

Central Region Life

JANUARY 2026

ADVENT IN THE CENTRAL REGION

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As the Advent season comes to a close, we give thanks for the ways our region has walked this sacred journey together. Advent invited us to look honestly at the world as it is while leaning hopefully toward the world God intends it to be. Churches, institutions, and ministry partners across our region held space for both joy and weariness, gratitude and grief; remembering that darkness is real, but it is not the end of the story. Even in the midst of uncertainty, Christ's light continued to shine.

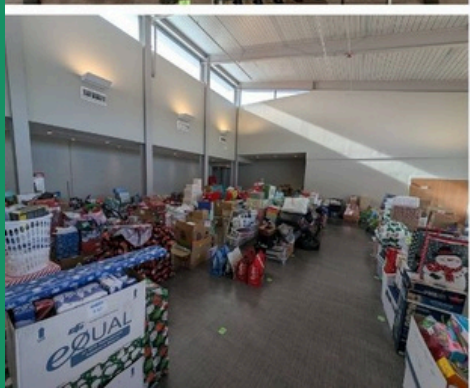
Throughout Advent, churches across the region gathered for worship, prayer, and acts of shared ministry that reflected the heart of the season. From services of lament and hope to the fellowship of meals shared around a table, Christ was present. From community outreach efforts and service to those in need, Christ was present. From moments of quiet reflection and moments of loud celebration, Christ was present. These gatherings reminded us that Christ is not only remembered during this time, but Christ is also present and active among us. The Jesus born on the margins continues to call us into lives marked by compassion, justice, and hope.

As we move beyond Advent, we carry with us what this season has shaped in us. Advent does not end at Christmas; it sends us forward. The hope we named, the peace we practiced, and the love we shared now become part of our ongoing witness. Together, as a region, we continue to bear the light of Christ through our relationships, our ministries, and our commitment to follow the way of Christ in a world still longing for hope.





Advent in the Central Region



KINDNESS

REV. JAN SMITH, RCOM MINISTRY CONSULTANT

I had lunch with some friends at a new restaurant. While the food was fine and the service was as good as possible given how busy the restaurant was, the thing that made that place special for me was kindness. The back of the wait staff shirts said Contemplate Kindness. There was a mailbox for kindness letters, and signs encouraging kindness were all over the restaurant.

If ever the world needed kindness, it's now. Folks are so polarized. And the general rule of behavior is: If you don't agree with me, you're just wrong! If you don't do things my way, I'll take my ball and go home! Perhaps a little kindness can help!

Kindness is one of the Fruits of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23 says: "But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!"

The Fruits of the Spirit are often seen as one singular fruit (singular, not plural) which manifests in nine different ways, showing the holistic character of the Spirit in a believer's life, like a single branch bearing multiple types of fruit.

There are nine fruits, divided into three groups: 3 with one syllable (love, joy, peace), 3 with 2 syllables (patience, kindness, goodness), and 3 with 3 syllables (faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control). These characteristics are the evidence of the Holy Spirit at work in a person, transforming their character to reflect Jesus.

Kindness, the middle Fruit, is defined by Webster as: the quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate. Biblical kindness looks like Jesus – showing goodness, mercy, and tenderness even to the undeserving, embodying God's love in practical ways. It is more than feeling; It's actively promoting the well-being of others through words, gestures, and deeds, reflecting Christ's compassion.

As we begin a new year, we often make resolutions. Mine might last as long as it takes for you to read the January Central Region Life. So, I have a suggestion. Why not, instead of failing or just plain giving up at a resolution, adopt a word to live by for 2026. And if you choose to do that, I suggest Kindness would be a good word to adopt. Wherever you go in 2026, whatever you are doing in 2026, try surrounding it in Kindness. And if you fail, you can always start again. It's never too late to be Kind. Others will be blessed, and I promise you will feel the Lord's Spirit with you as you follow Him in 2026!



PLANNED GIVING

IF THERE'S A WILL, THERE'S A WAY

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 you may or may not know, this article is written a month before it is published, and even though it is the Advent season, I am thinking about tomorrow, Pearl Harbor Day, when the United States was attacked by Japan, which led us into World War II. I am also thinking about one of the great statesmen of that era, Winston Churchill, who was the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom then. He delivered a speech almost a year later on November 10th, 1942 at the Lord Mayor's Day luncheon in London, where he spoke these famous words- - "Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

He was referring to the Allied victory at the Second Battle of El Alamein in North Africa, which marked a crucial turning point in World War II.

As I reflect on this quote for my own life, I would have to say that it is definitely the end of the beginning and probably beyond that, but I am grateful for every day and for this distinct opportunity to serve as the Director of Planned Giving for the Kansas Baptist Convention Foundation. While my main focus, efforts and knowledge relate to charitable gift annuities, I thought I can always learn more related to philanthropy, fundraising and other aspects of planned giving, so I decided to do just that!

My sister, Rev. Mary Armstrong-Reiner, has been asking me and bugging me about preparing a will, so I decided to click on one of those online offers for a free will kit, basically for the learning experience and also to complete a simple will. Apparently I am not alone in this because Caring.com in their 2025 survey found that around 76% of the US population does not have a last will and testament. However, another survey pointed out that around 32% of people do have one. Anyway, I wanted to get started on this so I filled out my information and they said they would send me a free will kit.

A few days after that, I got a phone call from a young man in New Jersey with the company that was offering the free will kit and he wanted to set up an appointment with me to go over a presentation related to that, so I set up the appointment. Then when it was time, he and his partner called me on a zoom call and I sat and listened and discussed the document with them. This is a simple and basic will that would be completed and then notarized by a notary public to make it legal. They explained it all very well, and then they went on with their presentation.

While I already knew this, I did want to point out that if the holy spirit moves you, you could make a bequest in your will to leave a certain amount of dollars or a percentage of your estate to the Kansas Baptist Convention Foundation, if you so choose. Maybe that is something to prayerfully consider?

I don't remember if my grandpa ever said this, but I have heard it many times before, and that is "there is no free lunch!" So the next part of the presentation was all about whole life insurance and they went through all of the benefits of it and how it can help pay for final expenses and provide money for a funeral and burial, etc. I would say the whole presentation was about an hour, and then they were asking me for some information, so I gave them just the basic stuff. Then when he asked for my bank account number, I told him to wait a minute. I'm not planning to do anything today and I'm not sure that I'm going to purchase this insurance, so I'll need a little time to think about it. Then the one gentleman stopped and said okay. I understand. We know you need some time to think about it, so can we set up a regular phone call in the future to talk again? Since this was the week before Thanksgiving, we planned a phone call on the Wednesday after Thanksgiving. Then he stopped me and said, look, I want you to see this. He then deleted all the basic information, which I had given him.

(Please understand that I was not giving out my social security number or bank account information or anything like that. I do also want you to know that it is a well known Life Insurance Company, and they did treat me with respect during the Zoom call.) However one interesting thing did occur at the end, because the audio portion of the call was on a phone line from my smartphone. Some young people might say it was a hot mic or a mic drop, but the one guy thought that I had already hung up and he said to his partner, "Darn it, we almost had him!" Now they didn't know that I was still on the line because the video portion had ended, but I hung up the phone then.

I decided after looking over everything that I would not be purchasing the whole life insurance because of my unique life case, since I don't have a spouse or children and my parents provided for me in their own wills.

So I waited for the call back that Wednesday. I thought I was coming down with a cold and wasn't feeling too well, but I prepared to receive the call at noon, and the phone didn't ring then. I went about other work at home and kept thinking that surely they were going to call, and they never did. Now it's 4 days after that and they have never called, texted or communicated in any other way, so I will see whether they call back later, but I am letting it go. Still, I am very, very surprised that they have not called me back!

It certainly was an educational process and I learned a lot from the experience. I am glad that I went through it, but I also need to tell you that I have never received my free will kit in the mail yet! Now I know the post office is slower these days and delivery can be delayed, but I am not holding my breath about receiving this free will kit. So now I am back to square one, but since I began this process, I have decided that, one way or another, I will complete a last will and testament in 2026.

Since I am not a lawyer, I cannot help you complete a will, but I would encourage you to do so as well. I have been blessed by Rev. Wilma Engle, the former planned giving director, as I have inherited (no pun intended) documents and papers that she created and gathered, related to end of life decisions and an inventory of your belongings, both personal and financial. I am very grateful to her for that and I will have copies of those when I see you at the next conference, which is the Midwinter Mission conference in January. Or I could mail you some, by your request.

I will say that this is definitely not the beginning of the end, but it is the end of this article. If you are interested in funding a charitable gift annuity that would benefit you and or your spouse or another family member financially for the rest of your life, while also leaving a portion of the funds to the mission partner or agencies that you choose, please reach out to me by phone, text, voicemail or email, and I will be joyfully ready to help you in that process. I extend to you my prayers and best wishes for a healthy, productive, meaningful and faith-filled New Year!





As we begin the new year, let us pray for the Mid Winter Mission conference that will be held at Prairie Homestead in Wichita, this month. Let us pray for our guest speaker and co-laborer in the gospel, Jill Lowery. Let us ask God to give her safe passage to Wichita as she travels around the country sharing the significant news of what is happening through our global mission agency, International Ministries. We could also pray for fairly good weather in January and for the safe travels of all who will be attending the conference as well.

Let us pray that Jesus would guide and direct Jill's thoughts and words as she speaks to us on the theme of "What's next?"

Let us ask the Holy Spirit to open our eyes, our ears and our minds so that we might take in what Jill has to say so that we can prayerfully plan new ways to serve in mission in our churches and communities. Let us also ponder creative ideas for our own lives, as we seek to share God's love and forgiveness with others. In that way we can continue the good work that God has begun in us. As the scripture says, "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."
Philippians 1:6 (NIV)

What's Next?

Philippians 1:6



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

2026 Lightwell Ministry Safety Summit

Join us!

Join us for a half-day training event that will equip your staff and volunteers with best practices to help keep your ministry safe.

We'll be tackling...

Situational Awareness - Seeing a potential issue before it becomes a problem

This training will cover:

- Exploring trends in active shooter violence
- Best practices to stay vigilant and keep yourself and others safe
- Having the mindset and abilities to respond to potential threats

Abuse Prevention and Child Safety - Our duty to protect those entrusted in our care

This training will cover:

- Exploring trends and case studies on ministry sexual abuse
 - Identifying grooming behaviors
 - Reporting claims of sexual abuse
-

Save the Date!

Online registration opens January 12, 2026

Locations, Times, and Cost:

Arvada, CO Tuesday,
March 3, 2026

Faith Bible Chapel
8:30 am - 3:00 pm

Overland Park, KS

Wednesday, March 4, 2026
Legacy Christian Church
(Blue Valley Campus)
8:30 am - 3:00 pm

Sioux Falls, SD

Thursday, March 5, 2026
Embrace Church
(Westside Campus)
8:30 am - 3:00 pm

Cost: \$25 plus tax
(Lunch included)

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.



YOUR BEST SUMMER YET STARTS HERE



WHAT IS SALT?

SALT is a **9-week summer residential program** at beautiful **Green Lake Conference Center** that develops young adults into Christ-centered leaders. This paid opportunity combines hands-on work, professional development, and spiritual growth. SALT members live in a Christian community & **serve others through hospitality and ministry.**

WHY JOIN SALT?



For Paid Serving with a Purpose

Earn a weekly salary plus room & board while serving in a role with professional development.



For Christian Community

Live in intentional Christian community with other young adults while working and worshipping together.



For Spiritual Development

Daily Christian community life, mentorship, and opportunities to grow deeper in your walk with Christ are abundant.



To Learn Gospel Communication

Participate in our Explorations in Creative Preaching for communication training.



For a Summer Adventure

Step away from the ordinary and experience a fun summer away from home.



"You are the salt of the Earth and the light of the world" Matthew 5:13-16



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.

ABCCR Camping 2026

CAMP CHRISTY HIGH SCHOOL CAMP

JUNE 1-5, 2026

9th-12th grade

\$350 before May 1

\$370 after May 1

CAMP CHRISTY PRIMARY CAMP

JUNE 22-24, 2026

2nd- 4th grade

\$195 before May 1

\$215 after May 1

WHITE MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL CAMP

JULY 13-17, 2026

9th-12th grade

\$425 before June 1

\$445 after June 1

CAMP CHRISTY MIDDLE SCHOOL CAMP

JUNE 8-12, 2026

6th-9th grade

\$350 before May 1

\$370 after May 1

CAMP CHRISTY DAY CAMP

JUNE 25-26, 2026

K- 2nd grade

\$105 before May 1

\$125 after May 1

WHITE MEMORIAL MIDDLE SCHOOL CAMP

JULY 13-17, 2026

6th-9th grade

\$425 before June 1

\$445 after June 1

CAMP CHRISTY JUNIOR CAMP

JUNE 15-19, 2026

4th- 6th grade

\$350 before May 1

\$370 after May 1

WHITE MEMORIAL JUNIOR CAMP

JULY 20-24, 2026

4th- 6th grade

\$425 before June 1

\$445 after June 1

