

Central Region Life

JULY 2026

CALLED BY NAME: MPYC 2026

On June 14- 18, high school students and adult leaders from ABC of the Central Region, ABC of the Great Rivers Region, Mid-American Baptist Churches, ABC of Nebraska, and ABC of the Rocky Mountains gathered at YMCA Snow Mountain Ranch in Granby, Colorado, for the Mountains and Prairies Youth Conference. Surrounded by the beauty of the mountains, students spent the week worshiping, learning, building friendships, trying new things, and creating plenty of memories along the way.

Throughout the week, students enjoyed uplifting worship led by the First Kachin Baptist Church of America and powerful preaching from DJ Dangerfield, pastor of FBC Chanute, KS. We even had the opportunity to listen to testimonies of how God has called others to pastoral ministry, to the mission field overseas, and to work in their local communities. Each worship experience gave students the opportunity to come together, reflect, and grow in their faith as they explored the conference theme, **"Called By Name"**.

To begin each day, students gathered in small groups led by peer leaders. These groups created space for students to process what they heard in worship, ask questions, share their thoughts, and connect with one another. It was a joy to watch young people take on these leadership roles. Leading small groups encouraged students to recognize their own gifts and voices within the body of Christ.

There was certainly no shortage of fun! During free time, students could choose from horseback riding, tubing, mini golf, roller-skating, basketball, volleyball, pickleball, and more. Students also had the opportunity to explore the beautiful Colorado landscape through hikes led by Pat Hernandez from the American Baptist Foundation.

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Women in Ministry Retreat



The fun continued into the evenings with activities designed to bring everyone together. Each night, students and leaders had a chance to fellowship together. Whether it was around the campfire to sing camp songs, challenging each other while playing board games, sharing their gifts during a talent show, or singing their hearts out at karaoke, they were able to connect and have fun together. MPYC even joined in celebrating Central Seminary's 125th birthday with Dr. Pam Durso, president of Central Seminary. And of course, a celebration is not complete without cake!

MPYC is about more than a week in the mountains. It is about creating spaces where young people can experience God, discover community, develop as leaders, and know that they have a place in the body of Christ. From powerful worship and meaningful conversations to hikes, karaoke, and plenty of laughter, MPYC 2026 was a reminder that wherever we find ourselves, God meets us there, and calls us to be His disciples.

We are grateful for every student, sponsor, peer leader, speaker, musician, and partner who helped make MPYC 2026 an incredible week. We look forward to seeing how the relationships built, lessons learned, and faith strengthened at MPYC continue to impact our young people and churches in the days ahead.



Individual Registration

Childcare Registration

Register using the links above or visit
<https://www.abccr.org/annual-gathering-2026>

2026 ANNUAL GATHERING

THIS HOPE IS A STRONG AND
TRUSTWORTHY ANCHOR FOR OUR
SOULS. IT LEADS US THROUGH
THE CURTAIN INTO GOD'S INNER
SANCTUARY.

HEBREWS 6:19 (NLT)



SEPTEMBER 25-26, 2026
KANSAS LAUTU BAPTIST CHURCH
KANSAS CITY, KANSAS

September 25-26, 2026

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:
REV. DR. GREG MAMULA

**KANSAS LAUTU
BAPTIST CHURCH**

2900 Minnesota Ave,
Kansas City, KS 66102

Registration Deadline: September 1, 2026 (Including delegates who are only attending the online business meeting).

Meals are not guaranteed for those who register after the deadline.

The 2026 ABCCR Annual Business meeting will be held via Zoom on September 15, 2026 at 7:00pm.

Keynote Speaker

Rev. Dr. Greg Mamula serves as the Executive Minister of the American Baptist Churches of Nebraska, where he helps congregations strengthen their shared life through collaboration, courageous leadership, and faithful imagination. He is deeply committed to the conviction that churches helping churches is not merely a strategy, but a spiritual calling rooted in the gospel.

As a preacher and teacher, Greg is shaped by biblical theology and a deep love for the local church. His scholarship focuses on the Jewish context of the New Testament, and his preaching consistently invites communities to live faithfully between the promises of God and the challenges of the present moment.

Those who hear him speak often describe his voice as both grounded and hopeful—honest about the realities facing the church, yet confident in the Spirit’s ongoing work among God’s people.

As an author, he explores how ordinary practices—especially shared meals—become sacred spaces where disciples are formed, and community is renewed.

Beyond his professional roles, Greg is a pastor at heart. He cares deeply about congregations of all sizes, especially those seeking renewal, courage, and clarity for ministry in changing times. He believes the church’s future is not found in fear or retreat, but in deeper discipleship, shared leadership, and a renewed trust in God’s presence among us.

Greg and his wife, Lisa, live in Nebraska with their two teenage children. He loves stories, history, baseball, and the quiet ways God forms people around tables and in community.



Rev. Dr. Greg Mamula
Executive Minister
ABC of Nebraska

2026 ANNUAL GATHERING SCHEDULE

Thursday, September 24

- 3:00 PM Executive Committee Meeting
5:30 PM Ministers Council Dinner & Program

Friday, September 25

- 8:30 AM Registration Begins at First Baptist
9:30 AM Session # 1
11:00 AM Lunch
11:45 AM ABW Meeting– Kristy Engel
ABMen’s Meeting– Jon Good
1:15 PM Session #2
2:45 PM Break
3:00 PM Workshop Session 1
#1 – Del Rae McCoullough, Church Safety and Security
#2 – Kristy Engel, IM Global Servant
#3 – Fun with Bible Baseball, Lois Chiles
4:15 PM Workshop Session #2
#1 – Ministry with Senior Adults, Rev. Janet Crowl
#2 – Church Revitalization, Rev. Chris Prater
#3 – Paul Wood, Head Hunters Transformed
5:45 PM Dinner
6:45 PM Session #3
8:00 PM Ice Cream Social & CBTS Birthday Celebration

Saturday, September 26

- 8:00 AM Registration Continues at KLBC
8:30 AM Devotion– Rev. Daphne Braswell
9:00 AM Recap of Business Meeting
Installation of Officers
9:30 AM Session #4
10:30 AM Break
10:45 AM Worship & Communion
11:30 AM Journey home

Please note that the ABCCR Annual Business meeting will be held via Zoom on September 15, 2026 at 7:00 PM.

WORKSHOPS

WORKSHOP SESSION #1

DEL RAE
MCCOULLOUGH

Church Safety and Security

Del Rae McCullough is the Regional Director for Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company in Kansas, specializing in ministry-focused risk management and church safety. She travels throughout the state helping churches build secure, customized liability and property policies

KRISTY
ENGEL

International Ministries, Global Servant

Kristy, a global consultant with a healthcare focus, is a trained pediatric nurse practitioner who served for 12 years in the Dominican Republic, leading teams and working with public health issues.

LOIS
CHILES

Batter Up! Fun With Bible Baseball

Join in the fun of a baseball challenge using Bible trivia to score points.

WORKSHOP SESSION #2

JANET
CROWL

Ministry with Senior Adults

Explore meaningful ways to engage, support, and empower older adults through compassionate and purposeful ministry.

CHRIS
PRATER

Church Revitalization

A brief introduction to Church Revitalization. We will discuss what the goal of Church Revitalization should be, along with a brief discussion on misconceptions about the process. A time of Q & A about the process.

PAUL
WOOD

Headhunters Transformed: The Story of God at Work in the Garo Hills of NE India

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, two Garo men were transformed and were used by God to begin the mission of bringing the Garo people to the saving knowledge of Christ. American Baptist missionaries to the Garo Hills followed in the footsteps of these men, and were used by God to spread the Word throughout the hills.



Lodging and Hotels

Please make lodging arrangements for the gathering as soon as possible, as it is race weekend in Kansas City and hotels are filling up fast! This is just for your information, there are no hotel blocks.

**Hilton Garden Inn
Kansas City/Kansas**
520 Minnesota Ave,
Kansas City, KS 66101
(913) 342-7900
10 minutes from KLBC

**Holiday Inn Kansas City -
Downtown, an IHG Hotel**
770 Admiral Blvd,
Kansas City, MO 64106
(816) 492-7565
15 minutes from KLBC

**Home2 Suites
Kansas City Downtown**
2001 Main St.
Kansas City, MO 64108
(816) 987-7300
15 minutes from KLBC

**Holiday Inn Express Kansas
City - at the Legends by IHG**
1931 Prairie Crossing,
Kansas City, KS 66113
(913) 328-1024
15 minutes from KLBC

**Best Western Plus KC
Speedway Inn & Suites**
10401 France Family Dr,
Kansas City, KS 66111
(913) 334-4440
15 minutes from KLBC

**Hampton Inn Kansas City
The Legends**
1400 Village West Pkwy,
Kansas City, KS 66111
(913) 328-1400
15 minutes from KLBC

**Courtyard by Marriott
Kansas City Shawnee**
17250 Midland Dr,
Shawnee, KS 66217
(913) 631-8800
20 minutes from KLBC

**Comfort Inn & Suites
Shawnee - Kansas City**
16510 Midland Dr,
Shawnee, KS 66217
(913) 951-0988
20 minutes from KLBC

**Holiday Inn & Suites
Overland Park-West by IHG**
8787 Reeder St,
Overland Park, KS 66214
(913) 888-8440
20 minutes from KLBC

**Hilton
Kansas City Airport**
8801 NW 112th St,
Kansas City, MO 64153
(816) 891-8900
20 minutes from KLBC

**Holiday Inn Kansas City
Airport by IHG**
11728 N Ambassador Dr,
Kansas City, MO 64153
(816) 801-8400
20 minutes from KLBC

**SpringHill Suites by
Marriott Kansas City Airport**
8303 N Stoddard Ave,
Kansas City, MO 64152
(816) 321-1200
20 minutes from KLBC

STARTING LINE — IN THE REVITALIZATION PROCESS

REV. CHRIS PRATER, ABBCR MINISTRY CONSULTANT

I am sure most of us have heard the question, "How do you eat an elephant?" Along with the response, "One bite at a time." But like any daunting task the real question might not be how to do it but where to start. The process of church revitalization can seem overwhelming for many church leaders as we question, "Where do we even start?"

Let's just be clear one important issue when it comes to the revitalization process – from beginning to ending, it is dependent on the work and movement of God. Now God has given us a role to play within this process so we can't just sit back and do nothing. Our starting point has two important elements. These two elements are just done at the beginning of the revitalization process, they continue throughout the process.

I mentioned in last month's article that the revitalization process as I learned it and walk with churches through the process has 7 P's that we work through. Before each of the specific P's, we come back to and deal with these beginning elements. While those 7-P's might be processed through in any variety of sequential order, the starting point for each should always be the same – these two elements.

Ok, what are these two elements. The first is prayer. Stop right now and spend a couple minutes with God in prayer. Go ahead, I'll wait. Before you just jump into this very daunting process of revitalization, I hope you spend more than just a couple of minutes in prayer seeking God's guidance in this matter. As I stated in the first article, this isn't a journey to begin under prepared and the most important way to prepare is spending a significant amount of time in prayer in preparation. Just a friendly reminder at this point, Jesus spent about twelve hours in prayer right before he chose the twelve disciples. A great reminder that any time we face major decisions or choices we should be willing to spend more than just a couple minutes asking for some instructions.

I'm challenging you to spend so significant time in prayer, so what specific things should you be praying for and/or about? The things I am going to bring up here, you should already be praying for as a church leader but now you want to pray for them specifically in the context of the church revitalization process. The first is your leadership team. However your church might be structured, you want to pray for the leadership team to be open and bold to follow the path that God might lay out before you as pertaining to revitalization. I've stated before and will state again (and again, and again) that this is not an easy journey. Prayers don't make it any easier, but it makes it a little more manageable by reminding us of who is ultimately in charge and that we don't walk this journey alone.

The second thing to include in your time of prayer is the congregation at large. Pray for openness and receptivity to the suggestions brought by the leadership team. Pray that they would themselves be willing to pray for the church and its leadership during the process. Pray that they would be bold enough to share any insights or ideas that the Holy Spirit might provide them and not just sit on the sidelines because they aren't "in leadership".

Thirdly, pray for yourself. This process takes time and energy, beyond what pastoral leadership already requires of us. This process requires us to find that next gear for season. While working through the process it calls us to dig a little deeper within ourselves a push a little harder. Pray wisdom to know in what other areas you might be able to back off for a time to focus on this journey. I believe wholeheartedly in the need for self-care. I am telling you to sacrifice your wellbeing for this process. Balance does need to be maintained. So what you are asking God for is wisdom in what other areas might you be able delegate or step away from in order that you have the needed time and energy for the journey of revitalization. This might be one of the most important reasons that revitalization should not be entered into lightly or without serious consideration and prayer.

Because of all the stated reasons above, you should also be praying for your family. Pray that God would prepare them for journey just as much as He is preparing you. Because this journey will affect you, your family will be impacted. One of the most helpful ways to make this a positive impact is to be open and honest with your family about the journey and how it is impacting you.

Prayer is the first element; discernment is the second. All this time spent in prayer, part of what we should be asking for is the wisdom to discern the direction God would have you and the church follow. The wisdom to see the path before and the boldness to follow that path in faith, knowing and trusting God is directing your steps. Discernment in the choices you and the church leadership will have to make along the way. Discernment in when to say, "Yes." And may when, maybe even more importantly, when to say, "No."

These two elements are pivotal in the church's revitalization journey. Not just in the beginning but throughout the process. If you call to talk to me about helping you and the church, please know one of the first questions I will ask you is, "Have you been praying about this issue and what have you discerned through your time of prayer?" I'm not after the solution to the issues you face. If you had that, you wouldn't be looking for someone to journey with you on the revitalization process. I just want to see if you've started in the right spot.

But now that you have been praying. Now that you discern that God is calling you to help the church through a revitalization process, give me a call or email and let's walk this journey together. I look forward to working with you and your church.

Blessings,
Rev. Chris Prater
Pastor, First Baptist Church of Hays, KS
Consultant on Church Revitalization
pastorgchris@yahoo.com



**FIRST EVENT
OCTOBER
9-11**

4TEN is cutting edge leadership skills training for youth entering 10-12th grades during the fall. 4TEN was formed by the scripture I Peter 4:10.

It exists to empower our youth to employ their gifts to serve Jesus and set an example.

Youth are the leaders of the future; we need them to step up NOW in their local churches!

Students who are chosen for this program are young people who love Jesus and are willing to grow in their relationship with Christ. Students do not need to feel a call to full-time ministry but do have the gifts and desires to be leaders in their churches.

If you would like to nominate someone, send their name, church, and phone number to Rev. Jennifer Schneider or scan the QR code that will take you to then website where you can fill out an application.

 **CONTACT US**

jennifer.schneider@abccr.org



PLANNED GIVING HAPPY 250TH BIRTHDAY TO THE USA

HELPING YOU TO GIVE GENEROUSLY,
REV. TIM SCHWARTZ
KBCF DIRECTOR OF PLANNED GIVING
913-424-9939 / 785-272-7622
TIMMANS39@GMAIL.COM
TIM.SCHWARTZ@ABCCR.ORG

Many people are excited about and getting ready for America's 250th birthday! Because your director of planned giving for the Kansas Baptist Convention Foundation is also a historian, I want to make sure that we are correct in our birthday greetings. It is not the 250th birthday of America since America is actually two continents in the Western Hemisphere. These two continents were first referred to collectively as "America" on a world map in 1507 by German cartographer, Martin Waldseemuller. Thirty-one years later, the specific distinction of North and South America was first formerly used by Flemish cartographer, Gerardo Mercator on his significant world map created at this time. So I think it's also important that we say, "Happy 250th birthday to the United States of America."

Now I know you're out there thinking what does this have to do with planned giving? Since I must answer you honestly, I would have to say that it has nothing to do with planned giving, but it is an introduction to the reading and research that I have been doing on the history of planned giving, which goes much further back than 250 years ago! Besides, learning a little history is not going to hurt you at all.

Now if we just look at it on the surface, meaning to look at those two words, "planned" and "giving" and we include God in the story, I think we could say that God is all about planned giving. God's essence and God's presence is all about giving and we can see that evident in the writings about creation in the Book of Genesis. As we know, God created everything including light and dark, heaven and earth, and everything in the universe from the largest planet to the smallest insect. God's giving provided all of the vegetation, animals and the glorious garden for humankind, just to name a few things. Then God's plan of giving created man and woman, and God called all these things good. We can give thanks for that.

In my first planned giving article for the Central Region Life in January 2022, I began by talking about the beginning of Psalm 24, which says, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." My theme then was that everything belongs to God and God motivates us to give back to God and others. Verse 1 of Psalm 24 also echoes what I just wrote, which is that God is all about planned giving.

Even though I am not an etymologist, I am compelled to return to the exact definition of planned giving. Since the Merriam-Webster dictionary does not have an official definition for this exact phrase, I will turn to another source. PlannedGiving.com defines the term this way. Planned giving is a method of charitable giving that enables a donor to integrate philanthropic wishes into their overall financial, tax and estate planning. So that narrows it down quite a bit.

While we are certainly not 250 years old, the Kansas Baptist Convention Foundation is 67 years old and we have been offering opportunities for planned giving since 1959. The primary way we do that is through the promotion of charitable gift annuities.

While I had written an article previously about the history of charitable gift annuities, I discovered something new about that in my latest research. Previously I noted that the American Bible society became the first nonprofit to actively offer gift annuities to the public in 1843, and that is true. However, the first official charitable gift annuity was funded in 1831 and it involved a famous painter at the time, a prestigious college and a gift of iconic paintings in exchange for the first charitable gift annuity!

Ron Brown, the director of gift planning at Fordham University, shares this story about the history of gift planning and charitable gift annuities. John Trumbull, an accomplished painter whose monumental Revolutionary War paintings still hang in the rotunda of the United States capitol building today, was 75 years old in 1830 and despite his success, he was broke.

Trumbull had his own astonishing story of being an overcomer as well. After graduating from Harvard, Trumbull became an aide to General George Washington during the American Revolution. He was determined to become a painter, despite being nearly blind in his left eye from a childhood injury, and with the encouragement of Thomas Jefferson, began his celebrated historical series a few years after the war ended. Trumbull was commissioned by Congress in 1817 to paint large versions of four of his works for the Capitol building in Washington DC, including his most famous painting, "Declaration of Independence."

In 1830, despite such recognition, he was living alone in a New York City Apartment, widowed and poor. His friend, Benjamin Silliman, Yale's first science professor and the husband of Trumbull's niece, asked him what he planned to do with more than a hundred paintings. According to the book, "Yale:A History": he replied, "I will give them to Yale College to be exhibited forever for the benefit of poor students provided the college will pay me a competent annuity for the remainder of my life."

As a result of this, Professor Silliman became the first gift planner in the USA, persevering through a year and a half of supremely difficult negotiations because Yale College had no money to fund a gift annuity of \$1,000 or to construct an art gallery to display Mr. Trumbull's artworks. Yet the astounding result was the first college art gallery in our nation and the first of many thousands of charitable gift annuities that fund so much philanthropic and charitable work today in the USA!

While some of you are very talented artists, I'm guessing that you don't have a collection of art that you wish to turn over to the foundation to fund a charitable gift annuity? If so, please let me know. Otherwise, if you wish to fund a charitable gift annuity for as little as \$1,000, please get a hold of me and I will be happy to talk with you, give you more details and help you in the process of funding that gift annuity with the Kansas Baptist Convention Foundation. Happy 250th birthday to our country, the United States of America!

Source: Kelley, Brooks Mather. Yale:A History. Yale University Press, 1974.



PRAYER

EMPHASIS

As we commemorate and honor the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, let us remember the Baptist idea of soul freedom and pray for our country according to your own faith framework, as a follower of Christ.

Let us pray for all of the leaders in our country, whether they be executive, legislative or judicial, from the precinct and township to the village and county to the city and state and to the national level, that in this “melting pot” of our country, they might live and govern with justice, mercy and humility. As the prophet, Micah, reminds us:

“To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:8b (NIV)



Declaration of Independence (1819), by John Trumbull



SAVE THE DATE

Building God's Community Women and Girls Conference



JULY 17 - JULY 18, 2026

Hybrid: Online & in person at Select Locations

"FOR WE ARE CO-WORKERS, WORKING TOGETHER; YOU ARE GOD'S FIELD, GOD'S BUILDING." - 1 CORINTHIANS 3:9



Visit Our Website
WWW.ABWOMENSMINISTRIES.ORG



From **BROKENNESS** To **WHOLENESS**

Educate, Heal, Restore

JULY 29-31, 2026
Rosen Plaza | Orlando, FL

REGISTER NOW



international
ministries 
world
mission
conference



RISE YOUTH
2026

JEREMIAH 29:11-14

SEPTEMBER 13th
4-8pm

First Baptist Church Olathe
2024 E 151st St, Olathe, KS 66062
913.764.7088
www.fbcolathe.org/youth

Join us for Games, Worship, Food, & Discipleship!

ABCCR

Women in Ministry Retreat



October 17, 2026

First Baptist Church
Topeka, Kansas

\$20 a person

RETREAT INFORMATION

Please save the date for our Women in Ministry Retreat on **Saturday, October 17th** at 9:00 a.m. We'll gather at First Baptist Church of Topeka, Kansas.

We are delighted to welcome Rev. Andrea Roth as our facilitator, guiding us through meaningful conversations, study, and fellowship. Rev. Andrea Roth is a Staff Chaplain at The University of Kansas Hospital specializing in Palliative Care and is a Certified Bereavement Care specialist. This role is a fulfillment of decades of experience in age & stage ministries with children and youth as well as years working as a writer and editor for the United Methodist Publishing House. An Ordained Elder in the Great Plains Conference of the UMC, Andrea is a sought-after retreat leader, lecturer, and mentor for ministry and medical residents and fellows. With degrees from Kansas State University, Vanderbilt Divinity School, and Iliff School of Theology, Andrea's academic background has prepared her for multi-generational, trauma-informed, and intersectionally-sensitive ministry. She and her husband, Rev. Dr. Wallace Smith, have five children, a dog, and two cats, so cups of hot tea, audiobooks, and crochet are some of her favorite entries into mindfulness and rest.

For more information, contact Nancy Killingsworth:
nancyjsnyder@gmail.com

