



November 2022 Executive Report to the Board of General Ministries, sitting as the American Baptist Historical Society

Although we planned for a year of getting back “up to speed” with new staff members having a year in their positions and learning their jobs, our work has proceeded more slowly than planned. In April archivist Caroline Crowell resigned effective June 30, because her husband had accepted a job in Anchorage, Alaska. After a diligent search ABHS hired Mariah Hamby for the position of Archivist and Head of Special Collections. Mariah comes to us with a newly-earned Certificate in Archival Studies as well as M.Div./M.A. in Religion degrees from the School of Divinity at Gardner-Webb University, and began her position on September 6.

Archival Projects

In May 2021 we received \$48,000 from the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) for a project to digitize audio tapes of American Baptist Conventions from 1958-1973. Those tapes have been digitized and the audio files monitored for quality control. The next step is to ingest the files into the digital preservation platform, Preservica.

We began a collaborative project with Ancestry.com in June when Ancestry moved scanning equipment to ABHS offices. An Ancestry contractor is currently scanning ABFMS/IM missionary bio files. The project also includes some original church records, MMBB data sheets, and a set of scrapbooks with newspaper clippings on notable Baptists. We estimated 500,000 pages to be digitized. Ancestry anticipated that it would take their employee 10-12 months of full-time work to complete scanning these documents.

Denise Hanusek has continued volunteering with us monthly to catalog the rare books. She has added 83 books to the catalog since the beginning of March. We currently have 2624 items in [WorldCat](#). Of those, 74 are unique holdings and another 998 are held by 2-10 libraries.

Outreach

We continue outreach to congregations and regions by means of church anniversary certificates.

In March ABHS participated in the Prairie Pastors Conference with a video presentation on Baptist history. The conference was hosted by ABCCR, Mid-American Baptist Churches, ABC of the Dakotas, and ABC of Nebraska.

Priscilla Eppinger gave a presentation for ABWM during Women’s History Month.

At the National Leadership Council meeting in May, PEppinger made a presentation to ABC executives on new services in preparation by ABHS, concentrating on digital archiving and the several services intended for congregations as outlined in the Strategic Plan.

PEppinger was named Conference Historian for the “Celebrating Ministering Women: Radical. Redeemed. Ready.” conference that was sponsored by ABWIM, and led two workshops during that Green Lake conference in June 2022. She took that opportunity to visit North Shore Baptist Church in Chicago and bring greetings from ABHS.

PEppinger attended a memorial service for Yosh Nakagawa in Seattle in July.

PEppinger participated in a dedication ceremony for a memorial to the 122,000 people of Japanese descent who were interned during World War II, at the invitation of the Japanese American National Museum in

Los Angeles. She took that opportunity to visit Gardena Valley Baptist Church and bring greetings from ABHS.

Autumn speaking engagements include the ABC of Great Rivers Region annual gathering and the 315th anniversary of the Philadelphia Baptist Association.

Funding and Fundraising

Donations

We have 19 new donors in 2022. Donations through July total \$30,184, compared with \$30,416 in the same period of 2021. We anticipate year-end donations to reach last year's level.

Grants

We have received a "Preservation Assistance Grant for Smaller Institutions" from the National Endowment for the Humanities. ABHS requested funding to carry out a general preservation assessment of our preservation needs. The final General Preservation Assessment report will provide observations and recommendations to guide ABHS in prioritizing strategies for upgrading current conditions and practices, as well as to plan for providing additional space for continued collection growth. This preservation assessment is the first step toward requesting and negotiating additional archival space from Mercer University.

Unexpected Circumstances

In July we discovered water leaking into one of the archival rooms. Mercer University is doing extensive renovations to the building, including removing all of the concrete tiles of the outside terrace, jackhammering up the underlying support, putting down new waterproofing, etc., to eventually have outdoor seating & garden area. In the meantime, hard rains leaked through the portions in progress, and we had water in collections Room 3 and two rooms where unprocessed collections and back issues of the *American Baptist Quarterly* are stored. Jenny, Jean, and Priscilla spent an afternoon hurriedly moving boxes from wet shelving to the Reading Room where we spread out damp materials to dry. Fortunately, there was no complete loss of any documents – archival boxes protected what they were designed to protect – but a carton of textiles from Burma got soaked. We have engaged a textile conservator from Alabama to do conservation work on the textiles. The contractor doing the building renovations has been very forthcoming in reimbursing ABHS for damaged ABQs and archival supplies for rehousing documents in boxes that got wet. He has also agreed to pay for the textile conservation measures.

Strategic Planning

The ABHS Board of Managers officially approved a new Strategic Plan and staff have begun preparing some of the artifacts needed for the new fee-based services outlined in the Strategic Plan, albeit more slowly than initially envisioned. The delays are due principally to staff transitions.

It continues to be an honor and a blessing to serve with ABHS.

Respectfully submitted,
Priscilla Eppinger
Executive Director