

American Baptist Churches of Maine

BOARD REPORT 2026

Rev. Dr Alfred J. Fletcher, Regional Resource Minister

The American Baptist Churches of Maine is finding renewed health and vigor. Our historic celebration of the life and ministry of Rev. George Dana Boardman has brought a renewed call to be useful in mission and ministry. Honoring those who have served in ages past as well as honoring those who are actively serving Jesus Christ through their local church's ministry and mission provides a culture of call that is needed among our congregations today. Every member has a unique set of gifts and graces that God has provided and are meant to be used to glorify God and to bless others.

The committees of the ABCOM and the committees of the Board have met faithfully and have deepened and broadened our mission and ministry. Through their efforts, the American Baptist churches of Maine have been provided new resources, a deeper understanding of local church dynamics, and insight into the new realities of the culture in which our churches are doing mission and ministry.

1. The Mission Support Committee called for a luncheon honoring Rev. George Dana Boardman. During the luncheon, local church Mission Advocates were recognized. Mission Advocates tell the story of mission in their local church and encourage support for various mission endeavors and missionaries.

The first George Dana Boardman Leadership Award was given to Mrs. Marlene Everett, First Baptist Church, Fairfield. This award acknowledges Marlene's contribution to mission in her local church, association, and in our region. Marlene's exemplary service is lifted as a model to emulate.

The Mission Support Committee takes great pride in our ABCOM mission and in our Global Servants.

2. The Christian Nurture Committee is hard at work revitalizing a prayer emphasis. It is also calling for local churches to begin working with students. There are many churches with ties to Academies, Community Colleges, Technical Schools, College and Universities. Developing relational ties with students provides an opportunity to share the love of Christ. Those relational touches are important in our lives and will be in the lives of students.

The George Dana Boardman Luncheon in the Spring of 2027 will honor those members of your local church who have served or are serving in youth ministry (cradle – 30 years old). Many churches have had members of their fellowship serving youth faithfully and it is time to thank them for their service and to honor their commitment. Youth ministry encompasses a large swath of local church ministry.

The George Dana Boardman Mission Banquet is looking for an outstanding leadership award nominee. To qualify for this award, the nominee must have a record of service in their local church, association, and in our region. The nominee needs to be nominated by their local church. The award will be presented at the GDBL in the Spring of 2027.

3. The Committee On Ministry continues to work on supporting the call of pastoral ministry. Through their efforts, they are producing videos that highlight our Maine mission and ministries. The collaborative work of the committee is already producing a series of videos that can help your church better understand the work of the Committee on Ministry and the mission of the American Baptist Churches of Maine.
4. Our Annual Meeting Committee calls for our local pastors to bring their insight and expertise into our gathering. Local church pastors will lead our time of worship at our Annual Meeting. I hope that you can attend this year's Annual Meeting and celebrate our work in mission and ministry.
5. In addition, the ABCOM Board has made a concerted effort to encourage the work of its committees and the committees of the ABCOM. The ABCOM Board has provided opportunities for local church leadership development through the "GiANT Leadership Training Program". The ABCOM has called Stephanie Hansen to serve as our new director of this program. A new opportunity for local church leaders to engage in this program will take place after the Annual Meeting.
6. ABCOM Board continues to support Pastoral Internships. This field education program allows an intern to learn ministry directly from a gifted pastor. Interns are encouraged to work through our ABCOM Institute for Ministry. The Board is grateful for the financial support of the Northern Baptist Educational Society that helps provide educational opportunities for the development and support of pastors. The Board continues to encourage local churches to develop a culture of call by providing the opportunity on a regular basis for those attending to be challenged to think about God's call to pastoral and local church ministry.
7. ABCOM has become a partner organization in the Novare Project. We give thanks to God for the opportunity to participate in this important work. It enables the ABCOM to join with a wide network of schools, churches, denominations, and ministry organizations to strengthen the preparation and support of pastoral leaders in ways that are both sustainable and deeply rooted in the life of the Church. In fact, the Lilly Endowment awarded forty-five grants ranging from \$2.5 million to \$10 million dollars. These grants will help schools share resources, expand access to pastoral formation, develop new pathways for ministry preparation, and explore large-scale approaches to educational and financial sustainability across the system of theological education.

The Vision of the Novare Project

This project, titled Novare, grows from more than a decade of Kairos University's collaborative work among seminaries, Bible colleges, Christian universities, denominations, and faith-based networks. Novare is designed as a large-scale, non-geographically bound collaboration that helps organizations envision, create, and live into alternative futures of theological education. Rather than focus on a single institution, Novare engages the system of theological education as a whole. It is rooted in the belief that theological schools, churches, and denominations are interconnected and interdependent. Their ability to prepare and support pastoral leaders grows when they work together toward a shared purpose. Our Institute for Ministry (AIM) under the direction of Rev. Joshua Burden, has helped our Institute rethink ways of identifying, developing, and supporting

pastoral leadership in The American Baptist church of Maine. We are a welcomed member of the Novare Project.

8. The ABCOM Property Review Committee continues to lift the significant ministry that happens throughout the year at the China Lake Conference Center. The China Lake Conference Center is grateful to the China Lake Camp Board and staff for their faithful service and maintenance of the China Lake Conference Center facilities and programs. The ABCOM Board remains committed to the ministry and mission that takes place at China Lake.
9. Finally, the American Baptist Churches of Maine continues to partner with the American Baptist Churches, USA. The Board has encouraged my participation in cooperative and collaborative regional ministry to include serving as President of the Regional Executive Ministers Council. The REMC exists to provide support, education, and encouragement to regional ministers, region staff and their region boards. Denominationally, the work of REMC President provides the opportunity to bring regional ministry's influence to national and international mission efforts. The work of President of the REMC is one of encouragement and support.

It is good to work with a dedicated staff. Sharon Workman, Melissa Dennett, and Michelle Brown bring a depth of knowledge and expertise to our mission which results in service to our churches that is timely, appreciated, and helpful.

This year we celebrated with the Brown family. God is faithful. Their oldest son, Malachi, faced a life changing diagnosis and treatment for leukemia. Malachi endured five rounds of chemotherapy and today, Malachi continues to receive regular checkups that continue to monitor his progress. We are grateful that his diagnosis has changed and that his progress toward health continues in extraordinary ways. We are grateful for God's watch care and provision and continue to trust in Christ's faithfulness that He who began a good work in Malachi will see it to completion.

Our Board continues to do good work. Under the leadership of our officers, the Board has affirmed, supported, and challenged local churches in their mission. Our Board takes seriously their responsibility to serve and oversee the history and heritage of the American Baptist Churches of Maine.

As always, it has been my privilege to serve the American Baptist Churches of Maine. It has been my joy to preach in your meeting houses, to sit in counsel with your leadership, to offer support and resources to address the needs of your congregation, and to build relationships with your members and friends.

May God bless the work of the Board and may God bless your mission and ministry. I am grateful for your partnership in the Gospel and for the financial support which makes this mission a reality.