Central Region Life

NOVEMBER 2026

4TEN KICKS OFF A NEW YEAR!

The 4Ten program began another exciting year in October with a weekend gathering at Camp Horizon in Arkansas City, Kansas. Students from across the region came together for a time of fellowship, spiritual growth, and leadership development as they began their journey through another year of 4Ten.

Throughout the weekend, students participated in sessions and conversations centered on discovering who Jesus is, understanding what it means to follow His calling, and recognizing the unique gifts God has given each of us. Together, they explored how their faith can shape their lives and how they can use their individual gifts, talents, and abilities to serve God and others. These conversations encouraged students to reflect on their own faith journeys and consider the ways God may be calling them to make a difference in their churches, schools, and communities.

On Sunday, the focus shifted to worship and what it means to worship God both individually and as a community of faith. After exploring the different elements of worship and their significance, students were given the opportunity to put what they had learned into practice. Working together, they planned and led their own worship service, taking ownership of the experience and using their creativity and gifts to lead one another in worship.

The weekend provided a meaningful opportunity for students to build relationships, ask questions, grow in their understanding of faith, and discover new ways to serve and lead. We are excited to see how these young leaders continue to grow throughout the year and look forward to the opportunities ahead as they deepen their faith, develop their gifts, and explore God's calling in their lives.

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NOT JUST TOOLS BUT THE KEY TO SUCCESS IN REVITALIZATION

REV. CHRIS PRATER, ABBCR MINISTRY CONSULTANT

While all the P's that we are looking at have their place and role in the revitalization process, the significance of our next "P" cannot be overstated. I've previously mentioned how when we work in one of our P's, that work has an impact of varying degrees on other areas as well. Any work in this P has an impact on all the rest.

So, what is this significant P? PEOPLE. Specifically, the people making up the congregation you are striving to revitalize. This P is the group of individuals you are not just leading but working with to make a difference in the community that God has placed you. You need to know these people. You need to know them almost better than you know yourself.

When it comes to the revitalization process there is a specific question you need to make sure that can confidently answer as it pertains to the people you are walking this journey. That question is simply this – What is the people's (this congregation's) capacity to move forward? If you have a coach or consultant come into your context, that is probably how they will word the question. Do you understand what they are asking? Let me state it another way for you:

What is the people's (this congregation's) capacity to change?

Stated as "moving forward" might be a little less scary than using that nasty "c" word for some in the church. While it might ask the question a little less abrasive, it doesn't alter the fact that change and how our congregation's capacity to deal with it are going to play a major factor in the journey we have been called to travel.

Pastors and church leaders, let me challenge you here. Whether you are going to go forward with revitalization or not, you need to be aware of your congregation's capacity for moving forward. Whether you're going to continue down the same path or feel God calling you in a new direction, change is a fact of life. You as the leader, need to have an awareness of how well those you lead deal with change. That awareness gives you the insight needed to answer the questions of how much and at what speed to introduce change to your group.

If you are journeying through revitalization and you are dealing with this P, how do you answer this question? There are few key indicators for you to consider when trying to determine the congregation's capacity to move forward. The first indicator is to look at the level of desperation within the congregation.

The desperation we are talking about here is not a negative thing. The desperation we are talking about is that understanding that God is going to have to step in and turn this around and we are desperate to see God do just that. We are desperate to get ourselves out of the way so that God shines forth. We are desperate for the community around us to see God do something through us so that when they ask us, "How did that happen?" we can point them to God and boldly proclaim His goodness and mercy in working on our behalf. This level of desperation is willing to follow God wherever he might lead and do whatever He calls us to do.

The negative desperation, where we don't want to be, Is the desperation that has given up all hope. The desperation that leads us to giving up and leaves us unwilling to follow God anywhere or try anything. "What's the point?" desperation is not the desperation we want or are talking about. This is the desperation the enemy wants us to experience and live in.

The second indicator in answering our question is the congregation's ability to have awareness. This indicator has several levels that we must be willing to look at and consider throughout the revitalization journey. As the leader for this journey, it requires us to be able to have awareness on multiple levels, simultaneously at times. Let me give you what may be the two most frequent ones.

Self-awareness is the first awareness. What are my blind spots? What are my gifts and talents and where can I use those to contribute to the revitalization process? What are some of my strengths and some of my weaknesses? Are you aware of your personality type and leadership style preferences?

Social awareness is another awareness that will be needed. How your group has historically interacted together. Is everyone aware of who has or hasn't got along in the past? Is there someone who needs to be handled carefully when in a group? Who are your alpha personalities and how have the group dealt with them in the past? How have you been able to get your introverts to contribute to conversations in the past?

The third indicator is the age of congregation members. This in no way is to say a congregation made up of seniors can't go through the revitalization process. Nor is this trying to say that our seniors do not have the capacity to move forward. The point of this indicator is dealing with more with the speed at which we move. If your congregation is made up primarily of senior members, a slower pace may be necessary to give changes time to be processed and received.

The fourth indicator of capacity is the congregation's history with change. Specifically, when was the last successful change implemented? How long did it take for that change to go from suggestion to implementation? (Here is another awareness – Contextual awareness.) Another thing to look at is the last unsuccess attempt at change as well. Sometimes we can learn more from those times as we do from successful change attempts in the past.

Congregational revitalization starts and ends with our people. As pastors and church leaders, we need those in pews to see the need for congregational renewal as well. If they don't see the need, revitalization without them is like trying to push a car while it is in park (another P).

Are you ready to see if your congregation has the capacity to move forward? Give me call or send me an email and let me help you journey with your congregation through the revitalization journey.

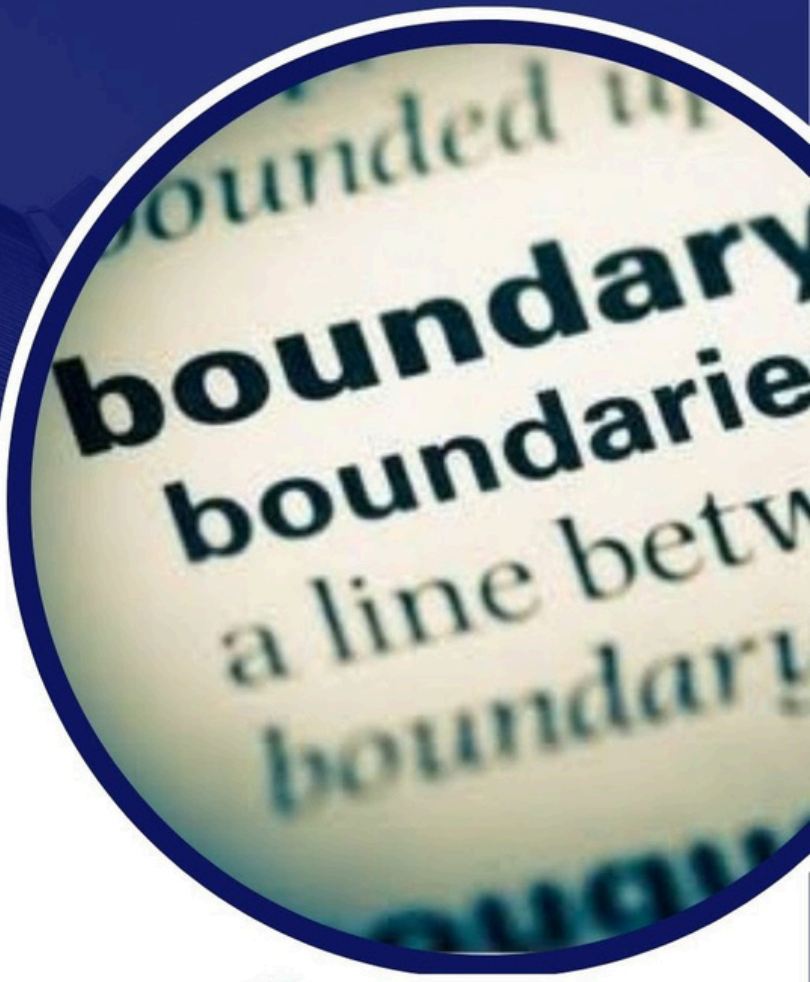
Rev. G. Chris Prater
Pastor, First Baptist Church of Hays, KS
Consultant on Church Revitalization, ABCCR
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American Baptist Churches of the Central Region

BOUNDARIES TRAINING

Registration Deadline:
November 25, 2026

To register, email:
Rev. Dr. Gregg Hemmen,
gregg.hemmen@abccr.org
or
Rev. Jan Smith,
jsonnall@gmail.com



Saturday, December 5
9:30am

ABCCR Office
5889 SW 29th St
Topeka, KS 66614

Rev. Mike Justice
Boundaries Training

$50 per person
Lunch is included

American Baptist Churches
Central Region

This training is for pastors in the ordination process, church leaders, or anyone who wants to explore healthy relationships with others. The training will explore appropriate boundaries in pastoral relationships, leadership, communication, and personal well-being. As part of the training, strategies will be suggested for staying safe and healthy within the demanding ministry context.
The cost is $50.00 per person and lunch will be provided.

Mid Winter Missions Conference
January 15-16, 2027
FBC – Emporia, KS



Who is My Neighbor?: Mission at Home
Matthew 22:37-39



Rev. Robin Stoops
Keynote Speaker

The Rev. Dr. Robin D. Stoops is a seasoned ministry leader, educator, and mentor with four decades of pastoral experience. He currently serves as Co-Director of the Antioch Center at Central Seminary, a member of the supplemental faculty, and a mentor to students from Burma. In addition, he contributes to donor development with the American Baptist Foundation and chairs the Burma Research Institute, as well as the Burmese Community of Kansas.

Throughout his years in ministry, Dr. Stoops has shepherded churches across South Dakota, Kansas, Iowa, and Nebraska and led as Executive Minister of the American Baptist Churches of Nebraska for 12 years. His broader work with the American Baptist Churches includes serving as Associate General Secretary for Mission Resource Development. preaching, pastoral searches, leadership development, conflict transformation, mission funding and development. He has guided Mission Study Trips to South America, Europe, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa with ABC Nebraska pastors and partners.

Beyond his ministry, he serves as Foundation Chairperson for the American Baptist Homes of the Midwest and as an officer of the Regional Executive Ministers Council. He founded ChurchHelp.net to assist unaffiliated churches with pastoral searches,
leadership training, and conflict transformation on a fee basis. Dr. Stoops also served as Special Assistant to Theological Education for Burma with International Ministries, coordinated the Burma Refugee Commission, and contributes to the Burma Advocacy Group.

Dr. Stoops and his wife, Kathy, celebrated 51 years of marriage in July 2026. They have three grown children and eight grandchildren. He remains committed to equipping leaders, strengthening ministries, and fostering missional partnerships worldwide.

ONLINE_REGISTRATION

ABCCR
Mid-Winter Missions Conference
January 15-16, 2027
First Baptist Church, Emporia, KS

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone number: _____

Registrationis $45perperson*. This is to help cover travel expenses and honorarium for the keynotespeaker andtwo meals (provided by FBC Emporia).

Dietaryneeds(pleasecircle if applicable): Diabetic Gluten Free Vegetarian

*Pleasemakecheckspayable to: “ABCCR” Write “MWMC 2027” in Memo line
Mailcompletedformand registration fee to:

ABCCR
5889SW29St
Topeka, KS66614

Or - Register and pay online at:
www.abccr.org, click on “events” tab

Registrationformandfee are due no later than January 4, 2027. One registration per person. Lodgingisonyourown.

Schedule for event:

Friday, January15	4:30 Registration
	5:15 Dinner
	6:30 Evening Session
Saturday, January16	9:00 Morning Session (An offering for Missions will be received)
	12:00 Lunch (this will conclude our time together)



“Who is My Neighbor? Mission at Home”
Rev. Dr. Robin Stoops
Keynote Speaker



PLANNED GIVING

HELPING YOU TO GIVE GENEROUSLY,
REV. TIM SCHWARTZ
KBCF DIRECTOR OF PLANNED GIVING
913-424-9939/ 785-272-7622
TIM.SCHWARTZ@ABCCR.ORG

It's the month of our traditional holiday in the USA, known as Thanksgiving, which is all about giving thanks and let us do just that! I am thinking of the Bible verse from first Thessalonians 5:18, which says, " in everything give thanks…" I would say that is a good verse to live by and something for all of us to work on in our daily lives. Unfortunately, I did not practice that in my heart 2 days ago.

I went to a local card and gift shop in the Kansas City area and I had planned to use my coupon for 30% off one item. This was not a copy of a coupon or a facsimile of one, but a real coupon from a national card retailer with their symbol on it and colors of purple and gold. I didn't think I would have any problem using it because as far as I'm concerned, it was the real deal. So I chose the item that I wanted to buy and I was also getting a free card. So I went to pay for them and I laid my coupon down on the counter and the lady behind the register said oh, I'm sorry. I can't accept this coupon. So I asked her why and told her that I didn't understand because this was a national coupon that had been given out at many of their shops. She told me that the coupon they had given out was a $5 off of a $20 purchase coupon and that this coupon was not given out at the store so she couldn't accept it. I asked one more time and she responded again that she could not accept it and you should have seen the look on her face! It was very stern and her expression was like," don't mess with me." Well, I knew I was not going to have my way, so I just let it go and I told her to cancel the sale, because the item was way too expensive without the 30% off coupon. So she rang up my free card and I asked her if there was any tax for me to pay and she said "no" and thanked me. I didn't leave in a huff or make a scene, but I was very frustrated and upset on the inside as I left the shop. I couldn't believe that they wouldn't take my coupon that had come from the national company, but they wouldn't and life goes on. Since I wasn't giving thanks in this situation, I will just have to work harder on that in the future.

Planned giving is something I get to work with all the time now. Many times a planned gift can be the result of someone who is giving thanks for a person, a life-changing event, an institution or a ministry. The donor gives a monetary gift or funds a charitable gift annuity to honor or remember someone or something and also financially blesses that person or another family member or friend as well.

People who live in the USA and citizens of our country are generally people who are caring and giving. As I learned in Catholic grade school, they may give of their time, their talent and their treasure. That of course relates to the area of stewardship, which is something we talk about a lot during this month, since churches and nonprofits are planning budgets for the new year. As we prepare to celebrate Thanksgiving, I wonder what the state of giving in our country is? One thing that sheds light on this topic is a report that is prepared every year called the "Giving USA Annual Report." It is the longest running, most comprehensive annual study tracking the sources and uses of charitable giving in the United States. It has been published every year since 1956 and it is considered the gold standard for philanthropic data. It is published by the Giving USA Foundation and is researched and written by the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy.

It does a lot of important work related to a variety of giving topics. For example, it estimates donations categorized across four major segments including individuals, Foundations, bequests and corporations. It helps to classify where the money goes using regular charitable categories like religion, education, human services, and public-society benefit. The methodology they use relies on tax data, economic indicators and demographic trends to produce a thorough and extensive report. Just so you are aware, the 2026 giving USA report is based on charitable giving facts and data from 2025. This would make good sense to all of us because it takes time to read, analyze, research, synthesize and aggregate all of the data from the year before.

The Giving USA Report generally contains 350 + pages of strategic insights, comprehensive tables and in-depth analysis. I am going to share just three important findings related to the status of charitable giving in the USA.

1. The total estimated charitable giving in 2025 reached a record shattering $617.2 billion dollars, representing a 5.7% increase in current dollars over the previous year.

2. Giving by individuals also increased 4.1% in current dollars (1.4% adjusted for inflation) to $394.2 billion dollars.

3. Giving by foundations also grew by 5.7%, reaching an estimated total of $117.15 billion dollars. When it is adjusted for inflation, foundation giving rose 3 %.

There is a tremendous amount of information in this supremely important report on giving in our country and I want to share one more finding from the report that will probably not surprise us, but it does need to be mentioned. That is religious organizations received the largest share of charitable giving dollars in 2025. Following that, other growth sectors included education, public-society benefit & environment/ animals. If you don't have anything else to do and you are interested, you can just put the "Giving USA 2026 report" into your search engine and go from there to find out much more about giving in our home country. Maybe you can do that while sitting on the couch before the tryptophan kicks in from your turkey dinner, while waiting for the next football game?

Whether you are giving thanks or celebrating all of God's blessings to you this year, if you are interested in funding a charitable gift annuity before the year is over, please reach out to me by phone, text, email or voicemail and I will get back with you right away. I would be delighted to help you in the process of funding this split interest gift, which would provide funds to your beneficiary for the rest of their life and take the remainder amount and financially bless one mission partner or a multitude of mission partners, when you go home to be with the Lord. If I can be of help or answer any questions related to this, please let me know. I want to extend my heartiest greetings to each and every one of you for a holy and happy Thanksgiving with your families and friends as you gather around the table and give thanks for all the blessings of this year!!

Source: Giving USA 2026: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the year 2025.
Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy.

New Connection Grant Application

Have an idea for connecting your church with your community?

The East Central Area (ECA) is offering grant opportunities to support churches in building new relationships and partnerships within their communities!

Grants are available to ECA churches planning events, outreach initiatives, or other activities that involve **a new connection or partnership within the community.**

We encourage ECA churches to explore new opportunities for community engagement and take advantage of this funding to bring their ideas to life!

Ready to get started?

Scan the QR Code to access the grant application and apply!

Antioch Center
AT CENTRAL SEMINARY

ONLINE CERTIFICATES OFFERED THIS FALL

TECHNOLOGY AND FAITHFUL INNOVATION IN MINISTRY

This five-week certificate course includes "Generosity, Stewardship, and Technology," "AI and Pastoral Ministry," "Social Media and Mission," "The Theology of Technology," and "Email as an Extension of Outreach." Led by experts in the field, this course explores the opportunities and challenges of technology in ministry.

- Tuesdays, 7:00pm - 9:00pm (CT)
- September 29 - October 27
- $125





CREATING A BLUEPRINT FOR MINISTRY TO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Join Rev. Jessica Asbell Oravec for this four-week certificate course and learn how to develop a practical ministry blueprint tailored for your church. As part of the course, participants will receive a complimentary copy of "Building Blocks of Faith: Teaching the Bible to Children."

- Mondays, 6:30pm - 8:30pm (CT)
- November 2 - 23
- $100

antiochcenter.cbts.edu

PRAYER EMPHASIS

During this month, let us simply give thanks!

Who are you thankful for? Pray for them or remember them in a prayer.

What are you thankful for? Say a prayer of thanks for that.

When was a day, event, season or chapter in time that you are thankful for? Offer a prayer of Thanksgiving for that time.

Where is a place that you are thankful for? Is it a place in your past, in your Christian formation or a place that is meaningful today? Share a prayer with Jesus for that sacred place or space.

Finally, why are you thankful? What has God done in your life in the past or today or in the promise of the future? Speak or sing a prayer of thanks to the Holy Spirit for what the spirit has done for you?

As the scripture says, "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus." I Thessalonians 5:18 (NASB)



The Word in a Weary World

PREACHING HOPE FOR TIRED HEARTS



APRIL 5–7, 2027

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
OF GREATER DES MOINES

8250 NW 62ND AVE.
JOHNSTON, IA 50131

PRAIRIE PASTORS
CONFERENCE

Senior Adult Retreat 2027

Exploring a Flourishing Finish

Philippians 1:6



Keynote Speaker

REV. DR. WALLACE SMITH

First Baptist Church
1330 Kasold Dr
Lawrence, KS 66049

April 28-29, 2027

"A Flourishing Finish" is a phrase rooted in the Bible. It means that life will not end in defeat, but in victory, restoration, and fulfilled dreams.

The phrase comes from Philippians 1:6, which states that God will bring the work He started in a person to a flourishing finish until Christ returns. It represents the belief that God completes what He begins rather than leaving a person broken or defeated.

Mark your calendars for the 2027 Senior Adult Retreat!
You will find Fun, Fellowship and Friends gathering together to Explore, Find, and Celebrate how God is and will work within us!

mpyc-abc.org

MOUNTAINS & PRAIRIES

Youth Conference

JUNE 25-29, 2028



Keynote Speaker
DR. KATHY MAXWELL

YMCA OF THE ROCKIES
ESTES PARK, COLORADO