

# Central Region Life

MAY 2023

## Books Are Essential to Education

Can you imagine sending your child to a school that did not have books? Can you imagine sending pastors to theological schools with the expectation to learn the Bible without reading books? Books are essential to education! Theological books are essential to theological education! "How can you expect to learn, teach, and lead as ordained clergy without reading books?" I asked my New Testament Theology students. "You have to read!" The students replied, "But we cannot access the books. How can we learn if we do not have books to read? Can you help us?"

Experienced educators and missionaries told me it was hard to access recently published books (after 2000) in Liberia, Africa. There is a huge market in Africa for printed books, but no publishers with copyrights to US manuscripts, and the shipping and import tax on books is too expensive.

The most recent conservative estimates state there are nearly 685 million Christians in Africa, with 760 million expected by 2025. African churches may have pastoral leaders who may not be theologically trained. A major need is a theological education and scholarly materials. So, after being invited as a volunteer theology professor at the Liberia Baptist Theological Seminary, I asked the seminary leadership, "What do you need me to bring from the USA?" "Books!" the seminary dean replied. "We need recently published books and journals in Bible, religious studies, homiletics (preaching), theology and Christian education." So, I asked pastoral colleagues, area churches, and Central Baptist Theological Seminary for donations. Wow! The Lord provided us with books, journals, and financial gifts to purchase books.

Jessamine and I carried over a hundred pounds of newly published theological books in our luggage to Africa (no small feat, I must say!) thanks to the generosity from Central Baptist Seminary, ABCCR churches, and the financial donation from First Baptist Church and Mission Society in Minneapolis, Kansas. We transported books for the New Testament theology students and books for the Seminary Library. Interestingly, we were stopped by Customs & Border Enforcement when we entered Liberia because the security guards had never seen a suitcase full of used theological books (light blue suitcase, foreground). Collecting and transporting books was an important project since Jessa was invited to teach English and volunteer in the Seminary Library.



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The students and staff were overjoyed when we opened our suitcases to share the books. "I've always wanted to read this book," one professor stated. It was the first time he saw the book in print. Several students clapped and praised God when they saw the donations. "Tell your friends and churches, Thank You!" they said. I was impressed that students read and quoted in their research papers several of the books and journals we delivered to them.

The seminary library's shelves were full of books – old books. Jessa spent her first week in Liberia getting accustomed to the heat (average 92 ° ) and high humidity (90%) while serving in a building without air conditioning. The collection was packed with books before the 1950s, which needed organizing. It had been organized into multiple systems (alphabetical, Dewey Decimal, Library of Congress, and randomly shelved). There was a card catalog, but it was not useable since many modern books were destroyed or disappeared during the Liberia Civil War (1980-1999). A gifted person did attempt to modernize the library by entering the collection into a computer database. Unfortunately, the file was corrupted, the computer was outdated, and the sporadic supply of electricity made the computer unusable. So, Jessa helped the library staff develop an organizational system that did not require electricity or a library science degree.

Jessamine spent two weeks helping the librarians clean and organize the collection, as the weather, heat and humidity allowed. "Let's take the books off the shelves and clean them before organizing them," the head librarian suggested. It was a great idea since many manuscripts were damaged by termites, wasp larvae, and rain (the roof leaks during the rainy season). "There was a pile of books in the hallway outside the library," Jessa told me. "When I asked what happened to this long line of stacked books, the librarian said, "we're throwing them away because they molded or mildewed after part of the roof was torn off." She was sad to see so many books destroyed by the harsh conditions and humid climate.

Despite the rough conditions, the librarians, seminary workers and Jessa persevered. They cleaned, repaired, and reshelved hundreds of titles. "Can you staff for a year to help us finish," the head librarian asked Jessa. "Or can you return for a year to finish the project?" Jessa smiled and appreciated the invitation but respectfully declined.

The Seminary needs books and recently published journals. They also need solar panels to provide a reliable electricity supply so students can study after sunset. An investment of \$30,000.00 would empower the school to repair the leaking roof, replace the windows (rusted open), install solar panels, add air conditioning, and secure the library collection for the future. Contact Rev. Charles Jones, International Ministries' Senior Area Director for Liberia, if you or your church want to adopt this project for the Liberia Baptist Theological Seminary.

International Ministries prayerfully seeks an individual or couple to partner with the Liberia Baptist Theological Seminary in Painesville, a section of Liberia's capital city of Monrovia. A person with a Master of Science degree in Library Science to establish a functioning library at the Seminary. If the Spirit of the Lord is moving you to consider this invitation, click the button below.

[CLICK HERE](#)



Books are essential to education! Theological books are essential to theological education! Thank you for partnering with us to share vital materials with students in Liberia, Africa!

Blessings,  
The Rev. Dr. Ivan E. Greuter  
Senior Minister at West Side Baptist Church of Topeka, Kansas  
Vice President of the Board of Directors, International Ministries



# PRUNING COMES WITH GROWTH

REV. DR. GREGG HEMMEN, EXECUTIVE MINISTER

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit." – (John 15:1-2; NRSV)

Shortly after Diane and I got married, some friends in North Carolina were getting ready to dispose of their ficus tree. They were just going to throw it away. It was straggled, odd-shaped, and tilted to one side. Since we didn't have much for home furnishings, we asked if we could have the tree. That was 29 years ago this month, and our ficus seems to be doing reasonably well. Here's a recent picture of the tree.

It's still not the best-looking tree but it has moved with us from North Carolina, to South Dakota, to Kansas, and has endured some very difficult transitions for a tree that doesn't love cold weather. When the kids were little and had fish, the fish didn't always have long lives so became fertilizer for the ficus. It was amazing how much the tree perked up when Harvey & Laura (the fish) died, so it's obvious we haven't always fed the tree the way it needs to be fed. We didn't always put the kids' artwork on the refrigerator but sometimes hung it from the branches on the Ficus. This tree has become a beloved mainstay in our home.

Recently, a friend of Diane's in Wichita was hearing our ficus tree story and to our good fortune, she's somewhat of an expert on ficus trees. One look at our tree and she began strategizing care for our beloved tree. She's done some pruning. Re-potting will happen this Spring. And since we don't have fish any longer, a more intentional feeding program will be implemented. Even though this ficus tree may not ever be a showcase plant, it has great personal value for our family.

Jesus taught about pruning in John 15. He teaches about the importance of staying connected to him and how pruning is often part of the process for growth. A more direct teaching from John 15 is that dead, non-fruit-producing parts get cut off. It's a vivid reminder about intentional growth. We could extend this further to our collective growth as churches and a region. Now before we get too aggressive with our plans to whack off parts that don't seem to be growing, we should remember that growth happens in many ways, often in ways that are not readily apparent at first blush.

As we move in the climax of the summer growing season, it's a good time to take a good look at state of our lives. Maybe you don't consider life to be the most attractive by visible standards. Do not fear, God looks at the heart. You hold immense value to God even if others are ready to throw you away. Maybe there is some re-shaping to life that would enhance your overall health. That re-shaping often includes pruning and that can be difficult. And then there's the feeding part. All of us needs regular feeding of our inner life through spiritual discipline and availability to God. Are you consistently letting the Holy Spirit feed you through Scripture, prayer, times of silence and meditation, and connections to others?

Thank you for the privilege of serving among you in the Central Region!

*Gregg J. Hemmen*



# Let the Walls Fall Down

## Conference Speaker



### Dr. Sunne-Ryse S. Smith, PsyD

[www.inspirationmattersco.com](http://www.inspirationmattersco.com)

Dr. Smith is the founder and lead consultant for Inspiration Matters Consulting. She is a born visionary and inspirational professional. Her greatest asset is that she can see the big picture and see the strategy. Dr. Smith has a talent for finding leaders, building teams, and creating momentum.

Throughout the course of her professional journey Dr. Sunne-Ryse has been consistently described as a thought-provoking, intuitive, results-driven professional, and passionate with a gift for motivating people to think, be, and do Big.

## Conference mini-project: Care Cupboard Hygiene Pantry

An outreach ministry of FBC Parsons. You may bring donations or make cash donations at the church.

Donations can be mailed to: FBC Parsons 1621 Main, Parsons, KS 67357

Needed Donations: Bars of soap, Toothpaste & Toothbrushes, Shampoo, Laundry Detergent, Toilet Paper, Diapers & Wipes, Baby Lotion, Hand Lotion, Deodorant, Shaving Cream & Razors, Tampons, Feminine Pads, Body Wash, Band Aids, Tissues, Adult Incontinence Briefs/Pads, Pump Hand Soap

## Registration Fees

Registration checks should be made out to AB Women's Ministries CR. Please add \$25 fee if postmarked after May 24th.

Fees: \$100 Full Conference or \$50 One Day Conference. \$25 late fee after May 24th. Scholarship recipients subtract scholarship amount and submit documentation with paper registration or upload with online registration.

Please mail registration fees to Lois Chiles, 201 Cottonwood Dr., Lansing, KS 66043

913-727-2232-/ 913-683-6880

[lochiles@kc.rr.com](mailto:lochiles@kc.rr.com)

## Hotels in Parsons

Hotel arrangements are your own responsibility.

Holiday Inn Express (844) 898-3258

Quality Inn (620) 421-6126

Best Western Parsons Inn (620) 423-0303

[Register Here](#)



It is time for men in our American Baptist Churches of the Central Region to do just that, "Rise Up!" Our organization has struggled for several years and the pandemic didn't do us any favors. Rusty Boyer has faithfully and courageously led us the last several years as our President and now that mantle has been passed to me. I want to rejuvenate enthusiasm in the men of our region to serve God while serving others. I will be setting up meetings in all of the Central Region areas to launch a "20 for 20" campaign.

The campaign is to sign up 20 men for \$20 each to be a part of the AB Men ministry. The goal is to update our database, increase membership, identify projects within the churches of our region and raise finances to carry out those projects. I know some are thinking, our church is too small and we don't have that many men. Then adapt it to 10 for 10 or 5 for 5, even one man is a start! AB Men Disaster Relief will still be a large part of our ministry but I believe we have churches throughout the Central Region that could benefit from some help completing projects from painting to new roofs. It all starts with men willing to get involved and participate in our organization.

I am excited to get started with the meetings Region-wide. Stay tuned for the date, location, and time in your area. I am making the same challenge to AB Men that I made to my congregation here at First Baptist Church of Milton, "Let's dream big and watch God do something Spectacular!" I have included my contact information, project application, and Rise Up Registration below.

In Christ's Service,  
 Rev. Mike Justice  
 American Baptist Men President

Mike Justice  
 PO Box 136  
 Norwich, Ks. 67118  
 Cell #316-640-0894  
 Church#620-478-2486  
 miltonbaptistchurch@gmail.com

**Project Application**

**Church name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Pastor or AB Men Representative** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact #** \_\_\_\_\_ **email** \_\_\_\_\_

**Brief description of project:**



# Seniors Benefit from Gardening

## Prairie Homestead Senior Living

Gardening can be an excellent way for senior citizens, living at home or in independent living facilities, to come together and have a shared experience. Gardening is an activity that can be both relaxing and rewarding, and it can be a great way to socialize and get to know one another.

There are many benefits to gardening for senior citizens. It can help reduce stress, improve mental alertness, and provide a sense of accomplishment. It can also give them a sense of purpose and a way to stay active. Gardening also provides an opportunity to get outdoors, get fresh air, and enjoy nature.

At Prairie Homestead Senior Living, there are many who have green thumbs! So many, in fact, that a monthly award is given to a favorite gardener on campus. Each month, residents are allowed to nominate and vote for a resident they feel has gone above and beyond! In April, Nancy Jones was recognized for her outstanding efforts to beautify her home. The flowers and creativity are amazing!

If you'd like to be inspired by other seniors who are passionate about their gardening, feel free to come visit Prairie Homestead. Perhaps your town has a community garden that you can become involved with? If you just aren't sure but have a spark of interest, start small with a garden in a pot. No matter how or where you garden, you will enjoy the fresh air, sense of accomplishment, and possibly even the goodness of fresh picked vegetables!



**Nancy said she's always liked the poem, "The House By The Side Of The Road" by Sam Walter Foss.**

**It was her wish to have a house by the side of the road so she could be a friend to man.**

**She wants her yard to be inviting so she can minister to others.**

**Nancy's yard sets a high standard for Yard of the Month, the award is well deserved.**

**Congratulations, Nancy! Thanks for your hard work!**


# INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES

## MISSION DISCOVERY TOUR TO LIBERIA, AFRICA:

Join IM Area Director Charles Jones on a Discovery Trip to Liberia, May 24 - June 2, 2023. It is an opportunity for a team of twelve people to meet with the IM partners: Link Aid International, Liberia Baptist Missionary & Educational Convention, the Liberia Baptist Theological Seminary, Ricks Institute, Lott Carey Baptist Mission, Liberia Tribal Baptist Convention, and the Liberia Direct Baptist Missionary Conference. A unique opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the historic relationship between American Baptists and Liberian Baptists, and between Liberia and the United States of America.

[More Information Here](#)

DEADLINE TO APPLY IS MARCH 24



Short-term mission trip to **LIBERIA**

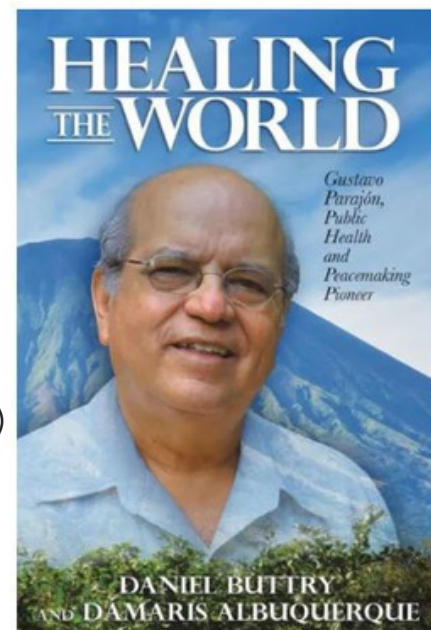


## A LIFETIME OF SERVICE...

Romans 12:13 – “Contribute to the needs of God’s people, and welcome strangers into your home.”

Gustavo Parajón (1935-2011) could have been a successful medical doctor in the United States. Instead, he moved his young family to Nicaragua and served the people of his home country.

During his lifetime, he was many things to many people. He was a medical doctor who launched a campaign to rid his country of many common diseases. Following the massive 1972 earthquake that crumbled Managua, Nicaragua, Gustavo gathered church leaders and together they developed a program that would have a deep and lasting impact on the poor of their country. When First Baptist Church of Managua found itself without a pastor, Gustavo filled the vacancy. During Nicaragua’s civil unrest (1978-1989) he visited insurgents and Government leaders alike to promote peace; always traveling without bodyguards. During the armed conflict in Nicaragua, the Parajón family welcomed refugees into their home from either side of their nation’s conflict.



# UNSHAKEABLE FAITH

life above the chaos

## ABCCR CAMPING 2023

### CAMP CHRISTY

June 5-9: High School; \$229

June 12-16: Middle School; \$229

June 19-23: Junior Camp; \$229

June 26-28: Primary Camp; \$124

June 29-30: Day Camp; \$90

### CAMP WHITE MEMORIAL

July 7-9: Primary Camp; \$260

July 10-14: Junior Camp; \$355

July 10-14: High School Camp \$355

July 17-21: Middle School Camp; \$355



**"NOW FAITH IS CONFIDENCE IN WHAT WE HOPE FOR AND ASSURANCE ABOUT  
WHAT WE DO NOT SEE."**

**HEBREWS 11:1**

Ages for camp are what the student will be in the fall

High School grades 9-12

Middle High grades 6-8

Junior grades 4-6

Primary grades 2-4



# PLANNED GIVING

I thought I would take some personal frustration and irritation that I recently experienced and turn it into an opportunity to talk about customer service or in the case of planned giving, what I would call, "donor service."

In another part of my ministry, I am living in another state and I frequent a national retail store that offers me a paper coupon for \$5 off of a \$25 purchase on Saturdays. I have been going to two different locations of this store and when I present my coupon, the computer did not accept it and I am at their mercy to get it figured out. I would like to use my coupon, but four times in a row on various Saturdays this has happened to me! I must also tell you that all of the employees have been courteous, professional, concerned, and helpful; even though they don't have the authority to fix the coupon situation.

They call the manager, who comes out to help and previously they have been able to take \$5 off of a certain item, but the company doesn't want them to do that anymore, so they are not supposed to do that now. I have even downloaded their app and entered my phone number in the system, and it still doesn't work!! Finally, the manager let the store employee take the \$5 off one last time. I should also say that I have never gotten into an argument with the cashier over this and I know that it is not their fault, but then I feel frustrated because the coupon doesn't work.

My frustration is that if you are going to print coupons for customers to use, then the computer system should work properly and accept those coupons. That is a principle of good business.

As your director of Planned Giving, I want to reassure you that our Planned Giving software from PG-Calc works very well and will provide the most accurate information for you as a donor.

I also would like to tell you that I am a very detail-oriented and meticulous person in the work that I do, but I am not a computer or a robot, so I could make an error, although as infrequently as possible, I hope! If I were to make an error in the drafting of an agreement, then I would apologize and fix it to the best of my ability, so that it is right with you. My goal is to assist you in the planned giving process and see to it that you are content with the outcome.

That, of course, is just the beginning of our relationship through the foundation and I will be with you through the years that follow to help along the way and to help complete your giving process when the Lord calls you home.

It was wonderful to see so many of you and visit with you at the Crossroads Area Meeting and at the Senior Adult Retreat! If I can be of any assistance to you in funding a charitable gift annuity or help in another planned giving way, please do not hesitate to call or email me at the numbers listed below!

**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**



# BETHEL NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER - MULTIPURPOSE CENTER PROJECT

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ!

We are very excited to share the status of the second phase of our expansion project with you and others in our churches. Construction of our activity and multipurpose center is in full swing! Last November, the ground preparation began and now the building foundation is being poured. So many of our children and families we serve tell us **how happy they are to see Bethel Center, the place where they feel love and support**, is now being expanded to provide a larger space for them to have fellowship, learn new things, exercise and promote healthy behaviors and lifestyles. We sincerely thank our community of faith for your continued support of the Bethel ministry. Your partnership with Bethel continues to allow us to provide programs and services that help to transform lives in our community.

We hired the Miller Stauch Construction Company to build our new multipurpose center. We hit an obstacle, unfortunately, and we are hopeful that your church will help us overcome it. We must raise an additional \$800,000 to finish the construction of the new center due to circumstances beyond our control. The original construction budget prepared by our architectural firm was too low as labor and construction costs have gone up very high within the last two years.

Unfortunately, we started the second phase of the expansion project in one of the highest-inflated construction markets experienced in decades. As a result, we were forced to increase the construction budget to reflect the following:

- Inflation
- Energy Cost Increases
- Labor Shortage
- Material Cost Increases
- Supply Chain Disruptions
- General Contractor Coverage



All of this had an impact and continues to have an impact on the costs to complete the construction of the multipurpose and activities center.

Your consideration and continued funding support for this project are requested and will be greatly appreciated. Dr. Mang Sonna, the Bethel Board of Directors, staff, volunteers, and those in the communities we serve acknowledge the generosity of our churches and its members. Without your support, many of the services we provide could not have been achieved.

Your support is creating a brighter future for so many children, families and Seniors who find HOPE at Bethel. We can't say thank you enough!

With deepest gratitude,

Dr. Mang Sonna, Executive Director  
Sandra Olivas-Talavera, Board President  
Dr. Robert Southard, Campaign Co-chair  
Marylou Reiter, Construction Chair  
Rev. Dr. Gregg Hemmen, Board Secretary  
Rev. Richard Copeland, Vice President  
Mary Etta Copeland, Campaign Member  
John Pauls, Board Member,  
Rev. Jan Smith, Board Member



# PRAYER EMPHASIS

REV. TIM SCHWARTZ



Since May is National Nursing month, let us pray for all of our nurses and those who provide care for others. Let us give thanks for the dedicated, amazing and wonderful work that they do. Let us pray that God would strengthen them, sustain them and surround them with hope and help as they seek to provide restorative care to all who are in need. Their marvelous actions remind me of a New Testament verse that speaks to what they do.

As it says in Romans 12:13—"Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers." (NRSV)

May rest find you, In the peaceful moments when all is still, In the quiet times when you pause, and breathe.

May rest find you, In the chaos of the moment, In the sorrow you seek to heal. May rest strengthen and bless you.  
May it fill your spirit, And give you unearned joy.

May you find rest in the care of others, In the knowledge of your worth, In the value of your service.  
May the One who gives rest, Bless you and hold you close.

And may you, in your very being, Be a place of rest for others.  
Amen.

From Voices from the Journey, by Juliana Casey,