

August 2020

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A Word from Paul Gibson ABCGRR Executive Minister

GOOD NEWS: Sometimes we need to remind ourselves of the positive things we have done in the past. Several years ago, our region made the decision that if we were given funds as a beneficiary from an estate or from the sale of church buildings, we would give away at least half of those funds. We put that into effect right away by giving:

- **\$50,000 to the Song Sawang Church** in Thailand to help buy their own building, to also share with Nightlife. Jeff and Annie Dieselberg; and
- **\$50,000 to church planting and training church planters** in Northeast India. Taku and Katie Longkumer.

STICKS AND STONES -- or maybe I should say *planks* and stones. Jesus mentions both when talking about judging others. In one instance He is talking about us being hypocrites when we can easily see what is wrong in the other person without noticing the wrong in ourselves. In the other instance he warns us about pointing out other people's sins without recognizing we are in the same boat. Good things for all of us to remember as we love Jesus and love others.

OPENINGS: Many of our churches are in various stages of reopening in-person worship services. Pray for them as each church and congregation is unique. Along those same lines, the Great Rivers Region has guidelines for all churches as they begin to reopen. Those guidelines are:

1. Wear masks when in public.
2. Observe social distancing.
3. Wash hands **often** with soap, water, and/or hand sanitizer.
4. Observe state guidelines.

RACE: We still have a lot to learn and acknowledge about our past. For older white men like me this is a great time/opportunity to listen and learn. I needed to admit that "the system" was designed for, and by, my group and was also designed to keep other groups from getting equal opportunity.

POLITICS: It's started, or maybe it never stopped. I have good Christian friends who are Democrat and others who are Republican. I don't always agree with their political positions, but I never question their salvation. I may question if they are listening to man more than listening to Jesus. I still use Matt 25:44-45, Matt. 22:37-40, and Galatians 5:22-23 as my guideline for this and most other things.

GIVING: We want to thank our churches who have been faithful in their giving to missions and to our region. Some churches have decided not to give to United Missions anymore but have given that money directly to the region. Giving to the region has declined during these past few months, so if your church could remember us as you give during this time, we would appreciate it.

HELPING: We have been able to help several pastors who have been let go during this difficult time. In all cases the pastor was not the problem but was the sad victim of the situation. We are glad that we have funds to help them. We have also helped several churches in difficult situations and Wally Holt and CRI continue to help congregations navigate difficult situations.

As always, "Be rightly related to God and find your joy there and out of you will flow rivers of living water. Be a vessel that God can pour His love through."

Installation of Rev David Schuring at Greenfield FBC.
David, Rhonda and Isaac Schuring.



Church Revitalization Initiative Update

Before I started writing this article, I had to tend to a problem that probably all of us have had before: a clogged bathroom sink! Now the drain is not open yet, but I believe that God was reminding me of something so very important. Sometimes we can allow things of this world to get in the way of our focus on God. In other words, they clog up our focus on God. For example, Covid-19! Do we go back to inside worship, do we wear masks, do our children and/or our grandchildren go back to school or will they be taught on line, will we have a job when we go into work today, and that overarching politician scene! Who will we vote for!

Now back to my clogged sink: I just poured in Drano and I am not a plumber, but I did read the instructions on the side of the bottle. Now I need to wait 30 minutes and then run hot water into the sink for about for five minutes: I will be right back: it has been 30 minutes. Now I am not poking fun at the grave situation we are in, but I want us to look to our Heavenly Father to unclog our minds so that our complete focus remains on Him. So here is some suggested spiritual Drano—Jesus says this in John 15:1-5 (NLT2): ¹ “I am **the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener.** ² **He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn’t produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more.** ³ **You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you.** ⁴ **Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.** ⁵ **“Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.”** You see I feel that Satan has set up camp and is ready to devour us. So, what can we do? ⁷ **“So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.** ⁸ **Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world.”** James 4:7-10 (NLT2)

So, how do we do that? May I suggest that you set aside 30 minutes a day to be alone with God to keep your focus on him. If you are doing that, Praise God, but if you’re not, then please run to Him to keep a clear focus. By the way, at least at this moment my drain is unclogged!

May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with our pastors and churches.

Wally Holt
CRI Coordinator

Mainstream Contact Information: Send your stories of mission/ministry. Please also send the names of new members to nancy@abcgrr.org or melissa@abcgrr.org.



2020-2021 Gernenz-Shurtleff/Wilcoxon Scholarship Recipients:

Emily Bright, Kayla Brimner, Selah Brimner, Noah Cash, CeCe Connors, Katelyn Cummins, Levi DeWitt, Daniel Embley, Zachary Flowers, Moses Gary, Alyssa Goss, Amy Gruschka, Max Gruschka, Whitney Brianne Hirano, Emma Loeppky, Kaylie Malenius, Connor McBride, Adam Meyer, Elizabeth Meyer, Andi Phelps, Ellen Pierson, Erin Pilgrim, Lillian Robinson, Anna Sawyer, Ryan Self, Zachary Shotton, Brock Smith, Ryan Taylor, and Hannah Warfel.

2020-2021 Harold O Long Scholarship Recipient:
Rev. Veronica Richardson.



Rev Chuck Moore – FBC Champaign/Savoy

Rev Dan DeWitt – FBC Rantoul



◆ GRR ABWM 2020 conference has been **rescheduled to July 30-August 1, 2021** in Alton, IL.

◆ Rev. Paul Gibson and Rev. Patty Bilyeu are available to preach in your church. If you would like one of them to come to your church, please let us know.