

AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF RHODE ISLAND
BOARD OF MINISTRIES MEETING
September 9, 2023

Minutes

The regular meeting of the ABCORI Board of Ministries was held at Phillips Memorial Baptist Church, Cranston, on September 9, 2023. Meeting location was moved from Oak Lawn Community Baptist due to a heatwave and that church's lack of air conditioning.

Present: Rev. Dr. Cal Lord, President; Eva Irby-Davis, Vice President; David Dolce, Treasurer; Lynne Linden, Clerk; Rev. Dr. Courtney Davis Olds, Executive Minister; Rev. Kathryn Palen, Associate Executive Minister; Beth Berry, Robert Butzier, Rev. Darin Collins, Joanne Brown, Jan Fletcher, James Ellison, Judy Butzier, Rev. Leigh Johnson, and Rev. George Barclay.

Call to Order: President Cal Lord called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

Devotional Moment and opening prayer: Rev. Lord opened the meeting with a meditation based on Scripture from Luke and with prayer.

Spotlight on Oaklawn Community Baptist Church: Judy and Bob Butzier were invited to share the history of Oaklawn Community Baptist Church.

Norms for Healthy, Respectful Conversations: In preparation for the coming discussions, Kathryn Palen detailed the following guidelines that she and Courtney have been using with various congregations:

- Approach as discussion rather than debate
- Everyone participates
- Put aside preconceived ideas
- Respect
- Speak for self
- Take only allotted time
- Assume the best
- Define your terms

Kathryn also reviewed the Board of Ministry Covenant and reprised the terms of the covenant.

Finance Trends: Courtney reviewed the financial trends covering the past 10 years for ABCORI. She provided the following handouts: Income Trends, Profit & Loss Prev Year Comparison for the Region, and Profit & Loss Prev Year Comparison for Canonicus Camp & Conference Center. It was stated that a draw of 4.5% on the available investment funds is standard but additional funds have been drawn to cover operating costs for Canonicus Camp & Conference Center. It was noted that there has been a net deficit for the Canonicus Camp & Conference Center for most of the past 10 years, and records indicate net deficits for many years in the decades prior.

Treasurer's Report – David Dolce gave a report on the current budget. He indicated that revenue is not meeting expenses. ABCORI has been just making payroll. David reported that, per Alliance Bernstein, the PIF has been stable due to a positive return in the market. *See attached report.*

Report of the Property Task Force – David Coon reported that this task force was charged with compiling options regarding Canonicus Camp and Conference Center. The task force hasn't completed this work yet. They have reviewed several options. The task force needs to obtain more information that will require expenditures and they request a budget of \$15,000. See Memorandum to the Board of Ministries from Dave Coon, Chair of the Property Task Force.

After several questions and a discussion, Joanne Brown made a Motion to provide the Property Task Force with up to \$15,000 to obtain the necessary information needed to give a more accurate assessment to the Board. Jan Fletcher seconded the motion, and it was passed by a voice vote.

Old Business:

- **Presentation of the Mission Statement** – George Barclay, chair of the Purpose Task Force, presented the mission statement as it was presented at the June 12th meeting. Discussion followed.

A motion was then made by George Barclay on behalf of the Purpose Task Force to change the language in the statement from "...and serves as a prophetic voice to and on behalf of American Baptists in Rhode Island" to "and serves as a prophetic voice to and on behalf of *its congregations*. This motion was passed.

A motion was made by George Barclay on behalf of the Purpose Task Force to accept the following mission statement for ABCORI:

With a commitment to proclaiming good news and transforming lives, American Baptist Churches of Rhode Island (ABCORI) resources member churches; equips congregational leaders; promotes shared ministry; and serves as a prophetic voice to and on behalf of its congregations.

The motion to accept the above statement was passed by a show of hands with 10 in favor and 1 against.

- **Update of meeting with Dan Hotchkiss** – The workshop with Dan Hotchkiss will take place at Warwick Central Baptist Church on October 14, 2023 from 9:00 to 4:00. Cal outlined what Dan will be presenting and what the Board will be doing with the information presented. Courtney indicated that Dan will present a written assessment to the Board.

Reports:

- **Executive Minister's Report** – see attached written report. ABCORI's financial situation is precarious. Most resources and staff are tied up with the Camp & Conference Center. If camp and conference-activities are to continue, there would need to be a sufficient budget and increased staff. Discussion followed. Regarding ABCORI's summer activities, Courtney noted the experiment of the Global Mission Camp was a success.
- **Finance Committee** – A decision was made to move the Pooled Investment Fund from Alliance Bernstein to the American Baptist Foundation, which will reduce administrative and management costs since custodial functions would be handled by the Foundation. However, the American Baptist Foundation cannot handle margin loans and there were two margin loans in place. The first loan was taken in 2020 to fund operating expenses. The second was taken in 2022 to cover costs of the Lake Adams Dam Repair Project that exceeded the amount raised by donations and grants.

A loan was applied for from the American Baptist Extension Corporation, however the Finance Committee determined that cash flow was not sufficient to make monthly repayments. Instead, after

extensive discussion and reinforcement of the Finance Committee's belief that moving the Fund management and paying off the Margin loan were in the best interests of ABCORI, several fully unrestricted accounts or specific use accounts were identified and closed. This followed a review of ABCORI's financial situation and careful consideration by the Finance Committee. Monies to pay off the loans were drawn from ABCORI's accounts in the pooled investment fund.

With these loans paid, ABCORI no longer carries debt or is subject to rising interest rates. The Finance committee is also working on bringing the Baptist Fund back on line.

New Business:

- **Emmanuel Baptist Contingent Mortgage** – Emmanuel Baptist Church is in the process of dissolving the church and distributing its assets. ABCORI was contacted by an attorney representing the church when it was discovered that the RI Baptist State Convention (precursor to ABCORI) and the American Baptist Home Mission Society held a contingent mortgage on the property. The attorney, on behalf of Emmanuel Baptist Church, asked ABCORI to discharge the contingent mortgage so that the property may be sold. There was a discussion regarding the proposed discharge of Emmanuel Baptist Church's contingent mortgage. Judy Butzier made the following Motion:

To allow ABCORI to discharge Emmanuel Baptist Church's contingent mortgage so Emmanuel Baptist Church can sell its property.

The motion was passed with 8 in favor.

- **2024 Annual Gathering Weekend** – The Annual Gathering will be held on March 7 and 8, 2024. Friday evening will be a pastors' gathering and Saturday will be an all-day event with fellowship, workshops, Bible study, and the annual business meeting held in the afternoon concluding with a worship service.

Minutes of June 12, 2023: The amended minutes of the June 12th meeting of the Board of Ministries were reviewed. A Motion to accept the minutes as amended was made by George Barclay. The motion was passed unanimously by voice vote.

Next meeting: Workshop with Dan Hotchkiss at Warwick Central Baptist Church on October 14, 2023 from 9:00 to 4:00.

Adjournment: A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Joanne Brown at 11:56 AM. The motion was passed by a show of hands.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynne Linden
Clerk