

**American Baptist Churches of Nebraska  
Nebraska Region Annual Meeting  
Saturday, January 7, 2023  
ZOOM Meeting**

Meeting called to order at 10:04 by Greg Mamula

**Attendees:** Greg Mamula, Bev Pacas, Lorlea Mees, Craig Erickson, Brad Pope, Orin Clinger, Jane Gangwish, Clint Walker Taylor Shippy, Joy Martinez Marshall, Becky Clinger, Rick Wheatley, Linda Wheatley, Steve Wisthoff, Bob Fairchild, Traci Gilmer, Steve Wisthoff, Clarence Reiss, Dale Pracht, Susan Howell, LaVonna Cline, Traci Gilmer, Aaron Sprock, Zausam Lahtaw, Karen, Joy Martinez Marshall, Caleb Lind, Cindy Combs, Brian Jenkins, Nolan Hayes, Patrick Jill Blaylock, Patrick Fleeman, Bob Howell, Tammy Freitag, Sandra Goodwater

**Welcome:** Lavonna Cline opened the meeting with a greeting and turned the opening of the meeting devotional and prayer to Steve Wisthoff.

**Review of Minutes:** Bob Fairchild made the motion to accept the minutes as corrected. Craig Erickson seconded and motion passed.

**Election of 2023 Leadership Team:** Greg Mamula presented the slate of nominated officers via screenshare. The slate of officers was seconded by Rick Wheatley. Slate of officers elected by

**Finance:** Bob Fairchild reviewed the 2022 financial report. The region ended the year with a \$5500.00 surplus at the end of the year. The camp budget ended the year with a \$20,000 net deficit, attributed to reduced revenue. The region budget for 2023 has been reduced by approximately \$4000.00 and expecting a positive balance at the end of the year. Camp budget has been created with reduced revenue and has reduced expenses, and will conduct a special appeal, and is expected to break even at end of year.

Craig Erickson opened the floor to any questions. Susan Howell questioned the line item 4600-Laten fund. Greg Mamula explained the Laten Gift and how it is being split into the budget for the region and for camp.

**Moses Merrill Camp and Conference Center:**

Bev Pacas expressed her appreciation for all the groups that support the camp. Bev invited each person attending the meeting to come out and spend a day when summer camp is in session.

2022 Summer camper season had 250 campers, largest increase was in family camp with 45 campers. Moses Merrill had 9 paid summer staff, with volunteer camp pastors and volunteer cabin leaders.

Keira Carlson, member of Benson Baptist Church— program coordinator – part time position, will be at camp full time in summer – outside of that time she will be assisting with summer camp, youth retreats and LIT.

Registrations are open now for 2023 summer camp, kickoff is next week. Churches will receive promotional information for 20-23 summer camp.

Bev attended the Christian camp and conference association conference in the fall and has been inspired for the upcoming summer season.

LIT is in its 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> year and is a way we develop potential summer staff, scheduled for Feb 11 & 12, open to H.S. freshman and older, opportunity to develop leadership skills that will carry on in churches and community.

Bev challenged attendees to look “outside the box” for summer campers. There may not be youth in our church but there may be children in your neighborhood or grandchildren that would enjoy and benefit from camp.

The Nebraska 2023 youth retreat is scheduled for March 10-12.

Facilities: Building Bridges to Next Generation- Renovation of Cabins for the Next Generation. Cabin 7 is nearing completion, cabin two is in demo stage and both will be done by summer camp 2023. We have 7 of ten cabins complete and we are funded at 80% for the last three cabins. Fundraising will be necessary to complete the last three cabins and camp will need to raise approximately \$30,000 to finish the last three cabins.

We are in the early stages of doing a Weaver Hall remodel. Building has not been updated since its creation in 1976 and we are getting bids for plumbing electrical and construction at this time. Will be hiring out for this project due to requirements of city codes. Weaver Hall has been impacted by sewer issues and the clay tiles that are deteriorating at camp and that will be added into the cost.

The well has high nitrate levels with the most recent reading at 11 and have had 3 high test in previous three quarters and are under admin order to resolve the issue. Working with a company out of Falls City to resolve issues most likely will need to drill new well

ABMEN have installed new garage doors and have stained the shop as well as raised funds for a replacement of the Gator.

#### **ABMEN:**

Brad Pope has been providing support for camp via the garage doors and funds for pool skimmer. air compressor and air stapler. Recently launched a fund raiser to replace the Gator that has been successful.

ABMEN has also provided camp scholarships for the youth attending camp.

Awarded the pastor of the year award to Joy Martinez Marshall.

**ABWM:**

Susan Howell reported that there was a disconnect between the election in May in ABWM a Fall retreat was successful with a few more people

2023 Summer conference is June 2-4 and planning is in process at this time.

Theme is Domestic violence and how to recognize and address in your community.

Susan Howell will be sending out a survey/questionnaire to see what women in the churches desire for ABWM.

In 2022 ABWM offered 10 - \$50 scholarships to camp and had three people take advantage of the scholarship.

Susan is working on creating a video for the churches that are on the western side of the state. Contributions are used to support the two women's retreats held each year but many women who live on the western side of the state do not attend. Susan is looking at different ideas to encourage more women to participate. Susan advised she was open to any new ideas that attendees would be willing to share.

**Board of General Ministries:**

Orin Clinger reported that he had two in person meetings for the board in 2022. Dr. Jeff Woods who is the current interim general secretary for the denomination and a search is in place for the next secretary.

Orin attended the conference to honor the Latens at Fremont FBC on October 9, 2022 and mentioned that the IM, ABHMS, and Rainbow Acres were represented at the conference.

Orin mentioned that he serves on the financial committee for ABC USA and that as a denomination, we have had more than a 5% decrease in giving to United Missions each year over the past five years.

Biennial Mission Summit for 2023 is June 23-25 in Puerto Rico.

Delegate process for Biennial is being updated and Greg Mamula displayed the current web page for the mission summit. Registration is not currently available but should go live in the

next 10-14 days. If you are a delegate for your local church the registrant will need the PIN number specific to their church. There are also 4-6 delegates who are region specific.

### **Executive Minister Search Team Report:**

Rick Wheatley reported the committee had their first meeting in early December with another scheduled next week. All meetings have been on Zoom at this time but the intention is to meet in person in the next few months. Rick Wheatley reviewed the names of the members of the search committee. Susi has been assisting with the search committee formation and work of the committee. Surveys will be sent to the local churches in the near future to assess what the perceived needs are for the next executive minister.

### **Transitional Executive Minister's report:**

Greg Mamula reported that the region office has been attempting to provide a multitude of resources and workshops for the local churches over the past year. He reviewed the mission statement for the region and how they calibrate an event to decide if it is valuable to the region.

Spring training event was held with Todd Bollsinger with the cooperation of other local regions.

Spring Prairie Pastors conference was held with multiple speakers and held in conjunction with the adjoining regions. The next one will be held in March of 2023 with three IM global servants.

Received a grant for training pastors and giving them relief after the COVID experience. One retreat was held in Ogallala for the western pastors and another will be held in January for the Eastern pastors at Moses Merrill with Jason Workman as leader.

Greg mentioned the work that Robin Stoops had done with the Burmese churches that are part of our region and for the people of Burma. This culminated in recent legislation that was passed for the rights of the Burmese people.

Greg Mamula and Robin Stoops attended an NT Wright conference in Waco, Texas that was hosted by Truett Seminary. Truett Seminary is the alma mater of Greg Mamula.

Greg Mamula attended the Radical, Redeemed and Restored retreat held in Green Lake Wisconsin for the work of women pastors was held in June in Green Lake, Wisconsin.

Table Life retreats have been held over the course of the year. Greg Mamula has traveled to Idaho/Western Washington, FBC Norfolk, FBC Lincoln, and ABC Indianapolis/ABC Indiana/Kentucky to provide workshops for Table Life.

Greg Mamula and Taylor Shippy preached at Senior High Camp during the summer of 2022.

Mission in Five podcast completed nine episodes produced by Greg Mamula.

The region completed grant work that allowed a group of pastors with Greg Mamula, to travel to Chicago for a retreat with a Ruth Haley Barton. She is a scholar in spiritual formation who has written several books. This resulted in the writing of the Advent devotions in December of 2022 with devotions from across the region. The intention is that the region will complete another devotional book during Lent in 2023.

Pastor's conference at Moses Merrill in the Fall, the speaker was J. R. Briggs from Philadelphia. He shared the idea of being a wounded healer with the pastors.

The Region Expo was held in October at Moses Merrill. It was the opportunity to say good bye to Robin Stoops. Greg felt it was well done and appreciated the sharing of everyone in the region.

Leadership team meetings held in November at camp and dates were set for 2023. Meeting dates for 2023 are January 7, April 22, August 26 and November 10-11, 2023

The region office is completing spring cleaning around the office and in a month or two it may look different. Using art we are going to present who we are as a region in the office. We are also trying to clean up the website and create some better resources on the website.

The region signed up to participate in "Tithe.ly" It is an online giving platform as opposed to using paypal. The region will create a button on the website for churches and individuals to give directly to the region.

Greg Mamula has been asked to be part of AB Homes of the Midwest board. AB Homes of the Midwest are a collection of care centers that are ABC in the Midwest.

The region continues to work with partner churches to assist in finding new pastors for churches. Scottsbluff, Fairbury, Benson, Norfolk and Sunset Hills churches are in search of pastors. Valley has identified and called a new pastor, Scott Jones, formerly of Benson Baptist Church.

The region has received a grant, in conjunction with Rocky Mountain region, Central Region, and Mid-American Churches to create and host a youth event in 2024.

Greg Mamula has visited churches around the region and continues to visit churches in the state.

Greg Mamula will be attending mission summit as presenter and to represent our region.

Greg Mamula looks forward to strengthening relationships with ABC. Will be traveling to Philadelphia in April to meet with partners in ABHMS, IM, and ABC USA.

Rick Wheatley offered his thanks to Greg Mamula as filing in as transitional exec minister

Closing business:

Craig Erickson advised that he can be reached by his email

Steve Wisthoff closed the meeting in prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Nola Crooks  
ABCNE Secretary

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Nola Crooks  
ABC Nebraska Secretary**



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 7<sup>th</sup> 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 150<sup>th</sup> 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



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 Shippy 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



**American Baptist Churches of Nebraska  
Fall Leadership Meeting  
Nebraska American Baptist Churches  
Friday, November 10, 2023  
Moses Merrill Camp and Conference Center**

**Members attending: Ngun Bawl, Jill Blaylock, Orin Clinger, Craig Erickson, Bob Fairchild, Patrick Fleeman, Jane Gangwish, Traci Gilmer, Nolan Hayes, Susan Howell, Scott Jones, Greg Mamula, Joy Martinez-Marshall, Lorlea Mees, Bev Pacas, Brad Pope, Steve Wisthoff (non-voting), Jamie Yendra**

Craig Erickson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Craig Erickson requested that all members of the board go around and introduce themselves.

Steve Wisthoff opened the meeting with prayer.

Craig Erickson adjourned the regular session and opened the executive session at 7:04.  
Craig Erickson adjourned the executive session at 7:22

**American Baptist Churches of Nebraska  
Fall Leadership Meeting  
Nebraska American Baptist Churches  
Saturday November 11, 2023  
Moses Merrill Camp and Conference Center**

**Members attending: Jill Blaylock, Orin Clinger, Craig Erickson, Bob Fairchild, Patrick Fleeman, Traci Gilmer, Nolan Hayes, Susan Howell, Scott Jones, Greg Mamula, Joy Martinez-Marshall, Lorlea Mees, Bev Pacas, Brad Pope, Steve Wisthoff (non-voting) Jamie Yendra**

**Via zoom: Nola Crooks, Doug Larsen, Aaron Sprock, Carlos Rene Angulo**

Craig Erickson called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

Stephen Wisthoff opened the meeting with a devotional and prayer.

Craig Erickson requested any additions or corrections to the minutes. Alvin Rife is misspelled, on page 2. Bob Fairchild moved to accept the minutes as corrected. Seconded by Brad Pope. Motion Passed. Meeting minutes Bob Fairchild moved to accept the minutes as corrected and seconded by Brad Pope. Motion passed.

**ABCUSA:** Orin Clinger reported that he attended the last meeting of the ABCUSA in Philadelphia last week, there was an appreciation dinner for Jeff Woods. Board received a report from the search committee on Saturday and the board voted to elect Dr. Gina Jacobs Strain as the next general secretary of ABCUSA. She will begin in the position on February 1, 2024. Orin reported that three new members were elected to the board and noted that this a large change this year with a new general secretary and president. A presentation on the budget was given the week before the meeting via zoom from the finance committee. In the previous year there was a budget deficit of approximately \$500,000.00 and this year there is an expected budget deficit of approximately \$318,000.00. This figure is about 10% of the reserves that of the ABCUSA organization. There was some good news from Brotherhood Insurance have once again provided funding as a rebate and they are proposing to provide additional funding in 2024. On Sunday morning the board participated in a workshop on racism and building bridges with Kathryn Choy-Wong.

There was a proposal to the Board of General Ministries that American Baptist Women's Ministries (ABWM) and Ministries and Missionaries Benefit Board (MMBB) become program boards alongside the two current program boards. There will be more discussion on this topic in the future.

**Professional Ministry Board** – Scott Jones reported that the group met informally at the fall pastor's retreat to discuss the process of ordination. Currently working with Charlie Bagley at Scottsbluff FBC for ordination and with a candidate at Beatrice, also for ordination. aid they met informally at the fall pastor's retreat Charlie Bagley @ Scottsbluff for ordination, candidate from Beatrice to see

**ABMEN** – Brad Pope – AB Men have not had a meeting since the last time the ABC Nebraska board met. ABMen awarded the lawman of the year to Keith Baker and the pastor of the year to Pastor Sam Zau at the region conference in October. .

**ABWM:** BWM: Susan Howell reported that 27 women attended the Fall retreat at Moses Merrill, which was planned by the women of FBC Beatrice. Susan has been visiting churches and has presented to North Platte, Blair, Chapman, FBC Omaha and will visit Sunset Hill Baptist Church on November 12, 2023. Researching on creating a scholarship for young women to attend any college or trade school they desired to attend, the Weichelman Fund, which was the previous scholarship fund only allowed for scholarships to women attending an ABC college or university. There is now a monthly newsletter edited by Susan Schwartz at FBC Beatrice. The spring conference is at Camp Comeca in western Nebraska and North Platte will be planning the conference.

**Moses Merrill Camp & Conference:** Bev Pacas reported that all of the 2024 summer camps have been scheduled for June of 2024. Postcards about camp have already gone out to last



year's campers and Bev has been attending different events to publicize the camping season. All of the camp pastors that served last year have been invited back and most have responded. Kira Carlson will return as the program director and the camp will be hiring a health aid, summer counselors and a floating person. Recruiting for next summer has already begun. There is one more event at camp for the year and we are done with the fall season. We have an increase in the diversity and number of people attending the events. Completing a cost analysis in the off season for the camp. With the increased costs of operation there is an expectation that summer camp rates will increase. The rates will be comparable with camps in our areas.

There will be an change in the software program the church uses over the winter, with a new program allowing for digital health records for the campers. Registrations will go live on Jan. 1, 2024.

Cabin Countdown – Cabin 8 has everything done but the bathroom and cabin 9 is in the early stages of demo which only leaves us with cabin 1 to complete. The goal is to complete them all by summer, which is ambitious but Bev is confident it can be done by summer.

We have five men that come out on every Thursday and do whatever needs to get done. It has been beneficial to have additional eyes on camp and we would not be able to function without our volunteers.

Water/Well: The camp is still in waiting mode with the engineer. The last contact was in September and the next step is to do a test drill. The last test of our water had a nitrate level of 11.7 and the legal limit is 10.

Weaver Hall: The fundraising to remodel and upgrade Weaver Hall is beginning. Bev Pacas appealed to the members of the board to make presentations to churches in the region. Donations for the project are currently at \$50,000.00.

**Region Staff:** Joy Martinez-Marshall preached at Oxford at the end of September for Pastor Bryan and at the beginning of October attended the Palmer Grant Conference. At the pastor's fall retreat she and Taylor Shippy participated in leading worship and the message. In December representing the region at the Kachin Baptist Church USA Youth Conference in Texas. Continuing with the Colossians groups and doing a sermon series for Lent for churches.

Planning a clergy luncheon in December in Grand Island to connect with the western portion of the state.

Greg Mamula - Presented that the agenda and meeting plan had been purposely oriented to focus on the mission and work of the region at the beginning of the meeting. The purpose of this is to have an agenda that is focused on Mission as a region.

**State Convention Recap:** There was a substantial presence of diverse individuals at our conference. The cost for each person; \$25.00 was not enough to cover the expenses of the event and there will be a cost increase for the event in 2024.

Orin Clinger suggested that we put our region motto on each name tag at the region statement.

Susan Howell expressed frustration that many of the workshops overlapped and it was difficult to attend many of them and that the area with the booths were hidden and people did not have easy access to them.

The fall pastors retreat went well, but the scheduling, one and a half weeks after the fall convention affected attendance and there was a low turnout. The speaker spoke on the local church ministry and to slow down and experience the community.

Currently FBC Fairbury and Norfolk FBC have not had good matches with their pastor search and are currently reevaluating.

Bill Prather resigned from FBC Omaha and November 12, 2023 is his last weekend and they will begin the process of searching for a new pastor.

North Platte FBC called their new pastor, Kem Reeder and he will join the church sometime in late December or beginning of January.

Greg Mamula attended the ABCUSA meeting in Philadelphia and attended an ABHMS training on intercultural ministries on Sunday. .

Will be joining Blair FBC on November 12, 2023 to preach and at Sunset Hills on November 19, 2023 to install their new pastor Steve Wamberg. Traveling to Houston to preach at one of our ABC Congregation Kachin Baptist churches. In December he will be traveling to Scottsbluff to assist in the installation of their new pastor, attending the OmahaLand Bowling party and an open house at the region office, in the afternoon, December 20, 2023.

In January will be at different Kachin ,Chin, and Karen churches on the four Sundays in January.

3 things – going to be different, empower, tools they need, make the ask – ask people for money, time and talent, energies to this work, hope towards resurrection and doing what God wants to do through us.

We are encouraging our churches to be different and to navigate the shifting mission landscape. Our theme for our state for 2024, and for the 2024 state convention is “Revel and Reveal.”

Livingstone Baptist Church has submitted a request to join the region. Susan Howell moved that we accept Livingstone Baptist Church into our region and Traci Gilmer seconded. Motion passed.

A motion was made to approve the 2024 housing allowance, in the amount of \$32,000 for Greg Mamula. Bob Fairchild moved that we approve the housing allowance and Jamie Yendra seconded. Motion passed.

Craig Erickson encouraged the board to consider what plans we have for the future. How do we see staffing and region management in the future when staff changes and retirements happen? How are we developing new leaders? Craig encouraged that all of the board members begin thinking about this for future discussion.

**Budget:** Bob Fairchild presented the financial report for the region. While the region budget currently is running with a surplus the budget for Moses Merrill has a \$46,662.26 deficit. Moses Merrill has written a 2024 budget with a more realistic picture of camp revenue and expenses. Attendees were provided with a document showing the current status of the investment pool as of September 20, 2023. Compared to 2022 the investment pool has made gains despite the necessity of pulling funds for the region and camp.

Bob Fairchild presented the 2024 budget to the region board. The investments will be rebalanced in 2024. Brad Pope motioned that we accept the 2024 budget. Orin Clinger seconded the motion. Motion passed.

### **ABC Nebraska State Board**

#### **2024 Meeting Schedule**

February 10, 2024 @ Region Office

May 4, 2024 FBC of Gibbon, Gibbon, Nebraska

August 3, 2024 location to be determined

October 4-5, 2024 – State Convention

November 8, 2024 Moses Merrill Camp

Craig Erickson closed the meeting and adjourned to lunch.