



## **Presidents Message –Cindy Richendollar (cindyrich04766@gmail.com)**

Dear Sisters in Christ,

Mid-winter is upon us, with longer days and a higher, warmer sun—bringing hope and anticipation of spring!

It has been a long hiatus since we were last in fellowship at the ABCOM Annual Meeting in September. Many of you signed up at that time to receive this periodical. We hope you will read it and share it with the women in your church and community.

Traditionally, we have held Spring Rallies in the north and south areas of the state, along with our Annual Meeting at China Lake. Due to declining attendance, and after much discussion, the Board has initiated a new format of Regional Gatherings—coming to a church near you. This is an effort to “come to you” and support you in the local mission emphases in your area.

To the best of my knowledge, there will be a mid-coast gathering this month, and then a southern gathering in April. Please look for details in this issue. The Aroostook ladies will be planning a northern gathering at a later date (TBD). We are also looking for a location for those in the western region and the Penobscot County/Central Maine area. Your State Board is “on call” to help anyone interested in making a gathering happen in your area—please refer to our contact information found throughout this issue. Updates will be shared in the June issue.

Thank you for all you do for community and international missions.

\*\*Please be mindful of our need for a portable frame for our quilt, and for a safe way to have the fragile material cleaned. Also, consider being an active participant at the state level. As always, communicate with your Board members.

Blessings in the name of Christ,

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## **President Elect—Sherry Cates (rbobcatesmason@roadrunner.com)**

Each of us has a special and unique journey with God. Each of us has a different message to share about the love God gives to us. The blessings God has given each of us help us grow closer to Him, and as God’s children we have the privilege of sharing those blessings with others.

“Let your light shine before others.” As American Baptist Women leaders, we care for our sisters and brothers throughout the world, but it is Christian fellowship—worship and praise—that binds us together.

There have been many blessed Christian women who have been mentors and examples throughout my life. Some were historians who brought Bible stories to life, while others lived them out in their daily walk. Some were “Marthas,” prepared to care for everyone they met and to nourish their bodies. Some were like Mary—obedient and trusting wholeheartedly in God’s plans for their lives. Some not only read Scripture daily, but listened as God revealed its meaning for them. Some taught me how to communicate with God, and how to listen when God responds. Some have stood boldly at the foot of the cross and declared their love for Christ.

Just as the women of the Bible give us insight into God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—let us pass these blessings on to each other. Let us support one another and be helpful to one another as we continue our journey with God.

I am taking a leap of faith, acting on God’s direction for me to serve as your President. It is not me, but God, who will guide us. I thank God for each of you who serve Him, and I will be grateful for your support and input as I continue learning to walk closer with my God.

A servant in God’s family,

# Regional Spring Rally 2026

**Saturday April 18**

Sanford First Baptist

905 Main Street

Sanford Maine 04073

Registration and Refreshments 8:30-9:30 Morning Program until 12:00

Lunch 12:00-1:00

Afternoon Program 1:00-2:00

With hearts open to spring's promise, we gather in faith to renew our spirits and share in fellowship

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## Speaker: Rev. Dr. Al Fletcher

Rev. Dr. Al Fletcher is a devoted American Baptist pastor and educator whose ministry centers on spiritual renewal, faithful discipleship, and the leadership of women in the church. He is widely respected for his compassionate preaching, commitment to justice, and encouragement of communities to live out their faith through service, fellowship, and hope.



## Music: "Up To God" Music Ministry

Kevin and Pam Rhein have been actively involved in Christian Music Ministry for over forty years. Their mission is "To inspire and uplift the body of Christ and share the Good News of Jesus Christ through musical praise."

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**\*\*Please call Carolyn Sweeney 207-432-2752, at least two full weeks prior to the rally with the number of attendees from your church**

**\*\*Registration \$2.00, Lunch \$5.00 (to be paid on arrival)**

## Educational Gift of Love ( ie. Scholarship)–Lorna Hansen (lbhansen42@gmail.com)

Do you know someone who is planning on going to college or seminary this year?

- Is this person a member of an American Baptist Church of Maine?
- Is this person enrolled in a Christian College, AIM classes, or seminary?
- Does this person believe it is God’s will that she/he enters some kind of Christian Service?

If all of the above applies to someone you know, tell her/him how to get an application. Notify...

Lorna Hansen  
376 Lake Street  
Auburn, Maine 04210  
[lbhansen42@gmail.com](mailto:lbhansen42@gmail.com)  
207-783-1510

Let’s get the good news out there and help someone follow God’s call.



## Personal Development –Lena Kanda (ekanda409@roadrunner.com)

“Potential”—that word jumped out at me as I read the reminder that articles were due February 1st for the American Baptist Women’s magazine *Potential*. It got me thinking, and I hope it will get you thinking too!

We all have **potential**—the unrealized ability, capacity, or possibility within us that can be ignored or developed in the future. Think of the gifts you use in your Christian walk: sharing your musical ability, offering a listening ear, teaching, encouraging, praying. Then there are the gifts some faithfully offer behind the scenes—like money collection and counting (definitely not in *my* gift box!). And so many other “ordinary” jobs that often go unnoticed—until someone doesn’t show up to do them. Do we remember to thank the people who serve week in and week out?

So, how are you developing your potential—growing in your faith in Jesus Christ during these long, freezing midwinter days? I hope you are able to attend church and connect with your sisters in Christ in meaningful ways. Sometimes it helps to steer conversations toward what you are learning from the Bible—or something a friend shared that gently nudged an attitude that needed adjusting.

My sister is staying with me for eight weeks, so we’ve had many opportunities for prayer together and for good discussion.

At Court Street Baptist Church, we also have our **Second Monday Lunch Club**. A group of women meets at a local restaurant each month for a friendly meal and fellowship.

We are back in our comfortable sanctuary at **129 Court Street in Auburn** for worship services and meetings. It is so lovely to be there again—though it is sad to miss members who are now worshiping in other places. The flood took a heavy toll on our membership, but it also leaves us with **potential** for future growth.

I’m looking forward to catching up with you all at **Spring Rally!**

The Chettis' write, "**Remember the 30.**" In Lebanon, in the Druze area of the Chouf Mountains, people are coming to faith in Christ—an area where it doesn't always happen.

In this rural, mountainous region, a dedicated pastor and his wife have spent years building bridges of trust. They are discipling this growing community of faith in one of the most unexpected places for the Gospel to take root. **Thirty people have been baptized.**

Each one of these new believers represents an act of extraordinary courage—choosing to follow Jesus in a community where such decisions carry real cost. Please pray for these new believers as they continue this new journey, and for the pastor and his wife as they faithfully shepherd this emerging church in the Chouf Mountains.

If you have access to Facebook, I urge you to become friends with all our missionaries. **Ann Clemmer** posts weekly about what is happening in **Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo**, where she and Bill serve.

**January 27** marked one year since the Rwanda-backed **M23 militants** entered the city of Goma, home of Bill and Ann. From gleanings Ann posted from the news media: The militants are still in control, with a tight grip on this major city. The scars of fighting remain visible. According to the UN, **7 million people are displaced.**

There is no real economic recovery. Banks are closed. Buildings are boarded up. The rebels have stolen people's money, plunging thousands of households into poverty. One mother of twelve says, "*She has been selling vegetables for years. She remembers a time when she lived in dignity. But that's not the case anymore. We hardly sell anything. Customers have no money left. Our children don't even go to school anymore.*"

Another woman says, "*Before I sold things, I earned money and that allowed me to eat and get medical treatment. But now, there is no money left. All my savings are gone, and what little was left, the rebels came and took from my home. My children no longer go to school. Priorities have been reduced to the bare essentials: food, shelter, and survival.*"

From another post: **HEAL Africa** has a program called **Women of Value**. Where women once shared hope for a better future, they now share the courage to preserve their dignity and stay alive. They find refuge, faith, and mutual support to keep living and dreaming—even in the heart of turmoil.

A 51-year-old mother of seven, whose husband was killed in the war, recalls that she was alone, desperate, and had lost the will to live. It was Women of Value, and the prayer meetings at the HEAL Africa Tabernacle, where she found the strength to go on. Today she lives with another woman from the Women of Value support group. She whispers, "*I'm living just by grace, but I'm holding on. I just pray that God helps me.*"

Another woman, age 55, a mother of eleven and guardian of three orphans, says, "*The war upended everything. My income vanished, my savings are drained, and my children's schooling has become uncertain. I don't want my children on the streets.*"

The Women of Value program has become a space of spiritual comfort and support where dignity is slowly rebuilt, day by day. Supporting these women means breathing life back into broken homes—and keeping alive a light that continues to shine despite adversity.

**Women of Value: transforming pain into hope, and fragility into strength.**

**Kristy Engel** writes, "**Missouri, Mia, and Mobility.**"

Following my ankle surgery last March, I am walking fairly well and even go on shorter walks—two miles on level ground. I'm getting stronger every day. Most days are great, but I still have enough pain to remind me I had surgery.

Kristy and **Mia**, her service dog, moved to **Missouri** in August and are enjoying family time. She speaks in area churches and is doing Zoom visits—one was at our summer conference.

Kristy will begin overseas travel in February. International Ministries has a new partnership with Baptists in **Jordan**, and they have requested help with medical teams. Following this initial visit, she will travel to **Italy, Bolivia, Ukraine, the Dominican Republic, and hopefully India**. Kristy will be going with a medical team in **September** to Jordan. Interested in joining a team—or know someone who would? **Speak up!**

At the end of December, **Jeni Pedzinski** and other leaders from International Ministries took a group of young adults (ages 17–28) to the **Urbana Missions Conference**, held every three years. It is designed for Gen Z to see firsthand what God is doing globally and to explore their role in missions.

Jeni was a speaker—this was her third Urbana. One of her roles with ABCUSA is preparing candidates for the mission field. Young people who attended described it as *invigorating, enlightening, beautiful, and incredible*. Many said the best parts were connecting with those currently serving in missions, worshiping alongside thousands of peers, learning from speakers, and gaining clarity about their call. Jeni calls it "**a banquet table of God's Word, worship, discovery, and learning.**"

While **Kit Ripley** has been on home assignment, her U.S. ministry journey has included 30+ speaking events, Sunday preaching, PowerPoint presentations, workshops, and our Maine Annual State Convention. She also presented an academic paper at the American Art Therapy Association annual conference.

At the Chihuly Garden and Glass Museum in Seattle, she enjoyed co-facilitating a Saturday morning creative arts workshop. She also participated in a Sunday morning panel discussion with International Ministries colleagues David and Joyce Reed at Mountview Christian Church in Columbus, Ohio.

In November, Kit joined anti-trafficking practitioners from 34 countries at the ICAP Global Conference at Green Lake. There she facilitated contemplative art, taught master classes, and participated in workshops and panel discussions.

Kit writes: *“I am deeply thankful for these opportunities to reconnect with friends and partners, thank supporting partners, share the exciting things God is doing in Thailand, and go apple picking, kayaking, and hiking in Maine. I plan to return to ministry in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in March.”*

**Brian and Lynette Smith** returned to the **Dominican Republic** in August—and it felt like going home. They are involved in a new project: completing the **Haitian Baptist Missionary Church in Bienvenido, Dominican Republic**, a former batey west of Santo Domingo. The church has been “a friend to the community,” faithfully serving since 1987.

In October 2021, the church was destroyed by fire. With no other place to gather, the congregation met under a tarp in a member’s yard. By May 2022, through small gifts and local fundraising, they began building a three-story church and multi-purpose building. It is not flashy, it is essential. The cement-block walls are up, and they meet on the first floor even though the building remains unfinished.

The next step is to **stucco the exterior and interior walls on all three levels**, a critical step to make the space safe, durable, and ready to serve the community for years to come. **The cost is \$20,000.** This brings them one step closer to a fully operational facility.

When completed, the building will include space for **400** for worship services, prayer meetings, and Sunday school, along with access to medical clinics, after-school tutoring, counseling, poverty prevention support, teen pregnancy and HIV education, and help navigating immigration changes.

**THE LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS AND THE DARKNESS CAN NEVER EXTINGUISH IT.  
JOHN 1:5**



## Touched by An Angel

The HEAL Africa Spiritual Ministries campus, located across the road from the 300-bed hospital in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo where Bill and I serve, stands as a beacon of healing, dignity, and hope. Spread across two acres and anchored by a large chapel, the campus offers a lifeline to some of the most vulnerable members of the community.

Surrounding the large chapel are ministries you have supported that embrace all who come to our doors:

- A day school (*Tuongane*) for children whose mothers are hospitalized
- A Sunday School complex (*EcoDim*) welcoming hundreds of children each Sunday
- A learning and counseling center (*EBA*) for homeless youth
- A women's center (*Femme de Valeur*) and arts facility (*Healing Arts*) for livelihood training
- Playgrounds and open spaces for recreation and restoration
- A chaplaincy school equipping spiritual leaders for service
- Two large dormitories: one sheltering up to 60 street children, and another providing refuge for women recovering from medical/surgical care after surviving sexual violence.

Many of these women journey from remote corners of the region, carrying the heavy weight of loss—health, livelihood, family, homes, and often their sense of dignity—stripped away by violence and stigma. Within the transit center, they discover comfort simply by being together, sharing strength in community.

One night, a woman residing there experienced a vivid dream. She saw an angel in flowing robes descend from heaven. The angel touched each woman at the place of her wounds and said, “*You are healed.*” Then, with gentle urgency, the angel impressed upon her heart the need to pray for the children sleeping in the adjoining dormitory.

At 5 am as the children awoke and began to pray, the women from the transit center heard them and knocked on the door asking to join them in prayer and song.

That morning, a quiet young boy named Zakayo stood and spoke. Softly, he shared how he had left home a year earlier, the hardships he endured on the streets, and his deep longing to return.



As he spoke, the woman who had dreamed of the angel was suddenly overwhelmed. She realized Zakayo was the son of her neighbor in a remote mountain village far from Goma. Remembering her dream and the angel's urging to pray for the children, she rushed forward, embraced the boy, and wept with him as she shared news of his family—who had long feared he was lost forever or dead.



Word has now been sent back to his village: a child once lost has been found through the compassion of a woman touched by an angel and whose own healing has only just begun. God is at work!

Love,  
Ann and Bill Clemmer  
Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo



*HEAL Africa EcoDim (Sunday School) and women's dormitory to the right*

*“Praise the LORD,  
you his angels, you  
mighty ones who do  
his bidding, who  
obey his word.”  
Psalm 103:20*



# American Baptist Women of Maine

## THE POTENTIAL

[abwmaine.org](http://abwmaine.org)

*Linda Deane*

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**Winter 2026**

### **2026 Dates to Remember**

February 1 Potential Articles Due

March 12 ABW Maine Board Meeting United Baptist Oakland

April 18 Regional Spring Rally South Sanford First Baptist Church

June 1 Potential Articles Due

August Summer Conference Date TBD