

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](http://www.abc-indiana.org)

WENDY SHULER, EDITOR - VOL. 23 NO. 4 - OCT/NOV/DEC 2023

## FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF WARREN EXTENDS CHRIST'S LOVE TO THEIR COMMUNITY

For over 125 years and with servants' hearts, members of First Baptist Church (Warren, IN) have been spreading the love of Jesus Christ by helping their neighbors. Throughout its history, the church has provided reliable financial and prayer support for American Baptist missionaries in the United States and abroad, but the families who attend the church have made serving their local community their most important mission. In fact, not only individual members but also the congregation as a whole have built a reputation for taking bold moves to support the emerging needs of others in Warren and beyond.

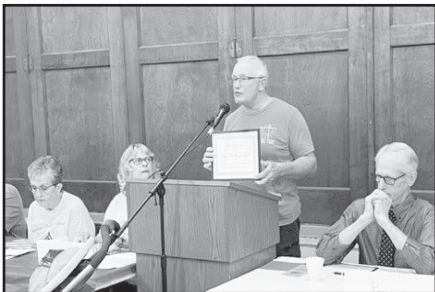
Beginning in 2009, they embraced the call found in Ephesians 2:10, *"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."*

Since then, members have pursued ambitious projects to show the love of Christ in their community. From 2009 to 2014, during the Salamonie Summer Festival, the church invited the entire community to attend its Fish & Tenderloin Supper (all you can eat & free of charge)! Thousands of meals were served each year.

Beginning in 2017, the congregation started Backpack Palooza. This program for children and families was created to ensure that every child in the community had a backpack and school supplies to start each academic year. During its first year, the church celebrated the distribution of 150 backpacks stuffed with the necessary supplies. At this year's Backpack Palooza, July 22, the church gave away 700 backpacks to families from Warren and surrounding communities.

The congregation's newest local mission is Little Rebel Store. For this endeavor, it has partnered with Salamonie School and the Huntington County Community Foundation to provide clothing, shoes, coats and toiletries for local children who would go without otherwise. Located inside Salamonie School, the Little Rebel Store is designed to be like a true-to-life clothing store. With the help of school staff, children with the greatest need are invited to have a private shopping experience where they may pick out their own new clothes.

These are just a few examples of how the families who attend Warren FBC have responded to needs in their community. Beyond programs, the church is committed to helping people of all ages grow in their faith in Jesus Christ. To that end, they also encourage folks to join them for Sunday school at 9 am and church at 10 am each Sunday.



Warren FBC received the Samuel Jones Community Service Award during Salamonie Summer Festival 2023.

(Far left) Sr. Pastor Rusty Strickler accepts the award.

(L to R, front row); Joyce Buzzard, Carol Tribolet, Karen Sandlin; (Middle) Kristina Smekens, Joyce Trout, Debbie Wiley, Lois Walling; (Back) Brady Smekens, Steve Park, Kim Park, Joe Wiley, Jerry Walling, Ashton Ousley, Cindy Strickler, Rusty Strickler and Nick Neuenschwander.

(For several other churches' stories, see p. 5)



**Rev. Mark Thompson**  
Executive Minister

[markthompson@abc-indiana.org](mailto:markthompson@abc-indiana.org)

## PASTORS, YOU HAVE OUR SUPPORT!

The ministry of a local church pastor is much broader and deeper than what is witnessed on a Sunday morning. A pastor of integrity does not stand before the congregation and reveal all of his or her week's experiences, particularly of those calling for confidentiality as he/she bears the personal burdens of the church family. Times exist when a pastor pours out his or herself to share the love and mercy of God with others, and the Lord uses the pastor as His quiet agent of that grace and mercy. Add to that the humility of the pastor and many stories of one's week rarely get told; but, as it should be, God receives all of the glory!

Although most ministers I know do not live out their calling in hopes of praise or recognition, when the testimony of God's work through the local pastor is not shared, I believe it can lead to undervaluing the work of the pastor. Having to work in a bit of a vacuum, pastors sometimes do not recognize or feel the importance of their efforts and service. The feeling of uncertain value to the work they do is one of the factors attributed to a decline in individuals entering and remaining in congregational

ministry. In addition, I believe that when the work of the pastor is not appreciated, the value of the local church can become diminished.

October is pastor appreciation month. Pastor, I see you! I know the things that you are doing. I believe that the work God has called you to, leading the local church, is His best plan to reach a world that is lost and unaware of His love. And the Region cares for you! Over the next 12 months, you will have many opportunities for continued training and renewal sponsored by our Region. We strive to offer you relevant opportunities for growth on every level. **M28** may be the resource that will help you in furthering your education. At press time, we were inviting you to a FREE mid-October workshop on transforming local church conflict. Next, we are planning to offer you a retreat at the beginning of the year to aid you in your connection with the work of the Holy Spirit. Excitedly, let me also share that we just got word we are receiving a Palmer Grant to gather with three other ABC Regions at Cedar Lake in Northern Indiana in April. This retreat will be led by *Fresh Expressions* with worship led by Jason Gray.

Pastor, we appreciate you! We love you. We will continue to pray for you. The Region recognizes that some of you might be feeling you serve in isolation, but Jesus never meant for that to happen! He always sent His disciples in a group of at least two. It is the hope of the Region Staff that you as a local church pastor see our team of Region Ministers as persons sent to walk with you as you serve the local church. Pastor, you do not have to walk alone! We walk TOGETHER on God's Abundant Journey.

### REGION MINISTERIAL STAFF

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Rev. Jaime Flores  
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**PASTOR/STAFF ZOOM CALLS**  
Tuesday, Oct. 17  
@10:00 AM (EST)  
WayFinder Follow Up

In Christ,

Rev. Mark Thompson  
Executive Minister

For addtl. info about upcoming Region events, visit our NEW ABC-IN/KY website and/or subscribe to **Observations** (our semi-monthly e-news) using the form found near the bottom of our website homepage. Go to [www.abc-indiana.org](http://www.abc-indiana.org).

### OBSERVER SUBMISSION DEADLINES FOR 2024

**WINTER ISSUE** (January, February, March) - Friday, December 1

**SPRING ISSUE** (April, May, June) - Friday, March 1

**SUMMER ISSUE** (July, August, September) - Friday, May 31

**FALL ISSUE** (October, November, December) - Friday, September 6

**Please 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](mailto:wendyshuler@abc-indiana.org) or (317) 635-3552 x222.

## EQUIPPING LEADERS

### IS M28 THE ANSWER TO A QUESTION YOU'VE BEEN ASKING?

Are you among the number of people who follow Jesus, seek to serve the church, and long to be better equipped in doing so? Perhaps it's time for you to consider the **M28** Certificate in Theological Education! This new opportunity, being offered by American Baptist Churches of Indiana and Kentucky, offers lay leaders and pastors alike the opportunity to gain quality theological education at an economical cost from the comforts of home.

The early response to **M28** in the ABC-IN/KY Region has been strong! We are onboarding a number of students (again, laity and clergy alike) into the program, matching them with mentors, and celebrating their beginnings in course work through Kairos University.

Some are seeking a path toward regional ordination. Others are grateful for a program that fits reasonably within their budget (\$25/month) and offers them the flexibility of completing classes at their own pace online. Some have enrolled in hopes of becoming a more effective teacher or leader in their church. Others have felt the call to pastoral ministry but thought a theological education was out of reach and are now finding those two paths converging through **M28**.

There's still room for you! Contact your Region Minister or email Dr. Dan Cash, Dean of the **M28** Program for the ABC-IN/KY Region, [dancash@abc-indiana.org](mailto:dancash@abc-indiana.org) to learn more or to begin your journey.



## YOUTH MINISTERS AND YOUTH LEADERS

Rev. Kristi Jones, ABC-IN/KY Region Minister, is putting together **a list of people who work with youth in our local churches** so that she can communicate about future youth event opportunities and offer you occasional times to meet TOGETHER for fellowship, support and youth ministry idea sharing! Please email [kristijones@abc-indiana.org](mailto:kristijones@abc-indiana.org) or phone her c/o the Region Office. Include the following:

1. Your Name
2. Church Name (City & IN or KY?)
3. Phone Number
4. Email Address

Tell Kristi you work with youth! - Thank you!

## PASTORS RETREAT FEBRUARY 2-3, 2024

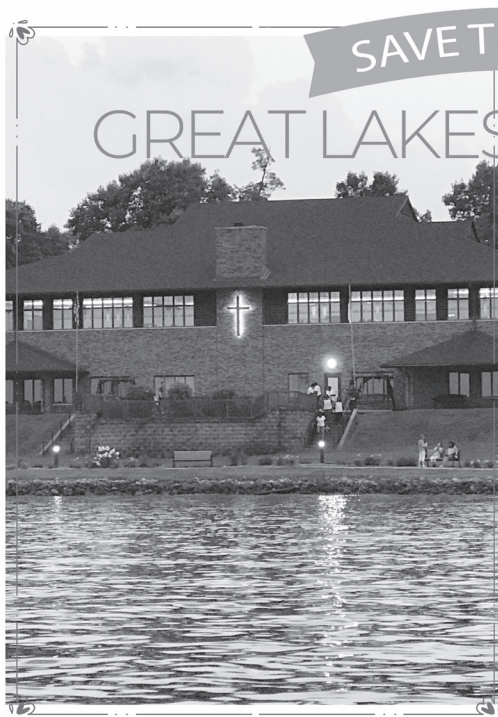
Much like what was offered in the northern part of Indiana in 2022,

**ALL ABC-IN/KY pastors are invited**

to Southeastern Baptist Youth Camp (SBYC - Greensburg, IN) for TOGETHERness, inspiration & renewal!

**NEW Content led by Dr. John Piippo, Holy Spirit Renewal Ministries**

Watch the Region website and e-news for registration info!



April 23-25, 2024

Cedar Lake Ministries  
Cedar Lake, Indiana

A Missiology for Church Renewal  
Ministry Training by Fresh Expression Ministries



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

## EXPANDING MISSION



### OPPORTUNITY TO SUPPORT NEW GLOBAL SERVANT

We have a newly commissioned IM Global Servant in our midst! As ABC-IN/KY Region churches did when others from here were first commissioned, you are encouraged to financially support Rev. Dr. Toya Richards, who resides in Louisville, KY. She has been called to serve as a missionary in South Africa. To learn about her, go to [www.internationalministries.org/international-ministries-global-servants/](http://www.internationalministries.org/international-ministries-global-servants/) and click on "Toya Richards" found there in the list of IM missionaries. (She is also pictured here at top left.)

ABC-IN/KY churches may send monies designated for Dr. Toya Richards (mentioning her name) using the ABC-IN/KY Mission Support Form.

With any questions, reach out to John Dunlap, Manager of Mission and Finance, through the Region Office.

### HOW CAN YOU ALSO SUPPORT MISSION TRIPS OFFERED TO ABC-IN/KY CHURCH MEMBERS?

1. Pray which is essential - For safety as groups travel; that volunteers don't become ill; that they will work safely at their job sites; that the weather will cooperate so that they can get their work done; that building supplies will be available; that people with building skills will join upcoming trips; that God will use Region volunteers to be His hands and feet; that they will continue to receive donations to cover costs.
2. Send financial contributions. We realize that everyone is regularly asked to send money to various offerings/other good causes but be creative! Perhaps your church can do an annual fundraiser just for these mission trips, such as a soup or spaghetti supper, collect aluminum cans and store them until you have enough to trade in for money, sponsor a church yard sale with proceeds going toward the next trip.
3. If you have been on one of our mission trips, share your positive experiences with others in your church!
4. Ask Patty Short, relief coordinator, to come speak to your church or ABC-related organization about past, present and future mission trip opportunities, with the most recent being to the Sullivan, IN, area in early October. For Patty's contact information, see the ABC-IN/KY Region website, past issues of e-news, or call the Region Office.



### FALL IS A FAVORITE TIME FOR AMERICAN BAPTIST WOMEN!

Two full weeks have been planned for Fall Conferences in 16 associations. International Ministries (IM) Global Servant Barb Bolick and ABWM State officers will speak the week of October 15 to October 19 in Judson, White Lick, Union, Coffee Creek, Madison, Long Run, Brownstown, and Flat Rock Associations. Global Servant Debby Witmer and ABWM State Officers will speak the week of October 23 to October 27 in Harmony, Logansport, Freedom, Curry's Prairie, Friendship, Sand Creek w/ Decatur, Laughery, and Bedford Associations. --Pray that the October 14 Women's Day and Fall Conferences will break attendance records. You must be present to receive the blessings that God has for you! Plan to attend.

## American Baptist

# Women's MINISTRIES

With questions, contact your ABWM Association Leader/s or ABWM of IN/KY President Jean Langdon.

## EMPOWERING CHURCHES

### THREE YEARS IN THE MAKING

Hayden BC was asked to partner with the Union Flatrock Church (Westport, IN) in funding Cabin 14 at Southeastern Baptist Youth Camp (SBYC). Back on March 15, 2020, Don and Sarah Snyder, former staff but now retired, were presented with a check from Hayden BC to do so. This was the last Sunday service before the COVID pandemic shutdown.

On May 21, 2023, there was a dedication service at the cabin with attendees from both Hayden and Union Flatrock. This was a group effort by both churches. We would like to give a big thank you to all of the volunteers that helped build the cabin! -- Submitted by Marilyn Williams, Hayden BC



### FUSE EVENT FOCUSES ON SHARING ONE'S FAITH

The second FUSE youth gathering was Sunday, August 27, at Southeastern Baptist Youth Camp (SBYC, Greensburg, IN). At FUSE, youth reconnect with friends they made at camp and have opportunity to meet additional peers from other youth groups. The focus is to provide a safe place to gather and to connect with Jesus and others --all while having fun!

During this event, we had youth and leaders from 11 different churches come together for a pool party, water games, food and to hear a message. They were also able to break into small groups before leaving for the evening. The message was about sharing one's faith with others. Participating youth had a great time whether it was sitting with a friend and making a craft, competing in sponge dodge ball, tossing water balloons, playing in the pool, enjoying the food or the message.

There will be additional FUSE gatherings in the coming months. Watch for more information in the ABC-IN/KY Region Observations (e-news) and on the website!



### VEALE CREEK BC CELEBRATES 200 YEARS

Veale Creek BC celebrated its Bicentennial Anniversary recently. Founded in 1823, the congregation is now in its third building. For many Baptist pastors, particularly in the 1960s, 70s and 80s, VCBC was known as a testing ground for new preachers. Current Pastor James Williams returned to the church in 2021 after having served there years earlier himself (from 2003-05)!

The 200th anniversary brought in more than 125 people, including some former members and pastors from out of town. Kevin Huebner, lay leader with longstanding family ties in the church, reports the church building was pretty full, and attendees really enjoyed being together and reminiscing. One highlight for Kevin was that 11 members of a church singing group he was part of called, "The Nehemiahs," were able to be there for the celebration.

The small church, located on SR 257 south of Washington, IN, maintains two cemeteries. Some of the grave stones date back before the civil war! The church has a rich history, and Kevin describes it as, "a small, country church that has hearts of gold."



**Indiana Baptist Convention  
AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES  
OF INDIANA AND KENTUCKY  
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**Franklin College** was founded in 1834 by American Baptist pioneers and continues a voluntary relationship with the ABC denomination. From its earliest days, Franklin has offered excellent education and allows students to thrive through intimate class sizes, individual mentorship, and focused attention. Students are challenged to be self-motivated, lifelong learners who serve and lead in the community. Franklin has a strong religious life program that encourages discipleship and spiritual growth through service and learning.

**If you are applying, please be sure to indicate that you are American Baptist and provide the name of your church. There are endowed scholarships for American Baptist students!** New this year, there are \$1,000 scholarships, renewable for up to four years (\$4,000), for those who **schedule a visit by November 1**, apply, are admitted and attend Franklin.

As an American Baptist pastor and Franklin College alumna, I am happy to share about the opportunities available. Students and parents, as well as older youth groups are welcomed for campus visits. To learn more, please email me, Rev. Rebecca H. May, **RHorstman-May@franklincollege.edu**.

To schedule a visit or to apply, please visit  
[www.franklincollege.edu/admissions/](http://www.franklincollege.edu/admissions/)



**First Baptist Church of Franklin, IN** (an ABCGI Region congregation) also has scholarship money available for a student attending Franklin College. The applicant must be an active member of an ABC church of either the ABCGI or ABC-IN/KY Region and apply by March 1 to be considered for assistance for the first semester, or by October 1 to be considered for assistance for the second semester. If interested or you have any questions, please contact the church by email, **franklinfbcoffice@gmail.com**, and an application and instructions for application will be sent to you by return email.