

ABC President Report—Don Ng
November 2014

American Baptists at Their Best

For 4 weekends in a row, I had the privilege of attending and speaking at four ABC regional meetings. What an opportunity to meet American Baptists at their best! In New Brunswick, New Jersey, I attended their “pastors academy” where they took attendance and taught classes leading toward a certificate. One class was on maintaining good financial records in the local church. Another was on email etiquette. Lee Spitzer and his able staff including Vernl Mattson and Elmo Familiaran gathered over 500 for a one-day session culminating with a luncheon at the Hyatt.

In St. Louis where Great Rivers gathered, I attended a session led by Marsha Brown Woodard, a former colleague in the Youth Department and heard a message from Adam Bond at their pastors event. BGM member Jim Wolfe oriented me to the region's business! I met one woman who shared with me about her concern for her identical twin brother who was estranged in Shenyang, China. I assured her that if I happen to meet him, I'd tell him that his sister loves him. Dwight Stinnett led his board through a review of the region's investment portfolios that I thought was superbly done and should be a continuing educational seminar for others.

The Evergreen Baptist's meeting was at New Beginnings Christian Fellowship where we visited after our September Executive Committee meeting in Seattle and where Leslie Braxton is pastor and is also a member of the BMS Planning Team. I worked hard that weekend—speaking at the Ministers Luncheon, preaching twice at the annual meeting and then preaching at FBC, Seattle on Sunday morning. A Chin choir sang one night and a Karen group of women danced the next day. BGM member Perla Belo and her husband Gus and Inter-Caucus chair Kenneth Kho were present. I also met Stephanie Commandest, the new BGM member from Evergreen who will be serving next year. AWAB held their meeting after Evergreen's but the board members came early to participate in the regional sessions. Marcia Patton and people like Yosh Nagakawa are modeling for us how to live into a new reality when consensus decision-making in caucus groups brings us closer to becoming the beloved community. At FBC, Judge Charles Smith introduced me before I preached.

Finally, the Philadelphia Baptist held their annual Mission Banquet at the Hilton on City Avenue with close to 600 in attendance. James McJunkin wanted me to speak about hospitality to the stranger and immigrant. Each year, they give recognition to people who have been mission-oriented in their local churches. This is a great idea to encourage people and churches to be missional. Imagine if we gave awards to churches that have done adaptive change, would there be more commitments to facing today's realities? BGM member Dean Parker gave me encouragement and I met many former colleagues and friends: Norm Green (Norm's wife, Dolores was an award recipient), Bill Klein, Joe Leonard, and Jeff Snyder.

Sharing the Word

For these regional meetings, I prepared 4 messages to give that reflected where my heart is in discerning God's call for American Baptists.

1. *Now We Are God's People* (1 Peter 2:2-10) While we may not recognize immigrants and undocumented workers among us, God does. We are all once not a people, but we are now God's people.
2. *The Peaceable Kingdom* (Isaiah 11:1-10) If wild and domesticated animals can live in peace, can we reconcile our differences and live in peace too?
3. *Boast in the Lord* (Romans 5:1-11) When pastors suffer in ministry, there's always hope. I offered 5 learnings that I see in my almost 40 years in ministry.
4. *Taking People Seriously* (Matthew 18:15-20) When we take people seriously, we act like how God in Christ has taken us seriously to save us.

Other Signposts Along the Way

I attended the World Relief Committee meeting to learn more about this work especially since their operating manual is being revised. With an improving real estate market, I attended the 588 Real Estate Council to participate in the discussions. And finally, planning and envisioning the 2015 BMS in Overland Park next June was another example of American Baptists at our best! The GS Search Committee will meet prior to BGM to review applicants.

I have a deep appreciation for the competent and dedicated staff colleagues in Valley Forge to whom I have an opportunity to serve. They make me look so good! Thank you!