

Central Region Life

DECEMBER 2025

BURMA ADVOCACY GROUP: URGENT ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITY

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The Burma Advocacy Group is inviting leaders across our regions to join together in an urgent moment of advocacy alongside our Burmese American siblings in Christ. Yesterday, DHS Secretary Kristi Noem announced that Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Burma (Myanmar) will be terminated. This, accompanied by public statements claiming that conditions in Burma have “improved” and that the junta’s upcoming elections are “free and fair.” These assertions are factually incorrect, run contrary to recent bipartisan U.S. Government statements, and disregard substantial documentation from more than 150 organizations, including our Burma Advocacy Group.

Many of our American Baptist congregations include Chin, Kachin, and Karen brothers and sisters who are deeply affected by this decision. The fear and uncertainty this announcement creates is real and immediate. We have a significant opportunity—and responsibility—to help communicate accurate information and to stand with these communities in Christlike solidarity. We are called to be our brother and sisters’ keepers. Our Baptist principles compel us to stand for their humanitarian right to thrive.

Please consider sharing this information within your churches. Even brief statements of awareness or prayer can offer encouragement and help counter misinformation.

Additionally, two national petitions have already been prepared and are circulating. Please consider signing and sharing them within your networks:

- Petition to Congress:
https://actionnetwork.org/letters/tell-congress-support-tps-for-burma?source=direct_link&
- Petition to the President to extend TPS for Burmese refugees:
<https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/president-trump-extend-temporary-protected-status-tps-for-burmese-refugees/>



Below are links to sample letters you can use to contact congressional representatives. There is also a list of contact information for your representative's staff.

These tools are voluntary, simple, public, and accessible ways for churches to express care and support. Additional materials from the Burma Advocacy Group will be released in the coming days and shared as they become available.

Thank you for your faithful leadership and for considering this important invitation. Our collective witness is stronger when we stand together.

Congress Staff List >>

Letter to Congressional Staff >>

One Page Staffer Handout >>



BURMA ADVOCACY GROUP

A HOLY DISRUPTION

REV. JENNIFER SCHNEIDER, ABCCR ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE MINISTER

Life is busy. As individuals we wear multiple hats and have many responsibilities. Too often it seems the Advent and Christmas seasons bring even more stress to our already busy lives. Decorating, shopping, wrapping, baking, party planning, and for some, Christmas card writing, require time that many of us don't seem to have. We want to savor the season, but it can be a burden trying to make everything "perfect."

It is much the same in church life. There always seems to be something that needs to get done at church. Building maintenance, worship planning, meal preparation, meetings, and ministry. Then things seem to get busier when Advent arrives. The church calendar fills with hanging of the greens, Christmas pageant practices, special choir practices, Sunday School Christmas parties, and other Christmas specific events. Our focus on the busyness of this season can rob us of some of the joy.

Jesus was not in the plans for Mary and Joseph. His conception and arrival were disturbances to their lives. They had their lives planned out and then God turned everything upside down! That first Christmas was a holy disruption for them.

As you prepare for and celebrate this Christmas, may God bring you joy and peace. My prayer is that each of us and our communities of faith experience a holy disruption during this Advent and Christmas season. I hope that we sense God's presence among us and that we might reflect God's love in our homes, churches, communities, and the very world.

"Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!"

II Corinthians 9:15



AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF THE CENTRAL REGION

Advent

DEVOTIONAL
GUIDE

2025

DOWNLOAD



PLANNED GIVING

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

As we end the year, it's always important to look at your financial situation and figure out how you can keep your taxes low while still financially supporting your church, missions and causes that you love. Did you know that our federal government, while not doing much at the moment, has given you that opportunity a few years ago through the Secure Act 2.0 in what is known as an IRA (Individual Retirement Account) to a CGA (Charitable Gift Annuity) transfer? It has been around for a few years now and I always like to discuss it and encourage it before the calendar year ends, so that you can save on your taxes.

There are a number of important requirements and features that I want to go over first. These include:

- You must be at least 70.5 years old
- You must make the transfer from a traditional or an inherited IRA. Roth IRAs do not qualify because they are already tax-free.
- This transfer or distribution is not included in your taxable income and it can count toward your RMD—required minimum distribution. (You must take a required minimum distribution from your IRA every year after you turn 70.5 years of age.) The amount is excluded from your taxable income, but you will not receive a tax deduction for the gift.
- As of 2025, the maximum amount an individual can contribute is \$54,000 and your spouse can contribute up to \$ 54,000 as well, which brings the overall limit to \$ 108,000.
- The funds must be transferred directly from the IRA to the charity. You cannot receive the funds first.
- You will receive lifetime payments from the charitable gift annuity.
- The annuity payments can only be made to you and/or your spouse. The gift must be a direct, irrevocable transfer; you cannot receive anything in return for the donation beyond the annuity payments from the CGA.
- One other important item to note is that this is a “once in a lifetime” financial opportunity, so it is not something that you can do every year!

There are three easy steps to make the IRA to CGA transfer and those are the following:

1. Contact the charity

Speak with the charity to confirm that they accept this type of gift and to understand their specific requirements for establishing a charitable gift annuity.

2. Contact your IRA custodian

Ask your IRA administrator about the process of making a direct, qualified charitable distribution to the charity. It is usually very simple and easy to do.

3. Complete the transfer

Have your IRA administrator send the funds directly to the charity. This must be completed by December 31st of the tax year for which you want the qualified charitable distribution to count.

Because I wanted to give you a general summary of the IRA to CGA transfer, I wrote this with a larger overview of how to do this related to a given charity. I do want to make it perfectly clear that the Kansas Baptist Convention Foundation, would welcome and encourage an IRA to CGA transfer, which would support the foundation, which is the investment arm of the ABCCR. Not only would you be giving to support our mission, but also with a charitable gift annuity, you and or your spouse or the beneficiary you choose, would receive income payments for the rest of your lifetime.

There is more information about this on the ABCCR website. If you go to the Resources tab, and then click on KBCF, you will find a couple of pages of information about this transfer there. On that last part of the page, it says to contact Gregg Hemmen, but since he is on sabbatical, please contact Jennifer Schneider for more information. You can also contact me as well. I would be glad to help you in this process or if you are interested in funding a charitable gift annuity through another financial gift like cash or appreciated stock, please call or email me and I'll be happy to assist you in funding that annuity, which will help you save on taxes and again, generate lifetime payments of income to you or the beneficiary you choose.

Finally, in the season of giving, I want to wish each of you, your families and your churches, a meaningful Advent season and a most joyous Christmas season as we celebrate Christ's birth, the greatest gift of all, all throughout the 12 Days of Christmas and into the new year of 2026!

SABBATICAL NEWS!

Here is a brief summary of what Gregg will be doing during his sabbatical from September-December 2025. First, some foundational information on the idea from the Bible. The sabbatical is an extension of the biblical concept of Sabbath, providing a longer period for rest, reflection, and spiritual growth, rooted in the belief that God provides and sustains His people, both physically and spiritually. The concept of a sabbatical finds its basis in the biblical principle of the Sabbath, with both sharing the idea of rest and renewal. You might want to check out Genesis 2, Exodus 20, and Leviticus 25, which serves as the foundation for the idea of a sabbatical.

For those who would like more detail about what he will be doing during his sabbatical, click the details button below. He will also be keeping a journal, which you can find by clicking the journal button below, for anyone interested in following his journey over the next few months.



NOTE FROM GREGG

I am grateful to the Central Region for providing the gift of a sabbatical and as a reminder, I'll be focusing in other areas of life from September-December 2025. During this time, please bring questions and information you'd normally bring to me to Jennifer Schneider.

jennifer.schneider@abccr.org





**American Baptist Churches of the
Great Rivers Region Presents...**

UNDERSTANDING CLERGY COMPENSATION

EQUIPPING CHURCH LEADERS FOR FINANCIAL CLARITY AND STEWARDSHIP

**A workshop for pastors,
church treasurers, finance
committees, and lay
leaders involved in church
administration**



**PRESENTED BY: REV. DR. ROB KIRBACH
ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE MINISTER, ABC-GRR**



**Tuesday, December 16, 6:30 PM
Central Baptist Church of St. Louis
2842 Washington Ave.
St. Louis, MO 63103**



**Thursday, December 18, 6:30 PM
First Baptist Church of Kansas City
100 W Red Bridge Rd.
Kansas City, MO 64114**

- How to build a fair clergy compensation package
- Housing allowance and tax considerations
- Best practices for churches and leadership teams
- Tools and resources





CHRISTMAS FUNDRAISER & OPEN HOUSE SOARING EAGLE GIFT SHOP

Holly Jolly Bidding
Silent Auction Daily

"Ladies Night - Rockin' on the Rez"
Thursday November 13th 5-8:30pm
FEATURING NDN ELVIS!!!

*1st 50 customers receive a Goody Bag
*20% OFF Coupon *Door Prizes *Hors d'oeuvres

"Lunch Hour Shopping Power"
Friday November 14th 11am-2pm
FASHION FRENZY-WHERE PAST MEETS PRESENT
*Free Gift with Purchase *15% OFF Coupon *Door
Prizes every 15 minutes *Heavy Hors d'oeuvres

"Jingle Bell Family Bash"
Saturday November 15th 10am-4pm
*Live Entertainment *Coupons (Up to 75% OFF)
*Door Prizes *1st 50 kids win a Goody Bag
*Cake Walk *Face & Hand Painting *Kids paint with
Mary Beth Timothy * Light Hors d'oeuvres

\$10 Indian Tacos - Saturday Only

Murrow Indian Children's Home
2540 Murrow Cir.
Muskogee OK 74403



As we enter the Advent season this month, let us pray that we might draw closer to God as we read and reflect on the hopeful and joyful scripture texts that encourage us and surround us during this holy season.

Let us take time to pray and confess our sins– the things we have done and the things we have failed to do, and let us offer prayers of repentance and receive God's forgiveness anew as we clean out the anger, bitterness, and callousness from our hearts and lives so that we can be open to the peace, hope, joy and love that Jesus gives to us so freely.

Might we share prayers of Thanksgiving for the humility of God to become one of us and the miracle of Christ's birth.

May we give praise through singing the joyous Advent and Christmas songs as they uplift our hearts and minds and spur us on to share Jesus' love and peace with others.

Finally, let us pray and ask the Holy Spirit to inspire us and give us wisdom on how we can share that love with others and provide care for their needs as well. In short, let us prepare the way of the Lord! As the scripture says, " As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: 'A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.' " Luke 3:4 (NIV)



FAN THE FLAME

College and Young Adult Retreat

March 6-8, 2026

Camp White Memorial
Council Grove, Kansas



PRAIRIE PASTORS
CONFERENCE



Sunset Hills Baptist Church
9416 Pacific Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68114



March 16-18, 2026

SR. ADULT RETREAT 2026

SAVE THE DATE
April 22-23
Milton Baptist Church

Put this information on your calendar
now. You won't want to miss this
event.

Wholly Holy Hospitality

More details will be shared soon!



The keynote speaker for the 2026 Senior Adult Retreat is Rev. Soozie Witten Ford. She served as Executive Minister with the American Baptist Churches of Indiana and Kentucky for more than nine years, retiring in 2021. Her previous ministry experiences include faculty positions with Sterling College, Sterling, KS and Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Shawnee, KS; pastoral positions with First Baptist Church Casper, WY and Calvary Baptist Church in Cheyenne, WY; regional ministry with Mid-American Baptist Churches (Iowa and Minnesota); and national stewardship ministry with ABCUSA.

In post-retirement, Rev. Soozie Whitten Ford served the Office of the General Secretary ABCUSA as the Interim Associate General Secretary for Regional Ministries. At the same time, she served in a volunteer position as the Special Assistant to the Executive Director of International Ministries, Rev. Dr. Sharon Koh, in the role of Chaplain.

Soozie Whitten Ford shares her life with Rev. Homer Ford and together they have two daughters, a son-in-law, and a granddaughter. Unscheduled time is often filled with connecting with family and dear friends; reading suspense novels; chasing the genealogical clues left by elusive ancestors; coaxing flowers to grow instead of weeds; knitting and planning the next travel adventure.



Registration information can be found on the Central Region website at www.abccr.org and through the weekly emails sent from the region office. The Sr. Adult Retreat will be held at Milton Baptist Church, Milton, KS. Directions and hotel information can also be found at this same site.

Hotel Options:

1. Hampton Inn by Hilton 455 N Crowne Drive Goddard, Ks. 67052 316-453-0444

Rooms here will be \$109 per night plus tax. Please use "Senior Adult Retreat or code 503" when making your reservation. We will use our church bus to shuttle people from the hotel to the church and back. Directions are on the bottom of this page.

2. Cobblestone Inn & Suites 899 Frontage Rd Harper Ks. 67058 620-896-2400

Rooms here will be \$125 per night plus tax



ABCCR SENIOR ADULT RETREAT

April 22-23, 2026

Milton Baptist Church, 1213 N Sycamore Rd. Milton, KS 67106

Guest Speaker, Rev. Soozi Whitten-Ford

Theme: "Wholly Holy Hospitality" Scripture: Romans 12:10-13 NIV

Name: _____
(If registering as a couple, please write spouse's name below)

Phone: _____

Spouse: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

Home Church: _____

City / State / Zip: _____

& City _____

First Timer to the Retreat? Yes _____ No _____

of Guests _____ Total \$ _____

Full Retreat (includes program and 3 meals) per person

_____ @ \$95.00 per person _____

One Day only (Wednesday or Thursday) per person

_____ @ \$70.00 per person _____

Discount Applied (February 1, 2026 deadline) _____

Total Amount Due _____

Dietary Requirements:

Sugar Free ☐ Gluten Free ☐

Vegetarian ☐

PLEASE NOTE: We will try but cannot assure to meet all dietary requirements

Interest Groups (please mark preference)

2:30 PM Wednesday – Bells ☐ or Outreach

Uncomplicated ☐

3:35 PM Choir ☐

10:30 AM Thursday – Craft \$5 ☐ or Biblical Hospitality ☐

Online registration is available at www.abccr.org

Bus Transportation – The host church is offering to provide transportation from church/hotel & hotel/church in Goddard, KS. I'm interested: Yes ☐

Hotel Information – Hampton Inn by Hilton, 455 N Crowne Dr., Goddard, KS 316-453-0444. Cost is \$109 plus taxes if you use Code 503. Other hotels are available in the area but with no transportation provided.

Abbreviated Schedule

Wed.	11:00 AM	Registration Begins
	11:30 AM	Lunch
	12:30 PM	Session #1
	2:30 PM	Interest Groups
	5:15 PM	Dinner
	6:30 PM	Session #2
Thurs.	8:30 AM	Registration
	9:00 AM	Group Study
	10:30 AM	Interest Groups
	12:00 PM	Lunch
	1:15 PM	Session #3

Please make checks payable to **Senior Adult Retreat** and mail payment and completed registration form to:

Senior Adult Retreat, John Williams, Registrar
C/O 5889 SW 29th Street, Topeka, KS 66614

Registration Deadline - April 8, 2026

**\$10 Late fee assessed if postmarked after April 8, 2026

Cancellation Policy: A full refund will be given if cancelled by April 15, 2026; \$25 non-refundable cancellation fee per individual after April 15, 2026.

Cut here and retain this stub for your records and information

ABCCRSeniorAdultRetreat: Milton Baptist Church, 1213 N Sycamore Rd. Milton, KS 67106

Dates: April 22-23, 2026

Registration begins at 11:00 AM

Retreat begins with lunch at 11:30 AM

AB Women's Ministries of the Central Region

**National Theme:
Building God's Community**



**Summer Conference Date – June 5-6, 2026
Summer Conference Location – First Baptist Church Topeka, KS
Summer Conference Theme – Making a Difference Together
Keynote Speaker- Dr. Kathy Maxwell, Central Seminary**

What's Next?

Philippians 1:6



[Online Registration](#)

**Mid Winter Missions Conference
January 16-17, 2026
Prairie Homestead, Wichita
Guest Speaker: Jill Lowery**

2026 Mid-Winter Mission Conference

ABCCR

JANUARY 16-17, 2026

PRAIRIE HOMESTEAD

1605 W. MAY ST., WICHITA, KS

What's Next?

Philippians 1:6



Mid Winter Missions Conference
January 16-17, 2026
Prairie Homestead, Wichita
Guest Speaker: Jill Lowery

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone number: _____

Registration is \$45 per person*.

This is to help cover travel expenses and honorarium for Jill Lowery. The Registration Fee also includes two meals**, (dinner and lunch provided by Prairie Homestead).

**We are unable to accommodate any special dietary needs for this event.

*Please make checks payable to: "Mid-Winter Mission Conference"

Mail completed form and registration fee to:

Melissa Newberry
101 Harper Dr.
Atchison, KS 66002

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

Registration form and fee are due no later than January 3, 2026. One registration per person. Lodging is on your own.

Schedule for event:

Friday, January 16	4:00 Registration Opens 5:15 Dinner 6:30 Evening Session
Saturday, January 17	9:00 Morning Session 12:00 Lunch (this will conclude our time together)

An offering for Missions will be received.



mpyc-abc.org



MOUNTAINS & PRAIRIES

Youth Conference

JUNE 14-18, 2026

**YMCA OF THE ROCKIES
SNOW MOUNTAIN RANCH
GRANBY, COLORADO**



Keynote Speaker
**REV. JOY
MARTINEZ- MARSHALL**

COST:
\$375 BEFORE MARCH 15, 2026
\$400 AFTER MARCH 15, 2026.

2026 CAMPING SCHEDULE

WHITE MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL CAMP

JULY 13-17, 2026
9th-12th grade

WHITE MEMORIAL MIDDLE SCHOOL CAMP

JULY 13-17, 2026
6th-9th grade

WHITE MEMORIAL JUNIOR CAMP

JULY 20-24, 2026
4th-6th grade

CAMP CHRISTY HIGH SCHOOL CAMP

JUNE 1-5, 2026
9th-12th grade

CAMP CHRISTY MIDDLE SCHOOL CAMP

JUNE 8-12, 2026
6th-9th grade

CAMP CHRISTY JUNIOR CAMP

JUNE 15-19, 2026
4th-6th grade

CAMP CHRISTY PRIMARY CAMP

JUNE 22-24, 2026
2nd-4th grade

CAMP CHRISTY DAY CAMP

JUNE 25-26, 2026
K-2nd grade

