



PARAGRAPHS FOR PARTNERS

2021 – Issue #4



From the Executive Minister
Rev. Dr. James Kelsey

Equipping the Saints

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ (Eph. 4:11-13).

These gifts of which Paul writes were given to tradesmen and laborers, mothers and farmers, merchants and civil servants. And they remained tradesmen and laborers, mothers and farmers, merchants and civil servants after receiving the gift.

A Church in Belgium. I was explaining to the leaders of a Belgian church that I was returning to the States in six months and they would be entirely on their own. There would be no missionary or trained pastor to lead them. Their response was immediate: we must learn to lead ourselves. The idea that there would be any diminution in their ministry or cessation of their programs was unthinkable. This never entered their minds.

They were dedicated believers, but few of them had experience in congregational church life. The vast majority of them had grown up outside of any church, and the only church model of which they were aware was the Roman Catholic hierarchy. None of them had any experience in ministry apart from worship leadership, managing the church's money, and caring for the building—an old movie theater. They struggled to understand how a protestant church worked. Quite honestly, they thought they had invented congregation church government, directly from the pen of the Apostle Paul to them with no intermediaries. It was, shall we say, a "fluid situation" around there; I never knew what to expect each time I arrived.

The encouraging thing was they were ready to be equipped to do the work of ministry on their own; they really had no other choice.

I trained a group of them how to preach a sermon of reasonable length and another group to provide pastoral care in a variety of situations. I guided the leaders through the basic structure of a church business meeting. We rewrote the bylaws to make it resemble, somewhat, a Baptist church.

Sixteen years later the church continues to serve their community and bear witness to the love of God in Christ. God equipped them and empowered them to do what needed to be done.

Living in a Mission Field. The words of Paul in Ephesians 4 gave to this congregation timely guidance because their church was in some ways living out the experience of the earliest Christian churches; they were living in a mission field. They were immersed in a culture that no longer had a lived experience of Christian faith and practice. Belgium is a Roman Catholic monarchy; yet in 4 years I knew one practicing Catholic. Catholics and Protestants and Pentecostals—we were all so far to the margins of society we barely registered in people's consciousness. It was a mission field in the shadow of magnificent cathedrals and in a sea of museums full of religious art, both of which were full of tourists.

In upstate New York we, too, are now living in a mission field. This is hard to accept. We might want to unpack how this happened and who is to blame. We might feel disappointment in or even irritation toward those around us who do not share our commitment to faith and our dedication to church life. Whatever our reaction of feelings, the situation is unchanged; we live in a mission field. We do not get to vote on this.

Once we accept this reality, we then become more flexible in our thinking about church leadership. Like those saints in Belgium, we realize that many of our churches will flourish or languish based not on the gifts of a seminary-trained professional church leader but upon how adequately the gifts of lay people are deployed in ministry.

Some of these lay people will get the training necessary to become Certified Lay Pastors through our ABCNYS Lay Study Program; few of those Certified Lay Pastors will rely upon their ministry to support them. None of them will do the work of ministry alone; they will work in partnership with lay leaders in the church. They will work hand in hand with deacons, Sunday School teachers, Bible study leaders, directors of clothing closets and food pantries, trustees, lay worship leaders, youth leaders, and community outreach chairpersons. They will share pastoral care responsibilities with others and maybe preaching responsibilities as well.

Leaning into God's Future. The Region is leaning into this inevitable future by investing additional time and resources in our Lay Study Program. This program has a threefold purpose: (1) to provide opportunities for church members to learn interesting things; (2) to assist lay leaders in developing their leadership skills as they guide their congregations into God's good future; and (3) to prepare people called to a Lay Pastor Ministry.

We must lead and nurture the churches we have, not the churches we used to have. In other words, we must play the hand we are dealt in the most faithful way we can; we do not get to turn it back in and get another hand. When we bring the best we have to what God is calling us to do—given where we are and who we are - God will honor that and bless our work.

In this *Paragraphs for Partners* you will find two fresh brochures promoting our Lay Study Program. You will notice that we are now planning our courses a year in advance and have them all offered online. In this way, a person may complete the program in no more than 2 ½ years.

The last weekend in October we had a conference entitled "Part Time is Plenty" based upon the book *Part-Time is Plenty—Thriving without Full-Time Clergy* by G. Jeffrey MacDonald. (If you would like a recording of these sessions, contact the Region office.) MacDonald catalogues the advantages and opportunities that arise for a church and a pastor through part-time ministry. There is an upside.

Churches led by part-time clergy and maintained by fully deployed lay people face new challenges but also discover new opportunities. Once a church embraces this new season of ministry, they find fresh vigor and vision.

In a way we are moving back to where we once were, when churches were led by farmers and grain salespersons, school teachers and welders. Indeed we are moving toward our origins when churches were led by the everyday saints to whom Paul wrote. It is a change, but under God's grace and the Spirit's power it will be good.

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope (Jer. 29:11)

Be Brave & Faithful,
Jim Kelsey

CELEBRATIONS & CONCERNS: Rev. Shaun Ellison Jones (Pastor, Star of Bethlehem BC, Ossining) married Minister Tenee Andrea Hall on 10/10/21 * Rev. Paul Credle (Retired, Mohawk-Oneida Association) died 8/5/21 * Rev. Suzi Harriff's (Pastor, Mission Hope Community, Iroquois Association) mother died 9/21/21 * Rev. Paul Bailey's (Retired, Iroquois Association) mother died 9/11/21 * Pastor Matthew Ripp (Pastor, FBC Newport, Mohawk-Oneida Association) died 9/28/21 * Rev. Randall Stone (Retired ABCNYS Pasto) died 10/7/21 * Rev. Judith Craik (Retired, Niagara Area Baptist Association) died 10/11/2021



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 CHANGES

Cedric Broughton to Interim, Lowville BC 8/15/21
 Donna Devoy from FBC Clarence to Retirement 8/1/20
 Robert Farnsworth from Pike Comm Ch to Retirement 8/31/21
 Deborah Curtis from Reed Corners Fed Ch 9/1/21
 Douglas Satterlee to Pastor, United Ch of Oxford
 Ray Merritt from United Ch of Auburn 8/31/21
 Lynda Myers to Pastor, United Ch of Auburn 9/15/21
 Deborah Curtis from Reed Corners Fed Ch 8/31/21
 Roger Jackson from Calvary BC Jamestown
 Gerald Haglund to Interim, Calvary BC Jamestown 7/4/21
 Lynn Sullivan from FBC Cuba to Retirement 10/17/21
 Nic Charlton from Westport Fed Ch 10/31/21
 Mike Coles to Pastor, FBC Cooperstown 10/3/21

DATES TO REMEMBER

October 29-30, 2021 -- *Thriving in Ministry: Part-Time Pastors & ABCNYS Churches @ Good News Center, Utica*
 November 5-7, 2021 -- *ABY Convention @ Ramada by Wyndham, Liverpool/Syracuse*
 November 11-14, 2021 -- *Mission Trip to Community Missions of the Niagara Frontier*
 November 14, 2021 -- *Iroquois Association Annual Meeting @ Mission Hope Community, Camillus*
 November 25&25, 2021 -- *ABCNYS Office Closed*
 December 24&27, 2021 -- *ABCNYS Office Closed*
 March 11-12, 2022 -- *Financial Management Seminar*
 April 22-24, 2022 -- *AB Women's Ministries/AB Girls NYS Convention*
 May 21, 2022 -- *ABMen's Conference*

Changes to New York Baptist Annual 2021

Page 12 **First Baptist Church, Hoosick Falls:** New Email: fbchoosickfallsoffice@gmail.com
 Page 13 **Mt. Ida Community Baptist Church, Troy:** New mailing address: c/o M. Whalen, 125 River St. 48F, Troy NY 12180
 Page 15 **Wayne Village Baptist Church:** Email: Judypeppard510@gmail.com
 Page 18 **True Vine Missionary Baptist Church:** Remove P.O. Box 6. New phone: 315.802.8442. Add email: truevinembc353@gmail.com

ABCNYS LAY STUDY PROGRAM WINTER 2022 COURSES

More information at: <https://www.abc-nys.org/ls-courses.html>

BAPTIST HERITAGE – STARTING DATE - TBA

Instructor: Rev. Jeremy Spencer. Spencerj76@aol.com

WORSHIP – STARTING JANUARY 10, 2022

When: Monday evenings, 7:00pm-9:00pm – Online via Zoom

The class will meet for 10 weeks, ending on March 14, 2022.

Instructor: Professor Loueda Bleiler, lbleiler@gmail.com

To Register: Complete registration form and postal mail with payment (payable to ABCNYS) to ABCNYS, 3218 James St., Syracuse NY 13206. You can also pay online at <https://www.abc-nys.org/lay-study-program.html>

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.

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



AMERICAN BAPTIST WOMEN'S MINISTRIES/AB GIRLS NYS CONVENTION CHAUTAUQUA HARBOR HOTEL, CELERON NY (JAMESTOWN) APRIL 22-24,2022

The planners would like to have a hand bell choir present music at the Saturday evening banquet (April 23). Does your church have one? Do you know of one? Contact Lillian Cabral (cabral.ld45@yahoo.com)



Help us be better communicators. Let us know if you'd like to receive Paragraphs for Partners by postal mail or if you'd like to be notified when it's posted on the Region web



site. Complete the survey below and return to: Mary Schwarz, ABC of New York State, 3218 James St., Syracuse NY 13206. Or scan & email it (Mschwarz@abc-nys.org). Thank you!

PLEASE CHECK ONLY ONE

Notify me at the following email address when "Paragraphs for Partners" is posted on the ABCNYS web site:

_____ (please print legibly)

I would like to receive "Paragraphs for Partners" by postal mail.

Please remove me from your "Paragraphs for Partners" mailing list.

Name _____

Address _____

**AMERICAN BAPTIST
MISSION SUPPORT**

AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES
OF NEW YORK STATE
THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2021 & 2020

	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>.

Ending the Year Well



Get a head start on your year-end tax planning.

✓ Congress made permanent the law that allows people age 70½ or older who own an IRA to make gifts directly from their IRA to charity. For many people, this is the best tax-wise way to give. An IRA rollover gift will not be included in your taxable income and may qualify for your required minimum distribution.

✓ **Outright Gift of an Asset**
If you wish to make a gift to support ministry and mission this year but are concerned about preserving your cash resources, consider a gift of an appreciated asset. A gift of securities, business interests or real estate can provide you with significant income and capital gains tax savings, often exceeding the benefits of a cash gift.

✓ **Donor Advised Fund (DAF)**
If you are looking for an end-of-year deduction but want more time to make thoughtful giving decisions, consider a donor advised fund (DAF). Our organization can use your tax deductible gift to establish a DAF in your name. You can make grants from your DAF now and in the future to support your American Baptist ministry or mission of choice.

✓ **Zero-Tax Gift and Sale**
If you are planning to sell an asset like securities, real estate or a business, before you sell, consider a “zero-tax” charitable gift and sale. By making a gift of part of the asset before the sale, you can use a tax-saving charitable deduction to significantly lower or eliminate the capital gains tax on the sale.

This information is not intended as tax, legal or financial advice. Gift results may vary. Consult your personal financial advisor for information specific to your situation.

Consider these worthwhile strategies before the year's end.

Selling securities, real estate or a business this year?

Consider planning strategies to avoid capital gains tax

Age 70½ or older?

Make a gift from your IRA

Own an IRA and/or 401(k)?

Maximize your deductible contributions

Expect to be in a higher tax bracket ?

Talk to your tax advisor for solutions to manage taxes

Expect to be in a lower tax bracket or can control income?

Shift income to this year

Have investment losers?

Sell to offset winners and lower your capital gains tax

Extra medical expenses?

Establish a health savings account (HSA)

Have state taxes, property taxes, medical bills?

Accelerate deductible expenses

May We Help?

For more information, please contact our partners, the American Baptist Foundation at (610) 768-2035 or by email abfadmin@abc-usa.org. Together we can help you create a plan that meets your needs and goals.

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GROWTH POINTS

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

Care for Others

If you visit your local bank or credit union, you may run into the president in the lobby. She will shake your hand, welcome you, and say how happy she is to have you as a client. You'll be appropriately impressed and go away thinking it's a great bank. If the president doesn't take your money, it won't bother you; that's the teller's job. If she doesn't help you fill out a loan application, it won't matter; that's the loan officer's job. Indeed, if you don't see the president again for a couple of years, you really won't care. You have been favorably disposed to the bank because of that short meeting with the president.

Similarly, average church attendees today don't expect as much personal care from a pastor as they did in the past. As a pastor, however, you should cultivate a strategic presence.

Here are some ideas on how to do so.

First, walk slowly through the lobby.

Some pastors hide out before, between, and after worship services. Being in the green room may be comfortable, but you'll have a more strategic presence if you walk through the lobby, taking time to greet and speak with people. You don't need to engage in long conversations; just take time to speak with a few. Not everyone will get to talk with you, but everyone will know that you are there.

Second, listen and ask questions.

Focus on the person you're talking to, and resist looking past them to the next

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person. Learn to say, “I’m sorry,” “I don’t know,” “I’m happy for you,” “How can the church help,” “Will you forgive me,” and “I forgive you.”

Third, thank people for their concern, but don’t promise results.

When people share a criticism, nicely explain that you can’t do anything about the issue. Encourage them to talk to the right person or department. If they share a need, point them to the right ministry, or have them call the office and make an appointment to talk to you later. Resist the urge to jump right to an answer or provide a solution in the moment.

Fourth, thank people for their service to Jesus and your church.

A few words of appreciation will empower most people for a long time. Small, hand-written notes carry powerful aromas of care in today’s digital world.

Fifth, make strategic appearances.

Be present with people at key moments. Remember: funerals are mandatory; weddings are optional. Know your people and culture, and show up at key times.

Sixth, make pastoral phone calls.

Make one phone call a day to a randomly selected person who attends your church. Keep the conversation short, ask how he or she is doing, let him/her know you care about him/her, and thank him/her for being part of the church. Talk to whomever answers the phone. If it’s a little child, teenager, or other family member, talk with him or her.

Seventh, get out of the office.

Book at least one or two appointments a week with people to talk about real-world issues. Meet near places where people work. Don’t talk about the church or church issues, but discuss life in the real world. Focus on what is pressing in on their lives. Ask what they cry about, what they rejoice about, their work, families, and friends.

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GROWTH POINTS

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Going Where God Goes

Pastors and others occasionally resist the idea that churches should organize. Reasons expressed for not organizing vary but are generally categorized as management is (1) not needed, (2) uninteresting, (3) unbiblical, and (4) lacks trust in God.

In response, others point out that a close look at the biblical record demonstrates that God himself is a planner and organizer. He might be called the premier organizer. The principles of organizing and organization are seen throughout Scripture. For example, the early books of the Bible show the nature of God as a planner in Creation (Genesis 1), building the ark (Genesis 6), giving the Ten Commandments and Law (Exodus 20), building the Tabernacle (Exodus 25-30), the spies of Joshua (Joshua 2), Solomon's building the temple (1 Kings 6), and Nebuchadnezzar's dream and Daniel's interpretation (Daniel 2). The grandest example of planning might be the birth of Christ as the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation (Matthew 1).

God has even created all the good works we're going to do in advance. "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God

prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10). God truly does what he pleases in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps (Psalm 135:6).

James warns, "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.' Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.' But, as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin (4:13-17)."

Is James saying pastors and church leaders are not to plan or organize to reach

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goals? Is it wrong to set goals for tomorrow, next month, or next year?

While it may seem that James is speaking against goal-setting and planning, he is not. He is speaking against taking a certain pride in planning. Beginning in the first chapter, James presents examples of Christians who take their life into their own hands, with little trust in God.

- James 1:5-8 He warns against double-mindedness.
- James 1:9-11 He warns against dependence on wealth.
- James 1:12-15 He warns against unrepented sin.
- James 1:19-21. He warns against an uncontrolled tongue.
- James 1:22-24 He warns against faith that does not produce fruit.
- James 2:1-13 He warns against showing partiality.
- James 3:13-18 He warns against selfish ambition.
- James 4:1-12 He warns against wrong motives.

It is pride rather than planning that

concerns James. As he wrote: “you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.’ But, as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.” To paraphrase James, he is saying, “Don’t take your life into your own hands. Remember that all you do is dependent upon God’s will.”

Christian letters from years ago often closed with “D.V.” The letters stand for *Deo volente*, Latin for “if God wills,” or “God willing.” Any statements about tomorrow, next week, or next year are made in faith. Notice how the responsibility of man to plan is balanced with God’s will in these verses:

“The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD” (Proverbs 16:1).

“The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps” (Proverbs 16:9). “Many plans are in a man’s heart, but the counsel of the LORD will stand” (Proverbs 19:21).

Plainly, faith planning is biblical and an action that Christians are expected to practice, trusting in God to provide final confirmation and direction.

How is planning viewed in your church? How does it demonstrate faith in God for the future?

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GROWTH POINTS

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

Prepare for the Worst

If a catastrophe hit your church tomorrow, would you be prepared for it?

Perhaps it is a newspaper article about a child being molested at your church, a fire that destroys the auditorium, an elder who commits suicide, an employee that embezzles a significant amount of money, or a virus that keeps you from meeting?

These are just a few of the occurrences that have, and will, hit churches. If a sudden tragedy were to strike your church, what would you do? Would you know what to tell the community, the church participants, or the press?

Now, I'm not suggesting that you have to know ahead of time how to deal with everything. Nevertheless, enough pastors have asked, "Why weren't we prepared for this?" It'll serve you and your church leaders well to have in readiness a thoughtful procedure for handling disasters.

As former president Teddy Roosevelt once remarked, "You never have trouble if you are prepared for it." That statement may be overstated, but the basic idea is right—be prepared.

One reason to prepare for the worst is that when a crisis occurs, people will want to know what happened and why. They desire to know what will happen as a result, and what you and other leaders are going to do about it. Furthermore, they want to know it now. It's best to be somewhat prepared.

As all eyes are focused on you for direction; You must be ready to tell your story honestly to squash rumors and lower panic. In most situations, you won't have days or hours to take care of everything that needs to be done. Having a preplanned communication plan in place will buy you time and rout confusion.

What preparations should be included in your plan? While specific actions and statements must be tailored to the particular situation, the following are some basics.

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First, designate specific individuals to speak.

Carefully select persons to talk to your publics who are emotionally controlled, measured in words and tone of voice, who are articulate, while able to bring calm.

Second, determine who will write any published information.

Look for those who are excellent writers, able to communicate clarity in written words.

Third, outline a procedure for investigating all claims of wrongdoing.

For example, what are the procedures for investigating an accusation of theft, child abuse, inappropriate touching, or the death of a key leader, as examples?

Fourth, designate specific people to key tasks like contacting legal counsel, insurance agents, proper authorities, and persons involved.

Fifth, communicate to ALL of your publics.

Be sure to include how your church would communicate to every one of your constituents. Think through what might be the major question each public would ask in an

emergency. Then prepare a general statement that might be made in such an occurrence.

Being prepared for the worst includes having a plan for how to say, "I'm sorry." Mistakes will be made in any church, and it behooves you to be prepared on how to make a strong apology. A successful apology demonstrates responsibility and acknowledgement of a problem. Most pastors and other church leaders do them wrong. The best research suggests there are six components to a good apology that you should keep in mind. First is an expression of regret. Second is an explanation of what went wrong. Third is an acknowledgement of responsibility. Fourth is a declaration of repentance. Fifth is an offer of repair. Last is a request for forgiveness.

Communication to all the church's various publics during a crisis is the glue that holds all of your actions together. Every person in each public needs to know what's taking place in your ministry, what others are doing, and what's being accomplished, so they are able to inform others in the church's wide network of influence.

Being prepared to handle a worst-case crisis is critical today, and will increasingly be important as various communication channels increase in the years ahead.

Are you prepared for the worst? Do you have a simple plan in place?

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