

FOCUS

A Newsletter for Professional Church Leaders

July 2008

Kansas Baptist Convention, Inc.

Vol. 26 No. 7

“As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.”

Proverbs 27:17 (Today's NIV)

This month I am writing from New Jersey where I've spent the last three weeks at Drew University working on courses for a Doctor of Ministry degree I began last year. As I am writing this letter I am at Ocean Grove for a final week of class on Prophetic Leadership. Although the schedule has been exhausting, and the reading and class work at times overwhelming, I must say this has been an incredible time of growth and enrichment for me. Surprisingly, one of the most beneficial parts of this learning experience has been the interaction with the women and men in my cohort.

This D.Min. program is done in partnership between Bacone College and Drew University. Three or four different cohorts formed for the degree program in this particular time frame. Mine, which last year met on the campus of Bacone College, is made up of several pastors, a chaplain, a librarian, a CPE supervisor and a judicatory level minister. We are Baptists, United Methodists and Presbyterians. We are from Oklahoma, Arkansas and Kansas. We are male and female. We are Anglo and Native American. We are young and old. (Guess who the old guy is?) We are a varied group of individuals from different backgrounds and from different theological and vocational perspectives. And we are a group of

men and women whom God has called to paths of obedience, discipleship and service. We do not see everything from the same perspective. We do not always agree. But we have found ways to listen and to be in community together. Whether discussing theological issues in a classroom setting or around a cup of coffee, we have found ways to be in dialogue with one another. We have found that life-transforming talk happens in the most casual of settings and conversations.

As we share concerns about the ministry that needs to be done in our particular contexts the insight our conversations lend to the situation is incredible. As we share our hearts and lives together we find we are better able to hear God speak through our shared stories and through the love and respect we hold for one another. I am continually amazed at what I learn from these colleagues; these sisters and brothers in Christ; who have become good friends. I know that when this time in New Jersey has passed I will greatly miss the times of conversation and spiritual reflection we have shared together. We are emerging from this experience more deeply rooted in our own convictions, but now with clearer understanding and deeper insights.

Time and again I hear from clergy who find similar enrichment from their participation in local clergy groups and ministerial alliance settings. We find it not only takes a village to raise a child, but it takes many villages to help us

discover how to live in the world together. Over the past several years many of you have taken advantage of the opportunity to be part of a Together in Ministry group, sponsored and funded by the Ministers Council. Overwhelmingly the response to these groups has been a profound sense of gratitude for the support and encouragement received from this supportive network of colleagues who pray for and strengthen one another.

Right now it is time to be forming new Together in Ministry groups for 2009. Application forms may be downloaded from the Ministers Council website, <http://www.ministerscouncil.com/TogetherInMinistry/TIMApplication.aspx>. Applications need to be submitted to ABCCR Ministers Council President, Jack Gilstrap, pastor, FBC, Abilene by September 15. Don't think you have to wait to be recruited by someone forming a group, take the initiative and begin to recruit and form your own TIM group. There is so much to be gained by entering into an intentional collegial relationship with other clergy. The potential for personal growth is tremendous. You don't have to go to New Jersey to experience the benefits of iron sharpening iron; you can do that right where you are and even get a little help from your Ministers Council.

Blessings to you as you seek to carry out the ministry to which Jesus has called you, in partnership and mutuality with other brothers and sisters called to share the load with you.

John Williams

Included in this issue:

- *Announcements*
- *Missions Moment*
- *Planned Giving*
- *Parish Paper*
- *Progress Report*

■ FOCUS is a newsletter published for professional church leaders in Central Region, and it is distributed monthly. For information, contact Martha Robbins at martha.robbins@abccr.org.

■ The deadline for inclusion in FOCUS is the first of the month of publication.

■ A contact name and daytime phone number should accompany all materials.

■ An 8 1/2 X 11 format must be used for all masters submitted.

■ Due to distortion, masters should not be faxed.

■ A variation in content and format is required for any copy to be printed in two or more successive issues.

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Missions Moment

Submitted by Dr. Rick Nelson, Sunnyside, Wichita

Murrow Indian Children's Home

For more than a century, the Murrow Indian Children's Home, in Muskogee, Okla., has been committed to sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with disadvantaged Native American children. Last year, renewed interest and help from concerned American Baptists and other friends averted a financial crisis that had forced the home to make a broad appeal for funding, and brought new hope for the home and its children.

Murrow Indian Children's Home was founded in 1902 by an enterprising missionary and educator who began taking in orphans and homeless Native American children soon after the Civil War. Two Indian tribes later donated land for an orphanage, and concerned Baptists in the local community also gave land and buildings.

The American Baptist Home Mission Society assumed full responsibility for the school in the early 1900s, and the orphanage was moved to the campus of Bacone College in 1910. Over the years, Murrow has provided loving care for hundreds of abused, neglected or abandoned children.

The home often accepts children and youth whom state agencies have given up on, says Director Joan Brown, a commissioned American Baptist missionary who serves through National Ministries. "Our staff is experienced, and our program has a good reputation," says Brown. "Most of all, we offer a loving, caring environment and an opportunity for the children to be more like normal children should be."

The Murrow Home depends heavily on church donations; and over the last few years, a lack of funds had become a critical issue. "Perhaps people didn't realize how crucial the need was, in light of all the recent natural disasters and other needs in our country and around the world," says Brown.

Just before Christmas 2006, the home was unable to accept a large sibling group because one of its residential cottages had been closed due to a lack of funds. "It broke our hearts," Brown says. Soon afterward, the home announced that it might have to close entirely within a few months. "We wanted our friends of many years to know about our financial crisis," she says. "People may have assumed that things were okay, but our children need stability and consistency. At times we had to decide whether to pay staff or buy groceries."

— There are many ABC missionaries doing life-changing work for Christ on mission fields throughout the world. To foster mission and missionary awareness, the Region Department of Missions will be providing mission related information through ABCCR publications. This column may be used in a Moment for Mission.



Once the word was out, many friends helped to spread the word about Murrow's plight. In February, 2007, members of the Creek Tribe made a one-time gift of \$100,000. According to the Rev. Marilyn P. Turner, National Ministries' associate executive director, Program Ministries, the tribe is also considering funding construction of a much-needed community facility on land they originally donated to the home.

In May, 2007, Tallgrass Broadcasting sponsored a "Radiothon" on eight area stations to publicize the home's needs. People prayed, made financial gifts, and contributed volunteer services as well as much-needed practical items. American Baptist Homes and Caring Ministries, a program of National Ministries, committed resources and training assistance to the Murrow Home in the area of development and long-range planning.

Ongoing prayers, financial donations, and other forms of support are always needed and appreciated.

American Baptist volunteers — individuals and church groups from Massachusetts to Minnesota — offer bright rays of hope for Murrow's children as they give their time, love, and caring through projects as varied as cleaning, painting, leading VBS, reading to the children, or coaching a game of stickball. Our children's lives are greatly enriched by American Baptist volunteers and others; and they learn about spirituality and God's love through these caring people."

Many Murrow alumni return to visit the Murrow Home, wanting to look at their old rooms. A number of graduates have become "success stories," excelling in various fields and going on to college. One young woman spent all her growing-up years at the home with her brother. Later, after moving away, she returned to Muskogee and worked at the home for several years — eventually as a case manager. After completing her education, she became a teacher and has stayed in the local community.

Sometimes Murrow children are reunited with their parents, as in the case of two middle school-age children who rejoined their mothers in the Muskogee area. "That took a lot of coordination," Brown says, "with the Indian Baptist Church (also on the Bacone College campus), the Creek Tribe, and others."



**Joan Brown, Director
Murrow Indian Children's Home
Muskogee, Oklahoma**

Brown says these stories speak well of what the American Baptists have given to the Murrow Home's ministry. "Many blessings have come in," she says, expressing heartfelt thanks for all American Baptists have done to help the children.

— This report is just another reminder of what we as American Baptists are accomplishing in our nation and Region for Christ. RN

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available on the
Region website,
www.abccr.org.**

**Click on pdf link,
July, 2008,
for the
color version.**



Kansas Baptist Convention Foundation



A Ministry of American Baptist Churches of the Central Region

Joint Tenancy Can Protect a Spouse

A widow was very worried. Her husband did not have a will. At his funeral, her stepson told her he wanted to sell her home so he could have his share of his father's property. Could he do this?

The answer is, "Maybe." If the title to the home and other assets was in his father's name only, then the property would be distributed according to the laws of the state.

On the other hand, if the property was held in joint tenancy with right of survivorship it all belongs to the widow. She does not have to go to probate to get the house in her name only. She should file her husband's death certificate with a legal description of the property in the office of the Register of Deeds to remove his name.

The husband's son cannot get the property unless she chooses to name him in her will. At the widow's death, the property will pass to her heirs or to persons she has named in her will or under a transfer-on-death deed.

For further information, contact:

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316.264.0420 or marshall.schirer@abccr.org*

Central Seminary Sends Relief Gift to Burma

Central Baptist Theological Seminary has sent the Myanmar Institute of Theology in Burma (Myanmar) a gift of \$11,525 to help in the repair efforts at the school. The gift comes from two sources. The first source is a commitment of \$10,000 from Central and the second is \$1,525 in gifts that have been given to Central for Burma. Dr. Maung Maung Yin, Vice Principal of the Myanmar Institute of Theology said in response, "How wonderful to know that CBTS is going to send a substantial amount of support to help meet the needs of MIT."

Central and MIT have a historical relationship that has been rekindled in the past year. This partnership will allow two Central students and one professor to go to MIT next summer for three weeks. Central will receive two students and a professor in the Fall of 2009 as part of the Alice and Gam Shae Partnership in Theological Education.

Homestead Health Center Seeks Director of Nurses

Skilled nursing facility, dually licensed Medicare/Medicaid, seeks Director of Nurses with experience in geriatric care, management and supervision of direct care staff, working knowledge of regulatory requirements, familiarity with computers and DS applications, medication management, dementia care, and resident centered care philosophy. Minimum requirements: Current KS license as RN, at least two years prior experience as DON, ADON, or MDS Coordinator in a SNF. Salary negotiable based on education and experience. Benefits, including paid health insurance, is available. Submit cover with current resume and three references to: Search Committee c/o Homestead Health Center, Wichita, KS 67213-3403.

Apartment Available at K-State Baptist Campus Center

A two-bedroom apartment is available at the K-State Baptist Campus Center, 615 Denison Ave., just one block south of the K-State campus. The 12-month lease begins August 1, 2008. Central heat and air conditioning, kitchen appliances, washer/dryer, and individual reserved parking space is provided. For more information, please contact Earline Dikeman at 785/776-7315 or 785/537-1692.

New Construction At Prairie Homestead

Prairie Homestead is completing an additional phase of its continuing care retirement community. To bridge the gap between independent living and long-term nursing care, they are building a 23,976 square foot assisted living facility on their campus. This building will provide thirty 475 square feet, one-bedroom apartments designed to accommodate the specific personal needs of our residents. In addition to the apartments, the ancillary space will include a spacious dining room, a safe room and other service areas. In order to develop a sense of neighborhood among residents, each wing of the building will have a conversation area to encourage the development of friendships and caring relationships. The outdoor area will include a gazebo, which will serve as a centerpiece for an attractive outdoor activity area. It is anticipated the hearth located in the central living room will provide an attractive and relaxing environment, which will encourage residents to gather for conversation and community building.

The projected completion for this project is October 1, 2008. At the present time, several inquiries have been received regarding the assisted living apartments. If this type of living environment is of interest to the members of Central Region Churches, please feel free to contact the administrator, Ms. Diane Hull for details regarding services and costs. The telephone number for the Prairie Homestead office is (316)263-8264, and the email is abei@websurf.net.

Upon completing this building, the Board of Directors will host a dedication service and open house to which our Central Region family is invited.



FOCUS

Giving to Congregations: Have Patterns Changed?

Two extraordinary gifts made headlines.

◆ Warren Buffett, the world's third richest man, donated the biggest gift in U.S. history—\$30 billion—to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

◆ The second noteworthy gift—a more modest \$150,000—was donated to The University of Southern Mississippi by Oseola McCarty, one of the state's poorest citizens. She spent more than eighty years washing and ironing clothes. A disciplined saver, she wanted “somebody's child to go to college,” an opportunity she never had. She sacrificed to make certain she saved one person from her fate.

Most of us possess resources somewhere between these two high-profile contributors.

Across America, lots of money goes to charitable causes, including local congregations. Two out of three U.S. households make charitable contributions. Large gifts like the two examples above receive media attention, because 95 percent of us give a total of \$6,000 or less per year to all charitable causes. For all giving-households, the median annual gift was \$1,917.

Contributors direct sixty cents of every dollar given to charitable causes to religious organizations, primarily local congregations.

What other types of organizations attract contributions? The long list of worthy causes includes poverty relief, education, health, youth and family services, the arts, neighborhood improvement, the environment, international aid, combined funds (such as the United Way), and other open-ended charitable endeavors.

Are people of faith the most generous of givers, even to secular causes? Yes. Households where an adult claims a religious affiliation give substantially more to all causes (66 percent of all households in this group make contributions). Only 41 percent of all households where an adult declares “no religion” contribute.

Time versus Money? If people volunteer their time to a charitable organization, will they give less money to that same cause? In other words, do they treat time and money like a multiple-choice question?

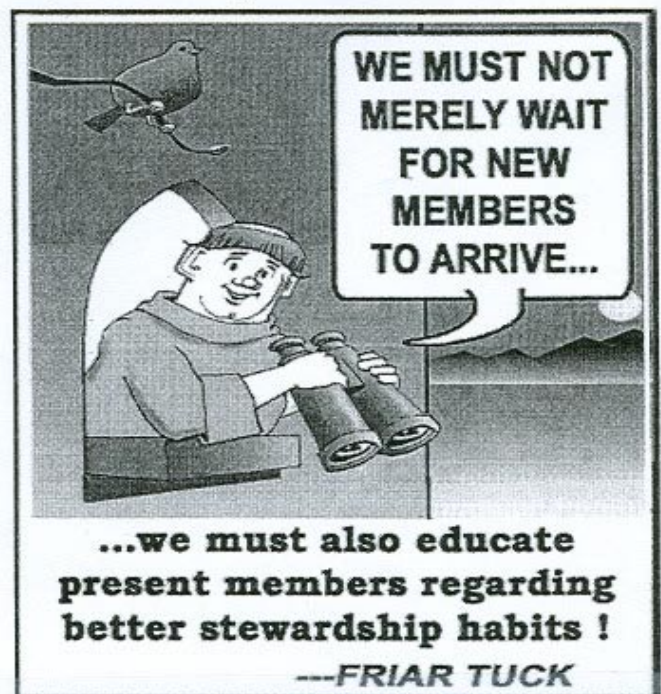
◆ Research on this “either-or” theory reveals that households where an adult member volunteers give more than the average household gives.

◆ The volunteer-household gives more than double the amount to charitable causes than the no-volunteer household gives—\$1,994 compared to \$866.

New Insights for Congregations. The Center on Philanthropy¹ released its findings from a panel study of giving that has tracked the same households and their financial matters since 1968. Several results point to significant trends:

◆ First, increases in religious giving by the “Pre-war Generation” (families headed by someone born in 1945 or earlier) kept pace with their income growth.

◆ However, religious giving by “Baby Boomer” families (whose heads were born between 1946 and 1964) was about \$250 less than expected, given their income growth during the same period. The drop in Baby Boomer *religious* giving was larger than the drop in their *secular* giving, which was only \$70 less than expected.



What explains that difference in religious giving between the Pre-war Generation and the Baby Boomers? After extensive research, the Center on Philanthropy scholars concluded the following:

◆ The differences were *not* caused by income, wealth, diversion (shifting contributions to secular causes away from religious ones), or other factors.

◆ The less-than-expected religious giving is also *not* due to a drop in the number of large givers among Baby Boomers. The top 5 percent of Baby Boomer givers contributed an amount fairly close to that of the Pre-war Generation's top 5 percent of givers. But, on average, the remaining 95 percent of Baby Boomers made smaller gifts.

Why do Baby Boomer households give less than Pre-war Generation households give? Differences in religious giving reflect differences in religious involvement. Individuals who attend church and those who are involved in congregational life give more generously to the local church. Baby Boomers attend less, are less involved, and therefore, give less.

Lessons for Members. First, *be an exception* to the rule. Follow the example of Oseola McCarthy. Her scotch-tape-bound Bible opened to 2 Corinthians 9:11: "You will be made rich in every way, so that you can be generous on every occasion." (NIV) What life changes could you make that would enable you to move your giving into the top 5 percent of all households?

Second, be an example for your children. Again, research shows that adults whose parents give to religious causes are 11 percent more likely to give to religious causes than are adults whose parents did not contribute to those causes.

Lessons for Church Leaders. Shift from old-paradigm giving methods to new-paradigm methods:

◆ Develop a strategy that asks for signed pledges.

◆ Send individual contributors quarterly statements that show their gifts-to-date compared to their pledges.

◆ Give members specific education about contributing. Currently, three out of five worshipers in conservative Protestant churches give 10 percent or more of their income to the congregation. In mainline Protestant churches fewer than one in five worshipers give 10 percent or more. Therefore, that education should emphasize (a) giving to the church as a priority, (b) percentage-of-income giving—a well-ordered approach that insures growth in giving as income grows, (c) progressive giving—a commitment to *increase* the percentage of income given, and (d) promptness—a commitment to respond to requests from the congregation for a planned strategy.

◆ Move away from a "unified budget" (comprised of requests from all of the committees and ministries, including special offerings) to a budget built on central congrega-

tional values and mission priorities, plus special offerings.

◆ Measure church health by multiple factors, including the actual dollar amounts given for ministry. Church health is not a function of (a) the percentage of the total church budget given to "ministry" or "outreach" or any single category or (b) the membership's per capita giving.

◆ Explore avenues for helping members contribute from all pockets of wealth—savings, investments, annuities, gifts of property, and other accumulated resources.

◆ Ask in person for contributions. Never use blanket invitations to give or mass "customized" mailings that solicit contributions in any manner other than face-to-face (in the worship service or in a personal visit).

◆ Involve clergy in a central and visible leadership role in all financial campaigns.

◆ Emphasize that members are stewards, not owners, of earthly resources.

The Main Point. Duncan Hanson, a denominational leader, retells a story about a mission worker's arrival in a small town in Central Europe. The local congregation warmly welcomed the missionary. After a lavish meal and festivities, the members complimented the visitor on his sensitivity to local customs, how he relished the foreign menu, and his command of the national language.

Finally, everyone departed except for the mission worker and one elder in the small church. The mission worker said to his new friend, "Everything was beautiful. But I do have one question. Why did the people of this congregation not ring their church bell?"

The elder paused and then replied, "There are perhaps a thousand things I could say. For instance, I could tell you about the sociology of our small town or the history of bell making in this region from Roman times to the present. But perhaps one point will be enough."

"Yes?" inquired the visitor.

He answered, "There is no bell."

Why do many local churches have fewer financial resources than in the past? The answer is not complicated:

◆ Fewer Americans attend religious services. If they are not involved, they do not give.

◆ If they attend, they often are not asked personally to give.

¹ Mark Wilhelm, Patrick Rooney, and Eugene Tempel, 2005 (http://www.philanthropy.iupui.edu/Research/WorkingPapers/religious_cycle_002.pdf)

American Baptist Churches of the Central Region

Mission Giving for May 2008

	2008	2007	Increase (Decrease)	% Increase (% Decrease)
United Mission	\$101,609.78	\$97,875.10	\$3,734.68	3.81%
ABW Ministries Love Gift	\$5,267.65	\$3,768.09	\$1,499.56	39.79%
American Baptist Mission Support	\$144,118.48	\$184,612.03	(\$40,493.55)	-21.93%

Mission Giving May YTD

United Mission	\$466,536.97	\$518,814.80	(\$52,277.83)	-10.07%
ABW Ministries Love Gift	\$25,030.04	\$20,505.60	\$4,524.44	22.06%
America For Christ offering	\$90,012.71	\$85,243.60	\$4,769.11	5.59%
One Great Hour of Sharing offering	\$4,357.92	\$55,854.14	(\$51,496.22)	-92.19%
World Mission Offering	\$12,696.81	\$14,799.51	(\$2,102.70)	-14.20%
Retired Ministers & Missionaries	\$20,137.48	\$23,758.08	(\$3,620.60)	-15.23%
Region Offering	\$5,154.41	\$6,333.42	(\$1,179.01)	-18.61%
Institutional Support Process	\$16,718.85	\$10,189.83	\$6,529.02	64.70%
Specifics	\$71,299.81	\$73,452.46	(\$2,152.65)	-2.93%
American Baptist Mission Support	\$695,941.10	\$789,405.31	(\$93,464.21)	-11.83%

Our Church's Giving for May

United Mission	\$ _____
One Great Hour of Sharing offering	\$ _____
American Baptist Mission Support	\$ _____

