

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

WENDY SHULER, EDITOR - VOL. 23 NO. 3 - JUL/AUG/SEP 2023

ABC-IN/KY TO OFFER NEW CERTIFICATE IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

The American Baptist Churches of Indiana and Kentucky Region is pleased to announce a new opportunity in theological education for pastors and lay leaders. In partnership with several other ABC Regions, ABC-IN/KY will be collaborating with Kairos University/Sioux Falls Seminary to make ATS accredited theological training available to subscribers at an economical rate! For a \$25 per month subscription, students will be able to pursue a Certificate in Theology by participating in online classes through Kairos University.

This opportunity, known as "M28" (to reflect Matthew 28/Great Commission), is a successor program to our Region's Church Leadership Institute (CLI), which itself replaced a program formerly known as Certified Lay Ministry. As congregations and leaders face new challenges and opportunities today, it is believed that this new initiative will offer current, convenient and collaborative training for those who participate.

The program is ideal for pastors serving in bi- or co-vocational ministry, who may not have had opportunity to pursue traditional seminary training at the M.Div. level. By completing this certification, those pastors will be positioned to pursue a level of ordination recognized regionally, meaning they will become better trained and credentialed for local ministry. In addition, lay leaders who choose to participate will benefit from seminary level training at an affordable cost and be able to enhance their own congregational service.

Kairos University utilizes a competency-based model of theological education. This means a student's prior competencies in education, leadership and ministry are considered during his or her initial assessment and the formation of a learning pathway. Each student's path will be crafted as the student, academic dean, and student mentor confer around the competencies needed for successful and faithful ministry.

Students will take 9 required courses and 3 elective courses to complete their certification. Ministry competencies will be assessed by a student mentor, who is someone with an M.Div. or equivalent level of education, selected by the student and approved by the Region. It is expected that a lay leader's pastor will serve as his or her mentor.

Rev. Dr. Dan Cash has been appointed as the Academic Dean for this program by Rev. Mark Thompson, Executive Minister. In addition to working with students in their progression through certification, Dan will coordinate monthly Zoom calls to help build a sense of community among each cohort of students.

Other ABC Regions plan to participate in this endeavor, but we will be acting as the pilot program. Watch for more information on M28 in future news releases and social media posts, as well as through the ABC-IN/KY website.

Anyone interested to learn more may choose to attend an informational Zoom call about this new educational opportunity. Join Mark Thompson and Dan Cash on either Monday, July 24 or Thursday, July 27, at 7 p.m. (EST). To receive the Zoom connection for either meeting, email Dan, dancash@abc-indiana.org, or watch for further announcements in *Observations* (e-news).



Rev. Mark Thompson
Executive Minister

markthompson@abc-indiana.org

CLOSING STRATEGIES DIFFICULT BUT IMPORTANT

When I pray about what to share with you in each publication, I always want to present to you something positive and inspirational, but, as you know, sometimes the message from the Lord is honest and direct without a positive spin. Recently, I have had several conversations with other Executive Ministers about church closures in their Regions. I have heard many stories about churches that did not address this topic, and the results were not what God would have wanted. One Executive Minister shared that his Region was contacted by a community because some children had been injured in an abandoned church building and wanted that Region to do something about it. Other stories have been told of various ways churches have broken federal and state laws in their closing.

As American Baptists, the Region has no authority over a local congregation or ownership of the local church building. Being a good steward of the gifts given by God includes the recognition that they are given for a season. A time comes in ministry when we must recognize that God is doing something new and that the old way is not as effective as the new thing that God is doing. I do not say this without a solid example from Scripture. The Temple of the Old Testament was more than just a big deal. It represented God's address. It was literally where God met His people. No other structure on earth compared with this dwelling that was made of stone, wood, precious metals and jewels. As we read in the New Testament, Jesus is now where God meets His people, and we no longer have to travel to meet Emmanuel at a particular building or address. He comes to us! The structure is sometimes changed, even gone all together at times, and yet the ministry continues in ways unimaginable before!

Over the past few years, I have had a difficult conversation with a few churches that addressed this sensitive topic. Please know that, just as a legal will does not mean you plan to die suddenly, the development of a church closure strategy does not mean the church is closing its doors any time soon. A church closing strategy is a recognition that more members participating in all of the decisions that need to be made will remove the burden from being left to just a handful of members to figure out should the time come when that church does have to close. The heart of the church is honored in that way, and the legacy of the church may continue far into the future.

Please know that your Region Staff are prepared to assist you even though we find it hard to initiate conversation on such a difficult topic. If you would like to discuss this further, please reach out to me or your Region Minister. We do not have all of the answers, and legal counsel will be required at some point, but we can help you with several considerations and walk beside you through some important decisions. Even in difficult times, we walk TOGETHER!

In Christ,

Rev. Mark Thompson
Executive Minister



PLEASE GIVE GENEROUSLY TO THE REGION OFFERING!

July/August is the usual time to promote the Region Offering. All other offerings that American Baptist churches are encouraged to support are 'pass-through' offerings. In other words, the monies received (all or in part) pass through the Region but flow out to other ABC partners or related organizations in support of their needs or ministries. In contrast, one hundred percent (100%) of this offering stays in our Region to support our local congregations as we seek pastors, evaluate our ministries, launch new ministries, and train and support our pastors and lay leaders. This is ministry closest to us; ministry that is happening *Right Now, Right Here!*

Region Offering promotional materials will be distributed in *Observations* (our ABC-IN/KY Region e-news) and by US Mail to our churches in early July. Like all promoted offerings, the season you receive these materials is limited to a certain time of year; however, the offering may be collected by your church at any time, even throughout the year.

Be in prayer as your church engages in this promotion during July and August. By giving to the Region Offering, you are supporting ministry that equips leaders, empowers churches, and expands mission *Right Now, Right Here!*

OBSERVER SUBMISSIONS - FINAL DEADLINE FOR 2023

FALL ISSUE (October, November, December 2023) - Friday, September 8

Send submissions to Wendy at the below email address!

If you would like more information about churches or events described in this issue, contact Wendy Shuler at wendyshuler@abc-indiana.org or (317) 635-3552 x222.

EMPOWERING CHURCHES

REV. KRISTI JONES CALLED TO SERVE AS REGION MINISTER



REGION MINISTERIAL STAFF

Rev. Mark Thompson
Executive Minister
markthompson@abc-indiana.org

Region Ministers

Rev. Steve Allen
Southeast
steveallen@abc-indiana.org

Rev. Dr. Bruce Cochran
North
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Rev. Kristi Jones
Southwest
kristijones@abc-indiana.org

Rev. Jaime Flores
Latino Ministries Strategist
jaimeflores@abc-indiana.org

The ABC-IN/KY Region has called Rev. Kristi Jones to the role of Region Minister. Her history in our Region and passion to connect others will be an asset to the Region's pastors and churches. Kristi will concentrate on supporting churches in the newly defined Southwest Area of the Region. Another part of her portfolio will be helping to strengthen youth ministry throughout ABC-IN/KY. Kristi grew up in the Region, having been raised as part of Hopewell BC (Holton, IN), where she was an active participant in the children's and youth programs. She also spent 17 years as a camper at Southeastern Baptist Youth Camp (Greensburg, IN) and served there as a staff member or counselor on multiple occasions.

One Search Committee participant shared, "I believe Kristi will bring a fresh perspective to the Region, and she will not only do a great job of listening to and caring for the churches of our Region in the more traditional role of a Region Minister, but she will also create a collaborative approach to a Region-wide emphasis on raising up the next generation for Christ that has the potential of becoming a synergistic movement for youth revival within ABC-IN/KY. Though young, she has valuable ministry experience and life perspectives, and she is a proven leader with a freshness that our Region needs for such a time as this. I am praying for her, her [most recent] church, her family, and our Region."

Kristi has a Bachelor Degree in both Youth Ministry and Christian Education from Indiana Wesleyan University and a Master of Divinity from Campbell University Divinity School (Buies Creek, NC). Kristi has been serving churches in various leadership roles for 17 years, most recently serving as pastor at Memorial Baptist Church (Columbus, IN) for nearly 4 ½ years. She has served on the Region Board for over three years. Kristi also had the opportunity to speak on a panel at the Region Biennial hosted by First Baptist Church of Terre Haute in October 2022.

Kristi has been married to her husband Chris for almost five years, and they have an adorable two-year-old daughter Rylee. The Region Staff are pleased to have Kristi as part of the team as of June, and we encourage you to warmly welcome Kristi as you have opportunity to join in ministry and consultation with her! --To reach Kristi or any other Region Minister, our areas of concentration and email addresses are at left.

RESOURCE SMALL CHURCH CONFERENCE



RESOURCE
LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

"The opportunity to meet, for the first time, and network with some small church colleagues from South Central Indiana was a real plus." -Mark Kern, Pastor, Pleasant View BC (Indianapolis, IN)

"I highly recommend this event for any bi-vocational pastors in our Region. Many thanks to the Region for paying for our registrations! I appreciate your investment in me." -Aaron Westfall, Pastor, Liberty Center BC (Liberty Center, IN)

"As one who is brand new to American Baptist circles, the Resource Conference left me impressed, encouraged, and excited about the future!" -Steve Gross, Pastor, Sardinia BC (Westport, IN)

These are some of the comments from pastors who attended the third ResourceLC small church conference in Savoy, IL. The two-day event, co-sponsored by ABC-IN/KY, the Great Rivers Region, and Judson College focused on issues and opportunities related to the small church context. Three prominent keynote speakers were featured: Sam Acho (former NFL player and ESPN analyst), Author Ellen Gray (*I Said This, You Heard That*), and Author/Pastor Karl Vaters, who is known as the most prominent authority on small church ministry. A number of workshops were provided as well.

After the opportunity to fellowship and share with pastors and leaders of other small churches, attendees expressed appreciation for the wisdom and encouragement gleaned from the event. For a more detailed view of what went on, visit the website, www.resourcelc.org.

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EMPOWERING CHURCHES

AMO FBC TAKES TIME FOR VISION CASTING

CONTRIBUTORS SOUGHT FOR BOOK PROJECT

Rev. Neil Sowards of Fort Wayne FBC is compiling a book of Christians writing on the subject, "When God Was Most Real to Me."

Each writing is about one page long and describes one time in the writer's life.

If you would like to share your experience with the next generation, please contact Rev. Neil Sowards at: neildianasowards@gmail.com.

June 3, 2023, is surely a day that will be recorded in the history of the ministry of the Amo First Baptist Church! Rev. Mark Thompson, Executive Minister, and Rev. Steve Allen, Region Minister, came alongside the Amo FBC congregation as we sought to "catch" God's vision for our spiritual family over the next 3-5 years. In a matter of a few hours (9 am to 2 pm), we learned so much about ourselves and about what God is speaking into our collective hearts.

After a series of church leadership meetings, and praying and fasting, then the two Region staff members came alongside us and very purposefully led us through Biblical teaching, creative exercises and conversations to discern our top three core values as we "cast our fishing nets into the water" for Jesus.

The church had done this sort of work about eight years ago, but that work was important to revisit while reflecting on trends of congregational demographics in connection to future population growth hoped for in our various areas of ministry. It was time to reassess, "What does God require of us now?"

We are grateful, thankful and blessed for the ABC-IN/KY Region Staff investment in the ministry in Amo. The gifts, skills and talents of these current Region Staff--still rather new in their respective roles but not new to ABC-IN/KY--are to be counted as a great asset to those local churches and pastors who call upon their willingness to assist. They, like we, desire to see our Region's local churches not only survive but THRIVE!

We have great expectation that God will "fill our nets to nearly capsize our boat." And we are thankful for one another and pray for open and sincere hearts as we discern who we are being called to become "TOGETHER on this Abundant Journey" with God.

Watch for exciting things to come from Amo FBC as we continue our journey together, remaining dedicated in unity, vision, and our love of God.

Article submitted by: Rev. Shelly A. Zook, Lead Pastor, Amo FBC (Amo, IN)

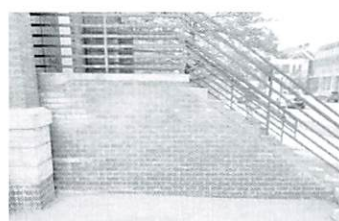


(Left) Work on Shelbyville FBC building facade. (Below) front steps before and after.

SHELBYVILLE FBC 175 YEARS STRONG

Shelbyville FBC (Shelbyville, IN) started 175 years ago with 13 people and the desire to plant a church. God has shown the congregation in many ways that FBC is to survive the many trials of life, including two fires and a pandemic. Recently the church was awarded a grant from Mainstreet Shelbyville, Inc., to restore the outside of the church building, and the work has begun. First Baptist was 175 years old on March 25, 2023, which was celebrated on June 11. The celebration was truly a special day for the church!

Members are so thankful to all who contributed to the success of the event and made it a day to remember. They celebrated their history, praised God for His grace and mercy, and, yes, also report that they "all ate too much." It was a joyous occasion that was filled with fellowship and celebration, all for the glory of God!



For more timely details about Region events, subscribe for FREE to **Observations**, our ABC-IN/KY semi-monthly e-newsletter, by emailing wendyshuler@abc-indiana.org your email address, the name of your church, and please specify whether you are an ABC pastor or layperson.

EXPANDING MISSION

FUSE YOUTH EVENT - ALL ARE INVITED TO AUG. 27 NEXT EVENT!

On April 16th, nine of the Flat Rock, Decatur County, Sand Creek & Coffee Creek Association churches gathered their youth together at Southeastern Baptist Youth Camp for the first ever FUSE gathering!

Worship, Scripture, small groups, food, games and fun were all a part of the gathering. This was an effort to bring students together in the name of Jesus, to help them know they are loved, and for them to learn more about the God we serve. Our churches also worked together for the greater good of the students. The next event is scheduled for Sunday, August 27, from 3-6 pm, with swimming, games and worship planned. Any churches (in these associations or others) with youth, grades 6-12, are welcome to attend!



Please email kristijones@abc-indiana.org for more information.

(At right) FUSE session and games.



(At left) Cookware presentation to residents of Bremen, KY; Mary Sue Green painting a home.

KY RELIEF EFFORTS CONTINUE

A total of 10 people from Indiana went to the small town of Bremen in Western KY for a mission trip in late March. They were part of the ongoing support to rebuild there after the December 2021 tornadoes. The group painted by brush the front porch area of a house being rebuilt while the owner spray painted the other walls. They also worked in the local warehouse sorting clothes.

Bremen's Volunteer Coordinator and Mayor Allen Miller reported that, of the 118 homes destroyed, 50-60% of the homes have been rebuilt; however, it continues to be a slow process. Several houses under construction are currently awaiting inspections before the next stages of the building process can occur. One home's supplies were delayed in Tennessee. Such delays are numerous and frequent. There are even a few people who have not yet decided what they will do about replacing their homes.

Because of donations generously provided, we were able to purchase six sets of cookware, two queen mattresses, one twin mattress and platform frames for the mattresses for storm survivors and three meals for our volunteers.

One resident did eventually get to move into his new house in January 2023 (he had a painter still painting the crown molding and the baseboards when the group was there). This man thanked all of us for our ongoing support, who had been before and continue to visit Bremen. He said that many people of Bremen were crushed, depressed and felt hopeless after the tornadoes, but the many volunteers who came--and continue to come--have helped them in so many ways! Yes, the labor was greatly appreciated but so were the hugs and emotional support while walking with them through their arduous journey. He said they no longer felt alone nor so overwhelmed. When this man was first met in June of 2022, he was depressed and overwhelmed. On this trip, he was smiling, laughing, joking, very thankful and full of praise! It has been such a joy to watch his transformation, according to Patty Short, KY Relief Coordinator.

Thank you to everyone who has given money, time and energy to this mission work. You have really made a huge difference! (Additional KY Relief information is shared on page 6)

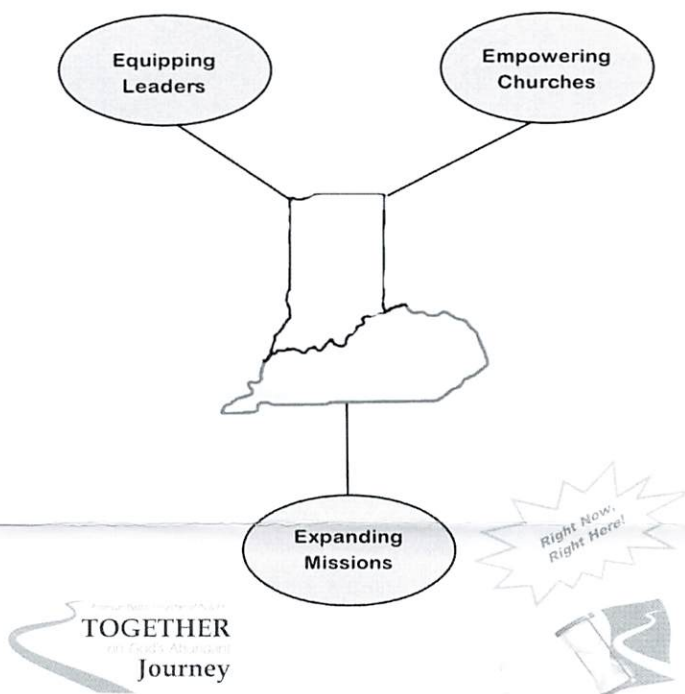
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EXPANDING MISSION (CONTINUED)

Don't forget - It's REGION OFFERING time!
- Promotion period is JULY & AUGUST each year -

(See article on P. 2)

2023 Region Offering



ABWM OF IN/KY GAVE GENEROUSLY TO CAM IN 2022

Coordinated Assistance Ministries (CAM-Kokomo, IN) became an ABC-IN/KY Region supported mission in July 2008. At that time, Ruth Lawson, CAM Executive Director and retired Co-pastor of Liberty BC-Kokomo, afforded our churches the opportunity to learn about and become directly involved with CAM.

American Baptist Women's Ministries (ABWM) has many ongoing projects. One is their State Project where they select a mission to collect monies for throughout a specific year. In 2021, Valorie Cole, then President of ABWM of IN/KY, proposed CAM as the State Project, which was chosen for 2022. Our ladies were thrilled to take on a new mission to learn about and support that year!

Dennine Smith, current Executive Director for CAM, came to the 2022 ABWM of IN/KY Summer Conference and spoke. She did a wonderful job and attended the October Region Biennial as well. The visibility helped a lot. Last year, ABWM of IN/KY collected \$13,416.11 for CAM!

If other ABC churches/organizations are interested in assisting CAM, send in your monies using the Mission Support Form or contact CAM directly through their website, www.camhope.org.

THE RECAP OF THE MOST RECENT TRIP TO KY

A group of 25 Hoosiers went to Eastern KY from June 21-24 to help survivors of the July 2022 floods. They worked in the community of Lost Creek. There they met a couple in their 40s who have been depressed since the floods. The man has severe scoliosis. He and his wife work the farm and raise/preserve most of their own food. They lost their garden last year. The soil is contaminated so they cannot plant a garden this year either. Other volunteers had built them a new stilt house so that it shouldn't wash away in future floods. Our volunteers got to hear the story of how their home was badly damaged by the flash floods, then just hours later they watched it get washed away when additional floods hit. The Indiana group was able to help them feel heard, loved and worthy! They saw big smiles on the homeowners' faces just before they left to return to Indiana because those survivors were realizing they will be able to move into their new house very soon!



"We made a difference in their lives, but each person who participated in this trip also was changed. Mission accomplished!" shared Patty Short.

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EQUIPPING LEADERS

American Baptist Women's MINISTRIES



Valorie and Jean

**Important meeting dates--
Ladies, mark your calendars!**

Women's Day – October 14
Anderson FBC (Anderson, IN)

Fall Conferences – October 16-19 & 23-26
at select churches throughout Indiana

WOMEN'S OFFICERS RETREAT WAS A BUSY BUT JOYFUL TIME!

Twenty-five ABWM State Officers met recently in Lebanon (IN) for their annual retreat. The theme was "Count It All Joy," based on James 1:2. A light breakfast was served as the women arrived and received "goody bags" for the day. Past president Valorie Cole started the retreat by installing current ABWM of IN/KY President Jean Langdon. Then it was down to business for the Executive Committee while the rest of the women got to know each other playing "Find Someone Who..." Bingo. As the Nominating Committee met, everyone else heard from Wanda Brower, featured speaker, who talked about joy and how she came to "count it all joy" in her life, an inspiring story!

A delicious lunch was served by the Lebanon FBC Women's Ministries group. In the afternoon while Assn. Presidents met, others enjoyed fellowship time including some reportedly "therapeutic" coloring. Then there were additional committee meetings, and the officers created valentines to send children in Brazil (South America) to whom IM Missionary Corenne Smith ministers. After a Board of Managers meeting, tickets were drawn for door prizes (potted tulips).

The day closed with worship and Communion. It was a joy for State Officers to see one another and to hear about all that is happening with ABWM women throughout IN/KY!



PASTOR DAVID LOVE CALLED TO ROCHESTER FIRST BAPTIST

On March 5th, 2023, Pastor David Love accepted a call to ministry at Rochester FBC (Rochester, Indiana) and was confirmed as the church's new head pastor by unanimous vote of the congregation.

During Pastor Love's career in ministry, he has served as a full-time youth pastor and been the head pastor at two churches in Indiana and another in Illinois. He holds a Bachelor Degree in Family Ministry and received his Master of Divinity from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Louisville, KY).

It is Pastor Love's theological training, experience with youth, and his work in pastoral counseling that led the pulpit committee at Rochester FBC to extend a call to Pastor Love. He is a wonderful addition to the church's already strong children and youth programs.

The congregation is also excited to welcome his wife Nelda and their four children, Ruth, Andrew, Benjamin, and Joel, to their church family. All are active members of the community, participating in sports leagues and community outreach programs. They are already a blessing to the Rochester area!

PASTOR/STAFF ZOOM CALLS



July - NO Zoom Call - Summer Break!

Tuesday, August 8, 2023
Praying Together:
Observations on Corporate Prayer
with Rev. Dr. Bruce Cochran

Tuesday, September 12, 2023
Another session with
WayFinder

All sessions @ 10:00 am ET/9:00 am CT
Zoom connection will be emailed to Pastors.
To subscribe, email wendyshuler@abc-indiana.org.

Indiana Baptist Convention
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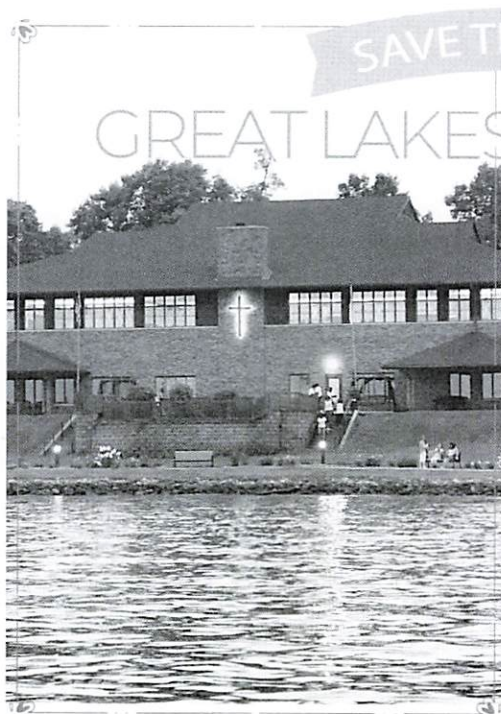
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UPCOMING EVENTS...

October 12-13, 2023
at Plainfield FBC
(Plainfield, IN)
WayFinder Training
for ABC-IN/KY Pastors

WayFinder events by *The Colossian Forum* train Christian leaders how to transform conflict.

Find out more about *WayFinder* via their webpage, www.wayfindertraining.org and watch for registration info in future ABC-IN/KY Region publications!



SAVE THE DATE

GREAT LAKES LEADERSHIP

Retreat

April 23-25, 2024

Cedar Lake Ministries
Cedar Lake, Indiana

A Missiology for Church Renewal
Ministry Training by Fresh Expression Ministries



FRESH

