

American Baptist Churches of IN & KY

TOGETHER

on God's Abundant
Journey

equipping leaders
empowering churches
expanding mission

The Baptist Observer Magazine

HIGHLIGHTING THE MINISTRIES
OF AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES
IN INDIANA & KENTUCKY

www.abc-indiana.org

BECKY SEPTOSKI, EDITOR • VOL. 15 NO. 1 • JANUARY/FEBRUARY/MARCH 2015

Youth invited to "LISTEN" at ABY Fall Retreat

Students from several churches of ABC-IN/KY and ABC-KI gathered for the ABY Fall Retreat on November 7-9, 2014 at Camp Camby near Plainfield. Over 300 students and adults came together to LISTEN to God in their lives. During the weekend, a variety of ways that we can LISTEN were explored. Through times of worship we discovered: What Prevents Us From LISTENING?; How We LISTEN?; What

We Hear When We LISTEN; and Going to LISTEN. Each of the worship times were led by a different church youth group. The band AFTERGLOW from Kokomo, led in music and singing. After each worship experience, church groups reflected upon the experience in their "Back Home Time".

On Saturday afternoon, students had the opportunity to practice LISTENING to God in their lives through a variety of activities. The

activities ranged from LISTENING in music, prayer, poetry, justice, and friends, to walking the Labyrinth, play, nature, liturgical dance, choices and creativity.

On Saturday evening, through a time of worship which included Communion, all were invited to LISTEN and hear the message of God's love for them through Jesus Christ. Following the worship experience, everyone enjoyed a campfire complete with hot

chocolate and popcorn.

A special "thank you" to the three church youth groups who helped plan and implement the weekend: Anderson FBC, Indianapolis FBC and Liberty BC in Tipton. The planning team spent months in preparation for the weekend.

To view more photos of the weekend, go to Facebook: American Baptist Youth Retreat



Above: Students "LISTEN" through creativity



Above: AfterGlow leads in worship



Left: Students walk the Labyrinth during the retreat



Below: One group of students "LISTEN" through justice





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

IN/KY's strong commitment to global ministry was made very personal this year as Kyle and Debby Witmer were commissioned for missionary service in Thailand. Avoca BC hosted the grand celebration as representatives from International Ministries and both regions joined in the commissioning service. A few weeks later, well over 100 IN/KY folks traveled to Green Lake for the World Mission Conference. We continued the celebration of the 200th anniversary of missionaries Ann and Adonirum Judson sailing to Burma with our Chin, Karen and Kachin brothers and sisters.

The region staff continues to make use of a 2013 grant from the American Baptist Foundation, entitled "Equipping Leaders for Effective Ministry in the 21st Century." Among other things, the grant provided partial funding for four pastors to participate in the Nehemiah Leadership Network (www.nehemiahleadershipnetwork.org). Josh Carney (Sullivan FBC), Ian McMillan (Mt Pleasant, Orleans) and Steve Roper (Faith, Ft. Wayne) joined with facilitator Bernie Jackson (Terre Haute FBC) to form the first cohort, along with two pastors from ABC-GI. In 2015, a new GI-IN/KY cohort will form, including Tim Earle (Denver FBC) and David Carroll (Vienna FBC).

The Wabash Leadership Program (www.wabash.edu/pastoral_leadership) is funded by the Lily Endowment to enhance excellence in ministry among a group of gifted pastoral leaders over a two-year period. Jerry Ingalls (New Castle FBC) recently completed the intensive program. Shellie Jordan (Seymour FBC) and Mark Thompson (Brazil FBC) will begin this journey next month with the new cohort.

We continue to invest in the lives of children and youth through the ministry of camps and conferences. The annual Region Youth Retreat recently brought over 300 youth and their adult leaders together at Camp

Camby to explore the theme of "LISTEN!" Well over 100 people came together just before Thanksgiving to dedicate to God "Providence Place", Tippy's new dining hall. This year saw the construction of a new facility at Indian Creek, used during the camping season for food service. The funding for both buildings came from the gifts of generous donors and churches. During the summer months, Camp Tippy and Indian Creek provided the opportunity for young people to encounter the love of Christ in the beauty of creation. This happened through the leadership of camp managers Rebecca Scott and Jordan Morris and, literally, thousands of volunteer hours from church leaders of all ages.

The Ministerial Excellence Fund provided \$145,205 towards debt elimination for 10 clergy leaders this year. You can read elsewhere in this issue about MEF and the transition to the use of the Sustaining Fund. For the last several years, Marc Kirchoff has done a wonderful job leading this ministry, along with the MEF team. He will now be turning his focus entirely toward his work with the Foundation for Evangelism (related to the United Methodist Church).

The delivery of CLI courses was expanded from one location to five. In 2014 alone, 78 students were enrolled in one or more courses to deepen their discipleship journey, and to develop their gifts and skills for service to Christ, their church, and the world.

The Associate Regional Ministers for Pastoral Care provided encouragement and pastoral care to their assigned pastors. We are grateful for the "extra ARMS" of Darrell James, Dwight and Lydia Herrin, Diana Strunk, Joyce Gaunt, Seth Alexander, and Don Scott for their quiet ministry as part of the region staff. The Resource Ministers (Dennis Bickers, Phyllis Goodyear, & Jim Walter) and I have worked with churches and pastors to

provide consultation and training in areas such as congregational health, discipleship, generosity and community mission engagement; in addition to providing opportunities for Healthy Boundaries, Missional Church Learning Experience (MCLE), Awakening and listening conferences.

The region board provides oversight to region business and has been giving particular attention to developing ministries in the areas of our three priorities of equipping leaders, empowering churches and expanding mission. Former region president, Mark Thompson, and gifted board members provided thoughtful and prayerful leadership to all areas of our mutual ministry together. With the region biennial in September, President Shawn Zambrows (West Lafayette) was elected and, along with new and continuing board members, will lead the region over the next two years.

I love to sing Christmas carols during this season and I especially enjoy pondering the beautiful theological truths embedded in many of them.

Christ, by highest heaven adored;

*Christ the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring of the Virgin's womb;
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail the incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with men to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel.*

*Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King."*

It is my joy and privilege to serve with you in the amazing ministries to which God is calling us as we are Together on God's Abundant Journey. May the carols of the season supplement our reading of scripture as we celebrate God's greatest gift to us in the infant Jesus.

2014 in Review

My annual ritual of reviewing the previous year's events begins between Thanksgiving and Christmas as I prepare to write the letter to accompany our Christmas cards. I look through photos, a much easier task now that most of them are on my phone. I review my calendar, which contains notes and reminders about everything from mundane appointments to guests in our home, trips and other adventures, and wonderful times spent with friends and families in both celebration and informal gatherings. Although I usually breathe a sigh of relief when it's completed, it is a ritual that continues to provide great joy during this special season. A similar summary of the year for my IN/KY family follows.

In September, Plainfield FBC hosted a wonderful celebration of church and regional ministry as the region gathered for its 2014 regional event and celebrated the theme, "Together on God's Abundant Journey". The offering received at that event provided the foundation for "Expanding Mission Church Grants" which will be awarded to several churches in January.

Ministerial Excellence Fund

As 2014 comes to an end, some very significant milestones in the Ministerial Excellence Fund (MEF) ministry have been met!

Financial needs identified through MEF over the past six years reached a level of more than \$3.3 million this year. Since the inception of MEF in 2009, the Team has approved distribution of more than \$1 million in grant money. This money, along with matching funds, have been distributed through 130 grants.

By the end of the year, funds received from Lilly Endowment to inaugurate this ministry serving ABC-IN/KY and ABC-GI will be exhausted. The Regions have met all the requirements and will submit a final report and accounting to Lilly Endowment in January.

But, as the angel said to the shepherds long ago, "Fear not, for I bring you good news of great joy!"

Through the generosity of so many, and the wise investment of our financial leaders, we have an MEF Sustaining Fund totaling some \$450,000, with promised estate gifts that will, in the future, add another (estimated) \$175,000. In addition, churches and individuals have pledged ongoing support in various amounts, at varying levels and over a variety of time periods. That means the MEF ministry will be around for many years to come. That truly is good news!

So, here's what's in store...

The MEF Team has determined that the Sustaining Fund will continue to be administered in the same fashion as the original Lilly Endowment grant money. The Sustaining Fund will not be an endowment. Rather, the Team will be judicious in grant approval and distribution. At the same time, the Team has not set a limit to the amount of any given grant or the amount distributed over the course of any given year.

Deadlines for grant applications will be March 1, July 1 and November 1. Requests to meet urgent needs for funding will continue to be considered between deadlines.

The MEF Team will also maintain its strong desire that at least some matching funds be provided by local churches of applicants. The initial grant period has shown that, when local churches participated in the process, ministry is strengthened.

The Team is determined to continue providing financial coaching for Professional Church Leaders (PCLs) who request it. The Professional Advisors Network composed of attorneys, insurance brokers, investment brokers, financial planners, and Dave Ramsey financial counselors will also be maintained. Clergy are encouraged to contact the Region Office to request assistance and referrals as needed.

While much of the MEF ministry will remain the same, some changes will occur. In order to be good stewards of the funds which God has provided, requests for student loan debt relief will no longer be considered. Making grants to eliminate student loan debt would require large disbursements to a few recipients. The goal of the MEF ministry is to impact as many clergy as possible for as many years as possible.

One final transition - on January 1 of 2015, Marc Kirchoff will step away from the position of Director. MEF Team members will assume roles in the areas of communication, promotion, meeting preparation, application processing and, of course, grant distribution. Please contact your Region Office with any request for assistance.

If you have been touched in any way by this ministry, please help continue this great grace gift from God with your gift to the MEF Sustaining Fund!

ABC-IN/KY - Attn: MEF Sustaining Fund
1350 N Delaware St
Indianapolis, IN 46202

FACE TO FACE

February 27-28, 2015

An opportunity for initial contact between church search committees and clergy available for relocation, seminary seniors or graduates in the ordination process.

Questions?

Contact your region resource minister

Early savings deadline: January 10

Clergy Applications due before: January 23

Committee Registrations due before: January 30

For complete information, go to:

<http://abc-indiana.org/ministerial-leaders-seeking-placement/face-to-face/>

2015 Observer Article Submission Deadlines

Beginning in 2015, The Baptist Observer will be produced on a quarterly basis rather than bi-monthly, as in the past. Below you will find a schedule of article submission deadlines. When submitting articles, please remember that we are now featuring articles under the areas of Churches, Leadership, and Missions. Please try to identify which area your article would fit best and label it as such when sending it in for publication.

April/May/June - Friday, March 6

July/Aug/Sept - Friday, June 5

Oct/Nov/Dec - Friday, Sept 11

Jan/Feb/March '16 - Friday, Dec 4, '15

News from Amo FBC

It is a Family Thing!

There are many benefits to being a part of a larger family. The experience of love, support and a cheering squad that helps one to accomplish their goals and encourages one to be the best they can be for God,



family, and community. Amo FBC pastor, Shelly Zook, receives support from fellow churches in Kokomo, Greencastle, Fillmore, Martinsville and Plainfield, just to mention a few. This support means being members of a larger family with a BIG vision that supports mission, ministry, dreams, compassion ministries and so much more. What happened on November 15, 2014 at Plainfield FBC is a prime example of the results of that larger connection when Plainfield FBC provided the facility for Amo FBC's 5th Annual Craft Fair and Holiday Bazaar. The primary focus of the event is to raise funds for those in need. A local food pantry is supported with the funds, and they are used to feed the hungry in the Amo area. Amo FBC has dreams of reopening their own local food pantry. The Craft show is directed by CLI student, Kelli Tipton, who carries on the

dream and vision of her mother. It is supported by the Amo ABW group, "The Threaders" who sew many projects and crafts to raise funds for those in need in their community. The local community building underwent renovations in the last two years and was unable to host the Craft Fair. Plainfield FBC came to the rescue of the Amo folks and offered their facility to house this important ministry. Amo FBC is pleased to announce they had yet another record year. Many thanks to Plainfield FBC for believing in this ministry and supporting it. It means the world to Amo FBC to receive such encouragement and support from a larger church who values the ministry of the region's rural Churches. So, this is why it is so important to be part of a larger connection like the American Baptist family. Thank you First Baptist Plainfield!!

Veterans Recognition



On Sunday, November 9, 2014, FBC Amo recognized Veterans that were in attendance. Gift bags were presented to visitors and a Quilt of Valor was presented to the church members. Recipients of the quilts

were: Gene Copeland, Bill Gray, Gene Cordray, John Porter, Jim Campton, Robert Zook and Fred Collier. The quilts were made under the care and love of the Slap Happy Baptist Threaders, the church's sewing group, and under the care and expertise of Lynn Smedley and Jo Cordray. Amo FBC also dedicated its new flag pole and memory stone in memory of Kenny Rhea, long-time member and World War II Veteran, who departed his earthly life on March 27, 2014.

CONGREGATION

Orleans FBC KIDSFEAST Youth Share with Local Food Pantry



A few KIDSFEAST youth from Orleans FBC took a moment to pose for a picture, and present a check along with 255 food items to the local food pantry representative, Wayne Barnett. The children had been collecting food for the past

month. They received a play coin for every food item they brought and will be able to spend them at the Christmas party. A general store will be set up with various fun items, health care items, clothing and food.

Hills BC Celebrates 175th!



Hills BC, located in Kirclin, IN celebrated 175 years of ministry on October 26, 2014. The celebration began with the reading of the very first entry in the clerk's book dated October 24, 1839. Former pastors were recognized and shared memories. Pastors attending were Gilbert Beers (1948-1950), John Amick (1993-1998), Dwight Herin (1999-2010), and Robert Loudon (2011-Present).

Also recognized, were those in attendance who are descendants of

the founders and early members, members for 50 years or longer, and Mary Butcher, who has been a member of Hills for 76 years - longer than any other living member.

Pastor Robert Loudon shared briefly regarding Hills BC as it is today. Submitted thoughts were shared in regards to what Hills BC will be like in 2039. The afternoon concluded with a concert from *Rejoice*, a praise band from First Baptist, Lebanon, IN.

GATIONS

Memorial BC Serves the Community with Gleaners Food Bank



On a rainy Tuesday morning in late October, Memorial BC, located in Columbus, hosted the Gleaners Food Bank truck in the parking lot of the church.

Volunteers from the church aided

the Gleaners staff in food (and umbrella) distribution. Representatives from over 180 households in the Columbus area were served at the event.

Shelbyville FBC is Empowering Grace



Grace House - Shelbyville, IN

Missional Church Learning Experience (MCLE) provides the tools needed to give direction to kingdom motivation. As a result of MCLE, three community needs were discovered: Homelessness, Addiction, and Unsupervised Minors. After a time of discernment, Shelbyville FBC began to explore the problems of addiction and recovery.

When the time came to find community partners in this

endeavor, those involved were overwhelmed with support and encouragement. The church was made aware of a new recovery-focused halfway house by the name of: Grace House. The MCLE team sat down with the Grace House leadership and discussed the needs they were facing. The aged and inadequate electrical wiring was high on the list. Shelbyville FBC, along with the help of many community partners, was able to

empower Grace House by rewiring the sleeping quarters for the residents.

The first MCLE team at Shelbyville FBC has led to other MCLE teams. Only one year after starting MCLE, there are more than 20 church attendees engaged in the MCLE process and exploring how they can make a real difference in their community.

Columbus FBC - Celebrations and Service

Yearlong Celebration Begins



50+ year members at Columbus FBC

On October 12, 2014, Columbus FBC began a yearlong celebration of fifty years of ministry in their present location. During the morning service, Regional Executive Minister, Soozie Whitten Ford, was in attendance to present Bill Griffith with a certificate commemorating fifty years of ordained ministry. Bill presented the message titled, "Did You Myth Your Call?" Bill and his wife, Lois, were honored at a reception following the worship service.

During the afternoon, a service was held to commemorate fifty years in the current building.

Speakers included Tom Vickers, who served on the building committee fifty years ago, Rev. Dick Crowley, who served as associate pastor in the early 1970's, and former pastor Jon Carlstrom, who served as Senior Pastor prior to Rev. Dr. Dan Cash, the present Senior Pastor. Also in attendance, were those who have been members for fifty years or more. The longest membership is held by Rosalind Hoff, who has been a member for 83 years. A reception was held at the conclusion of the service.

Abigail Circle Sponsors Shoe Box Ministry



Members of Abigail Circle prepare shoe boxes for distribution

The Abigail Circle of Columbus FBC has sponsored the shoe box ministry again this year. Under the faithful leadership of Ro Whittington and Charlotte Oestreich, and with

the support of the congregation, the Abigail Circle provided 100 boxes this year, making the total greater by 36 boxes than last year.

MISSIONS

Witmers in Thailand



Many of us throughout our Region have a warm and personal relationship with Kyle and Debby Witmer. They and their children have been in Thailand for about 5 months. Language school is going well and they have quickly settled into life in Chiang Mai.

The Witmers are in Thailand, because God has brought a number of factors together. First, there is God's ongoing call on the Witmer's lives to be ministering in Thailand along with their recognition and acceptance of that call. Then, there is our affirmation of their call, our faithful prayer support, and our generous and consistent financial support. On behalf of the Witmers and their Mission Partnership Team, thank you so much for being a vital part of this new ministry in

Thailand.

Having said that, as we near the end of 2014 and look forward to all that God has for us in 2015, let me ask you to do two very important things. First, please continue to be in regular prayer for the Witmer

family. Pray that God will meet their individual needs of Kyle, Debby, Hannah, Brennan, Julia and Emma. Nothing is more important to them than knowing their friends in our churches are holding them in prayer.

Second, please continue to be both regular and generous in your financial support of the Witmers. Since September, their level of financial support has fallen somewhat. While this was not totally unexpected, it does remind all of us of the need to continue the work of affirmation and support to which God has called us.

Again, thank you for all you do to enable the Witmers to be God's servants in Chiang Mai, Thailand. You are, indeed, a blessing!

Mission Opportunity for Youth in Ft. Wayne

During the week of July 18-25, 2015 ABC-IN/KY youth have an opportunity to experience mission close to home through an organization titled Mission Serve. Mission Serve seeks to improve the living conditions of persons in the community they are working with.

Faith BC, in Ft. Wayne, will be hosting a week of Mission Serve this summer. You can find more information by going to: <http://mission-serve.com/mission-serve/2015-projects/schedule>. You can also contact Tony Gualtieri at: pastortonyfbc@gmail.com.

ABCUSA News and Notes



Journey Team of ABCUSA Offers Grant Opportunity

In October of 2014, the Journey Team of American Baptist Churches USA approved the initiation of a Ministry Story Opportunity. Grant will be awarded at the Biennial Mission Summit in June. This began in December of 2014 and will extend initially to March 1, 2015. Stories may be shared by video or written (with photos) formats. A selection process that leads to the top five videos and the top two written stories will culminate in the granting of monies to those ministries that are selected. Videos and stories may be submitted by local churches, regions, or entities within ABCUSA.

Grants totaling \$5,000 will be awarded to the top videos and

stories, and these will be celebrated at the Biennial Mission Summit. A Transformed by the Spirit Ministry Story Opportunity booth will be set up as part of the event and other forms of recognition and celebration of the video and written stories will be shared at this booth and within conference communications. To find out more, go to:

<http://www.abc-usa.org/2014/12/08/abcusa-invites-grant-entries-for-ministry-story-opportunity/>

Deadline Approaching for Church Sponsorship - ABCUSA Biennial Mission Summit

The Mission Summit is less than seven months away! For the Biennial Mission Summit, June 26-28, 2015, churches are invited to register as sponsors. If a church registers as a sponsor for the Mission Summit, church members get a discount*. Sponsoring churches and regions will help to support the Mission Summit and make it a success. More information, including pricing and savings, can be found at: <http://www.abc-usa.org/2014/11/25/mission-summit-2015-register-as-a-sponsoring-church-before-its-too-late/>. Don't miss the deadline for Church Sponsorship - February 6, 2015!

*If a church registers as a sponsoring church, members of the church can individually register at a discounted rate of \$40 per person. If your church is not a sponsor, church members will pay an individual registration fee of \$165.

Direct Link to more information to include, if preferred: <http://www.abc-usa.org/2014/11/25/mission-summit-2015-register-as-a-sponsoring-church-before-its-too-late/>

[usa.org/2014/11/25/mission-summit-2015-register-as-a-sponsoring-church-before-its-too-late/](http://www.abc-usa.org/2014/11/25/mission-summit-2015-register-as-a-sponsoring-church-before-its-too-late/)

As a reminder for regional offices, Region Sponsorship rates are as follows:

1. Region offices with less than 100 staff - \$220. Region Sponsorship allows region staff members to attend the Mission Summit at the lower rate of \$40.
2. Region Boosters, regions that become major sponsors of the Mission Summit through a gift of \$1,000, will be automatically registered as sponsors. We are grateful to regions who contribute in this way.

Visit:

www.americanbaptists2015.com<<http://www.americanbaptists2015.com/>> and select "Register" to register your church or region as a sponsor today<<http://www.americanbaptists2015.com/>>.



2015 Camp Schedules

Listed below are the schedules for summer camp at Tippy and Indian Creek. For complete details and info regarding camp fees go to:
Camp Tippy: www.camp Tipp y.org
Indian Creek:
www.campindiancreek.com

CAMP TIPPY

DATE	SESSION	GRADE
June 7-12	Missions (Daily or Weekly)	All Ages
June 14-18	Explorer	1st-2nd
June 14-20	Leadership	7th-11th
June 19-20	First Timers	K-1st
June 21-27	Trailblazers	5th-6th
June 28-July 3	Day Camp	K-6th
June 28-July 4	JAM	7th-12th
July 5-11	Sr. High	9th-12th
July 12-18	Challenge	7th-8th
July 19-25	Discovery	3rd-4th
August 14-15	Father & Son	All Ages

INDIAN CREEK

DATE	SESSION	GRADE
June 1-5	Special Persons	16yr and up
June 7-11	Boys Camp	4th-6th boys
June 14-16	Explorer	1st-2nd
June 17-20	Discovery	3rd-4th
June 21-25	Girls Camp	4th-6th girls
June 28-July 4	Senior High	11th-'15 grads
July 5-11	Focus	7th-9th
July 11-12	First Timers	K-1st
July 12-18	Teen	9th-10th
July 29-25	Challenge	6th-8th

UPCOMING RETREATS AT CAMP

Camp Tippy

Jr & Sr High Winter Adventure
December 26-28, 2014
Cost: \$80.00

Mother-Daughter (5th-8th grade)
March 13-14, 2015
\$50.00

Mom's Getaway
April 2015
\$80.00

Indian Creek

Going All In - Sr. High
January 2-4, 2015

Why Are You Here - Women's Retreat
February 20-22, 2015

See Camp websites for complete details.



1st Ever AB Girls Teen Retreat January 9-10, 2015

For complete details & registration information contact:
Tracy Karnes, AB Girls Indiana Leader
812-498-4448 - Cell
812-793-3033 - Home



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AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES
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Indianapolis, IN 46202-2493

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COMING EVENTS

JANUARY

- 6 - Region Staff Mtg.
- 10 - CLI at Peru
- 17 - CLI at New Albany & Vevay
- 24 - CLI at Franklin & Peru
- 31 - MCLE - Snow Date: February 7
- 31 - CLI at New Albany & Vevay

FEBRUARY

- 10 - Region Staff Mtg.
- 14 - CLI at Franklin, New Albany & Vevay
- 21 - CLI at Peru
- 27-28 - Face to Face
- 28 - CLI at New Albany & Vevay

MARCH

- 7 - CLI at Franklin & Peru
- 12 - MEF
- 14 - Healthy Boundaries
- 14 - CLI (snow date at New Albany & Vevay)
- 17 - Region Staff Mtg.
- 20-21 - ABW Spring Officer's Retreat
- 28 - CLI - (snow date at Franklin & Peru)