



WAY 2 GROW

strategic plan 2018-2020
executive council session

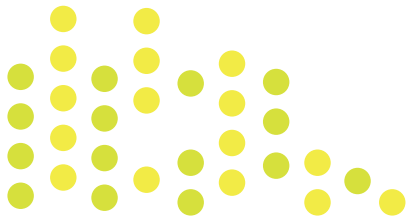
2018

2019

2020

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INTRODUCTION

Beginning in the fall of 2017, the senior staff of Advent Christian General Conference (ACGC) began to evaluate the current strategic plan and discern what changes, if any, should be made in order to

increase the fruitfulness and efficiency of the ministries of ACGC

What follows is a result of several months' worth of work and prayer on the part of the Executive Director and the senior staff. It is the conviction of the Executive Director and senior staff that this plan offers a "Way2Grow" God's kingdom that is faithful to the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. A special word of thanks goes to Executive Council member Charlie Merrill for his insight and guidance with the strategic planning process.



STRATEGIC PLAN 2011-2017

As we sought to evaluate the strategic plans that have been in place since 2011, we took note of both positive and negative elements of the plans. Since 2011, the strategic plan has been virtually the same. Some minor revisions were made in 2014, but the four core areas of ministry remained unchanged. The plan calls for the ministries of ACGC to be focused in four main areas:

loving the lost leadership development church health & church planting

While everything was evaluated and considered expendable, much value was seen in the past plans. The decision of the senior staff was to maintain continuity with the current plan and areas of focus. A fidelity to the past seven years of strategic plans was important because those plans had realized a number of positive results.

First, the four areas of ministry have begun to resonate with the broader constituency served by ACGC. Loving the lost, leadership development, church health and church planting are phrases that have become a common nomenclature for ACGC and those it serves. It seemed unwise to radically alter what has been well-received and become a significant part of the denominational culture.

Second, the four broad areas of ministry have served to define and direct the ministries of ACGC for the past seven years. While not perfectly executed, the strategic plan has served as the framework for work of AGCC. The ministry categories and language are now well-ingrained in the corporate culture of the Charlotte offices. One clear example of this is departmental reports to the Executive Council have been structured to



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**“the
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ago”**

measure performance against the tenets of the strategic plan. Again, it seemed unwise to modify this in any significant way, especially since each represents a clear and biblical focus for ministry.

Finally, the 2011 and 2014 strategic plans have provided missional alignment for the regions and ACGC. This has been especially true in ACGC’s partnership with the regional superintendents. The strategic plan has provided a common vocabulary, shared mission and clear direction to unite the ministry efforts of the regions and ACGC. While the manner in which this plays out varies from region to region, the sense of a common mission is greater than it was a decade ago, and is perhaps greater than it has ever been. The strategic planning process has facilitated this greater unity.

While much good has come from the last two strategic plans, some weaknesses and negative aspects of the plan were seen. For instance, some of the objectives set forth in the plan have not been addressed or have been addressed only in inadequate or superficial ways. Church planting is a good example of this. Also, there has always been ambiguity regarding who the plan was for. It has been unclear from the beginning if the strategic plans have been for ACGC or the entire denomination. It seems unreasonable that ACGC could make plans for a denomination as independent and varied as the Advent Christian denomination. Yet some of the plans and objectives could be interpreted as trying to do just that. This ambiguity has created confusion, inefficiency and even some friction with other levels of the denomination.

The past plans have also lacked many, if any, clear and concrete goals and objectives. Most of the goals listed were not specific, measurable and time-bound. Instead, they were largely vague, subjective and open-

ended. This was a major flaw in the previous plans that rendered the plans less strategic plans and more documents communicating values and a philosophy of ministry.

The issues of ambiguity and concrete goals also led to the final weakness of the previous plans. Perhaps largely because it was unclear exactly who the plan was for, critical issues facing the denomination were given superficial acknowledgment but no explicit solutions were prescribed. The plans spoke to issues in a vague and general way without offering discrete action points for addressing the most critical issues local churches faced and will face in the years to come.

The desire of the senior staff was to embrace the positive elements of the two previous plans, and to remain faithful to the ministry vision and pathway set forth in those plans. However, it was also realized that some significant changes would need to be made in order for a new strategic plan to be more effective.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As a result, there was a desire to maintain continuity with previous plans, to **embrace the positive results yet address the significant weaknesses** of the planning process in the past. Therefore, a number of guiding principles were employed when designing the new plan.

1 The local church will be the primary beneficiary of the plan
ACGC's mission statement explicitly states that ACGC exists to "encourage, equip and empower Advent Christian churches." As a result, the local church is the entity the Charlotte offices are mandated to serve. The services and ministries described in this strategic plan are intended to make the local church the primary beneficiary.

2 Enable churches to thrive, not just survive
Simply helping churches survive seems neither adequately motivating nor worthwhile. As a reflection of God's glory on earth, the local church ought to do more than merely get by. The services and ministries in this strategic plan are intended to help the local church thrive, not just survive.

3 Address critical, relevant and important issues
This plan is intended to address the most critical issues facing the denomination and not every issue facing the denomination. Resources are limited and ACGC simply cannot do everything and do it well. As such, this plan will of necessity be narrow in its ministry foci.

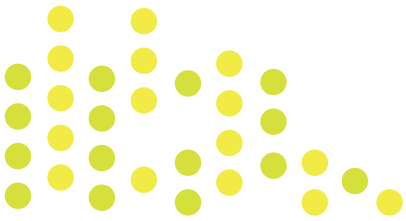
4 Primarily for ACGC
This plan is primarily for the staff of ACGC. They alone will be responsible for implementing and evaluating the plan. They alone will be accountable for the successful execution of the plan. This does not preclude the desired partnerships and collaboration of other denominational entities. These ministry partnerships will be essential for the success of the plan, but this plan is only intended to govern the actions of ACGC.

5 Do things ACGC is uniquely suited to do effectively
This plan is intended to prescribe services and ministries that ACGC is uniquely positioned, resourced and gifted to perform. This is in an effort to maximize all of ACGC's resources and minimize redundancies of services and ministries offered by conferences and regions.

6 Give direction and priorities for assigning resources
Resources, be they financial, human or capital, are limited. ACGC cannot do everything. To do one thing is often to exclude doing another. This strategic plan should set clear priorities that will give firm guidance to how and where those limited resources are used.

It is with all of this in mind that the senior staff developed the strategic plan presented in this document. The Advent Christian denomination is in decline, perhaps perilous decline. The goal in this strategic planning process was to **offer solutions** to some of the critical issues contributing to that decline and thus help move the denomination along a **pathway to growth**. It has been developed through

much prayerful thought and seeking God's wisdom and guidance. Because in the end, **the Lord and his good and sovereign purposes and plans will determine what becomes of the Advent Christian people**. May he be pleased to use us further for his glory and the advancement of his kingdom.



STATISTICAL INFO

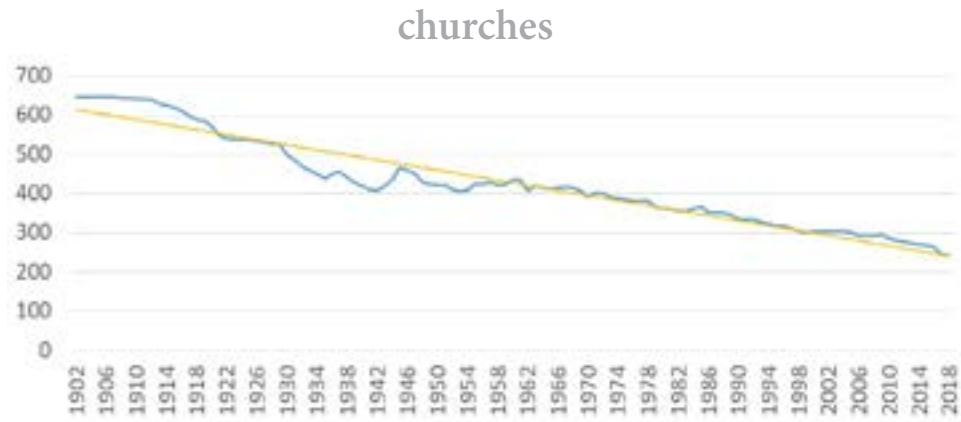
Dawn Rutan
Director of Finance

CHURCH STATISTICS



These numbers represent Advent Christian churches in the United States and Canada. The number of Advent Christian churches has been in steady decline since an all-time high of 646 churches in 1902.

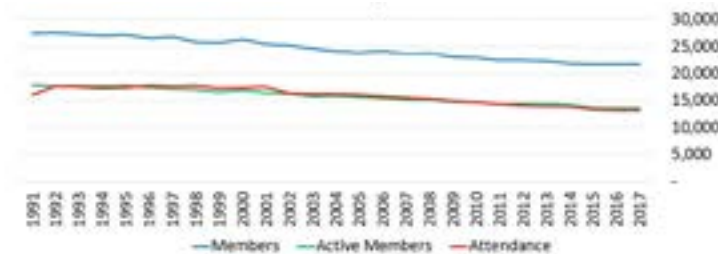
Since 2008, the denomination has lost 54 churches to closure or disassociation, leaving the current number of churches at 260. This equals a loss of 59 percent of the Advent Christian churches in the United States and Canada since 1902.



since 2008

we have lost 54 churches

church membership & attendance



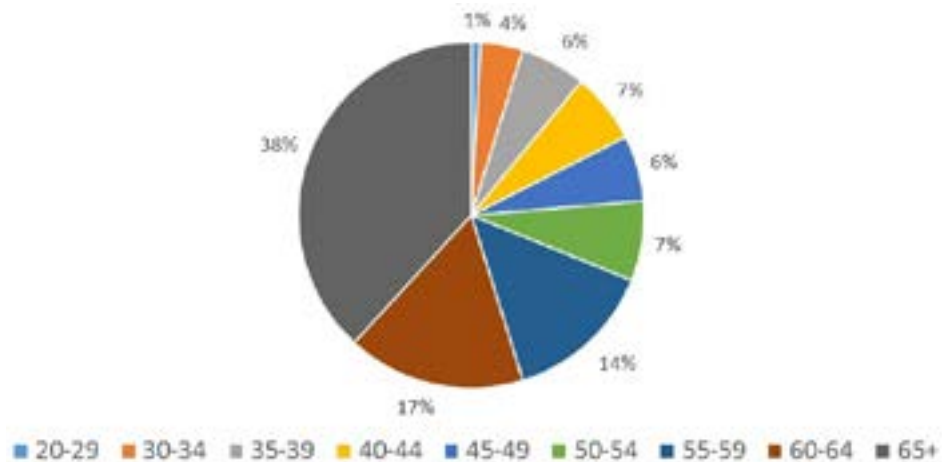
This chart represents the numbers for members, active members and worship attendance in Advent Christian churches in the United States and Canada. All three of the data points show a steady decline since 1991, which is the earliest data available on these statistics. The most useful of these three numbers is the attendance number as it is a less subjective metric than the other two. Average attendance has declined 17 percent since 2007.

This chart shows the percentage of Advent Christian churches that fall within each attendance range. Approximately 41 percent (107) of our churches have fewer than 30 people in attendance on Sunday morning. Nearly one quarter (24 percent) of Advent Christian churches in the United States and Canada have fewer than 20 people in their Sunday services. Overall, 65 percent (172) have fewer than 50 in attendance, as compared to the national average of 42 percent. **This means that a disproportionate amount of our churches are below 50 people when measured against the national average of churches the same size.**

church attendance



PASTORAL STATISTICS



These numbers represent all persons serving as pastors in any capacity.

Average ages of pastors serving in Advent Christian churches in the United States & Canada

>>> A large number, 55 percent (125) of our pastors are 60 years old or older

>>> 38 percent (87) of our pastors are more than 65 years old
compared to national average of 17 percent

7 out of 10

Nearly seven out of 10 (69 percent) of our pastors are at or within 10 years of retirement age. Only 1 percent of our pastors are between the ages of 20 and 29. Pastors under 40 make up 11 percent of our total pastoral ranks.

BUDGET



This chart displays overall revenue and expense for Advent Christian General Conference. Since 2011, there has been a steady decline in revenue. There has by necessity also been a relative decline in spending. Overall, that has been net budget decrease of 12.8 percent since 2011.

“there has been a steady decline in revenue”

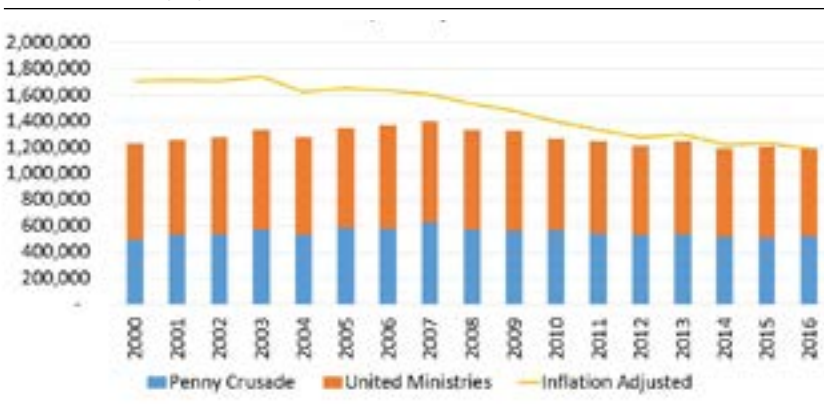
operating budgets by year

does not include convention or leaders conference

	Income	Expense	Net	% Change
2011	2,073,600	2,062,850	10,750	
2012	2,028,200	2,028,200	-	-1.7%
2013	1,986,000	1,986,000	-	-2.1%
2014	1,926,600	1,926,600	-	-3.1%
2015	1,933,250	1,933,250	-	0.3%
2016	1,924,430	1,924,430	-	-0.5%
2017	1,862,750	1,848,275	14,475	-4.1%
2018	1,829,150	1,829,150	-	-1.0%

Net budget decrease of 12.8% since 2011

UM/PC by year



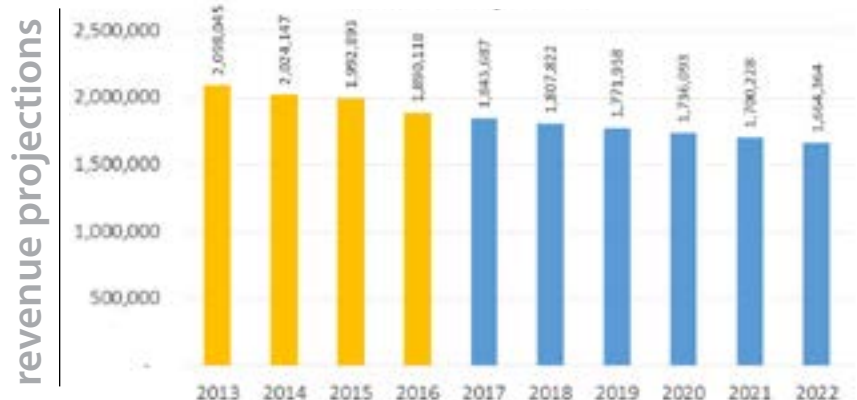
This chart shows Penny Crusade and United Ministries since 2000. Again, there has been a steady decline for ACGC’s two main sources of revenue.

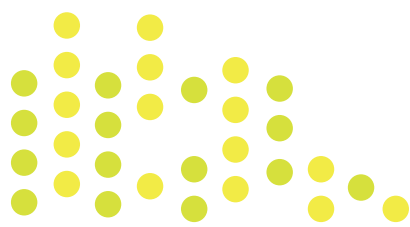
In 2017, United Ministries finished at \$676,095.96, which is \$20,904.04 under budget. Penny Crusade was \$485,049.21, which is \$34,950.79 under budget and the lowest total since 1999.

For UM & PC combined, Appalachian, Central and Western had their lowest totals since at least 2001 (as far back as there are accurate records). It should also be noted that declining United Ministries giving affects not only ACGC, but is the main source of revenue for the regions.

This chart shows revenue projections based on current trends through 2022.

This represents actual revenue from all budgeted revenue sources through 2017 and projected revenue from 2018 through 2022.





Department of
**LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT**

Matt Larkin
Director of Leadership Development

VISION

To see a strong new generation of leaders emerge in the Advent Christian denomination that will help in the development of thriving kingdom work well into the future.

IDENTIFY
CULTIVATE
CONTRIBUTE



MISSION



To identify, cultivate relationships with and contribute to the development of the next generation of Advent Christian pastors, church planters, chaplains and missionaries through the establishment of a clear leadership pipeline for Advent Christian churches and ministries.

PURPOSE

Since campus operations ceased at Berkshire Christian College, we have struggled to consistently identify, cultivate and develop new pastors, church planters and missionaries.

Additionally, when potential pastors, church planters and missionaries have emerged, we have struggled to consistently offer them direction in regards to how they can enter into service in the Advent Christian church. As such, we lack in the number of leaders necessary who can take the baton and lead our churches and ministries into the future.

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This new department seeks to address this issue, by partnering with our churches, conferences, regions and educational institutions to help identify emerging Advent Christian leaders and provide a clear pipeline into Advent Christian service.

identify | cultivate | develop new pastors



**THOSE SEEKING
PASTORAL
LEADERSHIP**

**TARGET
CONSTITUENCY**

The target audience for this new ministry is, perhaps, relatively obvious. We are seeking to reach out to all those seeking a future leadership role in either pastoral ministry, church planting or missionary service. This will include both those who are active college students and those who may be in our churches seeking a second career in ministry or service in a bi-vocational role. In addition to this, any programs developed will also be made available to existing pastors and ministry leaders who feel they need further development in fulfilling their calling effectively.

PRIMARY BENEFICIARY

WAY2GROW



Our hope is that through these connections, a **clearer pathway to ministry** will exist that will not only benefit these individuals, but will benefit all Advent Christian churches and ministries as well, providing them with **more potential candidates** for ministry leadership roles who can help these churches and ministries thrive in their kingdom efforts well into the future.

COLLABORATIONS

Through partnerships with the local church, conferences, regions and educational institutions, it is our goal to establish these three things:

- 1. Clear communication to aid in the identification of potential pastors, church planters and missionaries, both from within and outside of our network.*
- 2. A unified approach to cultivating strong relationships with potential pastors, church planters and missionaries, both from within and outside of our network.*
- 3. A program designed to aid in the development of potential pastors, church planters and missionaries that allows for candidates who desire training through both traditional and non-traditional methods.*

While we are certainly very early on in identifying all of the resources that may be at our disposal at this time, the ultimate goal is the establishment

of a clear pipeline for both traditional college students and those who may desire other approaches to their ministry training. We believe this will be necessary, given the varied needs of our diverse set of churches. Taking into consideration things like: income variance, congregation size and views on education, it is likely impossible to endorse one particular method. However, it is our goal to establish a core set of characteristics that we, as a denomination, would generally like to see established within our candidates for ministry.

With this in mind, some type of educational programming will likely be offered through ACGC and our educational partners. In the coming months, our goal is to establish a commission or task force to begin to identify some of the aforementioned characteristics and to help us in identifying the best way to provide opportunities for candidate development. Our early vision includes some sort of hybrid approach that may include a combination of online learning and



cohort driven learning within local churches, conferences or clusters of churches, coupled with the creation of opportunities to gain ministry experience (such as: internships, apprenticeships, summer ministries and other opportunities). However, there is still much work ahead before those decisions will be finalized.

In addition to educational programming, some clear processes for the identification and cultivation of emerging leaders must be put in place. These processes must begin and center around the local church, as the local church needs to, from a biblical perspective, be the primary sending agency for all those called

into ministry leadership. However, it is our goal to come alongside the local church in providing additional relationships and contacts in partnership with our regions and conferences. In the case of college students, there may be instances where ACGC (or another denominational entity) may provide the initial point of contact for a potential candidate for ministry, but the goal in those situations will be, ultimately, to connect them to an Advent Christian church for a portion of the process of their identification and development.

Overall, to accomplish our goals, it will be necessary to develop

strong partnerships with several local churches, as well as with our various regions, conferences and educational institutions. It will take a unified effort for us to address our need and move toward health in the area of leadership development. This will require a strong willingness to seek the Lord together, and a readiness to think outside the box and open ourselves to new and unique approaches. If we are able to do this, I believe that the future will be bright for our kingdom efforts.

“the ultimate goal is the establishment of a clear pipeline for both traditional and college students and those who may desire other approaches to their ministry training.”

GOALS

Year 1

Shift Structure to Accommodate New Focus - *completed*

The Dept. of Student & Family Ministries will be re-branded as the Dept. of Leadership Development and the department director will assume all new job functions. Or, if necessary, a new department director will be identified and hired.

The Coordinator of Educational Ministries and the functions of the ACGC Resource Center will be moved to another department, assuming the responsibility of all resource recommendations previously handled by the Department of Student & Family Ministries.

Short-term Plan for the Identification of Emerging Pastors, Church Planters & Missionaries

Short-term plan will be put in place and brought to full implementation.

Implement Plan for Site Visits

A plan for site visits will be put in place and will begin to be implemented among some of the currently vacant churches (churches without pastors) to determine the variance of leadership needs that exist within the denomination. This plan may not be fully implemented by the Director of Leadership Development, but instead, will likely be done in partnership and consultation with the regional superintendents.

A plan for identifying Christian educational institutions who are open to partnership with denominations like ours will be put in place and implemented.



Year 2

The implementation of the plan for initial site visits to all vacant churches will be completed, and an evaluation process of identified pastoral needs will be worked through.

A team will be established to determine priorities for ministerial candidates.

What should they know?

What is (are) our candidate profile(s)?

What character traits are we looking for in our pastors?

What types of qualifications are we looking for?

Five new educational partnerships with Christian educational institutions will be in process.

A team will be assembled to establish a system for Advent Christian specific training to take place.

Year 3 and Year 4

A multi-pronged process for Advent Christian specific training will be completed

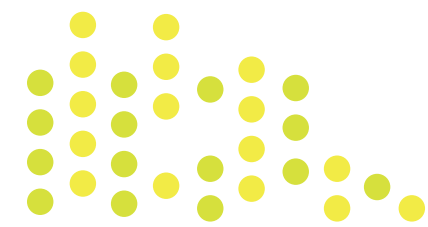
A regular flow of at least 30-35 ministerial candidates per year will begin running through our leadership development pipeline.

This is based on the identified need, on pastoral turnover statistics.

Year 5 and Year 6

The first round of ministerial candidates will have completed our established process for Advent Christian specific training.

The regular flow of 30-35 students will be passing through our leadership development pipeline.



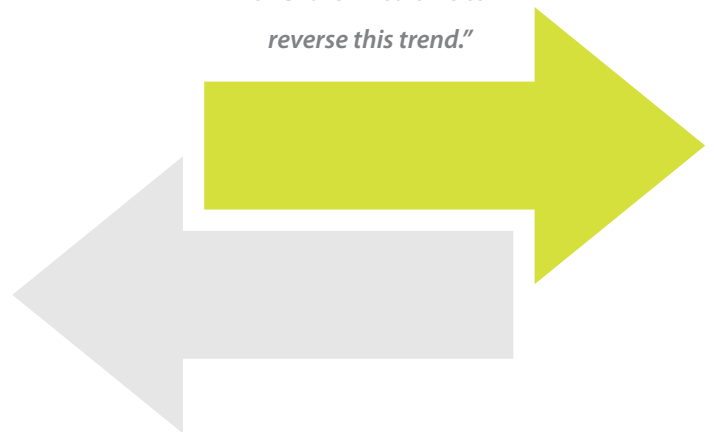
Department of
CHURCH HEALTH

Justin Nash
Director of Communication

INTRO

Presenting a proposal for the establishment of a new ministry of Advent Christian General Conference that will be named the Department of Church Health.

“Approximately 48% of Advent Christian churches...are in a state of decline. The primary role of the Department of Church Health is to reverse this trend.”



Nearly ninety percent of churches in North America are either declining, plateaued or growing at a rate slower than the community in which they are located. Ten percent of the churches in North America are at imminent risk of closing.

From annual church reports received at our office, we know that over the course of the last 10 years, the Advent Christian denomination has lost an average of 3.2 churches per year due to church closures and disassociations. This represents the loss of more than 1 percent of our churches each year. However, this rate of loss is likely to accelerate over the course of the next decade given the average age and current trajectory

of many of our congregations.

One objective data point that portends this accelerated decline is average worship attendance. While worship attendance is not a comprehensive metric for evaluation, it can be a useful tool for making some preliminary diagnoses and future projections. For instance, total church attendance has decreased by 17 percent in the past 10 years (including lost churches). Currently average attendance is 50, so that’s a decrease of 6 people per church in 10 years. Using only worship attendance as a metric, approximately 48 percent of AC churches in the United States and Canada are in a state of decline.

The primary role of the Department

of Church Health is to reverse this trend in the Advent Christian denomination in the United States and Canada. We strive to serve declining and dying churches so they will be renewed and revitalized and move from surviving to thriving.

Our vision is to see a constant increase in healthy, fruit-bearing and reproducing churches in the United States and Canada.

STRUCTURE

Initially, the department will consist of one director-level staff member who will be charged with fulfilling the following mission



mission

to provide relevant and high-quality resources, services and partnerships that will strengthen healthy churches, revitalize declining churches and resurrect dead churches.

consultation | coaching | curation | community-building

The Director of Church Health will be responsible to achieve this mission by working in four key areas: consultation, coaching, curation and community-building.

Consultation can be defined broadly as offering advice or an outside perspective to churches regarding church health and revitalization issues. These services will typically be single instances or short-term in nature.

Coaching will be longer term (one to two years) in length and more involved. Initially, much of the coaching work will be done in service to churches involved in the Natural Church Development process.

Curation will be an ongoing effort to identify, recommend and promote high-quality resources related to church health.

Community-building will be a critical component related to the ultimate scope and sustainability of the Department of Church Health. It is unlikely one person will be able to support a large number of churches, especially in consultative and coaching relationships. Therefore, the

Director of Church Health will seek to establish, resource, coordinate and connect a denomination-wide network of church health coaches that can offer consultative and coaching services based on a normative benchmark and a standard set of church health tools.

Natural Church Development (NCD) will serve as the foundational system for consultation and coaching. NCD has a number of qualities that lend itself to this type of role:

Principle-driven, not model-based

Being principle-driven allows NCD to be implemented in any church context.

Proven and long-term track record

The durability and validity of the NCD process has been proven over the course of 20 years.

Phenomenal success rate

After a second survey cycle, 85 percent of the churches using NCD have shown both qualitative and quantitative increases in the life of the

ministries.

Scalable

Can be used in any church of 10 or more members. The process does not change regardless of how large the church becomes.

Cyclic, long-term tool

The NCD process can (and is intended to) be implemented over and over in the life of a church. This means that NCD can be useful to not just improve the health of unhealthy churches, but to also continually improve the health of healthy churches.

Coach training readily available

Customized training events can be held for the network of church health coaches or training events are held on a regular basis.

Accessible

The NCD survey process is relatively inexpensive (~\$250) and most any church should be able to gain access to this diagnostic tool. At such a low cost, conferences or regions may be able to fund a portion or the totality of the survey process.

Sustainable

Every church has a minimum factor. By focusing on the minimum factor, a church can work progressively and long-term on constantly improving church health.

One of the big advantages of NCD is that it doesn't merely assess church health. It provides principles and strategies for improving church health.

No doubt there will be some churches that are not viable places for a fruitful revitalization effort. In cases where revitalization is not viable, we will walk alongside those churches so that they might leave a legacy of faithfulness and fruitfulness for God's kingdom.

CORE VALUES

6

Six core values will guide the ministry philosophy and work of the department.

1. Centrality of the local church

We serve the local church because the local church is the only institution Christ commissioned to make disciples of all nations. *Mt. 16:17-19*

2. Church health

The goal will always be to pursue church health, not church growth. Growth is a natural outcome of health, but the inverse is not necessarily true. *Mk 4:27*

3. Kingdom growth

Faithfulness to the Great Commission as seen in conversion growth, disciple making and service will always be the chief metric for health. *Mt. 28:19-20*

4. Collaboration

Partnerships and cooperative efforts

with other denominational entities and outside organizations are essential to success. God uses many different people to grow his kingdom. *1 Cor. 3:6*

5. Servanthood

We are servants of our local churches, always placing their interest ahead of own. *Jn. 13:1-17*

6. Excellence

We will strive to do all that we do with excellence. If we can't do it well, we won't do it. *Col. 3:17,23*

The scope of this ministry would be limited to churches in the United States and Canada.

All of our churches can be categorized in three broad categories: growth, plateau or decline. Determining which category a church is in begins with a "triage" conversation. As the name implies, this is a decision point regarding the future care of the congregation.

TARGET

3

The triage tool will use three tools to gain insights into the congregation

1. Worship Attendance History

According to the data for average worship attendance over the last 10-20 years, is the church in a state of:

Growth?

Approx. 20 percent of AC Churches since 2013

Plateau?

Approx. 32 percent of AC churches since 2013

Decline?

Approx. 48 percent of AC churches since 2013

2. NCD Survey

What is the average score on the NCD

survey?

35 and below

Average scores of 35 and below represent a congregation that is in decline or survival mode. Approximately 15 percent of all churches find themselves in this stage.

35 to 55

Average scores of 35 – 55 represent a congregation that is most likely in plateau. Approximately 70 percent of churches will find themselves at this stage.

55 and above

Average scores of 55 and above indicate congregations that are growing and capable of new and adaptive work.

3. Discovery Questions

This is a set of questions to be answered by church leaders to help better understand the history of the church, its current kingdom vision, kingdom impact and readiness for change.

The ideal pathway will be to begin the triage process when a church contacts the Department of Church Health. This will help to more accurately determine the current condition of the church and the urgency of a revitalization effort. In the long term the Department of Church Health would prefer to focus on the churches the triage conversation reveals to be declining (15 percent of churches) and requiring the most urgent attention. Once the church health coach network is adequately constituted and equipped the top 85 percent will be entrusted to the regional church health coaches.

"the Director of Church Health will seek to establish...a denomination-wide network of church health coaches that can offer consultative and coaching services"

COLLABORATIONS

The success of this ministry will hinge upon cooperation from churches, conferences and regions. First, churches must be willing to participate in the revitalization process. Finding churches that will be committed to the revitalization process is a necessity.

Second, the cooperation of the conferences and regions must be two-fold. First, we must seek ways for the regions, conferences and ACGC to collaborate in revitalization efforts with local churches. Also, the conferences and regions must be a part of the triage conversation to help identify the churches in need of the most urgent help.

Ideally, the conferences and regions would partner with ACGC in the revitalization efforts by providing resources (financial, human, capital, etc.) to aid in the ministry. This type of collaboration will increase the likelihood of this ministry's being fruitful.

GOALS



Year 1

Craft Vision and Values for Ministry - *within six months*

Vision - clearly define the purpose of this ministry

Values - what core values will govern this ministry?

Define Church revitalization position - *within six months*

Craft clear job description for church revitalization person
qualifications, responsibilities, salary, accountability, etc

Create a church revitalization network - *within 12 months*

At least three church health coaches in each region

Create a central exchange for projects, accountability, training and communication

Create a rubric and processes for serving churches at each level *within twelve months*

Create a triage system for evaluating church health and viability, and define clear processes for serving each level.

Define criteria for viability - *within twelve months*

What criteria will we use to determine whether a church undertakes a revitalization effort or pursues a legacy solution?

Recruit one church in each triaged category (growth, plateau and decline) in each region (15 churches total) to participate in the revitalization process.



Year 2

Create awareness of program and ministry goals - *within 18 months*

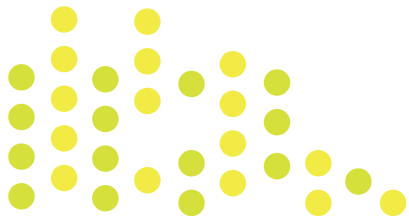
Marketing church revitalization services to churches
Education, training and inspiration for churches and leaders to engage in revitalization efforts

Engage 10-15 declining churches - *within 12-24 months*

Year 3

30 to 40 churches will participate in the program - *within 3 years*

Within the next five years, 75 percent of those churches will be revitalized or reinvested in kingdom growth. Revitalization will be defined as having moved from the decline category to the growth category using the triage conversation.



Department of
**INTERNATIONAL
MISSIONS**

Jeff Walsh
Director of International Missions

INTRO



We are changing the name of this department from “World Outreach” to “International Missions.”

Someone has already facetiously commented to me, “Every time there’s a new Executive Director we change the name.” While that’s not entirely true, it does raise the question as to whether a name change is needed. I believe the name changes in recent years reflect a lack of clarity concerning the role of this department.

This name change marks a new beginning with a new and sharper focus.

The name “International Missions” will also more clearly distinguish this department from the new Department of Home Missions.



UNFRUITFUL MISSION

Looking at the last 118 years of our missions’ history, we saw the number of full-time career missionaries peak in 1960. Since the 1960s, we have seen a gradual but steady decline in the number of missionaries. Today, we have only two full-time career missionaries serving outside the United States, and those two are Filipino. The last time a new mission field was opened by North American Advent Christian missionaries was 1958. That was the Mexican field, opened by missionary Robert Fillinger. That was 60 years ago!

The expansion of Advent Christians worldwide within the last 20 years is quite remarkable. Until the late 1990s, the number of mission fields and internationally affiliated ministries never reached more than four. During the

1990s we began to welcome a growing number of Advent Christian ministries as affiliates. Most of these had not been started by North American missionaries. This isn’t unique to Advent Christians. It coincides with the rapid growth of the non-western church in general. As an example, for the first time in history, Christianity has become the dominant religion in sub-Saharan Africa. Evidence of this rapid growth is also seen in the countries that are sending missionaries. In 1960, four of the top five missionary sending countries were Western. By 2010, however, four non-western countries were among the top five for sending missionaries.

Through the recent decades of adding the numerous affiliated Advent Christian ministries, the Department

“The last time a new mission field was opened by North American Advent Christian missionaries was 1958”

of International Missions assumed the responsibility for maintaining and strengthening the relationships with the affiliates. Since it is in many cases far easier and efficient for a gospel worker from the same or a near culture to reach the unreached, it made sense to invest in these relationships. This has borne fruit.

In almost every case, our relationship with affiliated conferences has strengthened the ministries of the local churches in those conferences.

From the perspective of the affiliated conferences, they have benefited greatly. However, from our perspective and from the perspective

of the local North American churches, this emphasis on supporting the work of affiliated ministries has some drawbacks. Our department now spends a great deal of resources on building and maintaining these relationships. In addition, much of our resources are spent communicating

several decades the department has also been responsible for denominational direction and oversight of urban ministries in North America. What about the priority of ministry in our cities? And then there are the myriad forms of mission that may or may not accompany gospel procla-

and sacrificially invested in the Great Commission globally. Our churches long for direct personal connections to the work of cross-cultural mission. The nearly non-existent North American missionary force combined with the emphasis on supporting affiliated national ministries means

“Our vision for mission has become blurred at best.”

the needs and issues of the affiliated ministries to our local North American churches. A serious consequence of this is that our vision for mission has become blurred at best. Are we focused on supporting national workers and ministries? Don't we also want to send North American missionaries? Or, is the training of national leaders our priority? In addition, for

mation: well-digging, water purification systems, micro finance loans, educational programs, orphan care, health care, child sponsorships, construction of church buildings and many more. All these things, as good as they are, have contributed to a lack of clarity concerning the vision and mission of International Missions.

Healthy local churches are personally

our churches are bereft of any direct link to the spread of the gospel around the world. To make matters worse, the lack of compelling vision naturally results in less investment of our churches' resources. When it is not clear what we are called to do, we should not be surprised that people do not want to invest in our work.

- > Are we focused on supporting national workers & ministries?
- > Don't we want to send North American missionaries?

- > Is the training of national leaders our priority?
- > What about the priority of ministry in North American cities?

“our churches are bereft of any direct link to the spread of the gospel around the world”

KINGDOM STEWARDSHIP MATTHEW 25:14-30

In Matthew 25:14-30, Jesus told a parable about a man who went away on a journey and gave talents to his servants to invest while he was away. This parable is set within the context of a large section of Jesus' teaching on the end of the age and his second

coming, making it all the more relevant to us today. This parable should force us to ask ourselves if we are faithfully making the most of what the Lord has entrusted to us concerning Advent Christian missions.

Are we faithfully making the most of what the Lord has entrusted to us?

In the previous chapter of Matthew, Jesus stated, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14). The Greek word translated “nations” is the dative plural form of *ethnos*, which could also be translated “peoples” or “people groups.” It does not refer to countries, the way we often use the term “nations.” The same word appears in Christ’s Great Commission, “... make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). Expressed here by a clear command of Christ,

it has always been God’s biblical mandate for his people to be on mission to the peoples of the world.

In recent decades, missiologists have sought to bring definition to the concept of “people group.” Such definition helps us approach the Great Commission more strategically. The Joshua Project defines a “people group” as a group in which:

- a. All individuals in the group understand each other reasonably well, and
- b. Cultural/relational barriers to the spread of the gospel are minimal

The Joshua Project classifies people groups by their “reached” status. An unreached people group is one in which:

- a. There are 5 percent or fewer Christians and 2 percent or fewer evangelicals, and
- b. The Christian community is



numerically too small to evangelize the people group without outside assistance.

So how many unreached people groups are there? There are 7,042 unreached people groups in the world today (containing 3.14 billion individuals). That’s 41.5 percent of all people groups. And where are these unreached people groups? Five out of every six unreached people groups are in the 10/40 Window, the regions of the world located between 10 and 40 degrees north of the equator. India, China, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal (all within the 10/40 Window) have the highest numbers of unreached people groups. It seems obvious that obedience to Christ’s Great Commission requires us to focus on unreached people groups.

How are we doing then as stewards of the “talents” God has given us? Are we maximizing the investment of resources (time, funding, personnel) we have been given? More specifically, are we directing those resources toward making disciples within unreached people groups? Two measuring sticks suggest we need to make some changes. First, of the 31 countries with Advent Christian ministries, 26 of them have a majority of reached

people groups. Only five countries with Advent Christian ministries have a majority of unreached people groups: India, Thailand, Japan, Myanmar and Malaysia. Second, the vast majority of budgeted direct ministry support goes to countries in which the majority of people groups are reached (73 percent). Only 27 percent of budgeted direct support goes to countries with a majority of unreached people groups.

26 of 31 < countries with AC ministries have a majority of REACHED PEOPLE GROUPS

> only 27% of budgeted direct support goes to countries with a majority of UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS

VISION FOR A FRUITFUL FUTURE

In 1 Corinthians 3:5-15 Paul uses two metaphors to describe differing roles in the work of God's kingdom. In the first place, using agricultural language Paul differentiates between one who plants and one who waters. In the second metaphor, he uses construction terms to make the point that one lays the foundation and another builds upon it. In each

metaphor the point is the same: there are different but essential roles in the work and mission of the Lord. In these terms, **International Missions' role is that of planting and foundation laying.** It is our place to provide the means and avenue for our churches to plant and lay gospel foundations cross-culturally.

vision

to see Christ glorified among all the people groups of the world.

mission

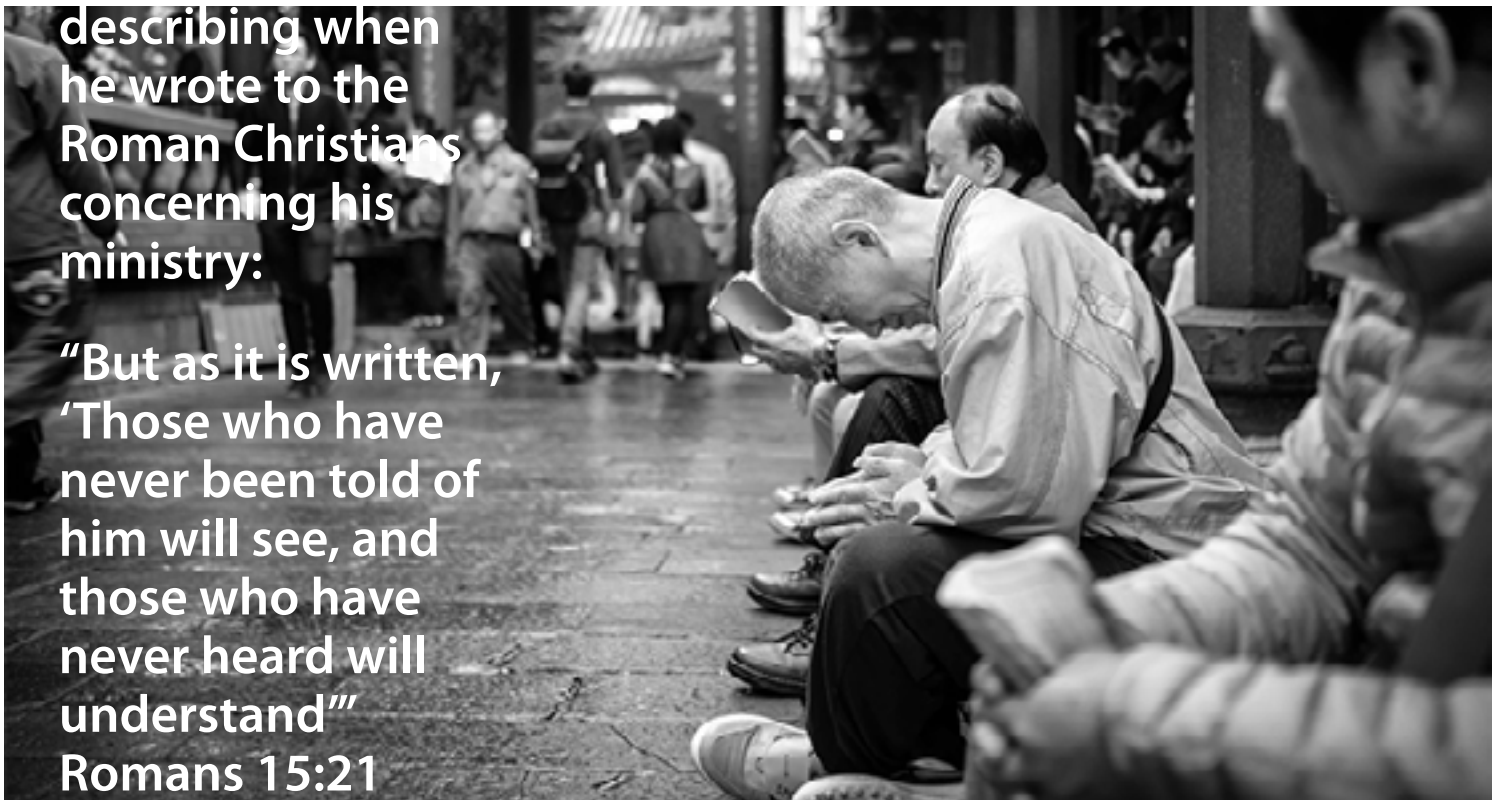
to establish reproducing churches among the unreached people groups of the world.

Surely this is what Paul was

describing when he wrote to the Roman Christians concerning his ministry:

"But as it is written, 'Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand'"

Romans 15:21



GOALS



SENDING *by the end of 2019*

Send one missionary team of at least 2 people to live and work among an unreached people group residing within the U.S./Canada

Send one missionary team of at least 4 people to live and work among an unreached people group outside the U.S./Canada.



SENDING *by the end of 2022*

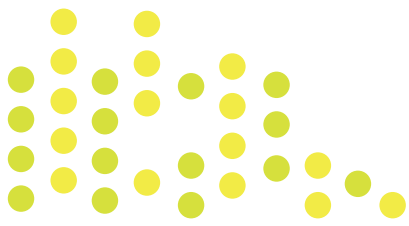
Send 3 missionary teams of at least 2 people to live and work among unreached people groups residing within the U.S./Canada.

Send 3 missionary teams of at least 4 people to live and work among unreached people groups outside the U.S./Canada.

CHURCH ESTABLISHMENT *by the end of 2022*

Establish a church within an unreached people group residing within the U.S./Canada.

Establish a church consisting of 2-3 family units within one unreached people group outside the U.S./Canada.



Department of

HOME MISSIONS

Steve Lawson
Executive Director

INTRO

Presenting a proposal for the establishment of a new ministry of Advent Christian General Conference that will be named the Department of Home Missions.



Church growth rates in the U.S. and Canada have been outpaced by population growth rates

PURPOSE

For decades now, church growth rates in the United States and Canada have been outpaced by population growth rates.

While new churches are being planted, they are not being planted at a rate sufficient to offset the number of churches that close each year and keep pace with an ever-increasing population.

In part, this has led to increasing numbers of unchurched and unevangelized people in North America. The church in the United States and Canada has been steadily losing ground.

This has been especially true for the Advent Christian denomination, which has seen very few successful church plants within the last two decades. Coupled with a loss of

approximately 2.5 churches per year in the last decade, the gospel fruitfulness of the Advent Christian denomination is waning in significant ways.

The mission of the Department of Home Missions will be to resource and enable the planting of evangelical and gospel-centered churches in underserved communities in the United States and Canada.

Currently there are a number of regions in the United States and Canada in which gospel-centered and evangelically-minded churches are grossly underrepresented. This has led to certain regions of each nation being extremely secular and largely unevangelized. Most notable among these are the northeastern and northwestern United States, and Quebec in Canada.

It is in communities without an adequate gospel witness that the

Department of Home Missions seeks to plant churches.

An under served community will be defined as a community in which the evangelical church-to-population ratio is greater than 1:1000 in an urban context and 1:500 in a rural context.

Our vision is to see gospel-centered, disciple-making and multiplying churches in every community in the United States and Canada.

Statistically, church plants grow 12 times faster than established churches.

MISSION

To resource and enable the planting of evangelical and gospel-centered churches in under served communities in the United States and Canada

New churches also gain 60 to 80 percent of their growth from new converts. It is our goal to see a multiplying movement of these churches that will effectively build relationships to share the gospel, win new converts and disciple them into mature believers who are sharing Christ in their cultures. These new churches will enable the ongoing reproduction of caring communities who make an ongoing impact for the kingdom of God.



Statistically, church plants grow 12 times faster than established churches.

COLLABORATIONS

ACGC will continue partnerships with existing church planting organizations (Church Planter Profiles, etc.) to assist future church planting efforts. However, seeing the need for greater expertise and experience in church planting,

we will establish an ongoing relationship with a proven church planting organization to enable us to develop a strong Department of Home Missions.

To this end, we have begun discussions with Converge, a church planting group with denominational ties. They have a proven history of success and have worked with other denominations by assisting them in developing a strategy for planting churches within their unique denominational structures. We will also seek to hire a director with the skills, knowledge and experience to work with churches, conferences and regions to lead, facilitate and administrate an effective plan for establishing new works in these under served areas. Ideally, ACCG will also partner with conferences

and regions in the establishment of these new churches. This type of collaborative effort would include the sharing of resources and information. It would also increase efficiencies and decrease the likelihood of conflicts and competition.



START. STRENGTHEN. SEND.
*because every people & community
needs a church*



GOALS



Year 1

Craft Vision and Values for Ministry - *within six months*

Vision - narrowly define the purpose of this ministry

Values - what core values will govern this ministry?

Planting in under served places, acceptable church planting paradigms - parachute, core group, house church, etc.

Find/Create specific Dollars for Ministry - *immediately*

Reconstruct current organizational budget to find adequate funding for ministry

Short-term launch budget and sustainable long-term budgeting

Complete start up by using funds from former Dept. of Nurture for consultation costs and salary for a future director

Contract Consultant - *within 3 months*

Hire a consultant to guide ACGC through the process of establishing the new ministry

Establish relationship with Converge

Church planting organization with great success and history of working with other denominations

Define Home Missions Position - *within 6 to 10 months*

Craft clear job description for Director of Home Missions
Qualifications, responsibilities, salary, accountability, etc.

Identify 10 under served communities in which to plant

Hire Director of Home Missions - *within twelve months*

Create Financing Plan - *within 6 months*

Create sustainable plan to finance home missions in the United States and Canada

Reliant, legacy churches, WHFMS, capital campaign, etc.

Identify all monies currently available for church planting
Conferences & regions

Promote Home Missions - *immediately*

Use publications to educate and inspire churches and individuals to become involved in home missions

Create and curate home missions resources for churches and leaders

Year 2

Begin planting between three to five new churches per year

Year 3

New churches should double the number of churches lost

Six to eight new churches per year

Within the next five to 10 years, the denomination will move from shrinking to growing

Years 1-2: Shrinking

Years 3-5: Maintaining

Years 5-10: Growing

shrinking to growing

...

