

**American Baptist Churches of the Great Rivers Region
REGIONAL MINISTRY BOARD**

Minutes From Meeting Friday, January 18, 2008

Executive Hall, Great Rivers Region Resource Center, Springfield, Illinois

Diane DeSmidt, President

Roland Sundberg, Recorder

Present:	Elaine Bolen Diane DeSmidt Reg Mills PJ Patterson Geraldine Sirls Dwight Stinnett	Sharon Brown Deborah Harkness Helen Murrell Gerald Phillips William Steger	Jim Daugherty Mark Keyser Harry Parker Mary Sharp Elmer Voudrie (16 of 26 members)
Guests:	Carl Cottingham Max Klinkenborg	John Grisham Roland Sundberg	Brian Hodge
Regrets:	Lynette Austin Rene' Gorbold Courtney Jones Hari Smith	Francis Bartley Jeffrey Hammer Patricia Midkiff	Henrietta Brown Keith Ingold William Schneck

Contents:

General	1-2	Introduction, Board Development and Training
Decision Items	2	Revisions to Ordination Standards, Policies and Procedures
	2	Contract for the Purchase of Church Property in Chatham
	2	Early Retirement Package for Staff Minister
	2-3	Task Force to Study Dates and Sites for GRR Annual Meetings
Monitoring Items	3	Staff Activity
	3	Report on the Regional Ordination Program
	3	GRR Finances
	3	Ministry of Financial Stewardship
Incidental Items	4	Update on National Affairs

Diane DeSmidt called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and gave a devotion on action. Acceptance is passive, but receiving Christ is action. Be active in receiving Christ in your life every day. She then led us in prayer. The Minutes from the October 5, 2007 meeting were reviewed without objection and will be entered into the record.

Regional Structure and Governance. Dwight Stinnett gave a PowerPoint presentation about the structure and governance of the region. The Regional Ministry Board functions as stewards in a biblical sense, or as trustees in a corporate sense. American Baptists differ from other denominations in that the churches create the regions, and in turn they create American Baptist Churches in the USA. From a legal perspective, the Regional Ministry Board *is* the Great Rivers Region. The Board is a representative, governing body of the region (not a programming body). The Board governs financial needs, property (assets) and staffing of the Region, not churches or

pastors. Our Board is a ministry of stewardship and empowerment for the churches in the Region. We make decisions based on discernment, consensus, and/or parliamentary rules.

DECISION ITEMS

Ministerial Standards, Policies and Procedures. The Council on Ministerial Standing and Ordination has recommended several changes to the region's standards and policies regarding the recognition of ordinations. These changes would not affect anyone already in the process of having their ordination recognized. The board voted unanimously to accept these changes and to adopt "Ministerial Standards, Policies and Procedures" as the official document of the region. The changes include: Delete specific reference to "Master of Divinity" degree and replace it with a list of minimal coursework; Change the name of the Regional Ordination Program (ROP) to Alternative Ministerial Education (AME); Add a provision for the automatic withdrawal of recognition of ordination when a minister leads their church to leave the Region and ABC/USA; and Clarify what "recognition" means.

Contract to Purchase Church Property in Chatham. The region assumed the full mortgage liability when Judson Baptist Church of Chatham closed its doors in March, 2003. Our real estate agent has presented us with a contract for purchase. The offering price is \$250,000, and we have received \$5,000 in earnest money. The property is listed at \$299,900 after originally being listed at \$375,000. Our current tenants are paying \$1,365 per month in rent, and they have paid rent in a reliable manner. A motion was made to turn down this offer since the offer is 20% below list price and a full one-third lower than our original listing. After discussion, the Board voted unanimously to not accept the contract for purchase. The President appointed a task force to review the status of the property and make recommendations to the Board. Task Force members will include Reg Mills, Gerald Phillips and PJ Patterson.

Early Retirement Package for Staff Minister. The Ministry of Staff Relations has initiated and negotiated an early retirement package for one of our Staff Ministers. Under the terms of the package, the Minister would retire effective July 1, 2008, and would receive health benefits through the region through June 30, 2010. After discussion, the Board voted to extend this early retirement package to Rev. Max Klinkenborg. Dr. John Grisham will be reassigned to service Area 2 as his major responsibility, and will be leaving behind his role in Mission Education and Stewardship to assume this new task. This retirement and other retirements anticipated over the next decade will provide a timely opportunity for the region to adapt to our changing world, both financially and programmatically with respect to ministry needs in the new century.

Task Force for GRR Annual Meetings. The Ministry of Planning & Review discussed several concerns and options regarding the Annual Meeting of the Region. They recommend that the President appoint a Task Force for the purpose of exploring alternative dates (as opposed to the Friday through Sunday morning schedule) as well as a fixed or limited number of sites (as opposed to the constant rotation among the five areas). After discussion, the Board unanimously endorsed the idea of appointing a Task Force for GRR Annual Meetings. Task Force members will include Elaine Bolen, Harry Parker and appropriate staff members.

MONITORING ITEMS

Staff Reports. Dwight presented written reports from the ministerial staff, detailing staff activity since the convention in October. Dwight continues to meet with pastors, churches and church leaders regarding issues in our denomination, and he has attended to the continuing financial crisis in the region. Other ministerial staff members have been active in the Natural Church Development and Consecration Sunday programs, as well as area ministry.

Regional Ordination Program Report. Carl Cottingham, Dean of the Regional Ordination Program, was greeted as a guest to the meeting. He presented an update to the Board about the progress of this alternative education program, intended to provide pastors for smaller churches, since its major revision in 2004. With the changes adopted by the Board in this meeting, Carl Cottingham will become the Dean of Alternative Ministerial Education.

GRR Finances Report. Dwight provided an update to the Board on current finances, analysis, and prospects. Giving through United Mission and America For Christ continues to spiral downwards, and has decreased slightly through World Mission Offering and Total American Baptist Mission Support. However, giving through Institutional Support, Specifics and Targeted has increased. The changes that we continue to see in the financial support of mission and ministry demonstrate that we are in the midst of a radical change in giving attitudes and the exercise of options. United Mission giving is an increasingly unreliable and diminishing source of regional income, but it appears that the effort to generate new income streams for the region has been successful. Our final 2007 deficit of \$71,756 was lower than previously estimated. It seems we are turning the corner, and because we know better where we stand, we can make financial plans with more confidence.

Ministry of Financial Stewardship. Treasurer PJ Patterson shared a detailed report of the financial statements for the region and camps for all of 2007. Our Current operating fund showed a deficit of \$71,756 for 2007, partly due to the dramatic decreases in giving to United Mission and America For Christ. These decreases were offset by new offerings taken by churches and individuals. Lake Springfield Baptist Camp had a deficit of \$4,452 for 2007, while Blackhawk Baptist Camp had a surplus in 2007 of \$11,751. The Capital Fund showed a deficit of \$163,600 for 2007, after considering unrealized gain on investments. These statements will be audited in March.

INCIDENTAL ITEMS

Future Structure of National Denomination. A press release from the American Baptist News Service was shared with members of the Board. The General Executive Council met in December in Kansas City to discuss the future structure of the national ABC denomination. A particular structure and its representative process have been proposed, and the gathered group reviewed and further developed points of consensus on the proposed model. The group advanced work on its concept of the Mission Table, the work of the National Staff Leadership Council, and the structure and role of the Board of General Ministries. This work will now go back to the Writing Team for drafting. In addition, the General Executive Council authorized the formation of a transition team. Recommendations are to be presented to the General Board in June and November, 2008. The General Board will make final recommendations for the consideration of delegates at the 2009 Biennial in Pasadena, California.

The board adjourned with prayer at 3:30 p.m., agreeing to meet next at 1:00 p.m. on Friday, May 2, 2008, at the Regional Resource Center in Springfield.