

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.

American Baptist Churches of Nebraska
Saturday May 4, 2024
Region Meeting
Gibbon Baptist Church, Gibbon, Nebraska

Members attending: Orin Clinger, Nola Crooks, Craig Erickson, Traci Gilmer, Susan Howell, Scott Jones, Greg Mamula, Joy Martinez-Marshall, Bev Pacas, Brad Pope, Jamie Yendra, Steve Wisthoff

Via zoom: Aaron Sprock

American Baptist Foundation: Paul Weers

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

Stephen Wisthoff opened the meeting with a devotional and prayer.

Craig Erickson welcomed the board to the region meeting and led the attendees team in introductions of each member.

Craig Erickson requested any additions or corrections to the minutes. Joy Martinez-Marshall made a correction to the minutes from January, the church she is working with is a "Karenni" church, not a Karen church. Orin Clinger moved to accept the minutes, as corrected. Traci Gilmer seconded. Motion Passed.

Paul Weers from the American Baptist Foundation presented regarding the foundation and the ways in which it can be utilized for giving and stewardship for our churches and regions. The foundation also assists churches and regions creating a foundation and endowment. Greg Mamula shared that we hope that the region can create an atmosphere of giving and allow the region to share in the Strengthening Your Financial Future (SYFF) program to a greater degree.

Moses Merrill Camp & Conference: Bev Pacas reported that 24 days from today the summer staff arrives at camp. All necessary staff have been hired with the exception of a health aide. Registrations are at the same pace as last year at this time and there are lots of new children registering for the first time this year. As an example she shared that they have registrations for the first time in ten years from youth from FBC Albion. Bev Pacas credits those registrations to a presentation regarding Weaver Hall that was given by Jill Blaylock. The rain has made preparing for summer camp difficult, the pool has been painted

and there are new pumps. The Zipline has been improved with an add on to the deck. Inspector is coming on May 28, 2024 to inspect and train leaders.

A new well has been dug, down to 350 feet, and should be connected before summer camp begins. Waiting for the state to approve the system. Bev Pacas indicated that she was very excited to have this issue resolved.

Cabin remodel update: The remodel on Cabin 9 is wrapping up and leave only cabin one left. All materials are on hand and in the fall we will begin the remodel.

Weaver Hall: Board member presentations for Weave Hall have been a huge help for fundraising. Currently \$400,000.00 has been raised towards the \$500,000.00 goal. Bev has spoken to a contractor and construction is scheduled for November. The contractor is considering putting in a PVC pipe as a temporary fix for summer and fall.

A team will be created from three individuals from the board to create an event to celebrate the completion of camp remodeling and upgrades.

Dept. of Professional Ministry – Scott Jones reported that his team is in talks with two individuals that are in the ordination process. One is Taylor Shippy from Gibbon. He has just presented his paper of faith this week and the next step is for the team to read and review the paper and then for an ordination council. Verla Dorn from FBC Beatrice, working with her on the paper and education requirements.

No pastoral misconducts at this time.

ABMEN – Brad Pope reported that they have been meeting about planning the conference in August. ABMEN has given money to various organizations that have been impacted for different disasters. \$500 to panhandle region of Texas for wildfires in February. They have also given money to Fire Dept of Brady for massive fires they have experienced. Actively looking for any area that has been impacted/churches by recent tornadoes to provide funds. Getting ready to award scholarships for seminarians for upcoming year. Contact the region office for any individuals who might be in need of a scholarship.

August 9 & 10, 2024 is the ABMen of Nebraska Retreat at Moses Merrill.

Bev Pacas mentioned that the ABMEN donated a trailer with the Fire Department in Linwood. That fire department will be sharing the materials with smaller rural fire departments.

ABWM: Susan Howell reported that she visited Scottsbluff in March for a luncheon and the churches from Bridgeport and Chadron attended. The general response she received from

the women was that they felt they had been ignored in the past and appreciated that she was there. Conference is in June at Camp Comeca and there are not any registrations from churches west of North Platte. Currently there are 20 registrations for the conference.

The Weichelman funds have been located in two banks; one in Pennsylvania and one in California. Susan Howell is working on moving the funds to Nebraska and has been updating the paperwork on the accounts. ABWM of Nebraska will be setting up new Weichelman board for the management of the fund.

The next ABWM board meeting is on May 30, 2024 in preparation for the summer women's conference. Susan 'Howell advised she is planning more church visits this summer to reintroduce ABWM of Nebraska.

ABCUSA: Orin Clinger reported next meeting is in June in Greenlake, June 12-14, 2024. During the meeting Rev. Gina Jacobs-Strain will be installed as the new General Secretary of ABCUSA.

ABCNebraska chose not to be in compliance with having an annual audit in 2017 or 2018. The ABC Nebraska board indicated that we did not need a local audit. Greg Mamula understood that only 30% of regions are in compliance with having the audit.

Engaged with Tait Weller to do a "review" that is dependent on the amount of mission giving that will put us back in compliance with ABCUSA regulations. Will cost between \$0-\$2500 each year.

Orin Clinger requested that as a member of finance committee they are requesting quarterly updates from the ABCUSA finance team.

Adjourned for a 5 minute break at 11:24 a.m.

Called back to order at 11:33 a.m.

Region Staff:

Greg Mamula shared that he was hearing a theme of "reconnection" throughout the reports that have been received this morning. There was a sense of positive accomplishment throughout all reporting.

Aaron Sprock reported his appreciation that Susan Howell had come out to the ABWM event in the west.

International Ministries is having a global mission event, the “Global Encounter” on May 21 and 22, 2024. Individuals can register or churches can register for a watch party. The event will have missionaries around the globe to share the work they are doing. There will be time for worship and sharing from different speakers. This is most likely a one-time event and in two years they will return to conference back to the United States at Greenlake.

Aaron Sprock will have a list of missionaries from IM that will be stateside and will share those individuals when they can come to Nebraska to visit churches in our state.

Aaron Sprock is working with Greg Mamula coordinating the “Faithful Citizenship” event with Region office and is also planning events for the western churches, worship and some want to come help with the tornados.

Blake Wilks not available as he is pastoring at a funeral today. He is working on creating guilds or pastor training groups. This would be a network of lay leaders who can do pulpit supply and help in their local churches. Currently he has a group of four individuals that are part of the platform at this time. Joy Martinez Marshall added that the group will increase discipleship and encourage the ministry at churches..

Joy Martinez Marshall reported that she has been traveling. Went to the Board of General Ministries meeting in March 2024. She reported that she was invited to serve on the executive committee of the Board of General Ministries. In March she traveled to San Francisco and met the General Secretary and board.

Was present at the Prairie Pastor Conference in March in Omaha and was encouraged by the fellowship. There was a large contingent of national leadership that attended the conference.

Joy preached at Livingstone Christian Church on Easter with multicultural connections and has made contacts with many of the congregations that are not geographically located in Nebraska.

Was the last minute replacement for the Nebraska Youth Retreat as replacement for the speaker who had deaths in his family.

There was a meeting two weeks prior with ABHMS to discuss the Space for Grace conference. There is a focus on intergenerational connections, as it has been determined that students and younger individuals are thirsty for a connection with older members. The future is now and we need to the work of investing in our churches and be open to different ways of ministry as the world changes

Joy served on a women in ministry panel at Truett Seminary, as a recruiting tool for people in our region. The time was spent speaking positively about our denomination and the ABC church.

Recently there was work with the ABCUSA Biennial committee in promotional work with the naming contest. In July will be speaking at the ABWM conference and also at a Central Seminary worship service via ZOOM.

Joy further reported that there are several small events to encourage and empower our Baptist distinctives and one of those distinctives is biblical authority. On August 24, 2024, at FBC Lincoln, will be hosting Rev. Dr. Dennis Tucker who recently released book on Malachi. Rev. Dr. Dennis Tucker is an Old Testament professor and will be giving a discussion in a one day conference on the message of Malachi. The registration is in discussion and will be priced between \$20-25 per person.

Greg Mamula reported that the Carpenter Fund, which is a scholarship fund for pastors for continuing education can also be used for doctors and teachers going into the mission field. The directives for the scholarship are not clearly specified and is technically available to "anybody." Looking to develop a committee to review the requests for scholarships and are looking to do fewer larger scholarships and more smaller scholarships.

The region was notified that it has been dropped by Church Mutual for its insurance coverage. Church Mutual has dropped several churches in the region as it recently lost its reinsurer and are dropping any risk profiles from coverage. The region has applied for coverage with Brotherhood Insurance and Farm Bureau and will review a third possibility as well. The need may exist to maintain two separate policies; one for camp and one for the region offices.

There are upcoming meetings with ABCUSA for the 2025 Mission Summit with more information about what we will be doing onsite.

FBC Kearney has shifted its college ministry and donations will go directly to Navigators and not through the region office.

In process of creating an event for rural churches and as an online event registration will be approximately \$20.00.

The parking lot at the region office will need a large amount of work and the quotes for the work have been quite high. Next Saturday is a "Clean Up Day" at the region office.

Greg Mamula has been visiting a lot of churches and ten year events.

Greg Mamula will be attending board meetings for ABHomes next week.

Summer Camp all of June at Moses Merrill.

Worship Conference on July 20, 2024, with Bob Myers, who has a worship degree leading the conference. Will be held at FBC Omaha.

Faithful Citizenship program is scheduled in September and it will offer a weekly ZOOM conversation with pastors and leaders for four weeks. The program is about thinking about politics and offer critical thinking skills when it comes to thinking about politics. There will be a follow up at the fall retreat.

October 14-16 2024 is the pastor retreat. There is a region event every month from July through October.

Bob Fairchild was unable to attend the meeting but Greg Mamula presented a brief report on finances. The region finances are behind expectations and the camp is currently on budget. The investment pool is up, even with a \$23,000.00 draw on the investments. There may be a need to complete three draws to meet budget. While United Mission giving is down the church giving is up.

Craig Erickson closed the meeting with a sense of positivity with the amount of work that has been done and how much we have come together.

Steve Wisthoff closed the meeting in prayer.

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Respectfully Submitted,

Nola Crooks

ABC Nebraska Region Secretary