



PARAGRAPHS FOR PARTNERS

2020 – Issue #4



From the Executive Minister
Rev. Dr. James Kelsey

A God Who Has Further Plans

Unchanging Yet Always Creating

The writer of Hebrews asserts “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever [13:8].” We can assume the same about God the Creator as well. So that is settled.

When it comes to God’s work in the world, it is not that simple. As God (Isaiah 40:18-19) is trying to convince the Hebrew exiles in Babylon to get with God’s dawning initiative, God declares:

Do not remember the former things,
or consider the things of old.
I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.

God has a habit of doing new, unanticipated things. And we have a habit of not getting with the program early on.

Jesus came, lived, taught, died, and was now raised from the dead. Still his followers had not gotten the drift that God was going in a new direction. In their last conversation with Jesus, at the threshold of his ascension into the heavens, his followers ask: “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel [Acts 1:6-11]?” They are still expecting God to restore to them what they had under David and Solomon. Jesus replies “no.” Then he promises that whatever fresh thing God is up to in the days ahead, God will provide for them what they need to embrace this new thing.

We are not real good at catching on right away when God is moving ahead with things.

Once these believers catch on that God is not going to restore a political kingdom, it still takes them a while to grasp that this new and very different sort of kingdom will include Gentiles (Acts 15). Peter, in particular, has some issues. He gets the idea (Acts 11). Then he goes back to his old ways and is upbraided by Paul (Gal.2:11-14). Finally he gets with God’s new program and stays with it (Acts 15: 6 ff.). It is hard to adjust when we are so set in our ways.

Why? Robert Nash, in his recent book *Moving the Equator—The Families of the Earth and the Mission of the Church*, catalogues the main shifts in the history of the Christian church, times when the followers of Jesus adapted—often grudgingly—to a changing world. Once they adjusted to a new reality, they believed all “was once again right with the world,” and they assumed “that this new reality was the final reality that would stand the church in good stead for the rest of history [p. 41].” At each juncture the church became so confident in its perspective and practices that they could not imagine a day when this consensus would be challenged.

Most of us came to belief and grew in our faith through a way of doing church that we thought was the best and highest and final expression of Christian community. Our interpretation of scripture anticipated and spoke to every aspect of the human experience. As the writer of Ecclesiastes (1:9) said,

What has been is what will be,
and what has been done is what will be done;
there is nothing new under the sun.

Our accustomed ways of doing things and how we live faithfully in our world have been “concretized” in our thinking. We lost the plasticity of heart and mind that enable us to keep up with a living, creative God who is always heading someplace else.

Literally, our faith and practices have been concretized in our sanctuaries and classrooms and parking lots and pews and Sunday School literature and hymnals and organs. They are monuments to our way of doing and serving and believing. The present “nones” and “dones” alone tell us that we are living in an age that our Reformation-era ancestors and the architects of the 20th century missionary movement, our most immediate ABC ancestors, did not anticipate and prepare for.

The Good News and the Good News

God does not change; this is good news. God’s character, God’s commitment to redeeming creation and each of us, God’s longing for justice, and God’s unbounded capacity for mercy do not change.

God’s initiatives in serving these ends, however, do shift as the world changes. This too is good news. It is evidence of God’s unbroken commitment to God’s creation and to us as God’s children come what may. God’s flexibility in methodology is evidence of this commitment. Further, it is evidence that God is so bursting with creative energy, that God just cannot let us or creation be. This makes God, unlike a fixed idol, infinitely interesting.

This should make us brave, even full of anticipation. We have not been living the highest, best, final expression of the faith and the church. We have been living what was appropriate for that day in which it was born. As we walk into a new day, God has new ways for us to be faithful and transformative in the world as it is evolving in new directions.

When it feels as if what we thought was nailed down seems to be coming up, don’t worry. God has a plan for that.

Jim Kelsey

DATES TO REMEMBER

November 20&21, 2020 -- Embracing God’s Future Without Forgetting the Past

The Region Office will be closed November 26&27, December 24&25, 2020 and January 1&18, 2021.

CELEBRATIONS & CONCERNS: **Stephanie Schneider** (FBC Glens Falls, Village BC Ft. Edward, ABY Program Director) and husband Andrew welcome son Lucas Andrew born 8/12/20 * **First United Church of Waterford** concluded 208 years of ministry with a final worship service 8/30/20 * Camillus Baptist Church and Fay Road Baptist Church, Syracuse have come together and become **Mission Hope Community**, worshipping at the Camillus location.

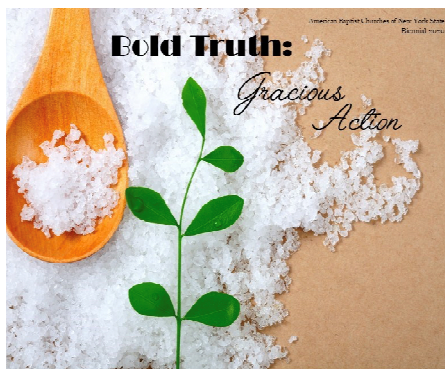


ABCNYS reminds member churches to pray for one another, especially in times of pastoral transition. If your congregation wishes to invite ABCNYS to provide support to your church’s search committee needs, please contact Rev. Jerrod Huguenot, Associate Executive Minister, at 518/380-4510 or jhuguenot@abc-nys.org.



LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS

Shirley Tubbs to Pastor, Mt. Zion Missionary BC Lyons 4/1/20
Terrance Brown to Pastor, Oneida BC 8/9/20
Thomas Smith from Westport Fed Ch to Retirement 9/27/20
Peggy Norton to Interim, FBC Hudson Falls
Peter Carman from Emmanuel-Friedens Ch Schenectady 1/15/21
Rich Hardy from Adams Center BC 8/15/20
Terry Ramsey from Lebanon Fed & Madison BC to Retirement 11/22/20
Karen Sundland to Pastor, FBC Penn Yan
Jessica Merrill to Pastor, Millers Mills Comm BC 9/20/20
Roland Shanks from River Comm Ch 10/20
Wendy Depew Partelow from FBC Bainbridge 10/31/20
Ivan Yu from Chinese Christian Ch Albany 10/11/20



ABC/NYS 2020 Biennial Bold Truth: Gracious Action

“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” (Colossians 4:6).

By the time you are reading this the Biennial will be over. I hope that everyone who participated felt that it was time well spent. As Chairperson for this event I would like to thank everyone who participated in making it possible. As you may be aware we actually had to reboot things in mid-April due to the Corona Virus Pandemic.

We began planning the event in September 2019 with the following committee members: Jim Kelsey, Jerrod Hugenot, Mary Schwarz, Marilyn Malone, Alicia Dixon-Garrard, Claudia Little, Leon Runner, Raquel Alston, Tanya Spencer, Stephanie Schneider, Joe Perdue, and Debbie Kelsey. In April, when people’s lives became increasingly more complicated as the pandemic lingered on and on and time commitments became more intensive, some members needed to back away, but then we were graced with the additional committee members: Ken McKenzie, our Worship Coordinator; and Lindy Boustedt, an independent film producer based out of Seattle, Washington.

What began as a two-day event held at a Central New York church turned into three evenings and one morning event, all online! It has been quite a journey, and I thank each and every committee member! Those that came early laid the firm foundation for that which came afterward. Just when it seemed like we did know what to do, God would intervene with inspiration and the people to move it forward. It has indeed been a Spirit-led, focus-driven planning committee that made it happen.

May God bless you with **Bold Truth and Gracious Action**, and *may your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*

Shalom,

The Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow
Chairperson, ABC/NYS 2020 Biennial

Changes to New York Baptist Annual 2020

- Page 3 **Board of Mission: Madison:** Dan Saulsgiver phone: 315.825.9076
- Page 9 **Granville BC:** Web: www.granvillebaptistchurch.org, Phone: 518.791.4899
Lakeville BC: Mailing Address: P.O. Box 93, Argyle NY 12809
- Page 19 **Sennett Federated Ch:** Web: www.sennettfederatedchurch.net
Email: pastor@sennettfederatedchurch.net
- Page 25 **Second BC:** Address: P.O. Box 646, Web: sbcdover.org

Embracing God's Future without Forgetting the Past

A conference brought to you by American Baptist Churches of New York State



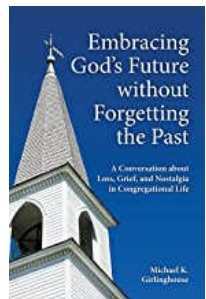
November 20 to 21, 2020

This experience has been changed
to an online meeting.

As we face challenges and changes in the present, our yearning for the past can trap us. As we consider our past, we can attempt to re-create it, we can try to forget it, or we can tap into our nostalgic memories in order to learn from it. As we consider the future, we can fear it, try to avoid it, or adapt to the changes that have brought the future to our doorstep. [p. xxii].

So writes Michael Girlinghouse in his book *Embracing God's Future without Forgetting the Past: A Conversation about Loss, Grief, and Nostalgia in Congregational Life*.

Reverend Girlinghouse has been the bishop of the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod of the Evangelical Church in America since 2011. Prior to that he was a pastor and oversaw a student ministry in Norman OK. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis in 1983 and a Master of Divinity from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago in 1987.



When?

We begin on Friday evening at 7:00 pm. We will meet on Saturday beginning at 10:00 a.m. and will finish at 1:15 p.m.

How Much?

There is no cost. This event is underwritten by the Region's "Preparing for God's Future" Palmer Grant.

This meeting is part of the ongoing Region series: **Preparing the Church for God's Future**

There is still time to register.

Send an email to office@abc-nys.org with your name, address, phone, email, and church.

HOW TO BE THE LEADER YOUR CONGREGATION NEEDS IN UNCERTAIN TIMES - DECEMBER 8

Our congregations are looking for tangible, real world solutions to navigating the Covid-19 crisis. They are dealing with uncertainty, confusion, anger, sadness, and fear. Some can't go to church. Most are separated from people and churches they hold dear. Many people are experiencing their feelings with more intensity than ever before, and they don't know what to do with them!

If you would like to view session 1 (*Be the Leader Your Congregation Needs When They Are Emotional or Angry*) of this 2-part series, contact Jim Kelsey at jkelsey@abc-nys.org.

Session 2 (*Be the Leader Your Congregation Needs When They are Sad or Fearful*) will take place on Tuesday, December 8, 7:00 to 8:30 pm. Go to: <https://ministrelife.zoom.us/j/94581568779#success>
Phone: 646-558-8656 - Meeting ID: 945 8156 8779



ABCNYS LAY STUDY PROGRAM WINTER 2021

Check out this link: <http://www.abc-nys.org/lc-courses.html>.

INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN COUNSELING – STARTING JANUARY 18 . 2021

This course is designed to equip students to understand life and relational challenges that will be faced by the people with who they minister to, identify resources that are available and explore ways they can help.

When: Monday evenings 7:00pm – 9:00pm

Where: Online only.

Instructor: Rev. George Stefani (Stefani.George@gmail.com)

Textbook: Christian Counseling; A Comprehensive Guide, 3rd Edition by Gary R. Collins. Zondervan Publishing, 2007.

BAPTIST HERITAGE – STARTING JANUARY 28 OR FEBRUARY 4. 2021

When: Thursday evenings

Where: Online only.

Instructor: Rev. R. Bruce Johnson (clifparkbj@hotmail.com)

To Register: Complete registration form and mail with payment (payable to ABCNYS) to ABCNYS, 3218 James St., Syracuse NY 13206. You can also pay online at <http://www.abc-nys.org/giving-to-the-region.html>. In "Write us a comment" indicate that it's for a lay study course and give name of course.

Questions: Rev. Leon Oaks-Lee (315.637.0023, leon.oakslee@gmail.com)

Fees: The tuition is \$110. For family members living in the same house, the course fee is \$110 for the first person and \$60 for each subsequent person. Students may audit a course, without credit, for \$60. The cost of the textbooks for each course is in addition to the tuition.

**LAY STUDY PROGRAM
AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF NEW YORK STATE**

STUDENT REGISTRATION FORM

Course Name _____ Starting Date _____

Credit _____ Audit (no credit) _____ Online (if offered) _____

Name _____

Address (Street, City, State, Zip Code) _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____ E-mail _____

Place of Present Church Membership _____

Association _____

If you haven't already done so, please complete the following information. This needs to be completed only once, but you may update when appropriate.

Place and Date of Baptism _____

Education: High School _____ Class of _____

College _____ Degree & Year _____

Other _____

Employer _____

Position or Title _____

Activities in your local church, your denomination and other religious activities *(use the back of the page if necessary)* _____

Activities and/or honors in other organizations _____

My goal in completing these courses is to seek to be a Certified Lay Pastor.

I would like more information about being a Certified Lay Pastor.



VICK & PATHFINDER CAMP & CONFERENCE MINISTRIES BOARD SEEKS A NEW CEO (part-time, 15-20 hours/week, competitive hourly compensation, commensurate with experience) to lead the VPCC's two camps. The CEO will be responsible for hiring and managing staff, implementing a strategic marketing plan, and fundraising and donor development. Housing suitable for a family is available, if desired.

Learn more: <http://www.vpccministries.org/camp-staff/ceo-position/>

Please email for application and send with your resume with a minimum of 4 references to: VPCCministriesceosearch@gmail.com or postal mail: VPCC Ministries Search, c/o Mrs. Jennifer Bloss, 101 Cemetery Road, Clifton Park NY 12065

OGHS FUNDS FOR COVID19 RELIEF

American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) has launched the process to apply for Covid19 related One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) grants. Its goal is to raise and disburse OGHS funds totaling \$1 million dollars to American Baptists in the US and Puerto Rico, in order to provide COVID19 emergency assistance and award grants of \$1,000-5,000 on a quarterly basis (April-June 2020, July - September 2020, October - December 2020, January - March 2021).

OGHS COVID19 funds will be processed by ABHMS, preferably by applicants applying online at this link: <https://abhms.org/abhms-covid-recovery-grant-application-form>. The password is: COVID1920

Priority for awarding grants will be given to organizations who are first time applicants. Questions? Contact GrantsAdmin@abhms.org.

FINANCIAL HELP

ABCNYS offers assistance to pastors in need through the Psalm Fund. The Region's Executive Committee designated up to \$25,000 of the Psalm Fund to provide for pastors who are experiencing budget cuts to pay and benefits. To receive an application form, please contact Rev. Jerrod Hugenot (jhugenot@abc-nys.org). We also welcome donations to support our pastors during COVID19. You can donate to the Psalm Fund (noting "COVID19") by sending a check (payable to ABCNYS) via: ABCNYS, 3218 James Street, Syracuse, NY 13206.

MMBB offers assistance to ABCUSA pastors who are members of the Comprehensive Benefits plan (the most common plan MMBB offers). They will consider applications up to \$3,500 in one-time grants. Please contact MMBB directly for this application form: 1-800-986-6222 or contact Grace.Cruz@mmbb.org. Rev. Gradia McKinney is also glad to work with ABCNYS pastors (Gradia.mckinney@mmbb.org or 347-703-1582).

PSALM FUND HELP AVAILABLE

For many decades, American Baptists in upstate New York have supported local church ministry and our pastors in times of need. With COVID19 impacting our churches, ABCNYS is concerned for our pastors and the potential financial challenges they encounter along the way.

The ABCNYS Executive Committee has authorized use of the Psalm Fund for special needs arising for our pastors over the next six months (through April 30, 2021). Pastors serving ABCNYS churches are eligible to apply for a one-time grant, up to \$500, based on their need due to a financial shortfall at the church impacting the pastoral budget.

To get an application contact the Region office (315.863.7148, office@abc-nys.org) or Rev. Jerrod Hugenot (518.380.4510), jhugenot@abc-nys.org). Submit completed applications to Rev. Hugenot by email or postal mail (115 Hazelhurst Ave., Albany NY 12203). **ALL REQUESTS ARE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL.**

**AMERICAN BAPTIST
MISSION SUPPORT**

AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES
OF NEW YORK STATE
THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2020 & 2019

| | United Mission | Annual Offerings | Institutions, Specifics & Targeted | Total ABMS |
|----------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---|------------|
| Received 2020 | 174,304 | 123,943 | 120,134 | 418,381 |
| Received 2019 | 194,980 | 139,115 | 137,045 | 471,140 |
| \$ Ahead (Behind) | (20,676) | (15,172) | (16,911) | (52,759) |
| % Ahead (Behind) | (10.60) | (10.91) | (12.34) | (11.20) |

For listing of church-by-church giving, go to <http://www.abc-nys.org/abms-summary-reports.html>.

GROWTH POINTS

With Gary L. McIntosh, D.Min., Ph.D.

Making Disciples: Part One

Pastors seize an adventurous, daring enterprise—making disciples of all people! The last words of Jesus to his disciples included a command to “make disciples.”

The word Jesus used—*disciple*—is found only in the Gospels and Acts, not appearing in the Epistles at all. Neither Paul nor Peter used the word, in part because it is a descriptive term, more suitable for biography than for doctrine or exhortation. *Disciple* is synonymous with *Christian*, i.e. a true believer (Acts 11:26). In general, *disciple* describes a person who follows Jesus, learning from him. This includes men and women (Luke 14:26; Acts 9:36), with wide ranging levels of commitment, from the merely interested to the strongly committed, from the mature to the immature (John 6:66; Matthew 26:56; Acts 6:7; 14:21). Thus, pastors work to enroll as many people as possible in Christ’s school to learn of him.

The church is its own discipleship model. It has an internal organization and climate, which blend together in a supernatural way to develop disciples.

The ministry of the early disciples demonstrates two types of disciple-making processes: public and private. For example, Peter preached *publicly* on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14) with the result that some 3,000 people decided to follow Christ. A short while later, he spoke *privately* in the home of Cornelius where many believed in Christ (Acts 10:23-24). Philip evangelized *publicly* in Samaria (Acts 8:5), then spoke *privately* with an Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26). Paul proclaimed Christ *publicly* in Damascus (Acts 9:20) and some time later dealt *privately* with Timothy (Acts 16:1-2). Jesus modeled the same rhythm of public and private ministry. He spoke *publicly* to masses of people (Matthew 14:13-21; 15:29-38). Yet, he engaged in intense *private* teaching and training of his small group of disciples (Matthew 16:13-28; 17:13).

The rhythm of disciple making flows back and forth between these two

Are you searching for a leadership coach? Email Dr. Gary L. McIntosh at cgnet@earthlink.net for full details.

dynamics—public and private—in the life of a church. Allow me to offer two definitions. *Public discipleship* is the process of spiritual growth that takes place in all believers as they are exposed to, and involved in, the life of a local church. *Private discipleship* is the intense concentration of attention on a person or small group of people for the purpose of leadership development.

Public Discipleship

God has initiated processes in a local church, which result in the discipling of its members. An overview of this idea, but not an exact process, is presented in Ephesians 4:11-16. In this well-known passage of Scripture, Paul explained that Christ gave leaders—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers—for the “equipping of the saints.” Equip is a rare word, which means, “to mend.” It’s used to refer to the repairing of a fishing net (Matthew 4:21), so that it can be used to catch fish again. Another image is of a physician setting a broken bone or dislocated joint. The essential idea is that leaders are to restore broken people so that they are useful to the Lord’s work. To disciple well is to equip (repair, mend) others so that they may engage in Christ’s work so the church, the Body of Christ, is strengthened. This is to continue until every individual in the church is mature

(“until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ” Ephesians 4:13). In a few words, the goal of public discipleship is to help people in your congregation become like Christ (Romans 8:29). Christ Jesus said it himself: “it is enough for the disciple that he come like his teacher, and the slave like his master” (Matthew 10:25).

Nothing describes public discipleship better than *body life*. Perhaps that is why we are admonished to stir up one another to love and good works. How do we accomplish that goal? We must “not neglect to meet together” (Hebrews 10:25). It’s in the meeting together that discipleship happens as we love (John 13:34-35), encourage (1 Thessalonians 4:18), exhort (Hebrews 3:13), forgive (Colossians 3:13), confess (James 5:16), pray (James 5:16), sympathize (1 Peter 3:8), serve (Galatians 5:15), are patient (Ephesians 4:2), kind (Ephesians 4:32), bear each other’s burdens (Galatians 6:2), practice humility (1 Peter 5:5), and work for unity (Ephesians 4:3). It’s public disciple making that brings maturity to the body as a whole. As people participate in worship, sit under the preaching of God’s Word, engage in prayer, participate in community, give witness to their faith among family and friends, and fellowship together they grow.

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GROWTH POINTS

With Gary L. McIntosh, D.Min., Ph.D.

Making Disciples: Part Two

Private Discipleship

The *Peanuts* comic strip is read by millions of people every day. In one *Peanuts* strip, Charlie Brown visits his psychiatrist Lucy and confesses, “Sometimes I think I don’t know anything about life. I need help. Tell me a great truth!”

Lucy replies, “Did you ever wake up at night and want a drink of water?”

“Sure,” says Charlie, “quite often.”

“When you are getting a drink of water in the dark,” Lucy goes on, “always rinse out the glass because there might be a bug in it! Five cents, please.”

“Great truths,” comments Charlie, “are even more simple than I thought they were.”

I suggest that they really are. One great truth about disciple making is *God’s method is people*. Jesus’s plan to change the world was not complex: “He appointed twelve to be with Him and to send them out” (Mark 3:14). The tendency of pastors—perhaps you?—is to make disciple making difficult. Jesus’ approach, though, was profoundly simple: companionship and commission. One invigorates the other.

Private discipleship, like raising children, is impossible by proxy.

If you desire to build up a team of leaders to accomplish God’s purposes in your church, you must spend time with a few people. Jesus’ disciples ate with him, talked with him, fished with him, prayed with him, and in doing so, became like him. Later when people observed the power of the disciples, they recognized that “they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

It’s a scary thought, but in time, people in your church will become like you. You can’t stop it from happening any more than you can stop children from becoming like their parents. Paul recognized this and lived it. Three times Paul exhorted his followers to “be imitators of me” (1 Corinthians 4:16), “be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). “Brethren, join in following my example” (Philippians 3:17). The following principles are essential.

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First, discipleship involves investing in the lives of future generations. When Jesus gathered his band of twelve disciples, he started a chain of multiplication. He discipled Andrew, who reached his brother Peter, who reached some 3,000 people on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38-41). Barnabas discipled Saul (Paul) and John Mark. Priscilla and Aquila discipled Apollos, and Paul discipled Timothy, Titus, and others.

Second, discipleship involves training a few to reach the many. The purpose of discipleship is not selfish. Rather it is to train a few people who will ultimately take the Gospel of salvation to countless others. Disciples are to be witnesses to Christ's work (Acts 1:8), to go preaching the Word (Acts 8:4-14), and to plant churches in all ethnic groups (Acts 8:26-40).

Third, discipleship involves a lifestyle that must be developed. Those who are discipled are to develop a lifestyle whereby they teach what they know to others (2 Timothy 2:2), which is a process that never ends ("what you have heard from me entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.")

Fourth, discipleship involves seeing potential in others. A good example is Barnabas who was the first to see

potential in the person of Saul (eventually Paul, Acts 9:27). After Saul's conversion, it was Barnabas who encouraged the disciples at Damascus to accept him.

Fifth, discipleship involves selecting people to disciple. When Barnabas was faced with a challenging ministry in Antioch, he immediately "left for Tarsus to look for Saul" (Acts 11:25).

Sixth, discipleship involves sharing ministry with others. After Barnabas found Saul, "he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers" (Acts 11:26). Serving together is the primary way to train disciples. It is the method used by Jesus, Barnabas, and eventually Paul.

Seventh, discipleship involves letting disciples go. Eventually, Barnabas and Paul went their separate ways in ministry (Acts 15:36-40, which may not be as bad as some have thought, as ministry was multiplied).

As you observe the people around you, whom do you think has potential? Are you meeting with them? Conversations before, during, and after serving together are the times when disciples are most teachable. When was the last time you met with him or her? It takes time to build a trusting relationship to disciple others. Regular times together are important.

So, who are you discipling?

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GROWTH POINTS

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The Case of the Expectant Deacon

“When are you going to mow the lawn, pastor?” The question astonished pastor Miller. He had only served Crossroads Church for three weeks. The lawn around the church was fairly long, but he never imagined he was responsible to mow it. In his previous church, that had been the job of the trustees. His conversation with deacon Fenton was a jolt.

“Is that what you hired me to do?” Pastor Miller’s response sent a reverse shock wave back to deacon Fenton. “Well . . . ahh . . . I’ve never thought about it,” deacon Fenton acknowledged. “The previous pastors always mowed the lawn, and I just assumed you’d do it, too.”

I doubt if most people in a congregation, or church leaders for that matter, have even considered pastor Miller’s question: “Is that what you hired me to do?” Pastors and church leaders need to step back and ask, “What is the pastor’s primary responsibility?” Beyond the responsibility to pray (1 Timothy 2:1ff) and preach the Word (2 Timothy 4:2), what are pastors to do?

Being a shepherd is closely aligned with being a friend. It’s within friendships that the best advice, rebuke, comfort, and correction are made and accepted. A therapist may be in a person’s life temporarily, but a pastor is in his/her life for the long haul. Pastors customarily build on strong, existing relationships. When you’ve buried a person’s mother, baptized their children, and officiated at their nephew’s wedding, you have been in their life consistently. That gives you an open door for caregiving that few others enjoy.

Most pastors are not psychologists. Unless you’re a trained therapist, you probably don’t know much about ADHD, PTSD, OCD, schizophrenia, or repressed memories. You must remember, though, that the prefix *psych* means *soul*. Psychology is *study of the soul*, and who can do that better than pastors?

Pastors find they are most likely to be asked to work through five crucial issues: grief, divorce, suicide, addictions, and

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marriage problems. To do so, pastors and churches use one or more of the following approaches.

Pulpit Care: Pastoral care is provided through the Sunday sermons, pastoral prayer, and after service prayer. Some pastors have a unique ability to love people from the pulpit, while providing helpful counsel for life's struggles and challenges. It's certain that the Bible covers a plethora of issues, which can be helpful. The opportunity to visit privately with a prayer counselor following a worship service offers a personal touch that meets many needs.

Lay Ministry Care: Volunteers who have special interests and gifting in caring for others are organized into small teams who visit, pray for, and care for others. Expanding a church's care ministry through multiple teams widens effective caregiving beyond what a single pastor can do on his own.

Assistant Pastor Care: A staff position is created to center on caring for others in the congregation. In some cases, a retired pastor is hired to fill this position part time. In larger congregations, a specialist in counseling or general pastoral care is brought onto the staff to target the needs of people.

Small Group Care: Larger churches discover that expecting all pastoral care to come from staff pastors is unworkable. The answer is to encourage the expansive growth of a small group ministry with caregiving at its heart. No matter what the groups are called—home groups, care groups, grace groups, mini-churches, care cells—their main job is to provide TLC: Tender Loving Care.

Referral Care: Staff pastors, or a designated lay person, offer triage meetings in order to determine the nature of needs. They then provide resources and means to direct people to professional and community organizations for help.

The nerve center for pastoral care is equipping the saints for ministry (Ephesians 4:12). This starts with moving cared-for Christians into caring Christians. Those who have experienced love and care from others, often are the prime people to enlist in care ministry. At least four pivotal areas of ministry training are needed.

Comfort for the Hurting — One-to-one support & Grief Ministry
 Assistance for the Needy — Benevolence & Crisis Relief
 Recovery for the Addicted — Addiction Ministry & Care Groups
 Encouragement for the Aged — Convalescent & Home based Ministry

Why not start developing your care ministry this month?

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