

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

Are you aware that our American Baptist denomination collects four special offerings each year? The first one, which is collected is called **America For Christ Offering**. America for Christ Offering helps communities through agencies that sponsor food programs, tutoring programs, nursing home and senior center ministries, chaplaincies, clean water programs, and other ministries across the United States. One-third of this offering goes directly to the Great Rivers Region to impact our local churches.

Another offering is **One Great Hour of Sharing**. When a national disaster occurs or countries are affected by war, One Great Hour of Sharing dollars go immediately to help people in distress. This offering is usually collected once a year but can be given at any time and directed exactly as needed. Last year, through One Great Hour of Sharing, the GRR churches gave thousands of dollars to help those displaced in war-torn Ukraine. Our region also responded when Hurricane Ian swept through the Gulf Coast. Even today, your congregation can give to aid those who have been affected by the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria. When you give to the One Great Hour of Sharing offering, every dime you give goes directly to those who need aid. Not one dime goes to cover overhead. No agency does this that I am aware. 100% goes to help those in need.

The **World Mission Offering** is collected every Fall to help global servants spread the message of Jesus Christ to more than thirty countries across the world. Your congregation can give to all global servants or direct your giving to specific servants whose mission and ministry is special to your heart.

The final special offering collected every year is also the **Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering** which is given as a thank-you gift to all retired missionaries and ministers and their spouses. Stories have been shared

where this gift came "just in time" for much-needed repairs or medical issues. We are thankful to those who have dedicated their lives to serving and sharing the Good News.



YOU ARE INVITED
TO OUR THIRD ANNUAL
VIRTUAL VISIT
WITH OUR SPECIAL GLOBAL
SERVANTS

**LARRY & BECKY
STANTON - Hungary**
SARAH MCCURDY- Iberoamerica
RUTH VINDAS - Costa Rica
DILIA ZELAYA- Honduras
NZUNGA AND KIHOMI
MABUDIGA-Dominican Republic
JAE STOCKTON - Mexico

ON SATURDAY,
FEBRUARY 25, 2023
10:00 AM TO ABOUT 12NOON CST
VIA ZOOM LINK

**SPONSORED BY AMERICAN BAPTIST
WOMEN'S MINISTRIES OF GRR**

TO CONNECT EMAIL
PMREED0802@YAHOO.COM

Church Revitalization Initiative Report

February 2023

The month of January has been an amazing month for the Church Revitalization Initiative. We welcomed two new churches into the initiative. Oak Park Avenue Baptist Church in Berwyn, Illinois, under the leadership of co-pastors Jill Fleagle and Jose Saenz, and First Baptist Church of Jacksonville under the leadership of Pastor Patrick Embley. I am looking forward to working with all three of these pastors and their leadership teams. It was **also my privilege** to be a part of welcoming not only to CRI, but to the American Baptist Churches of the Great Rivers Region, Bethel Baptist Church in Caseyville Illinois under the leadership of Pastor Drew Anderson. We now have twenty-two churches that are a part of the Church Revitalization Initiative.

I would like to invite all CRI pastors to mark their calendars now for June 10th for a CRI Pastors' Retreat to be held at First Baptist Church of Peoria. More details will be given at a later date.

Pastor Daniel Swihart from Open Door Community Church, Sterling shares the following:

As we enter our second full year of revitalization, we are sensing a shift that needs to happen in our emphasis and approach. Almost all the changes we have made to this point have had one thing in common: tangibility. People could easily see, touch, feel, or experience them. Changes like WiFi throughout the building, TV screens for worship, a reconstructed stage, or a new name and logo. All of these were very tangible and helped keep momentum going. Sure, not everyone agreed with all these changes, but there was a sense of movement forward with each one.

Now, we see that the change also needs to go deeper. It needs to include the intangible as well as the tangible. Changes like leadership structure, discipleship process, connecting new people to the church, training and retaining volunteers, and evaluating everything we do. These changes hit much deeper and take much more effort to enact. It is also more difficult to see their benefits immediately.

They may take months or years to come to fruition (or failure). Yet for revitalization to take hold and last, they are far more vital than the tangible changes.

So, if you want to see your church revitalized, press into both the tangible and intangible changes. Use those quick and easy wins to build momentum for the ones that will be harder fought and won. And in all of it never stop listening to the Spirit's voice in prayer and discussion. He will always guide the Church toward health and wholeness.

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 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

It is 2023! And both Scholarships and Grants will soon be available on our website.

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On January 22, 2023, we welcomed Bethel Baptist Church of Caseyville, Illinois into the Great Rivers Region. Region Staff were present for a wonderful Sunday morning worship service to celebrate with our new family member. Bethel Baptist Church is pastored by Rev. Drew Anderson.

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ABCGRR Area V Annual Gathering
Reframing -The Beloved Community
March 10-11, 2023
Second Baptist Church
3620 E. 39th St.
Kansas City, MO 64128

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ABCGRR Area II Gathering 2023
On a Mission of Love
March 19, 2023 – 2:15 PM
First Baptist Church
1701 Mound
Jacksonville, IL 62650

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ReSource Leadership Conference May 18-19.
Go to <https://www.resourcelc.org/> for registration and hotel information. First Baptist Church, 1602 S. Prospect Ave., Savoy, IL 61874

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*** see additional pages

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