



# • The Communicator •

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Dr. Marshall Peters, Executive Minister  
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## MID-AMERICAN BAPTIST WOMEN'S MINISTRIES EVENT

A one-day gathering of Mid-American Baptist Women and ABGirls was held at Dayton Oaks Camp on April 22, 2017. A special day camp was provided for the 19 children who also attended. More on pages 6 and 7.



## AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES CALL NEW GENERAL SECRETARY

The Rev. Dr. Lee Spitzer has been called as the new general secretary of the American Baptist Churches USA.

Dr. Spitzer began his service as General Secretary on June 1st, 2017, and will be preaching on Sunday morning, July 2nd, at the American Baptist Biennial Mission Summit in Portland, Oregon.

For the past 15 years, Dr. Spitzer has served as Executive Minister for the American Baptist Churches in New Jersey (ABCNJ). He has also served congregations in New Jersey, Nebraska, and Rhode Island.



*Many thanks to Ruth Yeaton for photos from both the Mid-American Baptist Women's Ministries and Prairie Pastors events.*



## PRAIRIE PASTORS

Close to one hundred pastors from Mid-American Baptist Churches, American Baptist Churches of Nebraska, American Baptist Churches of the Central Region, and American Baptist Churches of the Dakotas attended the Prairie Pastors Conference held April 24-26, 2017, at Sunset Hills Baptist Church in Omaha, NE.



## FROM THE EXECUTIVE MINISTER . . .



The editor of 'The Communicator' has been after me for the past week to write an editorial so we can get this issue off to the printer. However, even though I thought about it each day, I was not able to decide on a topic on which I wanted to write. I thought to myself that I couldn't just write about nothing. But then I thought

that if Jerry Seinfeld could make a show about nothing, maybe I should just start to write.

As I thought about this some more, I realized that I had fallen into the same trap that many of us do in our individual lives and corporately as the church. We don't know what to do or we are torn between competing ideas, so we end up doing nothing.

In recent years, our theme as American Baptists has been to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world. However, we are not able to accomplish this unless we first start to do something. Often churches talk about their vision for the future and start to get bogged down as they wonder whether or not they are on the correct path. As I work with congregations, I tell them it is better to start down a path and make corrections in the future than to just sit still waiting for

and fretting about the perfect path. As the old adage says, a rudder cannot steer a boat unless it is first moving in some direction.

As we read through the Gospels, we see that Jesus used his disciples to accomplish his purposes. We also see that the disciples often did not get things correct or even fully understand what was being asked of them. However, Jesus continued to lead them and guide them, even in the midst of whatever mistakes they were making.

*To begin,  
begin.  
Wordsworth*

God wants to do the same with us today. God wants us to get into action so that we can be led in the correct directions. The problem with doing nothing is that it can become a bad habit. We might find that it is easier to sit back and wait for signs that never come than to make an effort to move forward using the best information that we have.

My hope is that as we look towards the future, we might realize that we often do not definitively know what to do. But we should not use that as an excuse just to sit back and do nothing. Christ has given us the Great Commission which entails us being active in our world today. If we truly have faith, we will entrust our actions to God, knowing that if we go down a wrong path that God will be there to get us back on track.

In Christ's Peace,  
Marshall Peters

## WOMEN IN MINISTRY MEET FOR RENEWAL



The Mid-American Baptist Women in Ministry Retreat was held at Dayton Oaks on March 7th. Eleven women spent the day renewing their creative spirits in painting, prayer, and devotion.

Pictured at right, starting with the back row, are Brenda Stalbaum Martin, Janell Bloem, Susan Price, Kara Krohg; Alva Skiles, Sonja Van Dusseldorp, Carol Teare, Susan Russell, Ruth Yeaton; and Emily Beltrame. Also in attendance was Mary Robinson, not pictured.



## WOMEN IN MINISTRY IN HISTORY

On January 22, 1862, Lulu C. Fleming was born. She was the first female medical missionary and the first African-American woman to be appointed as a foreign missionary by Baptists. She served in the Congo from 1886-1899, and died from sleeping sickness that she contracted on the mission field. The American Baptist Historical Society has her correspondence while she was in the Congo and a biographical file which includes photographs.

One hundred sixty-six years ago, on February 28, 1851, Libbie Cilley Griffin was born. She became the first woman on record to be ordained by American Baptists in 1898 in New York state. She was a missionary in India 1873-1876, and in 1883-1893. The American Baptist Historical Society (ABHS) has her ordination certificate, marriage certificate, and many of her sermons and other writings. Go to the American Baptist Historical Society Facebook page for interesting tidbits of ABC history and personalities like these.



# BEHAVIOR YOU CAN EXPECT FROM YOUR PASTORAL LEADER

*A series by the Reverend Dr. Joe Kutter*

*Joe Kutter has served American Baptist churches in Michigan and Kansas. He is a past Executive Director of the American Baptist Ministers Council.*

Dear American Baptists,

With this letter, we'll begin our exploration of "The Covenant and Code of Ethics for Ministerial Leaders of American Baptist Churches." If you want to see the document as a whole, (which I heartily recommend), go to the website of the Ministers Council ([ministerscouncil.com](http://ministerscouncil.com)) or ask your pastor.

The Code of Ethics begins with these introductory paragraphs. Note that it is in the voice of the minister who is making the solemn promises.

***Having accepted God's call to leadership in Christ's church, I covenant with God to serve Christ and the Church and with the help of the Holy Spirit, to deepen my obedience to the Two Great Commandments: to love the Lord our God with all of my heart, soul, mind and strength and to love my neighbor as myself.***

***In affirmation of this commitment, I will abide by the Code of Ethics of the Ministers Council of the American Baptist Churches, and I will faithfully support its purposes and ideals. As further affirmation of my commitment, I covenant with my colleagues in ministry that we will hold one another accountable for the fulfillment of all public actions set forth in our Code of Ethics.***

The ordained leaders of whom I am one, who sign on to the Code, begin by affirming our vocational identity. We believe we have been called by God into the ministry of the church. Each one has a story to tell about the way that God touched his or her heart and summoned them into this ministry. Your ministers are a community of "The Called."

Your ministers have been called into ministry within the context of the American Baptist Churches. They covenant before God to honor this context for ministry by faithfully supporting our denomination's purposes and ideals.

The Code is primarily a document of behavior rather than theology. The core behavior, from which all other activities grow is this: your ministers promise to "deepen our obedience to the Two Great Commandments." How? "With the help of the Holy Spirit" which declares an eternal commitment to nurture an ongoing relationship with our God.

Your ministers affirm that they are in ministry together. They have entered into a community of sacred relationships. In the first paragraph, they decide that this is a covenant with God. "I covenant with my colleagues in ministry..." Within the context of our American Baptist family, they make a solemn and holy agreement with their brothers and sisters in ministry. They affirm, even celebrate, that no pastor is ever alone in the ministerial journey but each agrees to share the journey with colleagues who have heard and answered the call.

Finally, your ministers affirm that they are in a community of mutual accountability. "We will hold one another accountable for fulfillment of all the public actions set forth in our Code of Ethics." Each one agrees to be accountable to the standards which are set forth in our code.

## FIRST BAPTIST ST. PAUL SENDS MISSIONARIES TO BURMA

In early April 2017, Giri Tun Kasuh, Cecilia Oberg, and Mishiah Wah went as short-term missionaries from First Baptist Church in St. Paul, MN, to Burma. They spent several weeks teaching English to students in the Dawei Myeik Karen Baptist Association Churches.

Two hundred ninety students, grades 5 to college, participated in the lessons. Despite the heat and the over-crowded classrooms, the teaching went well. Each of the three teachers re-created her or his plans daily to meet the students' needs. The students accepted a style of instruction that required individual participation instead of straight lecture style. Some singing was included in every lesson, as the students loved to sing and sang beautifully.

*From a report by Cecilia Oberg*



## IOWA RELIGIOUS MEDIA CENTER CELEBRATES 31 YEARS OF MINISTRY

Iowa Religious Media Services (IRMS) marked its 31st Anniversary at its 2017 Annual Meeting and Re-Covenanting Service held on Wednesday, February 15, 2017, at the Iowa United Methodist Conference Center.

Among those representing the Mid-American Baptist Churches at the gathering were Marshall Peters, Executive Minister; Gary Martin, Associate Region Minister; Jim Laupp, outgoing IRMS board president; David Russell, IRMS board member; Emily Beltrame, IRMS Preview committee Facilitator; and June Peters, IRMS bookkeeper.

In her annual report, Sharon Strohmaier, Executive Director of IRMS, shared several startling statistics regarding the viability of small town Iowa. Half of the

communities in Iowa have populations of 500 or less, 600 towns in Iowa have no schools due to consolidations or closings, and 700 towns no longer have a grocery store. Community gathering places are also at risk – those gathering places include churches. Building on observations made throughout the last three years, Strohmaier reminded the gathering that an elegant solution is one that yields the maximum result in the simplest, most effective manner. IRMS partners in ministry, providing essential resources at a minimum cost, Connecting the Dots between denomination, church and community, and providing the elegant solution needed.

With the challenges faced by churches now, also come wonderful opportunities prompting innovative thought. Those denominations and congregations that will not only survive these challenges but thrive are those that seize the opportunity of every available resource.

Iowa Religious Media Services continues a long tradition of service, offering over 10,000 resource titles to subscribing churches and their individual members at no additional cost. Non-subscribers may also use IRMS resources for a nominal weekly rental fee. To learn more about IRMS or to search the complete catalog for other resources of interest, go to [www.irms.org](http://www.irms.org), email [questions@irms.org](mailto:questions@irms.org), or call 515.277.2920.



*The six covenanting denomination representatives as well as IRMS Executive Director, Sharon Strohmaier, pledge continued covenantal support to IRMS.*

## FOREST LAKE CAMP WORK WEEK

Before the busy camp season, our Region camps have a lot to do to prepare. In early May, volunteers from thirteen different churches came to Forest Lake Camp to clean up, spruce up, and fix up the facilities. Thirty projects were completed by the workers.

To get ready for summer, workers repaired a shower and an entryway, and cleaned gutters, repaired, and painted several cabins. Wood surfaces on the Lodge and entrance were stained.

Campers will enjoy using the repaired carpet ball tables, the cleared basketball court, and the new GaGa ball game pit, built by the volunteers.



The grounds had a lot of attention as the trails were groomed, outdoor chapel benches replaced, trash pile burned, and a new flag pole was installed. At the beach, the lake overflow was cleared, swimming safety rope was installed, and the beach was groomed.

Camp Manager Shawn Ott organized the supplies needed, and his wife Teresa prepared all the meals each day for the volunteers. Mealtime donations were received and totaled \$987, a reflection of the investment made financially as well as physically by the volunteers. Many thanks to all who support our region camps, Forest Lake and Dayton Oaks!

*From a report by Gary Morrison*





# CHURCH NEWS

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On April 30, **Bethany Baptist Church** hosted “A Sunday of Celebration” at its former house of worship located at 201 McKinley Avenue in Ottumwa, IA. The service was a celebration of how God moved and memories were made for the last 53 years at the McKinley Avenue location, and God's bright vision for the future as Bethany Baptist partners with Church of the Brethren.

Dr. Marshall Peters presented Appreciation Awards to Rev. Marion and Delphia McCoy and Rev. Dale and Nada Shadonix. These faithful church members have served Bethany Baptist in many ways over the years.

The two churches now worship together in the Brethren building, under the leadership of **Pastor Tim Curtiss**, and are moving towards a full union of their two congregations. The churches look forward to their partnership in worshiping God and making disciples of Jesus Christ.

**Rev. Dave Byrd** was installed as pastor of the **First Baptist Church of Oelwein, IA**, on Sunday, May 21st. Dr. Marshall Peters, Mid-American Baptist Executive Minister, took part in the service. Rev. Byrd had previously served churches in Illinois and the Hillcrest Baptist-Brethren Church in Fredericksburg, IA.



We extend our sympathy to the family of **Neoma Wonderlich**, who passed away April 8, 2017. Neoma was a lifelong member of Ollie Baptist Church (IA) where she gave much of her time and talents. She also served in various leadership positions in the area and region, including that of President of Mid-American Baptist Women's Ministries.

We are sorry to share that **Rev. Malcolm E. VanAntwerp** passed away on June 1, 2017. Pastor Van served churches in Des Moines, Indianola, Knoxville, Pella, Independence, Keokuk, Chariton, Cambria, Humeston, and Oskaloosa, as well as pastoring on an interim basis after his retirement. A funeral service was held Saturday, June 10, at First Baptist Church of Greater Des Moines, IA.



**Woodbury Baptist Church**, Woodbury, MN, planned and hosted a ski weekend for Mid-American Baptist youth. When participants were not on the slopes, group activities and games kept the group engaged.

**Rev. Royce Jones** has been selected to receive the Distinguished Service Award from Ottawa University. This will be awarded to him at the Awards Banquet on October 20, 2017, at Ottawa University in Ottawa, KS.



**Forest Lake Camp** is looking for “like new” copies of the New International Version (NIV) Bible to give to campers.

Contact Christian Krogh by email at [forestlake@mid-abc.org](mailto:forestlake@mid-abc.org) or call 605-940-5572.

More than a dozen churches in Pella, IA, cooperate to put on one huge **Vacation Bible School** for preschool to 6th grade children. First Baptist partners with St. Mary's Catholic Church to lead the 4th grade sessions, and because they have a new group of 4th grade kids each year, they have used the same curriculum for eight years. The churches share leadership responsibilities, and they decide on a local and an international mission for the VBS offering.

## MID-ABC QUILTERS RETREAT



*Mark your calendars - next Quilters' Retreat will be November 9-11, 2017, at Dayton Oaks Camp.*



# MID-AMERICAN BAPTIST WOMEN'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE



The M-ABW Annual Conference was held Saturday, April 22nd, at Dayton Oaks Camp. Rev. Janell Bloem led the Bible study with the topic, "Love Never Gives Up." A time of worship and music was led by President Susan Price and Rev. Carol Teare. The ABGirls had time for a session of their own, and a day camp was provided for the 19 children that attended. After lunch and the business meeting, hands-on projects gave everyone an opportunity to serve.



*Dayton Oaks Camp was "showered" with supplies for the upcoming camp season.*

## EVERYONE CAN HELP WITH WHITE CROSS PROJECTS

Sunday, March 26th, Altamont Baptist Church had a White Cross work day following the morning worship service. The congregation rolled 277 roller bandages and bundled 115 packages of 4" x 4" cotton squares (5,750 total squares) to be sent to the Congo. Fifteen bundles of quilt blocks (1,500 total quilt blocks) were also packaged to finish fulfilling the overland request to Stewart Community Baptist Church in Carson City, NV. Everyone in the church got involved as the children filled 12 school bags to be sent to Church World Service.





# MID-AMERICAN BAPTIST WOMEN'S MINISTRIES



## Christ Has A New Gift Each Second

Changes can be difficult and sometimes they may be needed in order to move forward. But

Christ has a new gift each second for us to discover. Changes are coming to AB Women's Ministries in our Region. At our April 22, 2017 business meeting at Dayton Oaks Camp, we voted to reorganize our 5 Areas and make a *change*. We will now have 3 Areas; MN North, IA East, and IA West. This move will strengthen our Areas and give support to the women who are struggling to fill positions or who want to step



down from their Area responsibilities but haven't been able to because there wasn't anyone to step up and continue the work. This change from 5 to 3 will take time but many women have said that they are ready to combine, continue to encourage and empower women and girls, and make the change.

Get ready for Women's Day! Come and gather with women for a day of worship and celebration on the opening day of the Biennial Mission Summit of American Baptist Churches USA on Friday, June 30, 2017 in Portland, Oregon. Register by June 15 by visiting [www.abwministries.org/womensday](http://www.abwministries.org/womensday).

### Give!

**National Support** – 100% of your gift is used for AB Women's Ministries to provide ministries that empower women and girls to serve Christ. Women who give \$120 or more a year to National Support are recognized as **Vital Partners**.

**The Women and Girls Mission Fund** – your gift provides support to AB Girls, Leadership Development Fund, and Refit.

**Love Gift** – is an over-and-above offering to the United Mission support of the American Baptist family. Love Gift began during the Great Depression when the denomination faced a deficit and the women challenged one another to raise enough funds to cover that deficit. AB Women's Ministries is celebrating Love Gift's 85th anniversary with a new silver offering box. Go to [www.abwministries.org](http://www.abwministries.org) to order the silver Love Gift boxes.

Susan Price  
Mid-America ABWM President

## AREA III RALLY

On Saturday, April 1st, the Area III Women gathered together at Forest Lake Camp for their Spring Rally. The theme of the event was "To Go, Love, Share." Guest speaker Marcia Street from Cedar Falls, IA, spoke about her most recent mission trips to Deborah House and the Philippines. The meeting was well attended, with 41 women (3 girls) representing 12 churches. A lunch of soup and salad lunch was enjoyed

Pictured below are the items brought by the women as a "shower" for the upcoming camp season at Forest Lake.



## REGION PROJECT UPDATE



Rainbow Acres

There is still time to contribute to our 2016-2017 Region Project goal of \$1000 for Rainbow Acres, which ministers to developmentally disabled adults, and \$2000 to help bring Friendship House administrator Rev. Matt Lundgren to our Region this fall to tell us more about the ministry in Billings, MT.



Love Gift Totals as of April 2017  
YTD - \$3,187.29  
Last YTD - \$4,119.61

The **COMMUNICATOR**



# One Great Hour OF SHARING

The One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering supports disaster relief, development projects, and refugee ministries of the American Baptist Churches and its partners, making the love of Christ real for individuals and communities around the world who suffer the effects of disaster, conflict, poverty or severe economic hardship, and for those who find themselves refugees or displaced within their home country.



## SPECIAL PRESENTATION

On April 23 at First Baptist of Pella, IA, Lovena Van Haaften presented Ken Hoksbergen with a Quilt of Valor made by Mid-American Baptist quilters at one of their retreats, and quilted by Catherine Parrish. Ken's family was in attendance and had kept the presentation a secret.

In 1969 his country called and Ken Hoksbergen enlisted in the Army. After basic training in Fort Hood, TX, he shipped out for Vietnam. Ken spent most of his tour walking point, leading his squad on patrols. Ken was awarded the Bronze Star. He was discharged in 1971. Thank you, Ken, for your service!

# IA & MN YOUTH! SAVE THE DATE



JOIN US FOR  
THE MID-ABC  
REGION YOUTH EVENT!

*This is an opportunity for youth from across Iowa and Minnesota to come together for a WEEKEND OF WORSHIP, PRAYER, GAMES WORKSHOPS, PRAYER AND FUN!*

In Cedar Rapids, IA  
at The Church on  
Northland

(FIRST BAPTIST  
CHURCH -  
CHURCH OF THE  
BRETHREN)

Don't miss  
this unique  
opportunity  
to connect!

**F** FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK FOR UPDATES!  
<https://www.facebook.com/RegionYouthEvent>

### THE COMMUNICATOR

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