

the ESSENGER

American Baptist Churches of Nebraska



Oct - Nov 2009

ABC/NE Date Data

- Women's Retreat
Moses Merrill
Oct 2-4
- Adult Ministries
Moses Merrill
Oct. 5-8
- Western Women's Retreat
Camp Rock
Oct 9-11
- Fall Pastors Seminar
Moses Merrill
Oct. 12-14
- Vital Church Leaders Conf.
Moses Merrill
Nov. 2-4
- Holidays With the Merrills
Moses Merrill
Nov 14

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Mission Giving—21st Century Style



A core characteristic of American Baptists is a commitment to share the good news of Jesus in our communities, across this nation and around the world. The style of delivering the message shifts from time to time, but the message is the same.

The ABC/NE Mission Department continues to find ways to assist churches in being effective in mission. One of their goals is to promote United Mission and the 4 annual offerings. These are the bedrock of ABC mission support. But from time to time there are special projects that the Department wants to bring to the attention of the churches for "over and above" giving. There are four of these right now that have been "blessed" by the Mission Dept.

1. Sudanese DayCare — Benson Baptist continues to have a relationship with a church in Sudan. The church in Sudan has begun a daycare program that reaches over 300 children. Benson continues to seek ways over and above their regular mission giving to support the Sudanese ministry. Churches and individuals are invited to help.
2. Thailand School — Kearney First Baptist has made a commitment to help Missionary Mike Mann get a school built in Thailand. Mike is well known & appreciated by ABC/NE folks. Information on this project is available from the church.
3. Karen Ministry — Htoo May is a Karen woman who lives in Omaha and does her work through the ABC/NE office. She is organizing Karen Baptist women's groups across the USA. She receives money for her expenses and a small stipend from a variety of sources. She is available to speak in Nebraska churches in return for a free will offering.

4. The Penny Project is a project of ABC's National Ministries. It is primarily a campaign being done by children and youth. Give one penny for each child living in poverty. In Nebraska that means 56,194 pennies. The goal is to raise the money by April 2010 and use the money within Nebraska to aid children in poverty. (see p. 8)

Please add these projects to your prayer list. Information on all of these will be distributed to churches in January. For information sooner, contact the region office. Contributions for these projects, clearly marked, can be sent to the region office.

See mission giving definitions, p. 4

ABMen in ACTION

ABMen step up when air conditioners fail — In August at the Men's Conference the men responded quickly when they learned that the air conditioners in Friendship Chapel needed to be replaced. Within one day they had raised enough to make replacement a possibility.

Preparation for Disasters — ABMen continue to maintain a disaster response trailer. Working with ABC/NE Emergency Services Consultant Jason Workman, the men receive training to use various kinds of equipment needed following a disaster.

Layman and Clergyman of the Year — Orin Clinger, FBC-Kearney, was named Layman of the Year by ABMen. Orin is active in his local church and also serves as Chairman of the ABC/NE Dept. of Camps and Conferences. **Rev. Ron French was named Clergyman of the Year.** Ron is pastor of Sunset Hills in Omaha and serves as chaplain for ABMen in Nebraska.



Rev. Ron French & Orin Clinger
Clergyman & Layman of the Year

From the Executive Minister Susan Gillies

FAMILY

Not long before I arrived in Nebraska, nine years ago, the ABC/NE changed the name of the Annual Convention to the Family Reunion. The longer a person is in the state, the more they understand the concept.

As we gathered in Kearney in September, I looked around at people I call "the pillars" and wondered how many of these events they had attended over the years. When families are at their best, they are open, welcoming, encouraging groups of people. They are people you can turn to in need. They are people ready to help you celebrate. At this year's Family Reunion there was delight as folks gathered around the babies. There was celebration as the oldest and youngest and healthiest and not as healthy came through the doors.

This is a good family and I am grateful for it.

Of course the family of God is an ever widening circle. And the ABC/NE family is no exception. We have been blessed by the Kachin church and this year we welcomed the Karen Church in Omaha into the family. There is a possibility that a second Karen group will form in Omaha. We have another Karen congregation at Lincoln First. A group of Chin people have begun worshipping at Miracle Hills. There is an Hispanic congregation at FBC, Grand Island.

We have the opportunity to make the ABC/NE family a group of loving, welcoming Christian brothers and sisters.

Just as in local churches, the region gatherings can become

self centered. In all my travels, only once did someone tell me their church was not friendly. Usually churches claim "friendliness" as a leading characteristic of their congregation. The problem is that often the "friendliness" is directed only to the folks we know.

Someone at convention said they wanted to go out to coffee after a session but everyone seemed to already have their own group. They felt alone.

The call is to free ourselves up. To open our hearts to the new folks that come to our church and region — whether those new folks are like us or not.

I knew a family once that was most like what churches should be. This family certainly would be stunned to see these words in print. They weren't trying to be like a church. But their home was open. They welcomed everyone. They had a gathering in their home after a play performance one night and one of the young men at the party stayed for two years! Pretty radical. Another time, a guy was trying to finish an academic program in their town. He ran out of money. The family took him in for the last six weeks of the semester. They didn't do it for any "reason." It was just they way they "lived" the idea of family.

Let's startle ourselves with our welcoming spirit.

Let's try new ways to show that we are truly the Family of God. Let's try the Radical Hospitality that our Dept of Church Vitality has been talking about.



From the Associate Executive Minister Dave Lundholm

The Importance of Continuing Education

My wife is a Registered Nurse. In order to keep her license she has to participate in a certain number of approved continuing education experiences each year. No learning, no license! Teachers, doctors, counselors, technicians, in fact all classes of people have to participate in educational experiences in order to stay competent in their jobs.

The same is true for clergy. It is true that the Bible is unchanging but our culture is undergoing massive change. Things are not the same as they were in the 1980s when I began ministry. Over the course of the last three decades more historical material has become available to scholars, more manuscripts have become available (or accessible) than ever before and very bright people have dedicated their lives to studying these materials. So, even in Biblical studies, there is new knowledge out there.

In every field of knowledge that impacts the church there is new information. Think of the changes in technology we have seen. Think of the new field of Positive Psychology (the whole field is only 7 years old). Think about Facebook and social networking. That is why it is so important for pastors to augment what they learned in Seminary with a consistent practice of participating in continuing education.

Pastors need to attend continuing education events in order to connect with this new knowledge, but even more important than that, they need to process that new knowledge with their peers so they can get perspective on how to implement the new

knowledge when they return home.

The best congregations understand that there is tremendous benefit to the church when their pastor participates in continuing education.

A pastor should not have to use vacation time, or time designated for denominational meetings to engage in continuing education.

The best practice is to provide 10 to 14 days away each year for pastors to pursue continuing education and for the congregation to provide the financial resources to make the practice possible. (ABC-Nebraska pastors are fortunate to have the availability of the Carpenter fund that provides the finances for Region sponsored continuing education events... but there will sometimes be the need for more resources than the Carpenter fund can provide.) Another important piece of continuing education for pastors is the provision of a sabbatical every five to seven years to allow more intense study of an area of interest.

The reason my wife has to participate in continuing education is to make her a better nurse, so that her patients will have the best possible care.

The reason pastors need continuing education is to make them better pastors, so that their congregations will have the best possible ministerial service.





Church Leaders Explore Best Practices At Vital Church Event

Moses Merrill Nov. 2-4

Church leaders will gather at Moses Merrill Camp & Conference Center, Nov. 2-4, to share "best practices" in church life. The Vital Church Leaders Conference, formerly known as the Small Church Conference, draws participants from several states. Leadership for this year's conference includes Tom Johnson & Robin Stoops. Contact the region office for details & reservations.



**Empowering your gifts
to transform the world.**

ABC's INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES: A Christian mission organization connecting U.S. churches and individuals to holistic missions around the world. Organized in 1814, American Baptist International Ministries is the first Baptist mission agency formed in North America. It serves more than 1,800+ short-term and long-term missionaries annually, bringing U.S. and Puerto Rico churches together with partners in over 70 countries in cutting-edge ministries that tell the good news of Jesus Christ while meeting human needs. The mission of IM is to glorify God in all the earth by crossing cultural boundaries to help people come to Christ, grow in Christ and change their worlds with Christ. The World Mission Offering supports this ministry.

Nola's Take Five . . .

Ideas from Nola Oberhelman
ABC/NE Christian Education Consultant

Take five tips for raising children from Susannah Wesley:

1. Subdue self-will in a child and thus work together with God to save his soul.
2. Teach him to pray as soon as he can speak.
3. Give him nothing he cries for and only what's good for him.
4. Punish no fault that is confessed, never let a sinful act go unnoticed, and commend and reward good behavior.
5. Observe all your promises.

Susannah Wesley was the mother of Charles and John Wesley and fifteen other children. She prayed daily in her eighteenth century home for her family and discussed spiritual matters with each child.

- 2/3 of the world's population still need to open their hearts to Christ.
- **Your gifts help 16 missionaries work to lead people to faith.**
- Millions of new believers yearn for teachers and pastors to expand their faith.
- **Your gifts help 32 missionaries work to train church leaders.**
- Millions of people suffer needlessly without basic education, health care and economic stability.
- **Your gifts help 64 missionaries work bringing help and the Gospel of Jesus Christ to victims of illness, violence, poverty and hopelessness.**

PART 3 - Fruitful Congregations

In the last 2 issues of The Messenger, the Department of Church Vitality provided questions for a church to ask itself about whether it demonstrates **Radical Hospitality**. Here are two more questions to consider.

The Department is studying the book *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* by Robert Schnase, from which these questions are taken.

QUESTION FOR YOUR CHURCH:

When and where do the laity and clergy of our church receive training each year to enhance hospitality?

Which groups in your church are the easiest for new people to join? What can your group or class learn from them?

This column is sponsored by the Department of Church Vitality. We want you to know that we are praying for your congregation and we'd like to know how these columns are helping. If you would like to report on what your church is doing, send a letter to Dave Lundholm, 4006 Mason Avenue, Grand Island, NE 68803 or email to: area.minister.ne@charter.net

Education for Lay Ministry:

What is God calling you to do? Has He been nudging you to enter into the ministry at a new exciting level?

Education in Lay Ministry (E.L.M.) is currently enrolling students into its Fall 2010 program. Currently ABC-NE has three enrolled in the Class of 2011 program, Mike Kidder (Belmont Baptist, Lincoln), Gary Samples (1st Baptist, Beatrice) and Kathy Krogh (Second Baptist, Lincoln). Graduates of the program become certified Lay Ministers able to serve as pulpit supply, to serve smaller congregations as pastor or to serve many other types of ministry that God is preparing them to do. The Baptist Congregational Church in York, NE is very grateful for the E.L.M. program. It is served well by E.L.M. graduate Barb Johnson. For more information please contact Sharon Shields at Cotner College, shieldscotner@windstream.net.



Sorting Out ABC Mission Giving Terms . . .

United Mission Basics(UMB)—This is the giving all ABC churches give to support all parts of our work together as American Baptists. This is the major source of income for ABC/NE.

United Mission Designations(UMD)—Churches may earmark part of their UM dollars to support the approved budget of a particular ABC missionary or organization.

Targeted Giving(TG)—Churches may give as the result of an appeal by a mission partner for support of their operating budget or special projects.

Specifics(SPC)—Churches may give money to ABC entities over-and-above their allocation from UM and annual offerings. (gifts for a missionary's personal use are NOT included here, but should be listed as Miscellaneous Objective.)

Miscellaneous Objectives(MO)—This category provides a channel for sending gifts to ABC missionaries for their personal use. (Small birthday gifts from circles for example.)

Love Gift (LG)—AB Women's Ministries makes over-and-above contributions to Love Gift. A percentage goes to ABWMin. and the rest is divided the same way UM is.

Institutional Support (ISP)—Support for ABC related institutions.

ANNUAL OFFERINGS

American for Christ (AFC) - This offering is for mission in the USA. Two-thirds go to ABC's National Ministries (the home mission societies). One-third goes to region ministry (ABC/NE).

World Mission Offering (WMO) - This offering goes for overseas mission through ABC's International Ministries.

Retired Ministers & Missionaries Offering (RMMO) - This provides emergency relief and a "thank you" check to retired ministers and missionaries.

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) - Disaster relief and development assistance in the USA and overseas.

All these categories and others are listed on the form your church treasurer sends to the region office. If you have questions, contact the ABC/NE Office 877-244-7339.



Dave Lundholm chats with Pastor Jim Green during a visit to Scottsbluff.



At their Moses Merrill Conference, ABMen received training on new disaster response equipment.



Central Seminary Breaks Ground

Central Baptist Theological Seminary broke ground in September for construction of a chapel at the Shawnee campus.

Made possible by a \$2-million gift from the Eula Mae and John Baugh Foundation, the chapel will be named the Baugh-Marshall Chapel.

This construction is part of the recent growth of the campus and the academic program at Central.

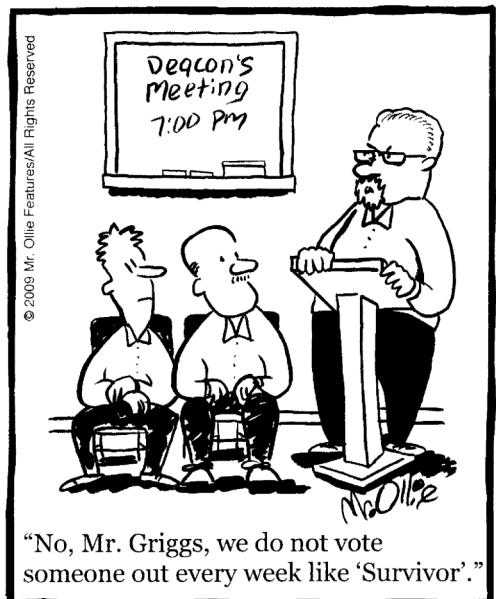
Susan Gillies, ABC/NE Executive Minister and member of the Central Board said, "After years of struggle, it's great to see Central growing in such amazing ways. Nebraska Baptists rejoice with Central."

ABC/NE Trivia

(answers on p. 6)

- How many First Baptist Churches are there in ABC/NE?
a-11, b-21, c-31, d-41
- How many Second Baptists?
a-1, b-2, c-3, d-4
- Which church has the highest number of Sunday worship services?
a. Kearney, b. Benson, c. Lincoln 2nd, d. Lincoln 1st
- Which of the following does NOT have Karen worshippers at this time?
a. Chadron, b. First-Omaha, c. Benson, d. North Platte
- Which church does not share its pastor with another worshipping group?
a. Chadron, b. Superior, c. Prairie Union, d. Oxford

Book of Timothy





Moses Merrill News

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SOARING TOWARD THE FUTURE

At Moses Merrill Camp & Conference Center

At it's August meeting, the ABC/NE Department of Camps and Conferences began a planning process to look at the future from a short and long term perspective. The department will continue the process during the fall. They are using a simple planning model called SOAR. The first stage is to seek or suggest ideas, the second is to order those ideas into a priority list. The third stage is to apply evaluative criteria to the ideas to see which will bring the biggest value for time and money expended. The fourth stage is to

"routinize" which involves building the new ideas into part of the regular operation of the facility.

The growth in year-round programming at Moses Merrill is a tremendous blessing, opportunity and challenge!

The cost of the camping program for children and youth continues to escalate. Year-round programming has great value in and of itself but it also provides support to the summer camps for kids.

Support Moses Merrill. We are making a difference!!

Sewer Work Progresses

Most of the sewer project was completed in August but completion was put on hold until November so that fall activities wouldn't be interrupted. The last part of the work will be done during the last half of November.

From Camp Cat . . .

For a long time I doubted the existence of "norvs." I believed the norvs all the kids talk about at Moses Merrill were simply mythical creatures who lived in the woods. The little kids who are here in the summer stay in their cabins at night because they don't want to run into the norvs. Well, I've started to become a believer. This summer the computers in the office have given us terrible trouble. The sewer contractors kept hitting water lines and the air conditioners in the chapel went out. Must be the norvs. I think the norvs are upset by all the sewer construction activity. Maybe the guys hit a norv nest. Scary! But, I've really never been directly bothered by them so I don't think you need to be afraid to come to camp.

We are really busy this fall. And that makes everybody happy. We could use more volunteers and financial supporters. Your help makes me purr! Please come out for Holidays With the Merrills on Nov. 14. I'll be watching for you.

- Camp Cat



Holidays With The Merrills

November 14

10am—4pm

Join us for a wonderful holiday Open House

- *Crafters will be on site with gift ideas for you*
- *Wagon rides for the whole family.*
- *Exhibits of Thanksgiving and Christmas decorating.*
- *Lots of sweets to taste*
- *Lunch served from 11am – 2:30pm*
- *Music performers*

All proceeds will be used for the Ministry of Moses Merrill.

2009 ABC/NE Family Reunion, Kearney, NE



Speaker Eddie Cruz speaking with Vivienne Friday, New Life, Bellevue.



Members of Host Church Welcome Team FBC, Beatrice



Missionary Duane Binkley



Just some of the great musicians from New Life Baptist Church in Bellevue who provided music throughout the convention.



**The JOY
of the LORD
Is our Strength!**



Mission Department chair, Johnny Nelson pours a bag of pennies into the Penney Jar. It's part of the Penny Project.



Rev. Ron French, Sunset Hills, talks with ABC/NE Adjunct staff person for Karen Ministry, Htoo May.

The ABC/NE welcomed the American Baptist Karen Congregation into membership in ABC. The church meets at FBC, Omaha.

RIGHT: Vice-President Onnie Drain, Exec. Min. Susan Gillies, and President Ted Hartung wearing Karen clothing given to them by the new congregation.

BELOW: The church choir sang, following the welcome of the church into the denomination.



Trivia Answers (from p. 4)

1. C. 31 FBCs in ABC/NE [That's why we don't know who you are when you call the region office and say "Hi, I'm from First Baptist."]
2. A. 1 But only one Second.
3. Two correct answers! B. & D. Benson has two worship services in English and one in Sudanese. Lincoln 1st has services in English, Karen and Chinese.
4. D. North Platte (If Chadron surprised you, some Karen young women from Omaha are part of job corps training in Chadron and attend 1st Baptist..)
5. D. Oxford



LOCAL CHURCH NEWS . . . Featuring four ABC/NE churches

Miracle Hills, Omaha

Miracle Hills Community Baptist Church exists to help spiritual seekers and disciples become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.

According to pastor Kevin Walden, the church places a high emphasis on children and youth. The preschool program continues to reach the neighborhood. Over 30 children are ministered to each year through this program. Brenda Baker is the director. Juli Bender remains one of the main teachers.

A new Before and After School program (Alpha & Omega) has just begun. After six years of prayer and community involvement to discern the greatest need of the neighborhood, this ministry came to the top. It is aimed at Elementary School children. The church provides a place of welcome for children before school in the morning and after school in the afternoon.

The church's youth program is in its third year. Two youth have been recognized in special ways. Michaela Millikan is the current Miss Nebraska Junior National Teenager and Miss Nebraska Pre-Teen. Emily Regan recently went on a mission trip to Missouri where she and other teens helped present a VBS program and ministered to the children in a town that deals with extreme poverty.

The congregation continues to explore creative ways to respond to the needs of the community. On Sept. 6, a group of Chin people began to hold worship services at the church. The Chin came to faith through ABC missionaries. The group in Omaha had been worshipping in an apartment. Now they have a new family at Miracle Hills.



First Baptist Church—Fremont

The Mission Statement of Fremont First is "To share the love of God, to study and grow together in the Word of God, and to serve and support the Family of God."

The church celebrated its 140th anniversary this year. It has been actively engaged and supportive of ABC missions and was recently recognized as a top 200 giving church. The church has had a daycare ministry since 1982 serving approx. 100 children daily. There are 6 women's circles, an active men's Bible study, an ABGirls group, youth group, Kid's Klub, VBS, and Sunday School.

As one of the two closest ABC churches to Moses Merrill Camp and Conference Center, the church feels a particular interest in and commitment to that ministry.

This is a time of tremendous change in the life of the congregation. Pastor Leland and Jean Foreman have retired after 27 years with the church. Walt Hickman has retired after 8 years as associate and visitation pastor. These folks have been a tremendous asset to the church and will be greatly missed. Church members have stepped up to assist in the transition and aid new staff. Brad Wiese became the new Associate Pastor and Youth Director this summer. The interim pastor, Rev. Dave Bender, began in mid-September.

The church reports that the Mission Statement is clearly in front of the congregation reminding them of who they are. The names of the leaders will change from time to time but the ministry of God continues.

First Baptist Church, Fairbury

Ministry to families is at the core of all that is done at First Baptist, Fairbury. The church's call and passion is sharing Christ with the families of the community and world.

First Baptist had a traditional launch to the teaching year with Rally Day. Pastor Jim Cutts reported that they used the Sunday School hour to go outside, play games, eat breakfast and enjoy fellowship. This year, they focused outreach efforts on this event. They gave attenders who brought an unchurched guest and the guest, each a prize for coming on that day.

The church continues to follow-up on unchurched children who attended VBS in August. During VBS, thirty three children trusted Jesus as their Savior. Many of those children don't have church homes. Members contacted every child who didn't indicate a church preference when they came to VBS and invited them and their parents to Rally Day. To tie Rally Day back into the VBS experience, the church launched a 13 week program during Children's Church time (during the sermon) that is linked to our VBS curriculum.

The hope is that many of the children will continue to come to the church throughout the year. The congregation has a van ministry, so they can even help in situations where transportation is a barrier. Pastor Cutts writes, "This will give us opportunities to help them grow in their relationships with Jesus. Who knows... maybe the parents will want to come and find out what all of the excitement is all about!"

The church is mission minded with a deep commitment to mission in Fairbury, across Nebraska and around the world.

Mount Nebo Missionary Baptist Church—Omaha

Founded in 1921, Mt. Nebo carries out a significant ministry in north Omaha. Pastor Terry L. Arvie came from Louisiana to lead the congregation in 2003 following the 46 year ministry of founding pastor the late John H. Whittington. Under Pastor Arvie's leadership, the church places its highest emphasis on evangelism and discipleship. The church has a strong foundation and is looking to the future.

The Mission/Purpose Statement: To bring men, women and children to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ; To develop them into the likeness of Christ; To train them in the Biblical principles of Worship, Prayer and Bible Study; To encourage one another by engaging in Fellowship, practicing Stewardship and rendering Service; To glorify God and Edify the Body. Dream it, Dare it, Define it and Do it!

Activities include Worship, Sunday School (Family Hour of Christian Education), Mission, Men's Ministry, Women's Ministry, Music Ministry, Nursery, Children's Ministry, Youth Ministry, Habitat for Humanity, Greeters Ministry, Ushers Ministry, Deacons Ministry serving Communion to the sick and shut-ins, Deaconess Ministry, Special Needs Ministry with emphasis on Drugs/Alcohol every week open to the community, Prayer Ministry, and Bible Study.

The church partnered with the Open Door Mission in responding to feeding the hungry this summer.

Among many other programs, is the Annual VIP Day each year in September to remember senior citizens especially who cannot get to church each week.

Top Churches in **United Mission** Giving through July 2009 *Praise God!*

Total \$ to UM	Per Capita to UM
1. Benson, Omaha	1. Miracle Hills, Omaha
2. Second, Lincoln	2. Belmont, Lincoln
3. First, Kearney	3. Benson, Omaha
4. First, Fremont	4. Second, Lincoln
5. First, North Platte	5. First, Beatrice
6. First, Holdrege (by 39 cents over #7)	6. First, Guide Rock
7. Arthur Baptist	7. Parkside, Omaha
8. First, Norfolk	8. Arthur Baptist
9. Miracle Hills, Omaha	9. First, Superior
10. First, Chadron	10. Gibbon Baptist

United Mission is our basic family support for the ministry we do together. It is the primary support for ABC/NE, part of it also goes toward home and overseas mission and our denomination-wide ministries. This chart is UM & Love Gift only, not the 4 special offerings or any other giving. For ideas to increase giving in your church, contact Dave Lundholm or Kathy Brown.

ABC of Nebraska Staff

Executive Minister	Susan Gillies
Associate Executive Minister	Dave Lundholm
Moses Merrill Camp & Conference Center Director	MaryBeth Robertson
Facilities Manager, MMCCC & ABC/NE.....	Clarence Reiss
Camp Staff	Trudy Reiss, Barb Fisher 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
Mission Consultant	Kathy Brown
Karen Outreach Adjunct	Htoo May
Pastor to Pastors (W)	Paul Kondy
Pastor to Pastors (E)	Dick Peterson
Emergency Services Consultant.....	Jason Workman



The Penny Project seeks to raise awareness of the extent of child poverty throughout the United States and Puerto Rico, and support for programs and ministries responding to the needs of children in poverty. Inspired by the example of the youth of First Baptist Church in New London, N.H., who raised 60,000 pennies to represent the number of children living in poverty in their state, National Ministries is encouraging the youth of American Baptist Churches USA to raise 14 million pennies to represent the number of children living in poverty in the United States and Puerto Rico.

Report the number of pennies you collect to ABC/NE. Then use the pennies for local programs for children in poverty or send the money to ABC/NE for camp scholarships for children in poverty. The region will report the penny totals to National Ministries. Pastors will receive updates on the # of pennies, weekly.



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