

# FOCUS

A Newsletter for ABCCR Professional Church Leaders

July 2010

Kansas Baptist Convention, Inc.

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I grumbled and fumed as I climbed into my car and headed down the road for a meeting I did not want to attend. A couple of months prior I had blocked off a period of time to devote to some important work that needed to be completed. I jealously guarded that time, refusing to let other requests chip away at those precious days. My wonderful office staff promised to run interference, allowing me to remain cloistered away to get the work done. I would still respond to emergencies and critical needs, but the time was reserved for work that had to be done. ... But one meeting got in the way. I couldn't protect the date. The meeting couldn't be rescheduled. I couldn't get out of it. So in the middle of the week I climbed into my car for a three hour drive, a four hour meeting and three hours back home. A wasted day! .... Wrong! It was a GREAT day. I repented of my curmudgeon-like attitude by the time the day was over. It was a helpful time of conversation and exchange of ideas. It seems obvious now that God wanted me there. I wish I could have seen that going into the meeting; it would have saved me several hours of griping and complaining.

How often do we reluctantly agree to some task, quietly (or not so quietly) complaining about the waste of time or interference with "more important" plans, only to discover how valuable the time given actually was? Perhaps that is a piece of why the Bible instructs us saying, "do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment." How important it is that we step out of the way so the Spirit of God might freely, and without interference, bring about God's purposes in our lives and ministries.

Does that mean we should "fly by the seat of our pants," never planning or budgeting our time and energy? No, we are still responsible to be good stewards of the manifold grace given to us; we are still responsible to be faithful managers of the time and gifts God has given us for ministry and life. We must leave room, however, for the

Spirit of God. I employ a simple phrase to keep my life in perspective: "God Is Bigger." Sometimes it must be repeated like a mantra, just to keep me focused, but it has served me well. I need to be reminded that God is bigger than my very best plans and schemes. God is bigger than my greatest needs and problems. God is bigger than the projects and ministries God has called me to engage. God is bigger! When I keep this truth in mind I find I live in a much better place.

How about you? As we reach the midpoint in the summer and begin to realize some of the things we had planned are probably not going to get done; as we realize deadlines are approaching with increased intensity; as we try to squeeze some much-needed rest and vacation time into our schedule ... how shall we proceed? What priorities shall we rearrange? What shall we do? ...

I suggest we take a breath and repeat slowly, "God is bigger." Let us remember that God was already present when, months ago, we set our calendars and schedules. God knew where we would need to focus time, energy and rest. God knew what would be best for each of us. And when those things come up that seem inconvenient interruptions, God is still there.

Take a breath, instead of complaining about the "bumps," whisper a prayer and count the blessings; and trust the Spirit of God to be at work in your life and schedule. I often remind pastoral search committees and churches in transition about the promise of God in Jeremiah 29:11. It's a great promise of hope in times of crisis and change. It's even more relevant for the everyday pieces of our lives. God HAS a plan, for good and not evil, to give all of us a future and hope. I am so glad God is bigger. My life needs a BIG God, doesn't yours?

Blessings,

John Williams

## Included in this issue:

- *Boundaries Workshop*
- *Missions Moment*
- *Planned Giving*
- *Progress Report*
- *Parish Paper*
- *CBTS News*

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- FOCUS is a newsletter published for professional church leaders in Central Region, and it is distributed monthly. For information, contact [martha.robbs@abccr.org](mailto:martha.robbs@abccr.org).
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- 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

*The following is from  
ABC missionary Gary Baits, Costa Rica*

## Building a Decent House on Your Summer Vacation

*“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter ... when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away ... Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear ... then you will find your joy in the LORD.” Isaiah*

*“What’s so funny ‘bout peace, love, and understanding?” Elvis Costello*

It was one of those weekends you dream about and thank God for, one of those weekends where you “find your joy.” The folks of the Mansion of Light Baptist Church had dreamed for a long time of building a decent house for Doña Blanca and her son Raúl, who had been living in a leaky shack made of tin and odd pieces of wood. Those of you who have experienced tropical rain know what can happen to a leaky house with a dirt floor.

So, the church started to raise 528,000 colones for the structure of the house and another 320,000 to do the roof. Vivian from Hacienda Heights, CA asked me how much that was. I told her that it totaled about \$1,600. “That’s a pair of airline tickets,” she responded, dumbfounded. She was struck by how little it would take to make such a big difference in the life of this poor family. But for the people of La Guacima, it was a big effort. The fundraising poster was broken down into blocks, and the church people filled the poster with commitments of \$5, \$10, and \$20, a considerable sacrifice for most of them. Some friends from the U.S. quietly filled some blocks, too; but mostly it was a church effort, a neighborhood project.

When we got there the holes had been dug, but there were a lot of concrete posts and panels to move around. Most of the church folks were trying to make a living on Friday and couldn’t help with the project, so there was a shortage of bodies. Coincidentally, the Hacienda Heights group had too many bodies for what they had planned for their day in another part of town. So just at the right time, about ten teens and a pair of leaders showed up to help, haul, and save some strain on my ancient back. They did what their building supervisor and brother in Christ Johnny Naranjo asked them to do, and they did it with a great attitude. We worked until it started to pour, then went inside and played silly games, sang praise songs in both languages and danced. When the rain died down, we worked some more. The work continued on Saturday with folks from the church and other churches from the Baptist Federation.

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— 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 will be providing mission related information through ABCCR publications. This column may be used in a Moment for Mission.

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On Sunday we went back, this time with our friend Caryn; and the place was hoppin'.

More of the structure was up, and the church was out in force. Their worship that day was to serve and build. They sold vigoron, a Central American delicacy of yucca, cabbage salad and pork. For the good of the cause, I managed to down my share of food (I can fast next week). There was music and face painting, and we touched up the butterfly mural that had suffered some graffiti. It was like Little Rascals meets Nehemiah. It was what the church is supposed to be.

The activity drew the curiosity of the community, and there was laughter and good conversation. I caught up with Alvaro who hadn't been to church in a long time. It was good to get reacquainted, and I invited him to a men's event for August. He hugged me and said he'd come.

On Sunday the roof went on, and sometime this week the slab went in. The whole house is about the size of some of our bedrooms; but for Raul and his mom it's a mansion, a leakproof, safe warm mansion, built by ordinary followers of Jesus.

The whole thing was what we like to call a kingdom moment, or a God-sighting. We didn't make it happen, the group from the U.S. didn't make it happen. But we did get to go along for the ride. It was a muddy, sweaty, loud ride; and it was more fun than a day at Disneyland.

**Please pray for:**

- \* Raul and his mother, Blanca, who is currently in the hospital.
- \* The Butterfly Transformation Center and the Mansion of Light Church.
- \* Gary's leadership for a men's retreat on August 1.
- \* Gary's leadership of the seminar, "Racism and the Gospel" on August 7.
- \* Mylinda and the women pastors' conference in Nicaragua (July 18-21).
- \* Jamie and Micah at Redwood Glen Camp in Northern California.

Thanks to all of you who have contributed and continue to give to our support. It allows us to be part of weekends like this. And please, please, don't forget about Haiti. See the website for ways to help.

\* \* \* \* \*

**STEWARDSHIP MATERIAL**

Need information about current stewardship materials? Go to the ABC/CR website, select the Missions Link, and find what is available from several sources.

●  
**Read It**

●  
**Print It**

●  
**Share It**

**FOCUS is also available  
on the  
Region website,  
[www.abccr.org](http://www.abccr.org).**

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## **Kansas Baptist Convention Foundation**

*Planned***Giving**



*A Ministry of American Baptist Churches of the Central Region*

### ***“I Want My Church to Receive a Small Gift Each Month Instead of One Large Sum.”***

The person who made this statement had received an unexpected windfall. He believed in tithing and wanted to invest in the ongoing ministry of his church.

Could the Kansas Baptist Convention Foundation be of help? Of course it could. The money was given to the Foundation with the stipulation that a designated amount would be mailed to the church every month. In addition, the amount that was given enjoys the benefit of the positive investment experience of the Foundation. And, if the investment experience is negative, the value of the gift decreases.

In return for the gift, the donor was given a statement from the Foundation verifying the amount of his contribution. Though it wasn't filed with his tax forms, it was placed with other documents that must be available in case of an Internal Revenue Service audit.

This particular donor wanted the contribution to be made anonymously. His wishes were fulfilled. The church was notified so it could budget responsibly.

Anonymous contributions can always be made through the Foundation. They can be distributed in small portions regularly or all at once if that is the desire of the donor.

Several churches have already made arrangements to have seminars that deal with many areas of estate planning. They are available free-of-charge, courtesy of the Kansas Baptist Convention Foundation. To make such arrangements, contact:

***Dr. Marshall Schirer***  
***Minister of Planned Giving***  
***(316) 264-0420***  
***marshall.schirer@abccr.org***

The services of the Foundation (seminars, brochures, individual counseling, financial planning) are offered without cost or obligation.

# THE PARISH PAPER

## IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FOR ACTIVE CONGREGATIONS

Coeditors: Herb Miller, Lyle E. Schaller, Cynthia Woolever - [www.TheParishPaper.com](http://www.TheParishPaper.com)

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### Should Our Congregation Use Internet Social Media?

The senior pastor of City Church, Rev. Jamie Osborne, serves the world's first "blended-model" congregation—a combination of Web and face-to-face interaction—spanning 100 cities.

Osborne explains the rationale behind the model: "Two hundred and fifty years ago, leaders like John Wesley led a revolution by taking the church outside its walls to where the people are. We're doing the same thing. It just happens that the Internet is where people are."<sup>1</sup>

Many institutions and religious communities now value Internet tools and social networking media. The Library of Congress holds an archive of the collected works of Twitter, the micro-blogging service whose users send more than fifty-five million messages daily. Thousands follow the Twitter posts of pastors Rick Warren and Joel Osteen, while thousands of others post on the Facebook "wall" of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI.

These examples are a small part of the 400 million active users of Facebook, one-half of whom log on to the site daily. Dozens of new social networking sites and thousands of applications emerge each year.

**What Would an Effective Social Media Ministry Look Like?** All types of social media offer a technological opportunity for accomplishing ministry.

As with all other communication technologies, the use of Internet social media must serve the congregation's ministry goals. Unrestricted by a set time or place, people can connect regardless of their schedule or location. Social media tools extend the boundaries of traditional ministry and establish a network of people who interact during the week—not just during worship services or on-site activities. Wherever people are gathered—in this case, online—a ministry opportunity exists.

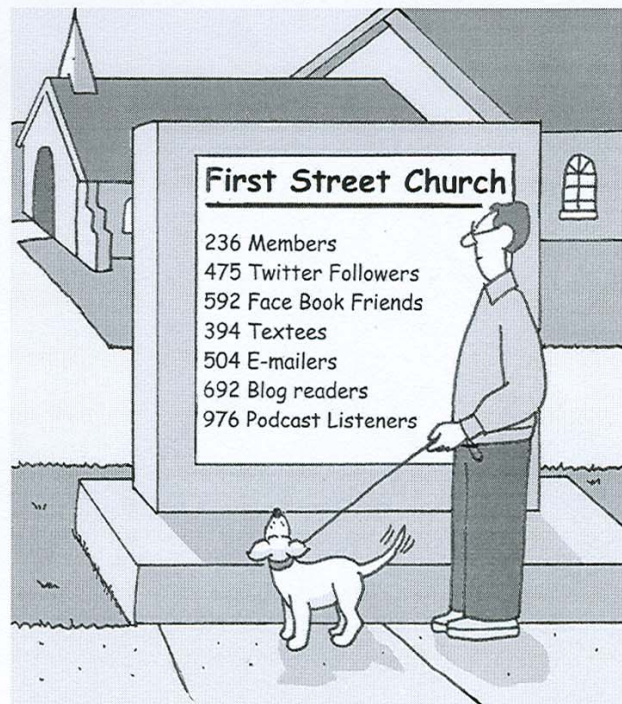
**Strengthening relationships.** Social media tools can strengthen relationships among church members and between leaders and members. Through Facebook posts, tweets, text messages, or other media tools, members take part in celebrations (birthdays, births, weddings, anniversaries, graduations, new jobs) and learn about others' challenges (illnesses, losses, deaths). Photos are the most popular feature of social media. Many churches post pictures or videos of events that can be shared with extended family and friends. The networking function of

social media allows users to share ideas, resources, encouragement, and friendships.

**Expanding evangelism and advocacy.** Social media transform the ways churches reach out to people outside the congregation. Different from a congregation's Web site, a church Facebook page creates an interactive tool for people to learn more about the congregation's mission and activities. Anyone can post updates or photos, use it as an on-line bulletin board or discussion room, call for volunteers, or send invitations to church events. Real-time communication encourages learning, sharing faith, and describing how God is working in lives.

Congregations can also use social media to highlight issues, encourage community volunteerism, and raise funds. The success of Red Cross fund-raising for Haiti illustrates this powerful capability. When calls for emergency relief funds spread through social media sites, the Red Cross raised more than five million dollars through individuals' \$10 text-message donations.

**Reaching out to younger adults.** New forms of social media have replaced email as the communication of choice for youth and young adults: to learn what media



and movies they prefer, what they are concerned about, and check out their profiles on Facebook or other sites. The use of social media allows congregations to express interest in young people's lives.

**Encountering the culture.** Technology has traditionally been a weak spot for churches. But social media requires almost no additional expense, very little technical knowledge, and a modest amount of time. Congregations already appear in the virtual world through sites that evaluate worship services (such as churchrater.com and yelp.com) and through members who create content (such as blogs or posts). Proactive social media use enables members to show that we are all human, gives others a chance to know what the congregation values, and confirms that worshipers are open to communication with people who might be different from them. Social media use offers a rare opportunity for the Church to become more vital and central in people's networks, more relevant to their daily lives, and more helpful to them in making faith-reflecting decisions.

**How Do Pastors Use Social Media?** At least one-half of the adult population of the U.S. currently creates content for the Web. Internet social media provides a wide variety of communication opportunities not otherwise available to clergy.

**Sharing content.** Pastors already create content on a weekly basis—sermons, prayers, teaching materials, and newsletters. Posting that content or writing material on a social networking site becomes a logical next step for reaching a larger audience. Currently, one in seven pastors maintains a blog—to discuss their interests, what they are reading, what conferences or seminars they are attending, and what they are learning.<sup>2</sup>

**Listening to others.** Pastors gain real-time feedback from members and non-members when they comment on sermons, weekly columns, or anything else the pastor posts. People tell stories, give personal testimonies, contribute ideas, and share concerns. Some disclose thoughts online that they might never voice face-to-face.

**Interacting with a larger network.** Pastors use social media to communicate with a larger and wider range of people: to renew and maintain connections with other pastors, former seminary professors, and other professional or supportive networks. Networking tools even make some administration details more manageable (such as sharing documents and negotiating meeting times).

**What Are the Reservations about Social Media Tools?** Church leaders express misgivings about on-line communication—and for good reason. Caution is warranted because hazards are real. Examples of those misgivings include the following:

**"It takes too much time."** All interactions with people take time. Therefore, social media users must always weigh the time investment with the potential return.

Additionally, in the beginning, some time is required to climb the learning curve.

**"It makes the message seem less spiritual and personal."** Some argue that on-line interactions demean the message. As one objector stated, "If God wants a personal relationship with us, how can that be accomplished through email, text message, or Twitter?" Any written communication—whether in hard copy or on-line—carries this risk.

**"The content can't be controlled."** When anyone can post comments or content, the possibility exists for some user statements to be off-message or negative. The congregation must decide whether it can dedicate staff or volunteer time to monitoring the congregation's on-line presence (such as removing out-of-bounds postings). One benefit of on-line conversations: The congregation knows what others are saying and can respond to it.

**"It risks my privacy and security."** While social networking sites offer ways to set privacy levels, in reality, all on-line content carries the prospect of becoming publicly accessible. Therefore, whatever content or messages users post should be done with the recognition that this on-line communication has a long shelf life. Users, especially the pastor and staff, should always use their real names on sites to avoid any suggestion of impropriety in their on-line interactions.

**The Bottom Line.** Create a list of your congregation's most important ministry goals (such as "build and deepen relationships among members"). How might social media help church leaders achieve those goals?

Make a list of reservations and fears about social media. What steps could our church take to neutralize those liabilities or turn them into assets?

In addition to the pastor, identify three to five people to form a social media ministry team. The team members should include tech-savvy people as well as social media beginners who serve to alert leaders to likely mishaps and misunderstandings. Begin the team's work by reading several excellent resources about social media technology and ministry.<sup>3</sup>

Expect church members to be located everywhere along the social media spectrum—from non-users to experts. Consider offering a social media workshop for church members, which helps them become involved in the congregation's on-line ministries.

<sup>1</sup>See [www.onebigcity.com](http://www.onebigcity.com)

<sup>2</sup>*Facebook for Pastors* by Chris Forbes (Ministry Marketing Coach: 2008); <http://ministrymarketingcoach.com/free-e-books/>

<sup>3</sup>*Reaching Out in a Networked World: Expressing Your Congregation's Heart and Soul* by Lynn M. Baab (Alban Institute, 2008); *The Reason Your Church Must Twitter* (<http://www.twitterforchurches.com>)

## American Baptist Churches of the Central Region

# Mission Giving for June 2010

	2010	2009	Increase (Decrease)	% Increase (% Decrease)
United Mission	\$92,979.60	\$101,321.63	(\$8,342.03)	-8.23%
ABW Ministries Love Gift	\$4,189.35	\$4,509.15	(\$319.80)	-7.09%
<b>American Baptist Mission Support</b>	<b>\$155,036.86</b>	<b>\$166,879.53</b>	<b>(\$11,842.67)</b>	<b>-7.09%</b>

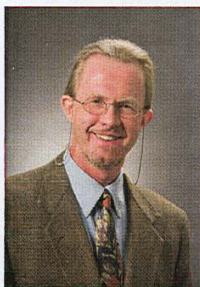
## Mission Giving June YTD

United Mission	\$550,097.46	\$577,162.05	(\$27,064.59)	-4.68%
ABW Ministries Love Gift	\$26,069.59	\$26,968.28	(\$898.69)	-3.33%
America For Christ offering	\$79,112.39	\$91,144.84	(\$12,032.45)	-13.20%
One Great Hour of Sharing offering	\$143,112.46	\$38,202.30	\$104,910.16	274.61%
World Mission Offering	\$25,091.87	\$18,880.92	\$6,210.95	32.89%
Retired Ministers & Missionaries	\$28,443.64	\$32,710.85	(\$4,267.21)	-13.04%
Region Offering	\$9,375.51	\$13,657.19	(\$4,281.68)	-31.35%
Institutional Support Process	\$13,825.84	\$16,276.24	(\$2,450.40)	-15.05%
Specifics	\$84,551.35	\$74,402.01	\$10,149.34	13.64%
<b>American Baptist Mission Support</b>	<b>\$960,625.98</b>	<b>\$882,177.92</b>	<b>\$78,448.06</b>	<b>8.89%</b>

## Our Church's Giving for June

United Mission	\$ _____
One Great Hour of Sharing offering	\$ _____
<b>American Baptist Mission Support</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>

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## What Is Taizé Worship?

Drs. Tarris "Terry" and Ruth Rosell recently travelled to the Philippines where they participated in a time of professional development with pastors serving there. Terry introduced the pastors to a form of worship the Central Community has come to appreciate very much—the music of the Taizé community. One of the Philippine pastor's wrote after this introduction, "Thanks! I intend to use Taizé here."

What is Taizé worship? It all began in 1940 with a young Protestant layman in Switzerland who moved to the village of Taizé in France. The man who became known to the world as "Brother Roger," founded the Taizé Community of Brothers during the Second World War. Their community became known as a place of refuge and hospitality for strangers, and in recent decades also for its unique form of communal worship.

Taizé worship is a service of readings, prayers, songs, and silence. Readings from scripture may be in the form of *lectio divina*—read slowly, repetitively, meditatively. Songs too are typically taken from the Bible, and are simple, slow, repetitive, easily learned and sung. Simple instruments are used—perhaps acoustic guitar and a flute. Since the Taizé Community welcomes thousands of international guests into their midst daily, everything is done in manner such that the stranger is made welcome. Anyone can join Taizé worship and feel right at home. Reading and singing is interspersed with long silences for prayer and meditation. This is quiet worship. There is no sermon except that delivered by the Spirit in the hearts of those who gather for prayer.

Many faith communities all over the world, both Protestant and Catholic, have incorporated Taizé into their worship experiences. Typically, it is an additional or occasional service for those of the American Baptist Churches who have tapped this worship resource.

### Taizé Worship [SAMPLE]

**Welcome---Introduction** to worship in the style of the  
Taizé Community

**Call to Worship:** *Psalm 46:1-3, 9-10*

**Singing:** *My Soul is at Rest in God Alone*

**Prayer of Invocation**

**Reading Responsively:** *Psalm 116:1-9*

[The English translation of the Liturgical Psalter ©1994, International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.]

*I am filled with love, for the Lord hears me.*

*The Lord bends to my voice whenever I call.*

*Death had me in its grip, the grave's trap was set;  
grief held me fast.*

*I cried out for God, "Please, Lord, rescue me!"*

*Kind and faithful is the Lord; gentle is our God.*

*The Lord shelters the poor, raises me from the dust.*

*Rest once more, my heart, for you know the Lord's love.*

*God rescues me from death, wiping my tears,  
steading my feet.*

*I walk with the Lord in this land of the living.*

*[So let us walk with God. So be it. Amen.]*

**Singing:** *Come and Fill Our Hearts with Your Peace*

**Reading:** *Matthew 25:34-40*

**Meditating in Silence . . .**

**Singing:** *O Lord, Hear Our Prayer*

**Prayers of Intercession**—on behalf of sisters and  
brothers in need . . .

**Singing:** *O Lord, Hear Our Prayer*

**Reading from the Hebrew Bible:**

*Lamentations 3:19-26*

**Meditating in Silence . . .**

**Singing:** *Wait for the Lord*

**Speaking Stories of Hope in Waiting . . .**

**Singing:** *In the Lord*

**The Blessing for Departure**

*The peace of Christ be with you.*

*And also with you.*

#### Sources for Taizé music:

- *Songs and Prayers from Taizé.* GIA Publications, Inc., © 1991 Ateliers et Presses de Taizé, France
- *Music from Taizé, Vol. 1 & 2.* © 1982, 1983, 1984., Les Presses de Taizé, France
- *The Faith We Sing.* © 2000, Abingdon Press, Nashville

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