



**Dr. Joe Kutter**  
Interim Executive Minister

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## **The Best Tool in the Box**

During my days with the American Baptist Ministers Council, I had the honor of administering a grant from the Lily Endowment that was given for the purpose of enhancing clergy health both vocationally and personally. One of Lily's stipulations was the administrators would participate annually in a conference in Indianapolis where we would share our learning with other groups who were doing similar things.

Of the many insights, I found this one both particularly disturbing and very hopeful. (I warn you now that my data is a bit dated, but I suspect that things have not gotten any better.) What we learned is that of all men who enter ministry, 50% will drop out within the first five years; and of all women who enter ministry, 50% will drop out in the first 3 years.

I have often tried to imagine the pain in this process for both pastor and church. Pastor John completes his seminary degree and accepts a call to his first church. It doesn't work out; and he has to wonder, "What went wrong? How did I so completely misunderstand my call from God? What kind of failure must I be?"

And the church's questions, did we fail our new pastor? When we called him, we were certain of God's call both for him and for our congregation. How in the world did we miss it so completely?"

There are reasons that are commonly given for the attrition. 1. Debt. Coming through college and seminary, young pastors sometimes accrue significant debt that the salaries of the churches simply do not allow them to pay. To make ends meet, they find other employment. 2. Church conflict. Pastors new to ministry neither expect nor are they well equipped to deal with the normal "give and take" of congregational life. Every disagreement and every divided vote feels like a failure, and they are all too often ill prepared to handle it. And when a real fight comes along, the young pastor may leave. 3. Not the job they expected. In school, they learn to teach and preach, to interpret scripture and visit the ill, to marry and bury. Then they arrive in the real church and find themselves managing decision making processes, administrating a complex volunteer organization, recruiting Sunday School Teachers and mowing the lawn on Saturday. It's not what they signed up for and they leave.

Now, in the midst of this difficulty, where is the hope. A United Church of Christ group in Massachusetts created a process through which all new pastors in their area were assigned to covenantal clergy colleague groups. They were grouped with peers and mentors, and they met monthly to talk over the issues of ministry and particularly their issues as men and women new to the pastorate.

The results? Instead of a 50% attrition rate, the retention rate was between 90% and 95%! The difference was having peers and mentors walk along side.

Remembering my entrance into ministry, I was not assigned a group. But, in the community where I first served as a solo pastor, there was a strong ecumenical group of pastors who made me welcome and then walked along side of me for several years as I learned the crafts of ministry. That collegial community of shared programs, shared worship, shared meals and lots of shared conversation became the nurturing group that mentored me into ministry, and I shall be forever grateful.

This is what I learned from the Lily Endowment — intentional and disciplined collegiality is probably the best tool in the box for our personal and vocational enhancement.

**ABMEN  
NATIONAL CONFERENCE  
SAVE THE DATE  
SEPTEMBER 7-9, 2018**

**www.ABMEN.ORG**

**GREEN LAKE  
CONFERENCE CENTER**

*"Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men"  
Luke 5-1-11*

**HOW to be the hands and feet of Christ**

Registration Fee: \$50.00 plus cost of room and meal plan  
Register at [www.GLCC.org](http://www.GLCC.org) / 920-294-3323

- DR. JERRY CAIN – past President Judson University
- REV. DR. LEE SPITZER – General Secretary ABC USA
- PASTOR LARRY DALE – retired Pastor, Belleville, WV

*Inspirational Praise and Worship  
Discover the mission of ABM in today's world  
Enjoy the amenities of Green Lake Conference Center  
Activities for accompanying spouses*



- ❖ 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*  
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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*

## How Do You Handle Growth?

We all say we want our churches to grow, but how well do we handle that growth? Growth brings its challenges. When families who have never been in church come to visit, is it an environment in which they can feel welcome? Or does it seem like a strange culture to them?

Those of us who grew up in the church understand the 'churchy' language and are fairly well familiar with all the Bible stories from our childhood. But do people who have never read the Bible or heard these stories understand some of the terms that we use so freely?

Cultural differences with growth is not a new problem. It existed even in the early church (Acts 6:1-7). Growth increases interactions across traditional barriers. As we seek the Holy Spirit's guidance, we'll find creative solutions as potential problems turn into opportunities for more growth.

One challenge is financial. Those who never attended church don't automatically give a tithe. They have to feel the love of Christ and the desire to be a part of this loving group, and then they will automatically want to give back to God. It can be a slow process, so don't be discouraged when increased numbers do not equal increased finances.

We need to be sure that we are setting a good example for others by how we manage our finances. Do we put God first when we receive a paycheck and start paying bills, or does He just get some of the leftovers? God blesses those who give back to His ministry cheerfully.

All of our ministries seem to be struggling financially. How can you do more? Maybe you feel you need income from your savings in order to live comfortably. I know if you have it in a bank, you aren't receiving much. Did you know that a Charitable Gift Annuity pays 2% to those 0-10 years and up to 9% if you are 90 years of age? And that's every year for your entire life, and then the annuity goes to the ministry of your choice. I can guarantee that any of our ministries will welcome it whenever it comes — even years from now.

There are many ways in which you can use God's financial blessings to you to help with His ministry. I'd love to discuss them with you. Please contact me.

Rev. Wilma E. Engle, Director of Planned Giving, [wilmaengle@juno.com](mailto: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 May 2018

	2018	2017	Increase (Decrease)	% Increase (% Decrease)
United Mission	\$56,505.82	\$65,123.61	-\$8,617.79	-13.23%
ABW Ministries Love Gift	\$2,794.05	\$2,972.94	-\$178.89	-6.01%
<b>American Baptist Mission Support</b>	<b>\$89,252.96</b>	<b>\$124,782.27</b>	<b>-\$35,529.31</b>	<b>-28.47%</b>

## Mission Giving May YTD

	2018	2017	Increase (Decrease)	% Increase (% Decrease)
ABW Ministries Love Gift	\$14,134.11	\$17,239.60	-\$3,105.49	-18.01%
One Great Hour of Sharing offering	\$11,281.43	\$7,460.51	\$3,820.92	51.21%
World Mission Offering	\$10,467.46	\$12,101.68	-\$1,634.22	-13.50%
Retired Ministers & Missionaries	\$21,826.66	\$23,307.99	-\$1,481.33	-6.35%
Region Offering	\$26,624.64	\$23,692.89	\$2,931.75	12.37%
Institutional Support Process	\$34,204.62	\$41,555.21	-\$7,350.59	-17.68%
Specifics	\$65,906.75	\$91,544.27	-\$25,637.52	-28.00%
<b>American Baptist Mission Support</b>	<b>\$546,892.67</b>	<b>\$587,615.38</b>	<b>-\$40,722.71</b>	<b>-6.93%</b>

## Our Church's Giving for May

United Mission	\$ _____
One Great Hour of Sharing offering	\$ _____
<b>American Baptist Mission Support</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>





**Our Mission: To Provide Resources and Services to Assist, Challenge, Empower and Represent Local Congregations in Ministry.**

## 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>Coffeyville, FBC</i>	
<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>Great Bend, Central Baptist</i>	David Walters, ABCCR Interim
<i>Goddard, FBC</i>	Steve Sherbenou will retire this summer
<i>Horton, FBC</i>	
<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 Roseler, 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 will be candidating a pastor in June.
- There are several committees who are at the point in the search process of receiving names of potential pastoral candidates. Be in prayer for the search committees as they discern who God is calling as their next pastor.
- Stafford, FBC and Horton, FBC are new additions 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 as 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=ojFopBeQpVI&feature=youtu.be>



October 12-13

# ANNUAL GATHERING 2018

*you are an important part of our*

**FAMILY**

*We want to be with YOU!  
So, let's glorify Christ together!*



Location: Cross Wind Camp and Conference Center  
8036 N. Hoover Rd. Hesston, KS 67062

Thank you for your interest in leading a workshop at the 2018 ABCCR Annual Gathering. Workshops will be held October 12 & 13. Please complete the form below and return it to Julie Robinson at [julie.robinson@abccr.org](mailto:julie.robinson@abccr.org) by July 15, 2018.

Workshop Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Presenter Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Presenter Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Presenter Church: \_\_\_\_\_

Presenter Bio: \_\_\_\_\_

Workshop Description:

AV Requirements: Projector      Ctrl click to select multiple options.  
Laptop  
Speakers  
N/A

Notes



5833 S.W. 29<sup>th</sup> St. Suite A  
Topeka, Kansas 66614-5505

Phone: 785-272-7622  
Fax: 785-272-5860  
Web Site: [www.abccr.org](http://www.abccr.org)

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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

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*Growing Healthy Churches to Fulfill Christ's Mission*

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

## MAKING THE NURSERY A PLACE OF BELONGING

“Where is the nursery?” That is often the first question when young parents visit a new church. At a minimum, they expect their question to be answered with confidence, not bewilderment. Beyond simply asking directions, the inquirer wants to know, Does this church care about us and our children? Is this a place where we can belong?

### Out of the Basement

Diane Olsen, a children’s ministry specialist, describes how her church’s ministry for children when she was a child occupied a place in the humid, slightly dark, and largely inaccessible basement. When visiting after returning from college, she noticed that the recently erected new building included only one floor and no basement. Suddenly it felt like the children’s ministry existed on the same level with every other aspect of church life.

“Out of the basement” began to function for her as a metaphor for integrating children’s ministry into the congregation’s overall mission.<sup>1</sup> The same applies to the congregation’s ministry with infants, toddlers, and two-year-olds. Wherever located, the nursery deserves equal treatment with other aspects of church life.

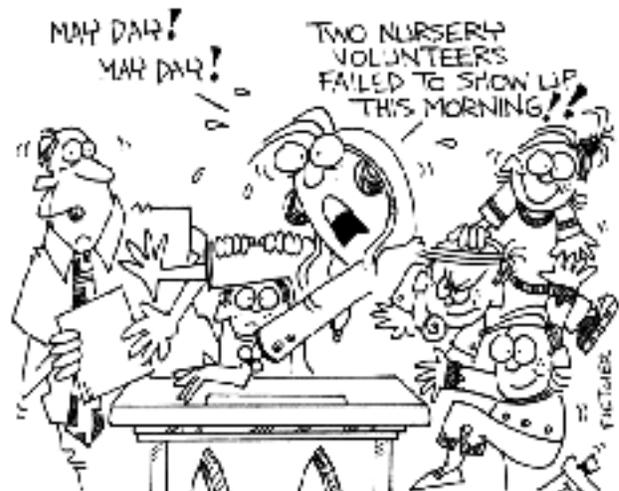
What about room size and location? Offer at least thirty-five square feet of playroom floor space per child, not including bathrooms, closet space, or hallways, as children need space to explore. Choose a central location, ideally adjacent to a primary hallway with visual access for security reasons. A bathroom should be located nearby with a sink low enough for toddlers to use, and a potty chair and diaper changing table located somewhere in the nursery area. The main nursery should be open, bright, and comfortable. Allow space at the entrance for parents to gather when they sign children in and out.<sup>2</sup>

### Calling Mr. Clean

Granted, some congregations may not have much choice in where to locate the nursery, but they can still keep it clean, well-lit, and safe. The cleaning operation starts with four large boxes or trash cans labeled: Keep, Discard, Ask, and Recycle. (“Ask” means consulting with someone before discarding or recycling an item.) Look for toys that need to be thrown away or replaced due to missing parts, broken pieces, or otherwise being unsafe. Next, examine basic equipment such as cribs, tables, chairs, and high chairs. Trust your instincts. When in doubt, toss it out! Finally, clean and wash the floors, walls, toilet, and wash or dry-clean the rugs or draperies. Making the space clean and safe can be an easy way to revitalize your nursery.<sup>3</sup>

### Volunteers or Paid Staff?

Caregivers provide the heart of any childcare system. It all starts with a nursery coordinator to recruit and supervise nursery staff, keep important information about each child, greet parents when they arrive, and generally set the tone for nursery care. With the



coordinator in place, the question becomes, Should we use paid staff, volunteers, or a combination?

Using volunteers may be financially advantageous by saving money on staff salaries, and it may give church members opportunities to use their gifts in the congregation. On the downside, scheduling volunteers may take up too much of the supervisor's valuable time, and volunteers who are less than committed may not show up on the appointed day, leading to a panicked search for a replacement. In addition, some children may feel unsettled by a round robin of ever-changing volunteers and prefer a more consistent routine.

Youth who want to volunteer because they enjoy working with children form a special category of their own. These young persons may already be known by the parents or even babysitting for them. Be advised that at least one adult supervisor must be present at all times, which may stretch some volunteer teams thin. Also, youth need to understand that their primary responsibility is to attend to young children, not socialize with other youth. Some churches provide training to youth on basic matters like changing diapers or sanitation or even offer to pay for a certified babysitting or childcare course in return for a certain number of hours worked.

Paid staff may result in the best guarantee of reliable caregiving, though for smaller churches, expense may be a factor. In recruiting, look for parents of older children or youth, or parents of young children who might be willing to give a few hours per week as long as they can bring their own child along. Other ideas include posting a job announcement at the student center of a local college, talking with a professor of child development, or checking with congregations with worship hours different from your own. With paid staff as the foundation, some churches fill their needs using a combination of employees and volunteers, with one or two paid caregivers ensuring continuity and a safety net for volunteers who step in as the need arises.<sup>4</sup>

### Protecting Children from Harm

Churches must screen all staff, whether volunteer or paid, to ensure that young children are safe from inappropriate behavior or sexual abuse. At a minimum, everyone must be required to complete an application form and be subject to a criminal background check conducted by an agency such as Trusted Employees

(www.trustedemployees.com). Include documentation concerning background checks in the personnel file. Make sure to have at least two nursery attendants present at all times, with at least one worker who is eighteen years old or older. For more information, see Church Mutual's web page, "The Background Screening Basics."<sup>5</sup>

### The Nursery Home Visitor

To maintain ongoing care for a family with young children, Mary Alice Gran recommends recruiting a nursery home visitor who sees the family at home at least once after a child is born in order to welcome the child on behalf of the church. This person's primary role is to be someone who listens, supports the family, and, if necessary, acts as an advocate for the family's needs with the congregation. Given the time and stress that young families experience, plan to stay only a brief time. The visitor may bring information for parents — a nursery handbook, a statement of the church's philosophy on caring for the young child, or a gift such as a book on parenting. Mary Alice Gran's *The First Three Years* provides a variety of parent support leaflets.<sup>6</sup>

### Commit to Children's Ministry

As one pastor said, "I learned as a pastor that if the preschool ministry was not going well, the rest of the church probably was not going well either."<sup>7</sup> Conversely, a church that pays special attention to its nursery may be laying the foundation for revitalization. It signals to young families a commitment to provide a place of belonging for anyone, no matter what age.

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1. Diane C. Olsen, *Out Of The Basement: A Holistic Approach To Children's Ministry* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2001), 5-6.

2. Mary Alice Gran, "Room Size and Location," in Mary Alice Gran, ed., *The First Three Years: A Guide for Infants, Toddlers, and Two-Year-Olds* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2001), 81.

3. Olsen, 29-30.

4. Sarah Heckert, "Hiring and Recruiting Personnel," in Mary Alice Gran, ed., *The First Three Years*, 56-58.

5. <https://www.churchmutual.com/10451/The-Background-Screening-Basics>. See also Joy Thornburg Melton, *Safe Sanctuaries For Children And Youth* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2008).

6. Mary Alice Gran, "The Role of the Nursery Home Visitor" and "Parent Support Leaflets," in Mary Alice Gran, ed., *The First Three Years*, 101-102, 91-105.

7. Janice Haywood, *Enduring Connections: Creating a Preschool and Children's Ministry* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2007), 1.



Dr. Terrell Carter  
Director of Contextualized  
Learning &  
Assistant Professor of  
Practical Theology

### Art as an Expression of Faith

I believe that art can be a beautiful thing. It can change someone's mood on a cloudy day. It can amuse or educate. In the hands of the right person or people, such as people who are more concerned about their communities than capitalism, art can be used to help others understand the moral and ethical values of diverse societies, and how those values contribute to the creation, change, and destruction of social structures. Art has the potential to transform people and society.

I believe this because I am an artist. There are two things that I am sure of in life. I am sure of my faith in God and the personal call that I have received to serve the church. I am also sure of an internal push to express myself and my faith through the visual arts. Any time that I have tried to fight against or ignore either of these aspects of my life, I have felt like the prophet Jeremiah who once said, "It is like fire shut up in my bones," and I cannot find rest until I practice one of them. For me, I take as much care in making art as I do in preparing to preach a sermon, and vice versa.

Through my artwork, I hope to cause the church, and society at large, to open their minds and think about what it means to be the hands and feet of God within the earth. I also try to let people know that they are not alone on their journeys, and that their struggles are not necessarily unique to them. There are others in the world who face similar circumstances. Because of that, no one must feel like they are alone or that that no one cares for them.

### Resources

Maybe you are like me and feel the need not only to express yourself creatively, but to do it in a way that challenges other people to be the best versions of themselves possible, so their lives can bring glory to God. If so, the following books may help you as you try to develop and foster your creative spirit in service to God and the body:

- ◆ *The Sacred Gaze: Religious Visual Culture in Theory and Practice*, written by David Morgan (University of California Press, ISBN: 978-0520243064)
- ◆ *Art and Soul: Signposts for Christians in the Arts*, written by Hilary Brand and Adrienne Chaplin (IVP Academic, ISBN: 978-0830826742)
- ◆ *Religion, Art, and Visual Culture: A Cross-Cultural Reader*, edited by S. Brent Plate (Palgrave Macmillan, ISBN: 978-0312240295)
- ◆ *The Art of the Sacred: An Introduction to the Aesthetics of Art and Belief*, written by Graham Howes (I.B. Tauris Publishers, ISBN: 978-1845110062)
- ◆ *The Visual Culture of American Religions*, edited by David Morgan and Sally M. Promey (University of California Press, ISBN: 978-0520225220)
- ◆ *Visual Piety: A History and Theory of Popular Religious Images*, written by David Morgan (University of California Press, ISBN: 978-0520219328)