

American Baptist Churches of Nebraska
Saturday February 10, 2024
Region Meeting
Region Offices, Omaha, Nebraska

Members attending: Carlos Angulo, Nola Crooks, Craig Erickson, Bob Fairchild, Traci Gilmer, Susan Howell, Scott Jones, Doug Larsen, Greg Mamula, Joy Martinez-Marshall, Bev Pacas, Brad Pope, Blake Wilks, Jamie Yendra, Steve Wisthoff

Via zoom: Jill Blaylock, Orin Clinger, Patrick Fleeman, Nolan Hayes, Lorlea Mees, Aaron Sprock, Michelle Wing

Craig Erickson called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Stephen Wisthoff opened the meeting with a devotional and prayer.

Craig Erickson led the leadership team in introductions of each member.

Craig Erickson requested any additions or corrections to the minutes. Brad Pope moved to accept the minutes. Jamie Yendra seconded. Motion Passed.

Dept. of Professional Ministry – Scott Jones shared that he met twice on Zoom to affirm two new pastors, Charlie Bagley of Scottsbluff and Marlesh Embry of Livingston Christian Church. In the beginning stages of ordination with Taylor Shippy of Gibbon Baptist Church, waiting on the statement of faith paper from him. o affirm and rec of two pastors. Transition for Aaron Sprock, from board member to staff member, replacing him with Gene Hill from Alliance on the board.

ABMEN – Brad Pope reported there have been no meetings since the last region meeting and there is nothing currently in progress. Meeting is scheduled in March to begin to plan the conference for summer. Bob Howe has resigned as treasurer and Craig Erickson has assumed his duties.

ABWM: Susan Howell reported there was a board meeting last week. She has traveled to North Platte to meet to plan the June conference, with the intention to have the conference on zoom for members at a distance. She will be traveling to Scottsbluff in March for a luncheon and tea for women and churches in the area. Chadron and Alliance churches were also invited. For the fall retreat, she is intending to seek out another church who hasn't been involved and would want to plan the conference. Trying to find someone who will write up the requirements for scholarship, currently starting with a small scholarship of

\$500 and considering fundraising to increase the amount of funds in the scholarship fund. Susan recently received some documents for the Weichelman fund but there is no bylaws or constitution on hand for the Weichelman fund. It appears that all board members are elderly or deceased and no one appears to have any information.

ABCUSA: Orin Clinger advised he did not have a lot to report. Rev. Gina Jacobs-Strain has started as the new general secretary. Pastor Joy Martinez-Marshall is now part of the ABCUSA board. A contract was signed for the 2023 audit at the cost of \$26,000.00 and there is a concern about costs. The next meeting is June 12-14 in Green Lake, Wisconsin.

Moses Merrill Camp & Conference: Bev Pacas reported summer camp registrations are open, with ten registrants at this time. Registrations typically increase in March. The new camp software is in place and is going well. Camp pastors are secured for summer camp and recruiting for summer staff. The Sunset Hills Baptist church praise band is confirmed for Senior High Camp and Family Camp. Bev Pacas has been visiting churches in the region promoting camp and the Weaver Fund. Signs for summer camp are available for churches to put in their yards.

LIT is next weekend and there are 15 registrants. Half the registrants are new to LIT and college age kids. Jason Workman is leading the session on the child protection policy.

The youth retreat for middle and high school kids is scheduled in March with Kevin Holloway as the speaker.

Retreat season is kicking off, almost every weekend at conf center and cabins is booked, and fall is filling up as well,

The January snowstorm resulted in 19 inches of snow at camp, lots of wind and drifting, roads were blocked and well pressure switch froze. Everything has been resolved and the new well will resolve the issue with the well pressure switch. There were a variety of breakdowns in machinery during the storm.

The cabin remodels are almost done. Cabin 9 is in process, waiting for a plumber and then Cabin 1 will begin in the fall.

The well driller was supposed to be here the week after Christmas to drill the well but had a family issue and we are waiting to reschedule.

Weaver Hall fundraising is going well, having raised \$257,384.00 at this point. Jill Blaylock has done several presentations and Lorlea Mees has done one in Fairbury. We have received checks from the churches that have had a presentation. Jill Blaylock encouraged

bord members to do a presentation in their own church and at a church in the surrounding area, noting that a personal touch makes a difference.

Bev Pacas will be attending the 3CA conference in Oklahoma from February 19-22, 2024.

Region Staff: Greg Mamula issued a thank you to Bev Pacas and to the staff at camp and noted that they had worked through several transitions in staffing over the fall.

In the late fall and winter several names were submitted to the personnel team and the region staff experienced growth in their staffing model. The region has added three part time, contracted, flat rate staff member. The expectation is that the part time staff person will provide 7-10 hours a week. Joy Martinez-Marshall has been added for multi-cultural churches and a staff point person for ABHMS. Blake Wilks is coordinating the Colossian 3 communities, as well as discipleship and rural pastoral care. He will also be the point person between the region and MMBB, assisting with financial stewardship for pastors. Aaron Sprock, FBC Chadron has been added for the western portion of the region and a point person for International Ministries.

Joy Martinez Marshall reported that she went to Seattle FBC for a Co-pastor installation. Working on Lenten season lectionary series for pastors at churches. Hosting region zoom for pastors to come and talk about scriptures for ideas and encourage pastors to do more. Met with the Burma Refugee Committee, led by Robin Stoops, looking to participate and share more. In March will travel to Board of General Ministries executive committee meeting in San Francisco. There is a Karen church in Lincoln interested in joining the region.

Blake Wilks reported that he was getting into swing of things for region work and has been reaching out to and keeping in contact with pastors in the region. Coordinating the Colossians 3 community and different resources, as well as a model of meeting online. Seeking to address the issue of rural churches and the issues with pulpit supply by looking at lay leader discipling to fill this need

Aaron Sprock reported that he has met with Jeni Pedzinski who provided some ideas to connect with missionaries and develop missions in the region. Men's retreat was hosted by his church and he is intentional about reaching out to the panhandle churches to enable them to connect with the region. The Scottsbluff church participated and he was able to make some connections and discuss some ways to continue to help support ministries.

There was the discussion that this model of contracted staff members is the same model that Indiana and Ohio have used successfully and that our region has the youngest of the regions of ABC. It was noted that we have a depth of talent with the region staff and that there is the idea of looking for a recent retired executive to mentor the staff. Looking for a recently retired exec to mentor the staff.

ABCUSA has changed their software platform with which we collect and store information, Netsuite. This is a commercial platform for business and there have been issues using it for a nonprofit organization. Update sheets were sent to each church, requesting that each church complete the document, but there is no online portal for the information.

It was noted that for grant applications that a parameter of review is 100% participation of the board in organizations in the region. Encouragement was given for board members to join ABMEN, ABWM, and the 2300 team.

The region calendar is available on the website and a printed copy has been provided for the leadership team.

There is an installation servie for Steve Wamberg at Sunset Hills Baptist Church and Charlie Bagley at Scottbluff. Bill Prather is the new pastor at Fairbury, beginning on March 1, 2024. FBC Omaha is voting on an interim for the future and Norfolk is still in the discerning process. Blair FBC has integrated back into the region and are currently active.

Omahaland had a bowling party for Christmas and there was a region open house.

In January, Greg Mamula met with Suzi Ford and introduced himself to the ABCUSA organization by sending an email to every organization and person. This resulted in zoom meetings with different people across different organizations. At ABCOM in Massachusetts he was invited as a guest speaker and preached at a church on the cape.

There was staff retreat for onboarding new staff on January 15, 2024.

In February our churches are focused on United Mission, which has not previously had it's own dedicated staff month. There is a deficit in the budget and they are working to raise awareness of their mission and purpose. There is a campaign for United Mission and are asking churches to emphasize United Mission during the month. The resources are available on the website. There have been two new videos created by ABCUSA and Greg shared them with the board.

Carpenter Fund: There is a scholarship program given to the region from Calvary Baptist Church and Isaac and Kerry Carpenter. United Bank is the steward of the funds and there is a reevaluation of how to get access to the funds. A committee will have to be formed to request the funds, which can only be petitioned once a year. Originally this fund was written for mission and ministry, including teachers and medical personnel. It can also be used for pastoral continuing education.

MMBB has a resource at MMBB.org with tax information for pastors and churches including

rules to assist in creating church budgets. It was brought up that the region should consider finding someone who is able to act as a subject matter expert for this as there is a liability for Greg Mamula in providing this information. Steve Wisthoff mentioned that Brotherhood Mutual offers this information/service for a fee.

Discussion for a policy for AI use on the region level. Including developing a template for social media, ground rules for utilizing AI for pastors that are using it when creating sermons.

Evaluating the possibility of having one off events throughout the year, as there are gaps between the big events. Ideas such as a one day Saturday event at a church, the cost would be approximately \$35 a person. Encouraged board members to submit ideas and topics for events.

Prairie Pastor Conference and Greg encouraged pastors and laypeople to attend. Gina Jacobs Strain is the Monday night speaker, Nikita McCalister is the Tuesday night speaker and Rob Long is the Wednesday morning speaker. There will be workshops on Tuesday.

In 2027 Nebraska will celebrate its 160th year of formation and ABCNE will also reach 160 years. Greg Mamula provided a list of all previous executive ministers in the region as well as a historical narrative of the region.

Attending the ABC National Leadership Conference in Orlando from March 10-15, 2024.

Jamie Yendra and Joy Martinez-Marshall are the co-chairs for the 2025 Biennial in Omaha.

Attending Space for Grace, April 9-11, 2024 in Philadelphia,. It is also the 200th anniversary for Judson Press

Budget: There has been no income so far this year. The board was provided an investment comparison from 2022 versus 2023. There was also a correction to the 6130 line item, to \$36,000.00 No vote as this was approved at the November 2023 meeting, and this is just a typo correction.

Steve Wisthoff closed the meeting in prayer

ABC Nebraska State Board

2024 Meeting Schedule

February 10, 2024 @ Region Office

May 4, 2024 Gibbon Baptist Church, Gibbon, Nebraska

August 3, 2024 – Second Baptist Church, Lincoln, Nebraska

October 4-5, 2024 – State Convention, Gibbon Nebraska

November 8, 2024 Moses Merrill Camp

Craig Erickson closed the meeting and adjourned to lunch.