



December 1, 2016

The Rocky Mountain American Baptist

A Newsletter of the American Baptist Churches in the Rocky Mountain Region

Where is the Manger Today?

⁷ And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. – Luke 2 (NIV)



This is the season that the church has set aside to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Centuries ago, the church opted to celebrate Christ's birth in conjunction with other holidays observed by various cultures during the Winter Solstice. That means that this season is replete with multiple celebrations, busyness and preoccupation.

While Jesus' birth probably took place in the spring, it too was a time of busyness and preoccupation. The Roman government had just ordered a census be taken and that all families must be in their home city. Imagine what that would do in the US today after the mass migration that has taken place during the past decades. It was a similar situation during that day.

So, Joseph and his expectant wife Mary traveled to Bethlehem and, not unsurprisingly, the journey caused Mary to go into labor and Jesus was born there. But there weren't hospitals in those days and since so many people had come back to Bethlehem, the town was sold out. But one innkeeper, either because of the cultures commitment to hospitality or because of his desire to get a few more shekels in his pocket, told the young family "If you don't mind the smell and the animals, I can put you up in the stable. Plenty of straw for your bed and you could probably use the manger there as a cradle. You'll be out of the wind and the elements, I'll bring your food there and you'll be out of the hustle and bustle."

And with no other options, Baby Jesus was put to bed for the first time in that infamous stable in Bethlehem. And the proud Pappa (not Joseph) decided to celebrate like new Dad's will do. No, this Pappa didn't hand out celestial cigars (unless that is how the Milky Way was formed), instead He sent a choir of angels to celebrate Jesus' birth and encouraging those who heard to come and be a part of this wonderful event.

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Now, Bethlehem was hopping...no place for Joseph and Mary after all. People who had been away for years were back in town so you can imagine the parties and celebrations that were taking place. Maybe these were people who were celebrating how important they were, how they had made a success of their life and were prosperous in their new setting. They were the movers and shakers of the community. But none of them heard the Angels sing that night.

It was the shepherds in the field... the equivalent of today's minimum wage workers... who heard the angels sing. Oh, probably they were a bit jealous of those who were celebrating and partying in town, the rowdiness and such. They weren't considered to be powerful or important. But because they were out in the fields... because they were not distracted by the busyness and the parties... they heard the angels, understood the message and came to the manger! Because they were who they were and where they were, they were blessed!

Recent years have seen a new catch phrase during the celebrations...Keep Christ in Christmas! But I suspect Christ has always been in Christmas. He's simply been lying in a manger away from the hustle and bustle, waiting for those who will to come and worship Him away from the hustle and bustle of the season.

My prayer for you as your Executive Minister and I am sure the prayers of your staff at ABCRM is that you will be able to break away and go to the manger this Christmas. That you will hear the angels sing and discover the gift of the new born Christ once again.

Please have a blessed and a very Merry Christmas.

*In Christ,
Steve Van O*

Region Hosts "Thank You" Luncheon for Retired Clergy

On November 11, the American Baptist Churches of the Rocky Mountains hosted a "Thank You" Luncheon for our retired clergy. We met at Cinzzetti's Italian Restaurant. We had 35 people in attendance. We had a blessed time filled with fun and fellowship. The Region truly appreciates the service our retired clergy provided and continues to provide. We extend our thanks to all of you. Below are some questions and answers we did as a fun activity.

What is the best thing about being retired?

Lots of free time – Mason Brown

No schedules – Bob Garcia

The flexibility – Dwight Neuenschwander

Time and schedule I manage – Joel Parke

Serving the Cheyenne Police Department – Ron Rimby

Coffee and sleeping, choices – Carol Willard

Planning my own schedule.

Time, fewer evening meetings.

What hymn did you hate to sing?

In the Garden – Mason Brown

Bringing in the Sheaves – Bob Garcia

None – Dwight Neuenschwander

I Come to the Garden Alone – Joel Parke

Most of them – Ron Rimby

Onward Christian Soldiers – Carol Willard

Beyond the Sunset

Here I Am Lord

What hymn do you love and wish the church sang more often?

Great is Thy Faithfulness and Thine Is the Glory – Mason Brown

Blessed Assurance – Bob Garcia

Amazing Grace – Dwight Neuenschwander

Power in the Blood – Joel Parke

How Great Thou Art – Ron Rimby

They Will Know We Are Christians by Our Love – Carol Willard

Church One Foundation

Under His Wings

Here I Am Lord

What advice would you give to a young pastor/chaplain today?

Let the Bible guide your preaching. Keep the faith – live a life worthy of your calling – Mason Brown

Never compromise God's word – Bob Garcia

Build a team – Dwight Neuenschwander

Spend huge amount of time with Jesus and others – not just the local church, but diversity – Joel Park

Guard your time – always make time for personal reading of the Word and faithful in prayer – Ron Rimby

First item of your business is to learn the history and stories of your new flock and to respect it and build it with the help of the people/church – Carol Willard



Thank You

Dear Friends of ABCRM

Thank you for the beautiful plant sent in memory of Tom Wheeler. He loved being part of that Region when we ministered there. You touched our lives.

*Sincerely
Nancy Wheeler and Family*

Greetings

I want to thank you for the wonderful cup and its contents of goodies. Also, I want to thank you for the privilege of serving on the Region Board. I enjoyed serving on the Board very much. Thank you again.

*In His Name
Bob Witt*

US Court Blocks Overtime Expansion Pay Rule

A federal court has blocked implementation of a rule that would have made an estimated 4 million more higher-earning workers across the country eligible for overtime pay starting December 1. To view the article, visit <http://www.denverpost.com/2016/11/22/us-court-blocks-overtime-expansion-4-million/>



[What's in this RMAB?](#)

Poverty DVDs

Are you being called to do something about poverty in your own community or the world? The Region office has a set of DVDs from povertycure.org titled 'Rethink Missions'. While it is primarily aimed at short term mission trips, the ideas that are discussed can make a difference anywhere.

The stories, and explanations, will change how you view poverty, and how you can help.

If you would like to borrow these DVDs, please contact our office at 303.988.3900 to make arrangements for you to do so.

Wanted: A Dynamic Woman

Wanted: A dynamic woman who holds the Word of God in high esteem to lead the Wyoming Women's Retreat. We enjoy thorough teaching with a Reformed base. The retreat will be held August 11-13, 2017 at Camp Wyoba.



If you are interested, or have suggestions, please email Jenita at mjmjpack@vcn.com.

Save the Date WyobaFest

Saturday, April 1, 2017

**First Baptist Church
514 S. Beech St
Casper, WY 82601**

**The party will start at 1:00 p.m.
Don't miss it.**

For more information, please contact
Jenita at mjmjpack@vcn.com.

December is Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering Month



Retired
Ministers +
Missionaries
Offering
2016

The Importance of RMMO

Following God's call does not come without sacrifice. Retired ministers, missionaries and their widowed spouses often have limited options to adequately plan for the future. Medical problems, relocating or the death of a spouse can also cause these leaders to find themselves far from the church family that once supported them.

RMMO provides financial support for the retired ministers, missionaries and widowed spouses who have helped build our churches. This assistance restores the lifeline and ongoing connection to the ABC family. Like any else, retired ministers and missionaries experience anxiety and worry when unforeseen costs arise. RMMO exists to alleviate the stress and hardship of unexpected expenses.

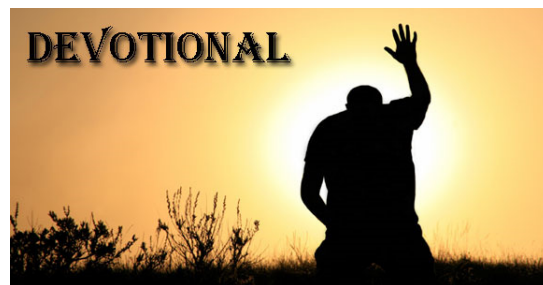
RMMO recipients have used their funds to:

- Pay for medical expenses not typically covered by Medicare – including hearing aids, dental services and vision care
- Pay for renovations to make their home wheelchair accessible
- Purchase prescription medication not covered by health insurance
- Make emergency home repairs

For more information and to view materials, visit http://www.abc-usa.org/what_we_believe/mission/stewardship/abc-annual-offerings/

Devotionals

Each week, ABCRM sends an email devotional to people from ABCRM churches and beyond. We try to have these devotionals be current to the season of year (Advent, Easter, Camping, Gathering, etc.), but you are welcome to submit a devotion on any topic of your choice. These devotionals are also posted on our ABCRM website. If you think you would like to write a devotional(s) for us, the guidelines are below. We welcome your input.



Guidelines for Writing a Devotional for ABCRM

The devotional should be around 500 words; though this is not a hard number, we do want you to be aware that if they are too long people won't read them.

Start with a Scripture verse or two.

End with a sentence or two of prayer.

Include your picture. (Sometimes people will recognize you by your picture if not your name.)

Include a sentence or two about you and what church you are from.

If you would like to include a picture to illustrate your devotional, we will do our best to include it.

Don't engage in politics or be overly "preachy."

The devotionals can be a reflection on the teaching of Scripture, self-reflective, reflective of the times, etc.

You can go to <http://abcrim.org/category/devotional/> to get a sense of the kinds of devotionals that have been written before you.

Your devotional should be submitted to your Ministry and Mission Coach. The coach will review your devotional and submit it to the office to be sent out. Your devotional may or may not go out immediately after submission.

Denver Cluster Coach – Larron Jackson (ljackson@abcrim.org)

Southeast New/Mexico – Mike Oldham (moldham@abcrim.org)

Wyoming – Bill Mankin (bmankin@abcrim.org)

Western Slope – Steve Van Ostran (svanostran@abcrim.org)

If you are not sure who your area coach is, please call our office at 303.988.3900.

Thank you in advance for writing a devotional. We look forward to hearing from you as to how you see God at work in our lives and our world.

Empower the Small Church



A majority of the churches that make up the Region are small. Small churches have a unique role in ministry and mission. Some of our small churches have embraced this small church role and are involved in mission in their community; others struggle to be something that they are not. Small churches face many challenges. Most cannot afford a full-time trained pastor. Pastors who work part time leading a church in addition to a full time secular job can be overwhelmed. Some pastors may need more training in ministry; all need support for the stress and multiple demands that can engulf them.

Recognizing this difficulty, the Region applied for and received a Palmer Grant from the American Baptist Foundation to create a program for ***Empower the Small Church*** by supporting and equipping pastors of small churches. This ***Empower the Small Church*** program will begin with a weekend conference in Cheyenne, WY next February. Pastors and their spouses will come together to meet with Dr. Tony Pappas, a former Executive Minister of American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts and a long-time pastor of a small Baptist church. Although spouses are invited to participate fully, a pastor may attend without his or her spouse. Author of several books, Dr. Pappas is a recognized authority on the life and culture of small churches. He will share understanding of the way small churches function and how that differs from churches of other sizes. At the conference, the pastors will meet in small groups with Region ministry coaches to discover how these ideas apply in their church and to develop some specific goals and plans to apply them at home. There will also be some fun, fellowship time. The Region will supply pulpit coverage for the pastor's church during the conference.

Follow-up Coaching and Workshops

Following the conference, each pastor will receive coaching from the Region staff. There will be four additional mini-conferences to address specific problems and concerns of the participants, identified at the first conference. These will be conducted as videoconferences to avoid the need for travel. An expert on the subject matter of the conference will introduce the problem and suggest some practical approaches for dealing with it in the small church. The participants will engage in discussions online about how this applies in their context.

Online Discussion of Resource Material

Prior to each conference, the participants will receive a copy of a book relevant to the topic. The first will be *Entering the World of the Small Church* by Dr. Pappas. Participants will read the book and engage in online discussions to prepare for the conference.

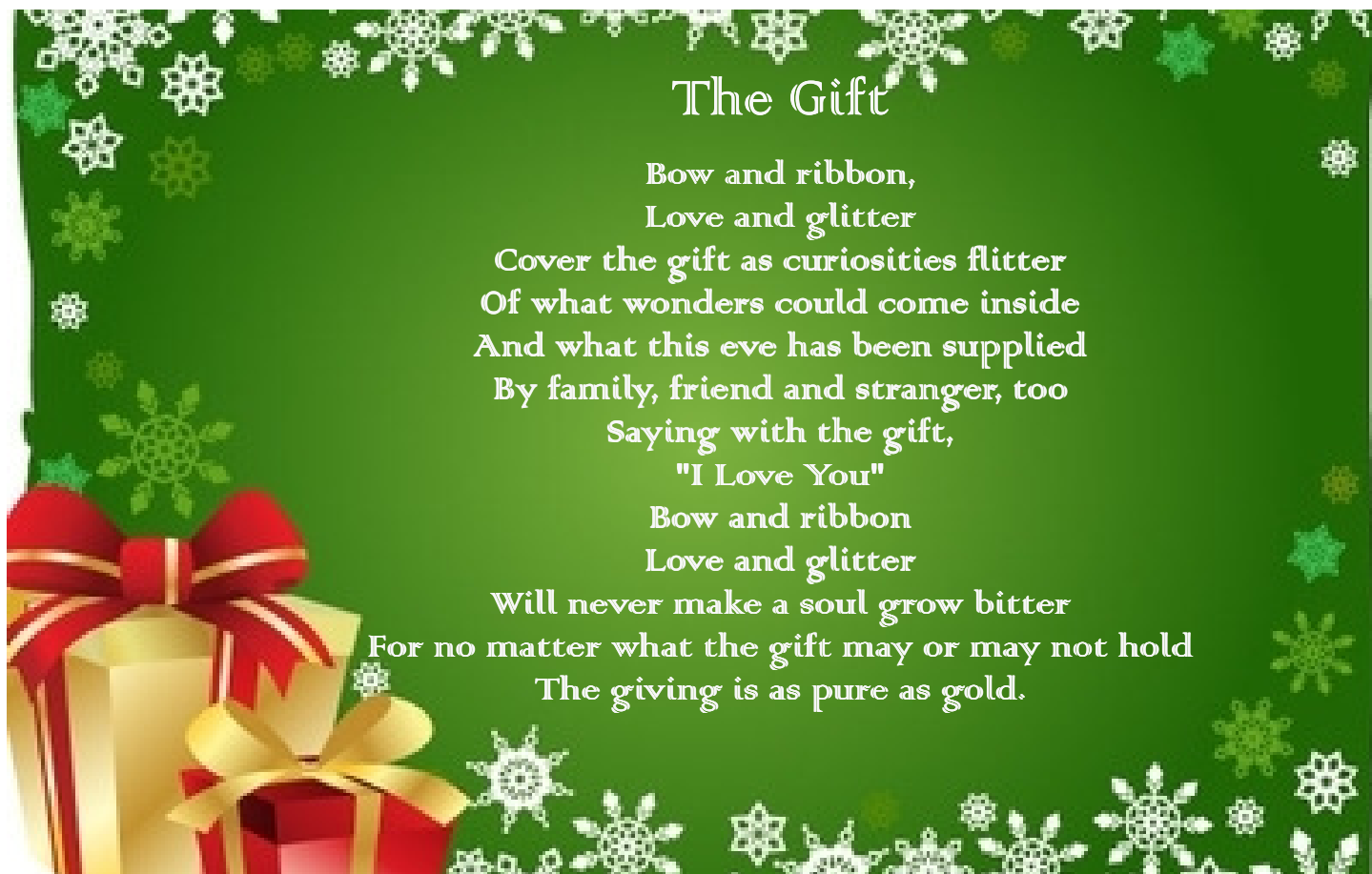
Registration Information

Thanks to the Palmer grant, the cost of the program, including accommodations and meals and conference materials, is only \$50 for pastor and spouse together. Space is limited; participation in the program is by invitation. If you are interested, speak to your ministry coach about receiving an invitation. December 1 is the deadline to apply.



Bill Mankin
Mission and Ministry Coach
Wyoming Cluster





IRS Year-End Giving Guidelines	Report for 2016	Report for 2017
Checks written in December 2016 and deposited in church offering in December 2016	X	
Checks written in December 2016 and deposited in church offering in January 2017		X
Checks written and deposited in church offering in January 2017 but "backdated" to December 2016		X
Checks written and deposited in church offering in December 2016 but "postdated" to January 2017		X
Checks written in December 2016 and deposited in the mail and post-marked in December 2016, but not received by the church until January 2017	X	
Checks written in December 2016 and deposited in the mail in December 2016 but not postmarked until January 2017, and not received by the church until January 2017		X

ABC-USA Mission Giving Guidelines		
Monthly cut off is the 8th of each month (except for weekends, holidays, and December year-end). Checks received prior to the 8th of each month are posted to the prior month. For example; checks received October 9 through November 8 are posted to October.		
	Report for 2016	Report for 2017
Checks received in Region office through January 11, 2017, but dated 2016	X	
Checks received in Region office through January 12, 2017, but dated 2017		X

From Mary McLeod Bethune to Michelle Obama

“Without faith, nothing is possible. With faith, nothing is impossible.”



Mrs. Bethune writes “I was loved before I came into being and I have treasured this heritage of love and have made it the foundation of my life. I have precious contentment in my realization of God as my spiritual Father... Out of the womb of salvation and truth my new life was born and it is that I live, move and have my being.”

Unlike her parents and 16 siblings, Mary Jane McLeod was born free. All members of the family worked in the fields, but one day a black missionary woman who was starting a school asked that the



McLeod children attend. Mary was selected. She walked five miles and after graduation she attended Nova Scotia Seminary and Moody Institute in Chicago.

Mrs. Bethune believed that education was the key to advancement and the fulfillment of the American democracy and in 1904 with \$1.50 in capital and no guarantee of a salary, she founded her own school, the Daytona Literary and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls, to help black girls “earn a living.” The school underwent a series of expansions and name changes, finally becoming the co-educational Bethune-Cookman College.

In 1935, she found the National Council of Negro Women in New York; Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed her as Director of Negro Affairs of the National Youth Administration.

In 1945, as she wrote these lines; “Death neither alarms or frightens one who has had a long career of fruitful toil. My worldly possessions are few yet my experiences have been rich. From them, I have distilled principles and policies in which I believe firmly, for they represent the meaning of my life’s work. Here, then is my legacy: I leave you love. Love builds. Our aim must be to create a world of fellowship and justice where no man’s color or religion is held against him. I leave you hope. Yesterday, our ancestors endured the degradation of slavery, yet they retained their dignity. I leave you the challenge of developing confidence in one another. I leave you a thirst for education. Knowledge is the prime need of the hour. I leave you a respect for the uses of power. We live in a world which respects power above all things.”

Sixty-three years later, Barack Obama became the first African American President of the United States, making Michelle Obama the first Lady. Mrs. Michelle Obama came into the White House with the confidence and the poise not seen since Jacqueline Kennedy. Mrs. Obama moved rhythmically and poetically through her executive duties and her social obligations. She spoke “to an America often too quick to read a black woman’s confidence as arrogance, her straightforwardness as entitlement.”

Michelle Obama reflects the modern, American woman, “outspoken and respected, but also sexy and beautiful.” In the words of Rashida Jones, “If feminism’s goal is equal opportunity and choice, Michelle makes me feel like every choice is available. You can go to Princeton and Harvard, you can rap with Missy Elliott, you can be a mother and a lawyer and powerful orator. You can champion the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Play Act, while also caring about fashion. You can dance with Ellen and fearlessly remind people, on live television, of the reality of your position: ‘wake up every morning in a house that was built by slaves. And I watch my daughters, two beautiful, intelligent black young women, playing with their dogs on the White House lawn.’”

Michelle Obama has begun a legacy of choice, her choice!!!! She can do it all!!!!

Frank Bruni in his column in the New York Times writes of the ‘Authentic Power of Michelle Obama.’

“I think of the gorgeous passage in her convention speech about moving to Washington and watching her daughters wake up every morning in a white house built by black slaves. That observation admonished America for its sins but also brimmed with appreciation, complimenting and congratulating the country on its progress. It got at something that politics and politicians seldom do: the complicated, inarguable, truth.”

Bennie Williams

Green Bean Casserole Remix

Prep: 15 minutes
Cook: 30 minutes

Welcome to a new and tastier version of the classic green bean casserole with bacon and fresh mushrooms.



INGREDIENTS

- 2 9 oz. packages frozen cut green beans, thawed
- 10 slices bacon
- 10 small fresh mushrooms, chopped
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- 1 cup half-and-half cream
- ¼ cup grated parmesan cheese
- Salt and paper to taste

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350 F. Place green beans into a 1 quart or similar sized casserole dish.
2. Fry bacon in a large deep skillet over medium-high heat until browned and crispy. Remove to drain. Drain off some of the grease leaving enough to coat the bottom of the pan. Add mushrooms to the grease in the pan and season with garlic powder and onion powder. Cook and stir until tender, about 4 minutes.
3. Pour the half-and-half into the pan with the mushrooms and stir to scrape the bacon flavor from the bottom of the pan. Simmer until thickened slightly, about 5 minutes. Pour this mixture over the green beans. Crumble bacon over the top and sprinkle with parmesan cheese. Season with salt and pepper.
4. Bake for 20 minutes or until the sauce is bubbling and the top is toasted.

From Allrecipes.com

You Can't Do Church Communications Alone

Remember when most churches' total communications consisted of a sign that was changed weekly, a simple newspaper ad with service times, and an informative bulletin (worship guide)? The sign and ad were intended for community outreach (along with an expensive annual yellow pages ad). The bulletin was "the" place for all the details.



Those were the good ol' days. One person in the church could do it all.

But then church programs grew, along with the details for each event; so the bulletin expanded. Some added MANY inserts. Churches started to tape posters around the church. All to help people know what's going on. Announcement time in service became a long-winded, competition time.

Now we have information-seeking congregants that stopped reading long, detailed paragraphs. They don't like picking up printed paper or weeding through a cluttered bulletin board. Most of them only want the specific information when they are looking for it.

People want church communications wherever they are, when they need it!

They don't carry the bulletin around with them, but they carry mobile devices that are connected to the internet. Now, simple church communications require:

1. **An up-to-date, responsive website** (for mobile and desktop) that uses consistent keywords that will allow you to be discovered by the search engines. And make sure your content is updated regularly so search engines see you as current.
2. **A regular email that speaks to your audience.** The more segmented the better (so it delivers only what they want). It should have lots of links to the details on your website.
3. **Social media entertainment channels.** Places that keep engaging your followers with content that "feels" like you. Not just promotion. And all your engaged people should occasionally be given links to (you guessed it) your website.
4. **MOST IMPORTANT: You need a team of people doing all of this.** The right people doing the right things, and they need to have the right creative mix.




Mark MacDonald

Senior Brand Strategist, Creative Director, Blogger
BeKnownForSomething PinPointCreative

Originally published at BeKnownForSomething.com (who holds the copyright); an organization dedicated to effective church communications while helping individuals and ministries become known for something influential; so they'll point to Christ. Printed with Permission.

ABCUSA Seeks New General Secretary



American Baptist News Service
American Baptist Churches USA / Mission Resource Development
P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851
Phone: (610)768-2159 / Fax: (610)768-2320
Bridget Lipin, Assistant Director of Communications/Web Manager
Contact: abns@abc-usa.org

VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 10/17/16)—The General Secretary Search Committee for American Baptist Churches has met face to face and by conference call to prayerfully discern the way forward in the search for our next General Secretary. The committee seeks the best qualified candidate who will serve ABCUSA with a sense of deep faith and love of Christ, engage in collaboration with denominational and ecumenical partners, offer both a pastoral and prophetic presence, and be the harmonizer who calls all American Baptists into unity. Executive recruitment firm, National Executive Service Corps, has been retained to assist with the search.

The General Secretary position profile is now posted on the ABCUSA website. For more information and to apply, please visit <http://www.abc-usa.org/generalsecretarysearch/>

January Newsletter Deadline

Articles for the January newsletter are due by December 14. Please send your articles to akeys@abcrm.org.

[What's in this RMAB?](#)

Calendar

December

- Retired Ministers and Missionaries
- Offering Month
- 6 SE/NM Pastors Christmas Party
- 8 NFR Pastors Christmas Party
- 9 Denver Cluster Pastors Christmas Party
- Wyoming Pastors Christmas Party
- 12 Western Slope Pastors Christmas Party
- 16 Executive Committee Meeting
- 24 Christmas Eve
- 25 Christmas Day
- 26-30 Christmas Holiday Break
(Region Office Closed)
- 31 New Year's Eve

January

- 1 New Year's Day
- 2 Region office closed in observance of New Year's Day
- 16 MLK Holiday (Region office closed)



HOLIDAY OFFICE HOURS

Your Region office will be closed December 26 through January 2 for the Christmas and New Year Holiday Season.



Have a Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year.

RMAB 12/01/16



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www.abcrm.org

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is the 20th of each month.
Send submissions to
akeys@abcrm.org*

*Reprint permission is granted
to ABCRM churches.*



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