

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

Minutes From Meeting Friday, February 6, 2009

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

Joel Lohr, President

Roland Sundberg, Recorder

Present:	Elaine Bolen Jeffrey Hammer Keith Ingold Mark Keyser Susan Metcalf PJ Patterson Janet Waychoff	Sharon Brown Deborah Harkness David Johanpeter Joel Lohr Reg Mills Gerald Phillips Dwight Stinnett	Sharon Farral Wally Holt Stephanie Johanpeter Benjamin Manso Harry Parker Mary Sharp (20 of 28 members)
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Guests:	Jon Lobos	Roland Sundberg
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Regrets:	Kenneth Board Rene' Gorbold Robert Scott	Henrietta Brown Courtney Jones Hari Smith	Paul Burden Patricia Midkiff
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Joel Lohr called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and gave a devotion on our convention theme of Harvest from John 4:27-38. The minutes from the October 3, 2008 meeting were reviewed without objection and will be entered into the record.

Governance By Policy. Dwight Stinnett gave a powerpoint presentation regarding how governing by the Regional Ministry Board takes place. He summarized John Carver's writing: The premise is that the board represents the ownership (stewardship); "Governance" empowers stewardship, and the board governs staff and ministries through policy; The board separates "ends" from "means"; "Ends" are defined through policy statements; "Means" are assigned to staff with restrictions (executive limitations). Furthermore, the board assigns resources to staff, sets boundaries and evaluates results. Our vision is Healthy Congregations.

DECISION ITEMS

Executive Financial Report for 2008. Dwight gave a written presentation of the region's finances for 2008. Once more the region faces a financial crisis. The regional portion of United Mission Basics was down \$57,888 compared to 2007. There is every reason to believe the global economic situation will remain depressed for the next 2-5 years, and our adopted budget for 2009 may now present us with a potential \$100,000 deficit. Our dependence on Reserves is of special concern in this present financial environment, because this time our rainy day account was devastated by the global economic downturn. We lost \$777,721 in the value of our investments, and that will have a negative impact on region programming for years to come. Given a choice, the board authorized by consensus the continuance of the duly adopted Budget for 2009, with due diligence and care, knowing that reduced income will drive us into a deficit situation, which must be covered from diminished Reserves. The board also suggested making the region's financial situation known to churches and promoting region ministry to churches. The board will be given an update on region finances in its May meeting.

Withdrawing Church. In a notice dated April 18, 2006, **First Baptist Church of Plainville, Illinois**, took action to withdraw from the Great Rivers Region and American Baptist Churches. It was verified that the necessary procedures have been followed. After discussion, the board voted unanimously to authorize the Executive Minister to report a change of status to ABC/USA.

Listing of Lake Benton Camp Property for Sale. At its meeting in February, 2007, the Board reluctantly adopted the motion to celebrate a half-century of Christian camping at Lake Benton with a de-commissioning service, dispose of the property as expeditiously as possible, use proceeds to erase the accumulated deficit and debts of the camp, and possibly create a fund for scholarships, mission trips, and other programs designed for children and youth. The property was appraised at about \$455,000 recently. Sale of the property was first opened to groups within the denomination. None responded. The board voted unanimously to give Dwight Stinnett the authority to list the Lake Benton property for sale with a sales agent and proceed with the sale of the property accordingly. Any bids on the property will be brought to the board for its action.

Lake Springfield Camp Upper Bath House Repairs. The upper bath house at Lake Springfield Camp has been in need of major repairs for some time now. It is estimated to cost about \$6,000 to make necessary repairs to the bath house. After discussion about the region's camping program crisis (see Incidental Items below), the board voted unanimously to authorize Dwight Stinnett to solicit donors for this repair project as soon as possible, and to authorize the Ministry of Financial Stewardship to approve the spending of this money as it becomes available.

MONITORING ITEMS

Staff Activity. 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 emerging financial crisis in the region. Other ministerial staff members have been active in the Natural Church Development and Consecration Sunday programs, congregational and web ministries, and our partnership with American Baptists in Costa Rica in addition to area ministry.

Update on Denominational Affairs. Dwight presented a complete written report detailing the **ABCUSA Reorganization Proposal** and a summary of this proposal. This proposal was first read in June, 2008, and voted on once in November, 2008. It will be up for a vote again at the 2009 Biennial in June. The complete report is on file at the region office. Dwight explained how the reorganization would impact region life and the denomination as a whole, and expressed a handful of concerns he has with the proposal. He also shared his belief that the proposal should be adopted, given the process and the alternative for not adopting it.

Ministry of Staff Relations. No Report.

Ministry of Financial Stewardship. Treasurer PJ Patterson shared a detailed report of the financial statements for the region and camps for all of 2008. Our Current operating fund showed a deficit of \$63,352 for 2008, partly due to decreases in giving to United Mission Basics. Expenses were only about \$900 over budget, but income ended the year about \$62,500 below budget. Lake Springfield Baptist Camp had a deficit of \$11,203 for 2008, while Blackhawk Baptist Camp had a surplus in 2008 of \$15,911. The Capital Fund showed a deficit of \$88,869 for 2008, and after considering unrealized losses on investments due to the recession, the deficiency in the Capital Fund grew to \$1,232,610 for 2008. Our Capital portfolios each lost about one-third of their values from the recession. These statements will be audited in March.

Ministry of Planning & Review. Wally Hold was introduced as the new Vice President for Planning & Review. He gave a brief report and requested that board members pray for the region.

INCIDENTAL ITEMS

Discussion Regarding Regional Camping. Regional Camping has come to a crisis point, as camper attendance diminishes while costs escalate. Some of the challenges we face are: Volunteer availability is under siege; Liability claims are rising; Insurance costs are increasing; Building and development costs are rising rapidly; New regulations require a higher level of certification for staff; Other programs are competing for the time of children and youth; and Highly qualified paid staff who require more than a subsistence level income are continuing to be in extremely short supply. The continuing shrinkage of regional staff and resources is forcing us to define more clearly our "core"

ministry so we can effectively focus time, energy and resources. Regional focus is divided and regional resources are inadequate. Something must “give.”

Simply, if camping is not a priority, then the region needs to find a way to disengage from it. However, if it is a priority, the region will need to launch a \$2 million capital campaign immediately, request churches to double their giving to camps, and let one of our staff spend a majority of their time on the camping program. The region's resources are too limited to be able to run both camps as they are right now. After discussion, the board voted unanimously to **authorize the President to appoint a special Task Force** assigned to discern the will of GRR churches and propose a plan of regional priorities regarding camping at the next meeting in May, and that such a Task Force should include at least one member of the Ministry of Planning & Review.

The board adjourned with prayer at 3:30 p.m., agreeing to meet next at 1:00 p.m. on Friday, May 22, 2009, at the Regional Resource Center in Springfield. Board members requested that Reg Mills give a brief presentation regarding the difference between United Mission and Specifics giving at the next meeting.