

The History Continues: ARLM

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With all the changes that have taken place in Baptist life during the past few years, ARLM has the opportunity to play an even greater role in the future history of resort and leisure missions than its founders might have ever expected. As we have moved into a new century and millennium, the nature and direction of outreach in resort and leisure settings depends on the vision and determination of the Association of Resort and Leisure Ministers (ARLM).

The strength of any membership organization is found in its members. Representative of the larger membership of ARLM are those who have served in leadership capacities since 1991. In addition to the formation group (Bill Black, Pete Owen, Sam and Betty Anne Schlegel, and Bo Simms), those serving ARLM have been Christy Hansen, Jeff Wagner, Randy Cowling, Fred Weatherly, Jane Barnes, Brad Lartigue, Charlie Elisor, Fran Cook, Kyle Woodfin, Lynn Davis, and Billy Hutchinson.

Much has already been accomplished as ARLM continues to discover its place as an advocate and ambassador of those whose call is to live out the gospel in the places where people play. In 1996, the members of ARLM held their second triennial meeting in Gatlinburg, Tenn., in conjunction with the HMB's last National Resort and Leisure Ministries Conference. There they elected new officers and began to prepare for the changes in denominational life that were already underway.

The next year, ARLM took advantage of the Touch a Life ministry celebration being sponsored by the ministry section of the Home Mission Board (HMB) in Atlanta, April 1997. Even though only a year had passed since the triennial meeting in Gatlinburg, it was decided to meet again before the HMB was merged with the Brotherhood and Radio/TV Commissions of the Southern Baptist Convention. This decision proved to be providential since a vacancy in the office of president needed to be filled, and transition preparations needed to be continued.

Since the HMB was morphed into the North American Mission Board (NAMB) in mid-June 1997, home missions and resort and leisure ministries have faced numerous changes and challenges. During a time of seemingly continual denominational rearrangements, the ARLM has served as a needed point of stability for our members, for those with whom we serve, and for those whom we serve.

In 1998, Jeff Wagner, a past ARLM officer and home missionary serving in Las Vegas, joined the NAMB staff as an associate in the Special Ministries unit with responsibility for resort work. Agency support for the concerns and priorities of ARLM was affirmed by this action, and working with Jeff has been a bonus for ARLM.

Since 1997, ARLM has strengthened its networking, established new denominational relationships, and encouraged professional development for its members. Because of the great changes in the SBC (the predominant denominational affiliation of its membership), ARLM has given special attention to strengthen communication among its members. Prayer networks have been set up to undergird the ministry within the organization to members and their families and ministry situations. Cluster groups with quarterly meetings have been formed in South Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia. Several state groups have continued to meet. Tennessee has now formed a chapter.

The work of the organization in the recent past has been to discover and establish new relationships with NAMB and with Baptist state conventions. Members have hosted NAMB leaders of all levels in their ministry settings and training events. As president, Bill Black has met with staff and secretaries throughout the many organizational changes that have taken place to keep them aware of ARLM and the priorities of its membership. Other members have made their concerns known to NAMB in the area of volunteers. ARLM has been speaking with a united voice as a recognized organization with whom proposals, ideas, and possibilities can be discussed.

In 1998, Pete Owen published his book, *A Christian Ministry in Resort and Leisure Settings*, through the Colorado Baptist General Convention. It clearly defines what ARLM ministries are all about. Two more of our members, Jeff Wagner and Bill Black, represent Southern Baptists on the board of A Christian Ministry in the National Parks (ACMNP). Thanks, Pete, Jeff, and Bill!

Delaine Tew of Woman's Ministry Union (WMU) and Volunteer Connection has come into the ARLM family as one who recognizes its ministries and is willing to help with volunteers. State conventions are utilizing ARLM members individually and corporately for leadership in planning new ministries, in developing state strategies, and hosting resort and leisure training conferences.

ARLM has worked to establish new systems of recruitment and referral for volunteers. ARLM applications for groups and individuals have been developed along with materials for administration and supervision. Networking of individuals and groups among members' ministries has been encouraged. Members have been informed of various sources and systems to be utilized (NAMB volunteers, WMU's Volunteer Connection, Youth Mission Exchange, etc.).

ARLM continues to offer résumé referral for its members and to work with mission sites searching for resort and leisure ministers.

The history of resort and leisure missions continues ...