



PARAGRAPHS FOR PARTNERS

2023 – Issue #4



From the Executive Minister
Rev. Dr. James Kelsey

PEACE THAT TRANSCENDS OUR CIRCUMSTANCES

ANXIETY

My mother was chronically anxious. It smothered much of the joy of life for her. I have always been determined not to be like her.

Acute anxiety is a good thing. It compels us to action when something needs to be done. Water starts dripping through the ceiling; we become understandably concerned and get someone to look at the roof. In this way, we minimize the damage and probably reduce the cost of repair. We feel pressure in our chest and pain in our arm. We become anxious about our health and go to the doctor. This may save our life.

Acute anxiety tells us something is wrong and we need to deal with the situation.

Chronic anxiety, on the other hand, is not constructive. Chronic anxiety is an abiding sense of ill ease or worry, creating a hyper alertness to threat or uncertainty. This type of anxiety cannot be traced to any particular event or situation. It is a posture of life that overreacts to any challenge or setback. Chronic anxiety makes us less, not better, equipped to deal with our lives. It can paralyze us right when we need to act. Chronic anxiety suppresses any sense of adventure by avoiding any risks. It can paralyze us from making necessary choices in order to avoid any risk. It closes down our openness to new experiences and growth and robs us of our joy.

The Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard described chronic anxiety (although that differentiation was not yet in use) as a vague yet unescapable uneasiness with no direct obvious cause. He saw it as both a spiritual and philosophical problem.

UNINTELLIGIBLE PEACE

Chronic anxiety certainly does have a spiritual dimension, so we should think through how our faith might address it. (Chronic anxiety can also have a mental health component and sometimes needs to have that type of treatment as well. The DSM 5 has a classification for Generalized Anxiety disorder.)

I offer the Bible word “peace” as the antithesis of chronic anxiety.

I have been thinking about peace in the midst of uncertainty and threat these days. As you may know, my wife Debbie, who is the English-language pastor at Tabernacle Baptist Church, Utica, landed in Tel Aviv with her mother and 24 church members on the Saturday morning that Hamas began its recent missile campaign and made its incursion into Israel. It was a tense nine days before they were able to travel home.

In spite of the increasing hostilities in the region, Debbie and her group visited many of the places they had planned to visit, including a sail on the Sea of Galilee and some baptisms in the Jordan River. They took their time there one day at a time and found things each day to be grateful for and to enjoy. They were, in my wife’s words, “pretty chill.” I would say they had a peace that on the surface was hard to understand.

The Apostle Paul wrote: *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus* (Phil 4:6-7). Paul does not have in mind here a peace that is the product of the absence of conflict or challenge or threat. If everything is going well for us and our lives are calm and secure, then our peace of mind is quite reasonable. It does not surpass understanding.

Paul writes about peace in the midst of threat or risk or loss. Remember, Paul wrote this letter from a prison cell. Peace in these times, peace unjustified by our circumstances, is that peace that “surpasses all understanding.” This is a peace that comes from trusting in God, even when life is hard and loss haunts us. Apart from faith in God, it is unintelligible.

PEACE AS A GIFT

As Jesus is preparing his followers for his death and the ensuing conflict that death would inevitably bring, he speaks of a type of peace that is a gift and not the result of our circumstances. He assures his anxious followers: *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid* (John 14:25-26). Jesus began his talk with his disciples by saying “*do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me*” (v. 1). This is a peace from a different place. Its origin lies in a deep assurance of God’s love for us and abiding presence—come what may.

This is not a Pollyanna view of life. This is not seeing the world through “rose-colored glasses.” Nor is this a denial of the losses and hardships life inevitably brings to us. This is a peace that looks at the world around us with a clear-eyed steely realism and says “my life lies with God and God will enable me to endure all things—come what may.”

This unintelligible peace that comes to us as a gift is what brought the faithful folks of Tabernacle Baptist Church through their recent ordeal. This is how all of us get through the hard places of life.

OUR CHURCHES

I have also thought a bit about our churches these days. Let us admit it: it is a challenging time to be a church in upstate New York. Thus, we all are prone at times to be a bit anxious about the future of our congregations. This anxiety can smother our sense of adventure and dull our openness to doing new and untested things. It can, at times, be paralyzing.

What can we do? Can we choose a different world and time? No, we don’t get to choose when and where we write our chapter in God’s redemptive plan. We can, however, seek out this gift of peace that surpasses all understanding. It is a peace that makes us brave—come what may.

So that is what I have been thinking about these last days, a peace that surpasses all logic and understanding, peace as a gift.

I leave you with the words of Reinhold Niebuhr:

Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime;
therefore, we must be saved by hope.

Nothing which is true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history;
therefore, we must be saved by faith.

Nothing we do, however virtuous, could be accomplished alone;
therefore, we must be saved by love.

We are part of a story much grander than our own lives, a story that stretches far beyond our own day. That gives me a peace that surpasses all understanding, peace that transcends the daily affairs of my life.

Blessings, Jim Kelsey

CELEBRATIONS & CONCERNS: Rev. Leonard Miller, (Retired Pastor, Living Waters Association) died 9/19/23 * **First Baptist Church, Ilion, First Baptist Church of Syracuse, and West Baptist Church, Oswego** have had final worship services in the past several months, with a combined 530 years of ministry



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

Don Henderson to Interim, FBC Walton 10/3/23
William Tatum from Eastwood BC Syracuse
Heidi Butler to Pastor, Eastwood BC Syracuse 9/10/23
Hector Meza to Pastor, FBC Hoosick Falls 9/1/23
Lydia Widbin to Pastor, Bottskill BC Greenwich & Lakeville BC 10/1/23
George Huffsmith from Sennett Fed Ch to Retirement 8/27/23
Marlene Ciranowicz from Memorial Park BC Vestal to Retirement 7/23
James Pearson to Transitional Minister, Memorial Park BC Vestal 7/30/23
John Simon from Second BC Poughkeepsie 10/15/23
Sandra Spaulding, Bottskill BC Greenwich, Ordained 8/13/23
Karen Blacks, Antioch BC Bedford Hills, Ordained 8/26/23
Sarah Flack, River Community Ch, Ordained 10/26/23
Carolyn Wallace, FBC Canisteo, Recognition Certified Lay Pastor 10/5/23

DATES TO REMEMBER

October 26-29, 2023 -- *Community Missions of Niagara Frontier mission trip*
November 10-12, 2023 -- *ABY Convention @ Crowne Plaza, Syracuse*
November 12, 2023 -- *Iroquois Association @ Tully United Community Church*
February 25, 2024 -- *Living Waters Association Spring Meeting*
April 26-28, 2024 -- *ABW Ministries & AB Girls NYS Annual Convention @ Corning Radisson Hotel, Corning*
May 5, 2024 -- *WEGO Association Spring Meeting*

Changes to New York Baptist Annual 2023

Page 21 **First Baptist Church, Chittenango:** Add email: fbchittenango@gmail.com

Page 30 **WEGO Association:** Association Moderator: Edris Hitchcock, 5 E. Main St, LeRoy NY 14482, 585.768.7600, edie18us@yahoo.com



The 2023 ABMen's booster project is to raise funds towards the water system at Camp Vick in Freedom, NY. The camp is in need of a lot of love, and its most pressing facilities need is getting clean, safe water to the camp sites and buildings. The project is roughly \$5,000 away from being financially ready to complete. Unfortunately, this funding gap creates a hurdle in the timeline with equipment orders. If funds are raised and equipment can be ordered the camp sites should be ready to open for family camping next spring and work can be focused on the other buildings. Hopefully having Camp Vick ready for families to enjoy and hosting retreats in the summer season of 2024. It has been a long journey after the obstacles of the past few years but the generous help of ABMen's 2023 booster makes the future all the more brighter. Donations can be sent to: ABMen NYS, c/o Rich Russell 43 Orchard Park Rd Pine City, NY 14871.

CAMP VICK

Work on the water system is well underway. The project will be completed as soon as the remainder of the funding becomes available.

A planned lumber harvest is happening this summer also. This is essential for good forest management of the site, and it is also providing income which will help meet the cost of the new water system.

The 4-5 bedroom house at Camp Vick remains vacant. The Board will put increased effort into finding someone to live in the house and oversee the property before winter moves in.



PATHFINDER LODGE

Repairs to the Culligan water system are in the planning stages with a November goal for completion.

Plans are underway to get the main septic system fully operational. Assessments are currently being made as to what repairs are needed and the costs, but we are committed to getting the system operating as it was designed.

The waterfront is our most prominent attraction, requiring many volunteers to manage all the moving parts. After three or four years in storage, we were able to get the 24 foot sailboat, the Pleiades, rigged and sailing for campers.

SUMMER PROGRAMS 2023 (all were located at Pathfinder)

Camper numbers increased by about 20% over last year.

Several staffing issues arose during the summer, but the leadership created a positive summer program for our campers. Volunteers helped with nursing, program assistance, counseling, facility maintenance and other tasks.

BE A PART!

The camping ministry owes much gratitude to the ABCNYS Associations and churches for the significant scholarships provided to our campers. Be assured that lives were changed this summer at Pathfinder!

Think about how you want to join in the camping experience next year. VPCCM Board members would welcome an invitation to share at your churches or Association meetings. Give us a call or email vpccministries@gmail.com.

Thank you for your prayers and your participation in this ministry!!!

In Christ's service,

Marilyn Malone
VPCCM Interim CEO

American Baptist
**Women's
Ministries**
of New York State

75th Diamond Anniversary

**Convention
2024
SAVE THE
DATE!**
Details coming
soon.

"Rejuvenate to be Strong and Courageous"
Joshua 1:9
Join us APRIL 26-28, 2024
Corning Radisson Hotel, Corning NY
Registration coming in January
This is a year you won't want to miss.

AMERICAN BAPTIST
G.I.R.E.S.
Office of Relationship, Leadership & Service



ABCNYS LAY STUDY PROGRAM WINTER COURSES 2024

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

NEW TESTAMENT – STARTING JANUARY 15, 2024

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

Instructor: Rev. Howard Maxson, hcmxson1953@gmail.com

Howie pastored a Southern Baptist Church for 9 years. He was involved in a Reformed Baptist Church as a Deacon, Trustee, Sunday School Teacher and preacher for the next 20 years. Did motorcycle ministry while attending an Acts 29 church for several years. He has been Pastor of Fowler Baptist Church in Gouverneur (North Country Association) since 2011.

Textbook: Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey by Walter A. Elwell & Robert W. Yarbrough, Fourth Edition!, 2022. Also recommended: A.T. Robertson's Harmony of the Gospels

First Assignment. Prepare to share a short intro with your classmates. Read the Preface, To the Professor, To the Student and Chapters 1-3 before class.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT – STARTING JANUARY 23, 2024

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

Instructor: Joan Dewing, dewingquilts@gmail.com

Joan is a member of and Administrative Assistant at First Baptist Church, Walton NY (Fransego Association). She has a degree in Christian Education and Biblical Studies from Houghton College, Houghton NY and a master's degree in Spiritual Formation and Leadership from Spring Arbor University in Spring Arbor, MI, having studied with Richard and Nathan Foster as well as others well versed in the practice of Christian spiritual disciplines and formation. Joan is a certified Spiritual Director through the Horizon's program at the Spiritual Renewal Center in Syracuse, NY, and is part-time pastor of a small community church in South Kortright, NY.

Textbooks:

Celebration of Discipline by Richard Foster (Harper Collins)

Spiritual Classics: Selected Readings on the Twelve Spiritual Disciplines by Renovare. Richard Foster & Emilie Griffin, eds.

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

Fees: The tuition is \$110 per course. 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)

Enclosed you'll find a brochure listing the courses that will be offered in 2024. Check it out!

AMERICAN BAPTIST
MISSION SUPPORT

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

	United Mission	Annual Offerings	Institutions, Specifics & Targeted	Total ABMS
Received 2023	136,805	180,787	155,229	472,821
Received 2022	152,620	185,307	127,516	465,443
\$ Ahead (Behind)	(15,815)	(4,520)	27,713	7,378
% Ahead (Behind)	(10.36)	(2.44)	21.73	1.59

	B	C	D	E	F	G	YEAR-TO-DATE SUMMARY		J	K	M	N	O	P
3	City	Name	UMB	Love Gift	AFC	WMO	RMMO	OGHS	Inst Support	Specifics	Misc Objective	Reg Off	Targeted Giving	Total ABMS
102	Oneida	Oneida Ba	636.00	5.00	233.00	0.00	172.00	202.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,248.00
103	Oswego	United Bap	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	217.00	228.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,220.00	1,665.00
104	Owego	First Baptis	0.00	69.45	451.00	0.00	0.00	450.00	0.00	2,735.00	0.00	0.00	2,400.00	6,105.45
105	Oxford	United Chu	118.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	85.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	203.00
106	Penn Yan	First Baptis	6,510.00	20.00	1,085.00	0.00	0.00	1,136.00	1,528.00	1,126.00	90.00	100.00	360.00	11,955.00
107	Penn Yan	Second Mil	30.00	19.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	96.00	0.00	80.00	0.00	0.00	120.00	345.25
108	Pine City	Pine City B	750.00	0.00	950.00	0.00	0.00	750.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,450.00
109	Port Byron	Port Byron	75.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	690.00	538.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,303.25
110	Poughkeep	First Baptis	1,500.00	0.00	135.00	0.00	0.00	20.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	750.00	2,405.00
111	Preston Hc	Preston Ho	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,000.00
112	Pulaski	Pulaski Ba	19.00	0.00	0.00	320.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	9.50	0.00	353.50
113	Pulaski	Pulaski Ba	237.20	18.30	0.00	0.00	395.00	429.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.25	0.00	1,179.75
114	Ransomvill	Ransomvill	270.00	0.00	360.00	0.00	0.00	310.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	940.00
115	Saratoga S	First Baptis	300.00	200.00	250.00	250.00	250.00	250.00	0.00	600.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,100.00
116	Schenecta	Emmanuel	6,385.28	0.00	152.46	0.00	32.46	22.46	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6,592.66
117	South New	First Baptis	0.00	0.00	2,000.00	0.00	1,220.00	890.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,110.00
118	Syracuse	Eastwood F	2,100.00	75.62	705.00	0.00	695.00	945.00	0.00	882.45	0.00	420.00	2,000.00	7,823.07
119	Trumansbu	First Baptis	0.00	0.00	895.00	0.00	2,125.20	0.00	200.00	200.00	0.00	0.00	550.00	3,970.20
120	Tully	Tully Uniter	2,102.51	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	590.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,692.51
121	Utica	First Baptis	117.25	0.00	0.00	250.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	90.15	457.40
122	Utica	Tabernacle	8,880.00	0.00	2,805.00	0.00	0.00	1,752.00	1,200.00	2,960.00	0.00	1,650.00	0.00	19,247.00
123	Vestal	Memorial F	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	805.00	0.00	0.00	559.00	0.00	271.00	0.00	1,635.00
124	Walton	First Baptis	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6,318.00	6,318.00
125	Walworth	Second Ba	889.92	0.00	0.00	120.00	115.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,124.92
126	Waverly	First Baptis	0.00	0.00	120.00	0.00	1,376.21	3,248.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,625.00	6,369.99
127	West Winfi	Millers Mill	1,240.00	123.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	189.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,552.50
128	Westport	Westport F	543.00	0.00	0.00	43.00	0.00	250.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	836.00
129	Williamson	First Baptis	0.00	0.00	200.00	0.00	200.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	400.00
130	Wolcott	First Baptis	300.00	0.00	656.00	0.00	0.00	460.00	0.00	300.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,716.00
131	Woodhull	Community	900.00	114.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,014.00
132														
133			132,033.45	2,172.29	33,693.78	28,851.75	34,679.84	59,994.10	7,249.31	25,901.17	1,080.01	11,737.75	71,485.45	406,878.90

GROWTH POINTS

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

Start Growing!

Once you've spent time developing a Church Growth Conscience (see July 2023 issue), it's time to START GROWING.

Mix It Right

My grandmother (like many) was a great cook. One thing I learned from her was the importance of mixing the right ingredients together. She never used a written recipe, as the proper ingredients and mix were in her own mind. Once I asked her to write down a recipe, which she did. But, she left out one necessary ingredient. Of course, when I mixed it and baked it, it didn't come out correct. Having the right ingredients is crucial.

To date, about 155 different factors have been identified that impact the growth of a local church. The following are five steps that may help you get started in mixing the right ingredients together to start your church growing and going.

First, hold fast to the Word of God.

After Henry Moorhouse heard D. L. Moody in 1868, he advised, "Stop preaching your own words and preach God's Word."

That's good advice today, too. Trust in God's Word, especially taking at face value the command to "Make Disciples," is crucial to build a growing church.

Second, refocus your church on evangelism.

The third law of Church growth states: Evangelism must be the priority. [See last month's issues for the first two laws.]

The basic principle is "You don't revitalize to evangelize; you evangelize to revitalize." To turn your church around and begin to grow, start refocusing on evangelism today. Preach and teach about evangelism. Challenge your people to list the names of those in their social networks of friends, family, associates, and begin praying for their salvation. Train ten percent of your adults each year, and every year, in some form of friendship evangelism. Offer a minimum of four events each year targeted specially to non-believers. In short, think evangelism, plan for evangelism, preach evangelism, do evangelism, organize for evangelism, and pray for evangelism.

Third, face reality.

Take a look at the last ten years of your church ministry. Obtain the stats and graph each of the following five key aspects of ministry: church attendance, baptisms or

adult conversions, number of people in small groups, number of people serving in a ministry, and financial giving.

When you've completed the graphs, look at the trends. What do the graphs indicate about the current direction of your church? What questions do they raise? If you're growing each year, what must you do to keep up with the growth? If you're in decline, what must you do to stop the decline?

Fourth, clarify your church's vision.

Based on the reality you've now faced, ask "If we could be all that God wants us to be, what would we do?"

Answer these questions:

1. Why are we here?
2. Where are we going?
3. How are we going to get there?
4. How will we know when we've arrived?

If you're not already doing so, pull your leaders together for a retreat to face reality and clarify your direction. Set two-year goals, then meet every other year to evaluate, clarify, and reset your goals. Remember: Vision is nothing more than God's dream for the future direction of your church. Write it down in twenty-five words or less?

Fifth, plan for growth.

Develop plans for each of the following areas.

1. Prayer: Strengthen the foundation of your church's spiritual dynamics. Begin by organizing prayer among your people. Ask God to give you direction for the future. Plea with him to see salvations take place. Ask him for souls. Deal with any sin in the church. Clean up the church spiritually.

2. Structure for growth. In general, refresh, relocate, remodel, restructure, revitalize! Update facilities, worship, childcare, advertising, website, etc. Do what you can now; do the rest later. But do what you can NOW!

3. Organize for growth. Budget and use five percent for local evangelism and another five percent for local church advertising. Get the word out on your church to the local community. Prepare for guests by training your welcome team.

Growth happens when we pray for growth and work for growth. Where will you start today?



Growth Points is published twelve times a year. Subscription price is \$29 (US Funds) per year. Permission is granted for use in a local church. For other reprint usage, advance permission must be obtained.

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GROWTH POINTS

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

Preaching for Growth

The Apostle Paul told Timothy to “preach the word” (1 Timothy 4:2). So, what kind of preacher brings God to mankind and mankind to God? What kind of preacher creates an atmosphere where growth can occur?

A Call From God

Growing churches have pastors who are called to preach. Paul encouraged Timothy to “fan into flame the gift of God” (2 Timothy 1:6). Pastors who desire to see their church growing must fan the flame of their calling to preach.

God calls pastors in numerous ways, but all have a combination of the following four aspects of call. Taken together these four items comprise a call to preach.

1. A sense in their spirit that God wants them to preach. It’s a mission they can’t give up.
2. An awareness of effectiveness when they preach. It’s an “ah-ha” experience that convinces them they were born to preach.

3. An affirmation from mentors and others around them. No one is called in a vacuum; all are called in a matrix of people, a congregation of like minded others who affirm the gift of preaching.
4. A congruity of circumstances opens doors of opportunity. A spouse is willing support you, a friend recommends you to a church, a preaching ministry is available, etc.

Pastors of growing churches operate from a sense of call rather than a feeling of drivenness. They know they are stewards not owners.

Driven preachers act as though they own the people; called preachers act as stewards of the people.

An Attitude of Authenticity

Pastors of growing churches let the people see them as real human beings.

What inspires people is not hearing about a pastor’s knowledge or administrative skill or leadership ability; it’s seeing them as people who struggle with life issues as all Christians do.

People see the pastor as real, as authentic, when they are allowed to peak into their family, work, and spiritual life. One does not need to share intimate life details, a small peak to let others know you struggle too, goes a long way to inspire others.

A Presentation of Excellence

Every craft or skill is backed up by practice. If you desire to play the piano, for example, you'll practice playing scales. Hours of playing scales makes the finger muscles limber and strong, as well as creating muscle memory so playing piano pieces comes easily.

What are the scales that pastors must practice to become better preachers? Well, they must preach. Take every opportunity to preach that you possible can. Research has shown that it takes around 5,000 hours of practice to become good at about anything. How many hours a week do you actually preach? How long will it take you to amass 5,000 hours? Other scales include the spiritual scale - your quiet time; the intellectual scale - your reading time; the intercession scale - your prayer time; the relational scale - your people time; the writing scale - your think time.

How are you at practicing your scales?

A Clear Message

Evaluating a pastor's preaching is difficult. A sermon is a creative act - a subjective thing. However, a few aspects to analyze for effective communication are . . .

1. Is it biblical? The pastor is responsible for the content of the message. Make sure it flows out of Scripture and remains true to Scripture.
2. Is it prepared? For most pastors, developing a good message takes no less than 15 hours. Are you putting in the time?
3. It is clear? Does the message have a point? Do you restate the point at least 3-5 times throughout the sermon?
4. Is it illustrated well? Stories engage people. Support each major point in your message with a story.
5. Is it action-oriented? Give two ideas on what to do following the message.

The bottom line of preaching for growth is engaging people.

How well are you engaging them?



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2023 – Issue #4



From the Executive Minister
Rev. Dr. James Kelsey

PEACE THAT TRANSCENDS OUR CIRCUMSTANCES

ANXIETY

My mother was chronically anxious. It smothered much of the joy of life for her. I have always been determined not to be like her.

Acute anxiety is a good thing. It compels us to action when something needs to be done. Water starts dripping through the ceiling; we become understandably concerned and get someone to look at the roof. In this way, we minimize the damage and probably reduce the cost of repair. We feel pressure in our chest and pain in our arm. We become anxious about our health and go to the doctor. This may save our life.

Acute anxiety tells us something is wrong and we need to deal with the situation.

Chronic anxiety, on the other hand, is not constructive. Chronic anxiety is an abiding sense of ill ease or worry, creating a hyper alertness to threat or uncertainty. This type of anxiety cannot be traced to any particular event or situation. It is a posture of life that overreacts to any challenge or setback. Chronic anxiety makes us less, not better, equipped to deal with our lives. It can paralyze us right when we need to act. Chronic anxiety suppresses any sense of adventure by avoiding any risks. It can paralyze us from making necessary choices in order to avoid any risk. It closes down our openness to new experiences and growth and robs us of our joy.

The Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard described chronic anxiety (although that differentiation was not yet in use) as a vague yet unescapable uneasiness with no direct obvious cause. He saw it as both a spiritual and philosophical problem.

UNINTELLIGIBLE PEACE

Chronic anxiety certainly does have a spiritual dimension, so we should think through how our faith might address it. (Chronic anxiety can also have a mental health component and sometimes needs to have that type of treatment as well. The DSM 5 has a classification for Generalized Anxiety disorder.)

I offer the Bible word “peace” as the antithesis of chronic anxiety.

I have been thinking about peace in the midst of uncertainty and threat these days. As you may know, my wife Debbie, who is the English-language pastor at Tabernacle Baptist Church, Utica, landed in Tel Aviv with her mother and 24 church members on the Saturday morning that Hamas began its recent missile campaign and made its incursion into Israel. It was a tense nine days before they were able to travel home.

In spite of the increasing hostilities in the region, Debbie and her group visited many of the places they had planned to visit, including a sail on the Sea of Galilee and some baptisms in the Jordan River. They took their time there one day at a time and found things each day to be grateful for and to enjoy. They were, in my wife’s words, “pretty chill.” I would say they had a peace that on the surface was hard to understand.

The Apostle Paul wrote: *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus* (Phil 4:6-7). Paul does not have in mind here a peace that is the product of the absence of conflict or challenge or threat. If everything is going well for us and our lives are calm and secure, then our peace of mind is quite reasonable. It does not surpass understanding.

Paul writes about peace in the midst of threat or risk or loss. Remember, Paul wrote this letter from a prison cell. Peace in these times, peace unjustified by our circumstances, is that peace that “surpasses all understanding.” This is a peace that comes from trusting in God, even when life is hard and loss haunts us. Apart from faith in God, it is unintelligible.

PEACE AS A GIFT

As Jesus is preparing his followers for his death and the ensuing conflict that death would inevitably bring, he speaks of a type of peace that is a gift and not the result of our circumstances. He assures his anxious followers: *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid* (John 14:25-26). Jesus began his talk with his disciples by saying “*do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me*” (v. 1). This is a peace from a different place. Its origin lies in a deep assurance of God’s love for us and abiding presence—come what may.

This is not a Pollyanna view of life. This is not seeing the world through “rose-colored glasses.” Nor is this a denial of the losses and hardships life inevitably brings to us. This is a peace that looks at the world around us with a clear-eyed steely realism and says “my life lies with God and God will enable me to endure all things—come what may.”

This unintelligible peace that comes to us as a gift is what brought the faithful folks of Tabernacle Baptist Church through their recent ordeal. This is how all of us get through the hard places of life.

OUR CHURCHES

I have also thought a bit about our churches these days. Let us admit it: it is a challenging time to be a church in upstate New York. Thus, we all are prone at times to be a bit anxious about the future of our congregations. This anxiety can smother our sense of adventure and dull our openness to doing new and untested things. It can, at times, be paralyzing.

What can we do? Can we choose a different world and time? No, we don’t get to choose when and where we write our chapter in God’s redemptive plan. We can, however, seek out this gift of peace that surpasses all understanding. It is a peace that makes us brave—come what may.

So that is what I have been thinking about these last days, a peace that surpasses all logic and understanding, peace as a gift.

I leave you with the words of Reinhold Niebuhr:

Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime;
therefore, we must be saved by hope.

Nothing which is true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history;
therefore, we must be saved by faith.

Nothing we do, however virtuous, could be accomplished alone;
therefore, we must be saved by love.

We are part of a story much grander than our own lives, a story that stretches far beyond our own day. That gives me a peace that surpasses all understanding, peace that transcends the daily affairs of my life.

Blessings, Jim Kelsey

CELEBRATIONS & CONCERNS: Rev. Leonard Miller, (Retired Pastor, Living Waters Association) died 9/19/23 * **First Baptist Church, Ilion, First Baptist Church of Syracuse, and West Baptist Church, Oswego** have had final worship services in the past several months, with a combined 530 years of ministry



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

Don Henderson to Interim, FBC Walton 10/3/23
William Tatum from Eastwood BC Syracuse
Heidi Butler to Pastor, Eastwood BC Syracuse 9/10/23
Hector Meza to Pastor, FBC Hoosick Falls 9/1/23
Lydia Widbin to Pastor, Bottskill BC Greenwich & Lakeville BC 10/1/23
George Huffsmith from Sennett Fed Ch to Retirement 8/27/23
Marlene Ciranowicz from Memorial Park BC Vestal to Retirement 7/23
James Pearson to Transitional Minister, Memorial Park BC Vestal 7/30/23
John Simon from Second BC Poughkeepsie 10/15/23
Sandra Spaulding, Bottskill BC Greenwich, Ordained 8/13/23
Karen Blacks, Antioch BC Bedford Hills, Ordained 8/26/23
Sarah Flack, River Community Ch, Ordained 10/26/23
Carolyn Wallace, FBC Canisteo, Recognition Certified Lay Pastor 10/5/23

DATES TO REMEMBER

October 26-29, 2023 -- *Community Missions of Niagara Frontier mission trip*
November 10-12, 2023 -- *ABY Convention @ Crowne Plaza, Syracuse*
November 12, 2023 -- *Iroquois Association @ Tully United Community Church*
February 25, 2024 -- *Living Waters Association Spring Meeting*
April 26-28, 2024 -- *ABW Ministries & AB Girls NYS Annual Convention @ Corning Radisson Hotel, Corning*
May 5, 2024 -- *WEGO Association Spring Meeting*

Changes to New York Baptist Annual 2023

Page 21 **First Baptist Church, Chittenango:** Add email: fbchittenango@gmail.com

Page 30 **WEGO Association:** Association Moderator: Edris Hitchcock, 5 E. Main St, LeRoy NY 14482, 585.768.7600, edie18us@yahoo.com



The 2023 ABMen's booster project is to raise funds towards the water system at Camp Vick in Freedom, NY. The camp is in need of a lot of love, and its most pressing facilities need is getting clean, safe water to the camp sites and buildings. The project is roughly \$5,000 away from being financially ready to complete. Unfortunately, this funding gap creates a hurdle in the timeline with equipment orders. If funds are raised and equipment can be ordered the camp sites should be ready to open for family camping next spring and work can be focused on the other buildings. Hopefully having Camp Vick ready for families to enjoy and hosting retreats in the summer season of 2024. It has been a long journey after the obstacles of the past few years but the generous help of ABMen's 2023 booster makes the future all the more brighter. Donations can be sent to: ABMen NYS, c/o Rich Russell 43 Orchard Park Rd Pine City, NY 14871.

CAMP VICK

Work on the water system is well underway. The project will be completed as soon as the remainder of the funding becomes available.

A planned lumber harvest is happening this summer also. This is essential for good forest management of the site, and it is also providing income which will help meet the cost of the new water system.

The 4-5 bedroom house at Camp Vick remains vacant. The Board will put increased effort into finding someone to live in the house and oversee the property before winter moves in.



PATHFINDER LODGE

Repairs to the Culligan water system are in the planning stages with a November goal for completion.

Plans are underway to get the main septic system fully operational. Assessments are currently being made as to what repairs are needed and the costs, but we are committed to getting the system operating as it was designed.

The waterfront is our most prominent attraction, requiring many volunteers to manage all the moving parts. After three or four years in storage, we were able to get the 24 foot sailboat, the Pleiades, rigged and sailing for campers.

SUMMER PROGRAMS 2023 (all were located at Pathfinder)

Camper numbers increased by about 20% over last year.

Several staffing issues arose during the summer, but the leadership created a positive summer program for our campers. Volunteers helped with nursing, program assistance, counseling, facility maintenance and other tasks.

BE A PART!

The camping ministry owes much gratitude to the ABCNYS Associations and churches for the significant scholarships provided to our campers. Be assured that lives were changed this summer at Pathfinder!

Think about how you want to join in the camping experience next year. VPCCM Board members would welcome an invitation to share at your churches or Association meetings. Give us a call or email vpccministries@gmail.com.

Thank you for your prayers and your participation in this ministry!!!

In Christ's service,

Marilyn Malone
VPCCM Interim CEO

A promotional flyer for the American Baptist Women's Ministries of New York State 75th Diamond Anniversary Convention 2024. The flyer features the organization's logo on the left, a large purple diamond icon and a purple hibiscus flower in the center, and the text "Convention 2024 SAVE THE DATE! Details coming soon." on the right. At the bottom, it includes the quote "Rejuvenate to be Strong and Courageous" from Joshua 1:9 and the dates "Join us APRIL 26-28, 2024" at the "Corning Radisson Hotel, Corning NY". It also mentions "Registration coming in January" and "This is a year you won't want to miss." The entire flyer is enclosed in a thin black border.

American Baptist
Women's
Ministries
of New York State

American Baptist
G.I.R.E.S.
Office of Relationship, Leadership & Service

75th Diamond Anniversary

**Convention
2024
SAVE THE
DATE!**
Details coming
soon.

"Rejuvenate to be Strong and Courageous"
Joshua 1:9
Join us APRIL 26-28, 2024
Corning Radisson Hotel, Corning NY
Registration coming in January
This is a year you won't want to miss.



ABCNYS LAY STUDY PROGRAM WINTER COURSES 2024

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

NEW TESTAMENT – STARTING JANUARY 15, 2024

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

Instructor: Rev. Howard Maxson, hcmxson1953@gmail.com

Howie pastored a Southern Baptist Church for 9 years. He was involved in a Reformed Baptist Church as a Deacon, Trustee, Sunday School Teacher and preacher for the next 20 years. Did motorcycle ministry while attending an Acts 29 church for several years. He has been Pastor of Fowler Baptist Church in Gouverneur (North Country Association) since 2011.

Textbook: Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey by Walter A. Elwell & Robert W. Yarbrough, Fourth Edition!, 2022. Also recommended: A.T. Robertson's Harmony of the Gospels

First Assignment. Prepare to share a short intro with your classmates. Read the Preface, To the Professor, To the Student and Chapters 1-3 before class.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT – STARTING JANUARY 23, 2024

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

Instructor: Joan Dewing, dewingquilts@gmail.com

Joan is a member of and Administrative Assistant at First Baptist Church, Walton NY (Fransego Association). She has a degree in Christian Education and Biblical Studies from Houghton College, Houghton NY and a master's degree in Spiritual Formation and Leadership from Spring Arbor University in Spring Arbor, MI, having studied with Richard and Nathan Foster as well as others well versed in the practice of Christian spiritual disciplines and formation. Joan is a certified Spiritual Director through the Horizon's program at the Spiritual Renewal Center in Syracuse, NY, and is part-time pastor of a small community church in South Kortright, NY.

Textbooks:

Celebration of Discipline by Richard Foster (Harper Collins)

Spiritual Classics: Selected Readings on the Twelve Spiritual Disciplines by Renovare. Richard Foster & Emilie Griffin, eds.

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

Fees: The tuition is \$110 per course. 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)

Enclosed you'll find a brochure listing the courses that will be offered in 2024. Check it out!

AMERICAN BAPTIST
MISSION SUPPORT

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

	United Mission	Annual Offerings	Institutions, Specifics & Targeted	Total ABMS
Received 2023	136,805	180,787	155,229	472,821
Received 2022	152,620	185,307	127,516	465,443
\$ Ahead (Behind)	(15,815)	(4,520)	27,713	7,378
% Ahead (Behind)	(10.36)	(2.44)	21.73	1.59

	B	C	D	E	F	G	YEAR-TO-DATE SUMMARY		J	K	M	N	O	P
3	City	Name	UMB	Love Gift	AFC	WMO	RMMO	OGHS	Inst Support	Specifics	Misc Objective	Reg Off	Targeted Giving	Total ABMS
102	Oneida	Oneida Ba	636.00	5.00	233.00	0.00	172.00	202.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,248.00
103	Oswego	United Bap	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	217.00	228.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,220.00	1,665.00
104	Owego	First Baptis	0.00	69.45	451.00	0.00	0.00	450.00	0.00	2,735.00	0.00	0.00	2,400.00	6,105.45
105	Oxford	United Chu	118.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	85.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	203.00
106	Penn Yan	First Baptis	6,510.00	20.00	1,085.00	0.00	0.00	1,136.00	1,528.00	1,126.00	90.00	100.00	360.00	11,955.00
107	Penn Yan	Second Mil	30.00	19.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	96.00	0.00	80.00	0.00	0.00	120.00	345.25
108	Pine City	Pine City B	750.00	0.00	950.00	0.00	0.00	750.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,450.00
109	Port Byron	Port Byron	75.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	690.00	538.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,303.25
110	Poughkeep	First Baptis	1,500.00	0.00	135.00	0.00	0.00	20.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	750.00	2,405.00
111	Preston Ho	Preston Ho	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,000.00
112	Pulaski	Pulaski Ba	19.00	0.00	0.00	320.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	9.50	0.00	353.50
113	Pulaski	Pulaski Ba	237.20	18.30	0.00	0.00	395.00	429.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.25	0.00	1,179.75
114	Ransomvill	Ransomvill	270.00	0.00	360.00	0.00	0.00	310.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	940.00
115	Saratoga S	First Baptis	300.00	200.00	250.00	250.00	250.00	250.00	0.00	600.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,100.00
116	Schenecta	Emmanuel	6,385.28	0.00	152.46	0.00	32.46	22.46	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6,592.66
117	South New	First Baptis	0.00	0.00	2,000.00	0.00	1,220.00	890.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,110.00
118	Syracuse	Eastwood F	2,100.00	75.62	705.00	0.00	695.00	945.00	0.00	882.45	0.00	420.00	2,000.00	7,823.07
119	Trumansbu	First Baptis	0.00	0.00	895.00	0.00	2,125.20	0.00	200.00	200.00	0.00	0.00	550.00	3,970.20
120	Tully	Tully Uniter	2,102.51	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	590.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,692.51
121	Utica	First Baptis	117.25	0.00	0.00	250.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	90.15	457.40
122	Utica	Tabernacle	8,880.00	0.00	2,805.00	0.00	0.00	1,752.00	1,200.00	2,960.00	0.00	1,650.00	0.00	19,247.00
123	Vestal	Memorial F	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	805.00	0.00	0.00	559.00	0.00	271.00	0.00	1,635.00
124	Walton	First Baptis	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6,318.00	6,318.00
125	Walworth	Second Ba	889.92	0.00	0.00	120.00	115.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,124.92
126	Waverly	First Baptis	0.00	0.00	120.00	0.00	1,376.21	3,248.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,625.00	6,369.99
127	West Winfi	Millers Mill	1,240.00	123.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	189.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,552.50
128	Westport	Westport F	543.00	0.00	0.00	43.00	0.00	250.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	836.00
129	Williamson	First Baptis	0.00	0.00	200.00	0.00	200.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	400.00
130	Wolcott	First Baptis	300.00	0.00	656.00	0.00	0.00	460.00	0.00	300.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,716.00
131	Woodhull	Community	900.00	114.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,014.00
132														
133			132,033.45	2,172.29	33,693.78	28,851.75	34,679.84	59,994.10	7,249.31	25,901.17	1,080.01	11,737.75	71,485.45	406,878.90

GROWTH POINTS

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

Start Growing!

Once you've spent time developing a Church Growth Conscience (see July 2023 issue), it's time to START GROWING.

Mix It Right

My grandmother (like many) was a great cook. One thing I learned from her was the importance of mixing the right ingredients together. She never used a written recipe, as the proper ingredients and mix were in her own mind. Once I asked her to write down a recipe, which she did. But, she left out one necessary ingredient. Of course, when I mixed it and baked it, it didn't come out correct. Having the right ingredients is crucial.

To date, about 155 different factors have been identified that impact the growth of a local church. The following are five steps that may help you get started in mixing the right ingredients together to start your church growing and going.

First, hold fast to the Word of God.

After Henry Moorhouse heard D. L. Moody in 1868, he advised, "Stop preaching your own words and preach God's Word."

That's good advice today, too. Trust in God's Word, especially taking at face value the command to "Make Disciples," is crucial to build a growing church.

Second, refocus your church on evangelism.

The third law of Church growth states: Evangelism must be the priority. [See last month's issues for the first two laws.]

The basic principle is "You don't revitalize to evangelize; you evangelize to revitalize." To turn your church around and begin to grow, start refocusing on evangelism today. Preach and teach about evangelism. Challenge your people to list the names of those in their social networks of friends, family, associates, and begin praying for their salvation. Train ten percent of your adults each year, and every year, in some form of friendship evangelism. Offer a minimum of four events each year targeted specially to non-believers. In short, think evangelism, plan for evangelism, preach evangelism, do evangelism, organize for evangelism, and pray for evangelism.

Third, face reality.

Take a look at the last ten years of your church ministry. Obtain the stats and graph each of the following five key aspects of ministry: church attendance, baptisms or

adult conversions, number of people in small groups, number of people serving in a ministry, and financial giving.

When you've completed the graphs, look at the trends. What do the graphs indicate about the current direction of your church? What questions do they raise? If you're growing each year, what must you do to keep up with the growth? If you're in decline, what must you do to stop the decline?

Fourth, clarify your church's vision.

Based on the reality you've now faced, ask "If we could be all that God wants us to be, what would we do?"

Answer these questions:

1. Why are we here?
2. Where are we going?
3. How are we going to get there?
4. How will we know when we've arrived?

If you're not already doing so, pull your leaders together for a retreat to face reality and clarify your direction. Set two-year goals, then meet every other year to evaluate, clarify, and reset your goals. Remember: Vision is nothing more than God's dream for the future direction of your church. Write it down in twenty-five words or less?

Fifth, plan for growth.

Develop plans for each of the following areas.

1. Prayer: Strengthen the foundation of your church's spiritual dynamics. Begin by organizing prayer among your people. Ask God to give you direction for the future. Plea with him to see salvations take place. Ask him for souls. Deal with any sin in the church. Clean up the church spiritually.

2. Structure for growth. In general, refresh, relocate, remodel, restructure, revitalize! Update facilities, worship, childcare, advertising, website, etc. Do what you can now; do the rest later. But do what you can NOW!

3. Organize for growth. Budget and use five percent for local evangelism and another five percent for local church advertising. Get the word out on your church to the local community. Prepare for guests by training your welcome team.

Growth happens when we pray for growth and work for growth. Where will you start today?



Growth Points is published twelve times a year. Subscription price is \$29 (US Funds) per year. Permission is granted for use in a local church. For other reprint usage, advance permission must be obtained.

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GROWTH POINTS

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

Preaching for Growth

The Apostle Paul told Timothy to “preach the word” (1 Timothy 4:2). So, what kind of preacher brings God to mankind and mankind to God? What kind of preacher creates an atmosphere where growth can occur?

A Call From God

Growing churches have pastors who are called to preach. Paul encouraged Timothy to “fan into flame the gift of God” (2 Timothy 1:6). Pastors who desire to see their church growing must fan the flame of their calling to preach.

God calls pastors in numerous ways, but all have a combination of the following four aspects of call. Taken together these four items comprise a call to preach.

1. A sense in their spirit that God wants them to preach. It’s a mission they can’t give up.
2. An awareness of effectiveness when they preach. It’s an “ah-ha” experience that convinces them they were born to preach.

3. An affirmation from mentors and others around them. No one is called in a vacuum; all are called in a matrix of people, a congregation of like minded others who affirm the gift of preaching.
4. A congruity of circumstances opens doors of opportunity. A spouse is willing support you, a friend recommends you to a church, a preaching ministry is available, etc.

Pastors of growing churches operate from a sense of call rather than a feeling of drivenness. They know they are stewards not owners.

Driven preachers act as though they own the people; called preachers act as stewards of the people.

An Attitude of Authenticity

Pastors of growing churches let the people see them as real human beings.

What inspires people is not hearing about a pastor’s knowledge or administrative skill or leadership ability; it’s seeing them as people who struggle with life issues as all Christians do.

People see the pastor as real, as authentic, when they are allowed to peak into their family, work, and spiritual life. One does not need to share intimate life details, a small peak to let others know you struggle too, goes a long way to inspire others.

A Presentation of Excellence

Every craft or skill is backed up by practice. If you desire to play the piano, for example, you'll practice playing scales. Hours of playing scales makes the finger muscles limber and strong, as well as creating muscle memory so playing piano pieces comes easily.

What are the scales that pastors must practice to become better preachers? Well, they must preach. Take every opportunity to preach that you possible can. Research has shown that it takes around 5,000 hours of practice to become good at about anything. How many hours a week do you actually preach? How long will it take you to amass 5,000 hours? Other scales include the spiritual scale - your quiet time; the intellectual scale - your reading time; the intercession scale - your prayer time; the relational scale - your people time; the writing scale - your think time.

How are you at practicing your scales?

A Clear Message

Evaluating a pastor's preaching is difficult. A sermon is a creative act - a subjective thing. However, a few aspects to analyze for effective communication are . . .

1. Is it biblical? The pastor is responsible for the content of the message. Make sure it flows out of Scripture and remains true to Scripture.
2. Is it prepared? For most pastors, developing a good message takes no less than 15 hours. Are you putting in the time?
3. It is clear? Does the message have a point? Do you restate the point at least 3-5 times throughout the sermon?
4. Is it illustrated well? Stories engage people. Support each major point in your message with a story.
5. Is it action-oriented? Give two ideas on what to do following the message.

The bottom line of preaching for growth is engaging people.

How well are you engaging them?



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GROWTH POINTS

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

Leadership's Seven Deadly Sins

Attendance is good; You may be setting new records. Your church is holding it's own in today's changing environment. Everything seems to be moving along well. But is it?

Today, pastors and other church leaders get surprised by challenges that threaten their continued success, or even continuation of ministry.

Danger signals go unnoticed, or ignored, because they appear in subtle ways rather than in drastic form that garners attention.

What are some of these common leadership pitfalls? Research has found several common obstacles. Let's call them "Leadership's Seven Deadly Sins."

1. A Lack of Direction

Where is your church heading? Is there a clear understanding of your mission and how to get there? When you and other church leaders take a

hard look at your basic model of ministry, ask yourself how long has it been since our systems and procedures were reviewed to see if they mesh with the overall mission?

2. A Lack of Follow Through

If your church has a solid mission and direction, great! Now, how well are you following through on implementing it? It takes more than a nice sounding mission statement to see growth in a church; it takes application - action.

3. A lack of Assimilation

Church leaders rejoice in the large number of guests who attend worship services. Guests are good, of course. But, are they returning? Are they staying? Are they getting connected? Is your welcome system working?

4. A lack of Communication

All too often, church leaders assume that everyone else in the church operates from the same dedication, commitment, and knowledge. They are shocked to discover that such an assumption isn't correct.

Communication of the church's mission, overall direction, and goals, is a never ending job. They must be declared weekly before all people in the congregation begin to understand . . . believe . . . and embrace them.

5. A lack of Delegation

The teaching on spiritual gifts, as well as the believers duty to minister, is common in most churches. What, though, is the reality? Is the work of ministry being shared with others? Are you doing things that others could do better? Are new leaders allowed to emerge?

6. A lack of Smart Work

It's not about working harder. Pastors, on average, work over 60 hours a week. The issue is learning to work smarter. Where do you put your time? Is it productive? Are you working from your strengths or out of your weaknesses?

7. A lack of Dissatisfaction

It's important to always have some dissatisfaction. Complacency is the biggest danger in a church that appears to be doing well.

Once all the major challenges and goals are addressed, people tend to sit back and rest. This leads to rearranging tasks and priorities to just get by. Opportunities for new growth and outreach are ignored. Fresh challenges are neglected. What are the signs of the sin of complacency?

- Leaders feel comfortable and demonstrate less willingness to take appropriate risks.
- A lack of interest in what's really happening in the various fields of church ministry.
- A feeling that "We tried that before and it didn't work. It won't work now either."
- A realization that everyone is thinking alike or, even worse, that no one is thinking at all.
- An inward focus that neglects evangelism and outreach into the community.

Which of these deadly sins do you see in your church?

Pick one and work on it this year.



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