



PARAGRAPHS FOR PARTNERS

2021 – Issue #1



From the Executive Minister
Rev. Dr. James Kelsey

A Question of Identity Technical Versus Adaptive Change During the Pandemic

Where We Are

COVID19 changed our lives in 2020. Suddenly, last March, things were different.

Some of those things will change back to the way they used to be; other things will not. As vaccinations become widely available and the number of people vaccinated combined with the number of people who have been infected reaches a sufficient number, we will begin to move among one another more freely and comfortably. We did not, however, magically leave the pandemic behind as we ushered in 2021; it is still with us.

The election is over and new leaders are being sworn in. The political acrimony that characterized 2020, however, is still with us. Indeed, it seems to have heated up in recent days. As I write this, an armed mob has breached the United States Capitol building seeking to overturn an election; our elected leaders have fled for cover in the cloakroom. The political divisions among us did not magically evaporate as the ball dropped in Time Square; indeed, they have become deadly.

Our ongoing conversation about racial inequity in America has not suddenly come to a satisfying conclusion as 2020 passes away. We go into 2021 with many unresolved issues about equality and justice in our nation.

I would like to choose one of these challenges, the pandemic, to talk about different types of change. These same dynamics would apply to other challenges as well—political divisions, racial justice, declining participation in church among Americans, ways to engage younger people in our congregations, what to do with our oversized high-maintenance church buildings, and a host of other challenges. In all these areas we are confronted with both technical change and adaptive change.

Technical Change in the Pandemic

In the initial stage of the pandemic, our churches and the Region tackled technical changes. These are challenges we can identify and that have a solution. With many of them we can look back now and say we resolved that. We were aided by experts who helped us, or we developed new skills and acquired new knowledge.

I remember that first Sunday of quarantine when I assisted my wife, Debbie, as she tried to get something together for Sunday morning worship at the church where she is pastor. I took my phone and wedged it into a cardboard box to hold it steady and then set the box on the piano. I filmed her speaking from the piano bench and then slowly turned the box to display the page of a hymnal leaning against a stack of books. After each hymn, I would slowly turn the phone back to face her. It was an admirable first effort, I think.

Now the young people at her church blend live and recorded material to make a well-flowing worship experience using purpose-built equipment. Most of our churches have made the move from faltering, clumsy first efforts at digital productions to well-done presentations with surprisingly high production values. Live or recorded services create a rewarding experience of worship and fellowship. Online Bible studies and small group experiences among us are multiplying.

The Region has made this same journey in the past nine months. Region staff now meets with individuals and groups online. We hold online conferences and pulled off an online Biennial via Zoom in October. We are hosting book studies and topical conversations online, providing people the opportunity to grow in the company of one another.

As conditions changed, some of our churches returned to in-person worship in addition to continuing to provide digital worship. The move to this twofold venue called for a larger portfolio of skills. Leaders had to learn about cleaning products, face masks, proper distancing, ventilation, how the virus travels through the air, and how long it lives on different types of services. Who knew the public health implications of singing? As red zones of infection emerge, church leaders are developing decision trees for returning to online-only worship.

These were all technical challenges. We acquired new competencies and relied on people with greater expertise than we possessed. In each case, a solution could be found, and we knew it when we found it.

Adaptive Change in the Pandemic

Adaptive change is different. In this arena there is no instruction manual, tutorial video, or expert who can give us “the” solution that will enable us to surmount the challenge. Often we cannot even clearly define the challenge itself and have little idea how to approach it. We have multiple approaches, all of which look equally plausible. At times we don’t really know what the “solution” would look like even if we stumbled upon it. This type of challenge often requires us to change and to embrace a new situation that has echoes of continuity with the past but is in some ways quite different and always will be.

We can learn about the virus and how it is transmitted, a technical challenge. But what is the solution to managing competing values and priorities? How do we protect our people yet preserve community and honor the value of fellowship? That is an adaptive problem; there is no instruction book for that.

Another adaptive challenge in the midst of the pandemic is preserving our identity as individual unique congregations and as a Regional ministry. An important component of who we are as a Region is built upon bringing together people from multiple churches through mission trips, conferences, fellowships, and service opportunities. The Region is a broker of relationships. We build a communal sense of Regional identity through these endeavors. How can we preserve this web of relationships in the absence of these activities? That is an adaptive problem.

Region staff still visits in churches, but many of our friends are at home, choosing not yet to participate in in-person worship. The Region often connects with people via Zoom, Facebook, Go to Meeting, and the good old telephone; but none of this has the same sense of immediacy and personal resonance of in-person encounters.

The same is true of our congregations. Congregations bring people together and, thereby, build a sense of shared identity. Congregations, like the Region, are brokers and sustainers of relationships that build a communal identity. Church members are still connecting with one another but often not with the same immediacy.

We Are Not on Our Own in This

The Greek word *ecclesia* is translated as “church” in the New Testament. The word dates back to gatherings of citizens of the various Greek States where they resolved some issue or made some decision. It came to mean “a public gathering of people where something is going to happen.” The early church saw

this as a good word to describe their gatherings. These gatherings were core to their identity. In modern churches, our gatherings are key to our sense of who we are.

God was always with God's creation, reaching out and calling into relationship those who had grown distant, but we know that when the "Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we beheld his glory, glory as of the only son from the father" (John 1:14) this sense of connection was on a whole different level. Admittedly, in-person encounters feed us and inspire us in ways that distant connections cannot.

Nonetheless, things are still happening among us. I participated in a Zoom worship session where during the children sermon a little boy shared that he cut his foot. Later, at the prayer time, another little boy reminded us to pray for this cut foot. I was in a conference call worship service yesterday where people encouraged one another and gave thanks to God. Things are still happening among us. God still inhabits our gatherings.

Our challenge is: (1) How do we maintain our identity as a Region and as congregations during this time of distanced communion? and (2) How can we use this experience to better understand and appreciate the bond we have in Christ that transcends distance and survives in the absence of proximity?

Paul wrote his brothers and sisters in Thessalonica:

As for us, brothers and sisters, when, for a short time, we were made orphans by being separated from you—in person, not in heart—we longed with great eagerness to see you face to face (1 Thess. 2:17).

This is our task in the present moment, to be bound in our hearts even while we are physically separated from one another. Paul knew the unity of the Spirit was strong and enduring:

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all (Eph. 4:1-6).

There is one body and one Spirit, one Lord and God. We are going to be alright as long as we hang on to what gives us our identity, the shared Spirit of our shared Lord.

Yeah, we long to see one another face to face. In the meantime, we can engage the adaptive challenge of maintaining the unity of the Spirit until that day. There is no handbook on maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. It is a work of God.

Jim Kelsey

CELEBRATIONS & CONCERNS: Rev. Douglas Merchant (Iroquois Association) died 11/5/20 * Rev. Robert McCrory (Adirondack Association) died 11/11/20 * Rev. Ken Beacher (Niagara Area) died 11/15/20 * Rev. David Higgs (Wayne Association) died 1/2/21 * Rev. Mark Caruana's (Mohawk-Oneida Association) father, Rev. Louis Caruana, died 1/3/21 * Peggy Norton's (FBC Hudson Falls, Village BC Fort Edward) father, Sterling Sumner, died 1/9/21.



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.

PASTORAL ZOOM CALL - SECOND TUESDAY MORNINGS, 10 AM - THIS WINTER AND SPRING!

As we enter into 2021, challenges remain from 2020, and pastors continue to navigate matters mundane and unprecedented alike. As part of ABCNYS' care for the Region, Jim Kelsey and Jerrod Hugenot offer a call to connect with colleagues around the Region, via Zoom (by phone or webcam). Each second Tuesday morning (10 AM start time), you can log on and have a time of collegial support and prayer as pastors, one to another.

The Zoom call schedule will be:

Tuesday, February 9 at 10 AM

Tuesday, March 9 at 10 AM

Tuesday, April 13 at 10 AM

Tuesday, May 11 at 10 AM

Each month, please use this Zoom connection link to join by phone or by webcam:

American Baptist Churches of New York State is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: American Baptist Churches of New York State's Zoom Meeting

Time: Feb. 9, 2020 09:30 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://ministrelife.zoom.us/j/8926678150?pwd=ZEITaUJ4dU5PenltQkpBaVcxVGIndz09>

Meeting ID: 892 667 8150

Password: NYSABC

Phone: 1 646 558 8656

Meeting ID: 892 667 8150

Password: 748311

Questions? Please contact jkelsey@abc-nys.org or jhugenot@abc-nys.org



ABCNYS LAY STUDY PROGRAM

Have you considered being a Pastor-Mentor for a Lay Study student?

The Regional Lay Study Team is developing a list of pastors who would be willing to share their wisdom, experience and guidance with a lay study student who has expressed interest in being a Certified Lay Pastor. Once the student expresses interest, the Lay Study Program seeks to pair that student with a Pastor-Mentor.

If you have interest, we invite you to attend a virtual Mentor Orientation. In this two-hour orientation, you will learn the role and responsibilities of a Lay Study Pastor-Mentor. If you wish to attend the orientation session, email Mary Schwarz (mschwarz@abc-nys.org). You will be sent a link for the meeting. It will be given twice on this schedule:

- Tuesday, February 16th - 10 a.m. – Noon
- Tuesday, February 16th - 7 – 9 p.m.

Choose the session time that works for you. If you have questions, you may contact Rev. Leon Oaks-Lee (leon.oakslee@gmail.com), Dean of the Lay Study Program, or Rev. Steve Reynolds (consultingpastor@gmail.com), orientation leader.

ABCNYS LAY STUDY PROGRAM COURSES WINTER 2021

Check out this link: <http://www.abc-nys.org/ls-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. 2021

Where do Baptists come from and what is our story? What sets us apart from other church bodies? What have Baptists contributed to the wider Christian family? Who are the American Baptists and what is our story? Who are significant Baptist leaders in our story? What practices and styles are important to us? ...and more.

“Understanding where we have come from has helped me to understand my congregation and fellow Baptists and has helped us set goals about where we'd like to see our church. The class reinvigorated our conversations about our mission work, our pastoral search, and our personal faith.” – a former student

When: Thursday evenings 7:00pm - 10:00pm 1/28, 2/4, 2/11, 2/18, 2/25, 3/4, 3/11

Where: Online only.

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

Textbook: Baptist Ways: A History by Bill J. Leonard

Note: There are four copies of the book available from the Region office for no charge if you register for the course (first-come, first-served). Contact Mary (MSchwarz@abc-nys.org or 315.863.7148).

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.



The Ministers Council

Dear Fellow Clergy Members of ABCNYS Region:

I extend an invitation to you to join the ABCNYS Ministers Council this year.

We bring you two events a year. (Last year was the exception because of COVID-19). We gather for collegiality, support, and wisdom from one another,

One of the events we offer is an annual retreat: This year on September 26, 27, & 28th, with **Jim Kelsey** leading us on the topic of his 2020 sabbatical leave, Christian Civility. It will be at Notre Dame Retreat Center in Canandaigua. Watch for a brochure and registration information this summer.

We also offer an annual Ministry Enhancement Day and our annual meeting. This year they will be combined with our retreat.

Annual dues are \$75.00, with \$50.00 staying in our local chapter. National MC receives \$25.00 (see membership form).

National MC stays in touch with all members with their monthly newsletter plus invites you to events they sponsor.

Ministers Council Officers (some names you might recognize)

President: Patricia Ludwig (term expires 2021)

Vice President: Phil Turner (term expires 2021)

Secretary: Wendy Depew Partelow (term expires 2020)

Treasurer: Cedric Broughton (term expires 2020)

Co-Treasurer and Registrar: Phyllis Granger (term expires 2020)

Sectional Vice Presidents (these are three year terms)

Eastern: Wendy Depew Partelow (term expires 2020)

Central Eastern: Howie Maxson (term expires 2021)

Central Western: Delma West (term expires 2020)

Western: Lynn Sullivan (term expires 2021)

At-Large Members

Walter Hargrove (term expires 2021)

Vacancy _____ (term expires 2020)

A BLESSED NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL AND THANKS FOR JOINING!

Peace to all,

Pat Ludwig

President, ABCNYS Ministers Council

MINISTERS COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP FORM 2021

When you join or renew, you belong to **both** the state and the national group!

Dues are only \$75.00, with \$50.00 staying with our chapter and \$25.00 going to national MC. Our chapter money helps to partially fund our annual retreat, this year set for September 26, 27 & 28.

Join or renew now and avoid the rush!

Checks payable to *ABCNYS Ministers Council*. Complete the following and mail to the treasurer - Rev. Cedric Broughton, 706 N. George, Street, Rome NY 13440.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY and ZIP _____

CHURCH and POSITION _____

PHONES (CH) _____

(H/CELL) _____

E mail _____

President is Patricia (Pat) Ludwig, and you can reach her here:
butterflypreacher@juno.com or 716-433-0976.

THE 2021 EDITION OF THE NEW YORK BAPTIST ANNUAL WILL BE PUBLISHED IN FEBRUARY and will be available on the ABCNYS website (www.abc-nys.org). If you wish to receive a printed copy you must request it – complimentary for a church/pastor - others at a cost of \$6 per copy. Please use the enclosed reply card or contact the Region office to request a printed copy of the 2021 Annual (315.863.7148, mschwarz@abc-nys.org). Thank you!

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

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 due to the impact of COVID19. We also welcome donations to support our pastors. You can donate to the Psalm Fund (noting "COVID19") by sending a check (payable to ABCNYS) via: ABCNYS, 3218 James Street, Syracuse, NY 13206.

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 Rev. Jim Kelsey (315.863.7336), jkelsey@abc-nys.org.
ALL REQUESTS ARE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL.

American Baptist Home Mission Societies' (ABHMS) Covid19 related One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) grants are in their last quarter (January – March 2021). Its goal was 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.

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.

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).



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
David Johnson to Interim, Adams Center BC
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
Sarah Flack to Interim, River Comm Ch 11/20

Wendy Depew Partelow from FBC Bainbridge 10/31/20
 Ivan Yu from Chinese Christian Ch Albany 10/11/20
 Kenneth Albert to Pastor, FBC Newburgh
 Joseph Perdue from FBC Cooperstown 1/31/21
 Douglas Thomas from Mt. Ida Comm BC Troy to Retirement
 Ivan Yu from Chinese Christian Ch Albany 10/4/20
 Don Crossman to Pastor, Trout Creek Comm BC 11/1/20
 Patricia Judd from Aldrich BC to Retirement 12/31/20
 Cedric Broughton from Bartlett BC 12/20/20
 Timothy Schultz from FBC Newfane to Retirement 12/20
 Kim Smith to Pastor, FBC Newfane 12/24/20
 Jael Rivas to Pastor, FBC Poughkeepsie 1/1/21
 Larry Cronk from United Ch Oxford to Retirement 12/31/20
 PJ Holcomb to Associate Pastor, Granville BC 1/21
 Mark Sommers from DeWitt Comm Ch to Retirement 12/31/20
 Alicia Dixon-Garrard, Memorial Park BC Vestal, Ordained 8/2/20
 Leroy Woodruff, FBC Waverly, Certified Lay Pastor 1/8/21

DATES TO REMEMBER

February 15, 2021 - Region Office Closed
February 28, 2021 - Living Waters Association Annual Meeting
March 6, 2021 - ABCNYS Board of Mission Meeting
April 2, 2021 - Region Office Closed
April 23-24, 2021 - AB Women's Ministries NYS Convention
May 31, 2021 - Region Office Closed

**AMERICAN BAPTIST
MISSION SUPPORT**

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

	United Mission	Annual Offerings	Institutions, Specifics & Targeted	Total ABMS
Received 2020	236,115	210,875	169,099	616,089
Received 2019	265,911	214,510	185,935	666,356
\$ Ahead (Behind)	(29,796)	(3,635)	(16,836)	(50,267)
% Ahead (Behind)	(11.21)	(1.69)	(9.05)	(7.54)

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



Come Zoom with us!

UPDATE from your ABWM NYS Convention Committee: January 12, 2021

The last year until today, has been one of the darkest episodes in our lifetimes, but spring is coming and equally our ***American Baptist Women's Ministries and AB Girls Convention 2021*** is on the way. There is no hotel, but we have the comfort and safety of our homes. There is no banquet, but we don't really need the calories. On the positive side, we have time for the ice cream sundaes! What's left? Us! Women coming together to talk, to share in each other's burdens, and yes, to laugh, and grow in Christ's spirit.

Going virtual was not our first choice, but it's a great option with a world in pandemic. Please join us for a new adventure into convention as we adapt to the challenges we face.

We will still be hosting our ***"AB Women Got Talent"*** show on Friday night. Different yes, but it will still be great! We are asking all our talented women and girls to submit videos that will be presented and hosted by Cheyenne Snyder. It's going to be a great night. We will also have a break prior to the start of the show so we can all make our ice cream sundaes or even popcorn! It will be fantastic fun.

On Saturday, we will have four morning and four afternoon workshops to choose from. Our workshops will feed your mind, body and spirit. There is something for everyone at any age. Details will be coming up in our "2021 Convention Times" which will be hitting the website in February.

New this year, because of going virtual, we will have our final worship service on Saturday afternoon. In these difficult times, we believe it important to be able to spend time with our church families on Sunday where our support may be needed.

Our team has worked diligently to bring you the best possible version of a Convention in a format and time frame that will best serve our sisters. We can't guarantee perfection, but we can tell you that we have never worked harder to bring a convention to fruition.

Questions? Email us at: abwm.nys.convention@gmail.com

Blessings and love from your Convention Committee,
Cindy Kamm &, Joyce Camp, Co-Chairs

GROWTH POINTS

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

Define Your Publics

Years ago, pastors thought of only two publics: congregation and community. It was a generalized way to think, and pastors assumed the constituency that mattered was the congregation. Today church leaders recognize a variety of publics. Consider how you might communicate information to each of the following publics.

Employees. It's not good if paid staff hear crucial news through the grapevine. If they get most of their information secondhand, it may be untrue or distorted. It's of prime importance that you keep your paid employees up-to-date on pertinent information.

Church Members. The attitudes and opinions of your committed members matter a great deal. They expect to be kept informed of major plans, changes, and directions. Internal affairs are of particular interest.

Church Attendees. The regular participants at your worship services require knowledge on the larger aspects of your church. What is the church's vision, goals, hopes, plans, and needs?

Most don't care about the internal workings of your church, but knowing the larger picture is crucial to their ongoing support.

Parents of Children/Teens. Growing churches are usually places where parents can raise their children in safety. They await knowledge that affects their children's lives. Changes in leadership (children's or youth pastors) rank high on their need-to-know list. Instruction about how the church is building character in their young ones and keeping children safe is critical.

Financial Supporters. Those who provide regular financial offerings must receive significant news about the financial health of your church before it appears in the financial reports at business meetings. By keeping them informed—truthfully and timely—you'll sustain their confidence and good will.

If someone could help you make new disciples for Christ, would you be interested? Contact us at cgnet@earthlink.net

Financial Community. Pastors and other church leaders forget that banks, credit unions, and other financial loan companies are a key part of their publics. While churches call upon such organizations only in key situations (e.g., when seeking a building loan), it's important to communicate with them on a timely basis. Building a base of knowledge among these publics goes beyond simple recognition to building trust.

Volunteers. Businesses have shareholders who must be communicated with to maintain their morale and benevolence. Volunteers are much like shareholders, as they invest not only financially in a church but also personally through dedicated service. It's necessary for your volunteers to receive significant information about your church before the general public becomes aware.

Larger community. As a member of the local community, your church's duty is to strengthen and protect it. If you hope to be accepted and supported by the larger community, you'll need the confidence of its members and officials. Not only are you dependent on the community for your safety, sanitation, and health, but you'll also need cooperation when growth requires traffic control and building construction. Then too, this is the

community you've decided to reach with the gospel. It's good sense to provide honest and clear communication to those who live there.

Local Community Officials. What do community leaders—mayor, chief of police, fire chief, others—understand about your church? Do they see your church as a positive force in the community? Have they even heard of your church? What impressions do they have about your contributions to the greater good?

Target Audience. Churches grow and decline according to how well they are able to identify, communicate to, and connect with their target audience(s). Thus, it's good to ask: Whenever you make a decision that will affect your target audience(s), ask: "How can we communicate this in a manner to enhance understanding among those we're trying to reach?"

Suppliers. Churches forget that a network of suppliers provides services and goods that help the church's ministry. Think of the wide network of people who provide services and goods to your church during the year: electrical, telephone, Internet, janitorial, gardening, and industrial and commercial services (floor mats, washroom supplies, carpet cleaning, etc.).

Proper communication with all your publics builds your church's credibility.

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GROWTH POINTS

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

Put Everyone on Your Research Team

After you've defined your publics (see the November 2020 Issue) put everyone on your research team. Ask key leaders in your church to start listening to what they hear others say about your church. Suggest they ask a barber or hair dresser, a mechanic or shop owner, what they know about your church.

Walk around your church's neighborhood. Stop and casually talk with people you meet, and ask them what they know about your church. The answers may surprise you, even alarm you, but they also may open your eyes to what your church has been communicating to the larger community over the years. Look at your church's communication through the non-churched person's eyes.

Make a list of the people who have visited in the last twelve months but not stayed. Send them a brief survey and ask them to share why they chose not to attend on a regular basis. You may only hear from a small number (usually about 10%), but what they say is oftentimes informative.

Interview a selection of volunteers, staff, members, attendees, parents, employees, and others to learn what their thoughts are

about your church. Where are they confused, informed, misguided, or annoyed? What information do they feel is needed for them to do their work or ministry in an excellent way? Use open-ended questions, such as, "Tell me about it," "Give me the details," or "Please explain."

Take three months to dig into the facts. List the key words your team heard pop up all the time. Summarize your research into a statement of the effectiveness or lack of effectiveness of your overall communication to all your publics. Whom do you communicate to well? To whom not so well?

Remember: the place to measure the opinions of your publics is in the marketplace, among your employees, and in conversations with those outside your church. You cannot gauge the attitudes and opinions of your publics while sitting in your desk chair in the pastor's office.

**Put Dr. Gary L. McIntosh on
your church's research team.**

**Email cgnet@earthlink.net
for full details.**

Communicate with Your Publics

Aristotle offered some sound advice for communicating well: “Think like a wise man, but communicate in the language of the people.”

The best language of the people is that which is used while talking informally on a face-to-face basis. No matter how busy you are as a pastor, it's best to talk personally with your publics, especially when big changes are in the works. Whenever you have a large change or adjustment to ministry coming in the future, make it a point to stroll through the office or meet with some volunteers, members, attendees, etc., to discuss the subject. This sort of edge-of-the-desk discussion will provide keen insight. When you're sitting on the edge of the desk talking with others, it gives you immediate knowledge of whether they are with you or not, whether they understand or not, and whether they need additional information or not.

Make everyone in your church a public relations person. Getting as many people as possible to disseminate your church's message is something you must encourage at every opportunity. It's called word of mouth advertising. When you have a PR staff of hundreds or thousands, depending on

the size of your church, your message is empowered along numerous networks. Simple steps, such as, providing sharp, business-type cards to everyone in attendance with, say, an inspirational Scripture and the church's website information on it, and then encouraging people to distribute them to those they meet, can do wonders to spread a positive flow of communication to the community. Every preaching series should be backed up with supportive materials that your people are proud to display and share.

Tell your church's story to the community. While you think about your church all the time, it's surprising to discover that people in the larger community rarely think about your church. People who live only a block or two away from church property busily drive by without so much as an afterthought of your church. This happens most efficiently through a well-designed website and regular mailings to the homes of people in your community.

Run from glibness. It never pays to substitute glib announcements for words, ideas, and honest communication. The best advice is to communicate to your publics the way you'd like to be communicated to—clearly. Communicating clearly and honestly to your internal publics is the beginning. It's not always what you say that counts but what they hear and absorb.

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GROWTH POINTS

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

Growing in Maturity

Growing in maturity is a natural aspect of life. Each of us, especially leaders, are to demonstrate an increasing maturation throughout our lives.

Our primary example on how to grow in maturity is Jesus. Scripture records in Luke 2:40-52 that he grew normally in five areas.

Jesus grew physically. Speaking of Jesus, Luke says that “The Child continued to grow and become strong.” And, he increased in “stature.”

Jesus grew mentally. He was “increasing in wisdom.”

Jesus grew socially. He kept increasing in “favor with God and man.”

Jesus grew spiritually. The “grace of God was upon Him,” and he was found “in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.”

Jesus grew volitionally. He made a personal choice to stay “behind in Jerusalem. But his parents were unaware of it.” Later “He went with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them.”

Jesus’ maturation did not involve sin. Several passages of Scripture speak clearly on this aspect of his life. For example, Hebrews 54:15 states the he was “tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin.” So, how did Jesus mature?

Jesus matured through the learning of three things: submission, obedience, and suffering.

First, He learned submission through a loving relationship with his parents. After his parents found him in the temple conversing with the teachers, “He went down with them and . . . continued in subjection to them.” Later, he subjected himself to the heavenly father, saying, “Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet, not My will, but Yours be done” (Luke 22:42).

Second, He learned obedience. The writer of Hebrews notes, “In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and

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He was heard because of His piety. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered” (Hebrews 5:7-8).

Third, He learned through suffering. “For it was fitting of Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings” (Hebrews 2:10).

What can we learn about growing in maturity from the life of Jesus? Here are a few thoughts to ponder.

We must go through a normal process of growth and maturation. Even though Jesus was perfect humanity, he had to grow through the process of normal life development. Each of us, must also live through the regular stages of life, growing in maturity as we gain life experience.

We must learn submission and obedience to authority. Even though he was perfect humanity, Jesus had to grow through the process of learning submission and obedience. Someone once said, “You must learn to follow before you can lead.” Excellent leaders have learned to submit to others.

We must go to the Lord for guidance in attaining maturity. “But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5)

Musings and Questions

The mature leader is a reflective person. Reflection on life, work, and ministry helps a leader become acquainted with the will and ways of God.

While some people forget God (Psalm 50:22; 106:21), the mature, godly person remembers Him. “O LORD, I remember Your name in the night, and keep Your law (Psalm 119:55).

As we begin 2021, it is a time for deep reflection on the challenges of the last year. This is perhaps the most difficult year of ministry that most pastors and church leaders have experienced. The abrupt changes, challenges, and corrections forced upon our churches, has created turmoil. However, it hopefully has caused us to grow and mature, too.

Psalm 77:12 states, “I will meditate on all Your work and muse on Your deeds.” Here are a few questions to begin your reflection.

- What lessons has God taught you this last year?
 - What ways has God increased your maturity this last year?
 - How will your life be different this next year because of what you’ve learned?
- What other questions might you add?

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