

WATCH FOR IT

THE 2012 ABC/NE MISSION TRIP

More info to come



ABC of Nebraska Staff

Executive Minister Robin Stoops
 Associate Executive Minister Dave Lundholm
 Director, Moses Merrill Camp & Conference Center
 MaryBeth Robertson
 Facility Manager, MMCCC Eric Byrd
 Camp Staff Kim Byrd, Barb Fisher
 Dan Hermsen, Bob Schuelke, Denise Harris, Beverly Pacas
 Office Manager Sue Gammel
 Office Assistant Margaret Brown-Moore
 Christian Education Consultant Nola Oberhelman
 Church Life Consultant A. J. Wagstaff
 Pastor to Pastors (E) Dick Peterson
 Emergency Services Consultant Jason Workman

Disaster Response . . .

**Be in prayer for victims and responders.
 There will be a need for teams of
 volunteers to respond with clean-up and
 rebuilding in many parts of the country
 following tornadoes and floods.
 See page 7 for additional information.
 Also, follow www.abcnebraska.com for
 information about team formation and
 travel dates.**

ABC/NE Annual Convention Trivia (answers on p. 6)

1. Conventions are now held in hotels. Where was the last church-based convention?
A. Kearney, B. Hastings, C. Scottsbluff, D. Beatrice.
2. Which of the following has NOT been a location for a convention in the last ten years?
A. Omaha, B. North Platte, C. Grand Island, D. Lincoln
3. Which of the following musicians have performed for convention in the last 10 years?
A. Paul Marine, B. Kip Mickelson, C. Linda Wiles, D. David Wells,
E. New Life Praise Team, F. Kim & Reggie Harris, G. All of these.
4. Who was the keynote speaker at last year's convention?
A. Roy Medley, B. Reid Trulson, C. Lauren Bethell, D. Jeff Woods
5. Identify each person mentioned in question #4.



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the MESSENGER

American Baptist Churches of Nebraska



June-July 2011

ABC/NE Date Data

Women's Conference
 Moses Merrill
 June 3-5

Men's Conference
 Moses Merrill
 Aug 12-13

Family Camp
 Moses Merrill
 Sept. 2-5

Annual ABC/NE Convention
 (Family Reunion)
 Kearney Holiday Inn
 Sept. 16-18

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Robin Stoops' Installation as ABC/NE Executive Minister - June 12 & 14

President Onnie Drain and the Board and Staff of the American Baptist Churches of Nebraska invite you to attend one of two installation services for Robin Stoops as Executive Minister.

Sunday, June 12, 2011 First Baptist Church, Lincoln 4:00 PM,
 Speaker: Dr. Roy Medley, General Secretary, ABC-USA
 Reception following.

Tuesday, June 14, 2011 First Baptist Church, Bridgeport 7:00 PM
 Speaker: Dr. Steve VanOstran, Executive Minister, ABC of the Rocky Mountains
 Reception following.

This is the Year! Plan Now for the ABC/NE Convention

September 16-18, 2011
 Holiday Inn Convention Center
 Kearney

The one who believes in me...
 will do greater works than these...
 ~John 14:12

Features:

Keynote Speaker: Missionary Stan Slade
 (more information on p. 3)

CONNECTION CAFÉ
 Friday and Saturday night after the
 evening session

Workshops and Hands-On Mission Projects

Women's & Men's Lunches

Mission Banquet

Retirement Recognition for Dave Lundholm

First Baptist of Kearney will be providing tours
 of a life-size tabernacle.

Registration forms and full information about
 the convention will be available in the Aug/
 Sep issue of *The Messenger* and in local
 church offices in mid-summer.



ABC NE
 State Convention 2011

From the Executive Minister Robin Stoops
Letting Go

Everyone knows there is little correlation between how much money people have and how much they are likely to give away. Is it true the person who drives to church in an \$80,000 automobile may make an annual gift of \$250, the same amount he donates to other good causes such as the Humane Society and the United Way, while the retired schoolteacher who lives on a fixed income turns in a pledge of \$2,500. In our culture the one who is rich gives as if he were poor, while the one who is poor gives as if she were rich. There is no telling what will fall out of people's hands when they hold them over the offering plate. A good example of this is what Jesus had to say in the Gospel of Mark 12:35-44, the story of the Widow's Mite.

A woman who no one expects to give anything gives everything she has to worship and honor God. As far as Jesus is concerned, the amount is not the point. The point is what the amount represents. Is it a tip or a tribute? Is it cash that will not really be missed, or is it a gift that will entail the daily toppling of other idols? The two copper coins in the widow's hand are nothing. If a wealthier woman dropped them, she probably would not even bend down to pick them up. In the widow's hand, however, they sparkle like diamonds. They are everything she has. When she lets go of them, she will be the richest woman on earth.

It takes money to do ministry and mission in the local church, the region and certainly to maintain missionaries on the field. The Scriptures are clear; our giving should not be out of guilt or

a tax break. Giving is not so much about the how but much more so about the why. God teaches us to give because it allows us the opportunity to be more like Him. God is the greatest giver of all! When we give we are in process of learning how it feels to sacrifice what is important to us and share it so others have the experience of grace and mercy.



We know the best standard for us to give is the tithe. It is an Old Testament law that is expanded by Jesus to go far beyond only giving the least we can get by with to making it a transforming worship experience setting us free to be His hands and feet. What a different world we would live in if each of us took to heart the tithe and gave with generosity and hilarity.

I realize we don't often speak of stewardship this early in the year but why not examine our habits when there is little pressure to give for the wrong reasons and truly seek God's face as to how and where we should be more like Him in our giving. May this also be a genuine thank you to you as you have supported the work we do in Nebraska through Moses Merrill Camp and Conference Center and as a resource for mission and ministry throughout the Region. We are truly family, held together by the oneness we experience through Christ. May the Kingdom of God grow in our communities and world because we have been found faithful stewards of all God has God has given.



Blessings, Robin

From the Associate Executive Minister..... Dave Lundholm
The Sermon

When I work with churches looking for new pastors, it's common for them to want preaching as the first essential skill for their new minister. The ability to preach and the ability to craft good sermons is essential to the ministerial role. It is common for churches to refer to their minister as "the preacher."

It is also common for people in congregations to underestimate the amount of time it takes to craft a sermon. In seminary, I learned that the rule of thumb for sermon preparation was that I should expect to spend one hour of preparation in my study for each minute I was in the pulpit. That means that it takes about 20 hours to prepare a 20 minute sermon.

How could it take that long? "Why, I preached once as a fill in and it only took me a few hours to get ready." I believe everyone has about three sermons already in them and it doesn't take long to get those ready to preach. But to preach week in and week out over decades takes significant preparation in order for the sermons to be sound and the content fresh.

The process begins with the selection of the text. Many preachers use a tool called the Revised Common Lectionary to help them in text selection. What the lectionary does is cover all of the key Biblical passages of a period of three years. For each Sunday it offers a Psalm, an Old Testament reading, a Gospel reading and a reading from the rest of the New Testament.

Others preachers move sequentially through a Biblical book or follow a key topic through the passages that deal with it. Some time is spent just selecting the text.

Then the process of understanding the text begins. The first key question is "what did these words mean to the first hearers?" Cultures change significantly over just a few decades but the Biblical record extends over thousands of years and we are thousands of years separated from then. So the pastor has to understand the culture and the historical context that are contemporary with the text. This may involve study of the text in the original languages or consulting commentaries.

After figuring out what the text said to the original hearers, it is necessary to answer the question: What is the message of the text for today and specifically what the message is for this congregation. (For example the text may have come from a time when God's people were turning away from God and worshipping idols. I don't know of anyone in any of our churches that are worshipping metal or wooden images of other deities. But there are things today — like perhaps money, sports, possessions etc.— that take us away from the worship of God.) After figuring out what the passage said then and what it says now it's important to move to the question: How do I say this so that the congregation has the maximum chance of encountering the message of the text and being transformed. What stories to use? What illustrations? How do I organize the material so that it is easily comprehended?

Then comes the actual process of writing and/or rehearsing the sermon.

Basically, that is the process of sermon development. It takes time. It takes time because preachers seek to honor the text of Scripture, and to honor their congregation by rightly handling the Word of God.



Memo To: ABC/NE
From: Jason Workman, ABC/NE Emergency Services Consultant

Responding to Those In Need

Tornadoes have swept the country this spring in record numbers. Many lives have been lost and an unbelievable number of homes and businesses destroyed. With that in mind, here are three things we want you know about and strongly consider using this season.

Disaster trailer - Nebraska Baptist Men have a disaster trailer in the state that is equipped to handle emergencies as they arise and it is available to help your family, church, or neighbors in times of need following disasters, floods, natural incidences, and even to assist, when possible, in special projects local churches are helping with.

Your Church - It is time to prepare your church for a natural disaster. Help facilitate a contact tree. This will allow members to check on one another following an incident. If someone needs help start with the men or women's group in your church and get a crew together to assist that person or family. If needed, call the region office and ask for assistance from sister churches in the area. That's what church families do for one another.

Your family - Below is an emergency preparedness kit for your home. It sounds silly now but when you need it you will be thankful you put forth the extra effort. Keep this kit in your storm shelter.

Hopefully we will not often need to utilize these resources but it is better to be informed, prepared, and ready so that we can care for our families, church family and help others in times of need. Please contact the region office following a disaster or emergency if your community, church, family, or a family you know needs assistance and the office will try to help facilitate the appropriate response to help. You may also contact me at 402-320-3875.

Emergency preparedness kit

Water—one gallon per person, per day
Food—nonperishable, easy to prepare
Manual can opener
Flashlight
Battery powered or hand crank radio
(NOAA Weather Radio, if possible)
Extra batteries/ Multipurpose tool

First aid kit / Emergency blanket
Medications / medical items
Sanitation and personal hygiene items
Extra cash/Copies of personal documents
Cell phone with chargers
Family and emergency contact information
Games and activities for children

HOW CAN WE HELP??

1. **Contribute to One Great Hour of Sharing ... if you wish, mark contributions for flood or tornado relief.**
2. **Volunteer to go with a response team for clean-up and rebuilding. ABC/NE, American Baptist Men and The ABC Home Mission Societies work together to coordinate teams. Re-building teams will be needed throughout 2011 and 2012.**
3. **Be an encourager. Encourage others to pray and volunteer.**

ABC Response to Earthquakes, Tsunamis, Tornadoes, Floods "One Great Hour of Sharing" Continues to Work

American Baptists in Nebraska and across the country are responding with love and generosity to disasters at home and around the world.

Contributions to the **ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING OFFERING** are being put to use in Haiti, Japan, and in tornado and flood ravaged parts of the USA.

JUST ONE EXAMPLE:

Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) recently presented a One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) domestic disaster grant to aid in clean-up and rebuilding efforts at Shaw University, which suffered tornado damage on April 16. The Raleigh, N.C., school closed for the remainder of the semester. The student union building and dormitories suffered tremendous structural damage and trees were uprooted, but no serious injuries were reported, according to a press release issued by university president Irma McClaurin, Ph.D. "Dr. Irma McClaurin, the faculty, staff and students of Shaw University and Divinity School are in our prayers. The first historically black university of the South, Shaw has handled

every man-made political, economic and social assault on its mission to educate and improve the lives of African-American youth," says ABHMS Executive Director Dr. Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins III. "The recent tornadic activity that damaged property is but a gentle wind compared to the constructive power of the life-transforming Spirit that has consistently blown through Shaw's history since 1865. The Easter promise is Shaw's as well. Because Christ lives, they will face tomorrow."

A member of the American Baptist Association of Colleges and Universities, the private, co-educational liberal arts school awards undergraduate and graduate degrees. "My heart sank when I first heard via the news that Shaw had been so severely damaged that the school had to close for the term," says Dr. A. Roy Medley, general secretary of American Baptist Churches USA. "I know the generous hearts of our American Baptists, and I am confident that they will respond to the challenge Shaw faces in restoring its campus."

Contributions may be made through OGHS designated to Shaw University.

BAPTIST ALPHABET SOUP



Every family has certain kinds of short-hand expressions. This is true for the ABC family. Here are three shorthand names to know. Watch for more in future issues of *The Messenger*.

ABHMS The American Baptist Home Mission Societies.

This is the domestic mission arm of American Baptist Churches USA. It ministers as the caring heart and serving hands of Jesus Christ across the United States and Puerto Rico through a multitude of initiatives that focus on discipleship, community and justice. The American Baptist Home Mission Society was formed in 18—. Because the tradition at that time was to NOT send single women as missionaries, the women of the Baptist churches formed the Woman's American Baptist Mission Society in 18—. The two organizations have been functioning together since 1955. That's the reason the current title is in the plural "societies." From the mid 1970s until 2010, ABHMS used the name National Ministries.

ABHHA The American Baptist Homes & Hospitals Association. This is the cooperative association linking homes and hospitals affiliated with ABC. MapleCrest, the retirement facility in Omaha, is a member of the American Baptist Homes of the Midwest, which in turn is a member of ABHHA.

OGHS One Great Hour of Sharing. This is one of the four major annual ABC offerings.

If you find "Baptist alphabet soup" sets of initials and don't know what they mean, check the ABC/NE Mission Handbook in your church office or online at www.abcnebraska.com. (click on "documents")

Bethel Center Celebrates 100th Anniversary

All this year, Bethel Neighborhood Center in Kansas City is celebrating its 100th Anniversary. Various special events are being held with the major celebration banquet scheduled for Sept. 17.

Bethel's neighborhood community is always changing and, within the last 100 years, Bethel Center has served many people groups from many nationalities. The longevity and the success of the Bethel ministry conveys the importance of the inner city ministry in Kansas City, Kansas. Bethel continues to be a lighthouse and a safe and fun place for young and old alike.

Director Mang Sonna invites Nebraska Baptists to visit Bethel and see the good work that continues to be done.

SUMMER VACATION!

When heading out on vacation this summer, check for ABC churches en route or at your destination. Join them for worship. We're family!



Trivia Answers (from p. 8)

1. C The last church-based convention was in Scottsbluff.
2. A There has not been a convention in Omaha in the last 10 years.
3. G All of these musicians, and more, have blessed the conventions with their talents.
4. D Jeff Woods was the keynote speaker at last year's convention.
5. Roy Medley is ABC General Secretary
Reid Trulson is Executive Director of ABC's International Ministries (IM).
Lauren Bethell is an IM Global Consultant
Jeff Woods is ABC Assoc. Gen. Secretary

CHURCH CONNECT



American Baptist churches in Nebraska enjoy connecting with each other. And is it any wonder? The **ABC/NE Mission Statement** is: "American Baptist churches in Nebraska are joined together as a region in a covenant partnership (ABC/NE) to: encourage, challenge, and empower one another to be transforming Christian communities in the world."

Being part of the covenant partnership is seen in the actions of churches across the state.

In June, the First Baptist Churches of Holdrege, Kearney, and Oxford are teaming up to sponsor a special Fathers Day program with author Todd Burpo. Contact any of the three churches for more information if you'd like to attend. Benson, First Lincoln, First Omaha, Grand Island, Miracle Hills, Parkside, and Sunset Hills all experience the unique joy of hosting and interacting with congregations worshipping in Sudanese, Karen, Chinese, Spanish, Kachin and Chin. How can your church "connect" with another? Reach out and be blessed!



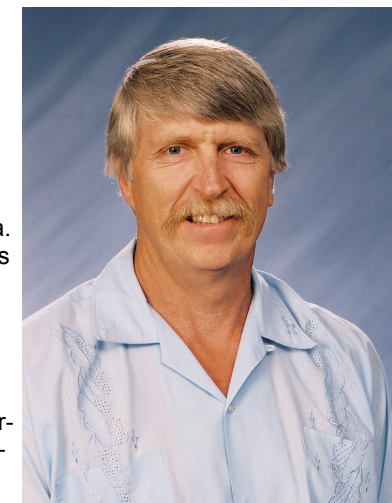
Missionary Stan Slade To Speak at State Convention Sept. 16-18, 2011

ABC Missionary Stan Slade will be the speaker for the ABC/NE Annual Convention September 16-18, 2011, in Kearney.

ABC/NE President Onnie Drain said, "We are blessed to have Dr. Slade come to Nebraska. He is known throughout the ABC family to be gifted leader." Executive Minister Robin Stoops added, "Stan Slade has accomplished things thought impossible and he has done it with a delightful style and great sense of humor."

Stan works with church leaders around the world to help them become more effective servants of Jesus Christ. He teaches in open-air workshops for those with little formal schooling or income, and also in high-tech classrooms for those with advanced degrees and notebook computers. Whatever the setting, Stan puts his own learning (B.A., Stanford University; M.A., Ph.D., Fuller Seminary; decades of teaching internationally) at the service of women and men who are investing their lives in the work of God's Reign.

Stan's passion is to help others encounter the transforming message of Scripture through inductive Bible study. So, missionaries and partners of International Ministries (IM) around the world often invite Stan to teach in their programs. But, as IM's global consultant for theological education, Stan also receives invitations to help local theological educators reflect on new ways that God may be calling them to approach the task of preparing effective church leaders.



ABC/NE Spring Mission Festival Packed With Learning, Celebration & Fellowship



Hospital Chaplains & Home Missionaries Rev. Dale Pracht (left) and Rev. Jim Cummings lead a workshop at the Festival.

The Spring Mission Festival was held this year in Holdrege, sponsored by the ABC/NE Mission Department. Attendees had the opportunity to learn more about mission at home and abroad. Special speaker Victoria Goff challenged churches to send volunteers to mission sites.



Moses Merrill staffers Clarence & Trudy Reiss take a look at the cake just before the Mission Festival reception in honor of their 12 years of service. See their "thank you" below.

Mark the dates now for next year. . .

2012 Spring Mission Festival

April 27-28, 2012

Moses Merrill Camp & Conference Center

We want to thank everyone who came to the reception for us in Holdrege as well as sent us cards and well wishes by phone and e-mails. The 12 years we spent serving the ABC/NE and Camp Moses Merrill were full of great rewards and personal satisfaction. We have met so many wonderful new friends all across the state and worked with many very special and dear people.

The reception was very special from the wonderful meal to the special gifts of the rocking bench, the wooden box, and wooden watch. They now have special places at our home in North Bend. Thank you to Rev. Darren Stroh and the Holdrege FBC family for hosting and to the ABC/NE Mission Department and Rev. Robin Stoops, Executive Minister of ABC/NE for our recognition. We will always cherish the ministry and many friends that the Lord gave us there.

Our prayers will continue to be with this ministry and now we will continue to see what "new adventures" the Lord has for us. Again—a BIG THANK YOU!!!!
In God's love and service, Clarence and Trudy Reiss



Eric Byrd, new Facility Manager at MMCCC

Moses Merrill Names New Facility Manager

ABC/NE Executive Minister Robin Stoops and Moses Merrill Camp & Conference Center Director, MaryBeth Robertson, have named a husband-wife team to positions on staff.

Eric and Kim Byrd will serve as Facility Manager and Office Manager. Eric has experience owning his own business in construction and home remodeling. He is also active in financial planning and budgeting, and public speaking. Kim has experience in banking, interior design and working in a school cafeteria. They have four children; one at Peru State and three at home (ages 15, 9 and 7).

The Byrd's have moved to Overlook House on the MMCCC grounds and have hit the ground running as summer season gets underway. They feel God's call in their lives to undertake this new direction and believe their work at Moses Merrill will be both a challenge and an opportunity for Christian ministry.

Eric can remember Moses Merrill Baptist Camp in Fullerton and both Eric and Kim were active at Benson Baptist Church in Omaha and attended summer camps at Camp Merrill while in high school.

After 12 years on staff, former staffers Clarence and Trudy Reiss retired from MMCCC earlier this year and live in North Bend, NE.

Volunteers Make A Difference!

Large numbers of volunteers made a difference this spring at Moses Merrill Camp & Conference Center (MMCCC). Pictured at right, a team from Fairbury that worked on plumbing at Parkgrove Lodge. Groups from other churches handled chipping, special maintenance needs and minor repairs.

Volunteers are now heading to camp to provide leadership for the summer children and youth camping season.

Volunteers are needed on a year-round basis to keep the facilities in shape and the programming strong for the vital ministries that take place on the grounds.

Any church or individual interested in volunteering, contact MMCCC, 402-666-5639.



Fairbury crew: Chris Buehler, Ron Southwick, Wayne Buehler

Calvary Lodge Celebrates Five Years

On July 6, 2006, Calvary Lodge was dedicated at Moses Merrill Camp & Conference Center. It was the final stage of the construction of the three part Ward Conference Center Complex. The first stage was the construction of Friendship Chapel, completed in 2003. That was followed by the main portion of the Conference Center with kitchen and conference room, completed in 2005. The final stage, Calvary Lodge, consists of 11 sleeping rooms and a utility area. A major part of the funding for the construction of the Lodge came from Calvary Baptist Church in Omaha which was completing its active ministry. The congregation made the commitment to take a portion of the harvest of their church's ministry and invest it in the ministry at Moses Merrill. In addition, ten churches and individuals contributed to finish and furnish each room.

Calvary Sunday Slated for July 10

**Former Calvary Baptist members,
Lodge Room Donors,
And all friends are invited
July 10 Anniversary Service 4pm in Friendship Chapel
Followed by a Potluck Picnic**



Moses Merrill News

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

This is the High Season for CAMP MERRILL . . .

Summer is Here!

Make sure every child and young person you know has the opportunity to attend one or more weeks at Moses Merrill this summer.

Take advantage of opportunities for women and men and families as well.

Prayer Requests:

- that each camper will come to know Jesus better
- that each leader will be blessed by the experience
- that everyone will be safe traveling to and from camp
- that camp staff will be energized
- that each church will rejoice in being part of this ministry



Groundsman Bob Schuelke keeps an eye on Volunteers Nate Wilcox and Ryan Martin from Lincoln Second.

From Camp Cat

"Summertime and the livin' is easy." You may not know that cats can sing. Sometimes I just hum that tune as I go about my work at Moses Merrill. Some folks don't think "the livin' is easy" at camp in the summertime. I understand their point. We have meals to prepare, programs to coordinate, campers to help, plumbing to fix, a pool to run, roads to maintain, roof repairs, mowing, cleaning, etc. [I don't do all this myself but I like to think I'm project supervisor!]

But the reason we sing "the livin' is easy" is because of all the fun we have at camp. I heard one of the teachers quote Jesus as saying "My burden is light." Now even a cat knows that Jesus had a huge burden. The teacher told the campers that when you are doing what Jesus wants you to do, it feels like the burden is light. That's why all the camp staff as well as the camp coordinators, cabin leaders and other volunteers have such a great time.

If you'd like to share in the "livin' is easy," just come to camp. I'd love to see you.

--Your friend, Camp Cat

2300 Team Giving . . . \$2300 per Month!

The 2300 Team is a group of contributors dedicated to sustaining general operations at Moses Merrill, narrowing the gap between annual expenditures and revenue.

According to MMCCC Director, MaryBeth Robertson, "For the first three months of 2011, 2300 Team members contributed an average of just over \$2300 per month! What a difference this amount makes in the stability of our operations budget, especially at a time of year when, historically, expenditures exceed income."

There are currently 113 members of the Team with a goal of 230 members. Just over half the Team members make monthly contributions of \$23 or more via electronic fund transfers from their banks to the camp's bank. The rest of the members send in monthly, quarterly or annual checks.

JOIN NOW . . . If you are not already a Team member, you are invited to join!

Call toll-free

1-877-244-7339 (in Omaha 402-556-4730) and ask for the form to sign-up for the 2300 Team.

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

