

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

The Holy Spirit was truly moving at the Doubletree Hotel as we held the 2022 Rivers Growth Conference, October 27-29. Thank you to the Antioch Baptist Church who led us with beautiful music and brought us to new heights. Rev. Dr. Kirk Byron Jones reminded us to rest in the storm and Jesus calls us to “sit on the dock of the bay.” It was such a joy to be with our brothers and sisters in Christ and be able to catch up after being apart for so long. We were able to celebrate the retirement of Rev. Dr. Paul Maitland, Dean of AME (Alternative Ministry Education), and to thank Rev. Claudia McCain for her faithful service as GRR President for the past two years. We were blessed to hear from IM representatives and global servants Sandra Dorsainvil, Nicole Cox, Carmella Jones, and Larry Stanton. We also had some amazing workshops led by ABC and GRR leaders. Thank you to all who helped organize this event and to all who participated! You are all a blessing!

Rev. Patty Bilyeu



† **50th Ordination Anniversary!!**

November 20, 2022 marks the 50th Anniversary of the ordination service of Rev. Ed Haun at the First Baptist Church in Lincoln, Illinois. He has served as Pastor of First Baptist Churches at Lincoln, Tuscola, Fairbury, Moweaqua and Jerseyville, Illinois and Keokuk, Iowa. He has counseled and directed many years at Lake Springfield Baptist Camp. Since his retirement in 2007, he has served as Interim Pastor at eight Baptist churches. He gives God the glory for his pastoral ministry.

Church Revitalization Initiative Report

October 2022

Thanksgiving 2022 is rapidly approaching. Have you made your *Thanksgiving check list*? If you have, it probably looked like this: Turkey—check. Cranberry Sauce—check. Pumpkin pie—check. Mashed Potatoes and Gravy—check, Hot rolls right out the oven Check, and most importantly Pepto-Bismol check! That was a fun check but here is a much *better Thanksgiving check list*. Loving family—check. Good friends—check. A roof over our heads—check. Food to eat—check. Clothes to wear—check. A church who loves us—check. A God that loves us—check. With all of that in mind, let me ask you this question: *What are you thankful for?* One of my favorite psalms is Psalm 100 and I really enjoy reading it in the Message Translation of the Bible. It reads like this. **¹ A thanksgiving psalm, on your feet now—applaud GOD! ² Bring a gift of laughter, sing yourselves into his presence. ³ Know this: GOD is God, and God, GOD. He made us; we did not make him. We are his people, his well-tended sheep. ⁴ Enter with the password: "Thank you!" Make yourselves at home, talking praise. Thank him. Worship him. ⁵ For GOD is sheer beauty, all-generous in love, loyal always and ever.** There is so much to unpack in this psalm. When was last time you stood to your feet and applauded God? He made us, we did not make him. I do think we get that reversed from time to time. We are God's people, his well-tended sheep. He does really take good care of us. As Thanksgiving 2022 approaches we need to remember we have so much to be thankful for. I am thankful for the women and men that are working diligently across the Great Rivers Region in the Church Revitalization Initiative. God is blessing churches with people accepting Christ, people being Baptized, and true excitement happening in churches who are looking outside the walls of the church and doing amazing things for the Lord. I thank God for the privilege of being the Coordinator for the Church Revitalization Initiative. Why are you thankful?

Wally Holt, CRI Coordinator

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GRR Holy Land Tour October 31-November 10, 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>



Congratulations to Rev. Eric Vogel, FBC Galesburg, who was ordained into Christian Ministry on October 22!

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In November 2021, First Baptist Church of Stonington participated in our 2nd year of Operation Christmas Child's Shoebox Ministry. The church members, attenders, and some residents of the Stonington community combined efforts to pack over 125 shoeboxes that were shipped to Samaritan's Purse and ultimately found their way to Central and Southern Africa. Each shoebox contained many wonderful gifts for children along with "The Greatest Journey," a multi-session Bible lesson on Jesus and how the children could know Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. This was a tremendous achievement for First Baptist Stonington and a wonderful opportunity to share the good news of Jesus Christ!