

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

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BECKY SEPTOSKI & JEFF TRYON, EDITORS - VOL 20 NO. 3 - JULY/AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2020

## Plunging Into the Promise

A portion of this article appeared in the previous week of May 11, 2020 issue of Observations.

Many of you know that one of my favorite biblical stories is found in Exodus 14. Pharaoh released the Israelites from captivity and God led them on a longer-than-usual journey towards the Red Sea, providing the pillars of cloud and fire to guide them so they could travel day and night, without stopping. Later, Pharaoh changed his mind and led his mighty army to chase after the Israelites. As the Egyptians advanced upon them, the Israelites cried out in fear and hysteria to God – but directed their angry questions to Moses, their leader.

Moses' response was simple: do not be afraid; stand firm; and see (or watch) what God is going to do. Then, God instructed Moses, "Tell the Israelites to go forward." The Exodus narrative continues with Moses being directed to lift his staff and stretch out his arms to provide a path for the people to cross the sea on dry ground.

In the Jewish Midrash (interpretation of an event, often in narrative form) version, the people move towards the sea, whining and complaining and questioning the entire time. As soon as they arrived at the water's edge, Nahshon

plunged in first, even before Moses lifted his arms to part the sea. Nahshon was the head of the tribe of Judah (Numbers 1:7), brother-in-law to Aaron (Exodus 6:23), and is included in the genealogy of Jesus by both Matthew (1:4) and Luke (3:32). The water came to Nahshon's ankles, and he kept going. The water came to his knees, his hips, and his chest, but did not part, and yet Nahshon moved deeper still. The water reached his chin and his mouth. He kept moving forward and it was only when the water came to Nahshon's nose – and was about to cut off his ability to breathe – that the mighty sea parted.

I am convinced that followers of Jesus are in a season of great opportunity. Yes, even in this pandemic season! Pastors and people are reporting that online participation usually far exceeds their typical physical worship attendance. I suspect there are those who participate via an online platform hungering for connection, community, and a spiritual space that has not been satisfied with (at least some) of our pre-pandemic church practices. How will we nurture and disciple these emerging online communities as we move further into, and beyond, this

season? Likewise, this season has illuminated great needs in our communities for better access to health care, mental health services for all, including the need to listen more closely to the deep pain experienced by those whose skin color and background is different than our own. What might need to change in terms of our priorities, ministry position descriptions, and the allocation of staff, volunteers, and resources to live into the opportunities God is placing before? What do we need to unlearn, or relearn, so we can listen well to, and serve well with, all of God's people?



I was privileged to serve the First Baptist Church of Casper, Wyoming, on two occasions relatively early in my ministry career. I was the youth pastor between college and seminary, and then, returned about eight years later to serve first, as the associate pastor and then, as the lead pastor. There were many wonderful people in this congregation who loved, shaped, and formed my pastoral identity in the almost 13 years I served among them.

Silas Jones was in his late 70s when I moved back to Casper in the late 1980s to begin my pastoral ministry. He and Eunice were from



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the deep south and had moved "out west" during one of Wyoming's many oil booms and stayed, making Casper their home. One of the stories in the church's history happened during the Civil Rights movement and racial tensions of the 1960s. The pastor of predominantly African American North Baptist Church contacted the pastor of First Baptist to request the use of First Baptist's baptismal. There were several children and adults who had requested baptism. It was the dead of winter, and North Baptist had no baptismal in their modest building.

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First Baptist's pastor and deacons were somewhat willing but felt it necessary – in “good” Baptist tradition – to pass this decision to the church body before granting permission. I wish I could say it was an amicable discussion and an easy decision. Just prior to the vote, Silas stood and asked to address the congregation. Roughly paraphrased from what was reported to me, he said, “I grew up in the South and what I learned about whites and blacks doesn't make much sense to me right now.” Reportedly with streaming tears, he continued, “If I believe Jesus died for everyone, how can I vote to deny North Baptist the use of our church just because they are black? They love Jesus as much as we do, and they deserve to be baptized by their pastor.”

Fast forward to the mid-2000s when I was serving on the region staff of Mid-American Baptist Churches (Iowa and Minnesota). We regularly joined ABC Nebraska and the Dakotas for “Tri-Region” events, including an annual Women in Ministry retreat. Enjoying a get-acquainted afternoon walk with Rev. Charlene Morris-Quarrells, she and I talked about our respective faith journeys, including the stories of our baptisms. After professing faith in Jesus at the invitation of her Sunday School teacher, Charlene was baptized in the winter of 1964 at a white church in her town, because hers did not have a baptismal. Yes, Charlene was one of the children baptized by North Baptist at First Baptist in Casper, Wyoming. We were amazed to discover that, some forty years later, we were serving as ABC clergy colleagues in Nebraska and Iowa/Minnesota – and both of us had such strong ties to both of those churches in Casper, Wyoming.

Never underestimate the long-term effects of making right – and just – choices. Like Nahshon (and Silas Jones), leading others into the deep waters of God's promises is not always easy and sometimes it's the only way.



I am a white woman who has access to privilege and power not so easily afforded to others, whether I am aware of it or not. I try earnestly to listen to, understand, and learn from my friends and colleagues whose skin is different than mine and, I confess, I often fail miserably. Generations of tangled hatred and violence towards others whom God created, and decades of living within the knotted realities of racial inequality, are not easily unraveled for anyone, including me. However, just because it's difficult doesn't mean I should avoid doing the hard work of learning and relearning in order to live into a new reality that is equitable, just and fair for all, no matter one's skin color or background.

Like the Israelites, it is easy to hang with the crowds who are seeking to place blame for the realities of a situation or further justifying inequities, or worse yet, eagerly voicing a desire to “go back to what we knew before this” (i.e. back to “normal,”) while ignoring the deep pain of others. It is more difficult – at least for some – to believe God's very real promise to not be consumed in the midst of fear, to stand firm, and witness what God is doing, and will do, to transform our reality. But the most difficult of all? To be like Nahshon, remembering the purpose to which God has called us AND taking the necessary courageous steps - plunging into the promise – even when a sea of fear and uncertainty threatens to drown us.

To live into God's Abundant Journey means, in part, we recognize our differences, and cherish each one as an equal partner in God's magnificent design and creation. We will fail, but we must try. Over and over, for as long as it takes. Will you join me? Only then can we truly be Together on God's Abundant Journey.

*I am grateful to Rev. Lauren Ng (ABHMS Director of Leadership Empowerment) for sharing this Midrash version of the Great Exodus story.*

## Expanded Opportunities for CLI

The Church Leadership Institute (CLI) has long provided discipleship and leadership training for church leaders in ABC-IN/KY and ABC Greater Indianapolis. With the IN/KY office move to Greenwood in 2018, the conference room was equipped for virtual meetings and in 2019, CLI began experimenting with the delivery of virtual class sessions. With the advent of the COVID-19 season in early 2020, such virtual sessions became the “new normal,” at least for the foreseeable future.

At their spring meeting, the Region Board entered into an agreement with the Baptist Seminary of Kentucky (BSK) to mutually share in offering non-academic training for church leaders. ABC-IN/KY will continue to offer courses through CLI while BSK will provide training through their new Flourish Center. Each will promote and credit one another's courses, allowing participants in one program to cross-register in the other's program. Course content and curriculum design will likely vary between the two programs, and participants may find that, while there are related courses, one may better fit their interests, needs, or schedule. IN/KY has had a strong connection with BSK since the seminary was founded in the early 2000s.

Rev. David Adams, BSK's director of institutional design, previously served in IN/KY, has taught CLI courses, and is now uniquely positioned to work with IN/KY staff to develop the joint effort. “I want IN/KY to be successful,” he said. “Now that I am at the college full time, I've got the

resources, time, and ability to do this for everyone.”

“BSK and ABC-IN/KY have long held a similar vision to provide learning opportunities for church leaders, beyond an academic setting,” according to Rev. Soozie Whitten Ford. “Our mutual passion for churches, their leaders and pastors fuels our desire to see them equipped and prepared to do what God is calling them to do as they deepen their personal discipleship journey and, in some cases, gain confidence to serve in various leadership positions in their church and beyond. IN/KY's Church Leadership Institute is excited about partnering with BSK's Flourish Center and look forward to new possibilities of serving churches and leaders together.

Rev. Dan Chadwick serves as the director of IN/KY's CLI program and offers these thoughts, “The cooperative endeavor of the Baptist Seminary of Kentucky's Flourish program and the Church Leadership Institute will enhance educational opportunities for participants of both programs. Students will be able to take classes from both schools which will allow for a greater selection of classes. The availability of the classes will also provide perspectives from instructors of other backgrounds. BSK's Flourish program and the Church Leadership Institute invite you take advantage of these programs for further development in your own ministry setting.”

To learn more about CLI, go to <https://abc-indiana.org/region-ministries/cli/>. For information on BSK's Flourish Center, go to <https://bsk.edu/flourish-center2/>.

**Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still; teach the righteous and they will add to their learning.**

**Proverbs 9:9**

# HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

TAUGHT BY: BRUCE COCHRAN & PHYLLIS GOODYEAR

Three Consecutive Tuesday Evenings Offered via Zoom  
7:00 pm - 9:00 pm  
July 28, August 4, August 11

**COST: \$25.00**

**Please send payment made out to ABC-IN/KY**  
in C/O Becky Septoski  
at the Region Office  
and put Healthy Boundaries on the memo line.  
65 Airport Parkway, Suite 120  
Greenwood, IN 46143

**To register:**

Please email Becky Septoski at  
[beckyseptoski@abc-indiana.org](mailto:beckyseptoski@abc-indiana.org)  
and include the following information:  
NAME, ADDRESS, CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE, CHURCH,  
PHONE NUMBER & EMAIL ADDRESS

Upon receipt of payment and registration, information  
regarding connecting to Zoom will be emailed to you.  
**REGISTRATION DEADLINE -TUESDAY, JULY 21, 2020**

American Baptist  
**Women's**  
MINISTRIES

**ABWomen's Day**

**October 10, 2020 9:30 AM – 4:00 PM**

**Liberty Baptist Church - Tipton, IN**  
**Sisters Seeking Wholeness**  
**II Cor. 5:17-21**

**For complete details**  
**regarding registration go to:**  
**<https://abc-indiana.org/2020-abwomens-day/>**

## Camp Connect

**CAMP CONNECT  
2020**

Get signed up soon so  
your child can experience  
camp with their personal  
**Camp Connect Care Package** and online  
activities!

**REGISTER YOUR KIDS FOR CAMP!**

Go to:

[https://abcin.campmanagement.com/p/  
request\\_for\\_info\\_m.php?action=enroll](https://abcin.campmanagement.com/p/request_for_info_m.php?action=enroll)  
to enroll your kids for camp!



## News from Southeastern Baptist Youth Camp

Since our camps don't have campers and leaders on the grounds this summer, it is a time our churches and families can utilize their camps in new ways. What better place than camp to take your family for a day or short campout adventure. Churches have opportunities to gather with distancing for outdoor activities or mission work. Contact your camp to find out what they have to offer as an extended ministry for churches. Plan to pay for accommodations at camp, as they work hard to ensure facilities are cleaned and sanitized between visitors and groups.

At Southeastern Baptist Youth Camp, we have made changes so we can continue nurturing children and youth during this pandemic. We are excited to offer "CAMP WHERE YOU ARE" during June and July – a camp experience wherever you are physically and spiritually. These are interactive online sessions along with a package full of fun camp stuff delivered to the home. Some churches are scheduling a week of camp at their church for campers and leaders to gather as a small group each evening to participate in these camp sessions. This is a good way to stay connected for a camp experience!

In August and September, we have six onsite camps scheduled. The annual fundraising event, "The RACE" will be held on Saturday, August 1st. Camp schedules and information can be found on the website at [www.sbycamp.com](http://www.sbycamp.com) or call us at (812) 591-2515.

## Osgood FBC Finds Blessings Through Service



The coronavirus has affected people in many ways, and Osgood FBC views it as a way to be a blessing in their community. Learning the local senior citizens meal site was shut down due to the pandemic, the church jumped into action. Led by congregation member, Joyce West, Osgood FBC began providing hot meals for those in need, including not only seniors in Osgood, but also, those in the nearby town of Napoleon. “Just for Him Ministries”, a local Christian group run by Ken & Charlotte Macphee and their children, joined Joyce in cooking and delivering 68 hot meals everyday throughout the area for two months. As the word spread, church members and others in the community helped by donating money for supplies or cooking and baking items for the meals. This was truly a labor of love to those in need showing them the love of Jesus.

A wonderful blessing for these seniors was the surprise Easter baskets they received during Holy Week. “What fun! Thank you so much!” one 90 year old woman exclaimed. “I haven’t had an Easter basket since I was a little girl. It means so much to me.”

And as we all know, when we set out to be a blessing to others, we always receive a blessing in return. Osgood FBC and “Just for Him Ministries” are feeling the love, and what it is like to be a blessing by being the hands and feet of Jesus Christ.



*Retired pastor, Don Buck and his wife, Shirley, were two of the many Osgood residents who received Easter baskets.*

## Badger Grove and Technology Work Together to Provide Services

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, Badger Grove Community Baptist Church, a small country church in Brookston, IN, cancelled Sunday morning services beginning on March 15. It only took them one week to get a recorded service up and running for the community. The service was posted on their Facebook page and several Brookston area community pages.

Just one month later, on April 26, after securing the necessary technology, a live Sunday morning drive-in service was added to their weekly recorded service. This drive-in service was recorded as well, and posted on social media. A new web page was created for the community to access during this time as well.

On Sunday, May 31, Badger Grove returned to morning worship in their sanctuary with all necessary social distancing and cleanliness needs addressed. They will continue to record a service for folks who cannot attend on Sundays, and will broadcast their in-sanctuary service on their FM transmitter to people who prefer to stay in their cars a few more Sundays.

Other forms of ministry during the pandemic include many more phone calls to members and friends, as well as, trips to make contributions to the area food pantry and other missions.



*Pastor Roger & Diana Strunk lead worship at the drive-in service*



*Members of the congregation participate in the drive-in worship service*

## Mobile Scavenger Hunt - Warren FBC

After several weeks of a virtual game nights, Kristina Smekens, along with Joe and Debbie Wiley, organized an all-church mobile scavenger hunt.

On Friday, May 15 at 6:30 p.m., 34 individuals from Warren FBC met in the old JC Penny parking lot in Huntington. Donned with gloves and face masks and honoring social distancing, participants learned of the rules.

"Teams" were formed by household and each had the same list of tasks to complete in a 45 minute time period. Each task was worth points, with numerous bonus points available. Proof of each completed task was documented on the cell phone of one of the team members.

Armed with their list of tasks, teams began the hunt! While traveling the city of Huntington, many teams passed one another, honking and waving as they went by.

Upon returning, snacks were provided by the Wileys and Peggy Bush. While everyone enjoyed their snacks and socialized, Kristina reviewed the photo proof of each team and tallied their scores.

*THE WINNERS!*



*Pastor Rusty kneels in front of an out-of-state license plate*

*Joyce, Karen & Carole give their best "Charlie's Angels" pose!*



## Columbus FBC Celebrates Mother's Day in a Unique Way



As in many occasions of late, Columbus FBC celebrated Mother's Day in a new way. This year, the flower committee came up with a unique idea. They bought pinwheels and placed them along the circle drive of the church. During the live stream worship, Pastor Dan Cash invited mothers to come by after the service and pick up a pinwheel for Mother's Day. The silver and rainbow pinwheels created a colorful display along the drive. By the next day, many of the pinwheels had been taken by the women of the congregation. It was a nice way to remember mothers.

## Columbus FBC Honors Graduates



*Pictured are three of the high school graduates, Mollie Nelson, Faith Briggs, Anna Kelley, and one college graduate, Jesse Langdon.*

Carolyn Pool, Leader for Education, along with her team, held a drive-by parade for all graduates at Columbus FBC. There are five seniors that graduated from high school, three from Columbus East and two from Columbus North, as well as, three college graduates. Many folks drove by with hand made signs in their windows. The grads were given cards with greetings and talked at a distance with those who participated. The graduates were very appreciative of the folks who came.

## Information Regarding the Biennial Region Gathering

Due to the ongoing concerns with COVID-19, the biennial region gathering **will not take place on September 25-26 at Terre Haute FBC as previously planned.**

Instead, the business meeting portion of the gathering **will take place virtually on Sunday afternoon, September 27th,** with Region President, Archie Patterson III presiding. Additional information will be made available in the near future.

We appreciate your patience and understanding during this most unusual season.