

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

Approved Minutes

June 26, 2022

The meeting was held at Wakefield Baptist Church.

Present: President Beth Berry; Rev. Dr. Clayton Lord, Vice President; Rev. Dr. Courtney Davis Olds, Executive Minister; David Coon, Esq., Treasurer; Eva Irby-Davis; James Ellison; Rev. Leigh Johnson; Jan Fletcher, and Lynne Linden, BOM Clerk.

Sharing a meal together: President Beth Berry had invited all members to arrive early for a picnic meal and an opportunity to fellowship together. The members enjoyed a lovely meal prepared by Beth and each other's company.

Call to Order: President Berry called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Approval of Minutes from April 25, 2022: The minutes of the April 25, 2022 meeting were approved as presented. Moved by David Coon; Seconded by Rev. Cal Lord.

Continuing Business:

- **Treasurer's Report** – Treasurer Coon presented the Treasurer's Report and the Financials as of 6-16-22. David provided an overview of the income shown on the report and said that looking at the figures, it would appear there is available money. This income is actually earmarked for the dam repair project. It was asked if all dam repair project invoices have been paid. David said there are still two invoices expected from the construction company and the engineers. Of the \$673,000 paid, \$354,730 was donated and the remaining amount was borrowed against our margin loan.

David said that we expect an additional invoice from the construction company and one from the engineers."

The Treasurer's Report was received.

- Treasure Coon also submitted a nonprofit corporation resolution authorizing that David Coon and Robert Butzier be made authorized signatories for the margin account in regard to expenses for the dam repair project and made a motion as follows:

MOVED: That the resolutions contained in the attached Exhibit A are hereby adopted and that the President is authorized to certify to the same.
See attached Exhibit A

This motion was seconded by Jan Fletcher. The motion was approved unanimously. President Berry then signed Exhibit A and returned the original to Treasurer Coon.

Committees

○ Operations Team

David Coon spoke on behalf of Bob Butzier and told the Board that the Operations Team proposed the nomination of Sue Colantonio and Peter Chatellier for the Investment Committee. Sue is already known to the Board and David provided a background for Peter. Peter is an accountant and the Treasurer of the John Clarke Retirement Center and Phillips Memorial Baptist Church.

It was unanimously approved to accept Ms. Colantonio and Mr. Chatellier.

David also said the Director's cottage lease was ending in August, 2022 and the current tenants had requested an extension of the lease. The Operations Team proposed offering a one year extension at a higher rent of \$2,500 with a 90 day period for either party to end the lease. The raise in cost was driven by the history of the utility expenses which are included in the lease. The team has not heard back from the tenants as of this date.

○ SCOM

Rev. Davis Olds reported that there are still candidates working through ordination or still in seminary. SCOM is currently addressing a clergy misconduct policy and will revisit this in September. There is currently a 2018 draft but no finalized policy on record. It was asked what would be the due process there was an issue. There was a discussion of the process. It was indicated that ABCORI can remove due standing but only the ordaining church can revoke ordination. The ABCORI Regional Directors are discussing guidance and a blue print for what should be done.

Once finalized, SCOM will put the policy in place and communicate to all member churches.

● **Other Business – Board of General Ministries**

Jan Fletcher reported on the conference she recently attended in Green Lake, WI, including the status of the Search Committee for the Executive Minister of United Mission.

● **Reports from Staff**

○ Elder Care Ministries

Rev. Kathryn Palen provided a written report in her absence (see attached).

Within her report, Kathryn shared the following questions and invited the Board to ponder them as we consider the future of Elder Care Ministries.

- What are the greatest needs and/or interests of people in the third third of life within our region? On what topics should Elder Care Ministries focus?
- Who should be our primary audience: congregations, individuals or both?
- Should our focus be on offering programs, providing resources, engaging in advocacy, offering training, or a combination of some/all of these possibilities?
- How might we touch the lives of more people? How might we encourage greater participation in programs and/or use of resources?

Rev. Davis Olds reported that five families have registered for the new program, "*A Grand Adventure: Stories, Steps & Stars*". It is unknown how many have registered for the off-site camping program, "*Paths of Discovery*" at this time. She stated that reimagining and re-visioning is happening this year. We will look at these activities and learn from them for next time.

○ Executive Minister

Rev. Davis Olds requested the figure for the salary budgeted for the open Finance/Office Administrator position. President Berry provided the line item and instructions for determining the correct figure. Courtney suggested that an Associate Executive Minister position to serve as COO would be a more needed position and provided the reasons for this position over the Finance/Office Administrator opening. Currently ABCORI is using a part-time outside bookkeeper, Kathryn Palen is processing the payroll and Courtney is handling all the other duties. This doesn't leave Courtney time to look at the bigger picture issues.

Jim Ellison asked to speak with Courtney at a later time regarding the possibility of the Baptist Home Board "purchasing" some time from the outside bookkeeper. It was asked if the Board of Ministries would be the party to change the open position and it was agreed that the Executive Minister handles the hiring while the BOM would vote on the budget for any position.

Courtney informed the Board that a celebration for the completion of the dam repair project will be held at Canonicus scheduled for August 28.

Executive Minister's Report to the Board of Ministries

When I met with the Board of Ministries in March 2022, prior to officially taking on the role of Executive Minister, I identified five areas on which I planned to focus initially. Following is a brief update on each of those areas, in no particular order:

1. Churches in Transition

The region presently has 14 churches in some stage of pastoral transition. This represents just over 20% of the region's 68 churches. Although this percentage is high compared to the denominational average a decade ago, when 10% of a region's churches could be expected to be in pastoral transition at any given time, it does reflect current realities.

Nationwide, a large cohort of pastors are reaching retirement age. Increased numbers of clergy are leaving ministry due to burnout, job dissatisfaction, or financial stress, among other reasons. And seminaries are experiencing decreased enrollment as fewer people opt for a career in ministry. These trends mean that ABCORI will continue to see a high percentage of churches in pastoral transitions and that pastoral searches will take longer than they once did.

This situation, while challenging, does present an opportunity. The region and its churches have an opportunity to experiment with different models of ministry and perhaps even different models of pastoral education and training. Such experiments, however, will take time, dedication, resources, and creativity.

Greenville, Wickford, Oak Lawn, and Sheldon Street celebrated their pastors' retirements in recent months. New pastors will begin at Phillips Memorial and Georgiaville this summer. East Greenwich, Wickford, and Greenville are finalizing arrangements for interim/transition pastors. Hope Valley, Pawtucket, and Summit are interviewing candidates for settled pastor. Olney Street has voted to extend a call to a settled pastor. The search committees at the other churches are at various point in the pre-search phase of the process.

2. Relationships with ABCORI Pastors and Churches

The majority of my engagement with pastors and churches thus far has been related to pastoral transitions and searches. I am the regional contact/resource person for 9 of the churches in pastoral transition. (Kathryn Palen is the contact/resource person for the other 5.) I have provided pulpit supply for one church in pastoral transition and will be doing so for another in August. I am also getting to know the region's pastors and churches through my

engagement with various boards and committees, through events such as the Ministers' Council picnic, and through occasional one-on-one meetings.

3. ABCORI's Staffing Situation

I have assumed responsibility for most of the executive minister duties that Kathryn took on during the interim period. Because of the small number of staff, most employees perform duties that are not stated explicitly in their job descriptions or are not tied exclusively to their role. The finance/office administrator position has been vacant for some time. The organization would be best served by an associate executive minister who can function as COO. I will be writing an updated job description and working with the budget committee/operations team to determine a compensation package for the position in upcoming weeks.

4. Policies, Procedures, and Processes

Together with staff and board members, I have been identifying areas in which policies, procedures, and processes are either unclear or nonexistent. More of these have been identified than have been remedied thus far.

One new policy that has been instituted since April relates to background checks. All ABCORI employees are now required to undergo a background check as part of the hiring process and every 3 years thereafter. Seasonal employees are required to undergo a background check upon each re-hire. Background checks have been completed or initiated for all current employees (including myself). Any volunteers will be subject to this policy, as well.

5. Future of Canonicus

A majority of my time has been spent on the current state of Canonicus and its future. As I shared in the April BOM meeting, the 300+ acres of Canonicus Camp and Conference Center are both the region's biggest asset and its biggest expense. The most straightforward way to rectify ABCORI's financial situation would be to eliminate its biggest expense and sell its biggest asset. But there is little desire for such a measure. That means Canonicus must become profitable.

I will be proposing to the budget committee that the Canonicus budget be separated from the region's budget for 2023 and that finances be tracked differently in order to better determine the camp/conferencing income and expenses.

In the meantime, I am working with Kathy Black to determine where camp/conference prices need to be set to cover expenses. With *A Grand Adventure*, Kathryn Palen is experimenting with an ABCORI-run event that does not fall under conferencing, and then evaluating how that impacts costs and other factors. Beth Hollis is adjusting meals and menus in response to rising food costs. Matt Black and Lucien Martin are prioritizing repairs and doing what work they can to keep maintenance costs down. All of these are stopgap measures, however; they will not significantly alter Canonicus' financial situation.

A more thorough evaluation of the mission and purpose of Canonicus, along with a detailed business plan, will be warranted. Such an evaluation and plan is tied inextricably to the wider mission and plan of ABCORI. As conversations around the mission and purpose of ABCORI begin to take shape, so too can conversations and plans around the future of Canonicus.

Although ABCORI is not offering a traditional camp program this summer, Canonicus Camp and Conference Center continues to be open and in use. Following are statistics for the summer:

June

Number of groups onsite: 9 (3 new, 6 returning)

Number of guests: 428

July (projected)

Number of groups onsite: 10 (4 new, 6 returning)

Number of guests expected: 330

August (projected)

Number of groups onsite: 14 (8 new, 6 returning)

Number of guests: 478

Additionally, with the near-completion of the dam repair project, the waterfront has been reopened. Waterfront usage is scheduled for 21 days this summer, for a total of 50 hours of recreation time.

A celebration of the completion of the dam repair project is being planning for the afternoon of Sunday, August 28. Details will be forthcoming in a future edition of *Connections*.

As many of the above updates reflect, I am in the discovery phase of my role as executive minister. I am also very focused on the day-to-day operational details of the organization. Although I would like to be able to provide a timeline or a plan for discerning ABCORI's mission and purpose, I am not currently able to do so. I will need to spend more time in my own discovery phase before I will be prepared to address ABCORI's future. Also, I will need to be relieved of some of the day-to-day operations if I am to focus on bigger picture questions. I hope to present "next steps" toward a discernment process and bigger picture planning at the September BOM meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Courtney Davis Olds, PhD

26 June 2022

Old Business

- Installation of Executive Minister
President Berry indicated that the Board needs to form a team to begin planning Rev. Davis Olds' installation. Courtney suggested combining her installation with the annual regional worship service typically held in October. After some discussion, it was suggested both be held on Saturday, October 22nd, in the afternoon, with the location still to be determined.

New Business

- How to proceed with reactivating Baptist Fund of RI
The Baptist Fund of RI is an ABCORI fund that helps clergy in times of crises and helps individual churches with small projects. This fund is supported by ABCORI churches and falls within the Board of Ministries' budget. There has historically been two standing grants given annually.

It was asked who is responsible for the fund and the answer was the President of the BOM, the Executive Minister, the Chair of Operations and three members at-large. At this time, only one of those at-large positions is filled. It was stated that Vonnie Dutton is the checkbook holder. Current ABCORI members are not aware of the fund and its purpose. Bob Butzier has the documents regarding the fund. It was determined that the Board will need to review those documents to know the background of the fund and then to reactivate it before recruiting for the other at-large members.

- Break up in small groups for discussion
The members broke into two groups to discuss the following two questions posed by Rev. Davis Olds.
 - If someone were to ask you today, "What is the value of being part of ABCORI?" what answer would you give?
 - If someone were to ask you in the future, "What is the value of being part of ABCORI?" what answer would you give?

After discussion within the two groups, the responses were shared with all the members.

See attached notes on the group responses provided by Rev. Davis Olds.

Adjourn/Closing Prayer

Rev. Davis Olds gave the closing prayer. The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynne Linden

Lynne Linden

Clerk