



PARAGRAPHS FOR PARTNERS

2023 – Issue #3



From the Executive Minister
Rev. Dr. James Kelsey

On Vacations & Jesus Going Aside

I remember well my family's first Christmas morning in Belgium, where we served as missionaries for four years. I had always been a big fan of Christmas Day and treasured the opening of gifts. On that first Christmas morning in Belgium, however, my joy was so much more buoyant, my delight so much richer. I wondered why. Then it occurred to me. This was the first Christmas morning in ten years that I had not been absolutely exhausted.

During the Advent season, both congregants and ministers have heightened expectations. Music, decorations, preaching—they all need to be grander than the previous year. Caring for people as they navigate depression, family conflicts, and process reawakened grief intensifies the pastoral load during the holidays. It is a demanding season in the life of a pastor.

At both my first and second churches we did a candlelight Christmas Eve service that went past midnight; at my second church we did a 6:00 pm “child friendly” service as well. I arrived home in the early hours of the holiday. After we had our two sons, I often would still have toys to assemble before going to bed.

So on “the big day,” the fatigue would hit me; I was shattered. I doubt that was the experience of most of my church members as they bustled through the affairs of their Christmas Day.

On that first Christmas in Belgium I was, for the first time in a long time, rested and ready for the celebration.

Pastors experience most holidays in a different way. They do not get a three-day holiday weekend to relax and recharge, maybe travel to be with family. They go to work in the middle of the weekend.

Please understand, the calling of God to ministry is a wonderful gift. It is, on the whole, a good life. Nonetheless, the attention required, the stress, the responsibility of this calling is still experienced by one's body and brain as work. To preach a sermon takes the same physical stamina as an 8 hour work day. Add in a meeting or two, and it is a full day's labor.

I remember pulling onto Interstate 71 South heading away from Mansfield OH on our annual vacation in our red Ford Windstar minivan, our boys situated in the back with toys and snacks and books. There was this feeling of a weight lifting as we merged onto the highway. For two weeks, I was set loose from the ever present awareness of around the clock availability.

My point is: Being a pastor is not exactly like being an accountant or a sales person or a school teacher or a mechanic. Pastors carry the weight of unceasing, unending responsibility.

This is why the custom among American Baptist churches is the granting of four weeks of vacation beginning with the first year of a pastorate. In other jobs people may over the years build up to four weeks of vacation; but remember, they don't work on Christmas Eve and every three-day holiday weekend throughout the year. Unless they are in the emergency services, they don't get called in to work at 3:00 in the morning or on Saturday afternoon when there is a crisis.

This is why Region staff encourages churches to grant pastors four weeks of vacation from day one. (It is also why we recommend sabbaticals, but that is another topic for another day.)

A pastor expecting vacation time does not indicate a lack of commitment to their ministry. Jesus himself sought out rest from his ministry. In Matther14, Jesus seeks to find some respite from his labors, but the crowds still search him out. He then ministers and ends up feeding 5,000 people. After that he sends his disciples on ahead of him. He goes up to a mountain by himself for a break, but he then sees his disciples in trouble out on the water and goes out to rescues them.

Pastors read this and know how Jesus must have felt. (Maybe Jesus longed for a minivan and an interstate to take him away for a break. When I think about it, I will always have a soft spot for that minivan.)

A primary contributor to the health and vitality of a congregation is the health and vitality of the pastor. Grant ample vacation because you care about your pastor's wellbeing. Grant ample vacation because you care about the wellbeing of your church.

Blessings,

Jim Kelsey



2023 Camping Information:
<http://www.vpccministries.org/>

TO ALL Pastors, lay pastors, CE personnel, assistant pastors, and all interested people!



The Ministers Council

Come along to the great retreat at St. Margaret's Retreat Center in New Hartford, where our resource leader, an ABC pastor and President of Sojourners Magazine and Community, the Rev. Adam Russell Taylor, will share his insights and beliefs about how to become the BELOVED COMMUNITY, based on Jesus' ethic of love.

Don't let the fees get in your way. You can apply to the Lynette Martin Fund for this kind of event. See ABCNYS web site for details or call the Region office for an application.

Call me with your questions: 1-716-433-0976 - Patricia Ludwig, President of NY Ministers Council



Community/Spirituality/Leadership

The Ministers Council
AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES USA

NEW YORK STATE MINISTERS COUNCIL
MINISTERS RETREAT
SEPTEMBER 24-26, 2023
ST. MARGARET'S ECUMENICAL
& RETREAT CENTER

47 Jordan. Road, New Hartford, NY 13413
Ph. 315-724-2324



**The Church in Global Society:
*Becoming the Beloved Community***

We are privileged to welcome this year's speaker: The Rev. Adam Russell Taylor, President of Sojourners, author of: *A More Perfect Union: A New Vision for Building the Beloved Community*.

Rev. Taylor previously led the Faith Initiative at the World Bank Group, served as the Vice President in Charge of Advocacy at World Vision U.S. and was the senior political director at Sojourners. He has also served as the executive director of

Global Justice, an organization that educates and mobilizes students around global human rights and economic justice. He was selected for the 2009/2010 class of White House Fellows and served in the White House Office of Cabinet Affairs and Public Engagement.

Rev. Taylor is a graduate of Emory University, the Harvard University Kennedy School of Government, and the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology. He serves on the Independent Sector Board, the Global Advisory Board of Tearfund UK, and is a member of the inaugural class of the Aspen Institute Civil Society Fellowship. Taylor is ordained in American Baptist Churches and the Progressive National Baptist Convention and serves in ministry at the Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria, VA.

Retreat Begins Sunday Afternoon

Registration: 4:00 p.m.

Dinner: 6:00 p.m.

Retreat Ends Tuesday After Lunch

Lunch: 11:30

**Remember your old BOOKS for the
BOOK SWAP Table!!!**

*"Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile
and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare."* (Jeremiah 29:7)

MINISTERS COUNCIL RETREAT · SEPTEMBER 24–26, 2023 · REGISTRATION

Registrants of this retreat may be required to show proof of vaccination.

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 <i>All rooms are private</i>	_____ \$250	_____ \$300
COMMUTER	_____ \$160	_____ \$200
MONDAY ONLY:	_____ \$ 80 (includes Lunch)	

To Register please enclose \$60 deposit [by September 8, 2023) made payable to:
Ministers Council of NYS. Please Note: *Sept. Retreat 2023* in memo.

REGISTRATION BONUS: IF YOU ATTENDED THE MAY RETREAT AND THIS ONE WE WILL CREDIT \$50 OFF YOUR 2024 DUES!

Mail registration to: Cedric A Broughton, 706 N. George St., Rome, NY 13440
Registration Deadline: September 8, 2023

Grants to attend this retreat are available:

1. *Lynnette Martin Fund*: Contact Pat Ludwig (see below)
2. *Grant Application for D.Min. or Mission Trip*: Office of Financial Aid for Studies, ABHMS, 1-800-ABC-3USA - Ext. 2067 or email: Carolyn.Majeed@abhms.org
3. *Cultivating New Life*: Office of Financial Aid for Studies, (see above)

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

CELEBRATIONS & CONCERNS: Rev. Stephanie Schneider, Pastor, FBC Glens Falls & Ft. Edward Village BC (Adirondack Association)/ABY Program Director, and her husband Andrew welcome Caleb Joseph Daniel - born 5/31/23 * Rev. Marilyn Bell's, Pastor, St. Paul's BC Utica (Mohawk-Oneida Association) husband, Jesse Bell, died 3/31/23 * Rev. Jim Austin's, Pastor, North Manlius United Ch (Iroquois Association) wife, Michelle, died 6/3/23 * Rev. Millard Cook (FBC Olean) died 7/14/23



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. Jim Kelsey (315/863-7336, jkelsey@abc-nys.org).



LEADERSHIP CHANGES

Correction from previous issue: *Warren Scott to Pastor, New Hope Institutional BC Tarrytown 4/2/23*
Robert Martin from FBC Georgetown
Allan Chandler from Randallsville New Life Ch to Retirement
Nic Knapp to Pastor, Randallsville New Life Ch 6/11/23
David Hall from FBC Hoosick Falls 6/30/23 to Retirement
Calvin Densmore from FBC Andover to Retirement 7/30/23
Cynthia Mapstone from Dewitt Comm Ch to Interfaith Works of CNY
Carolyn Peeler, Interim Pastor, Macedonia BC Buffalo, Ordination Recognition 4/10/23



ABCNYS LAY STUDY PROGRAM FALL COURSES 2023

Check out this link: <https://www.abc-nys.org/lay-study-program.html>

BASIC CHRISTIAN BELIEFS – STARTING SEPTEMBER 11, 2023

When: Monday evenings 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. – Online via Zoom.

Instructor: Rev. Greg Staples, pastorgreg@cliftonparkcenterbaptist.org

CHURCH ADMINISTRATION – STARTING SEPTEMBER 6, 2023

When: Wednesday evenings 7:00 – 9:00 pm. – Online via Zoom.

Instructor: Rev. Steve Reynolds, consultingpastor@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)

OCTOBER 26 to 29, 2023



Lending a Hand in the Name of Jesus



American Baptist Churches of New York State
working with
Community Missions of the Niagara Frontier



We will arrive Thursday evening for dinner and depart after breakfast on Sunday. If you cannot be present the whole time, we can work that out and your fee will be adjusted accordingly.

The cost will be \$295 per person, which includes everything except transportation.

Grants are available for youth through the ABCNYS Ministry and Mission Fund. Go to <https://www.abc-nys.org/grant-opportunities.html> and complete the Keith Griffin Youth Leadership Fund portion of the "ABCNYS Grant Application" found in the upper right hand corner of the page.

More here: <https://www.abc-nys.org/community-missions-niagara-falls-mission-trip.html>

This mission experience is made possible by your church's gifts to United Mission, the ABCNYS Region Offering, the America for Christ Offering, ABWM Love Gift, and direct gifts to the Region.



NEW LOCATION THIS YEAR!
Get excited, y'all!

Announcements about band, speaker, and mission project coming soon!

This convention is a ministry of American Baptist Churches of New York State. Your gifts to ABCNYS Region Offering, United Mission, America for Christ Offering, and direct gifts to the Region make this convention possible.

2023 Christian Men Conference Registration Form

Elbridge Community Church
119 EAST MAIN ST
ELBRIDGE, NY

August 19, 2023, 9:30am-4pm (Doors Open 9am)



Name and Mailing Information (use a separate form for each person) (please print clearly)

Name: _____

Mailing Address _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

E-mail _____ Phone Number _____

Home Church/Association _____ Age _____

2023 Prices - A deposit of \$20 is required to secure your reservation

Laymen Cost

\$ 40.00 _____

Clergy Cost

(Clergy pricing is at a special reduced rate)

\$35.00 _____

Youth Cost (12 to 18 years)

\$30.00 _____

I would like to add \$ _____ to my registration for:

Booster Club Project _____ Conference Scholarship Fund _____

General Fund _____ Disaster Relief _____

Scholarship Education Fund _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

A limited amount of scholarship funding is available when there is a financial need. Pastor endorsement is required. Please submit endorsements below. You will be notified once approved.

Scholarship requested in the amount of \$ _____. I recommend a scholarship for the above named individual so he can attend the 2023 Christian Men's conference sponsored by American Baptist Men NYS..

Pastor's Signature

Church Name

Make checks payable to: **ABMen NYS**

**Mail to: ABMen NYS
c/o Rich Russell
43 Orchard Park Rd.
Pine City, NY 14871**

Questions: nyrussells@gmail.com

DATES TO REMEMBER

- August 19, 2023 -- ABMen’s Conference @ Elbridge Community Ch
- September 4, 2023 -- ABCNYS Office Closed
- September 24-26, 2023 -- NYS Ministers Council Retreat @ St. Margaret’s Retreat Center
- October 8, 2023 -- Adirondack Association @ FBC Jay
- October 9, 2023 -- ABCNYS Office Closed
- October 26-29, 2023 -- Community Missions of Niagara Frontier mission trip
- November 10-12, 2023 -- ABY Convention @ Crowne Plaza, Syracuse

Changes to New York Baptist Annual 2023

- Page 13 **Ebenezer Karen Baptist Church:** Remove Pastor Green Ter, Add: Pastor Hsa Ku Htoo, 315.385.9377, hsao855@gmail.com
- Page 13 **Chautauqua Association:** New Moderator: Phillip Pratt, 47 W. Main St., P .O. Box 47, Falconer 14733-0047, 716.969.6525. us2Pratts@yahoo.com

AMERICAN BAPTIST MISSION SUPPORT

AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES
OF NEW YORK STATE
THROUGH JUNE 2023 & 2022

	United Mission	Annual Offerings	Institutions, Specifics & Targeted	Total ABMS
Received 2023	90,566	127,746	103,108	321,420
Received 2022	102,215	144,457	86,596	333,268
\$ Ahead (Behind)	(11,649)	(16,711)	16,512	(11,848)
% Ahead (Behind)	(11.40)	(11.57)	19.07	(3.56)

Conference Cost

Includes morning coffee and donuts, hot lunch meal, and departing snack.

Adult Layman

\$40.00

Youth (12 to 18 years)

\$ 30.00

Clergy

\$ 35.00

Virtual

Free

Please register by August 12, 2023

A limited amount of scholarship funding is available. Pastor endorsement is required.

A deposit of \$20 is required to secure your reservation.

Sorry, no refunds for “No-Shows.”

Note: All meals and registration at the White Church 119 E. Main St. all other events at the Brick Church 109 East Main St.



Conference hosted by
Elbridge Community Church
119 EAST MAIN ST
ELBRIDGE, NY

Join us for a day retreat with time for prayer, reflection and renewal led by great speakers.



As Christian men, we are not only saved by Christ, but we are saved into a fellowship. In such a fellowship, men are unburdened. In such a fellowship, men are sharpened. In such a fellowship, men are mentored. In such a fellowship, men labor and minister. In such a fellowship, men find deep friendships. Through the fellowship of other men, men can work out their salvation. Men's fellowship is not only beneficial; it is vital. Come join us for a time of fellowship with other Christian men.



Hosted at
Elbridge Community Church
119 EAST MAIN ST
ELBRIDGE, NY 13060

SPONSORED BY



August 19, 2023

**Doors Open at 9:00 AM
Conference Start Time 9:30 AM**

AB Men: bringing men and boys into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

Suresh Thiagarajan I was born in Salem, Tamil Nadu, south India in a Christian home. I accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior in December 1966 through a young man a baggage handler in TWA airlines from Queens, NY on a



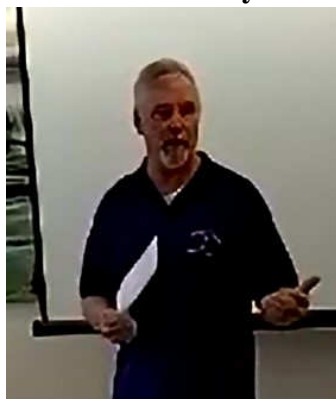
mission trip to India. I met him at a local restaurant and started talking to him and in the course of the conversation I found out that he was going to the same Christian conference my Dad was taking us, his three teenage sons. December 1965 my mother entered into the presence of the Lord. In this conference led by a Sikh follower of Christ Bakht Singh he led me to the Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom. 3:23, 1 John 1:9, Rev. 3:20, John 1:12) and God opened my heart (Acts 16:14).

My great grandfather was the first to become a follower of Christ in South India. He had to run away from home for safety but the light was lit (John 1:9). My 17th birthday I was in Western India with a team of young men sharing the gospel. The same organization of the man who led me to the Lord two years back Operation Mobilization which was started in NJ where God brought us providentially to serve in Paterson, NJ in 1975 where I got married to Ramani who is

also from India and served in the Star of Hope Mission for two years prior to coming to the USA. After college I worked for Back to the Bible Broadcast from Lincoln, Nebraska in New Delhi India.

In 1977 I went to work for Truck Stops of America till October 1982. The death of my mother made me realize the brevity of life and the sovereignty of God. As I read the Bible I would ask myself would I have the boldness to accept Christ's call to serve Him and this was always in the back of my mind. Most of my decisions were based on that. I have had several major health problems and car accidents but God has preserved me. September 1982 I resigned and moved to Syracuse to work among University students under the leadership of Dr. Koshy who is now with the Lord. We have been here for 41 years serving the students. We thank God for this privilege (1 Tim. 1:12). I am involved in a local church and serving in the community.

Reverend Jim Payne



Former pastor of Elmira, New York Free Methodist (Hand in Hand) church 18 years. I have witnessed the lack of

personal evangelism over the years. I started a ministry called “Umbrella of Truth” to assist Christians in sharing their faith on a regular basis. Many have difficulty in how to start or what to say, so we put together a website that shares the gospel. Then we invite Christians to partner with us. Each month we mail them something to hand out with our website imprinted on it. All a Christian has to say is “we give these out to check out our website”, and if they want to share further, they can or not, their choice. Last year we had over 600 hits from all over the world.

Umbrella of Truth – Website:

www.umbrellaoftruth.org

Lawrence White My name is Lawrence White and I was born in the Bronx NYC, the youngest of 7 boys to a single Christian mother, I've done time in prison, and also did drugs. God has set me free in every sense of the word!! I'm looking forward to sharing my testimony with you guys. May the Lord bless and keep you all until we meet!

Your brother in Christ, Lawrence



We welcome men from all denominations to gather with us again this year.

All speakers will be speaking at the Brick Church 109 East Main. St.

GROWTH POINTS

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

Changing Careers: Part 1

Pastors don't like to think of ministry as a career. Yet, some aspects of pastoral ministry are similar to a career, and it's wise to give heed to practical aspects of changing roles, locations, or, yes, even a complete change of career.

Two Types of Calling

Pastors tend to think of their calling in two parts: *General Call* and *Specific Call*.

A *General Call* to ministry implies that a pastor feels called to make their financial living from the gospel. While a *Specific Call* implies a pastor feels called to serve in a definite role, location, or position.

While a *General Call* to ministry may not change for most pastors, it's common for a *Specific Call* to change throughout a lifetime of ministry, with pastors often having three to six specific calls in their lifetime.

Allow me to give a personal example. Throughout my life, I've felt called to work in some field of ministry (*General Call*). I've served in at least seven different ministry roles—youth pastor, Christian education director, pastor, consultant,

professor, speaker, writer—(*Specific Call*). Throughout all of these, my place of ministry changed from Colorado to Oregon to California to national and international locations. As you can see, my *General Call* played out in several *Specific Calls*.

Life Changes

It was common centuries ago for a pastor to experience a *General Call* and a *Specific Call* as one. In the 1700s it was rare for pastors to change churches in their lifetime. Travel was not easy, and fewer ministry roles existed. Travel today, of course, is easier, and there are numerous and various opportunities for ministry.

Life change impacts ministry in other ways, too. A ministry position that once appeared perfect may now seem all wrong. Pastors may need a change due to family situations, or perhaps they've outgrown the current role, or they desire to pursue new interests.

Some pastors just fell into their positions at some point without much thought. Now, after ten to twenty years of experience, they find themselves stuck in an ill-fitting position, with no satisfaction in what they're doing.

Changing a General Call

Let's consider for a moment the major challenge of a complete career change, i.e., a change in the *General Call* of ministry.

If you feel you've made a mistake in understanding your *General Call* (career?), it's important to take some time *now* to think about who you are, and what are your gifts and passions?

Consider some . . .

Valid Reasons to change—

- You've been haunted for years by a vision or passion for work outside of traditional pastoral ministry.
- You don't fit in ministry positions even though you've tried for years.
- Your love for ministry is not there, and you dislike going to work.
- You've been fired or let go from ministry positions two or more times.
- Your values are not in sync with ministry work.

Invalid Reasons to change—

- Because security or money is the motive.
- Because you've experienced a bruised ego and are hurt.
- Because a friend or relative has a fabulous or lucrative career you could join.
- Because you're tired or burned out.
- Because you're running away from problems that are likely to surface in a new career.

In short, you shouldn't jump careers just because you're facing tough times or fantasizing about a different position.

Prior to making a major change, evaluate your *General Call* to ministry.

First, spend personal time in prayer asking God to guide you.

Second, talk and listen to close family members and key friends.

Third, find a ministry or life coach to walk with you as you consider a change.

(Continued next issue.)



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GROWTH POINTS

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

Changing Careers: Part 2

Once a pastor determines a career change is in order (see last month's issue), it's then time to consider a new calling, i.e., career. Put the following ideas into practice to help chart the future.

Charting a New Direction

First, explore a no-fail dream.

If you're going to change careers, you might as well try to find the most exciting option. So, if you knew you couldn't fail in your next career, what would you do?

Put your dream career on paper. For the best value, take a yellow pad and write out your ideas by hand (print if you wish), but putting words on paper will help you process your thoughts better than typing on a computer or tablet.

Write out thoughts, including the kind of work you would do, where you would live, how much you would earn, your typical day, your surroundings, what you would wear, and other ideas that occur to you. Think about your personality and what makes you thrive, feel alive, and challenged.

Would you work alone or on a team? In a large company or small one? Live in a big city or smaller one? Be in a high-pressured environment or a relaxed one? Have a flexible schedule or standard hours? Travel or be at home?

This exercise helps you to identify what's important, items that you should try to incorporate into your next career.

Here's an example of how this might work. Myron, a pastor who had found general pastoral ministry unsatisfying, wrote, "I'd like to start my own small non-profit business to help the less fortunate. I would travel locally identifying people and businesses who would partner together to care for others in our community, and help them improve their lives. I'd have a team of volunteers to follow-up my contacts, organize the work, but I'd be the front person making the initial contacts and the final decisions."

Take a look at what Myron wrote. He likes to network, work with a team, meet new people, care for the unfortunate, travel locally, but be in charge. These are the key elements he needs in his next career. He may not find them all in his next position, but at least he knows what's important.

Now, look at what you wrote in your own scenario. Show it to a family member, some friends, and to your life coach. What are the patterns that you and others see?

Ask yourself the following two questions. First, what elements of my dream career are not found in my current ministry role? Second, which two elements must I have in my next career to be happy and fulfilled? What you note to these two questions are the core elements.

Second, interpret your findings.

Look at your core elements and think about them broadly. How do you understand them. For example, Myron wrote that he cared for the unfortunate. He now has to interpret what he means by *unfortunate*. Does he want to focus on the hungry or people without shelter or those without jobs, or? If he means those without jobs, he may want to join an existing non-profit that works to help people find employment, rather than try to start his own company.

The better you can interpret your own core elements the closer you'll be to finding a new career.

Third, create a list of your skills.

On a piece of paper, list the skills you

use well in your current position. Example: recruit volunteers, organize events, public speaking, etc. Add other skills you are good with, but perhaps don't have opportunity to use in your current position. When finished, put a star next to the skills that bring you the most satisfaction.

Fourth, determine possible positions.

Look over your no-fail dream, its core elements, and list of skills you do well. Talk to others, describe your skills and core elements, and inquire about what positions might fit them. Key question: "Who earns a living doing something like I've described?" Search the Internet for information about careers that use your core elements and skills. Determine 3-5 possible positions, companies, or fields that appear to fit you.

Fifth, network, network, network.

Changing careers today is more about networking than writing a resume. Now, you will need a resume, but speak with people in the fields you are interested in. Ask questions, find out what each opportunity involves, narrow down to one or two and test the waters. Doing so will lead you to a fresh opportunity, an opportunity that may be a better career (*General Call*) for you.



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GROWTH POINTS

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

Church Growth Conscience

The continued plateauing and decline of churches in North America is sparking renewed interest in biblical church growth research.

While the recent focus on aspects of church health and missional church has provided needed corrections, the reality is too much focus on health often leads to a selfish inwardly directed church. In addition the theological insights derived from missional church studies is helpful but doesn't provide the practical how-tos that work on the ground.

Thus, church leaders are taking a second look at Church Growth research to make use of the numerous practical helps that create an outward focused church bent on making disciples.

Desire for Growth

Church Growth studies have identified many principles, some 155 factors, and four laws which impact the growth of a local church.

The first two Laws of Church Growth point to the importance of both the pastor and people having a desire for growth.

Condensed together the two laws state: The pastor and people must WANT the church to grow.

This statement seems rather obvious, but is ignored by multiple churches. It reminds me of an old adage that says, "If you think you can or think you can't, you're right." Adapting that adage, we could say, "If you think your church can grow or think it can't, you're right." Church growth begins with a desire FOR growth.

Of course, there's more to church growth than simple desire. But, without a desire for church growth among the pastor and people, there's little hope that a church will grow. In fact a lack of desire for growth almost always means a church won't grow!

A growth conscience must exist among pastor and people for church growth to take place.

So, how does one go about building a growth conscience? Here's some thoughts.

Building a Growth Consciousness

If your church is plateaued or declining, the first thing you must do is build a Church Growth Conscience in the lives and hearts of the people.

A Church Growth Conscience is the belief that people are actually lost and need to be found, converted, and folded in the body of Christ.

If a church does not have this basic understanding of Scripture then, frankly, a church will not grow.

First, preach and teach about the purpose of the church. Key passages that should be studied are Luke 19:1-10, especially “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Matthew 28:18-20, “Go therefore and MAKE DISCIPLES of all the nations.” Luke 5:1-10, “Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men.” Acts 1:1-8. “You will be my witnesses.”

Second, as leaders, model your commitment to making disciples. Pray from the pulpit for the lost. Share testimonies on how leaders are seeking to win the lost and disciple family, friends, and associates. Demonstrate a commitment to biblical church growth by studying growth principles and letting them impact goals and plans.

Third, demonstrate a commitment to finding and folding the lost in church practices. This is best seen through a commitment of money for evangelism

(not missions), that is, evangelism in your own Jerusalem (Acts 1:8). Growing churches commit a minimum of five percent of their budget for evangelism into the local community. Add to that another five percent for advertising, and growing churches give ten percent overall to outreach.

Fourth, invest in training people for church growth and evangelism. Bring your people up-to-speed with growth training. Pick some form of friendship evangelism and train ten percent of your people in it each year.

Fifth, work toward shared growth goals. The women’s, mens’ and youth group must be reaching out to evangelize. Make it a priority to meet with your leaders monthly or quarterly to promote growth and outreach. Share your passion for evangelism with everyone, at every time, in every manner. It’ll take time, but they will soon catch on.

Pastor and people must pay the price for growth in terms of financial commitment, time, and energy. Are you willing to do so? Are your people? Pay the price for growth!



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