

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

Minutes From Meeting Friday, May 22, 2009

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

Joel Lohr, President

Roland Sundberg, Recorder

Present:	Henrietta Brown Deborah Harkness Joel Lohr PJ Patterson Bud Pruett (14 of 29 members)	Sharon Brown Walter Holt Susan Metcalf Merredith Peterson Dwight Stinnett	Sharon Farral David Johanpeter Harry Parker Gerald Phillips
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Regrets:	Delano Benson Vicki Edwards Stephanie Johanpeter Benjamin Manso Robert Scott	Kenneth Board Rene' Gorbold Courtney Jones Reg Mills Mary Sharp	Elaine Bolen Keith Ingold Mark Keyser Quinton Runyon Janet Waychoff
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Joel Lohr called the business meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and gave a devotional message from Luke 9:57-10:2 illustrating how planting and harvesting are inseparable. He then led us in prayer. The Minutes from the February 6, 2009 meeting were reviewed without objection and will be entered into the record.

Board Training: Overview of the Region. 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 (Democratic Rules of Order). We conduct business by acting on Decision items, receiving regular updates on Monitoring items, and discussing Incidental items that are related to our denominational life.

DECISION ITEMS

Closing Church. Cherry Street Baptist Church of Alton has closed its doors. The church has no significant assets remaining. Dwight verified that the procedures specified by GRR Standing Rule V.E. have been followed. After discussion, the board voted unanimously to authorize the Executive Minister to report a “change of status” for this church to ABC/USA.

Task Force Regarding Region Camping. Board members authorized a Camping Task Force in the last meeting for the purpose of discerning the will of region churches and propose a plan of regional priorities regarding camping. A written interim progress report was provided. The task force met three times and formulated a survey of region churches to ask questions regarding each church’s participation and support of the regional camping program. The task force discovered that there is significant interest among churches in seeing the camping program continue in some form. Although the work of the task force is not yet finished, at this time the task force suggests to the board that Dwight Stinnett be authorized to take the steps necessary for the establishment of independent corporations to operate each of our two camps. These corporations would be autonomous from the region and responsible for all aspects of the camping program from fund raising to staffing to programming. They would still retain a connection to the region in much the same way as our campus ministries do at present. The board authorized Dwight Stinnett to work with an attorney and look into setting up these corporate entities in order that we might act on this matter in our next meeting.

Lake Springfield Baptist Camp – Lake Lot Lease Renewal. It was reported that the lake lot lease for Lake Springfield Camp will expire on July 1, 2010, after 60 years. The board authorized Dwight Stinnett to work with Springfield’s City Water, Light and Power (CWLP), the owner of the property, to renew the lease in whatever corporate form the GRR Camps will take.

Audits of the 2008 GRR Financial Statements. Richard Grafton of Estes, Bridgewater & Ogden, performed the audit this year of the region’s 2008 financial records. He met with Ministry of Financial Stewardship members on April 20, 2009, to present his preliminary draft of the 2008 Audit to the committee. The committee requested a few changes to the audit and unanimously recommended forwarding the final draft of the 2008 Audit after the changes are made to the Regional Ministry Board for their approval. Richard Grafton’s letter of audit was made available to the Regional Ministry Board, which approved the 2008 Audit unanimously. A copy of the finished Audit is on file in the region office.

MONITORING ITEMS

Staff Activity. A detailed, written report of staff activity from all ministerial staff members since the last meeting was provided to the board. Areas held their annual meetings this spring, and the regional Mission Conference was held in April. Staff continue to assist region churches in the areas of pastoral search, Natural Church Development, evangelism and revival, and to discuss denominational issues. In the last several months, nine churches were awarded Harvest grants and six churches received intern matching grants.

GRR Finances. Dwight Stinnett has spent considerable time tracking an emerging financial crisis in the region. Although the country is still in a recession, we are beginning to see signs revealing that the financial crisis won't be as bad as expected previously. The operating account should still show about a \$60,000 deficit this year, though, as income is running about 6% behind so far this year.

GRR Partnership with the Federation of Baptists in Costa Rica. In 2000, about a dozen representatives from the region went to Costa Rica. We met with Baptist leaders there and forged a covenant partnership. The stated goals of that partnership are to: Better understand one another; Challenge one another; Discover gifts that each of us brings; and Work together as partners. Since then, Randy McNeely has served as the staff liaison with the Federation. Randy gave an update on the status of that relationship. Seventeen work groups have traveled to Costa Rica since 2000 to assist with construction at the Alajuelita church and the Federation center. Representatives from the region and from the Federation in Costa Rica also joined together for a work trip to El Salvador, which was a first for the Federation.

Update for Lake Benton Camp and Various Camping Projects. The Lake Benton Camp property continues to be listed with a realtor, but no bids have been received yet. Maintenance projects are under way at Lake Springfield Camp and Blackhawk Camp. The Ministry of Financial Stewardship approved maintenance work for the upper bath house and for the manager's residence at Lake Springfield, and they approved repairs to the mobile home, well, and drainage and soil work at Blackhawk.

Ministry of Financial Stewardship. In addition to approving the various camp maintenance projects, the Ministry of Financial Stewardship is tracking the region's current financial situation. Treasurer PJ Patterson provided a written report of the region's financial statements through April. With 33% of the year passed, we have received 38% of our budgeted income and spent 32% of our budgeted expenses. About 30% of our United Mission budget has been received, and about 18% of our ABMS Specifics budget is in. After several months of fair market value losses in our investment accounts amounting to about a million dollars, we finally saw a turn-around in April with gains of about \$70,000.

Ministry of Planning & Review. Wally Holt reported that, considering the financial difficulties of the region and the transitioning of the denomination at the moment, there

may be some tough decisions coming soon. The Ministry of Planning & Review had a brainstorming session in their meeting just prior to the board meeting. Members at that meeting believe the region needs to set goals for better networking and communication. It is likely that the next two retirees will not be replaced, one from the ministerial staff and one from the administrative staff, thus reducing our staff further and affecting the services we provide. New staffing models were discussed to devise ways to handle the priorities of the region. One option for the ministerial staff is to have three ministers concentrating on Area ministry, one minister to be a specialist, and one Executive Minister (3-1-1).

INCIDENTAL ITEMS

Changing Financial Support of ABC Mission and Ministry. At the February board meeting, Reg Mills was asked to give a brief description of his perspective on changing financial support in ABCUSA. In his absence, Dwight Stinnett reported a few positives: In 2008, the Great Rivers Region was ranked 5th among all regions in giving to United Mission (UM), and ranked 2nd among all regions in giving to American Baptist Mission Support (ABMS), which includes UM, institutional and missionary support, and all the annual offerings. Reg will be asked for his perspective at the next meeting.

The board adjourned with prayer at 3:00 p.m., agreeing to hold its next regular meeting on Friday, October 30, 2009, at 9:30 a.m. at the Holiday Inn City Centre in Peoria, Illinois, which is where we will be holding this year's Annual Assembly. Registration will be free for board members, and a catered meal will be provided, with spouses welcome to join.