



the ESSENGER

American Baptist Churches of Nebraska



Oct—Nov 2010

ABC/NE Date Data

World Communion Sunday
October 3

Adult Ministries Conference
Oct 4-7, Moses Merrill

Fall Pastor Seminar
Oct 11-13, Moses Merrill

Finance Dept, Mission Dept, &
Exec Comm, 11/6 Grand Island

Vital Church Leaders Conf
Nov 8-10, Moses Merrill

HOLIDAYS WITH THE MERRILLS
Nov. 13

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Reaching Around the World With the Love of Jesus



Every October, American Baptists focus their attention on mission outreach beyond the borders of the USA. Each church receives the **World Mission Offering** to make a difference in lives in every part of the globe.

MISSIONARIES VISIT NEBRASKA!

Three ABC International Ministries missionaries are traveling in the state this fall. **Kristi Engel** who serves in the Dominican Republic visited several pastors in September. **Mercy Barnes** who serves in Mexico is visiting churches in October from Norfolk to Scottsbluff. **Becky Mann** who serves in Thailand will participated in the Adult Ministries Conference in October and then meet with several churches in the middle of Nebraska.

FROM DEEP ROOTS TO THE 21ST CENTURY!

International Ministries, organized in 1814 as the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, is the first Baptist international mission agency formed in North America and the second oldest Baptist mission agency in the world. IM serves 1,800 short-term and long-term missionaries annually.

ABC's International Ministries' mission 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.

For more information on how you or your church can support overseas mission, contact the ABC/NE Office.

Join the 2300 TEAM

WHAT IS 2300?

2300 is the value of the Roman numeral MMCCC. And MMCCC is the abbreviation for Moses Merrill Camp & Conference Center.

WHAT IS THE TEAM?

The 2300 Team is a group of families and singles who have committed to give MMCCC \$23 per month over and above other church and mission giving.

WHY?

At the recent ABC/NE Convention, Executive Minister Susan Gillies explained to the delegates that **Camp Merrill cannot continue its vital ministry** unless we raise the level of steady, regular support. She asked 230 families to give \$23 per month in an ongoing basis.

Join the 2300 Team — YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN COUNTLESS LIVES

One family said, "We can give up one restaurant meal a month to preserve the ministry of Camp Merrill. This is OUR ministry!"



One 2300 Team member wrote, "We've been told to find out where God is at work and come along side. God is definitely at work at Moses Merrill!"

From the Executive Minister Susan Gillies "The Days Dwindle Down, to a Precious Few"

The words of this title are from the song, Autumn Leaves. They come into my mind as I think of this fall and my last months as Executive Minister of the ABC of Nebraska.

The first thing I must say is "Thank You!" Thank you for the opportunity to work with you in this wonderful ministry we share as Nebraska Baptists.

I am so grateful to God for the staff, Board members and volunteers with whom I have had the privilege to work. I am grateful for each congregation whether big or small, healthy or struggling. I am grateful for the pastors who serve these churches, the chaplains, and the retired clergy.

I want to publicly thank Rev. Al Wagstaff, King Solomon Baptist Church, and Rev. T.S. Gilliam, Strangers Rest Baptist Church, for countless conversations. Their guidance has been a blessing. It is not always easy to pull together people who have found it easier to live apart. Eleven o'clock on Sunday morning remains the most segregated hour in America. I know, beyond doubt, that ABC Black, White, Hispanic, Sudanese, Karen, Kachin, Chin, and Chinese churches and worshipping groups will be blessed by opening their hearts to each other. Please keep at it. It's worth it.

You know of my passion for the ministry at Moses Merrill Camp & Conference Center. It will take prayer, work and

generous regular contributions and special gifts to keep it going. Is it worth it? In my opinion, YES! I've seen God use this place to work miracles of personal and congregational transformation. This ministry makes a difference and God has chosen you to be a part of it.

One of my favorite emphases during my time here has been "Churches Helping Churches." I urge you to continue to find ways to encourage, challenge and empower each other.

Many of you have asked what's next for me. God has some things lined up but I'm not looking at the list until I finish here. I have two trips planned to celebrate what I hope has been a job pretty well done. I am also under contract with Judson Press to complete a book on lay leadership by May 1.

I will continue to reside in Omaha but I will "absent" myself from ABC/NE for a time, in compliance with the Ministers Council Code of Ethics (which I strongly support).

There's still time this fall for us to see each other and celebrate God's life among us — at Adult Ministries Conference, Fall Pastors' Seminar, Vital Church Leaders Conference, and HOLIDAY WITH THE MERRILLS. I will enjoy these precious days.

"The JOY of the Lord is OUR strength." Neh 12:43



"Thank You"

Please accept my deepest thanks for the celebration and well-wishes that were part of the Family Reunion in Grand Island! What a wonderful time! I thank the Board and all of you for the gift of the beautiful pen and the lifetime slot for my RV at Moses Merrill. Also thank you for the book of letters. It is a treasure. I'm taking my time to read and enjoy them. These are truly memorable gifts. Thanks to the members of The Personnel Committee for coordinating the farewell.

The staff also sends their thanks for the "Appreciation Bags" given to them at convention. Please continue to express your encouragement and affirmation of them. We are all blessed tremendously by their work among us.
— Susan

From the Associate Executive Minister Dave Lundholm

A VERY PRECIOUS RESOURCE FOR THE CHURCH

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. {46} When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it."
Matthew 13:45-46

Your pastor is an incredibly precious resource for your church.

I have noticed over the years that things that are commonplace tend to be less expensive and things that are very rare tend to be far more valuable.

Nineteen years ago when I first began doing searches on the American Baptist Personnel System (ABPS), there were routinely over two thousand pastors who were open to a move or might consider one. As I am writing this column, I decided to check ABPS. Right now there are 413 who would consider placement.

Pastors in our denomination are becoming a rare and therefore very valuable resource for the church. We treat valuables differently than we treat everyday things. We protect them, we care for them, we cherish them and we honor them.



October is Pastor Appreciation Month

October is Pastor Appreciation month. What is your plan to demonstrate your care for your pastor? How do you cherish your pastor? In what ways will you honor their service?

I encourage you, of course, to demonstrate your appreciation for your pastor all year round. But October is a special time for you to give special recognition to this faithful servant of God.

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

1 Timothy 5:17



2010 ABC/NE Family Reunion

Grand Island, NE



ABC/NE President Ted Hartung;



Rev. Dr. Cheryl F. Dudley, Church World Service.



ABC/NE Board members wore their ABC/NE T-shirts to the Business Meeting. Pictured here from left: Rev. Tom Wiles, Janis Berry, Kathy Brown.



Exec. Minister Susan Gillies and ABC-USA Associate General Secretary Rev. Dr. C. Jeff Woods at the Retirement Celebration for Gillies



Rev. Darren Stroh headed the program for Gillies' retirement recognition.



Htoo May, member of the Sunset Hills Karen congregation.



American Baptist Karen Congregation Youth Choir.

RIBBONS: On any given Sunday, worship is held in ABC/NE churches in eight languages. The ribbons seen on the front of the podium represented the eight languages plus one additional ribbon for whatever is the next language!

[Worship is held in ABC/NE churches in Chin, Chinese, English, Kachin, Po Karen, Sgaw Karen, Spanish, and Sudanese.]



Margaret Gregory playing the flute during Sunday morning worship. She is a student at Hastings College. Her parents are pastors of ABC/NE churches in Grand Island and Chapman.



GROWTH IDEAS !

- Grown spiritually
- Grow in mission impact
- Grow in numbers

Sometimes old ideas can be dusted off and transformed into new ideas. The "tried and true" Invite-A-Friend Sunday idea can be used as is, or turned into a "Buddy Sunday" for children. Use your best creative people to re-package. Whatever ideas you use, it is critical to have enough lead time to prepare the congregation. Planning is key!

A NEW GROWTH IDEA IN EACH ISSUE — ABC/NE MESSENGER

Charlie & Beth Gregory Participate in Karen Ordination Council

Pastor of First Baptist in Grand Island, Charlie Gregory, and Pastor of First Baptist Chapman, Beth Gregory, had a unique opportunity during the summer.

While in Minnesota, they were invited to participate in ordination councils for eight Karen and Burmese pastors.

The candidates seeking local church ordination had participated in nine 3-hour training sessions. Following the councils, all the candidates were recommended for local church ordination and were ordained by First Karen Baptist Church, Karen Baptist Church and First Burma Christ Church in the Twin Cities. The service of ordination was held as part of a larger worship celebration of the Karen Baptist Youth and Karen Baptist Churches USA Conference.

Charlie and Beth Gregory both grew up as children of missionaries in Thailand.

ABMen Conference Largest in Years

Men Buy Tractor for Moses Merrill



American Baptist Men from across the state gathered at Moses Merrill Camp & Conference Center in August in their largest conference in years. The event featured worship, Bible study, discussion groups, music and fellowship.

The men raised \$16,800 to purchase a tractor for the camp. The commitment of \$7000 was made from the organization's invested funds and that amount was more than doubled by pledges from the men present. Facilities Manager Clarence Reiss said, "I'm blown away. The commitment of the men is such a great help."

Camp Director MaryBeth Robertson expressed her appreciation as well, "Both ABMen and ABW Ministries have demonstrated their partnership in this ministry. Both groups are key to our success."

The camp had maintained four very old tractors of different sizes for different jobs. A donor made it possible to replace the largest tractor late last year. The tractor given by ABMen replaces the two oldest tractors. According to Reiss this is a major improvement in the ability of the staff to care for the property.



The "new" tractor arrives at Moses Merrill

Brad Wiese Named ABMen's Pastor of the Year

Brad Wiese, Associate Pastor at First Baptist Church of Fremont, was named ABMen's Pastor of the Year. ABMen's President Bob Slechta made the announcement and accompanying presentation at the ABC/NE Family Reunion in Grand Island in September.



Brad served as Youth Pastor at Holdrege before moving to Fremont. He is coordinator of Senior High Camp at Moses Merrill Camp and Conference Center. He also is co-coordinator of the ABC/NE Youth Convention.

VITAL CHURCH LEADERS TELLING THE STORY

Pastors and other church leaders are invited to participate in the Vital Church Leaders Conference November 8-10.

The conference, formerly know as The Small Church Conference, focuses on strategies for excellence in small and medium congregations.

The event will be held at Moses Merrill Camp & Conference Center.

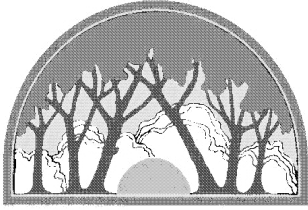
Speakers include Rev. Dr. John Williams, Exec. Minister of ABC of the Central Region, and well known storyteller; Marshall Peters, Exec. Minister of Mid-American Baptist Churches and computer resource expert; and Robin Sandbothe from the staff of Central Baptist Theological Seminary.

To register, call ABC/NE 1-877-244-7339.



Trivia Answers, from page 8

- Gammel, Gillies and Lundholm were all born in Omaha (and not very far from each other).
- Robertson was born in Brown's Station, MO
- Clarence Reiss was born in Holdrege
- Trudy Reiss was born in Blair
- Marge Brown was born in Winter Garden, FL



Moses Merrill News

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Everyone's Welcome at



Holidays With The Merrills

A Great Day of Crafts, Music, Food, Wagon Rides,
& Holiday Decorating Ideas

November 13, 2010

The Second Annual Holidays With the Merrills will be Nov. 13 at Moses Merrill Camp & Conference Center. Lodge rooms and cabins will be decorated for the Holidays, some for Thanksgiving and others for Christmas. There will be a wide array of crafters. Wagon rides will be available throughout the day (depending on the weather). Food will be available for purchase: morning coffee, soup-chili-and cornbread lunch, and an afternoon pie and ice cream break. Bring family and friends. Spread the word. It will be a great day!

From Camp Cat . . .

The way I see it, there's good change and there's bad change. I think the sooner everyone accepts that, the better off we'll be. Let me give you examples. Bad change would be staff not feeding me. Good change would be staff deciding to feed me more. Just kidding! Even I'm not that self-centered to see things only from my selfish viewpoint all the time.

Good change is about growing and trying new things. I learned that eavesdropping at one of the camps this last summer. Bad change happens when we stop putting our trust in God.

I'm not worried about the changes in ABC/NE. Whoever is the big cheese in Omaha, if God put them there, it's OK with me.

Now, let's talk about you. Did you get to Moses Merrill this year? Did you give a scholarship to a camper? Did you volunteer? Are you a member of the 2300 Team—giving \$23 each month? Are you praying for this ministry??? I can't do it all you know!

DON'T FORGET Holidays With the Merrills, Nov. 13. It's going to be great! I'll get the mice cleared out before you get here. I promise! [I'll do my part — you do yours. OK?]



Multiple Ministry Opportunities Fill the Fall Calendar

Fall programming is filling the calendar. Fall is now the number two season after summer at Moses Merrill.

Women's Fall Retreat: Oct. 1-3. All women are invited to this special time of renewal. Grace Wisthoff is Bible Study Leader. [The Western Retreat for Women is Oct. 15-17 at Camp Rock.]

Adult Ministries Conference: Oct. 4-7. Open to all, this event features a relaxed schedule with plenty of good learning opportunities and well as fun and fellowship. Kip Mickelson and Susan Gillies are speakers.

Pastors' Seminar: Oct. 11-13. ABC/NE Pastors are invited to a retreat setting. The theme is "Gratitude." Speakers are Steve Van Ostran and Soozie Ford.

Vital Church Leaders: Nov. 8-10. Designed for leaders of small to medium sized churches, this year's focus is on "Telling the Story." John Williams is the main speaker.

Numerous local church retreats, training events and personal retreats:

A few dates are still available, contact camp for info.

From The Department of Church Vitality: The Practice of Intentional Faith Development

The Department of Church Vitality has encouraged us to read *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* by Robert Schnase. In *The Messenger*, they've given us articles to help our study on "**Radical Hospitality**" and "**Passionate Worship**." Here is the next installment.

Many Christians, when asked about how to go about development of their faith, will reply with the standard "canned" answers of how they need to be in prayer and studying the Bible, but will really not give thought to how that plays out in our lives. We seem to think of this development taking place through "God time" that we bring about on our own terms, with only God and ourselves in the event. What many of us forget is that much of the valuable faith development in our lives has come when we have joined with a fellowship of believers in a common pursuit of growth.

We need to ask ourselves, where were the elements of our faith developed? If we were lucky enough to come from Christian homes, we realize that there were concerted efforts to guide us through those early faith steps by providing us with opportunities to learn Bible stories in Sunday School, more extensive lessons in Bible School, challenges to live out our faith in the junior high and high school years from youth leaders, and opportunities to grow in ways unimagined by attending church camps and retreats. Why then as adults, do we think that our faith development is something that leaves the elements of the church behind and centers solely on ourselves and no one else?

Intentional faith development in our churches comes right on the heels of passionate worship. When there is limited spiritual growth taking place, the church becomes an empty shell of what God intends for it to be. As it says in the book, "it is through Intentional Faith Development that God's Spirit works in us, perfecting us in the practice of love as we grow in the knowledge and love of God." It also says that "learning in community helps people explore possibilities that God may have for them that they never would have considered on their own." Each of us needs loving encouragement in our faith walk, and how valuable that becomes when we are a part of a group that cares enough to see our gifts, pray for us, and

help us to find the paths to follow. We certainly can't do that on our own.

The author wrote about "middle doors" and the problem that we have when our church is welcoming, but then can be cliquish when someone actually does try to enter into the life of the church was powerful. How easy it is to encourage people to become a part of our congregation, but then not be open to their participation in the groups and events already taking place in that church. Eventually those people step in the front door and step out the back with only a small stop in between. That is the challenge our churches face. We need to offer opportunities for people to become engaged in the community of faith.

Always coming up with fresh ideas on how to engage people can become a problem, though. The author brought up the fact that people desire fellowship and want to learn about the faith, but have trouble squeezing it into their lives. In that respect, we must always be mindful of trying to provide opportunities that are accommodating. Secondly our leaders may have to break out of the usual mode of doing things and become more open to place, frequency, and curriculum to have an impact.

"**Intentional faith development** requires a deliberate effort, purposeful action toward an end, and high prioritization. It highlights the significance of faith development and contrasts those congregations that take it seriously with those that offer it haphazardly and inconsistently, without new initiative, plan, or purpose." This statement says to me that we as a church should be re-evaluating our groups every year and be thinking carefully about what we offer in addition to worship. It should not be done quickly or without thought and we should not be scared to try something new or to drop something that is not working. From my experience it isn't as hard to get a new group started as it is to get rid of something that has been going on forever, but sometimes we need to clean house and begin again.

All in all we must recognize that God intends for us to join together, learn together, and grow together. That can only be accomplished through intentional faith development, and only through those means will our churches become vital, loving, and fruitful congregations.



World Communion Sunday

Many ABC/NE churches will join with Christians around the world in celebrating communion on World Communion Sunday, the first Sunday of October each year.

There are many varieties of Christians but one Lord!



Nola's Take Five . . .

Ideas from Nola Oberhelman
ABC/NE Christian Education Consultant

Take five ideas to keep conversation going with your kids:

1. Talk less and listen more.
2. Converse instead of giving a harangue.
3. Watch the body language.
4. Be prepared.
5. Keep a comfortable atmosphere.

First Baptist Church, Alliance

For nearly 120 years, First Baptist Church of Alliance has sought to be a witness of the love of Jesus to the people of its community.

The congregation has worshipped in the current church building for 48 years. The building is noted for its spacious sanctuary. [Executive Minister Susan Gillies has often said, "It's one of the most beautiful sanctuaries in the ABC/NE."]

Rev. Jim Rowe has served the church since 1999. He highlights some of the particular strengths of the church as Sunday School, worship, and the Sunday evening prayer service. But he also says that particularly important and effective are the American Baptist Youth, Vacation Bible School, special outings such as Christmas caroling and working on Operation Christmas Child.

Another strength is the women's group which has an annual drive to collect items for Family Rescue Service and works diligently with White Cross, this year sending much needed medical supplies to the Congo.

The church has been known historically for its recognition of Sunday School teachers, realizing the importance of those leaders to the health of the church.

The congregation seeks to be known in the community as a church that offers a warm welcome to all.

This church, along with many others, struggles with attendance. While prayers continue that they may reach more people, those who are active in the church are very dedicated to the ministry.

First Baptist Church, Guide Rock

The village of Guide rock was established in 1870. First Baptist was organized on July 27, 1873 in a small pioneer schoolhouse one mile east of the village of Guide Rock. The lots on which the church now stands were donated by the Lincoln Land Company and a frame building was completed and dedicated in September 1880 at a cost of \$773. The church shares Pastor Floyd Richardson with the First Baptist Church of Superior.

Through the years the energetic women were busy with the Ladies Aid Society. A great deal of missionary effort was supported and sustained by this group. Today the name has been changed to American Baptist Women's Ministries and there is still a small group of women that meet each month. They meet in the homes, enjoy a progressive dinner meeting in September, donate their assigned quota to the White Cross, give to the Love Gift each month, donate money to 2 missionaries with Christmas greetings and have a dinner meeting with the men in December followed by The Hanging of the Greens. This year they have served many meals for families who have lost a loved one.

The Men's Group meets the 3rd Saturday of the month for breakfast followed by devotions. Laypersons give the devotions. There are several men who attend from neighboring towns.

The church is active in community outreach. The primary local project is the Webster County Food Bank which the church supports financially and with volunteer service. They are strong supporters of AB Missions, including United Mission, America for Christ, One Great Hour of Sharing, World Missions, Retired Minister and Missionaries, Camp Merrill, Sioux Falls College and Central Seminary.

The church enjoys the faithfulness of many long time members.

First Baptist Church, North Platte

Following a full summer of special activities and worship experiences, First Baptist in North Platte is looking forward to the renewal that comes with autumn and a new year of church activities.

The adults have begun meeting in small groups on Sunday evening and throughout the week for an eight-week study of Gary Smalley material entitled, *The DNA of Relationships*. Epicenter Youth Ministries have also made the transition from summer activities and special fellowship events to regular worship and weekly gatherings. According to pastor, Rev. Tom Wiles, it is particularly exciting to see the spiritual and numeric growth that is evident among the teenagers as they meet consistently for Bible study, worship, and outreach fellowship. Ministry to children and young families will be highlighted during the 4th annual Trunk or Treat Halloween event. This event is a wonderful opportunity for the church family to invite the neighborhood to a fun and safe Halloween activity. The church parking lot will be filled with cars decorated for Halloween fun while costumed church members greeting families and children with treats, games, and several hundred hotdogs.

With fall in the air, the church is beginning plans for Advent and Christmas. The sanctuary choir is already at work on the 17th annual Living Christmas Tree. Each year over 1,000 gather for this annual community opening to the Advent and Christmas Seasons. The four performances of music and drama against the backdrop of a Christmas tree filled with singers has become a favorite outreach and worship event for the church fellowship and the broader Christian community in the North Platte area.

Belmont Baptist Church, Lincoln

[For its Messenger report, Belmont has chosen to share one great idea that made a difference!]

Early this year, plans were begun for a summer community picnic. Pastor Mike Kidder asked, "Could we add a few things?" That was the beginning of "an event." The picnic would be the day before VBS began. The decision was made that it should be a day of testimony of lives changed by Christ and was named the 'Belmont Community Summer Picnic' entitled; "*Now Is The Time.*"

A "Christian Blues" band played. Band members shared testimonies. Belmont members were encouraged to write out their testimonies and share them between songs. Organizers got a tent, kid's games and other items from 1st Baptist. (Churches Helping Churches!) Help running games, cooking and serving the picnic lunch came from friends and family of members. There was also watermelon purchased and chilled by a family that started their produce stand in Belmont's parking lot 15 years ago.

A motorcycle 'Show and Shine' was also held. Bikers from CMA (Christian Motorcycle Assn) and 'Hellfighters' were there and gave testimonies. Midst a summer of high heat, this day was perfect with a mild breeze.

About 200 Flyers featuring the Picnic on one side and VBS on the other were distributed to homes and apartments in the immediate area and others were posted in Belmont area businesses. The crowd was estimated at 150-200, most of whom had not been to the church before.

The church has a small membership. To make this VBS come together they enlisted the help of Child Evangelism Fellowship. The teamwork was successful. God provided this small congregation with the commitment to offer outreach to the neighborhood and it made a difference in the lives of children.



Come, Ye Thankful People THANKSGIVING 2010

How will you, your family and your congregation celebrate Thanksgiving this year? Consider some of these:

- Find a new and creative way to gather food for your local food pantry. [And THANK the food pantry volunteers.]
- Have a Thanksgiving Dinner at your church for anyone who wants to come.
- Participate in a community Thanksgiving Service.
- Have children in the congregation make Thanksgiving cards for shut-ins and deliver them in person.
- Have each person in your family, Sunday School class or study group list 10 things for which they are particularly thankful this year. Share a few with the group.
- Go Thanksgiving caroling!
- Invite a family to join your family for the holiday meal.

ABC of Nebraska Staff

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Associate Executive Minister.....	Dave Lundholm
Facilities Manager, MMCCC & ABC/NE	Clarence Reiss
Director, Moses Merrill Camp & Conference Center	MaryBeth Robertson
Camp Staff.....	Trudy Reiss, Barb Fisher
Dan Hermsen, Bob Schuelke, Denise Harris, Beverly Pacas	
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Church Life Consultant.....	A. J. Wagstaff
Pastor to Pastors (W).....	Paul Kondy
Pastor to Pastors (E).....	Dick Peterson
Emergency Services Consultant	Jason Workman

ABC/NE Trivia (answers on p.)

Match the ABC/NE Staff Person with the place of their birth. Answers can be used for more than one person.

Susan Gillies	1. Winter Garden, FL
Dave Lundholm	2. Omaha
MaryBeth Robertson	3. Blair
Clarence Reiss	4. Holdrege
Trudy Reiss	5. Brown's Station, MO
Sue Gammel	
Marge Brown	



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