



American Baptist Churches  
Central Region Life

December 2022

Vol. 120 No. 12

## December is Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering Month

For all they've done for you:  
Pray. Listen. Baptize. Marry.  
Direct. Lead. Bury. Celebrate.  
Counsel. Mourn. Welcome.  
Enlighten. **Give to RMMO.**

This past year has been one of both recovery and enduring struggles for our American Baptist Churches community—a year that reminds us of all that pastors do for our churches, congregations, and the communities they serve.

The theme for RMMO 2022 is: **For all they've done**

As illustrated in this year's campaign materials, our pastors are active. They pray, listen, baptize, marry, mourn, counsel, celebrate, and so much more. It takes great energy to sustain our congregations through the ups and downs of life. We give to remember and thank those who have dedicated their lives in service to Christ, the church, and us. With gift revenue from the RMMO 2021 offering, we distributed 3,395 thank you checks averaging \$134, a modest amount in which the gesture says far more than the dollars. For all they've done, let's do this for them again this year. We all remember the pastor or missionary who made a difference in our lives. The ones who were with us in the big moments and small. With leadership, listening, wisdom, condolence or just the right prayer when needed most, their selfless service has a lasting effect. the Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering is a way to give back.

The roots of the Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering (RMMO) originated in the mid-1930s, when American Baptist congregations received a Communion Fellowship Offering on the first Sunday of each month to support retired ministers, missionaries, their widowed spouses and elderly clergy within their churches. The long-standing tradition of the RMMO established in 1977 supports ministers, missionaries and their widowed spouses who have devoted 15 years or more to ABCUSA.

RMMO takes place the first Sunday in December (Dec. 4 this year), but you may conduct the offering at a time that works best for your congregation. Our goal in 2022 is to increase the number of American Baptist churches that participate in RMMO so that we can give even more to those who have faithfully served us. We encourage you to draw on our American Baptist spirit of voluntary cooperation to help our numbers grow. Even small gifts show our support for our pastoral leaders

### What is the Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering?

RMMO is a congregational offering and a joint project of ABCUSA and MMBB. Collected annually in December from participating congregations, RMMO funds are distributed as "Thank You" checks to ABCUSA retired ordained ministers and commissioned missionaries who have devoted 15 years or more to our denomination, as well as surviving spouses. A certain portion is also allocated for direct emergency assistance. The offering originated in the mid-1930s as the Communion Fellowship Offering and since 1977 has been known as RMMO.

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## Kansas Baptist Convention Foundation

# Planned Giving

*A Ministry of American Baptist Churches of the Central Region*

It's the end of an era. No, I am not resigning from my position as the director of planned giving for the KBCF. After 117 years, this will be the last paper copy of the Central Region Life, so you would think that I would write something purposeful and profound. Still it dawned on me just today that while I was encouraging everyone last month to consider a charitable gift annuity as a thank you gift to someone in their life, I forgot to do the most important thing of all myself! I forgot to say thank you to everyone who is involved with the foundation.

While this is the month of Advent and Christmas, the Apostle Paul reminds us in 1st Thessalonians to always give thanks and specifically it reads, "in everything, give thanks." So at the end of my first year as the director of planned giving, I would like to say thank you to many who are involved in the work of the foundation. There is no hierarchical order to this, so let the giving of thanks begin.

Thank you to Gregg, Jennifer, and Morgan in the region office who process paperwork, answer questions and advise on important matters. Thank you to Brady and Chris and Endeavor wealth for their knowledge, wisdom and expertise with our large portfolio of Investments. Thank you to Vonda Brecheisen and the staff at Knudsen, Monroe and Associates for their excellent accounting and detailed work in sending out payments, both on paper and electronically to our annuitants throughout the year. Thank you to our board, which is chaired by Fredric Moore and all of our board members including Duane Ramsey, Scott Darling, Brad Fisher, Jillinda Ansell, Mary Funk, Gary Smith, Marti Johnson and Scott Stannard, who give so freely of their time and energy in oversight and stewardship of the foundation. Thank you to Wilma Engle and the late Marshall Schirer, whose wonderful work I stand upon.

Last but not least, thank you to all of our annuitants and churches that have invested in the foundation and have provided charitable gifts to our region and mission partners in American Baptist life for many years now and also in the years to come! Your charitable gifts of love remind us of the greatest and immeasurable gift of Jesus Christ, our Lord, whose birth we celebrate this month.

Finally, it's almost the end of the year, and if you're thinking about your taxes and charitable deductions, I would encourage you to consider a charitable gift annuity at this time. If I can be of any service or help to you, please don't hesitate to call me or email me and I will be delighted to assist you in any way I can!

During this Advent season, may you continue to give thanks, celebrate and rejoice in the good news that today in the city of David, has been born our savior, Christ the lord!!!

Helping you to give generously,  
Rev. Tim Schwartz  
KBCF Director of Planned Giving  
913-424-9939 /785-272-7622  
tim.schwartz@abccr.org  
timmans39@gmail.com

BRING YOUR FRIENDS TO

## MIDDLE SCHOOL WINTER WEEKEND

First Baptist Church, Ottawa, KS  
January 27-28 2023

Luke 5:17-26

Students: \$35

Leaders: Free

## Merry Christmas

AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

FROM YOUR ABCCR STAFF  
GREGG, JENNIFER, BILL, AND MORGAN

Wishing you all many blessings this season and in the new year to come. We are blessed to serve among you.



## Praise God for the NBCC Successful Celebration of 150 years of Christianity in Nagaland

The Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC) has concluded the two-day celebration of 150 years of Christianity in Nagaland in Kohima on November 19-20, 2022. The programs were alive streamed in two TV channels through which participants in the capital city and around the world might experience the vibrant worship and music presentation, and learn from the Naga story and the powerful messages from local and international speakers.

I am most touched by the Naga joyful spirit and their steadfast commitment to Christian faith despite all kinds of difficulties facing their communities and churches. One of the speakers Professor Alongla Aier provided an answer, "There is power in the retelling of story." Yes, our Naga friends keep retelling the stories of how American Baptist missionary Edward Clark and Assamese evangelist Gudhola Brown brought the gospel to Nagaland in 1872; how their fore-fathers and mothers spread the gospel from one tribe to another other; how they say no to corruption and harassment and sacrificially pursue reconciliation, peace and justice; how the Nagaland Baptist Church Council provides pastoral care to Naga people in other parts of India and globally, and how the Nagaland Mission Movement coordinates the sending of Naga missionaries to preach the gospel internationally.

Equally important is that this Naga story has shown that Christ is alive in the past 150 years in India, and Naga Christians have become a vital member of the Baptist World Alliance and global ecumenical network. I invite you to have a glimpse of celebration from the following postings as NBCC releases more information of this historic and joyful event, including a new covenant to advance ten areas of mission

\*Benjamin Chan Facebook – pictures and videos of the two-day celebration



# Central Region Life 117 Years

of Continuous Publication

## CENTRAL REGION LIFE

*News of the American Baptist Churches of the Central Region*

**Executive Minister:** Gregg Hemmen

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**Editor:** Morgan Bandy

**Prayer Emphasis:** Tim Schwartz

**Planned Giving:** Tim Schwartz

**Women's News:** Mona Huggins

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As we begin the Advent season this month, let us ponder on the Christmas story and pray that we might be like the unnamed innkeeper and his family, so that we might welcome in the stranger, the needy, the less fortunate, those without houses and all who need help with the basic necessities of life.

Let us pray and ask the holy spirit for discernment and wisdom to help us open our eyes to the needs all around us and to see the Christ child, not just in the manger, but in the faces of all the people that we come into contact with as we help and love them in Jesus name.

As the scripture says,

"And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby, wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." Luke 2:12 ESV

## Central Region Life

American Baptist Churches of the Central Region

5833 S. W. 29th St. Ste. A, Topeka, KS 66614-5505

Yes, I wish to subscribe to

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# Bethel Neighborhood Center Capital Campaign

Bethel Neighborhood Center (Bethel) seeks \$1,300,000 to build a multipurpose space to help address the urgent need for Health and Wellness programs for the community around the center, as well as provide much needed program space. Bethel has partnered/worked with Vibrant Health, KU MED Center, Unified Government Health Department, REACH Healthcare Foundation, Catholic Charities, Safety Net Clinics, Family Conservancy, Mental Health of America, and PACES - Wyandot Center, and other nonprofit organizations in Kansas City, Kansas, to address the health, social, and economic needs of immigrants and refugees who are the most difficult group to reach in Kansas City, Kansas. Bethel will continue to collaborate with various community health partners in this new space to design programs tailored for the multiple minority groups Bethel serves.

-Wyandotte County is one of the most ethnically diverse counties in the US. with 68 languages spoken in the Kansas City Kansas Public Schools located there.

-Wyandotte County has the lowest life expectancy in the State of Kansas.

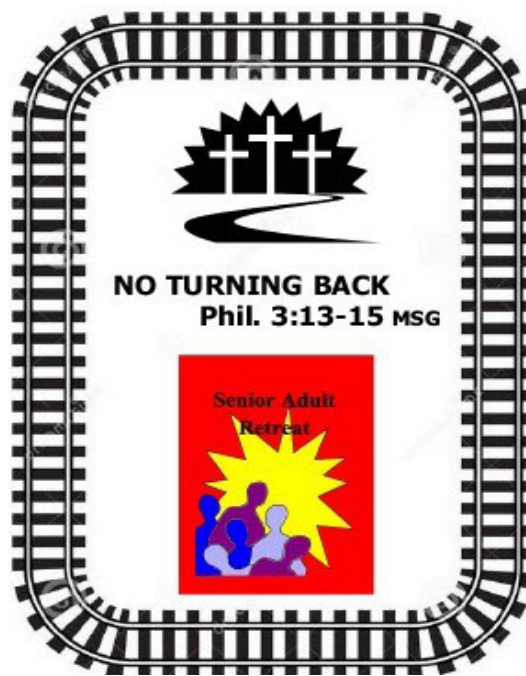
-The Unified Government of Wyandotte County has identified the lack of access to health and wellness resources as a key factor in low life expectancy.

Even when services are provided, the diversity of ethnic communities – Hispanic/Latino, White, Black, Congolese, Sudanese, Somali, Burmese, Iraqi, Bhutanese, Micronesian – and linguistic barriers in Wyandotte County often mean services are not understood or trusted and, consequently, not accessed.

*“Working with refugees and immigrants daily, I am drawn into their complex and varied life struggles in their new country. The healthcare system in this country is very confusing and is difficult for them to navigate. Their problem is compounded by low health literacy, language and cultural barriers, and lack of trust. The diverse communities we serve need a trusted organization like Bethel Neighborhood Center to work closely with them. Please donate to our capital campaign to provide help, health and hope to our at-risk community in Kansas City.”* —Rev. Dr. Mang Sonna, Executive Director of Bethel Neighborhood Center.



# Senior Adult Retreat 2023



**Rev. Dr. Jerry Cain**  
Keynote Speaker

**Apr 26-27, 2023**

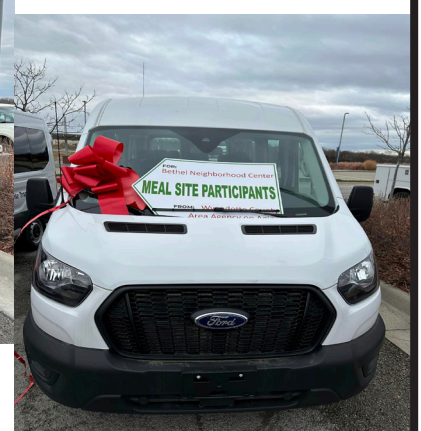
**West Side Baptist Church**

**304 S. Seneca  
Wichita, KS**

*Friends, don't get me wrong: By no means do I count myself an expert in all of this, but I've got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward—to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back. So let's keep focused on that goal, those of us who want everything God has for us. If any of you have something else in mind, something less than total commitment, God will clear your blurred vision—you'll see it yet! Now that we're on the right track, let's stay on it.*

## Area Agency on Aging Awards Vans to Bethel Neighborhood Center and Victory Hills Baptist Church

Both Bethel Neighborhood Center and Victory Hills Baptist Church, Kansas City were recipients of a passenger van from Area Agency on Aging during their Christmas in November van giveaway. Both ministries can continue to serve their communities in a much larger capacity. We are so thankful for the gift their ministry is to the Central Region.



## Central Region Life Goes Digital Beginning January 2023

The ABCCR Board of Directors agreed at our September 2022 meeting with a proposal to move the Central Region Life into the digital age. Beginning with the January 2023 issue, the publication will no longer come in a printed form, but will be available as a PDF download which can be printed by local churches for those who prefer the printed version. The rising printing and mailing costs, along with timing issues for the publication were significant factors in making this decision. We will have the current issue available each week as a link in the weekly email, and the issues will be archived on the Region's website for reference and access.

Please email Morgan Bandy at [morgan.bandy@abccr.org](mailto:morgan.bandy@abccr.org) if you would like to be added to the email list for both the CRL and any other Central Region news.

## Dr. Michael Thomas Celebrates 5 Years at Living in Victory Fellowship, Topeka, KS

On October 29, 2022, Living in Victory Fellowship in Topeka, KS, celebrated Dr. Michael Thomas' 5th anniversary as pastor. Several mentors and fellow-pastors spoke words of inspiration and encouragement for the gathered congregation. It was a great time of renewal! Below you'll find a picture of Michael Thomas as he gave words of response to the congregation. Then, some of the leaders of Living In Victory Fellowship made a presentation to Michael.



## First Baptist Church, McPherson Celebrates 150 years!

FBC of McPherson, KS celebrated their 150th anniversary as a church. On Saturday night, they held a wonderful dinner celebration that was emceed by Randy Flickinger. The program on Saturday night featured letters from former pastors and leaders, recorded videos, a recording from a worship service in the 1950s, and pictures from the past. Pastor John Pattison is doing a wonderful job leading this congregation into the future, while honoring the past. On Sunday, the gathered congregation worshipped together, celebrating all the ways God has worked through them in the last 150 years.



## Prayer for Puerto Rico, One Great Hour of Sharing Gifts Invited

Please pray for the people of Puerto Rico who are experiencing the most dramatic flooding on the island since Hurricane Maria. The 2022 Hurricane Fiona has dumped over 25 inches of rain and caused massive flooding.

Executive Minister Rev. Edgardo Caraballo lamented, "Currently most of the Island is without electricity service. Since Sunday we activated our Disaster Response Committee. We are taking an inventory of losses and needs among our pastoral families and congregations. We do not have much information yet because communications have been affected and the waters have not yet receded in many communities. But so far we have identified six families in three different churches who lost everything because of the floods."

Persons who wish to give to relief efforts may do so through the One Great Hour of Sharing offering. Checks and contributions should be labelled "OGHS PR 2022 Hurricane."

Relief efforts will be coordinated through the American Baptist Home Mission Societies. "We are so grateful for ABHMS that serves as the principle channel for distribution of relief funds in the U.S.," said General Secretary Dr. C. Jeff Woods. "ABHMS has organized a constant flow of volunteers to Puerto Rico since Hurricane Maria struck in 2017. Please pray, give, and volunteer as you are able to help our Puerto Rico residents recover from this disaster."

Dr. C. Jeff Woods  
General Secretary  
American Baptist Churches USA

# DISCIPLESHIP | MATTERS

## Children and Stewardship

In a culture focused on personal wants and desires, raising young stewards has never been more difficult! From cereal choices to sneakers, marketers target our children. Advertising messages blur the line between “wants” and “needs.”

It is important to teach stewardship habits early. Beginning with preschool, most children are taught to share. As these young minds are being shaped, faith perspective is critical.

Consider the following suggestions for teaching children biblical models of stewardship:

- Stewardship is learned and modeled at home. Encourage families to have conversations with their young children about caring for all that God has given us. It is important for parents to counter the voices of consumerism with God’s word.
- Provide families with simple tools. Suggest creating a three-jar bank system for children. Few illustrations have been more successful at teaching the value of saving, giving and spending than this easy ideal. Dividing their allowance and gifts into these three categories creates lifelong mental models.
- Teach that stewardship is about caring for *everything* God created. Provide children opportunities to give their money, time, energy and abilities in service and sharing with others. A range of activities—from picking up trash from a roadside to visiting a lonely neighbor—can help children see stewardship as involving all aspects of life.

— *The Rev. Dr. Christine Roush is American Baptist Home Missions Societies’ associate director of Discipleship.*



Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.

— Proverbs 22:6 (NIV)

# DISCIPLESHIP | MATTERS

## Making Christmas Meaningful

The pressure of the holiday shopping season coupled with numerous special events may make it difficult for families to keep the deep significance of Christmas at the center of their celebrations. Even in the most faithful families, children may perceive more emphasis on Santa Claus than on the Christ child. Consider using an unbreakable crèche set that children can handle. Set up the empty stable. Encourage children to “journey” Mary and Joseph through the house the week before Christmas, and then place them in the stable on Christmas Eve. Then place the baby in the manger, and add the shepherds. Tell the story from scripture or from a good children’s Bible storybook. In the days that follow, the Wise Men can journey through the house to visit the child.

The best time to plan for changes in observing Christmas is just after a family has experienced it. Talk together about what activities enhanced the celebration of the birth of Jesus, and which ones detracted from its significance. Think about how you might extend the meaning of Christmas into the New Year. For example, if children made Christmas cards for a nursing home, for what other occasions during the year might family members make cards, deliver small gifts or visit residents?

— *Martha Bettis Gee is a writer, editor and educator with more than two decades of experience in curriculum development and children’s ministries.*



Incarnation means that all ground is holy ground because God not only made it but walked on it, ate and slept and worked and died on it.

— Frederick Buechner

“A Matter of Stewardship: Eco-justice in Biblical Perspective” (#920C) can be downloaded at [abhms.org](http://abhms.org) > Publications & Resources > Workshops for Church Life and Leadership.

An Advent Wreath Dedication Service, two sets of weekly Advent readings, and a reproducible children’s Advent activity sheet for use in church or at home can be downloaded at [abhms.org](http://abhms.org) > Publications & Resources > Discipleship and Christian Education Guide.



*Everything comes from you; all we’re doing is giving back what we’ve been given from your generous hand.*

— 1 Chronicles 29:14b (MSG)

**The season of Advent**—beginning four Sundays before Christmas—contrasts with the relentless holiday shopping messages. In Advent, Christians prepare for Jesus’ birth and anticipate Christ’s second coming. Parents can reset the holiday button with times of quiet reflection. Here are a few suggestions. Light the Advent wreath candles every night at dinner or before bedtime. Have a quiet Advent picnic under the lighted Christmas tree with a take-out meal. Sing the first verse of a familiar carol together. Use the following blessing at mealtimes: “Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest, and let this food to us be blest.” Shop together for presents for vulnerable children—and talk about why.

— *Martha Bettis Gee is a writer, editor and educator with more than two decades of experience in curriculum development and children’s ministries.*



American Baptist Home Mission Societies  
Connect. Cultivate. Change.

DISCIPLESHIP | MATTERS is produced monthly by American Baptist Home Mission Societies. Download at no cost at [abhms.org](http://abhms.org) > Publications & Resources. For more information, contact Cassandra Carkuff Williams, ABHMS director of Discipleship Ministries, at [cwilliams@abhms.org](mailto:cwilliams@abhms.org).

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

Santa may not be as harmless a myth as many like to assume. According to psychologists, it can be traumatizing for children to learn that the people they trusted the most in the world have systematically lied to them. Some children then assume that the *other* Christmas personality, Jesus, is also a myth. And children who have meager Christmases can easily internalize being bad girls and boys because they did not receive their requested gifts.



A reproducible children’s Christmas activity sheet for use in church or at home can be downloaded at [abhms.org](http://abhms.org) > Publications & Resources > Discipleship Matters.

**The holidays** can be fraught with family stress—sometimes even more so for families of divorce or blended families. Here are some guidelines for making the season festive and peaceful.

- **Focus on the children**, considering what will work for them while taking care not to put on them the responsibility of pleasing adults.
- **Work out a detailed schedule** with former spouses, in-laws and extended family members to minimize stress for the children as well as yourself.
- **Don’t compete**—for time, best gifts or maintaining former traditions (and set boundaries with family members who want to compete).
- **Create new traditions** that incorporate and celebrate the way your family is now.
- **Avoid whatever does not serve** the purpose of celebrating God’s love and enjoying family and friends.



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Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

**REGISTER NOW**

**MIDWINTER MISSION & EVANGELISM CONFERENCE**

**Equipping the Saints**  
Eph. 4:12

Mission ————— Evangelism



**IM Global Servants**  
**DR. RICK & DR. ANITA**  
**GUTIERREZ**  
SERVING IN SOUTH AFRICA

**JANUARY 20-21, 2023**  
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH  
600 E Marlin St  
McPherson KS 67460

American Baptist Churches  
**Central Region**

REGISTER ONLINE [www.abccr.org](http://www.abccr.org)      MAIL REGISTRATION BEFORE JANUARY 5

**5 EASY WAYS TO BE A MISSION ADVOCATE**

**1. DECIDE TO JOIN GOD'S WORK**  
Say "YES" to God's work in the world! Being informed and engaged in God's work is one of the hallmarks of our Baptist faith. Decide now to come to the Midwinter Mission & Evangelism Conference.

**REGISTER NOW**

**2. LEARN**  
Learn about God's global mission work at the MWMC by registering online or completing a paper registration and mailing it TODAY

**3. Welcome**  
Be friends with God's global servants! Invite them into your home, hearts, and churches. Get to know the servants God is using to spread the Good News.

**4. Give**  
Prayerfully and financially support God's global servants by partnering with them each month. A free-will offering will be received.

**5. Pray**  
Ask God to release His supernatural blessing, so persons receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and churches are strengthened and grow.

**TRAVEL SAFELY TO THE MidWinter Mission & Evangelism Conference**

**FBC MCPHERSON**  
600 E Marlin St,  
McPherson KS 67460  
620-241-6400  
[www.fbcmcpherson.com](http://www.fbcmcpherson.com)



## HOTELS

- Hampton Inn 620-480-2990
- Holiday Inn Express 620-241-5566
- Best Western Plus 620-420-2667
- Holiday Manor 620-241-5343
- Fairfield Inn 620-504-5353
- McPherson Inn 620-241-3690
- Executive/Knights Inn 620-241-8881

\*Lodging options\* - All located within 5-10 minutes of the church. \* Each attendee will need to make a reservation and pay for their hotel or lodging.

American Baptist Churches of the Central Region

## Mid Winter Mission Conference

January 20 and 21, 2023



to be held at  
First Baptist Church, 600 E Marlin, McPherson, KS

### Registration

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Registration is \$25 per person** to pay travel expenses and honorarium for our missionary speakers Dr. Rick and Dr. Anita Gutierrez, who serve in South Africa.



Dinner and lunch will be provided by the McPherson church for a free will offering but we need to know by **January 7<sup>th</sup>**. # \_\_\_\_\_ Dinner # \_\_\_\_\_ Lunch

Please make checks payable to "Mid Winter Missions" and mail to: Wilma Engle, 6745 Interurban, Wichita, KS 67204-1323 or register and pay online. One person per registration.

Schedule	
Jan. 20 – 4:00 pm	Registration begins
5:15 pm	Dinner
6:30 pm	Program begins ---- Should end by 9:00 pm
Jan 21 -- 9:00 am	Gathering with music
12:00 noon	Lunch & homeward to share your experience

**Housing is on your own at local motels or with friends!**

**Offering for missions will be received!**