

American Baptist Churches of Nebraska
Nebraska Region Annual Meeting
Saturday, August 26, 2023
ABC NE Region Office, Omaha, NE

Attendees: President Craig Erickson, Vice President Jane Gangwish, Treasurer Bob Fairchild, Jamie Yendra, Orin Clinger, Traci Gilmer, Jill Blaylock, Scott Jones, Nolan Hayes, Lorlea Mees, Doug Larsen, ABWomen Susan Howell, ABMen Brad Pope, Chaplain Steve Wisthoff, MMCCC Director Bev Pacas, Interim Associate Exec Joy Martinez-Marshall, Transitional Executive Minister Greg Mamula. Via Zoom Michelle Wing

Meeting called to order by Craig Erickson 10:00am

Opening Devotion/Prayer: Steve Wisthoff led a time of brief prayer and worship focusing on being treasures in jars of clay 2 Cor. 4.

Review of Minutes: Corrected name of "Craig Fairchild" to "Bob Fairchild" in paragraph one. Discussion around how delegates work. Each church received a letter and information is on the abcnebraska.com website. 2 delegates per 100 people plus a pastor. Susan Howell moved to accept minutes. Bob Fairchild seconded. Motion carried.

Finance: Bob Fairchild presented the basic outline of the budget. The actual budgets ideally would be at about 58% expenses and income. Expenses are tracking as normal. Income is lower than expected because camping attendance was lower than expected. Additionally, the investment income is lower due to a low market value. Investments are improving with a rallying market.

Greg Mamula shared specific line-item expenses. Line 7135 Web/internet is higher than budget because the Region and Camp moved to a cloud-based server instead of a wired server. This was a \$2,500 investment. \$500 a month to maintain. Energy costs on 7245 are high because of all the uses of the building. However, the Region is charging rent to users that balances the added energy costs.

Greg Mamula shared about how mission giving operates and is distributed across ABC USA and the region. Reports were provided showing that ABC NE has given \$155,000 to United Mission through July of 2023. A spreadsheet was provided that showed which churches in Nebraska support United Mission and which do not.

Motion to accept financial reports by Brad Pope. Seconded by Jane Gangwish. Motion carried.

Moses Merrill Camp and Conference Center: Bev Pacas gave a summary report of summer camping activity. Five first time commitments to Christ were made. Overall census was down, but the Holy Spirit was moving with those who attended. The staff observed how much pain

students live with daily. The joy and respite of camp provides a place of healing and Christ mending of hearts.

MMCCC will make adjustments to the 2024 camping season. They will move all ABC NE youth camps to June. The Music and Drama Camp will no longer be offered because of lack of attendance. Camp is grateful for the long history of MAD camp, but it is time to try new models. Camp will recruit other churches and groups to book the camp in July and August. This will allow us to market beyond ABC NE congregations and use our great conferencing skills to host other Christian groups.

18 students received scholarships this summer.

The pool will require 2 new pumps. Possibly need an engineer because they will need to be stronger than current pumps. Pool will need painted.

Zipline will be inspected and new gear purchased this fall.

Nitrate levels remain high at 11.7. We are awaiting the well engineer to design and implement a plan. He has until April 2024 to get a blue print to the state of Nebraska for approval.

8 cabin remodels are complete. Two cabins remain. Camp will put fewer campers in each cabin to reduce the risk and stress for staff.

The Weaver Hall project will begin. The project will remodel the kitchen and dining area. Bathrooms will be added. Contractors have been contacted for quotes. Health inspectors have given suggestions on how to make it better. Bev is requesting that every Leadership Team member make visits to local churches to promote this upcoming capital campaign. We are going to raise all the resources for this project before beginning any construction process. We are seeking to avoid taking out a loan or going into debt. Jane Gangwish recommended utilizing professional video and advertising material. Susan Howell recommended Calvin Wright from FBC Lincoln a professional videographer. He might be able to help or know someone who can.

The fall conferencing season is near. Every weekend for camp is fully booked each weekend until November. Jane Gangwish asked how does camp determine the rate for conferencing. Bev explained it was a combination of food, lodging, building use, and activities. Conferencing is charged by the person rather than by the building/activity. We do need to do some research and cost analysis to ensure that we are charging enough.

President Craig Erickson shared the importance of balancing business with ministry models. The camp and the region must be honest about business expenses if they hope to offer the ministry they are designed and called to do.

ABMen of Nebraska Brad Pope reported that three scholarships have been provided for seminary student. ABMen did a survey of Calendar House to determine repairs needed. Determined needs include new windows, siding, and other repairs. The ABMen have raised and donated over \$125,000 in equipment and support for MMCCC in the past decade. The ABMen have sold their disaster relief trailers. Instead they are shifting toward having a reserve of fiscal resources to support disaster relief ministries already in place.

ABWomen Susan Howell reported that the ABWomen had their spring conference. Much of the discussion had to do with ABWomen national organizations attempt to alter the existing by-laws. Those changes were voted down. The national organization is listening better to local ABW groups because the upcoming trainings and webinars are more inline with the requests from local ABW groups needs. Susan shared the difficulty in making changes and improvements to ABW because important information collection opportunities like exit surveys from the spring conference and surveys sent via email and traditional mail directly to churches are going largely ignored. The fall retreat will be organized by FBC Beatrice. Theme of “Putting the Pieces Together”. The Spring conference will be held at Camp Comica near Cozad and organized by FBC North Platte. Susan has a goal of visiting as many churches as possible. ABW continues to research the Weichalman fund to use it well.

Department of Professional Ministries Greg Mamula reported that there are two new members to the Department of Professional Ministries. Scott Jones will serve as the new chairperson. Pastor Taylor Shippy of Gibbon Baptist Church will enter the ordination process soon.

ABCUSA Representative Orin Clinger reported about his engagement with the 2023 Biennial Mission Summit in Puerto Rico. Women in pastoral ministry were celebrated and encouraged. Rev. Joy Martinez Marshall was a keynote speaker and did a great job. Rev. Nikita McCallister was voted in as next president of ABC USA general board. The search process for the next General Secretary of ABCUSA continues to move forward. The CVENT technology used at Mission Summit worked well for registration, information, and recorded content.

Office of General Secretary staff member Soози Ford is working with Region Search processes. OGS staff member Robin Stoops is in contact with other regions to focus on United Mission.

United Mission and all other ABC USA mission groups are receiving less funding now than in years past. 12 of 33 Regions are in compliance with ABC USA request for auditing. ABC USA is working on improving the auditing process between Regions and national organizations across ABCUSA. Greg Mamula explained how the triple internal auditing process keeps regions, ABCUSA, and local churches honest and transparent in the receiving and distribution of mission donations.

Introduction to NetSuite platform. This is an online platform for tracking and monitoring financial giving to missions, church records, and other ABC data. It is slowly being adapted to meet the needs of ABCUSA.

Orin is glad to know that many people across ABCUSA have some sort of connection Nebraska.

--Break 11:20am—Region Building tour provided

--Resume at 11:31am—Board members introduced themselves to one another and welcomed new members.

Interim Associate Executive Minister Report Joy Martinez Marshall shared how the Colossians 3 Communities are designed to help pastors engage in spiritual disciplines and facilitate relationships. These groups will continue to meet later in the year. She has helped with the technology development with the website, social media content, tithely payment links. Joy is partnering with Pastor Taylor Shipley to plan the worship for the Fall Pastor Retreat. Joy will serve on the general board of ABCUSA beginning 2024.

President Craig Erickson shared his gratitude on behalf the board for Joy serving as the interim Associate Exec during this season of transition.

Craig introduced the updated website. The website was viewable on flat screen tv and introduced to the board. Specifically the Region Convention page was highlighted and walked through including the payment method of tithely. Greg reminded everyone of the many resources available to churches through the website, including access to RightNow media for each congregation.

Transitional Executive Minister Greg Mamula shared that he attended the National Leadership Council, the gathering of all Executive Ministers and national partners leadership in Green Lake, WI in May 8-12, 2023. The work together was to examine the good and bad of ABC past, present, and future. Lots of good conversations had and commitments were made to work together. This outline was so helpful, Greg suggested it be an outline for the overnight November Leadership Team Meeting at Moses Merrill Camp and Conference Center. President Craig Erickson agreed this would be fine.

Greg is a board member of the American Baptist Homes of the Midwest, a network of care facilities. The facilities range in purpose from independent living, to assisted living, to nursing home care. He is very impressed with the work of this board and the amount of effort, energy, and care they place on the residents of these facilities. They do a good job of supporting staff and the infrastructure of the facilities.

Greg served as the camp pastor for Family Camp at MMCCC. It was a fun experience. The Sunset Hills worship team did a great job leading worship at the event. Traci Gilmer shared how much fun she had at family camp with her adopted grandchildren.

Greg has been preaching in western Nebraska for most of the summer visiting Chadron, Scottsbluff, North Platte, Oxford, Arthur and Fairbury.

The search process is being updated. Jill Blaylock and FBC Norfolk helped pioneer the updated process. The update creates a new church profile document and website for churches that helps us promote them better on the region website and on various digital platforms. It also gives more information to potential candidates as they consider applying to positions. It is working well and has been applied to the FBC Fairbury search process.

Update on FBC Blair. The region is helping them work through a new search process and navigate the parting of their former pastor. This is a church that has not been very connected to the region the past decade but in a moment of crises they reconnected. This is how Churches Helping Churches functions.

The Region Convention will be held October 6-7, 2023 at Sunset Hills Baptist Church. All promotional material, website, letters etc are in full circulation. A social media campaign that will feature a daily post has been established. Lunch catering options were proposed from Hyvee, Rusty Taco, BBQ, and Jimmy Johns. The board discussed the options and chose to go with a box lunch combos from Jimmy Johns.

The Hornberger Volunteer of the Year Award needs a nomination. The board nominated Steve Bottum for volunteer of the year because of his work at camp, habitat for humanity, and his local church.

Update on the OPPD rewiring the neighborhood in December.

Kairos University is an ATS approved seminary that has an online platform we can partner. The goal will be to create a series of certificate programs. Greg hopes to create four to six certificate options including interim pastor, pastor, Christian education, church treasurer, pulpit supply, deacons etc. The cost is \$25 a month per student. The carpenter funds can cover this cost for students. The board agreed to begin making this a formal partnership and work towards creating these certificate programs.

Greg will take personal time off September 8-15, 2023.

All board members eligible for second terms agreed to serve their second terms. Carlos Angulo from Verdad y Vida was nominated to serve to replace a board member rotating off. The new slate of officers will be presented at the Region Convention for vote.

The Kareen Karen Baptist Church requested to become a member of ABC NE. Bob Fairchild moved to accept. Brad Pope seconded. The board voted unanimously to accept them in fellowship and membership.

The Nebraska law on non-profit meetings allows for meetings to be official and binding if boards use technology such as zoom as long as the gathered quorum can hear the meeting. No change to the ABC NE constitution or by laws are necessary to make this accommodation.

A quote from Younes Hospitality in Kearney, NE was received. The La Quinta will hold 50 rooms for \$124.95 per night, for October 4-5, 2024 for the Region Convention being held at Gibbon Baptist Church. The board agreed to make this reservation.

Region Staff departed the meeting at 12:30pm

Executive Minister Search Team Chairman Rick Wheatly updated the Leadership Team on the process.

The meeting ended at 12:45pm.

Submitted by Greg Mamula, Transitional Executive Minister