



America For Christ 2012

This is the time of year ABC/NE churches are celebrating home mission. This includes receiving the America For Christ offering.

The America for Christ Offering is the American Baptist response to the needs of home missions within and beyond the local congregation in witness and service for Christ as mandated by the Great Commission. Gifts are channeled through ABC Home Mission and Regional Ministries (ABC-NE) to fund home mission, education and local community ministries.

Spring Pastors Seminar — April 14-16

Moses Merrill Camp & Conference Center

Speaker: Timothy Geoffrion, author of:

The Spirit-led Leader: Nine Leadership Priorities and Soul Principles.

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American Baptist Churches of Nebraska



March-April 2012

ABC/NE Date Data

Pastors Seminar
April 14-16
Moses Merrill

Spring Mission Festival
April 27-28
Moses Merrill

Project Week
May 20-27
Moses Merrill

Mediation Skills Training
July 9-13
Omaha

ABC/NE Convention
September 21-23
North Platte

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Spring Mission Festival April 27-28

"AN EXPLOSION OF MISSION"



Take the word into the world!

Join the great gathering of Baptists from ABC/NE churches to learn about the mission outreach of our region. The goal for this year's festival is to have representation from each church.

Great first hand information

- + Meet the new President of ABC-USA, Ruth Clark, former President of ABC's International Ministries. Ruth has travelled to many ABC mission sites. She is knowledgeable, fun, and inspirational.
- + Hear from Nebraska Pastors who visited Myanmar (Burma) a few months ago.
- + Hear from churches engaged in cross-cultural ministry. (See the registration form inside for more details.)

Missional Church Learning Experience

MCLE is a cluster of churches in an Arthur, FBC:

American Baptist region that forms a Learning Community to explore what God is saying to the Church today. They seek to journey through the question, "How can we best fit in with God's mission in our rapidly changing culture?" Each church involved in the Learning Community forms a mission team that receives training in basic missional church principles and practices those principles by designing and implementing a small community project. There are nineteen ABC NE churches involved in MCLE in 2011-2012. Below are very brief summaries of the mission projects chosen as part of the MCLE process.

Still in the discerning process though they see need in ministering to the aging population in Arthur County.

Beatrice, FBC:

Provided a free Christmas Dinner in partnership with the local Catholic Church and local community for the city of Beatrice this past Christmas.

Bellevue, New Life Baptist Church:

New Life will host a neighborhood BBQ picnic for "old town Bellevue." It is an area that struggles with job loss, depression, substance abuse, lack of education, etc. The picnic will include live music and carnival games to create hope. They are looking for community partners for helping with the program.

Albion, FBC:

Partnering with a local bowling alley to design a youth bowling league on Saturdays.

Story continues on page 3

From the Executive Minister Robin Stoops

A Baptist Saint?



St. Patrick's Day is normally a day we would not consider a religious holiday. It was at one time considered a holy day by the Catholic church, but more recently it has taken the road many of our holidays have and become a secular day with everything turning green from milkshakes to beer.

The story of St. Patrick however is a good one. He was indeed a real person, a priest with a strong call on his life. St. Patrick had a passion for evangelism and this may be a bit of an oversimplification of his life but he spent most of his days of ministry sharing Christ with those who had not heard in Ireland. He converted countless numbers of pagans, to the point his life was in danger by those opposed to his message, the Celtic Druids. He lived in a world unfriendly to his message yet he stood strong sharing the truth.

Well, we may not have much in common with a catholic saint but St. Patrick is certainly someone we can sympathize with and learn from. His passion for sharing Christ is admirable and his bravery at sharing no matter what comes should remind us of the call on our lives and the presence of the Holy Spirit in us.

Sometimes these "secular" holidays can be an opportunity for us to break through the barriers keeping us from sharing our faith. When we know the story of St. Patrick and his evangelistic life, maybe we can use it to squeeze into our conversations the message of Jesus. We don't need the "luck" of the Irish when we have the power of the Spirit and the message of the Son. We can use the day to get our message in places difficult to share.

One traditional icon of the day is the shamrock. And this stems from a bona fide Irish tale that tells how Patrick used the three-leaved shamrock to explain the Trinity. He used it in his sermons to represent how the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit could all exist as separate elements of the same entity. His followers adopted the custom of wearing a shamrock on his feast day.

Let's make March our month of sharing. Wear green and explain the Gospel, pin on a shamrock and explain the Trinity, be so passionate about sharing Christ that you raise an eyebrow or two and don't just invite someone to church, bring 'em.

Blessings,

From the Associate Executive Minister Greg Mamula

God is Faithful



Judges is one of my very favorite books in the Old Testament. Despite all the horrible things that happen in Judges, there are also many glimmers of hope throughout the book. Specifically we see time and again the faithfulness of God to his people, even when they are not faithful to him. Over and over again throughout the Old Testament God teaches Israel to love YHWH with all their heart and to love their neighbor as themselves. Repeatedly in the book of Judges the people and the judges themselves, choose the path of selfishness and idol worship. And each time God forgives, rescues, and redeems Israel only to have the process start over again with the next Judge. Why would God allow this cycle to continue repeatedly for 21 chapters?

I find myself better able to understand this sort of behavior by God since I have become a father. When my daughter was younger I found myself having to say things to her that I never thought I would have to say to another human being...Sophie don't hit the TV with a spatula...No, no Sophie don't bite the cat...Sophie please don't throw the remote into the toilet...No, no Sophie you have to keep your pants on...Sophie don't play with the extension cord...Sophie don't eat your shoes. And on and on it can go. And when I catch her doing these things she gets very defensive...I will walk into a room and she will be hitting the TV or something she knows she is not supposed to do and she will immediately drop her current weapon of choice and proceed to explain to me with a series of odd words like *shzoo wow umpy dad bwam na na*, how it wasn't her fault and that she was really trying to teach our cat former Leo algebra or something. Like any good sister she has taught this trait to her now one year old brother.

As parents we teach some things to our kids just for sheer safety reasons. Don't touch the stove when it is hot, don't lick the outlets, and don't run on the fireplace mantle. But sometimes they do what they are not supposed to and one of them gets a bump or scrapes a knee. For example, I used to tell my daughter not to slap the cat, I could physically move her away from the cat, I can put the cat in another room, but eventually they would find each other and she would pull on his tail one too many times and he would scratch her little hand and she would come running up to me crying, arms open needing to be cared for. And I am there every time with my arms open wide to pick her up, hug her, to wipe her tears away, to make her feel safe, to fix her little scratches (we no longer have a cat). And wouldn't you know it, if not an hour later she's back at it, swinging a tissue box around trying to thump that darn cat in the head.

I think God is the same way with the Israelites in the book of Judges. He warns them over and over again not to worship idols. But they do. He tells them that he will allow nations to oppress them, but they don't seem to care. When the oppression becomes more than they can bear they cry out to God, and God is always there to take them back. And not once do they say they are sorry. They simply cry out because the oppressor is too mean. And immediately after the judge character dies they go right back to worshipping idols and pulling the tail of their proverbial cat.

What a strange, loving, and merciful God we have. For no matter what we do he is always there to welcome us back with open arms, care for us, heal our wounds, and tell us he loves us. Thanks be to God.

Special Training Opportunity

ABC/NE is sponsoring a "Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders," July 9-13, 2012.

The Institute will be held at Judson Baptist Church in LaVista. It will be led by the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center, nationally recognized for excellence in conflict mediation training.

Brochures available from ABC/NE.



Support the youth from Nebraska who have the opportunity to join other youth from across the nation for a week-long gathering that is:

SPIRITUAL . . MISSIONAL . . REFLECTIVE . . CONNECTIVE . . EXPERIENTIAL . . AND FUN

Immerse will feature hands-on mission opportunities, daily small groups, creative and powerful worship experiences, exciting recreation time, and the opportunity to meet youth from across the country.

COMING JULY 24-28, TO WASHINGTON, D. C.!

Are there young people in your church whom you should encourage and enable to attend?



Very Special Annual Events . . .

WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

June 1-3 — Moses Merrill

This conference renews spirit, body and mind. Women from ABC/NE churches and their friends gather for an enriching & fun weekend.

MEN'S CONFERENCE

August 10-11 — Moses Merrill

This is a special time of inspiration and fellowship for men of ABC/NE churches.

ABC/NE Region Convention Sept 21-23 North Platte

The annual gathering of Nebraska Baptists is a not-to-miss experience. Great music, speakers, fellowship.



Moses Merrill News

2849 Rd. 31 Bldg. 3, Linwood, NE 68036 (402) 666-5639

E-mail: campmerrill@nntc.net Web site: www.campmerrill.com

Crack the Code



Crack the code! This is the theme at camp this summer. It's all about the secrets of the kingdom. Jesus told stories to convey truths. Help find a way for children and youth from your church to make new faith discoveries at camp this summer!

Check www.campmerrill.com for all the information about summer camps and retreats, or contact the address or phone number above.

PRAY Every Day for MMCCC

Once again the ABC/NE Mission Department is calling on all Nebraska Baptists for special prayer every day in March and May for Moses Merrill Camp & Conference Center.

Get a free copy of a helpful prayer calendar from your pastor or by contacting camp 402-666-5639 or visiting www.campmerrill.com

Easter Sunrise Service

Smith Amphitheatre At Moses Merrill



7:00 am Breakfast Following Everyone Welcome!

2300 Team . . .

Are you a member of the 2300 Team? There's room for you! All you do is pledge \$23 per month to MMCCC. The easiest way is to sign a simple form and the \$23 will be drawn from your checking account on the 23rd of each month. So far, the Team has contributed \$37,000 to camp. The name 2300 Team comes from the Roman numerals MMCCC — which also stands for Moses Merrill Camp & Conference Center. Contact MMCCC for all the info you need for signing up.



Calling Volunteers:

MMCCC invites volunteers to help with spring tasks

to prepare camp for the summer. Contact camp with your available dates.

In addition, Project Week is May 20-17. Church crews and individuals invited!

Volunteers under 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

There are still openings for weekend volunteer hosts.

CAMP CAT . . .

I love this time of year. Excitement is high as everyone at camp is getting ready for the summer season. Sign-up now to volunteer or attend a conference or camp or to have a special retreat.

I hope you understand there is no huge pile of money here . . . And we always need more volunteers . . . We need YOU. Each of us is critical to keeping this great place in ministry. I'll do my part but one cat can't do it all . . . Even when that cat is me!

See you at the Spring Mission Festival!

Your friend, Camp Cat



MCLE continued from cover story...

Freemont, FBC:

"Isaiah 58:7" project. The Latino population has not been treated well in Freemont. FBC is reaching out to them by taking Spanish lessons to better communicate with the population which suffers from undernourishment. They have also provided clothing and other supplies to the local Latino families.

Gibbon, FBC:

On March 17, FBC will join hands with the rest of the Gibbon community with the SPUDTACULAR dinner. Frito-Lay has provided potatoes they cannot use for their chips to give away to the community. FBC and local businesses are teaming up to provide a free meal, extra potatoes, and a free recipe book.

Hasting, FBC:

Hand to Hand Hastings will occur May 19. This is a city wide generosity event where the community is encouraged to shop at local stores. These local businesses will disperse a percentage of their profits from that day to organizations in town who work with the poor in town.

Judson, LaVista:

JBC has had conversations with the Mayor of LaVista and the city would like the church to create a mural for the Senior Center. Judson is looking for missional partners to help with this art project. Also the city would like the church to be involved in a new park.

Lincoln, FBC:

FBC Lincoln is connecting with an Asian Community Center that does ESL and other cultural events for the cities Asian population. They are still discerning how to be involved in this community center that represents a growing population in Lincoln. FBC Lincoln currently hosts both a Chinese church and a Karen church.

Lincoln, Second Baptist Church:

Will begin a transportation ministry for substance abuse recovery. Their goal is to help recovering addicts get to court ordered appointments and rehabilitation appointments. Working with Cornhusker Place to see how they can best provide this transportation.

McCook, Grace Baptist:

Grace Baptist is providing space rent free to the Family Resource Center. They share utilities. FRC has asked GBC members to be on their board and provide classes on parenting, finance, and marriage. The FRC has asked GBC to use creative ways to share the Gospel message with its clientele.

Norfolk, FBC:

Will re-energize a past ministry called "Brush Up Norfolk." Their goal is to clean up yards, paint homes, and other outside cleanup activities in partnership with city organizations. While cleaning up homes they seek to build relationships with the home owners and their neighbors.

North Platte, FBC:

North Platte has an ambitious goal of participating in three mission projects simultaneously. They have partnered with the local Rape & Domestic Abuse Center to provide a library for children at the center. They are partnering with the local school district librarians for suggestions. Secondly, the Bring Up Grades Program is a partnership with the Kiwanis to help motivate elementary students to perform better academically.

Third they are looking to start a mobile food pantry because 1 in 5 children are hungry in North Platte.

Omaha, Benson Baptist:

Provide much needed food to hundreds of people via their food bank. They are trying to find creative ways to disciple the children of these families.

Omaha, Miracle Hills Baptist Church:

Joslyn Elementary is located mere yards to the north of MHBC. The school principle has asked the church to participate in a reading program. The members of MHBC will read to, and be read to, by students who struggle with their reading skills.

Omaha, Sunset Hills Baptist Church:

SHBC has begun a new partnership with the Sunset Hills Elementary school by serving the staff with snacks. As a result of this outreach and now the school is now allowing SHBC to volunteer as readers and would like the church to serve in the fall carnival

Scottsbluff, FBC

Will start a new "diaper ministry" in Scottsbluff. There is great need for disposable diapers for new and single mothers. Their goals are to provide a much needed resources, to share the love of Christ, and build relationships with the mothers and the community organizations that will help provide the diapers.

Valley, United Faith Community Church:

Project Loaves and Fishes. Every Sunday night they provide free meals to the community. They also operate Angels Attic to give away clothes for free to those in need.



ABMen-USA receive \$10,000 gift for Arizona Hopi Mission Project

On February 17, 2012, Dr. Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins III, executive director of American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS), presented a \$10,000 check for the Arizona Hopi Mission Project to Lucky Ray, president of American Baptist Men-USA (ABMen-USA).



"The ABMen-USA Ministry Team greatly appreciates the support of ABHMS," said Ray. "Thank you for your prayers, encouragement and financial gifts. The generous funding you have provided not only allows us to do the physical tasks of disaster relief ministry, but also to minister to the spiritual needs of so many who are broken and lost. We look forward to an active and productive partnership with ABHMS during the project and future missions with our Men's Ministry, being the hands and feet of Christ, as we have been called to be."

The multi-week project to begin on June 18 will build new capacity for ministry on the Hopi Reservation. Volunteers are needed for jobs that include the following: electrical work, ventilation repair, drain system installation, and wheelchair ramp completion, all at Sunlight Mission Church, Second Mesa, Ariz.; water tank removal and placement of holding tank and filtration system in the pump house; window replacement, septic system repair and building construction at the community center; floor and septic system repair at the parsonage; razing of shed; and maintenance at Hopi Mission School.

To thank ABHMS for its contribution and partnership, ABMen-USA presented ABHMS with an engraved plaque. Among those in attendance at the presentation were Jack Cobb and Dave Cross, both of ABMen-USA.

For more information about the mission and to register as a volunteer, visit the ABMen-USA's website at www.abmen.org. To donate, go to the home page of ABHMS' website at www.abhms.org and click the "GIVE NOW" button.

2012 Spring Youth Retreat
at Moses Merrill Camp and Conference Center, will be
March 23-25. Early-bird cost is just \$85. To register contact the Region Office.

Spring Mission Festival 2012
Registration

Please print clearly. Send registrations to ABC of NE, 6404 Maple St., Omaha, NE 68104 or MMCCC, 2819 Road 31, bldg. 3, Linwood, NE 68036-3117

NAME: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ **Email:** _____

Church: _____

Lodge room or Cabin is \$58 for Friday night.
Meals are \$8 for Friday evening, Saturday Breakfast and Lunch.

_____ **Lodge room as available** _____ **Cabin**

_____ **I (we) will attend the whole conference, Friday evening through Saturday afternoon.**
[\$58 per room/cabin, \$20 meals per person]

_____ **I (we) will attend Saturday only [\$15 meals, no overnight]**

Total _____

