

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

April showers bring May flowers! What do May flowers bring? Pilgrims! Remember that funny childhood joke? While we certainly have our share of rain, I always love this time of the year when I can fill my flower pots and hanging baskets with colorful flowers that will give me joy throughout the Summer months. The last part of the joke does make me think of our journey as Christians. We are pilgrims navigating a new land, especially since Covid. The landscape of the church has changed due to streaming services and electronic giving. If only our concerns of connecting with people began and ended there. We are living in an age, not unlike that of the first apostles. We have been transformed by Jesus Christ's saving grace yet so many do not have a clue who Jesus even is. They have been poisoned by false ideas of judgment, criticism, and condemnation that the truth of the grace, mercy, and love of Jesus and His Kingdom has gotten lost in translation. But God is still very good and the Holy Spirit is still with us to proclaim the Good News! And we must always remember that we, too, know the Good News of Jesus Christ because of the hard work and persistence of the first apostles. So where does this leave us today, the church of Jesus Christ? We must remember to connect with people just like Jesus did. Jesus spoke to the woman at the well about "living water" and he called the disciples to begin "fishing" for people. We need to connect with the truth of the Gospel in language people understand. While we have beautiful buildings for worship, we need to be creative in using our buildings for community centers, clothing closets, and food pantries. Jesus filled hungry people with food and then shared about the love of God. He also said when we take care of the least of these, we are doing it unto Him. This can seem overwhelming at times, but please remember that the Great Rivers Region and ABCUSA are here to partner with you in church revitalization, outreach, and transformation. We are here to walk beside you, encourage you, and support your vision and we partner with Jesus Christ to transform the world!

On that same note, congratulations to First Baptist Church of Jerseyville who received a \$3000 grant from the American Baptist Home Mission Societies for its work in the new Dinner Church ministry. Pastor Brent, Pastor Patti, and other leaders go into the community every Wednesday evening to share a meal and devotion to connect with people who might not otherwise come to a Sunday morning service. God is blessing this new, creative ministry!

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May 18 - 19, 2023

First Baptist Church at Savoy
1602 S. Prospect Ave., Savoy, IL

[KEYNOTE SPEAKERS]



Sam Acho
NFL Veteran, faith-driven
Athlete, ESPN analyst,
author, speaker

Spend time with other Pastors and Leaders from smaller churches and be inspired by teaching from gifted Christian leaders and teachers. Choose from workshops highlighting innovative ministry strategies on topics such as essentials and redefining success in ministry, capitalizing with online possibilities in smaller churches, leading the presence-driven church and communication improvement. Bring some of your church leaders so you can get more out of the conference as a team.

Visit ResourceLC.org to learn more and book discounted

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CRI Pastor Retreat:

Church Revitalization Initiative
Pastor Retreat

First Baptist Church of Peoria

June 10th, 2023

9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

For pastors whose churches are working with CRI or pastors who are interested in being a part of CRI.

Church Revitalization Initiative Report

April 2023

As I continue my spiritual journey as Coordinator for the Church Revitalization Initiative, I am reminded of something I often overlook and that is my present blessings in Christ. There are many but here are my top five blessings.

1. **Relationship.** "Now are we the children of God" ([1 John 3:2](#)). The God-given right of children gives the children the right to all the father possesses.

2. **Reconciliation.** "Now hath He reconciled" ([Col. 1:21](#)). Christ did not die to reconcile God to us, for He never went away from us, but He died to reconcile us to God, and to kill in us all that was associated with a state of enmity.

3. **Nearness.** "Now in Christ Jesus ye... are made nigh by the Blood of Christ" ([Eph. 2:13](#)). We are nearer than angels, for in the Person of God's Son we are as near as He. Being "made nigh," let us keep nearby.

4. **Illumination.** "Now are ye light in the Lord" ([Eph. 5:8](#)). As to the past, we were in a condition of "darkness;" as to the present, we are light in the Lord; and as to the future, we are to "walk as children of the light."

5. **Abiding.** "Now little children, abide in Him" ([1 John 2:28](#)). There is only one way to abide in Him, and that is by obedience. Those who keep His commandments abide in Him, and He also abides in them—[1 John 3:24](#).

Speaking of blessings, Pastor Carmen Jordan is experiencing this in the First Baptist Church of Cordova. She shares blessings that are happening at her church:

We had been without an organist or pianist when one of our newer members volunteered to play the piano and sing on a few Sundays. Her children were so excited that they wanted to sing also. This has led to us seeing the Sunday attendance grow with both adults and children, in addition to the unchurched and churched, yet unconnected to a local body. While I was on vacation, we had 19 children in Sunday service, with 16 of them singing their hearts out for the Lord! As I watched the video, it was clear that we, as a congregation, have adopted a new mindset and are watching revitalization happen right before our very eyes. As we have some young I am reminded of Jesus' teaching in Matthew 18 on the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven... "whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And, whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me" (Matt. 18: 4 – 5).

I remind our pastors of the June 10th CRI pastors retreat at FBC Peoria. The retreat will begin at 9 am and end at 3 pm. I am looking forward to seeing all of the CRI pastors there.

Wally Holt, CRI Coordinator

The Mainstream is a monthly publication of the American Baptist Churches of Website www.abcgrr.org. To subscribe/unsubscribe to The Mainstream

Short Term Mission Trip to Hungary!

The Great Rivers Region is excited to announce an international short-term mission trip this August! Join Associate Executive Minister, Rev. Rob Kirbach, on a mission trip to Budapest, Hungary for hands-on mission work with children and families at the Pannonhalmi Béla Baptist School -- an elementary school operated by Hungarian Baptist Aid. Come alongside as we continue to nurture our growing partnership with the Baptist churches and schools of Hungary. Trip dates are August 3 – 13. All the details about this trip can be found here: <https://sites.google.com/view/hungary-mission-trip-august-20?usp=sharing>

Please share this information with your congregations; registration deadline of June 9 is quickly approaching!

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The New GRR Church Directory was emailed to churches on May 1st. If you did not receive the directory, email nancy@abcgrr.org to request an electronic copy.

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Global Servant Carmella Jones preached at
Kansas City First Baptist Church

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