

**AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF RHODE ISLAND
BOARD OF MINISTRIES MEETING**

Approved Minutes

April 25, 2022

The meeting was conducted via Zoom.

Present: President Beth Berry; Rev. Dr. Clayton Lord, Vice President; Rev. Dr. Courtney Davis Olds, Executive Minister; David Coon, Esq., Treasurer; Rev. Kathryn Palen, Associate Executive Minister for Elder Care Ministries; Rev. Wendy Kiefer-O'Brien, Past President; Robert Butzier; Judy Butzier; Rev. Dr. Daniel Cottrell; Rev. Leigh Johnson; Jan Fletcher, Representative to the ABC-USA Board of General Ministries and Lynne Linden, BOM Clerk.

Opening Devotion: President Berry opened the meeting with a devotion speaking of how our life's events and people make impressions upon us and how this was represented in the making of Pysanki, Ukrainian Easter Eggs. The making of the Pysanki made Beth think of Kathryn Palen. Beth said how impressed she was with Kathryn's gift to bring out God's beauty in the lives of others as she works with those in their third third of life. She quoted Ecclesiastes 3:11, "God has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men, yet they cannot fathom the work that God has done from beginning to end." Beth indicated that a beautiful Pysanka she had created was in honor of Kathryn for her work and to thank God for her. The egg was completed as the Board members watched to reveal all the W words from Kathryn's Lenten coffee chat.

Call to Order: President Berry called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.

Approval of Minutes from March 28, 2022: The minutes of the March 28, 2022 meeting were approved with one correction. The minutes listed President Berry as having made a motion to accept the nomination of Sue Colantonio to the Investment Committee. This is not allowed under Roberts' Rules of Order. President Berry had entertained a motion. This correction was made in the minutes. President Berry entertained a motion to approve the corrected minutes. Moved by Rev. Wendy Kiefer-O'Brien; Seconded by Jan Fletcher. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Continuing Business:

- **Treasurer's Report** –The Treasurer's Report and the Financial Statement as of March, 2022 had been provided to the Board by email for review. There were no questions. A motion to receive the report and file it for audit was made by Jan Fletcher; Seconded by Bob Butzier. The motion was carried.
- **Committees**

○ Operations Team

Bob Butzier presented the Board with a Recommendation from the Operations Team.

MOVED: That the Operations Team recommends to the Board of Ministries that the Properties Committee be authorized to spend up to \$25,000 to make enumerated repairs and improvements approved by the Operations Team in respect to the HVAC at Meadowwood, the walk-in freezer and the walk-in cooler and that the expenditures be paid by liquidating assets in the Pooled Fund.

Items enumerated:

1. New HVAC System at Meadowwood \$14,200 (see attached proposal)
2. Walk-in freezer: Used unit available: 4 years old at \$4,500
3. Walk-in cooler: Repair existing unit at \$5,000

Total: \$23,700

These non-budgeted expenses are not operating expenses and would usually fall under Capital Expenses but ABCORI doesn't have a Capital Expense budget. The Operations Team believes all three items are necessary for either conferencing or camping activities going forward. The HVAC unit currently in operation is with a company that has proprietary rights to repair the unit. Operations obtained a quote for a new unit through a company without a proprietary right to repair. The freezer is to be replaced with a four (4) year old unit that is in good shape and the maintenance of the refrigerant for that unit will be much less expensive than the current model.

It was asked if the roof on Meadowwood will be able to accommodate the new unit. Bob said it would be sufficient and had held the current unit for the last twenty-five (25) years but additional support, if needed, was part of the quote. It was asked if the roof had been replaced within the last twenty-five years and the answer was no. Bob stated that the Operations Team believes all the items are necessary in order for Camp Canonicus and Conference Center to move forward, no matter what direction that would take. The amount was rounded to \$25,000 to cover contingencies.

President Berry called for a vote and the recommendation was carried unanimously.

○ SCOM

Rev. Davis Olds said the group had several new members and discussed the purpose of SCOM and reviewed the candidates in the ordination process. There was discussion in regard to how seminary students are receiving their theological field education in light of the shift to more online education and how SCOM and the region might be of help. This will be an on-going item on their agenda. There were no questions.

● **Reports from Staff**

- Elder Care Ministries

Rev. Kathryn Palen made a correction to her emailed report regarding the date that Rev. Wendy Kiefer-O'Brien had retired. Rev. Kiefer-O'Brien retired on April 24, 2022, not April 22, and Philips Memorial notified Kathryn that they had voted to call Rev. Amy Chilton as their new settled pastor on this same date.

Kathryn said the first registration has been received for "*A Grand Adventure: Stories, Steps & Stars.*" The first grandchild registered for this program has Down's syndrome and Kathryn feels this experience may fill some gaps for this population.

Courtney complimented Kathryn's use of the quote by Mr. Rogers in her report.

- Executive Minister

Courtney told the Board that she and Nate have successfully moved and are settling in and getting to know Rhode Island and the ABCORI churches. She has been attending many meetings, asking a lot of questions and is getting a sense of the organization and the needs of the member churches. There were no initial questions before Courtney presented her report.

"The most pressing issue facing American Baptist Churches of Rhode Island, as an organization, is its financial status. The organization has operated a deficit budget for a significant number of years. 2022 is no different. And that does not include the significant debt ABCORI has taken on to repair the Lake Adams dam. Doug Harris performed an extensive financial evaluation during his time as Interim Executive Minister, and his conclusion was that ABCORI has 3-5 years remaining if the financial situation is not turned around. I suspect the reality is closer to 3 years than it is to 5. If ABCORI is to remain viable as an organization, its finances must be turned around.

There are many pieces to that, such as the issue that Treasure Coon has brought up previously regarding the lack of clarity around ABCORI's finances, in terms of our restricted and unrestricted funds and if we have as much money as we think we have. But perhaps the biggest, most obvious, is the Camp and Conference Center.

The 300+ acres of Canonicus Camp and Conference Center are both the region's biggest asset and its biggest expense. In terms of expense, the cost of owning and operating these grounds is roughly equal to the region's yearly deficit. (Again, I am relying on the calculations from Doug which looked specifically at the pre-pandemic years of 2017, 2018, and 2019.) In terms of asset, these 300+ acres are valuable financially, without question. But they also hold emotional and spiritual value. As I said in the Connections newsletter, Canonicus is a special place. And so many people have memories of connecting with God and nature on these grounds.

The most straightforward way to rectify ABCORI's financial situation would be to eliminate its biggest expense and sell its biggest asset. Judging from conversations I've had over the past 3 weeks and from the findings of the ABCORI Ministries at Canonicus Task Force, though, no one loves the idea of selling Canonicus Camp and Conference Center.

So that means Canonicus must become profitable. These 300+ acres must not simply "break even," they must generate revenue on an ongoing basis. Revenue that can be put back into the care and upkeep of the grounds, certainly, and also revenue that can be used to further the ministries of ABCORI and provide programming that is valuable to the pastors and churches in the region.

Another pressing issue: Part of the reality at ABCORI is that Kathryn is the only programming person and one person can only provide the churches and pastors so much in terms of programs. There is a lack of programming and a lack of clear value for pastors and churches. What is the benefit of being part of ABCORI? I don't have a clear answer. We help during times of transition and when churches are looking for a new pastor. We need to work on that. This issue will be taken up in a future meeting."

Courtney proposed that, over the next year, very intentional steps are taken to make Canonicus profitable and that will be through the conferencing side since research has shown that camping programs on their own are not profitable. Camping can continue to be offered but at this time the focus needs to be on building and expanding conferencing through looking at fee structures, outreach and marketing for the use of Meadowwood, in which the BOM has just approved a substantial investment. And it will require some experimentation and some changes in practices. But either the Board of Ministries commits to this experiment or faces the reality of selling the grounds sooner rather than later.

It would help to reactivate the Canonicus Facebook page. Due to the lack of staff available to handle this task, a volunteer is needed. Courtney asked that any member of the Board of Ministries or person in one of the member churches interested in taking this on to please contact her.

It was asked if we have anything to offer for conferences other than the grounds and buildings. Courtney said that, at this time, we have the grounds, facilities and good food.

It was mentioned that, currently, there is a Camp Canonicus group on Facebook and it was asked if this was the page that needed updating. Courtney said no, this is not the official page but a group of former staff and alumni associated with Canonicus and it would be less confusing if they called themselves Friends of Canonicus. Cal Lord indicated that he has experience with Facebook and would be interested in helping with the Canonicus' Facebook page and would be glad to talk more with Courtney.

It was asked what was needed to increase conferencing use and will it require financial commitment. Courtney said there would definitely be a financial commitment. There has already been a commitment made in replacing the dam and investing in repairs at Meadowwood. It was stated that outreach to groups looking for conferencing facilities will be necessary. Kathryn said that careful records are being kept while the program, "A Grand Adventure" is being held to detail the expenses incurred during the use of the property. This will help determine if such a program is profitable. Courtney said a different accounting structure will also be needed to keep track of expenses in regard to the use of the property. President Berry said this may be part of what is provided by the new financial person being sought.

Discussion took place regarding camping and conferencing in general. There are alternative ways to use the property, in the idea of BoldRDash. This will be an experiment to see if Canonicus can be profitable.

Old Business

- Installation of New Executive Minister

President Berry asked when plans should be made for the official installation of the new Executive Minister. It was suggested that the Board allow Courtney to make the decision as to when she would like to have this scheduled. This item will be brought forward to the next meeting.

- Land appraisal

President Berry asked if the Board had a deadline for arranging the land appraisal mentioned at the previous meeting and it was decided that the only concern was to have it done before any outside offers were accepted. The DEM application being considered is not even available at this time. This appraisal will be reconsidered once the application is available. It was asked if Church Mutual had an appraisal on file for the property. Courtney is meeting with a representative from Church Mutual next week and will ask.

- Other Business

Jan Fletcher told the Board that she will be attending the next meeting of the Board of General Ministries at Green Lake in June. Beth will put Jan on the agenda for the BOM June meeting. Jan did report that the World Relief Officer has suggested that the next One Great Hour of Sharing offering be delayed until the fall due to the great outpouring of support for Ukraine with the collection earlier this year.

New Business

- Schedule Board Training with Jeff Wood

Jeff Wood, the General Secretary, has offered a virtual Healthy Board training on either May 23rd or May 24th. It will be a forty-five (45) minute virtual session and it will be

possible to record it for any Board members unable to attend the live training. After checking schedules, it was decided to schedule this training workshop on Monday, May 23rd, time to be decided. Rev. Davis Olds believes this is a valuable training opportunity.

- **Beaver Day Challenge**
Volunteer clean-up days at Canonicus Camp and Conference Center will be held on Saturday, May 21st and Saturday, June 18th. Beth urged all Board members to attend one of these sessions and to bring a church member or two. It is important for the Board to support Matt Black and to be able to view the property.
- **Summer use of Canonicus Property by member churches**
There will not be a regular summer camping program held at Canonicus this year but member churches are encouraged to use the property. There will be a certified life guard on staff this summer. Churches desiring to reserve a date were asked to reach out to Kathy Black. Courtney said a celebration is being considered at Canonicus when the dam is completed.

Adjourn/Closing Prayer

The next meeting will be the virtual Healthy Board training on May 23rd.

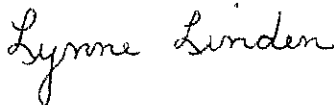
The next regular meeting is scheduled for June 27th at 7:00 p.m., hopefully in person at Canonicus.

Rev. Davis Olds offered the closing prayer asking God to help us dream new dreams and see new visions.

Rev. Wendy Kiefer-O'Brien offered Rev. Davis Olds the Board's prayers and support in the large job that she has been given.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Lynne Linden
Clerk