



Dr. Nathan Marsh
Associate Executive
Minister

Included in this issue:

- * *Mission Moment*
- * *Planned Giving*
- * *Progress Report*
- * *Winner Announced*
- * *Annual Gathering*
- * *Pastors' Conference*
- * *Parish Paper*
- * *CBTS News*

Old Mental Models, New Pathways

A few weeks ago, I received three very similar calls within a week's time. The individuals on the other end of the line used very similar phrases, "Nate, I just do not feel like I am being fed anymore when I go to church." This is certainly not the first time that I have heard this statement, but it did cause me to step back, pause, and think about the mission of the local church.

Up front, let me boldly state that worship is an important aspect of congregational life together. Each component of worship has its special place, but worship is not the only task of the local church. We live in a culture today when people do not feel "fed," they go off somewhere else to get what they feel they need. This type of mental model stems from the, "What can the church do for me," rather than the, "What can I do for the church?" perspective. This consumeristic outlook by definition deals with the 'I go to church' mentality. It also views the church as a dispenser of religious goods and services. People come to church to be "fed," to have their needs met through quality programs, and to have the professionals teach their children about God. A mission-focused congregation has the mindset, 'I am the church.' It believes the body of people who make up the local church are sent on a mission, gather in community for worship, community encouragement, and teaching from Scripture in addition to what they are self-feeding themselves throughout the week. Individuals in the congregation realize they are the hands and feet of Jesus, and they are partnering with God to do the work of God. This perspective helps others to understand that the mission of the church is much broader than an attractional and consumeristic way of thinking.

We are at a critical juncture within the church in North America, but this is an amazing time of opportunity. There is a silent ongoing migration away from the church. Below I am going to share three statistics with you taken from Ed Stetzer, Thom Rainer, and the *Christian Post*. This is not to scare anyone, but it is to bring urgency to the subject at hand.

- 3,500 people leave the church every day
- In 2015 - 10,000 churches conducted their final service
- 80% of those ages 14-33, when asked about the importance of the church in their lives, responded that church is 'irrelevant to them.'

When enquired about the biggest contributing factor of these statistics, Rainer and Stetzer agree it is the increase of the inward-focused church. No longer can we expect people to read our sign, an ad in the paper, or our social media page and show up on Sunday morning. Instead, we need to move our inward-focused mindsets to mission-focused deployments. My definition of mission-focused congregations is: Communities of faith that actively engage their local communities by participating in a mission with God's Spirit; purposely looking outward, not in; persistently showing authentic behavior while producing the fruits of the Spirit, and putting into practice God's mission here on earth.

To have a healthy congregation, churches need to have a mix of both inward and outward focus. One way to gauge if you have a good combination of the two is to look at your five key areas of resources (people, money, time, influence, and facilities). Get a group from your church together and mark an 'I' with those that are inward and an 'O' with those that are outward focused. After you compile your inventory list, see if your resources are balanced. I am sure the Holy Spirit will lead you to new ideas, big dreams, and realistic thinking throughout this exercise.

Friends, let's not simply go to church; but let's be the church. Let's make worship something we do, not something that is done for us; and let's not be mere spectators of God's mission, but let's be participants.



- ❖ FOCUS is a newsletter published for professional church leaders in the Central Region, and it is distributed monthly. It is also available on the Region website, <https://abccr.org/>.
- ❖ The deadline for FOCUS is the first of the month of publication.
- ❖ A variation in content and format is required for copy to be printed in two or more successive issues.

*American Baptist Churches
of the Central Region
5833 S.W. 29th St., Ste. A
Topeka, KS 66614-5505
editor@abccr.org
785/272-7622
<https://abccr.org/>*



Follow your Region staff on the ABC/Central Region Facebook page as they provide information on resources and services, as well as events and happenings across our Region — <https://www.facebook.com/ABCCRegion/>

Check our ABC Central Region Twitter link — <https://twitter.com/ABCCRegion>

Find local, regional, national and international mission opportunities and inspiration for your own projects and activities with mission emphasis at <https://www.facebook.com/abccr.missions>

Please like and share the posts made on these Central Region social media accounts to help us spread the news!

Mission Moment

July 10, 2017

Dear friends:

Thank you for your past support of the World Mission Offering. We value your partnership in global ministry more than you know.

I am writing to you today to provide advance notice of some changes in how you will obtain materials for the World Mission Offering this year. Because we want to be faithful stewards of your generosity and to reduce waste of unused materials, we will be allowing you to customize your order of World Mission Offering resources. And due to logistical changes in fulfillment operations, there will be slight changes to how we process your order. Please read on for more details ...

- The World Mission Offering resource packet that you will receive in August will contain fewer items. We want to ensure that your church receives the quantity of materials that you need and want. This year, your church will receive one complete package of World Mission Offering resources. This allows you to preview the materials and order just the items you want in the quantities you need—at no charge. Please be sure to request your additional materials early, as shipping can take up to two weeks.

- All orders will be placed through International Ministries. In past years, we have used Judson Press to fulfill orders; however, in early 2017, Judson Press moved its customer service and fulfillment operations and can no longer provide this service. You will have four convenient options for placing orders for additional materials beginning on August 1:

1. Fill out the electronic order form online at www.worldmissionoffering.org.
2. Mail in the printed order form that you will receive in the mail with your World Mission Offering sample packet.
3. Email us at wmo@internationalministries.org with your order and contact information.
4. Call us at 1-800-222-3872, ext. 2208 or 2182, during 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM EST, or leave us a message 24/7.

We are confident that the efficiencies of this approach will not only reduce paper waste, but also make a broader impact in mission by helping us to put your gifts to better use.

For more details, contact Catherine Nold, catherine.nold@internationalministries.org.

Yours in Christ,

Sharon Koh
Executive Director / CEO



Kansas Baptist Convention Foundation

Planned **Giving**

A Ministry of American Baptist Churches of the Central Region

What Do You Crave?

As anyone who knows me well can tell you, there are very few foods that I can't really enjoy eating. But it really puzzled me when our toddler son started digging in my plants and eating the dirt. He seemed to really like it, and I had to put all my plants out of reach to keep him out of it. Fortunately, we soon determined that he needed more iron which was an easy fix in a much healthier way.

In a similar manner, left to our own desires, our flesh craves the opposite of what Jesus wants for us just as our son wanted dirt more than the healthy foods I offered him. Think about all that we put into ourselves – whether through eating or in the mind. To what are we listening, viewing, scrolling, and thinking? Do we focus on Godly desires or fleshly cravings? What are we teaching our children and grandchildren??

If we ignore God, worship money, use God's name as a curse, work 24/7, disrespect our parents, hurt others, live promiscuously, steal, lie or desire what rightfully belongs to others, we cannot expect to live a fulfilling life. Unfortunately, there are far too many children and youth who have no godly examples in their lives. I know we can't be that example for everyone, but perhaps we have the financial means to help provide the leadership in the church so that there is an opportunity for those in the community to have that Godly example shown to them.

There are many ways to share financially. You can give money now – which is always needed and appreciated, or you can set up a fund to spread it out for a number of months or years. Or if you need income from your financial blessings now, you can get a Charitable Gift Annuity which gives you income during your lifetime and then goes to the ministries you have chosen when you go to your heavenly reward.

I'd love to visit with you as to what would be the best fit for your financial situation. There is no obligation or charge for my services, so please contact me.

Rev. Wilma E. Engle, Director of Planned Giving e-mail: wilmaengle@juno.com
6745 Interurban, Wichita, KS 67204-1323 Phone: 316-838-3065 Cell: 316-644-2069

American Baptist Churches of the Central Region

Mission Giving for June 2017

	2017	2016	Increase (Decrease)	% Increase (% Decrease)
United Mission	\$65,208.88	\$75,277.19	-\$10,068.31	-13.37%
ABW Ministries Love Gift	\$3,040.26	\$3,427.29	-\$387.03	-11.29%
American Baptist Mission Support	\$101,873.90	\$120,159.07	-\$18,285.17	-15.21%

Mission Giving June YTD

	2017	2016	Increase (Decrease)	% Increase (% Decrease)
ABW Ministries Love Gift	\$20,279.86	\$20,233.82	\$46.04	0.22%
One Great Hour of Sharing offering	\$25,372.81	\$28,855.26	-\$3,482.45	-12.06%
World Mission Offering	\$13,606.05	\$19,712.94	-\$6,106.89	-30.97%
Retired Ministers & Missionaries	\$23,438.86	\$23,700.90	-\$262.04	-1.10%
Region Offering	\$28,966.90	\$22,599.50	\$6,367.40	28.17%
Institutional Support Process	\$43,302.38	\$26,453.77	\$16,848.61	63.69%
Specifics	\$97,408.07	\$74,856.21	\$22,551.86	30.12%
American Baptist Mission Support	\$689,489.28	\$698,260.82	-\$8,771.54	-1.25%

Our Church's Giving for June

United Mission	\$ _____
One Great Hour of Sharing offering	\$ _____
American Baptist Mission Support	\$ _____



The Winner Is ... FBC, Paola

Rev. Jan Smith, Elm Grove, Chiles, presented Rev. Carl Olson, FBC, Paola, with a certificate for a free All-Church Registration to the Annual Gathering being held at Cross Wind Conference Center, Oct. 12-14, 2017.

FBC, Paola, was drawn from all the churches that had returned completed Annual Report forms by the Apr. 1 deadline.

Cross Wind
October 12-14, 2017
ABCCR Annual Gathering



Serve with Humility

“Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love.” – Ephesians 4:2, NLT

Keynote Speaker:
Rev. Dr. Lee B. Spitzer
General Secretary, ABCUSA



IM Missionaries:
Keith & Debbie Myers
Central Mexico



PASTORS' 2017 FALL CONFERENCE

Saturday, November 4 @ Milton FBC
Monday, November 6 @ Stilwell FBC
10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

How to Recognize DECLINING RELATIONSHIPS in Your Church Relationships

led by

Dr. Bill Hendricks, Performance Consultant

In this workshop, you will:

- * Determine relationship pluses and minuses with your congregation.
- * Review the eight relationship factors (4 positive indicators & 4 negative).
- * Equip yourself with the practical tools you need to build and maintain a healthy, long-lasting church relationship.

COST: \$25 (includes meals & snacks)

RSVP by Nov. 1

by contacting Jim Autrey at
jmautrey@tctelco.net or 620/767-8472

Sponsored by the Professional Church Leaders Vision Team of the ABCCR

HOW CAN WE HELP IMMIGRANTS?

A new church member—a recent African immigrant—described what his Christian mother taught him: “When someone comes to you and needs food and shelter, you give it to them. The next day you can ask them: What is your story?” The immigrant story touches every community and congregations have always welcomed newcomers. Typically, one in ten people attending a worship service in the US are immigrants—they were born outside the US. Further, one in five worshippers are children of immigrants because one or both of their parents were born in another country.¹

Do Labels Matter?

Conflating the categories of immigrant, migrant, and refugee reaps serious consequences for the health and safety of these newcomers. When considering issues related to the movement of people between countries, disagreement and confusion abound around the correct label. For the purposes of this issue, “immigrant” is the umbrella term for persons who moved from their country of birth to a new country. Migrants and refugees are terms for particular types of immigrants.

What is an immigrant? In the broadest terms, an immigrant is a person, born in one country, who chooses to make a home in another country. In most instances, they seek a better life with more opportunities—education or work—for themselves and their children. Because this is a planned choice, the individual or family is more likely to have saved funds, explored locations and jobs, and brought some necessary personal possessions. They may even have a network of family and friends who previously immigrated who are ready to assist them as they settle in a new country.

What is a refugee? Forced to leave their birth country, these individuals and families fear for their safety. In some cases, they risk their lives to escape a horrific situation such as torture, war, starvation, or violation of their human rights. Often they flee without much notice and leave behind almost all their possessions. Before arriving in a new country, they may spend time in an intermediary

country or a refugee camp, waiting for legal clearance to resettle in a host country. Refugees typically cannot return to their home country unless political and economic circumstances change dramatically. Recent crises provide a window into conflicts worldwide that have forced people to leave for a safe haven. The United States admitted 85,000 refugees in 2016 with the largest numbers coming from six countries: the Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria, Burma (Myanmar), Iraq, Somalia, and Bhutan.²

What is a migrant? People who seek work or educational opportunities for a limited amount of time are free to come and go between their home country and host country. Migrants include agricultural workers, students, educators, health care professionals, and a variety of other occupational groups.

For each category of immigrant, specific legal requirements and protections are in place. Confusing the groups takes attention away from the needs of these individuals and families. For example, international law defines “refugee” and spells out how they are to be protected. One



“DON'T FEEL BAD, LOU...
YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO THOUGHT EATING
LASAGNA AT THE CHURCH LUNCHEON
MADE US MULTICULTURAL.”

of the most crucial principles of international law is that refugees cannot be removed from the country providing asylum or returned to situations that might threaten their life. The appropriate legal response always depends on the individual's immigration status.³ Obtaining and processing the proper documents for legal status within the US is complicated, prolonged, and often expensive.

Will We Choose Welcome?

Whether an individual or group of church members wants to reach out to immigrants, they must do so with plenty of background information. Do we know the country of origin for immigrants currently in our community? What do we have to offer as a faith community?⁴ Do we see ourselves as allies rather than the ones in charge? Are we paying attention to who is asking for what? Can we listen to newcomers' stories about their background and journey without pre-judgment? Can we learn about their dreams?

First, learn about local immigrant groups and existing non-profit organizations. Use "immigrant and refugee ministries" as search terms to discover services and agencies already assisting in your area (see <http://www.americanacc.org>). Search your judicatory and denominational websites for information and updates (e.g., <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/immigration/>). Check out these additional resources:

- For worship resources: Church World Service founded by 17 denominations (<https://cwsglobal.org/our-work/refugees-and-immigrants/>)
- For ideas about how churches can help immigrant neighbors and fellow churchgoers: The Matthew 25 Movement (<http://matthew25pledge.com/toolkit/immigration>)
- For information about defending immigrant rights: American Friends Service Committee (<https://www.afsc.org/key-issues/issue/defending-immigrant-rights>)
- For laws, forms, and steps toward citizenship: US Citizenship and Immigration Services (<https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian>)
- For access to finding assistance organizations near you: Catholic Charities USA (<https://catholiccharitiesusa.org/find-help>)
- For locating local legal assistance: Immigration Law Help (<https://www.immigrationlawhelp.org/>)

Second, let what you learn lead you to discern the next steps for yourself or the congregation. Most communities

already have organizations with decades of experience assisting immigrants. Consider volunteering with or donating to a reputable local or national group. Local agencies often need help with job networking, tutoring children or adults, or basic items (shelter, food, and clothing) in the early months of resettlement. Legislative advocacy and local organizing efforts are additional options for supporting immigrant rights. Recognize that some assistance comes with zero risk for the volunteer or organization. However, the degree of risk falls along a continuum from no legal risks to possible violation of US law (such as providing sanctuary to undocumented immigrants, refugees, and unskilled workers with temporary visas).⁵ Whatever actions you or others might take, should be done with eyes wide open.

Third, assess the opportunities or barriers for your congregation to be more multicultural. Many churches are already worshiping communities composed of multiple cultural groups. Unfortunately, the tendency is for the largest or dominant cultural group to believe that the minority cultures should give up their unique cultural identities and practices once they become part of the congregation. Finding points of commonality, such as children's education, support for families, or shared experiences in ministry with Christians in a sister church in another country, increases the chances of a congregation becoming more multicultural over time.⁶

From Africa to America

An African proverb says: "If you want to go fast, walk alone. If you want to go far, walk together." Responding to the complexity of immigrants' needs requires many, many caring partners and a long-term commitment.

1. Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce, *A Field Guide to U.S. Congregations*, Second Edition (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 19.

2. "Most refugees who enter the U.S. as religious minorities are Christians," Pew Research Center, (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/02/07/most-refugees-who-enter-the-u-s-as-religious-minorities-are-christians/>).

3. See the Refugee Council USA, a coalition of twenty-four US-based, non-governmental organizations (<http://www.rcusa.org>).

4. Explore biblical texts and theological interpretations, such as Ched Myers and Matthew Colwell, *Our God is Undocumented: Biblical Faith and Immigrant Justice* (New York: Orbis Books, 2012).

5. "The roots and branches of the sanctuary movement," *The Christian Century*, February 15, 2017 (<https://www.christiancentury.org/article/roots-and-branches-sanctuary-movement>).

6. See "Multiple Roads to a Multicultural Congregation," *The Parish Paper*, Volume 24, Number 8 (August 2016).



Dr. Samuel Park
Director of Korean Missional
Church Programs

Pastoral Identity in Your Ministry Context

I believe that my identity as a pastor comes from God who called me to ministry. Pastoral identity consists of a deep sense that I am a representative of God and belong to the faith tradition and community I represent. Such a self-awareness, however, was challenged when I worked as a chaplain and pastoral counselor in a setting where many people did not see me as pastor. In that setting I was not fully entitled to deliver the

gospel to, and pray with, those I served in the name of God I believed.

The world we live in is a postmodern, intercultural, and of multiple faiths. The church is not an exception. Today's pastors need to think differently about their pastoral identities, in a world of such identity confusion. Our self-conscious identification as a conduit of God's love and grace can be challenged or rejected due to the decline of biblical and pastoral authority and disrespect for the transcendent reality within our highly technological society.

Contemporary identity studies contend that identity is not only an inner faculty of the person but also a property of social interaction. This means that our pastoral identity is not only grounded in our sense of vocation and calling but also formed and constructed through a dynamic interplay of daily life experiences in our ministry contexts. Thus, we form and construct our identities through interpersonal relationships, in addition to our innate sense of self endowed by God.

In a postmodern, intercultural, and multi-faith society, we come initially to people we serve with an awareness that we are God's servant. When we serve a church as a vessel of God, however, we oftentimes see ourselves also as sinners who are on a spiritual journey alongside our fellow humans. Soon, we find ourselves needing to surrender our presumed identity so that we are totally free to meet others where they most need to be met. We humble ourselves as a fellow human and walk with them as a companion in their life journeys. We become a theologically and spiritually sensitive pastor in responding to their expectations and our ministry dilemmas. In such a dynamic interaction, we sometimes discover a divine presence and power in our ministry as a partaker of God's ministry.

As we humbly listen to parishioners' life experiences and crises and respond to their needs, we sometimes find ourselves responding to *their* very real call to be their pastor. Indeed, pastors are called not merely by God but also by the people we serve. Our pastoral identity is a response to God's calling (a vertical call), as well as our church's calling for service (a horizontal call).

Resources

- ◆ Cote, J. E., & Levine, C. (2002). *Identity Formation, Agency, and Culture: A Social Psychological Synthesis*. Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum.
- ◆ Park, Samuel (2012). "Pastoral Identity Constructed in Care-giving Relationships." *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling*, 66(2), 1-13.
- ◆ Park, Samuel (2017, forthcoming). *Pastoral identity as social construction: Pastoral identity in Postmodern, Intercultural, and Multifaith Contexts*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications.