

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

I just returned from San Juan, Puerto Rico, where I attended the American Baptist Churches USA Biennial Mission Summit. I always love attending these gatherings when I can, to celebrate the shared ministry as pastors, church leaders, and denomination leaders connect with one another in our partnership to spread the good news of Jesus Christ. It was a very rewarding time celebrating the richness of our diversity. Women and men, preachers and teachers, and leaders of multiethnic backgrounds were all reflected in the worship and in workshops. General Secretary, The Rev. Dr. C. Jeff Woods, said in his opening statement, "It is so enriching to see the American Baptist family gathered in Puerto Rico for the first in-person Biennial in four years. The reach of American Baptist Mission is incredible, and it is even more evident when the family is gathered in the same place, sharing with one another."

One highlight, too, was to see GRR's own, Dr. Jim Wolfe, on stage and around the biennial as the President of ABCUSA. Jim signed the Bible kept by the American Baptist Historical Society that all ABCUSA presidents have signed. Another is that we also had many GRR "new to the ABC" pastors participate in Engage to learn more about our history, mission, and ministry.

This year's theme was taken from Esther 4:14, "For such a time as this." Each preacher focused on the promises of God and this is the time to be bold and courageous and loving in a world that seems to have forgotten how to do that. It can be a scary time to be in a church or in ministry. But our God is THE God who moves mountains and has promised to never leave us or forsake us. What if we step out on faith and God really does do the things He promised?! All in all, it was very inspiring and rejuvenating.



Our GRR delegates to the ABCUSA Biennial Mission Summit in Puerto Rico in June!



Our GRR Staff at the ABCUSA Biennial in Puerto Rico!

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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.

Church Revitalization Initiative Report

July 2023

1 Timothy 4:12 (NLT) ¹² Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity. Being young (in age or faith) has never been easy. Just ask young Timothy. Even though he was a pastor of a church, people in his church said he was too young and too boyish. So, his mentor and close friend, the Apostle Paul, stepped in and gave him some advice on how to handle the bullies who were trying to push him around. His advice was not to be afraid, but instead to stand out like a steeple among God's people. Steeples, you see, stand tall and strong. They tower above the building that holds them up. And they always point to heaven. As the leader of God's people, Timothy's job was to be like a steeple in the way he lived out his life. Timothy was showing them that his love, faith, and trust was in God. Timothy was a steeple among his people, always pointing them to God. That is exactly what God wants us to do. He wants all of us to put our love, faith, and trust in him. When we do, we will stand out like steeples among all of God's people.

Last month we had our first CRI pastors' retreat. Read what Gary and Mary Sheets, Pastors at Harvard Park Baptist Church, Springfield, IL had to say about the retreat:

"It was a joy to attend the recent CRI retreat. To get to meet and greet fellow pastors on the same journey was a blessing. The worship was enriching and soothing. The table break-out sessions helped us to connect with the pastors from El Paso and the combined church (Bridge of Hope) in Normal. You also can't go wrong with Chick-fil-A! Having Patty, Brian, Jim, and Wally there shows the deep commitment of the GRR and is appreciated!"

Wally Holt
Church Revitalization Initiative Coordinator

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Abraham Lincoln
PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

We have SIX tickets to the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library & Museum for your use!

Contact the Nancy@abcgr.org to reserve a date.

American Baptist Men Gathering 2023 **Theme: "Sharing His Story by Helping Others"**

First Baptist Church of Edwardsville
534 St Louis St., Edwardsville, IL 62025

August 4-5

Join us for a weekend of worship, spiritual growth, fellowship, food, and activities

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From Northern Seminary Magazine **RENEWING THE CHURCH**

Trailblazing for the cause of Church Revitalization: Patty King on God's Work Today

In a suburb of Toledo Ohio, Patty King was born on a Monday and was in Church the next Sunday. Raised in a Church that invited people to follow the call of God in their lives, she never knew women could be Pastors. And by the time she was graduating high school, she knew she could preach, too. "Patty King" her pastor had said to her one day after she preached in her Church, "if there is anyone who should attend seminary it's you!"

It was only in 1990 while pursuing at MDiv at Northern Seminary when her eyes were opened to the wider issue of how many women struggle to be affirmed in ministry. Along with several other women, however, she found a safe harbor to grow into the leader and pastor God called her to be. She became a pastor and spent significant time in youth ministry.

Today, Patty is the Executive Minister of the Great Rivers Region of the American Baptist Churches USA, a region made up of 205 Churches. She is trailblazing her way as the first woman to hold Executive Minister. Patty's passion? Church revitalization. In her role, she is seeing Churches that were once on the verge of closing now minister and care in ways that are new and necessary. "One Church in our region is ministering to people who are assimilating – those coming out of prison and former drug addicts." She says, "The Church looks totally different, but it has come back to life. It is amazing."

Her conclusion as she reflects on what God is doing today? "God is already working, and if we look closely, we can partner with him to transform the world." Men and women, together.

Patty King Bilyeu

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American Baptist History & Polity Course is August 18-19! See website for registration information.

ABMen Disaster Team working July 2023

