

**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](http://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 10<sup>th</sup>, 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

It is hard to believe that the first four months of 2023 are in our rear-view mirror. God has been blessing our CRI pastors and churches as they follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Pastors of CRI churches are planning to gather at FBC, Peoria on June 10 to engage and encourage each other as they travel this journey of revitalization together. Many have had major breakthroughs in their churches – new names, new members, new mindsets. Some have progressed faster than others. We will meet and share our experiences, encourage each other, and hear from GRR leaders. We will share some music and lunch. As of today (May 5), 13 of the 22 CRI church pastors are planning to attend.

If you are one of those pastors who has hesitated, I would encourage you to join us. I am excited about us getting together. If you can possibly join us, please let me know so I can arrange enough food!

And to the other readers of this article each month, your prayers and support have been uplifting and encouraging to the Church Revitalization Initiative; please keep them coming!

Wally Holt, CRI Coordinator



Executive Minister Patty Bilyeu at ABHMS

The Mainstream is a monthly publication of the American Baptist Churches of Website [www.abcgrr.org](http://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 1<sup>st</sup>. If you did not receive the directory, email [nancy@abcgrr.org](mailto:nancy@abcgrr.org) to request an electronic copy.

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Pastor Craig Pleva's installation at First Baptist Marengo

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Executive Minister Patty Bilyeu at the Office of the General Secretary

the Great Rivers Region, P.O. Box 13457, Springfield IL 62791. Phone: (217) 726-7366 please send an email to [nancy@abcgrr.org](mailto:nancy@abcgrr.org) or [sally@abcgrr.org](mailto:sally@abcgrr.org).



