



# The Mainstream

## News of Ministry and Mission

*Be a vessel that God can pour his love through.  
Let It Flow*

October 2018 No. 2

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### Calendar

2018

#### November:

2 - 4: **ABY Gathering**  
FBC Jacksonville, IL

14 - 16: **Space For Grace: Thy Will Be Done**  
Philadelphia, PA

2019

#### January:

18 - 21: **SKWIM**  
**Green Lake Conference**  
Center, Green Lake, WI

#### March:

9: **Area V Annual Meeting**

#### April:

13: **Area III Annual Meeting**  
FBC Champaign at  
Savoy, IL

26 - 27: **GRR Clergy Spouse**  
**Retreat** - LSBC

#### May:

9 - 11: **RESOURCE Leadership**  
**Conference**  
The Chateau Hotel &  
Conference Center  
Bloomington, IL

### GRR Business News

Some changes were made in the GRR during our annual gathering in Bloomington in September.

1. It was decided to go to a biennial instead of an annual meeting. That means our next gathering will be in September 2020 and will be every two years instead of every year.

2. The number of officers of the Regional Ministry Board was also changed. We now will only have a president and a vice-president. We removed the second vice-president and changed the term of office to two years. Our three ministry committees remain the same.

3. Our new president is **David Bi-lyeu**, pastor at FBC Greenville, and our vice president is **Claudia McCain**, retired pastor from FBC Macomb.

4. In May of 2019, 2021, and 2023, we will be sponsoring a conference with Northern Seminary and Judson University. It is called the **Resource Conference**, and will be held in Bloomington, May 9-11, 2019. Plan now to attend this great gathering.

5. Our region voted to accept a new ministry to officially be affiliated with ABCGRR. That ministry is the American Baptist Jail Ministry, also known as the Cook County Jail Ministry. They have ministry at the Cook County jails, Livingston County Jail Danville State (continued on p. 4)



**A Word From  
Paul Gibson,  
ABCGRR  
Executive  
Minister**

I heard something the other day that keeps going around in my head and has me thinking of all kinds of things. It was a statement by Ronald Godbee at Northern Seminary's Founders' Day. **"You can't have a stuck church with a moving God"**. If your church is stuck, examine yourselves to see if you have done something to stop God from moving in and through you. If Jesus is alive and well in your church, you will be moving, maybe not always comfortable, but there **will** be activity.

What about it? We could say the same thing about our personal lives. If we feel stuck maybe we are doing something to keep God from moving in our lives. How do we know He is moving? Here are words that I think we can use to help us identify when God is moving: love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. If those words are actively running in and through our personal lives and in our churches, then I believe we will see a moving God, a risen Christ, a Spirit led life.

**DO YOU HAVE MAY 9-11, 2019 ON YOUR CALENDAR FOR OUR RESOURCE CONFERENCE IN BLOOMINGTON?** The Great Rivers Region is joining with Judson University and Northern Seminary to bring some great things your way. Plan now to attend.

During this last part of the year we are taking two very special offerings.

- **World Missions Offering,**

- **Retired Ministers and Missionaries.**

I know not all churches take both, but if you still want to give to them you can give through the region.

Someone asked me the other day, **"why should we be a part of the region?"** I had a ready answer. We can do more together than we can do separately. No one church can support all the missionaries and other ministries out there, but together we can reach way beyond what just one church could do. The other reason to belong is that we need each other. We never want to get to the point where we believe we don't need each other. **We are brothers and sisters in the work and each of us plays a part, whether we are a large or small church. Each of us is important.** Be the presence of Jesus in your community and together we will reach out to be the presence of Jesus all over the world.

Remember...***Be rightly related to God and find your joy there, and out of you will flow rivers of living water. Be a vessel that God can pour His love through.***



## First Baptist Church of Greenville Receives the ABCUSA Matthew 25 Grant

**The First Baptist Church of Greenville, IL** received news that the church has been awarded a Matthew 25 Grant from the American Baptist Churches USA. Thirty-eight grants, ranging from \$500 to \$2,100 were awarded to applicants who demonstrated a wide variety of service to people in need across the United States and Puerto Rico.

Six of the 23 programs the church has going at the present time include "Get to Know Your Neighbor," Camp Scholarships, Community Seminars, the Clothes Closet, School Supplies, and a community Thanksgiving Dinner. The funds received will be used for one to three of the specified projects between now and 2019.

"One can hardly expect persons to hear God's Word unless they first experience the love of God's people. Christ-followers are called to deeds of love that care and share," says the Rev. David S. Bilyeu, the church's pastor. "We are humbled to have been recognized by our denomination as a church that is living out the principles of Matthew 25. We recognize that when we serve those in need, we are serving Christ," continues the pastor.

The Matthew 25 Grant is sponsored by the ABCUSA Office of the General Secretary and the Board of General Ministries. It is funded by a generous anonymous donor. The goal is to help meet the needs of "housing, feeding, education, and health with regard to the less fortunate." The Matthew 25 Grant initiative began in 2013.

## Church News

**Harvard Park Baptist Church of Springfield IL** is pleased to announce that **MaryJean (Richardson) Sheets** was ordained as a Minister of the Gospel, and was installed as the Pastor of Spiritual Formation and Community Outreach on August 26, 2018. MaryJean graduated from Lincoln Christian University in May 2015 with dual Bachelor Degrees in Bible and Intercultural Studies. She has completed the Alternative Ministerial Education (Seminary) program and practicum under American Baptist Churches in the Great Rivers Region. **Pastor Gary W. Sheets** has served at Harvard Park since 2014. Gary and MaryJean were married on January 6, 2018. Both are members of the Springfield Vicinity Ministerial Alliance, and have a vision for Harvard Park Baptist Church to become a vibrant Community Center.

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**First Baptist Church of El Paso, IL** is pleased to announce that **Lingxi Zhu** will be ordained on November 4, 2018 at 4:00 p.m. She was licensed by the church earlier this year and serves as Associate Pastor. Lingxi is originally from China and received her Master of Divinity from Sioux Falls Seminary in 2017.

Rev. Russ Zehr, interim pastor of the church received his Master of Divinity degree from Northern Seminary in June. The church also celebrated their 160th anniversary on August 5th. Pastor Russ presented a historic account of the church's origin while costumed as Rev. William Branch, the first pastor of FBC El Paso in 1858.



## Church Revitalization Initiative (CRI)

The Church Revitalization Initiative is designed to help committed pastors and church leaders who are willing to do what it takes to revitalize their churches. The Initiative is comprised of pastors and church leaders who have helped lead their churches to healthy revitalized congregations.

If you are feeling stagnant and/or undecided how to move forward, please email me; ([wallyholt63@gmail.com](mailto:wallyholt63@gmail.com)) and we can discuss your situation and determine if the team can be of service to you.

Because we are all one family (of God), the Great Rivers Region has put together this initiative so that all will know we are here for each other. If you think you may be interested in some counsel concerning the health/vitality of your church, please contact me.

Wally Holt, Coordinator

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## GRR Business News

(continued from page 1))

Penitentiary, and the penitentiary outside Joliet. If you receive any info from them, just know that they are now an official ministry partner with ABCGRR. We are proud to be involved with this great ministry.

The Mainstream is a twice-monthly publication of the American Baptist Churches of the Great Rivers Region, 3940 Pintail Drive, Springfield IL 62711 Phone: (217) 726-7366 Email: [debbie@abcgrr.org](mailto:debbie@abcgrr.org) Web: [www.abcgrr.org](http://www.abcgrr.org) To subscribe or unsubscribe to The Mainstream or to change contact information, please send an e-mail to Debbie Naugle with your request: [debbie@abcgrr.org](mailto:debbie@abcgrr.org).

## New Members of the Churches of the Great Rivers Region

**First Baptist Church of Greenville, IL Welcomes:** Alexandria LaFaye and Theresa Matheny

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## Mainstream Contact Information

Send your stories of mission and ministry. Please also send the names of new members to:

**Linda Ricks**  
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## GRR Website

GRR Webmaster: Richard Ricks:  
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## Videos Now Available

Rivers Growth Conference (2018 Annual Gathering) are now available in streaming (**from this site**) and dvd formats. (Contact the office of the GRR for dvd ordering information.)

Experience again - or for the first time - witness of God's work presented by David Fitch, Shane Claiborne, Tony Campolo, Sharon Koh, and Wally Holt (GRR church revitalization).