

the ESSENGER

American Baptist Churches of Nebraska



FEBRUARY 2003

ABC/NE Date Data

ABC/NE Board
Feb. 22, 2003
Jr. High Xtreme Retreat
March 14-16, 2003
Sr. High Retreat
April 4-6, 2003
Western 5th & 6th Grade Event
April 12, 2003
ABC/NE Dept & Exec Comm.
May 17, 2003
ABW Ministries Conference
June 6-8, 2003
AB Men's Conference
August 15-16, 2003
Family Reunion
Sept. 26-28, 2003

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A Heart for Ministry in The Heartland

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Come to the **GROUND-BREAKING**
For the chapel at Camp Moses Merrill
March 1, 2003 (snow date March 8)
3:00 pm

Make plans now to bring folks from your church to the ground-breaking at Camp Moses Merrill on March 1 at 3pm. The gathering will begin with a brief service in Weaver Hall and then move to the building site for the actual ground-breaking. A light lunch will be served afterwards in Weaver Hall. It will be a day for prayers asking God to guide the construction and thanking God for the gifts that are making this project possible. It will also be a time of celebration.

The name of the chapel will be announced at the ground-breaking. This chapel will be the first chapel constructed at the Linwood location. When Camp Merrill was located in Fullerton, the Sharp Memorial Chapel was the center of camp life. This chapel will continue in the tradition established by the Sharp Chapel.

Every American Baptist in Nebraska and every friend of Camp Merrill is invited to participate in this very special event. **Special Invitation:** A special invitation is extended to those who had meaningful worship experiences in Sharp Chapel at Fullerton.

The actual chapel building is being funded by gifts from Mrs. Floretta Ward and Rev. Palmer Swenson of Sunset Hills Baptist Church in Omaha. Other donors have made gifts to fund site development and architect's fees.

REACHING AMERICA -- Creatively!

People in America need to know Jesus. And those who know him need to discover the joy of living like him. In February and March each year, American Baptists make a special effort to raise money and prayers for mission in America. This effort is called AMERICA FOR CHRIST. One of the special qualities of this effort is the creativity. Congregations find new and interesting ways to draw attention to the need, to respond to the need, and to raise dollars for AFC.

***** Special Opportunity for NEBRASKA ***** ABC Churches in Nebraska are invited to enter a contest to be the church with the most creative approach to raising AFC dollars. The contest will be judged by the Ministers of Mission Support from our neighboring ABC regions. The church should develop a creative way to raise the money and the method should be effective (raise \$). Churches can submit a one page description of the creative strategy. This will be combined with the report of this year's AFC receipts from the church compared to previous years. The judges will select the winner. **THE PRIZE:** The ABC/NE staff will travel to the winning church on an agreed upon date and prepare dinner for the church. [Dave Lundholm, Jason Workman and Al Wagstaff claim to be a good cooks, Steve Bils knows how to make pasta, Don Gaines recently learned how to mash potatoes, Dick Peterson and Paul Kondy are recognized tasters, and no one knows whether Susan Gillies can cook or not. Because the prize may be awarded during the summer, Trudy Reiss and Dave Janzen will, unfortunately, be unavailable. We may be able to draft Clarence.]

Each church should have received a packet of materials with ideas for AFC planning and promotion. Additional packets are available.

From the Executive Minister..... Susan Gillies

Why I Celebrate Black History Month

Whether you call it Black History Month or African American Heritage Month, I celebrate it. I also celebrate Washington's birthday, Lincoln's birthday, Presidents' Day and Valentine's Day. I like celebrating! And this is just February. At other times of the year I celebrate St. Patrick's Day even though I'm not Irish and May 5th even though I'm not Hispanic and May 17 even though I'm not Norwegian. It seems to me that as Americans we are able to claim the heritage of all the rich native and immigrant groups, including those who came against their will, that have helped to shape who we are as a country.

As American Baptists, we are blessed with more racial/ethnic diversity than any other Protestant denomination. This blessing carries with it a responsibility. If we can learn to live and work well together within the ABC, we can bear witness to this country that in Christ Jesus we are one. We can demonstrate healthy working, worshipping relationships. We can learn and grow and seek to be faithful, together. And we can find deep and abiding joy in this God-given challenge.

During my February celebrations, I will give thanks for **Lulu Fleming**, an American Baptist, African-American



woman who became in 1887 a missionary teacher and, later, a missionary doctor to Africa. I will give thanks for **William Simmons**, an American Baptist, African-American who became a home missionary, also in 1887. I will give thanks for **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**, an American Baptist, African-American who called us as a country to live in a more Christ-like way. In addition to these giants of the past, I will also give thanks for my many, many African-American colleagues in ministry who give leadership in the ABC today, including **Dr. Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins, III**, Executive Director of National Ministries; **Dr. Bernadette Glover-Williams**, chaplain to the ABC General Board; **Dr. Al Brinson**, Assoc. Gen. Sec. for

World Mission Support and Regional Executive Ministers **James Stallings** in Metro New York and **Dennis Norris** in Cleveland, and **Walter Parrish, II**, in the South and **Len Thompson** in Metro Chicago, and **Jeffrey Haggray** in Wash. D.C. and **James McJunkin** in Philadelphia.

I invite you to celebrate, too!

ABC/NE Trivia

1. What ABC annual offering has often featured walkathons?
 - a. America for Christ
 - b. One Great Hour of Sharing
 - c. World Mission Offering
 - d. Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering
2. What ABC annual offering supports Neighborhood Action Programs (Christian Centers)?

Same answer choices as # 1
3. What ABC annual offering supports disaster relief?

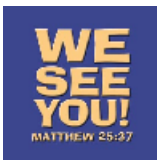
Same answer choices as # 1
4. What ABC annual offering supports ABC/NE?

Same answer choices as # 1
5. What ABC annual offering supports the New Life Center in Thailand?

Same answer choices as # 1

(answers on page 8)

AMERICA FOR CHRIST OFFERING



It has happened every year since 1951. American Baptists have been asked to give to the *America for Christ Offering*. In giving we have played a powerful role in bringing Christ to America by providing funds for Christian education, home mission projects, regional ministries, and community projects. The list of ministries supported by AFC is much too long to be included in this article. You can find these listed on the back of the prayer calendar or on the multimedia CD-Rom that were included in the packet of materials your church received. The PowerPoint presentation on the CD is also a source of valuable information if your church has the equipment for showing it.

We who are on Region staff live daily with the realization that our ministry is made possible in large part through your giving to the America for Christ Offering. This made it possible for us to gather at Camp Merrill January 2-4 to pray for your pastor and your church. Some would consider this poor use of time, but we who believe that God's blessing is essential for the health and ministry of a church and that God answers prayer believe this to be an important part of our ministry. AFC helps support staff assisting churches in their search for a pastor, counseling pastors who find themselves in difficult situations, and maintaining a vital ministry at Camp Merrill, to name just a few of our ministries.

In October eleven of us did a mission tour in Arizona. In the Valley Christian Center we saw AFC at work in the lives of 65 children who come daily from the inner

city of Phoenix, in the Hopi mission churches where dedicated pastors and committed laypersons address the spiritual and social needs of Native Americans on the reservation, and in the Hopi Mission School where children from non-Christian homes come and hear the story of Jesus in a challenging academic environment. At Middle Verde Rock Church we saw an infant dedicated with five generations of a Native American family present.

Your AFC gift will help persons hear the story and experience the love of Christ. Please give generously when the opportunity arises in your church.

Don Gaines

KEEPING PASTORAL MINISTRY VITAL

Why does it matter if your pastor has strong peer relationships? Current research reveals that clergy friendships are key to the excellence of ministerial leadership. The "Lone Ranger" style of ministry leads to isolation, burnout, and sometimes lack of accountability in the conduct of ministry. Ministerial leaders who commit to intentional colleague support groups benefit from what one called "holy encouragement and prophetic correction" as they engage in and reflect on their work.

The Lilly Foundation has granted to the Ministers Council of ABCUSA \$1,959,600 to develop a network of

collegial covenant groups during the next few years. Through the ABC/NE Ministers Council, your pastor will be offered the opportunity to participate monthly in a peer group for the purpose of strengthening ministry. Groups of six to eight persons will form, determine a topic to be explored, seek an equipped group facilitator, and make application to the Ministers Council for funds to compensate their facilitators and pay additional meeting expenses. From 2004-2007 funding will support these collegial covenant groups as they join in Bible study, develop particular skills, examine current trends in churches, focus on case studies

in ministry, do group spiritual direction, or pursue another avenue of their choice.

Lay leaders of a church may assist their pastor and other ministerial leaders in the strengthening of their ministry by encouraging participation in monthly meetings of a covenant group. Such groups are not an add-on to the work of the ministry but are an integral asset to excellence in fulfilling the call of God. God has blessed us all with abundance to resource our leaders for the work to which they have been called. It is in the interest of your church that when the suggestion is raised you agree, or even right now bring up the subject with your pastor.

Two Opportunities for Conflict Management Training

When people work together there will be conflict from time to time. How that conflict is managed makes a dramatic difference in the effectiveness of the group, and in the satisfaction the people find in being part of the group. Church conflict is especially troublesome. New members often expect churches to be heaven-like and are disillusioned when conflict erupts. Conflict is not something to be afraid of. It's part of life. How it is handled is the important thing.

Within the next few months, there are two opportunities for lay and clergy training in conflict management.

1. Central Seminary will hold a course on Fridays and Saturdays Feb. 28-March 1 and March 14-15. The course will be taught by author, pastor

and professor Dr. Mike McKinney. This course will acquaint participants with the nature of conflict and will guide them toward helpful resources from the Christian faith to address conflict in constructive, helpful ways. It will be especially helpful for church leaders. . . "

2. There will be a "Healthy Congregations" training event in Omaha May 9-10, sponsored by the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center. This workshop is designed to equip leaders to respond to the presence or potential threat of anxiety in a congregational system in ways that prevent destructive conflict and help the church stay focused on its unique mission and purpose. Call the ABC/NE office for a copy of the brochure.

Spring Lecture on Dead Sea Scrolls at Central Seminary

Dr. James Charlesworth of Princeton Seminary will present the spring lectureship at Central Seminary on Feb. 19. Dr. Charlesworth is chair of the Dead Sea Scrolls Project at Princeton and has been involved in the computer enhanced photographing and translating of the Qumran Scrolls.

The three lectures to be presented include, "The Revolutionary Nature of the Dead Sea Scrolls," "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Creativity of Early Jewish Theology," and "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Historical Jesus."

Following the lectures, Dr. Fred Young will host an open house in the Kansas Qumran Bibliographic Project Room of the Library. Now numbering over 30,000 items, this project is one of the largest collections of its kind in the world.

Pondering the Prayer Vigil

by Dave Lundholm

The Region Staff gathered on the 2nd through 4th of January at Camp Moses Merrill to pray for the 61 churches affiliated with the American Baptist Churches of Nebraska. We gathered in early afternoon on Thursday and arranged the space (Palmyra building) to make it more conducive for prayer. A large rug softened the space and candles, crosses and other items to focus our attention for prayer were distributed around the room. By evening we were ready to begin.

I have to confess that I was somewhat fearful of the intensity of three days in prayer. For me prayer is a very focused

thing and I have trouble focusing for long uninterrupted chunks of time. I discovered to my relief that the format that structured our prayer helped a great deal. We would begin prayer for each church by reading through their prayer requests (if any) comment on our perception of the needs of the church and then enter into prayer. The time flowed quickly.

I was surprised by one thing. Very few churches sent in requests for specific prayer. I was told by one of our African-American pastors that the key to church success in that context is fourfold: a great worship service, a great Sunday

school, a great Bible study and a great prayer meeting. Churches that are doing these things are thriving. As I think of most of our Anglo congregations, the focus and emphasis is on worship, Sunday school and perhaps Bible study. Most of our churches no longer gather for prayer.

I believe that many of our churches need to recapture an emphasis on prayer. Perhaps our Region Staff prayer vigil was the beginning of a new interest in prayer. Does your church pray together?



Camp Moses Merrill News

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Summer Jobs Opportunities

Friday May 23 thru Friday August 8, 2003

Qualifications -- Camp Moses Merrill is looking for Christian individuals with a desire to serve the Lord in the Camping Ministry. A self-starter who can be organized and relate to one's peer group as well as be of good character, integrity, and adaptability are qualities which are strongly desired.

Lifeguard

Responsible for guarding at the pool during its use. Also will clean and maintain the pool area and bathhouse. Other responsibilities will be assigned when the pool is not in use.

Wrangler

Responsible for the horses and trail riding activities. Also will build and maintain fences as well as the tack and equipment used by this program. Other responsibilities will be assigned during non-riding times.

Dining Room Host/Hostess

Responsible for the Dining Room and its use by the campers. Will be a host/hostess to the various groups as well as oversee the end of the day duties in closing the kitchen and dining hall for the day. Dishwashing, cleaning, and other assigned tasks will also be included.

Kitchen Aid

Responsible for assisting the cooking staff in food preparation and service to the various campers and staff. Will also assist with the Snack Shack, cleaning, dishwashing, and other assigned tasks.

Office Assistant

Responsible for the photography and computer record keeping for the summer camping programs. Will operate the Snack Shack, stock the pop machines, and deliver the campers' mail. Dishwashing, cleaning, and other assigned tasks will also be included.

Building and Grounds Assistant

Responsible for the lawn mowing, trimming, and other grounds keeping duties. Also responsible for building maintenance and equipment maintenance. Will be responsible for the campfire areas and the RV bathhouse cleaning. Cleaning, dishwashing, and other assigned tasks will be included.

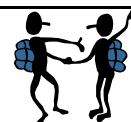
All positions include salary plus room and board for the time of employment. Contact the camp or visit the website for an application or more information.

Jr High Xtreme Retreat

March 14- 16

Cost \$65

This weekend will equip Jr. High students to grab what they need to be a better friend by knowing, praying for, encouraging and serving others in their youth group. Students will also learn what they need to help their friends begin a relationship with God. As students learn to share the gospel with their friends, they will be able to worship, pray, and share together to create friendships that will last forever.



Sr High Retreat

April 4- 6

Cost \$65

This weekend will grab the students' attention. The Sr Highers will be encouraged, challenged and stretched in building relationships with God and others. Students will also experience Camp Merrill's newest game: "GAGA!" Come with an open heart and mind and be ready to have fun.

LOCAL CHURCH NEWS

by Darlene Rimpley

March Deadlines

January 30, 2003 - Print Copy

February 7, 2003 - E-Mail

Home Town Editor

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E-Editor

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Subject: Messenger

FAIRHAVEN, BC: We had two deaths of our members Leona Reed July 14 and Blanche Woodward, the oldest member, Dec 1. Raquel Rae Cole and her parents were dedicated Dec 1.

ALBION, FBC: Accepting a challenge from Pastor Stahl to be a mission-minded church and surpass their World Mission goal of \$225 and perhaps even reach \$500, the church responded, and received \$854.19. Praise the Lord!

ALLIANCE, FBC: More than 90 from the First Baptist Church, Bridgeport, the First Baptist Church, Alliance, and the Baptist Church of Berea gathered in Alliance on Sunday, November 17 for a Thanksgiving Pot Luck Celebration. Following a great meal, a Thanksgiving worship and praise service was held with a hymn-sing, testimonies of thanksgiving, group prayer, and a message from Pastor Darin Stroh. The ABY planned a special Hanging of the Greens morning worship in December. On December 15, they delivered fruit baskets to two nursing homes and 10 homes of shut-ins as part of a caroling party. The church sponsored and delivered 13 Christmas food boxes to families in need December 21. A service of baby dedication for two families was held Sunday morning and a candle light service of Baptism was celebrated that evening. A Christmas Eve candle light service was well attended

FAIRBURY, FBC: A New Year's Eve party was held. Sponsors are being sought in order to continue the 40 radio broadcasts scheduled for 2003. FBC is now the official sister church of the "Church of Evangelical Christian Baptists" in Maloyaroslavets, Russia, which is made up of about 30 adults and 45 children. A visit to the church is being planned for this summer. Christmas events: The Children's program was presented on Dec. 22, followed by "The Pennies for Jesus" offering being received, which will go to a mission project; Christmas Eve service. One hundred fifty shoeboxes were filled for the Samaritan's Purse Christmas Ministry and \$300 was donated to the project.

BROKEN BOW, FBC: A soup supper was enjoyed on Jan. 30. The insulated shell over the education unit has been completed. The roof was severely damaged by a hailstorm, and the insurance settlement formed a big part of the building fund. (Does God send hailstorms?) Due to the water damage in the basement there will be much repair work. The Custer Assoc. of ABW met in Broken Bow on Jan. 31. Mae and Alasha Jennings of Arnold told of their mission trips and provided music. Christmas events: Hanging of the Greens on Dec. 1 with donations to the Food Pantry being given; a Christmas Tea, with the Pastor's wife, Beth Gregory, as hostess on Dec. 13; FBC uniting with other churches at the Christian Church for the Christmas Eve service.

ANSLEY, FBC: Regular SS, worship services, Bible study and prayer meetings were held. The ABW Ministries group also met regularly. In late October, the church held a special dedication service for the new stained glass windows that were given in memory of Roscoe Bristol and to honor Marguerite Bristol. The eleven windows each represent different scripture passages. Mary Ann Clinger (widow of Melvin Clinger) wants her ABC/NE friends to know they are welcome to come to worship anytime and enjoy the windows. The Christian Education Board hosted an all-church birthday party in November with a patriotic theme.

HOLDREGE, FBC: A prayer labyrinth was held on Jan. 5 and 12. Computer labs have "rebooted" and are being held for six weeks. Christmas events: Mary Jayne Circle had a luncheon on Dec. 5 and gave items for the Food Pantry; Jennie Adams Circle had a supper on Dec. 9 and gave Toys for Tots gifts; Cookie plates for shut-ins were prepared on Dec. 12; "The Gift of Christmas" was presented on Dec. 15 by the adult choir and the Sunday School children, followed by a soup and dessert luncheon; a Candlelight Communion Service on Dec. 24. The Jr. and Sr. High Youth held an "all-night bake sale" on Dec. 22.

COLUMBUS, FBC: Members delivered Meals on Wheels during the month of January. Christmas events: "Deck the Halls" was held in the morning and the ABW Ministries Christmas Dinner on Dec. 3. The Christmas program, "The Grumpy Shepherd," was held on Dec. 15. The Board of CE began a **ministry to Hispanic High School students** in November, with volunteer English teachers from CHS and church members to tutor and help the students with their homework. The ministry continued through December.

ARNOLD, FBC: A New Year's eve party, followed by a midnight breakfast was held. The public school teachers were guests of FBC at a "Back to School Breakfast" on January 6. Christmas events: The Hanging of the Greens followed a fellowship dinner on Dec. 1; the ladies salad luncheon was on Dec. 5; Heart to Heart, with the adult Sunday School classes joining together for a time of sharing following, and "Solving the Christmas Puzzle"; the children and teens' program on Dec. 15; caroling and a soup supper on Dec. 22; and Christmas Eve communion. Four portable hearing aides have been purchased for use in the church services.

ARTHUR, BC: The men of the church had a good crowd for a soup supper preceding the showing of the Billy Graham film, "The Climb." A new retaining wall and sidewalks were installed at the front entrance of the church with new handrails still to be installed with memorial money. The lower grades of the Sunday School entertained the community with a Christmas program at the church on Dec. 15.

BEATRICE, FBC: Christmas events: Caroling, followed by refreshments, was on Dec. 8; "Angels, Lambs, Ladybugs and Fireflies," the Children's Christmas program, was on Dec. 15. Church members rang bells for Salvation Army during the month of December. The church has an active "Pots and Pans Ministry" to help families get a fresh start with their kitchen needs.

CHADRON, FBC: A Unity Service was held at the United Methodist Church on Jan. 19, sponsored by the Ministerial Assoc., in which FBC participated. Christmas events: Children's Christmas program on Dec. 15, followed by fellowship and refreshments; Christmas Eve Service.

FREMONT, FBC: Christmas events: The movie, "The Star of Christmas," was shown on Dec. 1; Day Care Christmas program on Dec. 6; the Cantata, "Heaven and Earth Rejoice" was presented on Dec. 8; a Round the Table Carol Sing on Dec. 15; children's Christmas program on Dec. 22; and the Christmas Eve service. White Gift Sunday for the Salvation Army was Dec. 8. The Carillon Bell System has been updated and plays at noon, 3 pm and 6 pm. The Board of Christian Education is promoting "Read Inside While It's Cold Outside." All the children who checked out books in December were treated to hot chocolate and cookies in the library while their parents enjoyed the same in the parlor. A mission trip to Bacone College is being planned for June 2-6. A church sponsored lock-in for the youth was held at the YMCA on Jan. 17-18.

GIBBON BC: Christmas events: Decorating of the church on Dec. 1; ABW supper on Dec. 5, along with the making of goodie-plates for the shut-ins; a Christmas luncheon by Pastor John and Mary on Dec. 15; the Christmas cantata, "The Journey of Hope," on Dec. 22. Max and Beernidean Wildie celebrated their 60th anniversary on Nov. 28. The family of Opal Brannon gave, as a memorial, two desk chairs and a lamp for the sound booth.

GRAND ISLAND, FBC: A "Meal and Bible Study" will be held each Wednesday for the entire family. FBC members are joining with the Interfaith Community Choir to work on an Easter Cantata. Christmas events: The Hanging of the Greens was held on Nov. 30; Christine Quiring presented a Christmas program on Dec. 1; "Free Gift Wrapping" was held on Dec. 14; an ABW Christmas Tea on Dec. 14. "Check Out That Star," the children's program was held on the morning of Dec. 15, followed by Jesus' Birthday Party; Christmas Eve Service. As special Christmas offerings, various circles contributed canned goods to the Salvation Army Food Pantry, monetary gifts were sent to CHRC, Christmas Cheer, and the Salvation Army.

HASTINGS, FBC: We collected \$162 for the RMMO offering. The Sunday night prayer vigil was held for our church and the churches of NE. The Lydia Circle met for a Christmas luncheon at Mildred Taylor's. The ABWM had their annual Christmas Tea at the Church. We had a wonderful time with a family night with games, crafts, the Christmas Story read by Rob & Joyce Dinnell, and there was lots of food! The Juniata Church Choir with some of our members treated us to a Christmas Cantata, "Hallelujah To The King." We had a wonderful turnout for the Men's Prayer Breakfast on Dec. 21st. Many Poinsettias were purchased and placed in the Sanctuary in memory of loved ones. A candlelight service with communion was held on Christmas Eve with fellowship afterwards. The Crossroads Mission had their Christmas dinner in the FBC fellowship hall this year. There were around 80 served plus many volunteers.

JUNIATA COMMUNITY CHURCH: A good time was had at the New Year's Eve party. The funds were raised to begin the installation of an elevator at the church. A new furnace was installed. Christmas events: "Hallelujah to the Newborn King!" was the title of the Christmas cantata, with choir members from JCC and Hastings FBC combining and presenting the cantata in both churches on Dec. 15; the children's Christmas program on the evening of Dec. 15; cheer boxes were packed and delivered on Dec. 18, with a soup supper following; Christmas Eve in the Barn was actually held in a barn.

NORFOLK, FBC: Christmas events: The NHS choir presented a brief program of music on Dec. 8, and Pastor Frank and Meredith held an Open House that afternoon. The ABW prepared and delivered Christmas plates for shut-ins on Dec. 12; Holiday Baskets were distributed on Dec. 14; "The True Meaning of Christmas" was presented by all ages on Dec. 15; a Christmas Eve Candlelight service. Gifts to the AWANA program or to the Agape Pregnancy Care Center were received during the month. Freda Austin celebrated her 90th birthday on Dec. 8.

MCCOOK, FBC: A new Singles Group has been formed and will meet the first Sunday of every month. Christmas events: ABW Christmas party on Dec. 3; "The Perfect Lamb" Christmas program on Dec. 18, and the Christmas Eve "Birthday Party for Jesus." An individual gave a set of bells for the children, and the Rainbow Children's Bell Choir has been formed.

LINCOLN, FBC: A Family Retreat was held at Mahoney State Park Jan. 2-4. Pastor Lee and Lois held Open House and communion at their home on Dec. 31. Pastor Lee officiated at a baptism for the Chinese Fellowship on Dec. 20. Christmas events: Hanging of the Greens on Dec. 1, followed by a light supper; Star City Outreach, an evangelism activity through downtown Lincoln, followed by the Star City Holiday Parade on Dec. 7; FBC Family Christmas Celebration with all-church involvement on Dec. 8; Cookie Bake/Craft Day on Dec. 14. when plates were prepared for homebound members; "Agnus Dei - Lamb of God, Born to Us," the Christmas cantata at the Dec. 15 morning worship, and caroling and delivering of plates in the afternoon, followed by a chili supper; and "Christmas Eve One Week Early" on Dec. 18. Les Upton celebrated his 80th birthday on Nov. 30. A scholarship fund has been established by the Pioneer Youth Group, which was itself founded by Ruth Schroeder in 1950. Two scholarships will be awarded, one to a person attending an ABC college or seminary, and the other to help young people attend camping programs.

LINCOLN, 2ND: The Chancel Choir presented the Christmas cantata, "All Is Calm, All Is Bright" on Dec. 11 and 15. The Sunday School program, "Christmas in Bethlehem" was presented on Sunday morning, Dec. 22. Christmas Eve services were held. Sixty-three hats, scarves, and pairs of gloves were collected on the mitten tree and given to the City Mission and Headstart. A New Year's Eve party was held.

NORTH PLATTE, FBC: The Living Christmas Tree tradition was continued at Christmas time. The youth league volleyball began on Jan. 6. The Mid-High ABY held a lock-in on January 3.

OMAHA, FBC: Christmas events: Hanging of the Greens on Dec. 1, followed by a carol sing and fellowship; potluck dinner followed by communion at noon, and a concert by The Grace Univ. Chorale that evening; Rebecca-Ruth Circle luncheon on Dec. 18; the cantata, "Merry Christmas", on Dec. 22, and candlelight service on Dec. 24. Steve Bils concluded his ministry at the end of 2002, due to the elimination of that staff position. Steve has accepted the position of Mission Development Director with the ABC of Nebraska. Three marriage workshops were held at FBC on Jan. 19 and 26, with one more scheduled for Feb. 2, with Pamela Bass as leader.

OCTAVIA COMMUNITY CHURCH: Ed Stabal, a long-time member of the church, passed away on Dec. 22. He has served as trustee for many years, and had taken on the love task of painting the outside of the church building.

OMAHA, BENSON BAPTIST: The Benson Collection Center for Operation Christmas Child collected 11,476 shoeboxes, of which Benson contributed 90. John Tideswell, 92, who joined the church in 1930, passed away on Dec. 29. Benson youth traveled to the lock-in at Fremont on Jan. 17-18. The Youth Group has a gas can in the narthex for donations to go towards youth traveling expenses on a mission trip they are planning. Two other moneymakers include "Hire a Youth" and "A Buck a Pound", in which the youth pastor will lose weight with sponsors pledging funds for each pound lost. Christmas events: The ABW Celebration was held on Dec. 14, with Paul and Mary Falkowski presenting the message in word and song; the Holiday Soup Supper, followed by the singing of carols, was held on Dec. 15; The Senior Caring Ministry sponsored Ollie the Trolley for the tour of the city and the holiday lights; "The Littlest Star," the children's Christmas program, on Dec. 22, and Christmas Eve service. Christmas toys for needy children were collected in the "Operation Santa" project, and other items were purchased for a "Christmas Bell" project.

OMAHA, PARKSIDE BAPTIST: Christmas events: The ABW Ministries held a supper and Christmas program for the entire church family on Dec. 6 and hosted a party for the Solomon Girls on Dec. 11; A Kid's Christmas Party was held on Dec. 14; caroling for shut-ins was on Dec. 15, a Christmas Candle-lighting Service was held on Dec. 24. Church members helped ring bells for the Salvation Army. The church is collecting used cell phones to be distributed to victims of domestic violence. [The ABC of Nebraska staff thanks Parkside for hosting the region staff Christmas dinner! It was wonderful!] Parkside hosted the Omahaland ABMen's Breakfast in January.



Local Church News

TECUMSEH, FBC: Christmas events: Pastor Hugh and Beth held an open house at the parsonage on Dec. 8; The ABW had a supper on Dec. 9 with their families as guests; the Christmas program, which involved many members of the church family, was "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever," on Dec. 15; family caroling was on Dec. 15, with everyone invited to a home for potluck snacks following; The Sparks sang at Belle Terrace on Dec. 18. Items for the church supplies were put under a Christmas tree. The 135th anniversary of the church will be celebrated on Feb. 2 with a potluck and Heritage observance. The High School won the Christmas classroom-decorating contest for the fourth year in a row. Preschool class was second, and an adult class was third. A Super Bowl Party was held on Jan. 26.

OMAHA, SUNSET HILLS: The Sunday Night Live youth group created a live outdoor nativity on December 15, attracting several drive-through vehicles from the neighborhood, including one stretch limo. The Sunshine Troupe youth choir then presented its "Cool Christmas Carols" musical program, which was directed and coordinated by Mary Geiger, Gina Slechta and Jane Ray. The special Christmas Eve service drew more than 120 members and guests. "Forgiven" presented a musical program at a holiday dinner at Calvary Lutheran Church in Omaha. Jack Welch has been elected as the church's new moderator. Tom O'Connor is the new church treasurer. The Diaconate will sponsor its annual Valentine's dinner on Saturday, Feb. 15. Sunset Hills will be host for the annual Omahaland American Baptist Men's prayer breakfast at 8 a.m., Saturday, February 22. The church's youth are planning a weeklong mission trip in June to the Hopi Indian Reservation in Arizona, where they will lead the vacation Bible school.

TEKEMAH, FBC: Christmas events: FBC men and women united with the community to worship in the Advent Trysts; a live Nativity was held at various community churches on Dec. 14, with a different scene at different churches; caroling was held on Dec. 15, with a potluck supper at Riverside following; Christmas Eve service at Riverside. The children filled 31 shoeboxes for "Operation Christmas Child."

PALESTINE, BC: Pastor Appreciation Day was observed, along with the Genoa Congregational Church, which Pastor Carl Edwards also serves. A specially written tribute song was sung by a quartet, and an appreciation food shower was held. The long-standing Harvest Thank Offering Day was held. "God's Special Baby" was the Christmas program, and a Christmas Eve service was held. The latter was held in the St. Angsar Lutheran Church, which has been closed for several years but is cleaned, heated, and decorated by those whose roots are in that church. Doyle Andreasen, of Genoa, played his musical saw for a portion of the program.

SCOTTSBLUFF, FBC: Christmas events: A canned food drive was held to benefit the Panhandle Community Services Food Pantry during the holiday season; ABW Christmas brunch on Dec. 7; Caroling party on Dec. 8; Christmas fellowship dinner was held on Dec. 15; a living nativity was held on Dec. 19-20; Christmas Eve Service. Dan Johnson and his wife, Loretta, will be serving as Interim Pastors. They were welcomed by a fellowship dinner on Jan. 19. Soup suppers will be held on Wednesday nights, followed by choir practice. Christian Education Appreciation was celebrated during the month of January, with all teachers and Christian Education persons being honored. Marvin Johns celebrated his 80th birthday on Jan. 8 with a reception at the church.

WILSONVILLE BAPTIST - CHRISTIAN CHURCH: The "Tree of Sharing" items, which were divided between White Cross and several other missions, both local and overseas, were dedicated one Sunday in October. After much prayer and deliberation the congregation made the decision to improve and use only the former Baptist building. Many of the furnishings of the Christian church have been moved to the Baptist church, and the church will be known as the Baptist-Christian Church. Christmas events included the youth and adults decorating the church on Dec. 1, advent candles being lit throughout the Advent season, a Christmas program held on Dec. 22 focusing on the Christmas symbols and the "Candy Cane Story", followed by caroling and refreshments. Rev. Jeff Moore of Altus, OK, who was in the area pheasant hunting, preached at the Dec. 2 Sunday evening service, with a large crowd present.

NEW MEMBERS:

ARNOLD, FBC: Kim and Perry Sage, Natasha Sage, Denisa Larreau, Stacie Larreau, Ed Johnson, Mae Jennings, Irving Jennings

ARTHUR, BC: Eight new members (names unavailable)

ALLIANCE, FBC: Bob and LaVet Cole, Chris Arends, Katie Crilly

BEATRICE, FBC: Ritchie Gould, Gary and Linda Samples, Rick Mahloch

COLUMBUS, FBC: (in 2002) Gary Allis, Steven Lucht, Boston Lucht, John Larrington, Alice Larrington

FAIRBURY, FBC: Ron and Peggi Kelly and Brett

FAIRHAVEN BC: Ruthann Whatley

FREMONT, FBC: Heather and MaKayla Adams, Shaunna Steinbach, Ben Eller, Terri Nelson, Steve and Jolene McKeighan, Terri Nelson, Ben Eller, Jerry Adams, Kelly Adams.

LINCOLN, FBC: Joy Brown, Toni Biskup.

LINCOLN, 2ND: Renae, John and Bryan Odell, Jacob Anderson

OMAHA, BENSON BC: Lily Hanson, Terri Furth, Steve and Helen Bottum, and Jim Leland, Lily A. Hanson

SUPERIOR, FBC: Don and Shelia Korb

Steve Bills Begins Work With ABC/NE

Rev. Steve Bills, formerly Minister of Education and Outreach at Omaha's First Baptist, has joined the ABC/NE staff as Mission Development Director. This new position is a one-year temporary assignment made possible by special gifts. Steve will be working with the Camp Merrill capital campaign and with new ABC/NE mission outreach projects.

Steve has been active in region activi-

ties, chairing the Department of Evangelism and New Church Development. He originated and coordinates the annual ABC ministry at the Sturgis Bike Rally in the Black Hills of SD. He also serves as registrar of the ABC/NE Family Reunion.

Commenting on his appointment, Executive Minister Susan Gillies said, "We welcome Steve to the region office. He will be a tremendous asset in the development of expanded ministry potential at Camp Merrill and in the ABC/NE."

Trivia Answers

1. a. Walkathons are a great way to increase AFC giving.
2. a. AFC supports Christian Centers.
3. This is a trick question! Most disaster relief comes from "b" OGHs. But "a" and "c" are also true because National Ministries and International Ministries provide support as well. American Baptist Men are also an important part of disaster response.
4. a. One-third of Nebraska's AFC provides ministry and mission support in Nebraska.
5. c. WMO, received in the fall, supports mission overseas.

ABC of Nebraska staff

- Executive MinisterSusan Gillies
- Area MinisterDave Lundholm
- Minister of Mission SupportDon Gaines
- Mission Development Director.....Steve Bills
- Director of Camps & Conferences..... Clarence Reiss
- Asst. Camp DirectorDave Janzen
- Camp Staff: Trudy Reiss & Traci Specht
- Office Manager Sue Gammel
- Publication Specialist: Peggy Cannon
- Accounting Services:Jerry Buss
- Volunteer ReceptionistJudie Heller
- Church Life Consultant.....A. J. Wagstaff
- Pastor to Pastors (W)Paul Kondy
- Pastor to Pastors (E)Dick Peterson
- Youth Ministry AdjunctJason Workman



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