

**Great Rivers Region  
Churches Centered in Christ  
Committed to the Whole Gospel  
Covenanted Together**

The American Baptist churches of Illinois and Missouri came together forming the organization we know today as the Great Rivers Region in order to

**Promote the Kingdom of God**

With that in mind, the organizational PURPOSE of the Great Rivers Region remains to

**Challenge, assist, represent and empower  
American Baptist congregations in Illinois and Missouri**

The VISION of the Great Rivers Region continues to be

**Healthy congregations  
engaged in effective Christian ministry  
locally and globally**

Four “strategic themes” (overarching goals) set the broad directional priorities of the Great Rivers Region and guide us through staffing, programming, and budgeting

Strategic theme one:

**Cultivate passion for mission both locally and globally**

Strategic theme two:

**Create a learning and resource network of GRR churches and pastors**

Strategic theme three:

**Recruit and retain competent, qualified  
pastoral leadership for GRR churches**

Strategic theme four:

**Deliver core services with partnership, quality,  
innovation, communication, and accountability**

We will develop objectives and action plans that support each of these strategic themes which will advance the vision of the Region. Examples of actions, services and programs that contribute to each strategic theme are as follows:

Strategic theme one:

**Cultivate passion for mission both locally and globally**

We will speak a challenging word from God to God's people about God's mission;  
We will promote the mission offerings and opportunities of American Baptist Churches USA;  
We will encourage mission involvement through trips, local opportunities, conferences, and Mission Partnership Networks;  
We will help churches identify and engage their local mission field;  
We will continue our covenant relationship with the Federation of Baptists in Costa Rica;

Strategic theme two:

**Create a learning and resource network of GRR churches and pastors**

We will feature GRR churches and leadership in regional workshops and events;  
We will gather and distribute information about creative ministries in GRR churches;  
We will encourage "learning communities" of GRR pastors;<sup>1</sup>  
We will connect GRR ministers and churches by Internet "social networks";  
We will provide targeted conferences<sup>2</sup>, resources, consultation, and coaching;  
We will lift up and spotlight creative GRR churches to encourage and educate others;

Strategic theme three:

**Recruit and retain competent, qualified  
pastoral leadership for GRR churches**

We will raise ministerial leaders by scholarship and internship grants;  
We will challenge and encourage churches to identify potential ministerial leaders;  
We will establish educational and training standards for ministers and implement an ordination process based on those standards;  
We will guide churches through times of leadership transition;<sup>3</sup>  
We will coach churches through the search process to find the best pastor;  
We will advocate for fair compensation and benefits for ministers;  
We will provide and encourage continuing education for ministers;  
We will establish behavioral expectations for ministers and exercise disciplinary action when necessary;  
We will mentor new pastors to achieve their greatest potential;  
We will consult with pastors and congregational leaders for the health of the church;

---

<sup>1</sup> We will seek to connect pastors in ways that emphasize their commonalities (e.g., location, size, experience, and pressing tasks). We will resource and facilitate those "learning communities" with the clear intention of enhancing pastoral competence and congregational effectiveness.

<sup>2</sup> By "targeted conferences" we mean small venue events with limited geography and highly focused content that are planned in response to expressed needs.

<sup>3</sup> At times this may be as simple as helping a church find pulpit supply. At other times we may proactively suggest intentional interims with key tasks that need to be accomplished for the health of the church.

Strategic theme four:

**Deliver core services with partnership, quality,  
innovation, communication, and accountability<sup>4</sup>**

We will establish and maintain relationships with congregations, ministerial leaders, and our ABCUSA family through competent partnerships;<sup>5</sup>

We will strategically plan, manage, and enhance financial resources for mission and ministry while meeting legal, regulatory and ethical expectations;

We will recruit, train, retain, support, and equip staff to accomplish regional goals;

We will learn, communicate, collaborate, and be productive in a positive work environment;

We will exemplify Christian devotion and behavior in all we do.

---

<sup>4</sup> This goal speaks to both ministerial and administrative staff.

<sup>5</sup> This includes intentional, purposive contacts and visits by regional ministerial staff.