

What time is it?
Where are we?



In one sense, the answer to those two questions depends on context. Time and place are relative to the point in history in which we find ourselves and where we are geographically.

On the other hand, the answers are universally the same every time those questions are asked:

What time is it? Answer: *Now*.

Where are we? Answer: *Here*.

From a Biblical perspective, those two questions surface over and over. Adam and Eve lived in the Garden at the beginning. But for them, it was *now* and *here*. What about Abraham? He lived in Ur of the Chaldeans. God told him to get up and go, but, for him, it was *now* and *here*. Moses? He was at a burning bush, and God spoke to him. Again, when this happened, it was, for Moses, *now* and *here*.

Simply put, it is always *now*. We are always *here*. For us, this is our time and our place. We are here in 2023 and we each live and serve in our respective communities and congregations. Your church is one of nearly 300 congregations connected to the American Baptist Churches of Indiana and Kentucky. Congregations and Region staff come alongside one another to help discern and fulfill the ministry God calls us to do at this time and place.

Most likely, you receive many requests to support mission efforts in a variety of settings and contexts. The Region Offering is an invitation to financially support ministry that happens *right now, right here* in your Region.

One hundred percent (100%) of this offering stays in your Region! Funds from this offering support congregations as they seek pastors, review their ministries, launch new ministries, train and support pastors and other church leaders; overall, to help you do ministry *right now, right here*.

If your congregation does *not* financially support Region ministries in a direct way, we encourage you to consider taking up a Region Offering this year.

If your church already supports Region ministries, THANK YOU; however, please also realize that, during the months of July/August, you are invited to join a concerted effort to support your Region. The enclosed materials will help you tell the story of the many ways your Region conducts and supports ministry *right now, right here*!

With questions about exciting, NEW Region Ministries or Region Offering 2023, please reach out to any Region Minister. We look forward to speaking with you soon!

Rev. Mark Thompson, markthompson@abc-indiana.org or 317.635.3552, press 1.

Rev. Dr. Bruce Cochran, brucecochran@abc-indiana.org or 317.635.3552, press 5.

Rev. Steve Allen, steveallen@abc-indiana.org or 317.635.3552, press 6.

Rev. Kristi Jones, kristijones@abc-indiana.org or 317.635-3552, press 7.

Rev. Jaime Flores, jaimeflores@abc-indiana.org or 317.635.3552, press 3 (for forwarding).



Promotion of the 2023 Region Offering American Baptist Churches of IN/KY Ministries

Please use the suggestions below in any way that would be helpful to your congregation as you promote our Region ministries. Each congregation is unique, and you will know what would work best for your congregation. The enclosed resources have been developed to help you share the story of the ministries of the Region. If you have any questions, please contact the Region Office at abcin@abc-indiana.org or call 317-635-3552.

Whatever you choose to do, be sure to take some time over several Sundays to share the story of Region ministries. You may utilize these bulletin inserts, sermon starters and other resources created to help tell the story of Region ministries. Or perhaps there are those in your congregation who have participated in Church Leadership Institute (CLI), a camp, youth ministry event, or attended some other training event in the Region. These persons could also share their testimonies of how the Region ministry impacted their lives.

So that the Region Offering doesn't conflict with other major offerings, we suggest you consider receiving it during the months of July or August. Of course, you may choose to receive it in the time that works best for your congregation.

Resources included are:

- Bulletin inserts
- Sermon starters
- Clip art for newsletters and announcements
- PowerPoint slides
- Posters

Suggestions for promoting the Region Offering:

1. After several weeks of telling the story of Region ministries, dedicate a time to receive the offering through a special one-time collection.
2. Use the resources to promote Region ministries and then provide special offering envelopes for people to contribute during the promotion period, or at any time throughout the year.
3. Envelopes could also be included in church newsletters and other publicity.
4. Consider making the Region Offering a line item in the church budget along with other mission categories.
5. If your congregation utilizes online giving, be sure to inform persons about how to designate their contribution to the Region.
6. Invite your Region Minister to speak on the Sunday the Region offering is to be received. (Be sure to schedule in advance as each Region Minister relates to about 100 churches).
7. Hold a special fundraising event such as an ice cream social or cook out with the proceeds dedicated to the Region Offering. Such events can be used as an outreach to the community and connect with new persons. Take pictures and we will perhaps share through our communications network.
8. Whatever is decided, please let us hear about it and share what impact the Region and Region Offering has had on your congregation.



Being Disciples “Right Now, Right Here!”

The book of Esther tells of a dramatic, failed attempt to annihilate God’s people, the Hebrews. Unbeknown to the perpetrator, the queen at that time was a woman named Esther, who happened to be a Hebrew. Upon hearing of the plan, Esther’s uncle implored her to intervene, saying, “Perhaps you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” Esther acted. The plot was uncovered. The people were saved.



We may find ourselves concerned about our church’s future, but the Power that saved God’s people in the book of Esther is among us today. With the promises of a risen Christ, this is our moment to embody God’s call, to meet people where they are, and instruct others in and about the gospel.

In other words, like Esther, we have come to this moment by Divine appointment. We are God’s people “right now, right here!”

ABC-IN/KY Region contributes to this cause in unique ways. The Region helps the Kingdom cause in ways that churches cannot do alone. For example, the Region has recently offered the following:

- Through the Nehemiah Leadership, leaders (primarily bi-vocational) were introduced to “Table Life: An Invitation to Everyday Discipleship.”
- FREE registration for our IN/KY pastors to attend ResourceLC (small church conference, which the ABC-IN/KY Region co-sponsored)
- The Two-Step Leadership (virtual) series this past spring led by Dr. John Piippo, co-hosted by Warren First Baptist Church and the Region
- The ABC-IN/KY Biennial held in October 2022 (open to pastors and lay persons) included presentations, workshops, fellowship and worship.

Both Esther and her uncle fulfilled Kingdom purposes. Likewise, through the ministry of the Region, churches join hands to accomplish larger purposes as well as to equip one another. As an individual and as a church, don’t “go it alone.” Being in ministry and mission TOGETHER makes each of us more effective. Contributing to the Region Offering is a way to help congregations be disciples of Jesus *right here, right now!*

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Just as God called on Moses from the burning bush, you are being called, *right here, right now!*



“Come no closer!” Those were God’s first instructions to Moses in Exodus 3. Moses could hear and receive God’s call from where he was standing in that moment.

What a lesson for us! God calls us where we are in this moment. Whether a pastor, lay leader, or simply a church member or attender, visitor or “seeker,” we may be -or become- called to serve Christ and others *right here and right now!*

We tend to think the way to support missions is to give to *international* missionaries serving outside the U.S. or to *national* partners like community ministries in cities across the U.S. or through mission opportunities attended out of state. While those are noble causes, we should recognize that service to our neighbors and nearby communities is also mission.

The precautionary tale travelers hear while preparing for take-off on airplanes comes to mind: *We have to take care of ourselves in order to take care of others!*

That’s where ABC-IN/KY Region ministries come into the picture. Your Region offers important resources to congregations. Routinely, Region Ministers visit churches for consultation or celebration. Likewise, a multitude of activities for enrichment are provided, such as the Region Biennial Gathering, men’s or women’s meetings, pastors’ meetings, Senior Adult Days, virtual or in-person educational events through our new M28 Certificate in Theological Education, Healthy Boundaries, Nehemiah Leaders, and ResourceLC (often free or discounted through the Region). Churches regularly hold retreats at ABC-related facilities. Mission trips are launched in the Region to help right here (like the recent work trips to Bremen and Lost Creek, KY).

God directed Moses by saying, “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” Yes, our “holy ground” is *right here, right now*. Please pray about giving generously to the Region Offering!

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When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. (Galatians 4:4-5, NKJV)



It can be a challenge getting our minds around the concept of an Eternal God. God, by definition, is entirely different from us. God does not exist in a place like ourselves. God is not floating around on a cloud nor sitting on an actual throne. Likewise, God does not exist in time, because there is no today or tomorrow in eternity.

Nevertheless, God broke through the veil of time and space, took on flesh and became one of us; all so we could become children of God! That's good news! Galatians 4:4-5 teaches us that the life of Jesus Christ and the gospel He accomplished took place in a certain time.

Another challenge we face is how to seize upon the opportunities our time affords to us. We struggle with how to make the most of our time. We wring our hands because we feel helpless in our time. We worry our time will pass without making much difference.

Certainly, there's much to be done, but we need to step back, take a deep breath and assess what we can do, where we can do it, and when to act.

You have many opportunities to help. People all over the world are working to make a difference, and they need the support of others to take on the challenges. The American Baptist Churches of Indiana and Kentucky is a partnership of almost 300 churches, all working to make a difference in their time and place. You support the work of this partnership when you and your church contribute to the Region Offering. By pooling our resources, skills, energy, time and finances—we make a difference in our communities and our world.

And, this is a difference we make *right now, right here.*

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On the other hand, the answers are universally the same every time those questions are asked:

What time is it? Answer: *Now*. Where are we? Answer: *Here*.

Simply put, it is always *now*. It is always *here*. This is our time and our place. We live in 2023 and we serve in our respective communities. Your church is one of nearly 300 congregations connected to the American Baptist Churches of Indiana and Kentucky. Congregations and Region staff come alongside one another to fulfill the ministry God calls us to do at this time and place.

From a Biblical perspective, those two questions surface over and over. All the heroes of our faith mentioned in Hebrews 11 lived and practiced faith at a certain time and place. Their faithfulness was displayed what was, for them, *now* and *here*. As you consider supporting the ministry of ABC-IN/KY, understand that your giving harkens back to the kind of faithfulness displayed by those who have gone before us. They made a difference then. *Right now* is the time for us to make a difference, *right here*.

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Sermon Starter for Esther 4:1-17 (for Pastor Use)

Title: "Our Place, Our Time"

Thesis: We each have unique opportunities to give and to serve Christ here and now.

Objective: To challenge people and congregations to engage their lives in service for Christ and His church today.

Introduction: We all have choices to make. Individuals and congregations are called by God to be where God wants us to be when God wants us to be there.

- I. Like Esther, our existence points to a higher purpose. Esther had a choice to make.
 - A. Esther could remain silent...
 - All would have been lost for Israel, unless God used another person or other people.
 - Esther could have lost her life as well if her accuser had his say.
 - B. Esther could communicate God's purpose by willingly investing her life for God's people.
 - Justice would be served for Esther and for the people of God.
 - Our actions as God's people may be the difference between life and death for folks God calls us to serve.
- II. If we remain silent, God will use other people from other places to help individuals/congregations.
 - A. Mordecai would tell us to take action!
 - Esther 4:14...do what you can
 - Esther 4:16...pray that others will act out in justice
 - B. Presently, we are the people of God. We have the gifts and abilities that are needed now.
 - We are called to the ministry of reconciliation – II Corinthians 5:18-19
 - We must embody God's call if we want to be God's people in our place and time.
 - Congregations must be ready to be disciples of Jesus for today and for a changing tomorrow.
- III. God used Esther to fulfill His purpose. God will use us to fulfill His purpose.
 - A. Esther became the queen whose voice carried the influence to deliver Israel.
 - B. Each of us has a circle of influence.
 - We must pay attention to what is going on around us.
 - We are called upon to risk our comfort to be used of God in His place and time.
 - When God assigns a task, will we allow God to use us in "such a time as this?"

Conclusion: As a member of an American Baptist Church of Indiana and Kentucky, your willingness to allow God to use you here and now has an eternal effect. We want to be engaged in the great work God has for us to do. The future of ABC-IN/KY may be held in the balance of your decision!

Sermon Starter for Exodus 3 (for Pastor Use)

Title: Pay Attention to Your Burning Bushes!

Thesis: God is calling you to a Place and a People.

Objective: To challenge people to respond to God in love for Him and for others.

Introduction: Moses was spared from the wrath of the Pharaoh in order to make a difference for God's people. God calls all of us to make such a difference today.

- I. Moses was born against the order of the Pharaoh.
 - A. Moses' mother concealed him after he was born
 - A papyrus boat was used to hide Moses in the Nile River until his sister Miriam could retrieve him
 - Miriam took Moses to the Pharaoh's daughter
 - B. Pharaoh's daughter adopted Moses as her own
 - Moses was nurtured by his birth mother and trained in Pharaoh's palace
 - Moses was destined for greatness following his desperate beginning
- II. Moses experienced crises and had to make choices – 3 periods of 40 years each
 - A. Moses witnessed Egyptian soldier beating Hebrew slave
 - Moses slew the Egyptian oppressor
 - Moses fled to the wilderness of Midian to escape consequences
 - B. Moses guarded Jethro's sheep in the wilderness
 - Life was quiet for Moses
 - Moses learned how to thrive in the wilderness
 - C. Moses' time in the wilderness came to an end
 - While tending sheep, Moses saw a bush that, although it was burning, it was not consumed. So, he looked closely.
 - Moses heard the voice of God tell him to lead His people out of Egyptian bondage.
 - Moses protested with several objections
 - God made special re-enforcements and encouragements for Moses
- III. Moses accepted God's mission to lead God's people to do what they could and should do
 - A. The people had lost sight/consciousness of their mission from God.
 - B. Pharaoh wasn't willing to let them go.
 - C. God intervened with 10 plagues.
 - D. Israel recognized God's leading through observance of the Passover.
- IV. Israel crossed the Red Sea
 - A. The Lord directed the Israelites by a pillar of cloud (night) and a pillar of fire (night).
 - B. Israel was delivered from bondage and death, so they rejoiced (Exodus 15:1-18).

Conclusion: The significance of the Exodus for ABC-IN/KY today is that God leads us through very difficult times when we stay focused on His purpose. What have we learned from the past that can take us into a better future? God has tested us, is testing us, and will test us in order to prepare us for His mission!

Sermon Starter for Galatians 3:26-4:7 (for Pastor Use)

Title: Heirs According to Promise

Thesis: Christians are children of God and heirs by faith in Christ.

Objective: To challenge individuals and congregations to utilize our connection with Christ today.

Introduction: Heirs are entitled to their father's inheritance. Consider what you are enabled to do with your inheritance from God in Christ through the Holy Spirit.

- I. What does "all who were baptized into Christ..." mean?
 - A. Who is "all?"
 - Paul's way of setting out his cultural, social and sexual mandate
 - Believers in Christ come from every walk of life, every nation and both genders
 - Faith in Christ obliterates distinctions
 - B. What does "baptized" mean?
 - United with Christ
 - Initial and necessary response of faith
 - Dying with Christ and rising with Christ
 - Put away sin and put on new life
 - Call God "Abba"... "Father"
 - C. What does "into Christ" mean?
 - Christians have been "swallowed up," included in Christ to live in Him in relationship with Him.
 - Fellowship with Christ through God's Spirit signifies this new relationship to God that Christ brings through His Spirit.

- II. What does it mean to "have put on Christ?"
 - A. National distinctions are broken by the blood of Christ.
 - Cultural revolution has begun in your life
 - All are to be treated with God's love regardless of cultural past
 - B. Social status is irrelevant for God's acceptance in the church
 - Slave becomes brother (Philemon 16)
 - Significance in the church is inestimable if we do it!
 - C. Neither male nor female...
 - No sexual prejudice in Christ
 - Male and female are one

- II. What is Paul's point?
 - A. We are not slaves to the law.
 - B. We are no longer children who are unable to utilize what we have inherited!
 - C. We are free in Christ from the law
 - D. We have been given God's Spirit

Conclusion: As ABC-IN/KY congregations, we are called to live out these distinctions in radical ways! Intimacy with and respect for God because of Christ through His Spirit are ours. Patriarchy, chauvinism and racism have no place in Christ. We have a great inheritance to put into use today!

Sermon Starter for Hebrews 11:1-12:3 (for Pastor Use)

Title: What is a “hero of the faith?”

Thesis: The life of faith commended by the heroes of the faith is not so much a definition as it is a declaration that we are to work out in practice.

Objective: To challenge each believer to nurture the characteristics of men and women who had faith in God to overcome all opposition in order to fulfill God’s direction for life as people of God today.

Introduction: We are shown the qualities of “heroes of faith” in order that we may live faithfully today.

- I. Examples of faith from Creation to Abraham (Hebrews 11:2-12)
 - A. “Being certain of what we do not see...” (11:1)
 - Guided by Scripture, we see behind the scenes
 - People with faith in God are distinguishable from people without such faith
 - B. “THIS is what the ancients were commended for...” (11:2)
 - Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah...YES, Sarah!
 - These all testified/bore witness to/spoke well of...faith in God
- II. Faith pleases God
 - A. Believing that God exists is the basis/beginning for a good relationship with God.
 - B. Heroes of the faith are testimonies that God’s rewards are for those who “earnestly seek Him.” (11:6)
 - Not a passing interest
 - “Walking with God” as Enoch did
 - Noah took God’s word more seriously than what he saw with his own eyes!
 - Noah acted on what he believed. We must act on what we believe.
 - C. Abraham was challenged to leave security on the basis of a mere word of God.
 - Abraham did not know his destination.
 - Abraham knew that God would make his destination clear.
 - D. Isaac and Jacob were joint heirs of the same promise.
 - Tents reminded them that they were not home yet.
 - They had the promise without the reality.
 - E. Sarah considered God faithful to His promise.
 - Her laughter of unbelief became laughter of joy.
 - Sarah finds herself with Moses’ mother (v.23) and Rahab the prostitute (v.31) representing women in the gallery of the faithful.
- III. God’s people are not at home in the world today.
 - A. We are in a temporary residence.
 - We look forward knowing God has a better “country” in store.
 - We are aliens and strangers on earth.
 - B. We long for our homeland/hometown.
 - We seek the place where we were re-born, where we are recognized as family.
 - Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters (Hebrews 2:11).
 - Our earthly story is not the end of us.

(Continued on next page)

Sermon Starter for Hebrews 11:1-12:3 - Page 2 (for Pastor Use)

- IV. Examples of faith from Abraham to Jericho (Hebrews 11: 12-31).
 - A. Abraham's faith was tested in God's command to sacrifice Isaac.
 - B. Isaac, Jacob and Joseph demonstrated their faith in the fulfillment of God's promise (vv.20-22).
 - C. Moses defied immediate threat of Pharaoh because of his faith in God (vv. 24-28).
 - D. Rahab the prostitute broke with her own people to fulfill God's future for His people. She was confident in God (v.31)!
- V. Summary of later periods of faithful ones (11:32-38).
 - A. The author of Hebrews recognized a shortage of time to report on all the other faithful ones.
 - B. Through faith they conquered kingdoms, administered justice, gained what was promised, shut the mouths of lions, quenched fiery flames, and their weaknesses were turned to strengths.
 - C. Many did not escape suffering and death. "The world was not worthy of them" (vv.36-38).
- VI. God had something better for...us! (vv.39-40)
 - A. With us, God's purpose has reached its ultimate goal!
 - For the "heroes," the best was yet to be.
 - For us, the best is here!
 - B. God has sent His Son so that they (the heroes) and we can enjoy the fullness of salvation.
 - C. We don't run alone. Christ's power is at work in us (12: 1-3)!

Conclusion: ABC-IN/KY congregations must "fix our eyes on Jesus" as we continue to run the race. If all the great men and women of faith could provide such shining examples of faith in action, how much more should those of us who have now experienced God's salvation through Christ stand firm as the people of God?



2023 Region Offering



American Baptist Churches of Indiana and Kentucky
Supporting Churches Like Yours
Right Here! Right Now!
(Designate Your Gift as "Region Offering")



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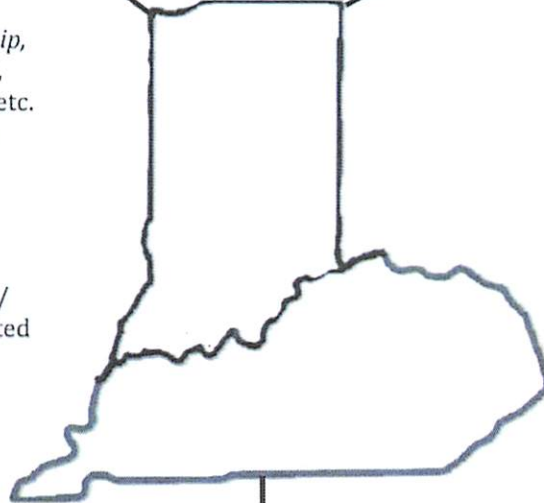
For information about any of the following opportunities, contact your Region Minister!

Equipping Leaders

- Pastor support/consultation
- *Pastor/Staff Zoom Calls*
- Other continuing education opportunities such as *ResourceLC, Two-Step Leadership, Great Lakes Leadership Retreat, Church & ABC History & Polity*, etc.
- Monthly pastor gatherings (by areas or associations)
- Young pastor gatherings
- *Healthy Boundaries* training
- Transitional ministry training
- Bi-vocational minister support/training including, but not limited to, *Nehemiah Leaders*
- Ordination coordination
- Campus ministry & seminary relationships/resource info
- *Ministerial Excellence Fund*

Empowering Churches

- Pastor/staff transition consultation
- Church support/consultation
- Small church consultation
- Hispanic ministries/consultation including, but not limited to, *Latino Anglo Bridge Builders (LAB)*
- Intercultural relationships/resource info
- Church boards consultation/training
- Communication consultation/seminars
- Evangelism training
- Mission education/interpretation
- Stewardship consultation/training
- Stewardship resources
- Church treasurer/tax consultation
- Church budget preparation assistance
- Estate planning/planned giving resources
- Capital funds consultation
- Building consultation resources



Expanding Missions

- New church development and partnerships
- Camps and youth events
- Senior Adult Days
- Partnership with American Baptist Men
- Partnership with American Baptist Women and Girls
- Partnership with Community Ministries such as Edna Martin Christian Center
- Partnerships with ABC Global Servants/ Mission Centers such as Chilean Baptist Churches, the Bolicks, Bonilla-Giovanettis, Longkumers and Witmers
- Missionary speaker resources (national and international)



2023 Region Offering

