



PARAGRAPHS FOR PARTNERS

2022 – Issue #3



From the Executive Minister
Rev. Dr. James Kelsey

HOW ABOUT A BIT OF A BREAK?

I remember our first Christmas morning in Belgium serving as missionaries. That crisp morning was so much fun; I was so happy. Our boys, a first grader and a third grader, were still really into Christmas morning. Debbie and I were having our customary Christmas morning flavored coffee and pastries.

I remember thinking to myself: Why is this so good? What makes this Christmas morning feel so special, I wondered? Then I realized: It was the first Christmas morning in years that I had not been totally exhausted.

For 10 years I led churches through Advent and then Christmas. The special music, the decorations, the flowers, the services, people's high expectations, the recurring grief and depression people sometimes experience during the holidays all took their toll on my energy; and I felt obligated not to disappoint or fall short in any of these areas. In my second church we did a child friendly service at 6:00 pm and a candlelight service at 11:00 pm. I got home well after midnight, and some years still had toys to assemble before I went to bed.

Being a pastor can be a very rewarding way of life. It can also be a very demanding way of life.

Easter and Christmas, holidays when many people enjoy time with family and friends, are the most hectic times for pastors. Throughout the year the luxury of a three-day weekend is not an option for pastors; they work Sundays and usually spend part of Saturday reviewing (hopefully not writing) their sermon for Sunday.

The disruptions the pandemic has brought to church life and the tensions between “maskers” and “non-maskers” have taken a toll on pastors as they try to sow peace and understanding in the last few years. Our pastors have done a lot of funerals, sometimes for people who were not elderly and left behind young children. The political and racial tensions of recent years have confronted pastors with new challenges as they try to guide their congregants to embody the spirit of Christ in the midst of divisions. Now that the pandemic may be waning, pastors must try to chart the future of ministry and church life in a changed world. Who would have thought that hybrid would be a word we would use about church gatherings. It is all taking a toll on pastors who, in the best of times, already had a demanding vocation.

A recent [Barna study](#) released in November 2021 found that 38% of pastors have considered quitting full-time ministry, up from 29% at the beginning of 2021. The researchers write:

“One of the more alarming findings is that 46% of pastors under the age of 45 say they are considering quitting full-time ministry, compared to 34% of pastors 45 and older,” according to the report. “Keeping the right younger leaders encouraged and in their ministry roles will be crucial to the next decade of congregational vitality in the U.S.”

Two principal reasons cited in the research for leaving the ministry were the stress of the work and loneliness. Three other reasons were each cited by nearly a third (29%) of respondents: unhappiness with the job's impact on their family, lack of optimism about their church's future, and conflicts between their vision and the direction of the church.

Jesus himself realized that an empty vessel cannot quench the thirst of others. In Mark's telling of the Gospel story, Jesus seems to move through his ministry with breathless urgency; one can get out of breath reading that Gospel. In the midst of all this activity, Jesus tried to get away to renew himself. As early as chapter 1, after a stint of teaching and healing, we are told:

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" (35-37)

His respite was short lived. In chapter 6, Jesus again goes aside for some rejuvenation, and again he is called back into service by his disciples' struggle on the windy lake (6:45-50).

I don't share this with you to discourage church leaders. I share it to make you aware of the lived experience of pastors.

Our pastors in New York State give of themselves in service to our churches. It has been a demanding few years in their lives. I am encouraging our churches to give their pastors two weeks of paid personal leave—including two Sundays-- to rest, to study, to travel, to visit family, to do whatever will give them renewed vigor in their ministry and feeds their souls. If you do not have the resources to fund two Sundays of pulpit supply, contact me; the Region will help this out of our Psalm fund.

Thank you for your consideration.
Blessings,
Jim Kelsey

CELEBRATIONS & CONCERNS: Rev. Dr Gregory Johnson (Broome-Tioga Association) commissioned as a military chaplain/US Navy * Eugene Mattoon (Certified Lay Pastor, Living Waters Association) died 3/14/22 * Keith Griffin (Region Board member, Adirondack Association) died 6/20/22



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

Gregory Johnson from Cornerstone Comm Ch Endicott 5/31/22
Gary Spraker from Interim to Pastor, Lebanon Fed Ch 5/1/22
Aleka Schmidt from FBC Albion 6/22 to Michigan
Arthur Reed from United BC Elmira
James Horton to Interim Pastor, United BC Elmira 5/15/22
Stanley Skinner from Preston Hollow BC 7/10/22
Daniel Poucher to Interim, Granville BC 7/1/22
Kevin Grish from Fleming Fed Ch 7/1/22
Lynda Myers to Pastor, Fleming Fed Ch 7/17/22
Kar Min, Utica Karen BC, Ordained 4/10/22
David Harris, FBC Syracuse, Ordained 5/28/22



**AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES
NEW YORK STATE MINISTERS COUNCIL
MINISTERS RETREAT**

SEPTEMBER 25–27, 2022

NOTRE DAME RETREAT CENTER

5151 Foster Road
Canandaigua, NY 14424
ph. 585-394-5700



***THE LIVING CHURCH IN TRANSITION:
The Relevance of The Church in Post-Modern Culture***

*Presenter: Dr. Ryan P. Burge
Assistant Professor of Political Science
Eastern Illinois University
and an American Baptist Pastor*

Dr. Burge is a published author and is best known for his book, *The Nones: Who they are, where they came from, and where they are going*. In addition to being an assistant professor and pastor, Dr. Burge has published numerous articles on religion and politics in America, including *Politics & Religion; Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion; Review of Religious Research; Journal of Religious Leadership; Representation, Politics, Groups, and Identities; Journal of Communication and Religion; and Social Science Computer Review*.

His research has been covered in a variety of media outlets including *The New York Times, The Washington Post, CNN, Vox, 538, Christianity Today, Religion News Service, The Daily Mail, Deseret News, and C-SPAN*. He is cofounder and frequent contributor to *Religion in Public*, a forum for scholars of religion and politics to make their work accessible to a more general audience.

We are very excited to have Dr. Burge present at this fall's retreat and look forward to all that he has to offer as not only a well respected author and professor, but also one who knows what it is to lead a congregation in these very challenging times.

Retreat Begins

Sunday Afternoon

Registration: 4:00 p.m.

Dinner: 6:00 p.m.

Retreat Ends

Tuesday After Lunch

Lunch: 11:30

*“Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains tremble in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam...The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.”
(Psalm 46:2, 11)*

MINISTER'S COUNCIL RETREAT • SEPTEMBER 25-27, 2022 • REGISTRATION

*This retreat is partially funded by a Palmer Grant
obtained through your offerings to the ABCNYS Region.*

Name: _____ E:mail _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Any Special dietary needs? _____

CEUs? _____

Fees include all meals from dinner on Sunday through lunch on Tuesday.

	MEMBERS:	NON-MEMBERS:
PRIVATE ROOM	_____ \$250	_____ \$300
<i>All rooms are private</i>		
COMMUTER	_____ \$150	_____ \$200

EARLY BIRD DISCOUNT: (before August 1st) DEDUCT \$30.

To Register please enclose \$60 deposit [by August 1st for discount] made payable to:
Ministers Council of NYS. Please Note: *Sept. Retreat 2022* in memo.

Grants to attend this retreat are available:

Lynette Martin: Open to all ABCNYS leaders

Form: <https://www.abc-nys.org/lynette-martin-educational-fund.html>

Questions: Contact Dr. James Kelsey (jkelsey@abc-nys.org) or Pat Ludwig

Continuing Education Grant, ABHMS, open to ABCUSA pastors registered in ABCUSA Professional Registry
(NOTE: ABCNYS is not administratively involved with this grant. Please direct all questions, including eligibility, to
the ABHMS Scholarships & Grants office.

FORM: https://abhomemissions.formstack.com/forms/ce_application

NOTE: Grant application due by July 15, 2022, to be considered for a September 2022 event.

Questions: Contact scholarships@abhms.org.

Questions? Contact: Rev. Patricia Ludwig, President ABC-NYS Ministers Council
e-mail: butterflypreacher@juno.com Phone: 716-433-0976

Mail registration to: Rev. Cedric A Broughton, 706 N. George St., Rome, NY 13440
Registration Deadline: August 21, 2022

2022 ABCNYS BIENNIAL – OCTOBER 7 & 8
THE UNITED CHURCH, CANANDAIGUA NY
"The Church: Gifts from the Exile" - Isaiah 43:18-19

Check out the enclosed informational brochure for details!

Register using printed form (in brochure) or online at:
<https://www.abc-nys.org/abcnys-biennial.html>

Canandaigua area hotel information can also be found on the web page.



ABCNYS LAY STUDY PROGRAM FALL COURSES 2022

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

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION – STARTING SEPTEMBER 12, 2022

This course is designed to enable the student to relate Christian education to all aspects of church life.

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

Instructor: Dr. Shawn Hast, thast@juno.com

PREACHING – STARTING SEPTEMBER 8, 2022

This course is designed for lay people who are beginning to preach or considering preaching in a church setting. The course will cover the basic elements of hearing God's word, communicating that word to listeners in an authentic manner and in a way that is faithful to the text while connecting to human experience.

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

Instructor: Rev. Ken McKenzie, PastorKen.FedChurch@yahoo.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)

ABCNYS LAY STUDY PROGRAM
STUDENT REGISTRATION FORM

Course Name _____ Starting Date _____

Credit _____ Audit (no credit) _____

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.

LS.4



The Ministers Council

Hey friendly pastors and CE Directors and lay pastors and retired pastors –

Enclosed is the registration form for MINISTERS COUNCIL annual retreat with the Rev. Dr. Ryan Burge, a political science professor at Eastern Illinois University and an ABC pastor.

Early bird deadline is fast approaching, so get your registration in soon.

See you there.
Pat Ludwig, President
ABCNYS Ministers Council

Changes to New York Baptist Annual 2022

- Page 27 **Open Praise Baptist Church, Buffalo:** Remove phone
- Page 27 **St. John’s Baptist Church, Buffalo:** Change phone: 716.852.4504

DATES TO REMEMBER

- September 5, 2022 -- ABCNYS Office Closed
- September 25-27, 2022 -- Ministers Council Retreat
- October 7-8, 2022 -- ABCNYS Biennial
- October 10, 2022 -- ABCNYS Office Closed
- November 4-6, 2022 -- ABY Convention
- November 24-25, 2022 -- ABCNYS Office Closed
- December 23 & 26, 2022 -- ABCNYS Office Closed



2022 REGION OFFERING
“SERVING & THRIVING TOGETHER”
<https://www.abc-nys.org/region-offering.html>

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” Galatians 6:9-10



Christy, Bohdan, & Kaylin Siau Fund

As we try to absorb the tremendous loss and trauma of the attack on the Siau family last weekend, we all want to do something.

For now we can pray for the recovery of Christy and David's sister. We can pray for David and Christy's two children as they bear the trauma of this experience. We can pray for both families as they process the deaths of David and their younger daughter McKenzie.

Perhaps we have no words adequate to the occasion. The Apostle Paul can encourage us here:

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with groanings too deep for words. And God, who searches hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God (Romans 8:26-28).

There is something else we can do right now. We can help Christy face some of the challenges ahead by contributing gifts to help her and her family. The Region is establishing the **Christy, Bohdan, & Kaylin Siau Fund**. One hundred percent of the gifts received will either be passed on to Christy or used to pay expenses, at her discretion. You may contribute to this fund either by mailing in a gift or online via our website.

Please mail contributions (payable to ABCNYS) to: ABCNYS, 3218 James Street, Syracuse NY 13206

Please indicate on the memo line of the check "Christy, Bohdan, & Kaylin Siau Fund." Also include a note stipulating this fund.

Online contributions may be made at <https://www.abc-nys.org/giving-to-the-region.html>

The Siaus' church has also established a support fund for the family. You can find it at <https://onrealm.org/pompeychurch/-/form/give/Siau?fs=e&s=cl>.

Thank you for your generosity in support of this dear family.

AMERICAN BAPTIST MISSION SUPPORT		AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF NEW YORK STATE THROUGH JUNE 2022 & 2021		
	United Mission	Annual Offerings	Institutions, Specifics & Targeted	Total ABMS
Received 2022	102,215	144,457	86,596	333,268
Received 2021	127,009	98,896	89,013	314,918
\$ Ahead (Behind)	(24,794)	45,561	(2,417)	18,350
% Ahead (Behind)	(19.52)	46.07	(2.72)	5.83

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

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Saturday 10:45-11:45am and 2:00-3:00pm
(Sign up at Biennial)

1. **GOING BACK TO GO FORWARD?**

The last few years have brought many challenges and traumas, and some have found it difficult to find hope. The Bible and historical church stories are full of people who faced seemingly hopeless situations and persevered. We will discuss some of these stories and lessons we can take from them as we seek a way forward in our own troubled times.—**Rev. Jonathan Lawrence**

2. **YOU LOOK MAHVELOUS... BUT YOU SOUND AWFUL**

A quick overview of the theology surrounding online worship along with tips for how to create engaging video presentations of worship. Whether you are streaming live or pre-recording worship, this breakout should help you to engage with your online viewers without breaking the bank.—**Rev. Ken McKenzie**

3. **FINDING GOD & OURSELVES IN THE WILDERNESS**

The world we live in is becoming more and more a spiritual wilderness. The ancient celtic Christians lived, moved and followed Christ through the spiritual wildernesses of their day. We will explore what has been preserved from their rich history and writings and how we may find God and our true selves using some resources available today.—**Rev. Howard Maxson**

4. **A BIBLICAL LOOK AT CHRISTIAN “WORSHIP”**

Discussion of what the Gatherings (“Come Togethers”*) of the Body of Christ ought to be “about” and the appropriate “doings” of such. Discussion of Worship’s impact on Church revival and vitality. *Paul, 1 Cor. 11:17, 18, 20.—**Rev. Jim Kerr-Whitt**

5. **WEAVING TOGETHER MISSION, VISION AND VALUES**

Can you explain your congregation’s mission? What about your organization’s values and vision? These elements exist in every organization but do not always work together to create a clear focus. Learn how to clarify these components for your church or nonprofit. Hear how ABCUSA is currently seeking to transform its own focus using these core elements.—**Rev. Dr. C. Jeff Woods** (morning session only)

6. **ABC GLOBAL SERVANTS** Anita & Rick Gutierrez will share what God is doing in South Africa.

**American Baptist Churches of New York State
Biennial 2022**

THE CHURCH: GIFTS FROM THE EXILE

ISAIAH 43:18-19

October 7 & 8, 2022
The United Church
11 Gibson Street, Canandaigua NY

ABC/NYS Biennial
3218 James St.
Syracuse NY 13206

NON PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
EAST SYRACUSE
N.Y.

2022 Biennial Registration Form

(1 person per form. Please photocopy form for additional persons
Register online at <https://www.abc-nys.org/abcnys-biennial.html>

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Church _____

Delegate * _____

Delegate approved by Pastor or Clerk

Visitor

Fees** Check One

- ___ \$40 /person
- ___ Five or more from one church (sent together)—\$35/person
- ___ With Saturday dinner— \$50/person
- ___ With Saturday dinner—Five or more from one church (sent together)
\$45/person

** includes Saturday continental breakfast & lunch, refreshments, ice cream social & program costs.

Request for Childcare ***: Child: _____ Age: _____

If more space is needed, please include a separate sheet of paper.

*** Note: If you expect childcare, you MUST pre-register your child(ren).

Return completed form to:

ABC/NYS Biennial
3218 James St.
Syracuse NY 13206:
315.863.7148
E-mail: office@abc-nys.org

**Registration Deadline: September 15
(\$5 per person late fee after this date).**

Checks should be made payable to
"ABCNYS."

* Each member church exceeding thirteen (13) resident members as reported in the last ABC/NYS annual may have as delegates for ABC/NYS meetings the pastor and one (1) other person plus an additional delegate for each full one hundred (100) resident members, provided, however, that the congregation is also reported as contributing to the basic mission program of the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. (ABC/NYS Bylaws Article III. Section 3.6)

Friday, October 7th

3:00PM Registration/Exhibits/Bookstore

7:00PM Opening Session/ Worship

9:00PM Ice Cream Social/Fellowship

Saturday, October 8th

8:00AM Registration/Exhibits/Bookstore

9:00AM Morning Session/Worship

10:45AM Breakout Sessions

12:00PM Lunch

1:15PM Business Meeting

2:00PM Breakout Sessions

3:15PM Closing Session/Worship

4:45PM Dinner

Three offerings will be taken at the Biennial—

Friday: Region Ministry

Saturday Morning: Ministry of Rick & Anita Gutierrez

Saturday Afternoon: Ukraine & Burma Relief

Our Guest Speakers



Rev Dr. C. Jeff Woods
General Secretary, ABCUSA



Rev. David Harris
Pastor, First Baptist Church of
Syracuse in Jamesville NY



Anita & Rick Gutierrez
ABC Global Servants in South Africa



Karen Podsiadly
Past President, ABCUSA
Director of Community Development
SUNY Brockport

Our text for this Biennial says that we should “forget the former things” and not “dwell on the past...” (Isaiah 43:18-19) But I am reminded of this warning: “those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” (George Santayana) And so while we should not dwell on the past, we do need to remember it, or we will indeed repeat it.

As Baptists we are a Bible people. Reading our Bible provides a way for us to remember the various ways in which God has delivered his people from one Exile after another!

Eugene Petersen reminds us that: *We do not begin life on our own...we enter a world...created by God, that already has a rich history and is crowded with committed participants... a world in which...surprising things keep on taking place.**

Petersen’s words remind me that as we begin life the world is already in motion. But even as the world keeps turning, God surprises us along the way. When we know God’s presence and live into God’s grace, we may be surprised at how God works through the gifts of Exiled people—a people embraced by God’s steadfast love and committed to God’s lovingkindness. And so as we live into God’s eternal presence, let us discern the “new thing” God is doing, and allow this year’s ABCNYS Biennial to bless us in surprising ways! — Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow, President, ABCNYS Board of Mission

GROWTH POINTS

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

Check the Bullies: Part 2

Unfortunately, church bullies are common in churches. It's difficult to know how to handle them, since everyone's expected to be nice at church.

Dealing with church bullies is uncomfortable at the least, and dangerous to one's ministry in the most. It's complicated, but dealing with bullies is a necessary aspect of leading a church. Ignoring bullies leaves the church in serious danger.

Here are some ideas to help guide you as a pastor to challenge and handle bullies you may encounter.

First, if your church is a light on a hill, you'll attract a few bugs.

Good churches attract a lot of people, and some of them will be bullies. Expect them to come, and be ready to manage them. Start with prayer. It's powerful. Ask the Lord what to do. Listen to him speak through the Scripture and other godly leaders. Other church members, particularly ones who've been around a while, know the problem. Talk with them. Listen to their concerns, insights, and suggestions.

Second, think of the bully as a rock in a stream.

A church is like a stream in which are a lot of rocks—some bigger than others. As the church moves along, some rocks will block the stream, causing it to pool up. If water can't move out of the pool, it'll eventually stagnate. If a particular rock is blocking the stream, you have two options: move it or let the water go around it. Bullies are like larger rocks. Thus, you must either move the rock or go around it.

Third, deal with bullies directly.

Confront bullies head-on, that is, move the rock. Avoiding confrontation leads to resentment. Resentment then sours relationships beyond the original person. If you don't confront, the ministry will slow down, perhaps even come to an abrupt halt. In time others in the congregation will get tired of the church bully, but it usually falls to the pastor to "do something about it."

**Put Dr. Gary L. McIntosh on
your coaching team.**

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

Fourth, attack problems not people.

Work to separate the bully as a person from the issues. This may not be possible, as bullies merge so closely with some issues that they can't be separated. However, do your best to love the person, while addressing the problem. One way to do this is to maintain respect for the bully as a person. Even if they use cutting words, are boisterous and mean spirited, relate to them with standard courtesy. Resist mirroring their attitude or reactions. Be "shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves" (Matthew 10:16).

Fifth, hold bullies accountable.

Hold them accountable by asking direct questions. For example, "How was this decision made? Who specifically are the other people who are concerned? Can you respond to the rumor that you've been spreading lies?" Then wait and let them respond. If this occurs in a board or business meeting, perhaps others will also raise questions. However, if no one speaks up but you, it's okay. It may take several confrontations before others gain the courage to say much. If they try to humiliate you, let the others see what the bully is really like, but respond only with kindness. Point out your concern is for the church and Christ's honor, rather than your own reputation.

Sixth, if you can't confront head on, go around them.

As you become aware of the bullies tactics, anticipate their actions and work ahead of time to negate their influence. Be prepared for their anger, attempts at intimidation, or threats. Speak to others about how to handle the bully, and work around them.

Seventh, if a bully threatens to resign, accept their resignation.

Church bullies often threaten to resign as another means of control. They likely have used such a threat in the past, but prior pastors have been too scared to call their bluff. If this happens, call their bluff! Immediately accept their resignation. Your response will shock the bully, as no one before was strong enough to deal with their threats. Occasionally, the bully will call the following day (of maybe right away) and try to take back their resignation. Don't allow them to do it. Hold your ground. Refuse to reconsider. They resigned, that's it. Standing up to a bully is always risky, but even if they leave, it's worth the risk.

How have you dealt with bullies in the past?

Which of these ideas do you need to use in the future?

What other ideas for checking bullies have you seen work?

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GROWTH POINTS

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

10,000 Hours

In his delightful book, *Outliers: The Story of Success*, Malcolm Gladwell introduced the concept of the 10,000-Hour Rule.

As he reports on several studies from different fields, Gladwell weaves the stories of prominent individuals into his book to answer the question: “Is there such a thing as innate talent?”

The short answer is yes, there is such a thing. Some people in all fields of endeavor have innate talent that positions them for success. However, the surprising insight is innate talent is not as important as preparation — especially the amount of time a person practices.

He notes, “The idea that excellence at performing a complex task requires a critical minimum level of practice surfaces again and again in studies of expertise. In fact, researchers have settled on what they believe is the magic number for true expertise: ten thousand hours.”

The conclusion? “Ten thousand hours of practice is required to achieve the level of mastery associated with being a world-class expert — in anything.”

What About Pastoring?

Assuming Gladwell’s report is accurate, how does it relate to pastoring a church?

It’s an intriguing question that few have thought about. It’s widely recognized, of course, that few pastors fresh out of seminary or Bible school are considered excellent pastors. For most new pastors, it takes time to learn, develop, and mature.

Some church historians may argue that a few pastors excelled immediately, for example, someone like Charles H. Spurgeon. It’s true that Spurgeon was highly successful right from the beginning of his public ministry. But, a close look at his life reveals he had spent hours talking with his father and others about theology and church ministry. By the time he took his first pastorate, he had at least 2,500 hours of formal and informal study of the Scriptures. Add to that his four years of ministry experience in his first church, which provided a minimum of 4,000 hours to practice preaching and teaching (a conservative estimate), and together he had at least 6,000 hours of practice prior to becoming the pastor of Metropolitan Chapel. Thus, even Spurgeon spent hours practicing.

Practice, Practice, Practice

An old joke tells of a tourist who stopped a New Yorker on the street and asked, "How do you get to Carnegie Hall?" To which the New Yorker replied, "Practice. Practice. Practice."

There's truth in the joke, of course. It takes practice to become excellent at most things in life.

Gladwell writes, "Practice isn't the thing you do once you're good. It's the thing you do that makes you good."

Thus, Pastors may find it helpful to ask: "How many hours does it take to become an excellent pastor?"

Reaching 10,000 hours of practice is a huge number. Think about it this way.

Let's assume a pastor today spends 15 hours in preparation and actually preaching on a typical Sunday morning. If the pastor speaks 40 Sundays a year, that's 600 hours a year. At that rate it'd take 16 years to reach 10,000 hours of study and practice. Thus, if an average seminary graduate starts preaching at, say, age 25, it'd take them until age 41 to reach 10,000 hours, which is a reasonable estimate of how long it takes for a pastor to be deemed excellent (Spurgeon started preaching at age 15!).

With the rise of shared preaching in numerous churches today, however, some pastors preach only 20-25 times a year, which would then take over 30 years to reach 10,000 hours!

Generally, 4,000 hours of practice makes a person adequate at what they do, 8,000 hours of practice makes one good, and 10,000 hours of practice makes one excellent.

The bottom line? If you want to be an excellent pastor (preacher, teacher, leader, mentor, etc.), you need to practice. And, you most likely need to practice more than you currently do.

If you wish to be a better preacher, then you need to preach more. If you wish to be a better counselor, you need to counsel more. If you wish to be a better leader, you need to lead more.

Looking back over your ministry life, how many hours have you given to preaching or teaching or leading or caregiving or [you name the ministry]?

How close are you to reaching 10,000 hours?

Dr. Gary L. McIntosh can be reached at cgnet@earthlink.net.

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GROWTH POINTS

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

Funding a Church's Ministry

Money is a major topic covered in the Bible. For example Matthew explains that it is a key aspect of discipleship (6:19-24), stretches our faith (6:25-30), and extends our legacy (6:31-34).

It's a subject that most pastors don't care to talk much about. However, it takes money to build a fruitful church. Here are eight principles of giving to keep in mind as you lead your church.

Principle #1: Giving is an act of generosity.

When Moses called for the people of Israel to give to the building of the Tabernacle. He asked, "Whoever is of a generous heart, let him bring the LORD'S contribution" (Exodus 35:5). Focus on building a generous church.

Principle #2: Generosity is not a function of wealth.

Paul noted how the "extreme poverty [of the Macedonian church] overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part" (2 Corinthians 8:1-7).

Principle #3: Generosity is a mark of a disciple.

Jesus Christ serves as the example for his disciples to follow. "For you know," explained Paul, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:8-15).

Principle #4: People give to vision more than to pay bills.

David first shared his vision to build a house for God, and then included how he personally was investing in its building. After doing so, he invited the people to contribute generously (1 Chronicles 29:1-20). It is a three step process: Share the vision, note the investment by leaders, and share an invitation for others to give. Note: if people are not giving, you don't have a giving problem you have a vision problem.

Principle #5: Financially healthy churches balance allocations.

The following suggested allocations are generally appropriate for most church, but each church is specific, thus adaptations are often necessary.

- Education/Small Groups - 10-15%
- Evangelism/Outreach - 5-10%
- International Missions - 10-15%
- Fixed Costs - 10-15%
- Mortgage/Debt Relief- 15-25%
- Salaries/Benefits - 35-45%

Principle #6: People give from six pockets.

- The Budget Pocket: People enjoy giving to the basic budget of the church.

- The Missions Pocket: People enjoy supporting missionaries or mission projects.

- The Program Pocket: People enjoy financing various programs or ministries conducted by the church.

- The Benevolence Pocket: People enjoy providing assistance to those in need.

- The Facility Pocket: People enjoy funding buildings or construction projects.

- The Projects Pocket: People enjoy sponsoring various special projects.

Principle #7: People give when they are trained to give.

The key to training people in the church is to be systematic. It is the continuous teaching conducted over months and years (drip, drip, drip) that leads to strong support. Here's some ideas to use.

- Set the example by demonstrating that leaders are giving. When asking for financial support, share how much the leaders have already contributed.

- Cultivate generosity by giving to others. For example, consider giving an entire Sunday's offering to a local food shelter, adoption center, or church plant.

- Talk to your donors and say "Thank You" often.

- Use technology for giving. For example, place pay stations in the lobby, recommend online options, etc.

- Invite guest speakers to address the topic of giving.

- Suggest books and articles for leaders and church participants to read on giving generously.

Principle #8: People give when they have different ways to give.

- Check or cash offerings.

- Online options (PayPal, etc.)

- Pay stations (Kiosks in the lobby)

- Regular deductions

- Direct contributions, (Venmo, etc.).

Remember: the best time to plant a tree was 25 years ago; the second best time is today. Get started on training your people to give generously this week.

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