

March 2022

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Our Vision: *Healthy congregations engaged in effective Christian ministry locally and globally*

Our Purpose: To challenge, assist, represent and empower American Baptist congregations in Illinois & Missouri

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

Rev. Fred Rogers (aka Mister Rogers) once wrote that in a time of crisis, we should look for THE helpers. He had such wisdom for us to see as well. As I write this article, days have turned into weeks, with the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The pictures on the news are so hurtful as I see the women and children who have been separated from husbands and fathers. Even though I have seen that war is never pretty, my heart aches for those who are hurting. Another crisis has hit our world.

At this very moment, International Ministries along with many ABC Global servants are aiding in helping Ukrainian refugees. This week, I heard from a dear friend of mine who pastors in New York, that they are already receiving Ukrainian refugees and helping them get connected to loved ones here in the United States. It can be very overwhelming.

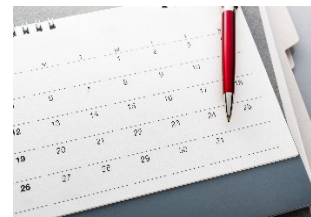
You may be asking yourself, "How can I help?" That is a very good question. You may help by giving to the One Great Hour of Sharing offering through your local congregation. Write 'Ukraine' in the memo. Your local church will send your donation to the Great Rivers Region Office where it will directly go to aid our Ukrainian sisters and brothers. Some funds will go to frontline humanitarian efforts for food, clothing, and shelter, while other funds are used for medical needs and transportation. No overhead fees will come out of your donation. Your gift will help refugees unite with their families wherever they may be across the world. You can play a part, by being a helper.

Please continue to pray for the Ukrainian people, our global servants, the churches in Ukraine, Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Russia. Please lift up Hungarian Baptist Aid and other Christian agencies helping with this crisis.

Rev. Patty Bilyeu



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Pastors, mark your calendars for "Coming Out of the Rabbit Hole 2" clergy webinar with Dr. Kristina Gutierrez. This will take place on Thursday, May 5th, via Zoom. Two times will be offered. Kristina will be with us, in person, for "Coming Out of the Rabbit Hole 3" in August and she will be our speaker at the Ministers' Conference in October. More details will be in next month's Mainstream.

Great Rivers Region Strategic Themes:

In 2010, the Region board adopted GRR Strategic Themes. The original idea was to write a document that defines who we are as a region; what is our focus; who are we all about. Sadly, the document got filed, really through no one's fault and did not resurface until the end of last year. Our Region Executive Search Committee asked for the Ministry of Planning and Review to go over the document along with current staff to make additions and corrections. At the February Region Board Meeting, the Board corrected and approved the 2022 Great Rivers Region Strategic Themes. It will be the goal of the staff and board to regularly review these themes, to set yearly strategic goals, and to keep the focus on who we are as a Region and a denomination at the forefront. Our main purpose has always been faithfulness to God and the church of Jesus Christ and to glorify God in all we do. A copy of the themes will be included in this month's Mainstream.

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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. Only 2 weeks left, so please get your information in on time!

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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"For updates on GRR activities and work with refugees, check our Facebook posts."

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Annual Reports for churches are due on March 31st for churches to be included in the 2021 GRR directory. Please complete and mail your annual report to the region office at PO Box 13457 Springfield IL 62791. Thank you!

CRI February Update

The month of February started out with a big snowstorm that dumped around 15 inches of snow here in Danville. What a way to start the month! But through this very wintry February, we see that God is continuing to bless the churches in CRI. The pastors and leadership teams are working to listen to the leadership of the Holy Spirit on their next step for revitalization. As I work with the pastors and their faithful leaders, I see these five characteristics of faithfulness that reflect who God is: **loyal, trustworthy, steadfast in love, patient, and committed**. When we begin to embrace these characteristics of faithfulness, we learn to be faithful to God, ourselves, and others because Jesus is consistently faithful to us. Read this great illustration about faith called:

FAITH AND AN ELEVATOR

If I stand on the ground floor of a 27-floor building and press the button for an elevator, I am confident (I have faith) that the elevator will arrive. Indeed, it does, and the door opens. I am now presented with a vehicle that, I am confident (I have faith), will take me to the top of that building, provided I step into it. When I do, my faith in that elevator takes the form of personal trust.

I step into it, and it does the rest. My faith in the elevator does not empower the elevator, it trusts in the elevator's power to take me to the floor I want to go to.

Faith is simply stepping into Christ, trusting in His power to save me.

Please continue to pray for all the pastors and congregations of the Great Rivers Region as we continue to travel through the year of 2022.

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. We are down to 2 weeks left, so please send your information in!

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