

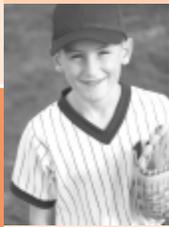


# The Baptist Observer Magazine

BECKY SEPTOSKI, EDITOR • VOL. 12 NO. 4 • JULY/AUGUST, 2013

HIGHLIGHTING THE MINISTRIES OF AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES IN INDIANA & KENTUCKY

## Kyle and Debby Witmer Endorsed by IM to Serve In Thailand



Debby and Kyle Witmer of Springville, Indiana, have been endorsed by American Baptist International Ministries (IM) to serve in Thailand with IM's partner, the Thailand Karen Baptist Convention (TKBC) at the Siloam Bible Institute in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The couple will work in pastoral education and leadership development. Kyle will also do continuing education with TKBC pastors and evangelists.

The Karen (pronounced Ka-wren') is an ethnic tribal people group, a minority in Thailand. Karen young people who attend the Bible school wish to follow the call of God on their lives to be pastors and evangelists among the Karen villages in the hills of Thailand.

Kyle currently serves as pastor of Avoca Baptist Church in Avoca, where Debby also serves as worship leader and chair of the missions committee. Avoca BC is excited about partnering with them in this new area of ministry. The Witmers homeschool their four children, Hannah (16), Brennan (12), Julia (10), and Emma (7), and hope to continue this ministry of discipleship in their new location of ministry.

Pastor Kyle says, "The church is called to make disciples of all ethnicities. Our sense of call to this ministry is a response to our call to serve the church. Leadership development is greatly needed all around the world. The work at Siloam

is an established ministry and is helping pastors grow and learn, as well as calling new pastors in villages to the ministry."

As endorsed missionary candidates, the Witmers are currently working to build their Missionary Partnership Network (MPN). They are inviting individuals, groups, and churches to partner with them by committing to share the spiritual, relational, and financial support needed for them to begin their ministry with the church leaders to whom God is calling them.

Please celebrate this new endorsement by praying for Debby and Kyle and their children as they invite others to join them in "the journey to become all God has intended for us as Jesus' disciples." If you'd like more information about

becoming a part of the Witmer's MPN, you may send words of encouragement and communicate directly with them at [witmer@internationalministries.org](mailto:witmer@internationalministries.org). Learn more about the Witmers on the IM website: <http://www.internationalministries.org/teams/594-witmer>.



International Ministries

On page two, Rev. Soofi Ford writes about a time of transition in our region

Read about the 2013 ABY Scholarship recipients - located on page 3

A wonderful time was had by all in attendance at the Senior Adult Day on April 13, 2013. Read more on page 7

Keep up with coming events - found on page 8

**"Together on God's Abundant Journey"**



**Rev. Sooz Whitten Ford**  
Executive Minister  
sooziford@abc-indiana.org

## A Time Of Transitions

Your region staff is in the midst of several transitions. There is a sense of loss and grief as we acknowledge that those who have served alongside us are no longer present, requiring adjustments for all of us. At the same time, these transitions bring new opportunities and we are reminded, once again, that our Generous God will provide all of the necessary resources as we serve pastors and churches during these challenging days.

We recently bid farewell to two valued colleagues on our staff, Dan Barringer and Mike Wilson, following many years of committed ministry in our region. We are grateful for Dan's caring service with pastors and churches no matter what situations they found themselves in. He gave wise leadership to the regional ordination process, to new church planting, and the evangelism ministries. Likewise, Mike often responded to questions and concerns from pastors, was one of the original visionaries for the Lilly Endowment funded Ministerial Excellence Fund (MEF), and held the region to the highest standards in the stewardship of all resources. We are grateful for their ministry among us and wish them well in the next phase of their lives.

The Ministerial Excellence Fund has developed to the point that it no longer requires full time staff. To that end, Dr. Marc Kirchoff recently began a position with Biblica, the American Bible Society, as Midwest Regional Director. Marc will continue in a reduced part-time capacity as a member of our region staff to ensure that MEF will continue without interruption. Pastors and churches can be assured that MEF will remain a valuable resource to them as needs arise.

Mike Wilson will begin a part-time position as a transitional member of

our region staff. For a period of time, he will continue to work with region investments and will join Marc Kirchoff to resource the MEF team as they consider MEF grant requests.

We welcome Melva Gray to our staff as interim manager of finance. Melva recently retired from Wellpoint following a distinguished career in financial services spanning several decades. A lifelong American Baptist from southern Indiana, Melva is an active member of First Baptist Church of Indianapolis, and has served in various volunteer positions with her church, ABC-GI and with ABCUSA. Melva is already providing valued leadership with the region's stewardship of financial resources entrusted to us.

Last winter, your region staff and I engaged in a discernment process designed and led by Dr. Wade Allen, pastor of Muncie First Baptist Church. This was to determine how to align our ministry responsibilities in order to better focus on the regional priorities of growing leaders, healthy churches, and greater mission and service. Over the course of several months, we devoted significant portions of our monthly staff meetings to prayer and dialogue, ably guided by Wade. We invited other regional leaders into conversation as part of the discernment process, and consulted with leaders in other ABC regions about

their experiences.

Connecting with and caring for pastors emerged as a key component for our ministry, and one that is valued by region leaders. As a result of this discernment process, we have created several positions, Associate Regional Ministers of Pastoral Care, to further extend the region's care for pastors. I have been very pleased by the interest in, and response to, these new positions and am looking forward to interviewing potential candidates over the next few weeks. Please watch for an announcement of new staff in early July.

Dr. Dennis Bickers, Rev. Phyllis Goodyear, Dr. Jim Walter, and I are looking forward to working alongside the new Associate Regional Ministers (ARMs) of Pastoral Care. We know that new ARMs will help to extend our reach as together we support and resource pastors, the ministries of churches, and our wider ministry together as a region. They will be bringing new and valued perspectives from their own experiences. We look forward to new possibilities and new opportunities, as we are Together on God's Abundant Journey.

## Association Assignments

### Dennis Bickers

dennisbickers@abc-indiana.org  
812-346-1560

Bethel  
Brownstown  
Crawford County  
Coffee Creek  
Evansville  
Laughery  
Long Run  
Madison  
Orleans  
Sand Creek  
Union

### Soozi Ford

sooziford@abc-indiana.org  
317-635-3552

Bedford  
Friendship  
Johnson County  
Mt. Zion  
Tri County  
Chin Churches

### Phyllis Goodyear

phyllisgoodyear@abc-indiana.org  
317-373-9858

Decatur County  
East Central  
Flat Rock  
Harmony  
Northeastern  
Salamonie

### Jim Walter

jimwalter@abc-indiana.org  
317-635-3552

Curry's Prairie  
Freedom  
Judson  
Logansport  
Monticello  
Northwestern  
Tippecanoe  
White Lick



## Home Missions

When we think of "home missions", we tend to think of missions within the United States and one would be right in doing so. But, while listening to a Christian radio station recently, the subject of missions came up and "home missions" was discussed. While mission and ministry to foreign countries and the United States are important, we must not neglect the mission God has given us right where we live. God has given us this "home" and let's do our best to honor Him.

There are many seasons of life and that will determine one's mission at a particular time. Are you in the young child season of life? Are you in the teenager season of life? Maybe it's the grandchildren

or great grandchildren season of life? Maybe your home does not include children of your own at all, but I'm sure there are members of your family or your church family you could minister to.

Be creative and do something out of the box. It may be difficult or time consuming, but so is anything of importance for the work God has called us to do.

Let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. I John 4:7 NIV. Let's use the love God has given us to minister to those in our family. Let's leave a legacy of love to those in our sphere of influence.

So, see your family as a ministry and love them wholeheartedly.

## Love Gift Update

By: Carol Theobald, Love Gift Chairman

The latest Love Gift figures reported from the state office from January thru April, 2013 are \$11,796.37. No report has been received from Greater Indianapolis.

These figures are down from last year. Please faithfully pray and be silent and listen for God's reply.

He knows our need and He surely will answer, if honest time is spent in prayer.

The word "LOVE" appears in the Bible 442 times, so it must be important to love one another.

Love deeply Love widely  
Love unreasonably

## Observer Article Submission Deadlines

September/October - August 9  
November/December - October 11  
January/February '14 - December 6, 2013

## ABY 2013 Scholarship Recipients Chosen!

Abigail Newlin and Jessica Smothers were chosen to receive the 2013 ABY College Scholarships. It is a scholarship in the amount of \$750 to be used towards 2013/2014 college expenses. Both young women have served in various leadership roles within and outside their home churches, including being very active leaders in their youth group programs. They both sing in their church choir and have participated in youth service projects and summer mission trips as well. They also were both members of the National Honor Society and participated in many musicals in high school.



Jessica Smothers

Jessica has enrolled at Anderson University and hopes to serve in full time ministry after college. She is the daughter of Carson & Connie Smothers. In high school, she served on the Student Council, and in the community, she used her gifts through her work with the Good News Club at a local elementary school. At Pleasant View BC in Indianapolis, she leads praise & worship on Sunday mornings and volunteered as a camp counselor last summer. She is described as displaying leadership through hard work and service along with just being herself through loving others & caring for them, intentionally praying, developing relationships and sharing Jesus with not only her words, but with the way she lives her life as well.



Abigail Newlin

Abigail is the daughter of Paul & Linda Newlin. She graduated high school with academic honors and received the Family & Consumer Sciences outstanding Senior Award. She will be attending Indiana State University this fall. Along with her role as a student leader at Seymour FBC, she ministers to the children at her church in almost every way possible including teaching in children's church, volunteering in the nursery and working with VBS. Her youth minister wrote, "Abigail is a young woman who lives out her faith. She has a very kind and loving heart along with an inner joy that others gravitate toward."



# CONGREGATIONS

## News from Seymour FBC

Seymour FBC is excited to have Brittany Jackson as the new interim music minister. She will be leading services starting June 9, and the church looks forward to serving with her.

Seymour FBC hosted a retirement reception for Dan Barringer on May 18, 2013. It was well attended and the hope of all is

that Dan had a nice send-off into retirement.

Preparations are underway for a Youth Mission Trip during the first week of July. Vacation Bible School will start on July 14<sup>th</sup>. Many of the children have signed up to attend camp at Indian Creek. It should be an exciting summer!

## Amo FBC Holds Moving Service Over Memorial Day Weekend



*Pictured with the Jeffs family are Robert and Pastor Shelly Zook*

Amo FBC recently welcomed back Rev. Wallace & Bettye Jeffs and their family. Rev. Jeffs brought the message during the worship service on May 26, 2013, and led those in attendance on a stroll down memory lane! Brother Wally, as many in the congregation called him, served as the minister from 1961-1967.

What a joy and a blessing to have this family in worship, as well as, many who used to be a part of the congregation in earlier years! The worship service also included an Offering of Thanksgiving & Remembrance in memory of those from the church family who went to be with our Lord and Savior this past year. A white rose with their name was placed on the Communion Table along with a memorial wreath in honor of those currently serving their country. A candle was lit in honor of the fallen soldiers and

up listening to the Nye sisters' beautiful voices. The voice of their sister, Joyce Nye White, was missed as Joyce went to be with our Lord and Savior in April. Lynn Smedley, on



behalf of the Slap Happy Baptist Threaders presented Kenny Rhea, World War II Veteran, with a Quilt of Valor. Praise God for this wonderful service and the many, many blessings that were received from participating!

## McDoel BC Holds Book Drive

McDoel BC recently held a book drive for the Boys and Girls Club in Bloomington. The monetary donations collected over the course of two weeks provided funds to purchase 46 books for the teen summer reading program. Members of the congregation delivered the books during the second week of June.



## Iglesia Bautista Emanuel Celebrates Anniversary

On April 20, Iglesia Bautista Emanuel in Ft. Wayne celebrated 10 years of ministry. It was part of a special worship celebration of the Hispanic congregations in Indiana, Michigan and Ohio. Children and youth from Iglesia Bautista Emanuel and several of the congregations in attendance presented special songs and interpretive dances for everyone in attendance. Among the participants were guest speaker, Salvador Orellana, (Latino Ministries Strategist

from the American Baptist Home Mission Society) and Phyllis Goodyear (ABC-IN/KY Resource Minister) who brought greetings from the American Baptist Churches of Indiana and Kentucky.

We thank God for the unique ministry of Iglesia Bautista Emanuel and pray for God's continued presence with the congregation and its pastors, Jaime and Andrea Flores.

## Kalyn Sebastian of Kimberlin Creek BC Shares Jesus Love with Others

Kalyn Sebastian, granddaughter of Tom & Diana Sebastian and Doug & Carla Gross, turned 9 on March 17th. For her birthday party, she asked friends and family to bring canned goods to be donated to the Scott County Clearing-house instead of



receiving presents for herself. She is a very sweet young lady who often thinks more of others than herself. She has attended Kimberlin Creek Baptist Church in Scottsburg her whole life. She received 330 cans for

her birthday. Kimberlin Creek BC is very proud of Kalyn and her convictions. Several families will now be able to put food on their table because of Kalyn's gift.

## CONGREGATIONS



### Scholarships Awarded at Coffee Creek Association Meeting

The Coffee Creek Association of Baptist Churches met Sunday May 19, 2013 at the Kimberlin Creek BC for their annual Spring Singpiration where they awarded 3 local candidates with \$1000 each. The scholarships were

awarded to Phillip Richey, Harrison Randall, and Clayton Baker (not pictured). The Coffee Creek Association of Baptist Churches would like to congratulate the class of 2013, may the Lord bless and keep you!

### Waldron BC Holds Community Easter Egg Hunt

The photos below show children enjoying the Community Easter Egg Hunt hosted by Waldron BC.



## MISSIONS

### Mitchell FBC Hosts Disaster Relief Food Pack Night

On April 10, Mitchell FBC hosted a Disaster Relief Food Pack night with 4 other area churches in the Christian Life Center. Due to last year's drought, the Bryantsville Corn Project had very little corn to donate this year. As a result, the local youth filled bags with rice, soy, & dehydrated vegetables to

send to Niger, Africa sponsored by Bryantsville Corn. Long tables were lined up making several assembly lines. 82 youth members from the churches worked diligently, making a total of 1,756 bags which will provide 10,536 meals!! The youth were able to taste a cooked food pack if they wanted to see exactly what they were packing for those in need. The



project provided the opportunity for the youth to meet with youth groups from other churches that go to the same school. It also provided an opportunity for new Godly friendships. It was truly a blessed evening.

### Women from Vincennes FBC Travel to Murrow Indian Children's Home

On April 17, 2013, seven women from the Vincennes FBC traveled to the Murrow Indian Children's Home in Muskogee, OK. With fabric in hand and paint brushes ready, they spent the next 3 days working in Joseph Cottage. During those 3 days, the ladies made 34 pair of curtains and 14 valances for both windows and closets. They sanded and painted 28 doors and 33 doorways. Thanks go to "Mac" who furnished a belt sander, making that part of the task so much easier. To conclude the weekend, the women also mowed the yard and trimmed shrubs. It is always such a blessing to work at Murrow and see the smiles on the children's faces.

Joseph Cottage currently houses 7 boys ranging in age from 3 to 16, so appropriate posters were hung in each boy's room. Besides seeing the children, a highlight of the trip was the drive through Honor Heights Park to see the beautiful dogwood trees, azaleas, and tulips in bloom. Also 'in bloom' was a high school girl that was sent off to the prom in her beautiful dress with all the "bling" that goes with it.

If you have never been to Murrow, we encourage you to schedule a mission trip there. Great things are happening and we look forward to an even better future serving there.

# LEADERSHIP

## Saw Lincoln Ordained

Burmese Christian Fellowship in Ft. Wayne ordained Saw Lincoln on April 21. The celebration included special music from choirs and ensembles from Karen BC Ft. Wayne and Burmese Christian Fellowship as well as, spirited singing by the congregation. The service opened with a baby dedication by Ler Htoo, one of the participating clergy, and closed with a baptism by Pastor Saw Lincoln. Ler Htoo gave the word of ordination followed by a charge to

the candidate by Phyllis Goodyear (ABC-IN/KY Resource Minister). Duane Binkley gave the charge to the congregation. (Duane and his wife, Marcia, are International Ministries missionaries who serve ethnic Karen, Chin and Kachin refugees originally from Burma who are coming to live in the U.S. as legal immigrants). The ordination prayer was led by Wungreiso Valui, pastor of Ft. Wayne BC.

## Hayden BC Pastor Recognized for 30 Years of Ministry

On May 26, 2013, a "standing room only" crowd gathered at the facilities of the Hayden Baptist Church to give recognition to its pastor, Reverend Mark T. Sorrels who celebrated 30 years of Christian ministry. Ordained to ministry by the Burk's Branch Baptist Church of Shelby County, KY in May of 1983, Sorrels has served as pastor at Hayden Baptist Church since January of 2006. Visitors from Mark's home church in Shelbyville, KY as well as guests from the Burk's Branch Baptist Church and the Vernon Baptist Church were present and took leadership roles in the ceremony.

Music was provided by world renowned pianist, Betty Jean Chatham and soloist, Wayne Anderson, both of Shelbyville, KY. Roger Travis from the Burk's Branch Baptist Church shared his experience with Mark's ministry as well as others whose lives Mark has touched. On behalf of the Hayden Baptist Church, deacon Jerry Robertson presented Mark a



plaque of recognition and Troy and Virginia Haddix presented him with 30 red roses. Also present and participating in the service were Rev. Sorrels' mother and siblings.

Reverend Sorrels serves on the missionary partnership team for ABC missionaries to Nicaragua Carlos Bonilla and Mayra Giovanetti. He also is the advertising director for the Plain Dealer & Sun newspapers and provides color commentary for high school sports on local radio. In May of this year, he completed his studies in Green Lake, WI with the Center for Excellence in Congregational Leadership.

## Denver BC Calls New Pastor

After months of prayerful search, First Baptist of Denver is pleased to welcome Pastor Timothy S. Earle as their new pastor.

Pastor Earle fills the position opened when Pastor Steve Bate retired at the end of 2012 after more than 20 years of service at Denver Baptist.

Raised in Virginia, Pastor Earle most recently served at First Baptist Church in Mason City, Illinois. He received his Master of Divinity in May 2013 from Lincoln Christian University.

He and his wife, Michelle, have two beautiful young daughters, Alayna and Carley. They officially began their ministry at Denver Baptist on June 1, 2013.



Called into ministry at the age of 33, Pastor Earle has a work history rich in leadership and is looking forward to using his skills in leadership, hospitality, teaching and preaching to minister to, serve and grow Denver Baptist Church and the Denver community. An official installation service will be scheduled in the near future.

## Southeastern Baptist Camp Swimming Pool Groundbreaking



On Sunday, April 28, 2013, the camp trustee board along with supporters and friends of camp gathered for a celebration of groundbreaking for the swimming pool project. The swimming pool is the final phase of the Grace Hall project that began 15 years ago. Through God's provisions, the camp has the nice year round facilities of Grace Hall with a full size gym and retreat center containing 84 beds, kitchen and lounge area. The swimming pool will complete this project.

Due to timing, the pool will be ready for campers next summer. So, this summer may be the last chance for campers and leaders to enjoy the beach with the diving board and waterslides.

Thank you to all of the churches and donors that have helped make dreams come true at camp. Christian camp ministry is one of the most effective ways of reaching children and youth with the Good News of God's love.

For more camp information visit the website at [www.westportcamp.com](http://www.westportcamp.com).

## Senior Adult Day - April 13, 2013 The 3Ds of Discipleship



By: Ruth Proctor



Attendees join in exercise led by Robyn Thompson

Over two hundred of Indiana's finest senior adults joined with the people of Martinsville FBC for the April 11, 2013 Senior Adult Day gathering. With the theme, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," the warm welcome began with fresh donuts from Long's Bakery, fresh fruit and hot coffee!

The warm hospitality continued throughout the day with devotions from Pastor Larry Osmon, singing of favorite hymns and songs of praise, led by Linda Brown with Rachel Sutherland at the piano. The Martinsville FBC Women's Quartet preceded the morning message of inspiration by Rev. Soozie Whitten Ford, Executive Minister, ABC-IN/KY. She developed the gathering's theme with insights from Philippians and challenges from her own experiences in mission work trips.

Jordan Morris, manager at Indian Creek Baptist Camp, brought inspiring thoughts, urging all to become involved in the Indiana camping ministry. Senior adults are needed to assist at camp to give and receive blessings from the camping ministry. Ken McVey promoted the Church Leadership Institute (CLI) as a means of service and growth.

Each church group present responded to the roll call by ringing a bell from Georgia Simmons' collection and performing an appropriate activity. L. Dean Jones from Greenwood, IN, gave an inspiring concert performance on tuned cow bells! His talent,



Bob and Georgia Simmons

dexterity and enthusiasm made the presentation an event to remember.

To show the possibilities of gentle exercises with minimal equipment and no special environment, Robyn Thompson demonstrated good ways to stretch and loosen aging muscles and joints.



L. Dean Jones

Several fortunate attendees had their name drawn for beautiful and unusual door prizes. We were sent on our way with fond memories of gracious hospitality, good food and warm fellowship.

**Any and all are welcome to attend the next event hosted by First Baptist Church of New Castle, IN, on October 10, 2013.** Hold the date, begin inviting others to fill your cars and vans, and plan for a great day to support the host church as you celebrate with your ABC family of the ABC-IN/KY and ABC-GI regions.

I attended a "3D" event while worshipping away from home during a holiday weekend in May. No, it didn't involve a movie or funny glasses. It was graduate Sunday and I noticed a distinct pattern emerge as each of the ten graduates was introduced. It appeared that most of them had attended this particular church since they were children, so I am guessing there had been a fair amount of discipleship as they grew up in the church. Their college plans indicated good grades and the good grades surely indicated discipline in their studies. And when asked for a favorite memory of their church experience, I noticed that every answer was a "doing" thing such as a service project or a youth retreat.

It was obvious that the 3Ds of discipleship, discipline and doing had worked together in a positive way in the lives of these young people. The interaction of these 3Ds is necessary to the growth of our faith at any stage of our lives, just like those special glasses are essential to the 3D effect in the movies.

The Discipleship Partners Network is available to help the local church in matters of discipleship. You may contact Ruth Proctor at [proctor606@frontier.com](mailto:proctor606@frontier.com) or 260-493-1694 for more information.



### SAVE THE DATE!!

## ABY FALL RETREAT NOVEMBER 8-10

### Camp Camby, Camby, IN

New Name...New Venue...New Schedule...  
Mark Your Calendars Now!

**You won't want to miss this high energy, high fun, high inspirational time at Camp Camby this fall when the ABY from ABC-IN/KY and ABC-GI come together. It promises to be a great time for all middle and high school students.**

Keep an eye on the region website for registration information to come in the near future.



Indiana Baptist Convention  
AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES  
OF INDIANA AND KENTUCKY  
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Indianapolis, IN 46202-2493

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## COMING EVENTS

### JULY

- 13th - CLI Classes - both sites
- 19th - Region Board Meeting
- 20th - CLI (C205 only)
- 27th - CLI Classes - both sites

### AUGUST

- 10th - CLI Classes
- 24th - Awakening
- 24th - CLI (C105 & C102 only)

### SEPTEMBER

- 7th - CLI (C205 only)
- 8th - Freedom Association Mtg.
- 9th - CORMS
- 12th - Retired Ministers and Spouses Reunion
- 11th -15th - Quilt Retreat at Camp Tippy

- 14th - Alumni Reunion at Indian Creek
- 15th - Brownstown, Friendship & Judson Association Mtgs.
- 21st - Madison Association Mtg.
- 22nd - Union Association Mtg.