

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. 25 NO. 1 - JAN/FEB/MAR 2025

FIRST FUSION EVENT HOSTED BY NEW CASTLE FBC



Early in November, the ABC-IN/KY Region held its first Fusion Conference (formerly known as ABY Convention) for students in grades 6-12, hosted by New Castle FBC (New Castle, IN). We had a great turnout from our churches, and the students and leaders had a wonderful time getting to know one another, playing Nine Square, Gagaball, Sardines, and so much more! We were led in worship by Christian recording artist Jason Gray and took a deep dive into Ephesians 1-3 as we discovered what it looks like to be ALIVE in Christ. (Notice the conference t-shirts above.)

Our speaker for the weekend, Bryan Marvel, reminded the students of several key truths:

- 1) "It doesn't matter where you came from as long as you discover where you belong."
- 2) "All of who you are is found in who Jesus is."
- 3) "Jesus came to bring dead people to life, not make bad people good."

It was a wonderful weekend connecting with God and with one another. We hope to make the Fusion Conference a regular event here in the Region. A special word of thanks to those who made this event possible!

FUSE
STUDENT GATHERINGS

FUSE Central: Sunday, January 19 @ Columbus FBC, 3:30-6:00 pm (EST)
FUSE South & FUSE North: Both are planning to meet in the first quarter of 2025.
More info to come!

These regularly scheduled student events (also for Grades 6-12) happen throughout the year in various locations. Students from throughout IN/KY may attend any FUSE event/s. We welcome you from near and far!

If you are a Youth Pastor or volunteer with Youth Ministry at your church and would like to receive updates about ongoing Youth Ministry happenings in the Region, please contact Kristi Jones, 317.635.3552 (press 7) or kristijones@abc-indiana.org.



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

2024 IN REVIEW & GRATEFUL FOR YOU

A healthy habit held by many is to reflect and review on the previous year to help establish the vision and direction of the new year. In the last few gatherings with Region staff, I listened as they reflected on some of their accomplishments and shared their favorite events we held as a Region in 2024. Of course, the ABC-IN/KY Biennial, hosted by Muncie FBC, is likely the most memorable due to the investment of staff time in preparation and the joy we always experience when connecting with our many pastors and church members from around the Region. We remain grateful to our hosts and all who attended to create such a fond memory for us.

Another fun event that has become an annual tradition is the gathering of pastors for an Indianapolis Indians baseball game. The pastors share the joy and feel the care extended by the Region, which pulls the pastors from their busy schedules and enables them to relax and be themselves for an afternoon in the spring.

Not all our staff activities were as joyful, however. One staff member shared how they felt the value of their work when called by one of our churches that found themselves in crisis and needed someone to come and help them find a pathway forward. I could take pages to express how the Region has responded to a variety of needs and concerns throughout the past year, but, like a local pastor, we respond and cannot always tell those stories. To express our response in numeric fashion, the Region staff collectively drove about 100,000 miles in 2024 to meet our pastors and churches.

Our agreed upon favorite activities were the local pastor gatherings held monthly in most associations. One take away from these gatherings is how much our pastors love the local church they serve, and you churches would be pleased to hear your pastors express the blessings they receive from you.

To the Region, I would like to say thank you for your generous support that allows each of these connections to happen. When we meet at these events, I am often asked how best to support the ministry of the Region. Some have expressed a bit of confusion with the different options. When a church mails in their offerings, the accompanied Mission Support Form designates where your offerings land. The Region receives about 17% of the American for Christ offering, 67% from United Mission, and 100% of Region support. Any other designation will go exclusively to the selection made. If you have further questions about the Region Offering (aka Region support), please let me know. The Region staff likes to call the work that we do "right here, right now" work. Of all the ministries that you support, the Region is the one that responds directly to you. We are right here, right now as we walk "TOGETHER on God's Abundant Journey."

Rev. Mark Thompson
Executive Minister



INCREASE YOUR KNOWLEDGE THROUGH M28

Would you like to be better equipped as a pastor or lay leader for your congregation? Are you interested in theological education but feel seminary is beyond your reach? M28 may be an affordable option for you!

It is an ABC-IN/KY Region partnership with Kairos University with rolling admission.

For more information, email Dr. Dan Cash, M28 Dean, dancash@abc-indiana.org, or visit www.abc-indiana.org/M28.

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Observer submission deadlines for 2025

(All are Fridays) March 7 - June 6 - September 5

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 or (317) 635-3552 - press 3.

EQUIPPING LEADERS



Pastor/Staff Zoom Calls

All are at 10 AM (EST); 9 AM (CST)

Tuesday, January 14, 2025

Rev. Dr. David Hinson

Retirement Benefits Consultant
Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board
(MMBB), *Looking Ahead to Your Future*

Tuesday, February 11, 2025

Preaching Collaborative Session

Tuesday, March 11, 2025

Mr. Paul Weers, Development Consultant,
American Baptist Foundation,
How Planned Giving Impacts Ministry

*Pastors will receive the usual email reminders
or feel free to reach out to your Region Minister
for connection information.*

AB WOMEN, SAVE THESE DATES!

Ladies, mark your calendars NOW and make plans to attend ABWM Summer Conference at Franklin College.

This is your personal invitation! Invite a friend to join you.

You are cordially invited to join your Indiana sisters for a time filled with fun, fellowship, and many blessings!

WHAT? ABWM Summer Conference

WHO? ALL American Baptist Women & Guests

WHEN? June 27 & 28, 2025

WHERE? Franklin College

(Overnight accommodations available at nearby hotels)

I am looking forward to seeing YOU there!

Please also help share the important 2025 ABWM Scholarship info (at right) with any prospective applicants you may know!

Jean Langdon, President, ABWM of IN/KY

MEMORIAL BC, COLUMBUS CALLS NEW PASTOR

Memorial BC (Columbus, IN) is pleased to announce the calling of Rev. Jesse Letourneau as pastor of their congregation. He began his duties in November 2024, assuming the role from Rev. John Parsley, who had been the church's interim for the past year.



Rev. Letourneau is a California native and has spent time ministering in Illinois, Texas, Florida, as well as California. He graduated from North Park Theological Seminary (Chicago, IL) in 2015 with a master's of divinity.

Rev. Letourneau has extensive experience with children, youth and family ministries. He is committed to visitation and sharing experiences with the church's senior members as well. He has a strong passion for outreach, and the church's commitment to outreach is one of the things that drew him to Memorial.

Rev. Letourneau came to Indiana in 2020 to pastor a church in Southern Indiana before coming to Memorial; and, despite being born in California, he now considers himself a Hoosier!

ABWM SCHOLARSHIP APPLICANTS, THIS YEAR'S DEADLINE - FEB. 15

If you are an American Baptist student needing funds for college, now is the time to get forms filled out and turned in! The American Baptist Women's Scholarship application is due February 15, 2025, and there are several things to be aware of:

1) There is a new form every year. Many women and their churches received the 2025 scholarship form when they attended Women's Day back in October. Many AB Women received a copy of the 2025 form in their email in December, and it was included in the Region's e-news in early December. It's also made available on the ABC-IN/KY Region website every year (www.abc-indiana.org).

2) The scholarship has several important parts that *all* need to be turned in by February 15. Please read the entire application carefully!

3) Every blank on the application **MUST** be filled in! If you do not know an answer, check with someone in your church, your pastor or an AB woman.

4) You must have one letter of recommendation from a non-family member, your pastor, a teacher, or someone for whom you have worked.

5) You must get your school to send a copy of your most recent transcript to me by email or US Mail. (My contact information is included on the application form.)

And the best news yet-- the scholarship amount has been increased from \$500 to \$1,000! So, be sure to seek out the 2025 ABWM Scholarship application if you haven't already. Get it filled out very soon. Good Luck!

Janie Barnett, Scholarship Chair, ABWM of IN/KY

EXPANDING MISSION

FT. WAYNE FBC STILL SERVING OTHERS



Ft. Wayne FBC is an old church - both the church itself, founded in 1822, and the small congregation, most of whom are many years past retirement age. We may be old, but we can still serve God!

Just in the last two months, we have done the following:

Made preparations to reach 1,816 children with the good news of Jesus through *Operation Christmas Child*. We may be old, but we can still do children's ministry by packing a large number of Christmas shoeboxes.

Listened to our bell choir play their monthly selections...a bell choir composed of three ladies all in their eighties (read t-shirts in photo above). We may be old, but we can still make music and contribute to our worship services.

Provided Trunk or Treat for the Boys and Girls Club, who uses our building, as well as for the neighborhood children. We may be old, but we can still reach out into our community.

Raised over \$1,200 for missions with our chili supper and silent auction. We may be old, but we can still raise money to support a wide variety of missions.

When you hear that a church has a Senior Citizens Ministry, you usually think of it as being a ministry "to" or "for" senior citizens. At our church, the senior citizens' ministry is a ministry done by seniors. We may be old, but we can still serve. - Praise be to God!

As shared by Ruth Proctor, Ft. Wayne FBC

The ABC-IN/KY Region is moving more toward electronic communications.

Don't be left out! - Subscribe to e-news on our website & be sure to Follow the Region on Facebook.



CLAYTON FBC EMPHASIZES CHRIST'S BIRTH, JOY TO THE WORLD AT TOWN FESTIVAL

Clayton FBC participated in the 2nd annual "Christmas in Clayton" festival on Saturday, December 7, 2024. Their float theme was, "The World Celebrates His Birth." Costumes on the parade float (see above left) were depicted from the following countries or areas of the world: Scotland, Germany, Sweden, Mexico, the Republic of Congo, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and the Philippines. The LIVE nativity (above right) included sheep and a donkey. Small metal cars and playdough "wrapped" with an information sheet about the church were handed out to local children. The congregation was grateful they were able to participate in this outreach ministry.

INDIAN CREEK BAPTIST CAMP (ICBC) SUMMER REGISTRATION HAS BEGUN!

Grades	Sessions <small>Dates and prices subject to change</small>	Dates
Kindergarten- 1st	FIRST TIMERS	June 1st - 2nd
1st - 2nd	EXPLORER	June 7th-9th
2nd - 3rd	DISCOVERY	June 10th-13th
4th-6th Boys Only	BOYS CAMP	June 14th - 17th
4th-6th Girls Only	GIRLS CAMP	June 18th - 21st
10th - 2025 Grads	SENIOR HIGH	June 22nd - 28th
7th-9th	FOCUS	July 6th - 12th
6th-8th	CHALLENGE	July 13th - 19th
16yrs + <small>(mild to moderate special needs)</small>	SPECIAL PERSONS	July 25th - 28th

CAMPINDIANCREEK.COM/CAMP

REGISTER AS A CAMPER OR CABIN LEADER

REGISTRATION GOES LIVE 1/1/25



EMPOWERING CHURCHES

ANDERSON FBC CELEBRATES PASTOR & A VERY BUSY YEAR



Rev. Steve Sheridan, pastor of Anderson FBC (shown at left with his mother, other family and friends) was honored after the church's Thanksgiving meal on Sunday, November 17, 2024, for one year of service with the congregation.

The church has had many activities going on during the past year including a Mother's Day breakfast, Father's Day event, Eclipse Party, several cookouts, two drive-in movie nights, an Easter Egg Hunt and Fall Trunk 'n' Treat event. On the third Sunday of every month, they enjoyed a dinner together after worship.

This fall First Baptist packed 130 boxes for *Samaritan's Purse*. As a regional collection site, they took in 1,301 shoeboxes. During their World Mission offering promotion one Sunday morning, they Skyped with IM Global Servant Paul Rollet and learned about his mission work in the Philippines.

The Anderson congregation has adopted their neighborhood elementary school and visit there every Wednesday afternoon to tutor and find additional ways to build bridges with their community. Before winter break, they hosted a Christmas party where they gave brand new school supplies, hats and gloves, games and other treats to the school children. The church has purchased a small bus and launched a new children's outreach program on Saturday, Dec. 21, beginning with a Christmas party for the kids. Stay tuned for future updates because the church anticipates growth stemming from these efforts!

The church's AB Women have participated in monthly adventures around Central IN, including but not limited to, weekly visits to a local women's shelter offering food, various activities and devotions to the residents. In the last few weeks, the Anderson FBC women held a Purse and Pie Auction for the ABWM of IN/KY State Project and had a Cookie Walk after Sunday worship on Dec. 1.

M28 students, Ordination candidates, pastors and church leaders, register online soon for this helpful, two-session course led by Bruce Cochran & Phyllis Goodyear!

**HEALTHY
BOUNDARIES**

Tuesdays, Feb. 11 & 18, 2025
7:00-9:00 PM (EST)
-via Zoom-
Must attend BOTH nights!



BURTONS HONORED IN MUNCIE AT RIVERSIDE BC RECEPTION

Rev. Robert Burton and wife Lydia Burton (above left) moved to Muncie, IN, in 1999 when Robert began working as a chaplain for the local hospital. They became active members of Muncie FBC. In 2006, Robert started preaching at Riverside Avenue BC in the same city, and they continued to be active members at both churches. He jokes that he was the latter mentioned church's "interim pastor" for 18 years.

The Burtons recently sold their house and will move to Mississippi in early 2025 to be closer to their three daughters and their families. They were honored in a send-off reception at Riverside Avenue BC on Sunday, December 15, 2024. Over 100 friends came to show their love and support. - *Thank you for the multiple ministries you have led and been a part of, Burtons. You will be missed!*

During the reception honoring the Burtons, Rev. Rusty Strickler, Associate Region Minister, and wife Cindy visit with Daniel Harris, director of Charis, the recently restarted Baptist Student Ministry of Muncie.

If you would like more information about Charis or know of a Muncie area college student to help connect to that ministry, Daniel's email address may be found on the Region website: <https://abc-indiana.org/campus-ministries/>.



BLUE RIVER BC REPORTS BAPTISMS & MEMBERSHIP INCREASE

On Sunday, December 1, 2024, Little Blue River BC, Shelbyville, IN, baptized 11 people, and, during the invitational hymn that morning, nine people came forward to join the church by letter or baptism.

Rev. Kenneth Morgan is the pastor. The church knows it is a team effort led by the Holy Spirit. The congregation cannot wait to see what God has in store for them in 2025!

FRANKLIN COLLEGE RECEIVES \$200,000 GIFT



A \$200,000 gift from the estate of Constance J. "Connie" (Richardson) Van Valer, M.D., has been provided to establish the Richardson Chapel Maintenance Fund at Franklin College (Franklin, IN), ensuring the ongoing preservation and care of one of the College's iconic buildings.

The chapel was constructed thanks to the generous financial support of our Indiana Baptist Convention pastors, churches, and American Baptist Women, and was dedicated on October 23, 1976. The building had been renovated a couple of times since then, most notably in 2008 thanks to the

benevolence of Dr. Van Valer and her two sisters. It was renamed at that time to honor their late father, Rev. Dr. Harold W. Richardson, the 10th president of the school. During his service to Franklin College (1949 to 1964), he expressed his hopes that a freestanding chapel would someday be built on the Central Indiana campus. Dr. Richardson also had served on the staff of Educational Ministries/American Baptist Churches USA.

The college provided the following statement about the recent estate gift, "Richardson Chapel continues to reflect the institution's belief that spiritual growth is an essential aspect of the student experience, and it is a reminder of the College's historic affiliation with the American Baptist Churches USA."

Sources: Franklin College's *Campus News* webpage, October 8, 2024; *Finding a Way in the Wilderness, Tracing Baptist History in Indiana*, written by the late Dr. I. George Blake, published in 1983; and a plaque memorializing Dr. Richardson entrusted to the College, 2008.