

**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 EXECUTIVE MINISTER, REV. PATTY BILYEU

In Exodus 23, Scripture states (as in many other verses) that we should rest. When we read the creation story, we see that God rested on the seventh day. We also see in the New Testament that Jesus took time away from the crowds to rest. If Jesus sought the importance of rest, shouldn't we? I just finished a one-month Sabbatical this past August. Being guilty like most of us, I am an overachiever. I have had to remind myself repeatedly to take days off, to not look at my email on vacation, and to not look down at my phone during dinner. This was something new for me...to experience moments where I was not taking care of anyone, but myself. I will also confess that I was approaching moments that were telling me that it was time to **feed** my soul. It was time for me to "remember the Sabbath."

We live in a culture that emphasizes work. People are preoccupied with work, but it is rest that is essential for our well-being. A recent Harvard Business Review article states, "Not taking time to rest is one of the worst things you can do for productivity and mental health." Some take Sundays as a day of rest. But for those of us who are clergy, that does not always happen due to preaching schedules. It is not only pastors where the idea of Sunday rest does not work either. Police officers, firefighters, young mothers, medical personnel, family caregivers, air traffic controllers, and so many others cannot take the Sunday rest either. Therefore, we must find a way...a place, and a time for physical rest and spiritual renewal.

God created us as beings who need regular, restorative, intentional, joyful, and worshipful rest. God created us as beings who need rest and God gives us directives for rest. And if Jesus needed time to rest, who are we to think we do not need it?!

My August sabbatical was what I needed. I experienced art, culture, music, food, and worship in a variety of settings. I used my French language skills and did not embarrass my colleagues, too much. I also spent time reading and studying in Ohio and visited Pere Marquette State Park outside of St. Louis. Above all, I prayed, prayed, and prayed some more. My clergy coach told me this week that I was "beaming" and seemed very refreshed. Thank you, Great Rivers Region for seeing the importance of sabbatical, sabbath rest, education, worship, and renewal. May we all "honor the Sabbath and keep it holy."



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First Baptist Church of Stonington met our "50 At First" High Attendance Goal this past Sunday, August 27th with 50 worshippers in attendance.

## Church Revitalization Initiative Report

August 2023

I appreciate so much what the Pastors of the Great Rivers Region do in their churches and communities. But with that being said I know ministry can become difficult and trying, so let me suggest that maybe we all should eat more vegetables! The Bible says in **Daniel 1:11-16 (NLT)** <sup>11</sup> Daniel spoke with the attendant who had been appointed by the chief of staff to look after Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. <sup>12</sup> "Please test us for ten days on a diet of vegetables and water," Daniel said. <sup>13</sup> "At the end of the ten days, see how we look compared to the other young men who are eating the king's food. Then make your decision in light of what you see." <sup>14</sup> The attendant agreed to Daniel's suggestion and tested them for ten days. <sup>15</sup> At the end of the ten days, Daniel and his three friends looked healthier and better nourished than the young men who had been eating the food assigned by the king. <sup>16</sup> So after that, the attendant fed them only vegetables instead of the food and wine provided for the others. The Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, picked the brightest Jewish teenagers to serve in his court. Daniel was one of them; the king's goal was to turn these teenagers into real Babylonians who would think like him and believe as he did. But we have a clue about the strength of Daniel's character. When told to eat the rich, royal food of the King, Daniel told them no. He knew that much of the king's food was not allowed by the law of Moses. Because Daniel wanted to obey God, he chose to eat good, clean, fresh vegetables. And guess what? He grew stronger and wiser than those eating the king's food! Maybe we should eat more vegetables to help travel through difficult and trying times of ministry. As well as being good for your health, they will remind you to be like Daniel!

Please continue to pray for our pastors and churches in the Church Revitalization Initiative that they will follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit in their lives and the lives of their churches.

Wally Holt,  
Church Revitalization Initiative Coordinator

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**\*\* Mainstream for 2024 \*\***

Please make sure the Region office has all updated email contact information for pastors and church leaders. Beginning in January 2024, no hard copies of the Mainstream will be mailed. **All** GRR office correspondence will come through email. Thank you for your help.

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**For those planning to join the Costa Rica Trip in February 2024!** It is taking months for passport renewals to be processed. Send renewal applications ASAP.

The Mainstream is a monthly publication of the American Baptist Churches of Website [www.abcgrr.org](http://www.abcgrr.org). To subscribe/unsubscribe to The Mainstream



Sherri Hill's ordination at FBC, Jacksonville!

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Canton First Baptist Celebrating 190<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!

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### **UPCOMING EVENTS!**

- **Area I Annual Meeting** is Sat., Sept. 23  
9:30-3 at Blackhawk Camp
- **Area I Youth Retreat** is at Blackhawk  
Sept.29–Oct.1
- **Patty Bilyeu's Installation** will be Oct. 14<sup>th</sup>!  
Please RSVP on our [ABCGRR.org](http://ABCGRR.org)
- **ABY The Gathering** will be Nov. 10-12<sup>th</sup>!

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