

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.

Growing New Followers of Jesus in a Post-Church Age:
How to Make Disciples when the Wind is Against Us.

Renewing Church from the Outside In: Paths of Vitality for Congregations.

There will be a time of worship with a well-known praise team, fellowship, free time, break-out groups, and tasty food! Mark your calendars now. Registration is NOT available yet but is coming this Fall. This may turn into a biennial partnership between regions and other ABC-endorsed entities to work together to aid churches in spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ!

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A region board member, Charlie Nilon, was on a 10-day discovery trip in Liberia recently. Also, there were Charles Jones, Sandra Dorsainvil, and Carmella Jones.

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**** Mainstream for 2024 ****

Please make sure the region office has all updated 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 with this matter.

Church Revitalization Initiative Report

June 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, Springfield, 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
CRI Coordinator



From the ReSource Conference, open discussion with Mark Thompson, Patty Bilyeu and Gene Crume!



Pastor Tony Stangs' Installation June 11 pictured with Stephen Jones, Patty Bilyeu, Tony Stang, Patti Meyer and Bill Steger from the Region!



Tony with His Family!



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.



Biennial Mission Summit June 23-25, 2023, San Juan, Puerto Rico. Many of our Pastors are going and would appreciate prayers for the Summit!