

# The American Baptist Churches of Nebraska

## Regional Profile

### Core Purpose Statement

*American Baptist churches in Nebraska are joined together as a Region in a covenant partnership (ABC/NE) to: encourage, challenge, and empower one another to be transforming Christian communities in the world.*

In order to understand how we intend to carry out this mission, consider the following notes of explanation:

**Covenant partnership:** a linking of autonomous churches into a cooperating regional structure within the American Baptist Churches USA.

**Encourage:** to encourage pastors, other professional church leaders, congregations and their leaders; to encourage self-care and continuing education and growth; to encourage and support congregations in times of transition, search, interims, conflict, and other times of need.

**Challenge:** to consistently raise up new possibilities for ministry.

**Empower:** to identify needs; to provide resources, services, and training; to link congregations where there is a need with one that has a resource; to help congregations be in relationship with one another and with others in the ABC-USA and the broader Christian community.

**Transforming Christian communities:** transforming individuals through the experience of new life in Christ; transforming congregations to be renewed communities for the worship of God, caring and mission; transforming the world through mission, outreach, witness, and working together.

Affirmed by the ABC of Nebraska at its annual meeting at Kearney, NE, Sept. 8, 2001

### Current Progress

The region has been active in helping churches reach their full kingdom potential through several vital church experiences, e.g. "The Good Soil Vitalization for Small Churches". Noteworthy is the fact that this initiative has run the course the region staff set, and still the churches continue to meet in order to resource, encourage and advance the principles for which they began. Another activity is the, "Churches Helping Churches" initiative. Through this initiative churches are encouraged to pray for one another and respond to one another's needs.

Thanks to a charitable gift that is known as the, "Carpenter's Fund" pastors from around the state are able to be revitalized by sending them to region and non-region sponsored events for the purpose of continuing education and to ensure pastoral preparedness and productivity.

### Youth

The region is responsible for helping coordinate and, or sponsor a number of youth events: "Spring Retreat" for Jr. High and High school students; "Youth convention" (this happens simultaneously during the annual business meeting each fall); "Senior High and Jr. High School camps" are a few of the region youth events.

## Demographics

There are 54 vibrant church communities predominantly in the eastern 3<sup>rd</sup> of the region; most of the congregations are within a two hour drive from the region office. However within the 54 churches there are 3 open country churches. The church in Scottsbluff is furthest away from the region office. The Scottsbluff church measures a distance of approximately 473 miles.

Historically, the Nebraska region has been made up of mostly European American churches with only a few African-American churches. Currently, we have a growing diversity in the region with a Sudanese congregation, a growing number of people from Burma: the Karen, Kachin, and Chin, and one Hispanic fellowship.

## History

The Nebraska Baptist State Convention was organized in 1867. The first Nebraska missionaries were Moses and Eliza Merrill who came to Nebraska Territory in 1833. The Merrill's are known to have built the oldest site built by man, and still standing, in the state of Nebraska. This is the Merrill Mission Site near Plattsmouth. The next Baptist missionary, Rev. J. G. Bowen, who worked in Nebraska City, came in 1855.

## Moses Merrill Camp & Conference Center

"Camp Moses Merrill" was established in 1943 and was given the name "Moses Merrill Baptist Camp". In 2002 construction began on a chapel, conference center, and a new twenty-seven bed lodge. Since their completion the region has begun to use the current name of "Moses Merrill Camp and Conference Center." This expansion has led to adding a full time staff person who coordinates the day-to-day activities, administrative operations, and supervision of staff. The development of Moses Merrill Camp and Conference Center, serves as a testimony, and evidence of the transformational potential in the Nebraska Region.

## Auxiliary Organizations

AB Men: The men of ABC Nebraska are well connected to one another because of joint service projects, cooperative fellowship and shared work projects. There is an annual men's retreat held in August. The men do take pride in the maintenance and oversight of the region's disaster relief trailer. The men are also involved in providing scholarships for seminary students.

AB women: AB women are also a very vital part in the mission work in the Nebraska region. The following are some of the activities that the AB women have been involved with. The AB Women host an annual June conference. They are also known for their mission projects that raise funds that go toward a specific mission project. The AB Women also provide a scholarship to young college bound women.

Overall our men and women are very active in missions.

## ABC/ NE Staff

Executive Minister/ Staff – Vacant

Associate Executive Minister – Rev. David Lundholm

Director Moses Merrill Camp and Conference Center – MaryBeth Robinson

Facilities Manager Moses Merrill Camp and Conference Center – Clarence Reiss

Office Staff Moses Merrill Camp and Conference Center – Trudy Reiss

#### Office Staff

Sue Gammel – Office Manager

Margaret Brown-Moore – Office Assistant

#### Volunteer in Missions thru ABC Home Mission Societies Grant

Rev. Richard Peterson – Pastor-to-Pastors East

Rev. Paul Kondy Pastor-to-Pastors West

#### Volunteers

Rev. A. J. Wagstaff - Church Life Consultant

Htoo May - Karen Outreach Adjunct

Kathy Brown Mission Consultant

Nola Oberhelman – Christian Education Consultant

Jason Workman – Emergency Services Consultant