



Dr. Joe Kutter
Interim Executive Minister

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The Hardest Thing in Church

So what is the hardest thing to do in church? My best guess is this, the hardest thing is to talk agreeably with people with whom we disagree. And why is it so difficult? Again, my best guess is that when you know the truth then it feels like a solemn duty to defend the truth and to attack that which is untrue, and any other kind of conversation feels like a betrayal of sacred convictions. The result is that when the other person, the one with whom we disagree, is talking, trying to express his or her point of view and how he arrived at that point of view, instead of listening to understand, we are listening for the sole purpose of shaping our own arguments in order to prove that the other person is wrong. The voice in our own head becomes so dominant that we simply are unable to listen carefully to the other person and a reasonable dialogue becomes impossible. If the other person has to be proven wrong before they are understood, then meaningful conversation is impossible. Mutual shouting replaces mutual understanding,

From time to time, I am overwhelmed by Jesus' commandments to love. I am convinced that we love best when we listen best to try to understand the other person and how she or he became the person they are. Quoting from memory, or perhaps paraphrasing, Jesus said:

- Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Or, as you wish to be heard and understood, try to hear and understand the other person.

- Love God with your entire being and love your neighbor as you love yourself. In the same way that you seek to understand and accept yourself, seek to understand and accept your neighbor.

- Love one another as I have loved you. This is the big one! (At least for me.) If I love you as I love myself, since I am often not very good at loving myself, then the bar is not very high for loving you. But if you and I are to love one another in the same way that Jesus loved us, totally, unconditionally, sacrificially, with an abundance of forgiveness, then the standard is extraordinarily high. This commandment was given on the same night that Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and told them to wash one another's feet. It seems to be a commandment given with the explicit purpose of telling Jesus' disciples how they were to treat one another. So Jesus is saying, take care of one another, listen to one another, understand one another, and forgive one another just as I have cared for, listened to, forgiven and understood you.

- Love your enemies! This one seems to go overboard, and the commandment is often very hard even to attempt to obey. But Jesus said it, so I assume that we are to take it seriously. You and I, as disciples of Jesus, are to make every effort to listen to and try to understand those whom we regard as enemies! And this certainly includes those with whom we profoundly disagree, both out of and within the church.

Am I suggesting that to listen and to understand the other is to agree? No. We may fully understand and still disagree, but we will better know the person with whom we disagree.

For what it is worth, I believe that Jesus is God's son, the one who above all others embodies the character of God. I believe, as recorded in John's first chapter, that Jesus is God's word, the final and ultimate expression of God's truth and love. And I believe Jesus when He said in the last chapter of Matthew that all authority in heaven and on earth have been given to Him.

So when Jesus tells us that we are to love one another, to care for one another, to try to listen to another to understand, and to forgive one another, I propose that we take Him seriously, as hard as it might be.

Executive Minister Search Update by Region President, Rev. Franklin Ruff



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojFopBeQpVI&feature=youtu.be>



- ❖ 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.

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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!

Kansas Baptist Convention Foundation

Planned Giving

A Ministry of American Baptist Churches of the Central Region

Ordinary People Can Do Amazing Things!

Especially in July, I love to read various articles involving people who had a part in the creation of our independent nation. Recently, I read one about Paul Revere who became famous mainly because of William Wadsworth Longfellow's famous "Midnight Ride" poem. But there was far more to this famous patriot than just one historic ride.

He had a long and very productive life, with strong ties to his city's politics and community life. His primary trade was that of a goldsmith, working with both gold and silver. In addition, he was an engraver, producing his work for magazines, books, political cartoons, and even tavern menus. He was responsible for the original gilding of the dome atop the Massachusetts State House. Because of chronic leaking of the wooden roof, his company was contracted to cover it in copper. He was the first to use rolled copper commercially. Displaying his amazing versatility, he was also appointed as the first health officer of the city, leading the first health department in the nation.

This year marked the 200th anniversary of Paul Revere's death; but historians still remember him, and thousands visit the Paul Revere House Museum annually.

How will you be remembered years after you go to your eternal reward? Will it be because of your trade skills, your love for others and service to them, your community involvement or your dedicated service for your Lord?

All of the above could very well be true, but I can guarantee you one way to be remembered for the lifetime of a child or grandchild or great-grandchild. You can buy a Charitable Gift Annuity that gives the person of your choice an annual gift of 2% - 9% of the Annuity depending upon the age (9% is 90 years or older so I doubt that would apply). Upon the death of the beneficiary, your gift goes to the ministry that you have chosen. It's a win-win situation. You further the ministry of your Lord, as well as give gifts for years after you've left this earth.

I'd love to discuss possibilities of how you can not only benefit financially but also help to further God's kingdom on earth! There is no charge for my service nor any obligation to follow my suggestions, so please contact me. I'd love to come visit with you in your home or with a church group.

Rev. Wilma E. Engle, Director of Planned Giving, wilmaengle@juno.com
6745 Interurban, Wichita, KS 67204-1323, 316-838-3065 or cell 316-644-2069

American Baptist Churches of the Central Region

Mission Giving for June 2018

	2018	2017	Increase (Decrease)	% Increase (% Decrease)
United Mission	\$65,525.11	\$65,208.88	\$316.23	0.48%
ABW Ministries Love Gift	\$1,639.45	\$3,040.26	-\$1,400.81	-46.07%
American Baptist Mission Support	\$104,046.59	\$106,802.30	-\$2,755.71	-2.58%

Mission Giving June YTD

	2018	2017	Increase (Decrease)	% Increase (% Decrease)
ABW Ministries Love Gift	\$15,773.56	\$20,279.86	-\$4,506.30	-22.22%
One Great Hour of Sharing offering	\$26,593.26	\$25,372.81	\$1,220.45	4.81%
World Mission Offering	\$11,556.94	\$13,606.05	-\$2,049.11	-15.06%
Retired Ministers & Missionaries	\$21,932.46	\$23,438.86	-\$1,506.40	-6.42%
Region Offering	\$29,649.95	\$28,966.90	\$683.05	2.35%
Institutional Support Process	\$39,885.35	\$43,302.38	-\$3,417.03	-7.89%
Specifics	\$74,324.33	\$99,996.47	-\$25,672.14	-25.67%
American Baptist Mission Support	\$650,939.26	\$694,417.68	-\$43,478.42	-6.26%

Our Church's Giving for June

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

SAVE THE DATE

Annual Gathering

October 12-13

CROSS WIND CAMP AND CONFERENCE CENTER

ABCCR.ORG



Rev. Dr. Sharon T. Koh
Global Consultants
International Ministries



Rev. Dr. Dan Buttry
Sharon Buttry
Global Consultants
International Ministries



Open Churches in the Central Region – June 2018

Join ABCCR staff in prayer as we remember churches and pastors going through transition.

Church	Interim Minister
<i>Barnard, FBC</i>	Dennis Finch will retire this summer
<i>Cedar Vale, FBC</i>	
<i>Coffeyville, FBC</i>	Rodger Tyrell, ABCCR Interim
<i>Council Grove, FBC</i>	Jim Autrey, ABCCR Interim
<i>El Dorado, Park Ave.</i>	Gary Knox, ABCCR Interim
<i>Garden City, FBC</i>	
<i>Garnett, FBC</i>	Melinda Oberhelman, ABCCR Interim
<i>Goddard, FBC</i>	Steve Sherbenou will retire this summer
<i>Horton, FBC</i>	James Callaway, ABCCR Interim
<i>Hutchinson, FBC</i>	Gordon Rhodes, ABCCR Interim
<i>McPherson, FBC</i>	Timothy Conner, ABCCR Interim
<i>Oswego, FBC</i>	Rick Qualls, ABCCR Interim
<i>Overland Park, FBC</i>	Amy Beckett, ABCCR Interim
<i>Simpson, FBC</i>	Dennis Finch will retire this summer
<i>Stafford, FBC</i>	
<i>Topeka, FBC</i>	Bob Roesler, ABCCR Interim
<i>Topeka, North Topeka Baptist</i>	Ken Porter, ABCCR Interim
<i>Waverly, FBC</i>	Doug Crawshaw, ABCCR Interim
<i>Wichita, Meridian Ave</i>	Jim Zier anticipates retirement later this year
<i>Wichita, Pleasant Valley</i>	

Persons interested in having their names before specific search committees should contact Dr. Joe Kutter, Dr. Nate Marsh, Rev. Mike Justice, or Rev. Julie Robinson. Do not contact the church directly.

Search and Call Updates

- Central Baptist Church in Great Bend, KS called pastor Daniel Dugas from Nebraska as their pastor. Welcome, Daniel!
- Cedar Vale, FBC is a new addition to the open churches list.

Celebrations and Prayer Concerns

- Continue to pray for the Executive Minister Search Task Force. Rev. Dr. Jeff Wood, ABC Associate General Secretary, is coaching the search process. Remember each one by name: Rev. Franklin Ruff (President), Mr. Ron Smith (Past-President), Rev. Pete Smith (Crossroads Area), Mrs. Bethany Vance (ECA), Mrs. Lois Chiles (NEA), Rev. Waylon Upchego (OIABA), Rev. Rick Qualls (SEA), Mrs. Danielle Massaglia (Western Area), Mrs. Barbara Westfall (ABWM), Mr. Lyle Adcock (ABM) and Rev. Tim Schwartz (Ministers Council).
 - The Executive Minister Search Task Force has narrowed down their list to the final candidates. They will interview these individuals in August. For additional details, see the Executive Minister search and call update video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojFopBeOpVI&feature=youtu.be>



Like and follow us @abccregion

July 2018

RE: Continuing discipleship of your K-State bound members

Dear Pastor and Church Leaders:

CornerHouse Christian Ministries (CHCM) and the First Baptist Church (FBC) of Manhattan, Kansas would like to extend an invitation this fall to any Kansas State University college students in your church to visit our church (FBC) and campus ministry (CHCM, a Roger Williams Fellowship formerly known as "Wildcat Ministries").

In fact, we would like to reach out to them! Please send us names and contact information (phone numbers, etc.) of your students who are attending K-State. We will seek to make direct contact with them to invite them to CHCM and FBC.

CornerHouse Christian Ministries is the young adult ministry of FBC that has been active for Christ for more than 60 years on the southwest edge of K-State's campus at the historic intersection of Anderson Avenue and Denison Street. Our activities include a free home-cooked dinner and activity/discussion on Sunday nights, Bible studies on Tuesday nights, and participation in additional acts of service and mission.

First Baptist Church also welcomes students with open arms and ministry options, particularly a lively Young Adult Sunday School class that meets every Sunday morning at 9:15a.m., along with our worship service at 10:30am.

Many of our students are drawn to CHCM and FBC because they boast a sense of family where everyone knows one another, and no one gets lost in the crowd.

We hope to hear from you and help your young adults continue their walk with the Lord.

Sincerely & Respectfully,

Dr. Travis Smith

CornerHouse Christian Ministries Campus Minister
tws8337@ksu.edu

Rev. John C. Parsley

Pastor, First Baptist Church, Manhattan Kansas
fbcpastorjcp@gmail.com



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May 17, 2018

Pastor,

Region staff would like to inform you of an educational opportunity that we will be conducting on July 28, 2018. Healthy Boundaries by Faith Trust Institute will be taught in the conference room of the Region offices in Topeka and also at FBC Hays, FBC Humbolt, and Faith Renewal in Wichita via Zoom telecast. This class is for any clergy working as a Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor or Youth Pastor. If you are friends with other pastors in your community feel free to invite them. Continuing Education Units (CEU's) will be available for all that take the course.

We are excited to bring this training to our Region and to be able to use technology to reach more pastors at once. We know that your time is valuable, so by having four sites across the state we save you travel time and expenses.

This class will be beneficial to any pastor whether you are new to ministry or have been ministering for 50 years. It is a great reminder of the faith and trust we have been given and a reminder of those lines that we shouldn't cross! This training will only cost you \$20, the price of the workbook, and a few hours of your time.

Take a look at the attached registration form for all the details about the class. The registration deadline is July 16 so we can order the workbooks. To allow meaningful discussion, which is an important component of this class, we need at least four registrations per site. Hope to see many of you on July 28!

God Bless,
Mike

Growing Healthy Churches to Fulfill Christ's Mission

Rev. Mike Justice, Region Staff Minister
Cell Phone: 316/640-0894
Email: mike.justice@abccr.org



American Baptist Churches
Central Region
**Healthy Boundaries
Registration**

The class will be taught on July 28th, 2018 from 12:30-4:00 p.m.

Name _____ **Church** _____

Position _____

Site you will be attending:

___ Topeka, Region Office – 5833 S.W. 29th St.

___ FBC Hays – 12th & Fort

___ Faith Renewal, Wichita – 2000 N. Maize Rd.

___ FBC Humbolt – 118 N. 7th St.

Please mail your registration and \$20 for your workbook to the Region office by July 16.

ABCCR
5833 S.W. 29th St., Suite A
Topeka, KS. 66614-5505

You can also register and pay online by going to:

Boundaries Payment link,

<http://abccr-camping.squarespace.com/payments/?category=Boundaries>

If you have any questions about this class, please contact Mike Justice by phone at 316-640-0894 or email at mike.justice@abccr.org.

cards or flyers for these special worship events for members to distribute or mail.

Mass communications—the church website and social media channels, direct mail, yard signs, door hangers, church banners and signs, radio and print ads, and community ads (such as bulletin boards, ads in movie theaters, or sponsoring events)—are additional broad strategies for reaching people. The goal of these efforts is to show the congregation as a place that welcomes newcomers. While no one media strategy produces the desired results in today’s context, some experts argue that there is a growing preference for printed materials. In fact, even though many congregations have invested in digital marketing strategies, a recent study found that direct mail outperforms all digital communications combined by 600%.⁵ Still, an up-to-date and easy to navigate church website (optimized for mobile phones) serves as a primary source of information to which print pieces can direct.

How to Inform

Successful efforts to invite newcomers do not yield new members. Sadly, at most, only three out of ten visitors return for a second visit. Too many visitors catch only a glimpse of what the congregation offers. Prehn claims that two printed pieces are important for informing newcomers: the church bulletin and connection or visitor cards.

The church bulletin. When people attend a worship service, the bulletin is the first picture they see of the congregation. This description of church life should be jargon free, friendly, and clearly written. The order of service should be easy to follow and related to congregational theology and commitments. The bulletin should provide information for linking to the church website, phone numbers, and other contact information (such as church office hours). Visitors are highly likely to take the bulletin home, so consider what information might be most useful to them.

Connection or visitor cards. Visitors typically fill these out during worship services to drop in the offering plates or return to ushers at the end of the service. Too often visitors aren’t given the time during services to complete the card. Worship leaders should give some thought as to when to bring the cards to the attention of visitors (early in the service) and how visitors are welcomed because many visitors do not want to be publicly recognized. In addition to the cards, brochures or visitor packets help visitors learn more about the congregation.⁶

How to Include

Think about a movie theater website. The website makes it easy to see what is showing, at what times, ticket prices, the theatre location, and maps. Participating in a church small group or event should be as easy as going to a movie. A web-supported calendar is essential for including new people as well as current members. Do not make people go through nonessential steps to figure out what is going on and how to participate (such as “call the church office for more information”).

Additionally, most newcomers want to try things out before making a big commitment. Classes or groups that require a multi-week commitment scare away new people because they are not certain they want to make such an extended commitment. A brochure that describes ideal groups and activities that new members can try could be included in the visitor packet. Church consultant Jeff Woods believes encouraging people to engage in common activities builds trust, and helping participants to reflect on those activities builds commitment to a common purpose.⁷

Three Pillars of Evangelism

Three complementary efforts serve the congregation’s ministry goals: inviting, informing, and including new people. Just like a three-pillared tower, without one support, the overall purpose becomes unstable. To invite is to increase the church’s visibility and relevance, to inform is to offer opportunities for connection, and to include means spiritual experiences that promote Christian maturity and growth. Which effort needs more intention and planning in your congregation?

1. “When Americans Say They Believe in God, What Do They Mean?” Pew Research Center, <http://www.pewforum.org/2018/04/25>.

2. Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce, *A Field Guide to U.S. Congregations: Who’s Going Where and Why*, 2nd edition (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2010).

3. Yvon Prehn, *5 Steps of Effective Church Communications and Marketing*, 2nd edition (Ventura, CA: Effective Church Communications, 2016), 54.

4. See Church Effectiveness Nuggets, Vol. 4: “How to Increase Worship Attendance” and Vol. 8: “How to Attract First-Time Worship Visitors,” <https://www.theparishpaper.com/free-resources>.

5. www.twosidesna.org

6. See Yvon Prehn, *Church Connection Cards*, 2nd edition (Ventura, CA: 2011).

7. C. Jeff Woods, “What Type of Follower Attends Our Church?” *The Parish Paper*, Vol. 22, No. 7: July 2014.



Master of Divinity

Central's innovative Master of Divinity (MDiv) degree program is designed to help you craft a ministry that is unique to your calling, either as full-time clergy, bi-professional minister, lay leader, non-profit sector leader, or as a professional in any number of leadership roles. It will equip you with a new, empowering vision of ministry so that you can become a transformative agent in the emerging global Christian community. The MDiv is the degree required by many churches and denominations for their pastoral leaders as well as by hospitals, prisons, and the military for their chaplains.

Values

At Central we value solid theological grounding for ministry, learning in context, diversity in community, imagination, entrepreneurship, spiritual formation, ecumenical openness, and multi-cultural experience for the purpose of renewing leaders and the communities they serve. Our goal is to prepare graduates who respond to God's continual call with excellence, confidence, and grace.

Courses

The MDiv program is a 75 credit hour program. Our MDiv program has been designed to help students continue working in their professional field during their studies. It is never easy to balance work, family, church, and study, but Central does what we can to make that a possibility for most students. Here is our curriculum map:

<p>Year One</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Foundations for Seminary Studies - Biblical Interpretation - Creativity in Public Ministries - Christian Heritage I & II - Interpersonal Skills - Hebrew Bible I - Media for Ministry Development 	<p>Year Two</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hebrew Bible II - Theological Foundations I & II - New Testament I & II - Christian Ethics
<p>Year Three</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Caring Ministries - Contextual Learning (Formation) - Ministry in a Pluralistic World - Homiletics - Missional Imagination - Contextual Learning (Cross-Cultural) 	<p>Year Four</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Foundations for Ministry Leadership & Innovation - The Art of Worship Leadership - Practice of Ministry Leadership & Innovation - Contextual Learning (Public Practice) - Capstone



Online Education

You can complete your MDiv from almost anywhere as long as you have a webcam and a broadband internet connection. Our online curriculum uses video conferencing technology to provide a fully interactive virtual classroom experience. These synchronous class meetings (on campus or off or at one of our sites) are always offered in the evening (in the US) and are supplemented by asynchronous assignments each week. This hybrid format offers you flexibility in how you structure your time while keeping you closely connected with a community of students and faculty.

Scheduling

Central operates on a trimester schedule that is rooted in the Christian calendar. You can begin the MDiv program at the beginning of any trimester. Most students finish in four years, but you can go slower or faster based on your needs. Here is our trimester schedule:

Ordinary (Fall) – September to November
Lent (Spring) – January to March
Easter (Summer) May to July

Accreditation

Central is among the first seminaries to be accredited by the Association of Theological Schools to offer our MDiv program entirely online. We are accredited through the Higher Learning Commission's North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. We also have approval from the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements and several state-specific higher education accreditation bodies. Our satellite sites in Nashville, TN; Milwaukee, WI; and Ann Arbor, MI; are all approved to offer the MDiv coursework.

Cost & Financial Assistance

Tuition is \$360 per credit hour. The total estimated cost with fees and books is about \$2,550 for a 6-credit-hour trimester. There are some scholarships available through the seminary. There are also often scholarships available through denominations, congregations, organizations, and charitable foundations. We encourage you to be creative and curious when seeking funding for your theological education. Central Seminary does not participate in the federal student loan program.



Scan this code to begin the application process now or contact Lyle Kraft, lkraft@cbts.edu, Nathan Huguley at nhuguley@cbts.edu, or call 913.667.5711.