



The Mainstream

News of Ministry and Mission

*Be a vessel that God can pour His love through.
Let it Flow!*

December 2022

Email: Sally@abcgrr.org

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

Welcome Rob Kirbach!

Rev. Rob Kirbach has been selected to serve as our Associate Executive Minister, beginning January 1. Rob is a lifelong resident of the Great Rivers Region, growing up at Upper Alton Baptist Church and spending summers at the former Lake Benton Baptist Camp. He is a graduate of Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis and has served GRR churches in Area V and Area IV as a youth minister, campus minister, and pastor. He also holds a master's degree in clinical counseling, previously working as a therapist in St. Louis, and he is currently a Doctor of Ministry Student at Palmer Theological Seminary. Most recently, Rob has served as our Area IV Assistant and Interim Co-Associate Executive Minister, and as the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Highland, IL. He also serves as the Special Assistant to Hungary for International Ministries. Rob and his wife Julie have three young children and live near Edwardsville, IL.



From All Your GRR Staff!

Welcome Brian Romanowski!

Another GRR staffing change we are excited to announce!

With the retirement of Rev. Paul Maitland as the dean of our Alternative Ministry Education program, **Rev. Brian Romanowski** has been appointed to fill this position. Brian will also be serving the GRR as the Area Assistant for Areas III and IV, all beginning January 1.

Other than his time serving in the US Air Force, Brian has been a part of ABC-GRR churches his entire life. Brian has served on the board of the American Baptist Men of the Great Rivers Region for more than a decade and serves as the team captain for the Area III Disaster Relief team.

Brian is passionate about missions, and he has participated in numerous local, regional, national and international mission projects, including dozens of disaster relief trips and Habitat for Humanity builds. A second career pastor, Brian worked as an automation project engineer before hearing the call to ministry. Brian received his M.Div. from Lincoln Christian Seminary and his D. Min from Northern Seminary.

He has been married to his amazing wife Julie for 37 years and they have one adult son, Vincent. Brian currently pastors First Baptist Church of Mahomet, IL, where he has served for more than 15 years.

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The Region Office will be closed Dec. 22 thru Jan. 4!

Church Revitalization Initiative Report

November 2022

Through the prophet Ezekiel, we learn that God offers us a new heart. Unlike a physical heart transplant, which prolongs our earthly life, it is a spiritual transformation that God gives us that radically changes our lives. When Jesus gives us a new heart, all aspects of our lives are impacted. That is what has been happening in the lives of our pastors and congregations.

Here is an example of this process that is shared by Pastor Daniel Swihart from Open Door Community church in Sterling Illinois. *"Revitalization is not for the faint of heart or weak of faith. It is hard work with lots of ups and downs. In revitalizing, we stand with the God of resurrection against the powers of Satan, sin, and death. At Open Door Community Church (formerly First Baptist) of Sterling, we have entered this fray with anticipation of what God can do, but Satan has been fighting us every step of the way. Just this year, we have completely redesigned the front of our auditorium, set up livestreaming on our website, transitioned from traditional to blended music, created a Facility Master Plan, chosen a new name and logo, updated much of our lighting to LED, added outdoor signs to help guide visitors, installed speed bumps on our drive, set up new social media pages, launched a Pray and Go ministry, started an after school program for middle schoolers, implemented a new discipleship process, are getting ready to hire our first associate pastor, and several smaller projects. Each of these has come with its share of difficulty and hardship, yet God has shown up each time and kept us united and on target despite Satan's best efforts. We haven't seen explosive numerical growth (though there has been some), but God has grown our faith showing us that he is behind us 100% and will continue to lead us.*

If you are on the fence about revitalization in your church, know this: It will be a hard-fought war, but you have the King of Kings fighting for you. Whatever the enemy throws at you will pale in comparison to the power with which you stand. So, fight on! There are people who desperately need to hear the gospel from the lips of your church. God is ready to speak through you to a hurting and broken world. As one of my favorite worship songs from my youth exclaims, 'Open up the doors and let the music play; let the streets be filled with singing'"

We are looking forward to 2023 with great anticipation to see how God is going to continue to work in lives of our pastors and congregations as they follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Please continue praying for all our pastors and churches in the Church Revitalization Initiative that they will follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in their lives and the life of their churches.

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

ABMen Disaster Relief in Florida 2022



† GRR Holy Land Tour October 31-November 11, 2023

Have you ever dreamt of walking where Jesus walked? Is traveling to Israel on your "bucket list?" Be a part of the GRR Holy Land Tour in 2023. Limited space is available. Click the link below for more information and to sign up! We will begin by traveling to Nazareth in Galilee and experience several days in the hometown of our Savior. We will see where Jesus was baptized, called his disciples, Magdala, Capernaum, and Cana. Then we will travel to the area of the Dead Sea, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem. All fees include airfare, hotels, two meals a day, ground transportation, and tour guides. <http://www.morningstartours.com/GRR1330>. (Initial payment is due by February 1.)

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