

## Baptist Heritage Center Annual Report

*One generation shall laud your works to another,  
and shall declare your mighty acts. Psalm 145:4*

The purpose of the Rhode Island Baptist Heritage Center is to help our American Baptist Churches of Rhode Island to connect the past with the present, ever looking to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with each generation of the future.

In the fall of 2013, we conducted the Baptist Polity course for those in our churches who want to learn more about being an American Baptist. The course is taught over three sessions focusing on Baptist History, Baptist Principles, Baptist Polity, and ABC Denominational Structure.

This year the meetings were held at the Meeting House of the First Baptist Church in America on September 28 and at Meadowwood Conference Center on October 26 and November 30. The instructors were Charles Hartman, J. Stanley Lemons, and Donald Rasmussen. For the session on Baptist polity, Kathryn Palen, chair of the Standing Committee on the Ministry, Bob Auld, president of ABCORI, and Peggy Johnson, past president of ABCUSA, contributed their insights and knowledge of Baptist structures and the ordination process.

Originally, eighteen students enrolled in the polity course, but four, for various reasons, withdrew. Four of those who completed the program were taking the course to fulfill a requirement for ordination, but one of them failed the course. The other participants took the course for their own enlightenment and pleasure. The ordination candidates were required to read a number of books, papers, and articles and to make reports that were evaluated by the instructors. The level of the work required was what anyone taking a graduate-level course would be expected to do. Those taking the course as an “auditor” were encouraged, but not required, to read the books and do the assigned essays and reports. As was true when the course was first offered in 2011, some of the “auditors” read and wrote papers.

The students taking it for ordination:

Myria Conationi  
Linda Moore  
Darcia Parham  
Michele Sullivan  
Melanie Towle  
Kurt Ward

The others enrolled in the course:

Dr. Nancy Austin  
Nancy Bancroft  
William Cotton  
Rev. Reppa Cottrell  
Nancy Cyr-Larson  
Vonnie Dutton  
Rev. Paul R. Ford  
Rev. Betsy Aldrich Garland  
Theodus Jordan  
Mark Lindsay  
Roy Savasta  
Rev. Walter Smothers

The Texts for the course included the following:

- Edwin Gaustad, *Liberty of Conscience: Roger Williams in America*.
- Sydney James, *The Legacies of John Clarke*.
- Everett Goodwin, *Down by the Riverside*.
- Walter Shurden, *Four Fragile Freedoms*.
- Wm. Brackney, *A Capsule History of Baptist Principles*.
- Edwin Gaustad, "Where are the Lions When You Need Them?" *Christian History*, Vol 4, No. 2.
- 1663 Covenant of the church in Swansea
- Maring & Hudson's *A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice*
- Wm. Brackney, *The Genetic History of Baptist Thought*
- By-laws and manuals of local churches

Looking to the November of 2014 - we are planning to hold a conference focusing on Baptist Hymns and how they shaped our worship and lives.

In conclusion, let me say that the Baptist Heritage Center is here to serve our local ABCORI churches by answering questions about preserving vital church records as well being a resource for learning more about our rich RI Baptist heritage that began in 1638. To contact the BHC email the Rev Paul Hanson at [ubcnp@verizon.net](mailto:ubcnp@verizon.net) or by calling 401-847-3210.

Respectfully submitted  
Rev. Dr. Paul M Hanson

The following are the Officers and Board members of the Baptist Heritage Center.

2014 - 2015

**Officers**

**President:** Rev. Dr. Paul M. Hanson  
*United Baptist Church*

**Vice-President:** Rev Dr. Charles Hartman  
*First Baptist Swansea*

**Secretary:** Nancy Bancroft  
*Wakefield Baptist*

**Treasurer:** Don Waterman  
*Berean Baptist Church*

**Board of Directors**

**2015** Rev. James C. Miller  
*Emmanuel Baptist Church*

Rev. Delphain Demosthenes  
*Memorial Baptist Church, Seekonk MA*

**2016** Rev. Clay Berry  
*Wakefield Baptist Church<sup>9</sup>*

**2016** Rev. Dr. Johnny M. Wilson, Jr.  
*Olney Street Baptist Church*

**2017** Dr. J. Stanley Lemons  
*First Baptist Church in America*

Rev Stephen E. Hollaway  
*First Baptist Church, Block Island*

**BHC TREASURER'S REPORT as of 02-11-2014**

Beginning balance as of last report 12-8-2013		\$4670.67
Withdrawals 1 check		\$100.00
Deposits		\$ 30.00
Balance as of	02-11--2014	\$4600.67

Respectfully submitted  
Don Waterman