

ABCOM Board Report 2011

Rev. Dr. Alfred J. Fletcher
Regional Resource Minister

It is a privilege to serve as your Regional Resource Minister. The call to affirm, support and challenge the local church in mission is rewarding and creative work. The American Baptist Churches of Maine in 2011 furthered the cause of our Divine Redeemer.

The decisions of the Annual Meetings and the work of the Board since 2008 have changed our organization significantly. The work of the Board in 2011 continues to encourage the American Baptist Churches of Maine to adapt changes that encourage collaborative work, shared vision and leadership.

China Lake Conference Center is an important priority for the Board. The Board determined to work with the China Lake Camp encouraging them to develop a business plan that would assume responsibility for the China Lake Conference Center properties and management. The Board encouraged the formation of a China Lake Conference Center Transitional Committee to assist the China Lake Camp. The Board also determined to take the necessary steps to prepare the China Lake Conference Center properties for sale. The current economic realities and real estate market is not conducive for sale. The China Lake Conference Center is able to function and maintain properties through its rental operations. There continues to be "enough flour and oil" in the jug.

In agreement with the ABCUSA's covenant of relationships the mission portion of our accounting was audited by a certified public accountant. The Board also voted to change its Rules of Procedure by calling into being an External Review and Internal Review of ABCOM's financial records. A review is not as comprehensive as an audit. It is thorough in its scope and does provide a management letter. Through this course of action, the Board recognizes significant savings while acting to insure its trust.

The Board hired Alice Casey as our Mission Bookkeeper.

The Board thanked Denise Bond for her years of faithful service to the American Baptist Churches of Maine.

The Board ratified with regret the Bowdoinham Association's acceptance of the request of the Sabattus Community Church to withdraw from their Association.

The work of associations continues to be lifted up in the Board meeting. Many new and creative endeavors are underway.

The Board issued a grant to the South Aroostook Association. The grant in cooperation with South Aroostook support enabled the Selden Baptist Church to provide worship services throughout the summer.

The Board in cooperation with the Cumberland Association identified Central Square Baptist Church as a "Church Restart". Working with Central Square Baptist Churches' leaders and Cumberland Association leadership, Central Square is developing partnerships in a renewed sense of mission.

The Board in cooperation with the Kennebec Baptist Association is currently engaged in a new church planting project. The Kennebec Baptist Association is engaged in a process of discovery. The results of this process will develop into specific actions as they seek to implement a process in planting a church in their association.

Rev. Glynis LaBarre was added to our list of our “Maine Go Global Missionaries”. Rev. LaBarre is a missionary with the Board of the American Baptist Home Missions Society and has been instrumental in helping our American Baptist Churches discover missional church learnings.

The work of strategic planning continues to shift from the Board to the Associations. The work of coordinating association efforts, identifying areas of support, and enabling the American Baptist Churches of Maine to recognize the tremendous change that has occurred and the changes that continue to occur in our culture and among our churches constitutes the primary work of our Board.

Most observers have noted that the church in North America has entered a season of challenges the likes of which none of us living have seen before. This process probably began in the 70’s and has only accelerated and intensified since then. No denomination, including American Baptists, has been immune. We hear words like tsunami, perfect storm, meltdown, and earthquake to describe the world of the church in North America. But this is fundamentally not about denominational structures. It is about churches. Something new is emerging. The question before the churches of North America is whether we have the discernment to identify where the Spirit of God is leading and the courage to actually join the journey.

This is also an opportune time for American Baptists to engage such a process of discovery because we have just adopted a new style of national organization. Our old patterns of working together are gone. We need to develop new patterns of working together that are more in tune with our changing world.

God, who makes all things new, is calling the American Baptist Churches of Maine to new work, in new ways, and to new discoveries of His grace, mercy and peace.