
February 2022

Email: Sally@abcgrr.org or Nancy@abcgrr.org

A Word from the Acting Executive Minister, Rev. Patty Bilyeu

This is the month of hearts and flowers; pink and red; cards, candy, and love letters. Sigh! Let me begin by saying, I am not really fond of Valentine's Day. Why, do you ask? If we really study the history of the holiday, it is not full of candy and flowers. Plus, every time I seek a Valentine to give to someone I love, the contents hurt my heart. The simple paper card that costs around \$10 is an apology for not treating the loved one well during the year, but today I want you to know I love you. Moreover, the love of family and friends, neighbors, and strangers should be a part of all of us 365 days a year.

Jesus says in Matthew 22:39, "Love your neighbor as yourself." But we know that it is preceded by another and greater commandment. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself."

While we realize Valentine's Day's primary purpose is the expression of love between each other, then we must realize the foundation of this is the kind of love is from God. "Love your neighbor as yourself" is far more than an overused statement; it is something that we as God's people should take the lead on. We live in a world that needs the love of God expressed through His people more than ever before. In I John, we are reminded to love one another because the greatest gift from God is love and when we do not show love, we do not even know God! We are the ones who can help our world to heal by showing Christ's love, every day, in everything we do!

Rev. Patty Bilyeu



Black History Month

The month of February is a time that has been set aside to honor and appreciate the sacrifices of African Americans who have had an impact on our nation. In 1976, President Gerald R. Ford urged Americans to "seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history."

Black History Month is only a beginning for us to be united every day into the people God would have us to be. The Church has played an integral part in the advances that have been made over the years, and rightfully so! The songs we sing, the Word we preach (and sing!) have become woven into the very fabric of our being and provide hope and inspiration both for our generation, as well as generations to follow. We proudly recognize and remember that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was an American Baptist. His words permeate who we should be as Christians and as a God-loving nation. All people would do well to get back to the spiritual heritage, love, and respect for God that made us great and can only make us greater as we move closer to one another bound in purpose by Christ's great Calvary love!

The **2021 Annual Reports** were mailed to churches the week of February 7th. Completed reports are due at the region office on March 31st. Completing the annual report is a good opportunity to update information in preparation for the annual Region Directory that will be sent to all churches in April. If you have not received your report, please notify sally@abcgrr.org or nancy@abcgrr.org. Thank you for your continued support!

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Great Rivers Regional Scholarship Programs

These scholarship programs exist in the Great Rivers Region to assist young people who are members in Great Rivers Region American Baptist Churches to secure a college and/or seminary education. Scholarships are for any college student (regardless of major) or seminary students under the Gernenz-Shurtleff/Wilcoxon Scholarship. Ministerial students attending ABC-related schools and seminaries in preparation for ministry can apply for the Harold O. Long Scholarship.

All application information and materials **MUST BE RECEIVED** in the GRR office **BY April 1, 2022**. Once this date has passed the scholarships will not be available; please make sure that all documents are postmarked by the deadline above to be accepted.

To receive an application for these scholarships, write to **GRR Scholarships**, P.O. Box 13457, Springfield, IL 62791, or phone 217-726-7366 or email sally@abcgrr.org for forms.

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Welcome to Rev. Dawn Huddleston! Who was installed as the pastor of Ashland First Baptist Church in November. Rev. Patti Meyer, Area II Assistant, Trent and Rev. Dawn Huddleston, Revs. Mary Jean and Gary Sheets, pastors of Harvard Park Baptist Church in Springfield, Illinois.

CRI January Update

As we begin a new year together and as we continue to travel through these uncertain times I go to the word of God for my answers. As I continue to meet with women and men across the Great Rivers Region, I also see them seeking God's leadership in their lives. My life verse really says it all **Philippians 4:13 (NLT2)** ¹³ **For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.** I want to encourage all of us to stay very close to our wonderful Lord in order for Him to give us strength.

The Church Revitalization Initiative continues to move forward with pastors and congregations doing great things for the Lord. Here is a testimony from New Journey Baptist Church's pastor, Rev. Corine Reed: *Our church was struggling prior to the pandemic with decrease in attendance, lack of zeal, and declining tithes and offerings. The administrative team wasn't much better: weary, worn, and tired. Then enters Covid-19, what a punch to the gut, things got worse! With families trying to juggle loss of income, sickness, death, virtual schooling, the task of assisting individuals and families of the church and community, and ourselves and families was overwhelming. If any church needed revitalization we did! We can't thank Pastor Wally enough for the invitation to join CRI, it was just what we needed, help for the Church, Pastors, and leaders. It's where we share, vent, laugh, listen, refocus, and regroup and where we are revived. There we are connected to the struggles and victories of our brothers and sisters in ABC. We are encouraged and reminded that we are better together.*

Please continue to pray for all of our pastors and congregations in the Great Rivers Region that God will keep them safe in the palm of His hands.

Wally Holt
CRI Coordinator

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Scholarship Renewal Reminder

This is a reminder that all RENEWAL applications **and all documents** for the 2022-2023 Great Rivers Region Scholarship are due in our office **NO LATER than April 1, 2022**. This deadline is firm.

The mailing address is on the RENEWAL applications are only for those who have previously applied and been awarded a scholarship from GRR.

