

American Baptist Churches of Nebraska
Nebraska Region Annual Meeting
Saturday, April 22, 2023
FBC Gibbon, Gibbon, Nebraska

Attendees: Greg Mamula, Bev Pacas, Lorlea Mees, Craig Erickson, Orin Clinger, Jane Gangwish, Steve Wisthoff, Bob Fairchild, Traci Gilmer, Susan Howell, Brad Pope

Via Zoom: Patrick Fleeman, Cassandra Nelson, Jill Blaylock, Zau Sam, Bob Fairchild, Joy Martinez Marshall

Meeting called to order at 10:00 by Craig Erickson

Opening Prayer: Steve Wisthoff led the team in a devotional.

Review of Minutes: Susan Howell indicated the sentence regarding her report at last meeting was incorrect. Brad Pope voted to accept the minutes as corrected Brad Pope , Traci Gilmer seconded. Bob Fairchild made a motion to accept the minutes, Brad Pope seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Craig Fairchild brought up the issue of replacing Clint Walker (term expires in 2024) and Caleb Lind (term expires in 2025) on the region board. Greg indicated our by-laws show that we can either choose a replacement for the duration of their term and approve at next meeting or we can choose new candidates to be voted in at the October region gathering, with terms beginning in January. Jane Gangwish noted that our bylaws call for a nominating committee. Craig Erickson appointed Jane Gangwish, Greg Mamula and himself to the committee and advised they would meet in the upcoming weeks to discuss potential nominees

Finance: Bob Fairchild reported that our region income is currently in the positive by \$769.00 for the quarter and \$3500.00 for the year. Our income is down at this time but expenses have been monitored and reduced. Our camp report is not currently reflecting expenses and income as the camping season has not begun yet. Income for camp will increase over the summer when the camping program starts.

Investment report: Greg Mamula reported that the current investment funds are down due to market conditions at the end of 2022 and the previous quarter. Region has taken a 2.5% draw from the funds every six months when needed. We have not taken a draw from the investments the first three months of 2023 as the region has existed on current income received and the Laten Legacy funds. Without the Laten Legacy funds the region would be in much more difficult financial issues. Through January-March we did not pull any funds out of investments but we did a draw from the funds in the amount of \$23,100.00 in April. Our goal is to not dip into the principal of the investment funds.

Greg Mamula added that there have been no expenses for the executive search process so far this year, those will be reflected later in this year.

Susan Howell moved to accept the financial report and Jane Gangwish seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Moses Merrill Camp and Conference: Bev Pacas relayed a story regarding a Hispanic family that arrived at camp for prayer this past weekend. The board paused for a minute to pray for the family.

Bev Pacas reported summer camp is preparing to start. Theme this year is “Be the Light” Matthew 5:14-16, all camp pastors are in place, working on staffing, currently we have more males than females for camp counselors and she is still looking female cabin leaders. Also looking to hire more cooks and kitchen staff so camp can be more fully staffed. Staff arrive Tuesday after Memorial day. Employee interviews consistently had candidates stating that they want to give back to camp, what the camp gave for them

Keira Carlson, the program coordinator, has been meeting weekly with Bev Pacas to plan for the summer. Keira has assisted with youth retreat and LIT this year and there is a lot of excitement with her participation in camp leadership.

Moses Merrill continues to make improvements to activity areas. Added a frisbee golf area and sunshades are up by the basketball court, archery area, zipline area and sand volleyball. The rec shed has been cleaned up and repaired by Dimitri after an infestation of mice. Thanks to donations we are able to replace all the sports equipment that was destroyed.

Summer camp prayer warriors are needed – warriors are given the first names of 10-12 campers for the week they are coming to camp so that they can pray for them while they are at camp and then when they come back home...

Camp calendar is very full and we many new groups. Bev Pacas has given a large number of tours this spring. Chin group will have a weeklong camp and doing their own programming. Estimate is that 50% of groups renting facilities are ethnic groups.

The most recent test of the water and nitrates level was at 11.1, 10 is the legal limit, so we are not in the normal range. Warnings have been reposted and Bev has purchased bottled water. High nitrate report requires warnings posted, a quarterly report and the purchase of bottled water. We have hired an engineer and are currently waiting for the report to be delivered. The deadline from the health department for the report in April 2024 and the water department budgets two to three years for the completion of all reports and drilling for new well. Bev Pacas is hoping we can complete the process more quickly.

The gas barrel was hit by a downed cottonwood tree and was replaced in March.

ABMen raised money and have donated a new gator to camp.

Cabin remodel project is still in process. Cabin #2 will complete this week and will be the 7th cabin completed. There are three cabins left and fundraising is required to finish the cabins. Cabin remodel costs escalated due to more expensive materials costs to approximately \$20,000 per cabin as compared to the original \$15,000 estimate. Sunset Hills Baptist church is currently fundraising for Cabin #9.

Sewer issues continue at Weaver Hall and the most recent Weaver Hall and camp was advised that we need to replace and fix the sewer system. The sewer was repaired as much as possible without going into the concrete foundation but there is a ½ inch crack six feet out into the building. Camp has known for quite a while that the sewer line under the building was crumbling but the goal was to wait until the remodel project began to repair. Camp has been advised that we can auger the line every 60-90 days as a method to continue to use it. Currently camp is waiting on bids and the contractors require a blueprint before they will submit their bids. A company will be coming out next week to do a blueprint the last week of April. The most recent estimate for the plumbing is approximately \$110,000-130,000 and a general contractor will be at camp on 4/24/2023 to review the project. Currently the estimate for the remodel is approximately \$300,000-\$400,000 depending on how much needs to be done. Currently camp has received a gift of \$35,000 to begin the fund for the remodel. Bev Pacas has begun creating materials for fundraising for the project. Nola Crooks suggested that the materials for the campaign should be multimedia and not just print. Traci Gilmer suggested that we create a group to create the campaign so that they could encourage all members of the board to visit churches and publicize the need. The discussion continued regarding creating a team to develop the campaign for funds.

ABMEN: Brad Pope reported that most of the planning for the August 11-12, 2023 conference is complete. Speaker for the conference is Robin Stoops. Meeting in few weeks to finalize conference plans.

ABMen purchased a new gator for camp to replace 2006 model. In the process of having delivered a brush cutter attachment for the skid loader to take out big pieces of brush and trees.

ABWM of Nebraska: Susan Howell reported that ABWM is planning the women's June 2-4, 2023 conference. Surveys asking how women feel about ABWM, what ABWM could do in Nebraska, and what would women want ABWM of Nebraska to do. These surveys were sent out to 43 churches and 5 churches have returned the surveys. ABWM is pursuing the idea of having a conference in a more central location of Nebraska to encourage the western half of the state to participate. Susan Howell reports there has been no contact from the individuals handling the Weichelman fund and, following this meeting, she is headed to Hasting to pick up the paperwork related to the Weichelman fund. Susan also reported that she would like to reach out to churches in less populated areas and churches in transition to seek out ways that

we could encourage and help those women. Susan Howell also reported that she has been asked to fill the pulpit as a lay preacher at a church in Iowa.

Department of Professional Ministry: Greg Mamula reported that this department has been very busy. In January, Blake Wilkes at Arthur FBC, was ordained. The process began in the fall and Clint Walker, Greg Mamula and Herb Jennings as well as other representatives from ABC churches in Nebraska met to complete the ordination council. Blake Wilkes is still completing his MDiv online.

Benson Baptist Church recently called Pastor Praveen Kumar TN, to lead their church. Pastor Kumar TN is completing his studies at Truett Seminary and will graduate in May. He is already ordained and the DPM met with him and recognized his ordination. Cassandra Nelson shared that Pastor Kumar TN is also getting married in June.

The DPM has been in conversation with Pastor Taylor Shippy of Gibbon FBC to begin his ordination process.

The region is fortunate that we do not have much in the way of clergy misconduct issues in our region.

ABC/USA General Board: Orin Clinger reported that the application deadline for the general secretary was in February and the expectation is that the new general secretary will be announced at the Mission Summit in June. One Great Hour of Sharing has contributed much to disaster relief over the past few months with the hurricanes. Orin Clinger reminded the board of the ABCUSA biennial Mission Summit in San Juan, Puerto Rico on June 23-25, 2023. Orin Clinger inquired if anyone in the region was attending the Biennial. Greg Mamula indicated that Joy Martinez Marshall and Rev. Ang were also attending the biennial in addition to himself.

Orin Clinger shared that he was inquiring about the financial reports for the ABCUSA and had been in contact with Paul Higgins.

Interim Executive Minister's Report:

Greg Mamula reported that he attended the Beatrice Baptist Church 150th anniversary on January 29, 2023. Several city leaders participated and it was a good experience. Beatrice FBC and Kearney FBC are two churches in the state that provide a Foster Care Closet.

Clergy retreat on Jan 23-25, 2023 at Moses Merrill. Funded by a grant received in 2021 with a focus on clergy health with Jason Workman as the retreat leader. Region continues to realize the mental stress that pastors carry and are considering continuing on in intentional ways and potentially hiring Jason Workman as a counselor to the pastors.

Brought greeting at Chin National Day on February 18, 2023 at Omaha Playhouse. All Chin churches came together and celebrated their independence day.

In partnership with Mid-America, Central and Dakotas regions, the region received a \$12,000.00 grant from AB Foundation. The grant will be used to fund the prairie pastor's conference and half the grant was spent on the 2023 Prairie Pastor Conference and the remainder will be used for the 2024 Prairie Pastor Conference.

The 2023 Prairie Pastor Conference was held on March 27-29, 2023 at Sunset Hills Baptist Church. The conference hosted three International Ministries Missionaries as speakers and presenters. Dwight and Barbara Bolick, Chile, but currently based in Texas. Keith and Deb Myers based in Mexico and Toya Richards who will be assigned to South Africa. There were national representatives from ABHMS, IM, Judson Press and ABWM as well as other national agencies. Sunset Hills has agreed to host the Prairie Pastor Conferences in the future.

Attended the First Kachin Baptist Church at Easter and preached the message.

Updating the website was a priority in February. It is the same URL and has links on the website for ABWM, ABMEN and MMCCC. There is also a page for ministry story spots. Churches are welcome to share their ministries or activities and it can be shared on the website. If anyone believes there should be additional content or stories, please let him know. There is also a page for open positions in the region and it can be expanded for youth positions, administrative positions and camp positions.

There has been a large amount of remodeling in the region office building. The staff has moved around and redecorated. The main hallway has logos from all the ministry partners with mission statements. One wall is devoted to camp with mixtiles of camp pictures. The goal is to eventually have a wall with pictures of every church with the building telling a story. In the wall of the breakroom are pictures of all the closed churches in the region to remind us that there is not a church from the New Testament is open and that all churches have a life cycle.

Joy Martinez Marshall was hired to help the region on a stipend basis. She assisted with the Prairie Pastor Conference and will be responsible for spearheading the Colossian 3 communities that were birthed out of the workshop with Ruth Haley Barber in Chicago. The process has lost momentum and she will be responsible for continuing the program. Joy Martinez Marshall also assisted with the redo of the region website and completed the section with the Google map that has pins to all the churches in the region.

Scottsbluff currently has Herb Rainey serving as interim and Sunset Hills has Steve Wamberg serving as interim. Positions have been posted for the pastoral positions but there has not been a large response. It is one of the most challenging seasons of identifying pastoral candidates and recently the region advertised on a pastor search website, in addition to using ministrelife.

Fairbury Baptist church has Dale Pracht as interim and Norfolk Baptist Church has Brian High as interim, both are in a good state at this time. Greg Mamula will be traveling to Fairbury to preach before the end of April. North Platte is currently looking for an interim and although

Greg Mamula has reached out to several potential interims, there is not one currently hired. The region recently had interactions with Recent with Blair FBC after they experienced issues with the current pastor. It has resulted in a renewed relationship between the church and the region.

Orin Clinger asked about FBC Mason City and their relationship with the region. Greg Mamula advised they still have a relationship with the ABC churches of Nebraska but in name only. Greg relayed that in 2013 the region assisted when they were potentially closing and assisted the church and also revitalizing the community.

The region received a letter from Amazing Grace Ministries International to join ABC Nebraska. Amazing Grace ministries is a congregation of Nigerian immigrants and learned that we have space for rent in our region office. Requirement to rent the facility was that they join the American Baptist Churches of Nebraska. The church has participated in the Prairie Pastor's Conference and the orientation at the event.

Jane Gangwish made the motion to accept Amazing Grace Ministries International into the Nebraska region and Traci Gilmer seconded. Motion carried.

The nominating committee will also need to consider additional positions for the new year. Connie Harvey, Abe Montalvo, Traci Gilmer, Nola Crooks will conclude their first term and can option for a second. Zau Sam will come off the board and will need to be replaced.

The next region event, the EXPO, or gathering has been scheduled for October 6-7, 2023 at Sunset Hills Baptist Church. There will be an open house of the region offices on Friday afternoon. Need to reconsider keeping the name or choosing a new name. There is a rough schedule at this time. Friday night will be a worship time and Saturday morning will be workshops from experts at local churches, showcasing what we are doing well. The 2024 gathering will be at Gibbon First Baptist Church on October 5-6, 2024.

Greg Mamula's upcoming events are Regional Executive Ministers Council at Green Lake, Wisconsin on May 8-12, 2023.

ABC Homes of the Midwest have a board meeting on May 19-20, 2023 in Colorado.

Preaching at Chadron Baptist Church on Sunday May 21, 2023.

Tempered Resilience online workshop on May 22, 2023.

Preaching at North Platte, Nebraska on May 28, 2023

Preaching at Gibbon First Baptist Church on June 4, 2023

Serving as Family Camp Pastor at Moses Merrill, July 28-30, 2023.

Mission Summit on June 20-27, 2023

The Executive Minister Search Committee will have listening sessions on April 29, 2023 at Alliance FBC, 10 a.m. MST, Sunset Hills FBC at 10 a.m. CDT. May 6, 2023 FBC Fremont 1:30 p.m. CDT. May 7, 2023 at Second Baptist Church, Lincoln at 5 p.m. CDT. There will be

additional listening sessions scheduled in the upcoming weeks. The survey is currently closed. Any information received from the search committee is copy and pasted onto social media.

Jane Gangwish shared a prayer request; a couple from Gibbon FBC is in the process of moving to Kodiak Baptist Mission. The husband is driving up with a truck and trailer at this time and the mother and daughters will leave in mid-May. Prayer request for the family and this transition.

Steve Wisthoff closed the meeting in prayer

Next meeting is August 26, 2023 at the region office in Omaha.

Respectfully submitted,

Nola Crooks
ABC Nebraska Secretary