



Dr. Joe Kutter
Interim Executive Minister

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A Word of Appreciation

I do not know how October came to be “Pastor Appreciation Month,” but I am happy for it.

First, let me reveal my bias towards pastors. My father was a pastor. My mother’s father was a pastor. I entered pastoral ministry as a seminary student in 1969 and retired from that role in 2008 — 39 years. From 2008 through 2012, I served the American Baptist Ministers Council where my role focused almost entirely on ministerial leaders. From 2012 until now, I have worked with Interim Pastors and the churches they serve; and since January of this year, I have served as your Interim Executive Minister. In short, pastoral ministry has been my life, and I pretend no lack of bias in my appreciation for the call.

Allow me a few observations. Through the years, I have met a handful of persons in pastoral ministry who I wished would find other jobs. Either because of aptitudes that do not fit the call or because of a skewered set of ethics or morality, I sincerely wish that they had searched other arenas to earn their living.

On the other hand, I have met a few genuine stars, men and women whose skill set and commitment to ministry have led them to make enormous contributions to the life of the church and the work of God’s Kingdom. I admire and appreciate them, but there have only been a few real “Stars.”

Mostly I have served with thousands of faithful men and women who have been extraordinarily faithful and fruitful in the places where God has called them to serve. Every day they have gotten up to do the work set before them; and they have done so with integrity and faithfulness, sometimes in very difficult circumstances. While I deeply appreciate the “Stars,” it is also these men and women, who serve without significant fanfare, whom I wish to celebrate in this article.

To this cadre of faithful pastoral leaders, though you do not hear it often enough, I want to anticipate the words that you will certainly hear from our Master some day, “Well done, good and faithful servants.”

For sermons carefully prepared and well delivered, well done.
For prayers offered that open souls to the presence of God, well done.
For teaching the scriptures in all of their depth and complexity, well done.
For hours spent in hospital rooms reminding patients of the love of God, well done.
For preparing kind and caring funeral services, well done.
For shepherding men and women into new seasons of marital life, well done.
For loving your spouse and raising children amidst sometimes unreal expectations, well done.
For leading congregations into new seasons of faithful service, well done.
For preaching the gospel, by word and deed, faithfully in every season, well done.
Mostly, for being the person God created you to become, well done.
Well done good and faithful servants.
May God bless you and keep you and make His face to shine upon you.



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

Open Churches in the Central Region – October 2018

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

Church	Interim Minister
<i>Cedar Vale, FBC</i>	
<i>Coffeyville, FBC</i>	Rodger Tyrell, ABCCR Interim
<i>Garden City, FBC</i>	
<i>Garnett, FBC</i>	Melinda Oberhelman, ABCCR Interim
<i>Goddard, FBC</i>	Rick Nelson, ABCCR Interim
<i>Horton, FBC</i>	James Callaway, ABCCR Interim
<i>Hutchinson, FBC</i>	Darrell Treat, ABCCR Interim
<i>Lindsborg, FBC</i>	Jim Bridges, ABCCR Interim
<i>McPherson, FBC</i>	Timothy Conner, ABCCR Interim
<i>Osawatomie, FBC</i>	Larry Spray, Private Contract 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>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

- Council Grove, FBC called Rev. Chris Carlson from Lindsborg as their pastor.
- Lindsborg, FBC is a new addition to the list this month.

Celebrations and Prayer Concerns

- Pastor Travis Ball had surgery to remove an acoustic neuroma tumor on September 28. The surgeons anticipated the surgery taking 8 hours, and it ended up taking 17 hours to complete. Travis has done well with recovery. Continue to pray for him, and his wife Katrina, as he works toward a full recovery.
- Rev. Dr. Gregg Hemmen has been called as ABCCR Executive Minister. Be in prayer as he transitions into the Central Region. Gregg's official start date is November 1.

Like and follow us @abccregion



- ❖ 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

Jesus Christ Is Our Role Model!

October is the month when most of our churches are beginning to formulate next year's budget. This is quite often a very stressful time as few want to approach the theme of stewardship and tithing.

If we have read our Bibles, we know that at least 16 of Jesus' parables have to do with people's possessions and money and how they use them. Also, Jesus Himself became the greatest role model of giving. If Jesus hadn't laid down his riches in heaven and came to earth to die on the Cross for our sins, God wouldn't be able to offer you the opportunity to receive the gift of salvation and the Holy Spirit living in you and an eternal home in heaven.

How do we respond to the generosity of God and the generosity of Christ who gave it all away for our sake? Are we living life with an overwhelming sense of gratitude for the blessings He pours out on us?

We often hear the excuse that people give generously because they have a lot of money to give away. "If I had more money, a bigger income, then I'd do the same thing." But that sort of reasoning is absolutely mistaken. There are stingy people and generous people at every pay grade. The difference is love.

It was love that caused God to send His only Son to die for our sins so that we could spend eternity with Him. Giving to God's ministries is not a duty! Generosity comes from a heart of love!

You are constantly receiving blessings from God. Don't be a dead-sea person who receives fresh blessings, fresh resources, fresh provisions from God on a regular basis, but has no outlet — does not share these blessings with others!

God loves a cheerful giver, and you will find that the more you give out of your love for God's blessings, the more blessings He will pour out on you! God loves seeing people go over and above because they want to excel in the grace of giving.

If we're faithful followers of Christ, the church family should have adequate finances to pay all expenses and share with others. Consider the math: If 10 families gave 10% of their income, it would be enough to pay the pastor the same wages you receive. If another 10 tithed, it would probably pay all the other necessary expenses, plus outreach ministries of most churches.

There are a multitude of opportunities and ways to give besides the local church. I'd love to talk with you about possibilities that fit your situation. There is no obligation or charge for my services.

Rev. Wilma E. Engle, Director of Planned Giving, wilmaengle@juno.com
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American Baptist Churches of the Central Region

Mission Giving for September 2018

	2018	2017	Increase (Decrease)	% Increase (% Decrease)
United Mission	\$52,742.89	\$58,199.63	-\$5,456.74	-9.37%
ABW Ministries Love Gift	\$2,160.72	\$2,231.65	-\$70.93	-3.17%
American Baptist Mission Support	\$75,957.41	\$115,918.35	-\$39,960.94	-34.47%

Mission Giving September YTD

	2018	2017	Increase (Decrease)	% Increase (% Decrease)
ABW Ministries Love Gift	\$23,850.20	\$26,721.67	-\$2,871.47	-10.74%
One Great Hour of Sharing offering	\$49,262.37	\$76,861.96	-\$27,599.59	-35.90%
World Mission Offering	\$24,088.03	\$22,812.54	\$1,275.49	5.59%
Retired Ministers & Missionaries	\$24,969.41	\$25,319.37	-\$349.96	-1.38%
Region Offering	\$49,548.33	\$43,328.95	\$6,219.38	14.35%
Institutional Support Process	\$45,870.41	\$49,716.09	-\$3,845.68	-7.73%
Specifics	\$101,723.34	\$143,150.09	-\$41,426.75	-28.93%
American Baptist Mission Support	\$938,152.43	\$1,024,204.02	-\$86,051.59	-8.40%

Our Church's Giving for September

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

In October, congregations come together for a time of awareness, advocacy and action for global mission. Churches all across the country celebrate and support the ministries that God is using to transform the world. This is the World Mission Offering.



The 2018 World Mission Offering, highlights Ministry Priorities of Health and Wellness, Abolishing Global Slavery and Economic and Community Development. While these represent only a fraction of IM's ministries, they provide a window into what God is doing worldwide through our 120 global servants, 900+ volunteers, 43 home staff and 240+ global partners. Bulletin inserts are available at <https://www.internationalministries.org/world-mission-offering/>

DON'T DISAGREE, DELIBERATE HOW TO LEAD COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS IN YOUR CHURCH

The church is no stranger to controversy. Chapter 15 of the Book of Acts describes a heated debate among the apostles at a gathering in Jerusalem. Should Gentiles be welcomed as Jesus' followers or only Jews who kept Moses' law by getting circumcised? When they resolved the matter, the letter they sent out to the churches acknowledged God's work in the midst of disagreement: "For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us," they wrote, that even non-Jews should be welcomed (Acts 15:28). Yet if disagreement about church matters can be holy, what about community matters? Should church leaders ever discuss issues of public concern and ask community members to join them? If so, how?

Creating Space for Conversation

During an election season, some churches offer forums in which candidates for public office speak to the community about public issues. According to one research study, 16% of mainline Protestants, 12% of other Protestants, and 8% of Roman Catholics are members of congregations that hosted such forums.¹ In addition to candidate forums, a newer model has emerged for discussing issues of public concern that emphasizes fairness and respect among participants. Sometimes called a "deliberative forum," this highly structured meeting is designed so that everyone gets a chance to speak and provide their perspective, others listen respectfully, and all in attendance discuss the options so that the best solutions emerge.² While deliberative forums go by many names and take a variety of forms, they all share a structured process, one that requires advance preparation from the participants and aims to include a diverse group of people.³

A Deliberate Process for Deliberative Work

The Reverend R. Gregg Kaufman, an Evangelical Lutheran pastor in Jacksonville, Florida, began experimenting with deliberative forums as a way to introduce churches to dialogue about public issues. The inspiration

for Reverend Kaufman's work came from the Kettering Foundation (www.kettering.org), a nonprofit foundation that gathers community leaders to find ways to make democracy work better. With advice from a group of pastors hosted by Kettering, Reverend Kaufman began to use deliberative forums in several churches in the Jacksonville area. A few months before the presidential election in 2016, Kaufman held one at St. John's Episcopal Cathedral on the topic of political dysfunction.

Using a guide designed by the National Issues Forum Institute, *Political Fix: How Can We Get American Politics Back On Track?* Kaufman laid out the process for the group: First, he invited everyone to speak about a personal stake they have in the issue. Next, he presented ground rules that emphasized listening and respect. Then he added a twist: no talk about the Trump/Pence or Clinton/Kaine presidential tickets. The goal was to find ways to talk about political dysfunction and solutions to the problem in a way that



JUST RELAX, BUDDY...
THEY SAID EVERYONE WOULD GET A CHANCE TO SPEAK

encouraged respectful speaking and listening. The issue guide presents three options for consideration:

1. Break the grip of special interests: The key to addressing gridlock and dysfunction in government is to rein in special interests and curb the influence of big money.
2. Increase responsibility: Our best hope of fixing American politics is to restore individual responsibility in communities and at every level of government.
3. Fix the mechanisms of politics: The mechanisms of government are no longer responsive to the will of the people. We need major structural changes to make the system work as it was intended to.

Discussing politics with strangers can be intimidating, even with topics that might appear easy to reach consensus about. Some participants arrived at the meeting tense, expecting heated arguments. Before the discussion got very far along, however, the tenor of the group began to shift. “Speech that was like shaky steps on thin ice began to take on the feel of a driveway basketball game,” according to an observer who later wrote about the evening. Kaufman has held over a dozen such forums in the Jacksonville area, with most of them using churches as sponsors or to provide the venue.⁴

Deliberative work tends to be exploratory and open to revision. Meetings are designed so that everyone gets a chance to speak and listen respectfully. The goal is to move toward understanding, find some common ground, and identify possible solutions. For this reason, the National Issues Forum Institute (www.nifi.org) provides four-page printed guides that present three different and sharply defined policy options. The guide asks participants to examine the options together, keeping in mind the trade-offs or disadvantages implicit in each one.

Creating a Process for Your Church: An Example

When rhetoric becomes heated around a specific community issue, church-based forums give participants the chance to cool their tempers. In 2015, for example, in the midst of public concern over police violence and community safety, two Tennessee pastors joined forces to encourage dialogue. Oak Ridge, Tennessee is also known as the “Secret City” because it was established in the 1940s as a community for workers in the federally sponsored Manhattan Project, which built the first atomic bomb. Over time, this city of 29,000 has become increas-

ingly diverse. In the summer of 2015, the largely white Oak Ridge Unitarian Universalist Church responded to outrage over police violence nationwide by posting a message on its electronic sign: Black Lives Matter. When the pastor, the Reverend Jake Morrill, began receiving death threats, he called a meeting with his colleague, the Reverend Derrick Hammond, pastor of Oak Valley Baptist Church, a largely African American congregation in the city. At that meeting, also attended by a Roman Catholic priest and the city’s chief of police, the group decided to take the sign down and host a series of three public forums called “Community Matters.”

After considerable discussion, the group designed a process for discussing the community’s issues fairly and in depth. The process aimed to: identify the issues of most concern to the community, do research using quantitative data that would offer an objective basis for understanding the concern, identify resources that might improve the situation, and resolve the issue by taking collective action. The ground rules were simple. Participants were to 1) speak as an individual, not as a representative of a group, 2) speak to concerns without laying blame or personal attacks, and 3) “Remember there is no room for disrespect.”⁵

If Not Us, Then Who?

“One who spares words is knowledgeable; one who is cool in spirit has understanding” (Proverbs 17:27). Group discussion does not have to be twisted by anger or marred by disrespect. Deliberation is possible, even concerning controversial matters such as immigration, gun violence, or the opioid epidemic. By hosting forums, church leaders can offer a space where difficult issues get raised, and though perhaps not resolved, at least considered respectfully and fairly. Along the way, churches might help their members as well as community residents learn how to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39).

1. Mark Chaves, “Religious Variations in Public Presence,” in Robert Wuthnow and John Evans, eds., *The Quiet Hand of God*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 118.

2. Tina Nabatchi and Matt Leighninger, *Public Participation for the 21st Century* (Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2015), 276.

3. *Ibid.*, 276.

4. Linell Ajello, “Out of the Shadows of Polarization,” *Kettering Review* 34, no. 1 (Fall 2017), 23-29.

5. Derrick Hammond, “Employing Democratic Practices to Address Community Forum Concerns” presented to the Kettering Foundation, October 20-21, 2016.



Central Seminary's Vocation Discernment Group



Central's Vocation Discernment Group offers new and prospective students an opportunity to explore their sense of call. At Central, we believe that all Christians are called to service. Some are called to be pastors, some to be chaplains, some counselors, some non-profit sector leaders, and others to be deacons, lay leaders, Sunday school teachers, and church staff members. The Body of Christ works best when we have each explored and discerned our own particular place in the community, that place where your gifts best minister to the church's or the world's needs.

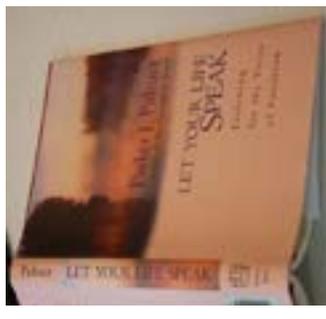
Do you sense God calling you to something new—a new chapter, a new job, a new task, or maybe even a new career? If so, then our Vocation Discernment Group may be a good place for you to work through and pray about what that new thing might look like for you.

The Vocation Discernment Group meets one evening a week for six weeks. You can come to our Shawnee, KS campus to engage directly with the facilitator and the other participants or you can join us using Zoom, the same video-conferencing technology that Central uses for its online classes. It is offered free of charge as a ministry to those exploring a call to ministry or leadership. The only cost is in your commitment to the six one-hour sessions and in buying the book we use as the springboard to our discussion. There is no sales pitch to endure; this group is just a safe space for people to come and do the challenging inner work that prepares them for the next step in their journey.

"The Vocation Discernment Group at Central has provided me the time and space to consider next steps in my vocational journey through a safe, accepting, positive, open, and collaborative environment. It has allowed me to become attuned to who God made to be and how He wants to uniquely use me for His kingdom work." – Audre



"Sometimes I forget that the discernment process never really ends. Being content and settled in full-time ministry, it's easy to put aside that ever growing edge of your personhood with God as you focus on the work at hand. At least that's how I felt until my life and ministry imploded. To put it simply, my being part of this vocation discernment group was the work of the Spirit. It happened exactly when I needed it and gave me the space and support I needed from other women who understood my situation in profound ways." – Jillian



For more information

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