

the MESSENGER

American Baptist Churches of Nebraska



April 2007

ABC/NE Date Data

EASTER, April 8

Work Days at Camp Merrill
April 9-14 & May 6-12

Tri-Region Pastors Event
April 23-25
FBC, Sioux Falls, SD

Ministry With Children Event
Camp Merrill, May 4-5

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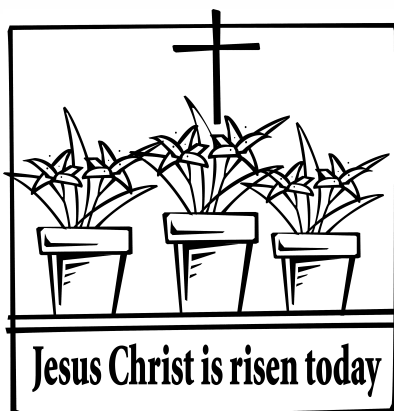
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Incorporated as
The Nebraska Baptist State Convention

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EASTER BLESSINGS!

May the joy of the resurrection surround you!

— The Staff of ABC/NE and
Camp Moses Merrill

**“Ministry With Children” Event
Great Opportunity for Churches**

“Ministry With Children” will be the first Moses & Eliza Merrill Christian Education Event. It will be held May 4-5 at Camp Merrill. It is designed for those who work with children.

The main speaker for the event is Rev. Dr. Cassandra Williams, National Coordinator for Discipleship Resource Development for ABC’s National Ministries. Dr. Williams will share insights on children’s spiritual development and educational methods that work well with children. Nola Oberhelman, ABC/NE’s Christian Education Consultant will provide “live” versions of her “Take Five” features from *The Messenger*. Rev. Irv Jennings, Arnold, will be the Saturday luncheon speaker. He will share his perspective on the importance of involving men in children’s ministry.

Gina Slechta of the ABC/NE Camps & Conferences Department has been advocating for an event of this type for some time. Her advocacy has born fruit in this first event in what will be a series of annual Christian Education events.

The Event begins will supper at 6:00pm on Friday and ends at 3:30pm on Saturday. Total cost per person is \$60. Register by calling (toll free) 877-244-7339 (or 556-4730 in Omaha).

YOUR CHURCH IS INVITED TO PARTICIPATE!!



Plan now for a special Family Reunion . . .

The Nebraska Baptist State Convention’s 140th Anniversary

- ABC/NE Family Reunion/Annual Convention Sept 21-23
- Sandhills Convention Center, North Platte (worth the trip!)
- Special Guest: Rev. Dr. David Laubach
author of *12 Steps to Congregational Transformation*
- Missionary features
- VBS-type activities for children
- Simultaneous Youth Convention at Camp Maranatha

From the Executive Minister Susan Gillies

You've Got Influence

These days it seems that nearly everyone feels powerless or marginalized. Some folks think they can't be heard in Washington, D.C., or Hollywood, or Valley Forge. It is easy to begin to think you have no influence. I'd like to suggest that the reality is . . . you've got influence. The danger is when you don't realize it.

As I'm writing this column, I've just come from the funeral of a woman who was a cabin leader of mine at Camp Merrill – Fullerton. She was in training to become an ABC Home Missionary when I stayed in her cabin. Her name was Erva. She was a unique person. I had a good friend in the same cabin and we loved to study the Bible with Erva. She was the best example we'd ever met of a person who knows the Bible and puts it dramatically into action. The girls in the cabin corresponded with Erva for quite awhile after camp. She went on to become a missionary serving Christian Centers in Arizona and California. Her letters were full of stories about mission work in the inner-city. I don't know if she ever fully understood the impact she had on a group of young women who were in her cabin that year.

We are gifted to have some great musicians among the ABC/NE pastors. I love to watch children watch these pastors use their musical gifts. I'm sure there are boys and girls who will take piano or voice lessons because they've seen Pastor Kip or Pastor Paul or Pastor Kevin or Pastor Jim play or sing. I think all of these pastors understand their influence from the pulpit but I wonder if they understand their musical influence.

When working with groups, I sometimes ask each person to share a story of someone who influenced their faith development. I hear wonderful stories of Sunday School teachers, and camp leaders, and all kinds of folks who think of themselves as "ordinary" Christians. Many of them would be amazed to know that something they did years ago actually changed a life.

Children (and adults) around you are aware of you, of the way you put your faith into action . . . in making decisions, in handling conflict, in caring for others. Your lifestyle is a witness. You've got influence. Use it well.



From the Associate Executive Minister Steve Bils

Ask not what your denomination can do for you . . .

I know it's become a natural question in our consumer-oriented society, but occasionally I still get irritated when I hear someone ask, "What does the ABC do for our church?" I assume local pastors experience similar frustration when they hear a visitor say, "We're looking for a church home. What does your church have to offer?" My frustration is not to imply that the ABC and most local churches don't do a great deal for us or for our members. It is just that a church (and a denomination) shouldn't be a place where we go first and primarily to receive something, but rather, they ought to be viewed as venues for exercising our gifts and for joining with others in the fulfillment of our life's mission and ministry.

Back in the early and mid 1800s when the Baptist churches in this country were organizing the *American Baptist Foreign Mission Society* (now known as **International Ministries**) and the *American Baptist Home Mission Society* and the *Women's American Baptist Home Mission Society* (later merged and now known as **National Ministries**) it would have made no sense to ask "what are the mission societies doing for our church?" The societies were created to allow Baptist churches the opportunity to pool their resources so mission and ministry could be done throughout the country and around the world. The churches who gave had no expectation that they would themselves become a direct recipient of the societies' ministry. They gave so they could be a part of ministering to those outside the walls of their church.

That being said, I have to admit that it was comforting to learn that the Senior Chaplain at the army base where my son was doing his basic training was a commissioned American Baptist chaplain. Both here in the states and at bases and on ships around the world, ABC chaplains serve our men and women in the military with distinction. An outstanding example

of these chaplains is Commander Lee Axtell, CHC, USN.

Cdr. Lee Axtell has distinguished himself by outstanding service as supervisory chaplain for the Religious Ministry Team of Third Marine Expeditionary Force, Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. His outstanding professional skill, leadership and ceaseless contributions helped his organization to achieve maximum operational effectiveness.

Chaplain Axtell is first and foremost a pastor and a chaplain. His calling as a Christian minister of the Gospel is readily apparent by his personal testimony in Christ, which is demonstrated daily.

One example of his ministry effectiveness occurred when 3,500 marines and sailors returned from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. Based on small group discussions of spirituality and their journey from combat to home life, Chaplain Axtell organized 520 "Return Warrior Debriefs" to help them process their experiences.

Another time, when he was deployed in Valparaiso, Chile, in 1993, he coordinated with local missionaries to bring his ship board congregation together with local churches to share in worship and fellowship. While deployed in Naples, Italy, in 1998, he organized community service projects at orphanages sponsored by USS GUAM's ministry team.

He also holds training sessions so lay leaders have the necessary resources and knowledge to provide ministry in the combat environments of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Chaplain Axtell will receive the *2007 Military Chaplain Merit Award* at our Biennial in Washington, DC this summer.

As a soldier's dad, I am looking forward to shaking his hand and thanking him for what he is doing for me.



First Lincoln Hosts Worship Workshop



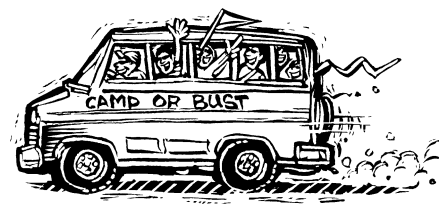
First Baptist of Lincoln is hosting a workshop on worship on April 23-24. All ABC/NE churches are invited to participate.

The event will feature noted author and speaker **Brad Berglund**. He is the author of *Reinventing Sunday* and *Reinventing Worship*. He has been a pastor, church musician and worship leader for more than 20 years.

The event begins at 7pm on the 23rd. Call the church if you plan to attend 402-477-4198

Van for Camp Merrill

Chaplain Sandy Smith and his wife Pat have donated a van to Camp Moses Merrill. The van's special use will be for transporting children from western Nebraska to Camp Moses Merrill. "It has been a dream of the camp staff to make the Camp Merrill experience possible for boys and girls in every part of the state," said Camp Director Clarence Reiss. "The generous gift from the Smiths makes a big difference in bringing this dream to life." Reiss pointed out that now drivers are needed and money is needed for gas. During this first year, western campers will be recruited for Junior I and II camps.



Rev. and Mrs. Smith are active members of Sunset Hills Baptist Church in Omaha.

SPRING YOUTH RETREAT EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

Junior and Senior High Youth stretched the capacity of Camp Merrill at the Spring Retreat March 23-25.

Approximately 100 youth and leaders turned out for the inspiration, fun, and relationship building.

Jason Workman, ABC/NE Youth Adjunct and Assistant Pastor at Benson, Omaha, and Brad Weise, Youth Pastor at Holdrege, led the event with assistance from Ben Edwards and Nicole Kasl. There were two separate tracks, one for Junior High and one for Senior High. With some activities combined.

The youth from FBC, Concordia, KS, also joined in the gathering.

Nola's Take Five . . .

Ideas from Nola Oberhelman
ABC/NE Christian Ed Consultant



Projects for your VBS program

1. Bring canned goods for the local food pantry.
 2. Collect cans for Habitat for Humanity
 3. Bring puzzles, games, and books for the Crisis Center in your area. These can be used items in good condition.
 4. Cash offerings to purchase a goat for Heifer International. Contact dave@kelloggsoft.com or ask me for materials
 5. Collect school supplies for Bethel Neighborhood Center.
- There are six other VBS mission projects in the Judson Press packet of Bible School brochures sent to your church office in February. Locate that packet and see what else is available for your church summer program.

ABC/NE Churches Are Building for the Future

A number of Nebraska Churches are expanding or improving their facilities. Several churches have been remodeling or refurbishing projects but at least three churches have dramatic building projects underway.

Judson Baptist, LaVista



Judson Addition

Judson is building a new addition which will contain classrooms, offices, and a large central gathering area.

The new building is adjacent to the existing sanctuary building.

removed in preparation for building. Pastor Robin Stoops began his ministry in Norfolk on March 18.

First Baptist, Arnold

The goal of First Baptist Church in Arnold is to provide worship, education and fellowship in a handicapped accessible building. The outer shell of the new building is in place. Work continues inside. Pastor Irv Jennings and the congregation see expanded ministry opportunities in the new facility.



First Baptist Church of Arnold

First Baptist, Norfolk

Following a devastating fire in November, First Baptist is planning an entirely new facility. Leaders are designing a church building with a larger sanctuary to accommodate the growing congregation. In mid-March, the parts of the building that were still standing following the fire were



This is the summer for a . . .

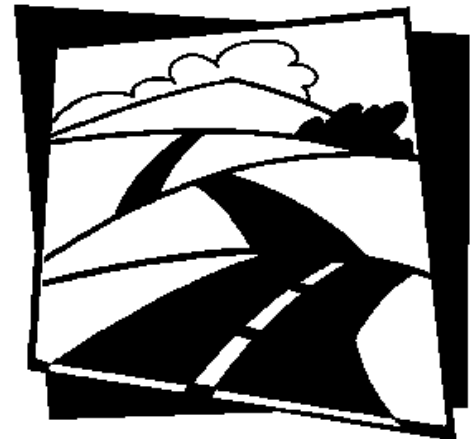
ROAD TRIP !!!



And the Road Trip is to Camp Moses Merrill. This summer will be packed with great camps, family vacations, family reunions, weddings and retreats. Don't miss the excitement. The theme for the summer is about the road of life and the incredible guide for the journey . . . Jesus!

CHILDREN & YOUTH . . . Get registration forms at your church and mark the early bird deadline for the camp you'd like to attend. Get the forms in early! If your church doesn't have forms, call camp or the region office or go on-line.

ADULTS . . . Watch for information on registration for Women's Conference, Men's Conference, the Adult Ministries Conference and the Fall Women's Retreat.



Camp Leaders Look Ahead

Members of the ABC/NE Camp & Conferences Dept., the staff of Camp Moses Merrill and ABC/NE, and a strong group of faithful supporters continue to look forward to the on-going stewardship of Camp Merrill.

Two projects loom large in the immediate future. The first is a sewer project. It's not glamorous but obviously essential. Some of the camp infrastructure is aging and the system needing attention is the sewer system. Engineers are at work, checking plans with the state. There is not a price estimate yet.

The second project is the construction of an activity building. It will be the final phase of the Building Bridges Campaign. Currently work is being done to try to find grants and foundation support for the project. After that, major donors will be contacted and then general contributors. The final phase will engage the youth in taking the campaign over the top. The actual fundraising could be a year away, depending on how the preliminary work goes.

Young Adult Retreat April 20-21
"It Makes A Difference"

The retreat begins at 6pm on Friday night (no meal) and concludes at 8 pm on Saturday night (3 meals on Sat).

 To Register, send a check for \$30 to ABC/NE, 6404 Maple St., Omaha, NE, 68104 by 4/14

 Lodging for Saturday night available for nominal charge. Call 402-556-4730 or (toll free 877-244-7339).

CMM Needs . . . Can you help?

Replacement windows in several buildings, Weaver Hall tables, small loader tractor, cabin leaders, Sunday worship leaders, activity building!

This is special.. . Horse Care & Riding Camp!



For Girls . . . June 10-15
 For Boys . . . June 17-22

Contact Camp for more information!

Thanks . . .

Gifts in memory of Ethel Reichenberg by Ralph Reichenberg and Dolores Benson. Other gifts from Betty Kizlin, Erma Nolan, Frank Townsend, Lane & Stacy Soukup, Doug & Keri Bedke, Platte Valley Feeders, and to each person who prays for camp and its ministry!

From the Associate Executive MinisterDave Lundholm

A Spring Retreat

Often the season right after Easter Sunday is an excellent time for pastors (and others, too) to take a personal retreat. Jesus modeled the practice of retreat by his engaging with the crowds and then withdrawing to an isolated place to pray. Spiritual directors have recommended to pastors that they take a day each month and a week each year for retreat.

For most of us, with the crazy schedules that structure our lives, the recommended practice seems impossible. What if instead we used the Good Soil principles of playfulness, gentleness and grace to guide us in modifying a retreat so that it would really meet us where we are?

Traditional Retreat (a whole day)	Gentler, graceful, playful Retreat (as long as is useful)
Arrival 30 minutes of silent listening Repeat: Scripture Readings Other Readings for Reflection Prayer Journal Writing Recreation Rest 30 minutes of silent listening	Arrival A time of listening: Perhaps in silence, or listening to music (classical, Christian or what most brings you joy), or listening to the sounds of nature around you. Listen until you are done. Jot down any thoughts or new insights that come to mind. Scripture Readings: Read your favorite passages, or read in the Psalms, or bring is list of verses to look at that address the areas of life where you most welcome guidance. Again jot down any new thoughts that come to mind. Read in a favorite book that always encourages you, or read in a new book. Jot down insights and ideas. Spend as much time as is comfortable in prayer. Look at the notes you jotted down. Are there any new patterns you see? Any actions you want to take? Do something fun. Take time to rest End the retreat with a time of listening again.

All of the activities of the Gentler Retreat are optional except one (and you get to pick that one). The order of activities in the Gentler Retreat is not important, you can do things in any order. You could take a whole day for the retreat or do it on a coffee break. (The listening times could be one breath long. The Scripture could be only one verse. The reading omitted or just one paragraph from a devotional book. The prayer could be one sentence long. The fun could be talking with colleagues, and the time of rest just the break from normal work routine.)

It's your retreat. You can do what you wish. But remember if it feels like work, you are doing it wrong. It should feel like play. If you are pushing yourself, you're doing it wrong. It should feel gentle. And if you don't do what you planned, that's fine, because you are called to give yourself grace.

I'd really like to know about your retreat. Send me a copy of what you did on your retreat and how it affected your walk with Christ.



LOCAL CHURCH NEWS

by Darlene Rimpley

May Deadlines April 4, 2007 - Print Copy April 9, 2007 - E-Mail	<u>Home Town Editor (Note New Address)</u> Darlene RIMPLEY 912 N. Carroll Arnold, NE 69120	<u>E-Editor</u> area.minister.ne@charter.net Subject: Messenger
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ALLIANCE FBC: The annual Valentine Banquet was held Sunday evening Feb 11. Traditionally, the men of the church pay for the catered dinner for the congregation. Bruce Cook provided live dinner music and song and the sing-along following. The ABY ski trip to Terry Peak in the Black Hills was Feb 23, 24.

ARNOLD FBC: Thirty-seven Senior Citizens were honored at a potluck dinner held by the church on Mar 4, with a program of music, scripture, and poems following. Rev. Jerry Beltz, a former pastor at Arnold and a hometown boy as well, passed away in Omaha. Memorial

services were held at FBC on Mar 14. After taking the winter off for soup suppers, Heart to Heart was begun on the third Sunday morning of the month again, with the deacons preparing a pancake breakfast. The Junior High and Senior High Sunday School classes have combined, and begin each session with a breakfast.

BEATRICE FBC: AB Men's Breakfast was held at *County Cookin' Cafe* on Mar 10.

BELLEVUE NEW LIFE: New Life recently began designing its worship services through a

ministry team that incorporates drama and other arts, while interpreting the scriptures and events in ways that enable 21st-century worshippers to more easily discern and discover God. The congregation is currently organizing itself into NETS - Neighborhood Exploration Teams - which, when off the ground, will engage in some kind of ministry or evangelism to which each is uniquely called. Last Friday monthly is the popular "Movie Night", a secular movie with a life message aimed at kids and families, complete with free popcorn, snacks and admission. Our Missions Team and a Youth Think Tank are continuing urgent work aimed at

making us more relevant and effective in ministry to our wider communities.

FAIRBURY FBC: A farewell dinner and open house for Pastor Robin and Kathy Stoops was held on Mar 11. A men's prayer breakfast is held each Friday morning at 7:00 am at Griffey's. A "Dollar Supper" was held on Mar 14.

FREMONT FBC: The FBC Day Care celebrated its 25th anniversary on Mar 18. First Baptist t-shirts are being sold to raise money for the camp fund. Movie night was held on Mar 11, with "Facing the Giants" being the movie of choice. Four adult sponsors and nine teens had the privilege of going to Omaha and selecting books for the church library.

GIBBON BC: The World Day of Prayer was held at FBC on Mar 2. The ABW served supper to Roger William Fellowship In Kearney on Mar 26.

HOLDREGE FBC: An Assimilation (a passion for God and a passion for people) Seminar was held on Mar 25, presented by Vivian Tillotson. New carpeting and two new furnaces/ac have been installed recently.

JUNIATA CC: Mr. Loren Uden, the Adams County Emergency Manager, spoke at the general meeting of the JCC Women on Mar 7.

LAVISTA JUDSON: Some of our Junior and Senior high kids attended a retreat at Camp Moses Merrill. We celebrated a baby dedication. The American Baptist Women were treated to a powerful message and plea from Rev. Paul Marine as he told of his experiences in the Sudan. The women also attended the ABW World Day of Prayer at Christ the King Catholic Church. The J.O.Y. Club held their second-annual Scavenger Hunt. In lieu of an egg hunt, the kids will visit Immanuel Trinity Village and perform part of their Easter program, give the residents an Easter Cup of goodies and mingle and play bingo with them. The AWANA children gathered non-perishable foods for the LaVista Food Bank. Girl Scout Sunday was observed in March and we were all especially glad to see the first day of Spring arrive. Preparations have begun for the Annual Spring Fling next month, which sounds very exciting.

LINCOLN FBC: The FBC Men held a fellowship time on Mar 17. Mar 14 the men came to hear about a program through Released and Restored, or hiring released felons. Clothing is being collected for the People's City Mission. Lenten Prayer Services are being held each Sunday morning. Children's Church will be using Noah's Ark for the program, and 4th and 5th graders are helping by being leaders. Twenty-eight students and sponsors attended Dare2Share Weekend. A Music and Worship Workshop was held Mar 23-25.

LINCOLN SECOND BC: Dewey Jr. & Donna Foster were the Selected Valentine couple for 2007 at the Feb. 17th, 41st Annual Valentine Party; Mar 4, following worship the parents of the youth provided a light lunch for everyone and then held a Bake sale and (youth) Labor Auction to raise funds for the Youth Fund that

will enable the youth to do their projected Summer Mission Projects; Mar 8th, the Women's Bible Study of the book of Daniel began; Mar 10, was the AB Men's Breakfast; Mar 22, the Senior Adult Ministry group sponsored a bus tour to Kansas City to visit the "Dead Sea Scrolls" exhibit; Mar 24, was Family Ministries Supper Club; Mar 25, was Missions Sunday with guest speaker Pastor Tom from Lincoln "Peoples City Mission", an AFC special offering was received and clothing for the City Mission to use to assist people in need was collected.

MCCOOK FBC: A potato bake and "all the fixings" was held on Mar 18 by the AB Youth as a camp fundraiser. FBC joined in the Community Lenten services at the First Congregational Church, with Rev. Jackson giving the message on Mar 23.

OMAHA BENSON: A Church Ministry Fair was held Mar 11, which gave those attending an opportunity to see a ministry they might become involved in. The K.I.D.S. held a "Good Behavior Skating Party" on Mar 11, which the entire church was invited to. Eunice Arant from the Good News Jail and Prison Ministries was the speaker at ABW on Mar 17. Pastor Paul attended the National Pastors Convention in San Diego, The church lost two very long-time members: Verbarie McIllece, 99, who had been a member for 55 years, and Gladys Dixon, 102, who had been a member for 60 years. Julia O'Brien celebrated her 80th birthday on Mar 4.

OMAHA FBC: A chili feed/pie auction was held on Mar 11 following the morning worship service. Proceeds from the auction will be used for the VBS Carnival; VBS, and to help campers attend Camp Moses Merrill. The youth group traveled to Lincoln to attend a concert featuring, Newsboys, Kutless and Stellar Kart on Mar 10. On Apr 7th and 8th a "Lock-In" for the Junior High/Senior High young people will be held at the church. New member classes are being offered during March and April for those interested in becoming part of the FBC Family. Plans are starting to take shape for the celebration of First Baptist's 150 Year Anniversary next year, 2008.

OMAHA KING SOLOMON: The church hosted Omahaland pastors in March. Our 26th anniversary as a congregation was celebrated.

OMAHA PARKSIDE: A St. Patrick's Day Dinner was held on Mar 17 (of course), with a catered meal. Gladys Schmitz, who was the widow of a former pastor, Rev. Charles Schmitz, passed away recently, at the age of 100. The women attended World Day of Prayer at Christ the King Church on Mar 2. Lenten Soup Suppers were held during March on Thursday nights, followed by a study of *Rich in the Things That Count the Most*. A clothing drive was held on Mar 17 to benefit the Salvation Army Adult Rehabilitation Center.

OMAHA SUNSET HILLS: Two ministry fairs were held to fill roles in the new Ministry Councils. Among the activities planned are the observance of Sunset Hills' 50th anniversary and a revised web page. Pastor French has presented a series of sermons on the six

councils. About 50 attended the Omahaland Men's Prayer Breakfast. Sunset Hills men are exploring mission opportunities in the community, including food and clothing drives. Madeline Karlen was baptized, Pastor French's first at Sunset Hills. A church-cleaning day was planned as Easter approached. A Maundy Thursday service will be held.

OXFORD FBC: Our church family enjoyed a "potluck" dinner on Sunday, Jan 21, followed by our annual business meeting. A Wedding Shower was hosted at the church for Mr. & Mrs. Doug Trenchard and it was well attended. **We are searching for Sunday school books**



titled "Biblelog for Adults", the New Testament series by Pam & Stan Campbell. There are 4 books in this series used in 1996 & 1997. They

are no longer available. If anyone has any of these books that they would like to share, please contact Jean Birt, 707 Central, Oxford, NE 68967.

SCOTTSBLUFF FBC: Invite a Friend Sunday was held Mar 11. A door-to-door neighborhood ministry was held on Mar 31, with the Board of CE doing the planning. Loaves of homemade bread, gospel material, and information about the church were handed out to those visited. A special "Youth Offering" was taken during the month of March to help cover 1/2 the cost of the youth attending *Acquire the Fire* in Denver Apr 27-28. The annual "Cookie March" was held on Mar 18. The children met immediately after church for pizza, and then delivered cookies to the shut-in folks of the church.

TEKAMAH FBC: The Community Lenten Breakfasts were held at the Presbyterian Church, with the FBC men preparing the breakfast on Mar 7. FBC took part in the "Kids Against Hunger" Packaging Party on Mar 25 at the City Auditorium. They packed 5000 packages of six nutritious formulated meals to hungry children and adults around the world.

TECUMSEH FBC: The Community Lenten Luncheons were held in the area churches, with FBC being host on Mar 8.

NEW MEMBERS:

SCOTTSBLUFF FBC: Kelsey Schank

SUNSET HILLS: Madeline Karlen.

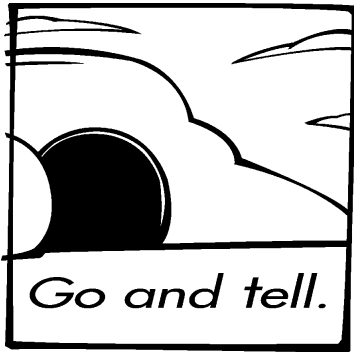


God answers knee-mail



Many churches and communities begin Easter Sunday with a service at sunrise. Historians suggest this early service developed as a conclusion of a traditional Easter vigil. Others feel it represents the women coming to the tomb early on Easter morning. Others simply believe this highest holy day of the Christian year should be honored in its entirety — beginning at early dawn.

The tradition usually calls for an outdoor service. Nebraskans have had a wide variety of Easter sunrise experiences. One year there will be the singing of birds and the gentle breeze of spring. The next year the wind will blow and the sleet will sting. Sunrise services are often moved inside because of the weather.



It is good for Christians to greet Easter dawn with a spirit of joy and celebration whether that is on a hillside watching the sun rise, in a sanctuary or around a family breakfast table. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

ABC of Nebraska Staff

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Youth Ministry Adjunct	Jason Workman

Where Are the Closest ABC Mission Sites?

Near Nebraska: University of Sioux Falls, Ottawa University, Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Bethel Neighborhood Center in Kansas City, Curtis Park Community Center in Denver
In Nebraska: Maple Crest Care Center
Nearer Yet: Just outside the front door of each ABC/NE church.



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