



# The Oregon Baptist

Volume 17 No. 7

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## He is Risen . . . He is Risen Indeed!

By Steve Bilis, Executive Minister

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### Dates to Remember

<b>ABM Conference</b>	April 16-17
<b>ABWM Conference</b>	April 24
<b>ABCO Board Meeting</b>	April 26
<b>Sr. Adult Day at AW</b>	June 2
<b>High School Summer Camp at AW</b>	August 1-6
<b>Middle School Summer Camp at AW</b>	August 8-13
<b>Elementary Summer Camp at AW</b>	August 16-20
<b>Primary Summer Camp at AW</b>	August 16-18
<b>Adult and Family Camp at AW</b>	September 3-6
<b>Annual Gathering</b>	October 22-24

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The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the cornerstone and centerpiece of the Christian faith. After all, how can one believe in the central theme of the Gospel – that eternal life is guaranteed to all who put their faith in Christ alone – if Christ himself is still dead? How can we trust someone who couldn't raise himself from the dead to raise us from the dead?

The apostle Paul recognized this when he wrote to the church in Corinth concerning doubts that had arisen concerning the whole question of the resurrection. *"If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins."* 1 Corinthians 15:17

Clearly, the value of our faith and our standing before God as people whose sins have been paid for is linked to the resurrection of Christ from the dead. In his summary of the Gospel (good news) of our salvation in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul mentions the death, the burial, the resurrection, and the post-resurrection appearance of Christ to many. *"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved . . . For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve, after that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once . . ."*

- **Christ died for our sins.** This was "according to the scriptures" and was further confirmed for the skeptical by the fact that *He was buried.*

- **Christ rose again the third day.** This, too, was "according to the scriptures" and was further confirmed for the skeptical by the fact that *He was seen* by a large number of people in the days and weeks following his resurrection.

The resurrection of Christ is indeed central to our faith. Paul recites a cascading litany of unpleasant consequences that we must face if there is no resurrection from the dead (*1 Corinthians 15:13-18*):

- "If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen."
- "If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is vain and your faith is also vain."
- "If in fact the dead do not rise, then we are found to be liars because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ."
- "If Christ is not risen, your faith is in vain; you are still in your sins."
- "Then also, those who have died in Christ have perished."

But, fortunately, this whole discussion is purely hypothetical, for ". . . now Christ is risen from the dead . . . and in Christ shall all be made alive!" (*1 Corinthians 15:20, 22*)

In John 11 Jesus consoled his friend, Martha, who was grieving over the death of her brother, Lazarus. He said, *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die."* Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus is found to speak about how we can have eternal life by trusting Him completely and exclusively. He came to earth to be our propitiation by dying in our place for our sin. The "wages" for the sin that separated us from God was death. Since Jesus had no sin of his own to pay for, he was able to pay for our sin for us. That is why he can offer eternal life, *"Most assuredly, he who believes in Me has everlasting life."* John 6:47

Christ did die for us! He did rise victorious over death and offers eternal life freely to those who simply trust Him! *"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life."* 1 John 5:13



## ABCO Board Notes

The annual Pastors' and Spouses Retreat was held in Seaside last month. As I pondered what was happening, I decided that one of the most important parts of that conference was the time the spouses had together. It can be a tough thing to be married to the pastor, who is either the "hero" or the "villain of the week," at the church where her primary friendships and support groups are. The spouse often has to be the silent sufferer, or the secret keeper, who has no one to talk to about the things that are most important to her. So their time of sharing, unloading, laughing and crying together, was a truly cathartic time of confession, release, and renewal, with a group of women who absolutely understand. That's one of the gifts of ABCO to the local churches that cannot be assigned a dollar value. Related to that: A problem we have not begun to solve is how to support the spouse who is a husband, and in that still non-traditional role, has next to no one with whom to share, who understands that awkward position.

ABCO's ministry and mission reaches into our local churches time and again, in ways that we seldom think about. Our Executive Minister, Steve Bils, is in our churches from Bandon to Gresham, and from Astoria to Yreka, California, working with congregational leadership to provide interim and permanent pastoral leadership. Then he gathers with those pastors in clusters, each month, to give support to clergy in the south, the Willamette Valley, and in the Portland metro area, who have come together to strengthen each other, not to mention an occasional foray into the eastern part of the state. We can add to that the number of churches in which Steve fills the pulpits, and the times he gives support to youth ministries in our Region. There are also the occasions when he meets with denominational leaders to help us fashion the best

way for our local churches to support missionary personnel and ministries overseas, and we see that ABCO is quietly, and not so quietly, touching our congregations week in and week out, because of our connections with sister congregations throughout Oregon, and across the borders into northern California and southern Washington.

It seems glamorous to send money to Central America, Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East, to support the work of the Lord. And it is both glamorous and important. It's

equally important to support our common ministries, and ministries that come back to strengthen our own churches, through our financial undergirding of our Regional mission close to home, in one of the most unchurched states in the nation.

When I heard those wives opening their hearts to each other in Seaside, and then calling a second meeting to complete their ministry of support to one another, before they went back to their various home responsibilities, I decided in my mind that this is truly important stuff. You need to know that it goes on. It benefits you; and it's made possible when you make sure ABCO remains financially viable.

George Nye

President, American Baptist Churches of Oregon

**ABCO's ministry and mission reaches into our local churches time and again, in ways that we seldom think about.**

*It is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy . . .*

### In his death, as in his life, Walter Ferrell honored his values

Camp Arrah Wanna lost a great friend and supporter this past January with the passing of Walt Ferrell. A member of Grace Baptist church in Portland, for many years Walt was one of the "Wednesday Guys." Each Wednesday he and a crew from Grace came to camp and work on whatever project was most needed. For his part, Walt became the king of firewood production. In retirement, Walt could be

**Walt felt that camp was a critical tool for churches to use as they worked with children and youth.**

found at camp as many days a week as he could get away, and Arrah Wanna will be forever grateful for his contributions! Not only did Walt keep the camp supplied with split wood, he also had a deep concern about the financial state of camp. He felt that camp was a critical

tool for churches to use as they worked with children and youth. It was important to him that camp be preserved for many years to come.

Walt and his wife Kaye spent many weeks at camp as youth, and later as volunteers in both program and facility needs. It was important to Walt that people view him as a man who led by example, and his model in giving was no different. At the time of his death, Walt left provisions for both his church and his great love – Camp Arrah Wanna – as part of his estate.

Consider following Walt's example! Call the ABCO office and arrange for your church to hold a free seminar on estate planning through Rick Barlow and our American Baptist Foundation. Like Walt, your legacy gift can insure your church and the other ministries that matter most to you will remain on solid financial ground even after the Lord calls you home. By planning today, you can reap tremendous future rewards for Christ's kingdom!



*When it comes to God's money, be meek as a lamb but wise as a serpent!*

## All the "Bang for the Buck"

By Lou Engle

Especially during these economic times it is vitally important to the ministry of Christ in the World that we use the Lord's money as efficiently as possible. We must get the biggest bang for the buck that we possibly can. Our Lord deserves no less! We need to shop around and not just buy from the familiar places because they are familiar. But good stewardship involves more than bargain hunting.

Good stewardship also involves the security of the Lord's money. Jesus warns those who place temptation before others in Matthew 18:6, "*If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.*" In the Lord's Prayer we seek delivery from *temptation*, yet many churches regularly place temptation before some who cannot resist it.

Through casual conversations I know of several churches which together have lost over a million dollars; one church several thousand dollars through relatively small amounts out of petty cash, another several hundred thousand dollars, one lost eight hundred thousand dollars, and yet another instance where several hundreds dollars were regularly taken through cash withdrawals on deposits. In one church, the secretary was buying personal items using the church accounts.

While there are many ways in which those who do not resist temptation can rob the Lord's church, creating the opportunities for theft come about in three primary ways. This also means that just three primary safeguards will prevent or catch most, if not all, stealing from the church.

• **First. Double Custody.** The receipt and paying out of

all funds should be done by two persons working together. These should be persons who are not related to each other. As examples, church offerings and fund raisers should always be counted by at least two people, and church checks should require two signers.

• **Second. Division of Function.** Those who receive, record, and deposit funds should not be the same persons as those who review the bills and payout the church's monies for its obligations.

• **Third. Oversight.** The church board and the congregation should exercise oversight by receiving and reviewing monthly financial statements. These should be confirmed by an annual audit, conducted by either an outside entity or committee not involved with any of the financial aspects that are being audited.

Good church policies and procedures, rigorously enforced, can also go a long way toward caring for the Lord's money. In addition to the policies listed above, standards should be outlined directing who opens the mail and records contributions on a daily basis, what the process is for soliciting donations in the church's name, who can open accounts on behalf of the church, and what address all business mail must be sent to.

We promote a trusting environment in the church but we should remember the words of President Reagan when he spoke of agreements with the Soviet Union concerning nuclear weapons, "Trust, but Verify." We do the Lord's work when we keep His treasure focused on the purposes for which it was given, and we prevent temptation when we insist on good business procedures, and policies like Double Custody, Division of Function, and Oversight.

♦ *Rev. Engle is a retired pastor living in Oregon.*

## ABWM Conference at Cedar Hills Baptist Church

All women are invited to the American Baptist Women's Ministries event on April 24, 2010 at Cedar Hills Baptist Church. We will open our doors for registration at 9:30am and begin our program at 10:00am.

The guest speaker will be Jonna Turek, Northwest Section Coordinator for ABWM. The theme will be "**TWITTER-TWEETER: Braving The Disconnect**". We will leave knowing more about connecting with others.

Lunch will be provided. There will also be an installation of new officers as well as very short Willamette and Central association meetings. Margie Ogden, our outgoing president, will be honored. Join us for a day of enjoying old friends as well as meeting new. A registration form is below but you may also pay at the door. The cost is \$20.00. We will adjourn at 2:00pm. Cedar Hills Baptist is located at 24270 SW Roxbury in Portland. Maps will be mailed to the churches.

Please mail forms to: Diane Weidkamp, 8820 SW Maverick Terrace, Beaverton, OR 97008  
or, call (503) 524-5593 to reserve your spot.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Special Dietary needs \_\_\_\_\_ Home Church \_\_\_\_\_

The Missional Church in Oregon**Celebrating what the Lord has done**

Did you hear the celebrating? On March 6th, at Judson Baptist, churches who had been part of a pilot project with National Ministries met to share their journey of the past year and celebrate what the Lord has done in their churches and in their local communities.

A little over a year ago, ten ABCO churches made a commitment to form a *Missional Church Learning Community*. They joined six other regions across the country who were working with Glynis LaBarre and Ron Carlson from National Ministries of ABCUSA.



They learned what it was to

become an authentic faith community whose primary focus is outward. During the year they met four times at different churches to share the journey. The goal was to go out into the community and listen to what needs were not being met. After they had identified a need in the community they looked around for possible partnerships with other groups, non-profits, schools, businesses and churches. Some did one-time projects and others have found new ministries that are ongoing.

On Saturday they got to hear what the Lord has been

doing in the region through the outreach of the various churches. It was a great celebration to see what a difference can be made by taking the first step of looking beyond the church's 4 walls. They heard about partnerships with Habitat for Humanity for new housing, outreach to dancers in a strip club, and assistance to the homeless and working poor. One community discovered that children were going hungry on the weekends, so they are gathering food that will be placed in a backpack that the children take home on Friday from school and return on Monday. The stories are being collected by National Ministries and will be published. See page 5 for two of the stories that emerged from this project. The Rivergate story will be featured on National Ministries web site ([www.NationalMinistries.org](http://www.NationalMinistries.org)) during the month of April.

The effort was such a success that the churches want to continue staying in touch with one another and having an annual reunion. There will be an opportunity for other churches in the ABCO family to be part of another Learning Community later this year. Some of the churches who were part of this pilot program will assist as coaches. To find out more information, please contact the ABCO office.

Thank you Lord for giving us eyes to see and ears to hear the needs in our local communities. May we continue looking for ways to reach out in your love to those around us.

**ABMen meet April 16,17**

All American Baptist men are invited to attend our next conference at Sky Camp at Springfield on Friday and Saturday, April 16, 17. Our speaker, by popular request, is Pastor Emmett Wheatfall of Remember The Hope Community Fellowship of Portland. His messages in 2007 and 2008 truly challenged and encouraged us. He will speak on the subject, *"The Hands And Feet of God"*. There will be rousing community singing, fun activities and a Wii station for your enjoyment. Our own Wayne Bridges, Terry Waibel and Terry's son, Josh, will prepare us all festive meals. Our offering will address two needs; responding to improvements at Camp Arrah Wanna and scholarship assistance for seminarians.

Registration forms will be in the mail in mid-March. There's no late fee, but sign up early so we can prepare for your arrival and have enough food for everybody. Dads and sons save money with a family rate. There is an assistance fund for anyone unable to pay the full registration fee. Pastors, come and make this a priority for the men and teen boys of your church.

Rev. Norm Lawson,  
President, American Baptist Men of Oregon

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**

**Annual Gathering  
October 22, 23, and 24**

**Eastwood Baptist Church  
in Medford, OR**

Please make plans to join your church as they attend our Annual Gathering again this year. It is a major opportunity to connect and rub shoulders with your extended American Baptist family in Oregon.

Watch your mail for more information coming soon.

**Tod Scheler  
Annual Gathering Task Force**

Rivergate Community Church, Portland, Oregon**How Rivergate Community Church got its groove back**

Over fifty years ago the small group of believers who started Rivergate Community Church acquired the entire city block where our church stands. Of course, at the time that wasn't saying very much. The area was industrial, almost undeveloped, and the land wasn't worth much. After clearing the land of the brambles and blackberry bushes, they built a building to worship in. Two generations later the Church is still meeting and worshipping in the same building. We now live surrounded by a working class, inner city neighborhood. Dreams about the land have come and gone.

As we dwindled in numbers we also dwindled in vision. We once dreamed of building a bigger worship center on our land because we were reaching our neighborhood with the message of Jesus Christ, now we dreamed of selling the land just to pay our bills. Talk was no longer about our God given mission, it was now about survival. Our future looked dark.

However, God does funny things to us sometimes. In our case he caused us to get old. We could no longer navigate the steep stairs in our own worship building. And the bathrooms were downstairs. We had to put in an elevator, but of course that was tens of thousands of dollars. We began to look at the "back forty", our land, as our only way forward. It was then that God gave us the hard push we needed.

We had been learning about being a missional community through our involvement with the ABC National Ministries program on church revitalization. The idea dawned on us that we could use our land somehow to engage our community in mission, and solve our elevator problem at the same time. One night in a deacons meeting the idea arose clearly: what about

Habitat for Humanity?

We contacted Habitat, and all of the pieces fell into place in rapid order. It seemed like God had already known what we were supposed to do, and had everything ready for us when we finally got the message and acted. We arranged to sell the back half of our property to Habitat for below market price. It was enough money to build an elevator. Suddenly we discovered that with the elevator in place God began sending outside community groups who needed meeting space but required handicap accessibility. Our building is becoming a community center.

And we have discovered a new life. We are pouring ourselves into helping Habitat to build homes for twelve families. We are figuring out how to help our neighborhood celebrate a new community that is forming in our midst. We are starting a community garden so the Habitat families and neighbors have space to grow vegetables. As we have done these things, we are seeing more and more that God has gone before us. He has prepared for us a space to work, and live out his Kingdom calling.

Today all we talk about at Rivergate Community Church is the new life growing up in the community named Rivergate Commons; built on ground our forefathers bought for a song, cleared with their own hands, and tended for years with no idea what or why God wanted them to do it. We have learned the hardest lesson of all for a Christian community: In order to save our life, we had to give our life away. What looked like defeat, the inevitable bowing to our dwindling numbers and money, has become the foundation of a new life together in mission for God. Our future no longer looks dark.

Eastwood Baptist Church, Medford, Oregon**Jesus loves . . . the strippers**

"Who are you? Why would you care about us anyway?" demanded a young stripper.

"We care about all the women who work here," replied their visitor.

"Thank you for not discriminating against us," spoke up a young dancer.

What do you know about the women in the sex trades in your community? Are they there by choice and desperate for the money? Do any of them want out if they had an alternative?

These are some of the questions asked by a group of men and women at Eastwood Baptist Church in Medford, OR. In the fall of 2008 they held a 6 week forum to educate themselves on sex trafficking internationally, in the USA, and locally. They identified a strip club in their city and began an outreach to the 55 nude dancers there.

Using the training manual from Treasures, a long standing ministry in Los Angeles, a small number of women started to visit the club monthly. They did not know how they would be received by the management, the women or the customers. At first they were met with suspicion and disbelief that anyone would care about them enough to bring gifts and ask for nothing in return. In reality the gifts are tokens of God's love for them.

A web site was developed, [www.morethanpearls.org](http://www.morethanpearls.org), where women can find stories of those who have left the sex trades, words of encouragement, resources and an anonymous way to contact someone. Web site cards are included in the gift bags. The purpose is to let the women know God has a better purpose for their lives and they are of great value in His sight.

Building trust comes slowly with women who have known

little except abuse, exploitation and destructive relationships.

Now, more than a year later, the women look forward to our visits, verbally express their thanks and acknowledge our caring for them. They know their names are on a prayer list of a group of church women from Eastwood Baptist. The female bartender said, "they are the only ones who come in here with encouragement and gifts". The bouncer acknowledged "these women need all the support they can get in this degrading work".

Many in the church have participated in this ministry, from making cards and items for the gift bags, giving money to buy flowers and balloons, and praying. Every visit is covered by prayer for the words shared and the Lord's love to shine through those who go to visit. In 2010 the women were invited to write their birthdays on a monthly calendar. Each dancer will now receive a personalized cake, card, balloon and gift on her special day.

The quick money, thrill of doing something against community mores, and a place where they are accepted, all exert strong pulls on the dancers. But at least three have quit and six attend college to try to make a brighter future for themselves and their children.

God has opened the door in Medford, OR and committed women will continue to bring His light into a very dark place. What about your town or city? Are there women there in such a place yearning for the face of someone who cares about their heartaches, times of desperation and dreams for a better life? Can you see them as loved by God? Might God have you be that person?

## Successful “Breakthrough” at Camp Arrah Wanna



ABCO Winter Camps 2010 have come to a close, and we are proud to say that they were AWESOME! Thanks to all the work done by Barbara Galbraith, our Program Coordinator, and the MANY volunteer directors, counselors and adult helpers, each of our campers spent a safe and fun weekend worshipping our Lord and growing in their understanding of God’s grace and love. We studied Bible stories that teach us about key figures who experienced a “breakthrough” in their relationship with Christ, and spent time discussing what that means for our faith today.



One thing that made these winter camps so successful was the strong leadership base we were able to recruit from our churches. It is never easy to find spiritually mature adults to volunteer for a camp session, but that is what

makes ALL the difference in the lives of these campers and gives us the peace of mind in knowing they are in good hands emotionally, spiritually and physically. It also gives our Site and Program staff more time to focus on the big picture of this ABCO ministry, which makes for smoother and deeper experiences at camp.



We are already planning for and looking forward to summer camps! The informational brochure will be going out soon, so keep your eyes peeled. This time it will also have comprehensive information about other major activities happening at Arrah Wanna throughout the coming year. The dates for summer camp are listed on page 1, so please start praying about how you can recruit campers, volunteer your time, give towards scholarships, and spread the word in your church and community. God has blessed this ministry in so many ways, and we just can’t be more



thankful for this opportunity to serve him!

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