

REPORT TO THE EASTERN REGION
From the
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
of
ADVENT CHRISTIAN GENERAL CONFERENCE
October, 2016

At ACGC, we see our role primarily as servants of our local churches in helping them be faithful and fruitful to the ministry and calling that the Lord has given to each of them. To this end, we offer a wide range of programs, material and services. In 2014, we developed and adopted a three-year strategic plan that guides us in these endeavors. There are four main facets to this plan: Loving the Lost, Church Planting, Leadership Development and Church Life and Health.

The foundational value upon which the other facets of the plan are built is **“Loving the Lost.”** It is our main desire to see people come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ, and having the right heart is key. One of the most direct ways we do that is through our Department of World Outreach. While we have experienced decline in our North American churches, we have seen significant growth on our mission fields. We have ministries in 20 conferences on four continents, at least 26 new churches were planted last year, and more than 3,500 baptisms have been reported from our mission fields. All of us are part of this great harvest as we pray for and financially support these fields. The 2016 Penny Crusade material has been sent out and is available online at www.pennycrusade.com. We encourage all of our churches to participate in this campaign and use this material to inspire your churches to not only support foreign missions but mission’s right here in North America in our local Advent Christian churches.

“Church Planting” is the second facet of the strategic plan, as research shows that new church plants reach more unchurched people than existing churches. The decline in existing churches based on the shifting demographics and increasing secularization in society shows that we need to plant churches in areas where people are moving and growth is taking place. We are excited to offer Church Planter Profiles, a service that will allow us to identify, assess and train church planters. We have church planting coaches identified in each region who have completed or are currently going through training to work with new planters. Through this program we have intensive training for each potential planter. If you feel led to plant a church or know of someone who is, please contact your regional superintendent or Dr. Sam Warren to begin the initial assessment.

“Leadership Development” is key to our future working with current leaders and striving to enlist new leaders in training programs. **LEAD** Teams have been a powerful boost to pastors and leaders to come together and encourage and strengthen each other through times of study and sharing. A **LEAD** Team is a group of pastors, pastors' wives or women in ministry who make a commitment to

spend time together on a regular basis so they can do life together. Each participant understands that ministry in the local church cannot only be rewarding but tremendously challenging. By intentionally joining together with others on a regular basis they are able to become part of a group that meets a deep need: the need to talk and share their lives with people they trust and people who understand what they are going through.

The AIMS (Approved Internship Ministry Site) program was created for the purpose of partnering healthy churches with interns to expose them to real-life experiences in an active church or Christian organization. Experiential learning is a primary focus of the program, providing opportunities for growth in leadership and abilities that the classroom cannot develop. By pairing those who are interested in learning more about how ministry works (interns) with those who are proven leaders in ministry and are successfully making faith relevant to their culture (mentors and internship sites), it is our hope that future interns can make the transition from preparation into vocation more successfully.

While we have numerous leadership development programs, we are very excited about the Summer Ministry Exchange Program, which came under the auspices of ACGC last year. The Summer Ministries Exchange Program was developed out of the partnership of some Advent Christian regional associations, conferences and camps, with the assistance of ACGC. The program can give college students the opportunity to travel to new places, meet new friends and serve God this summer as they travel to serve at camps in different regions! Historically, summer ministry teams have proven to be fertile ground for cultivating new leaders as students have the opportunity to exercise their spiritual gifts and discern God's calling on their life. If you are interested in the program or would just like more information, please contact your regional youth person or Director of Student and Family Ministries, Matt Larkin.

The final element under the Strategic Plan is "**Church Life and Health.**" A part of this area has continued to grow in importance as we examine the safety and security of our churches. Most churches are unaware of the issues and dangers involved in ministering to children and youth both with our facilities and staffing. Matt Larkin is available to consult and train with conferences and churches. Matt has developed free "getting started" guides to share with leadership as they begin to tackle these issues. ACGC Resource Center continues to expand its list of contacts to help churches with Sunday school and Christian Education materials for all ministers in the church. Through the Resource Center, we can help with free samples, suggested titles and curriculum, ordering materials and consultation in areas of discipleship, youth, children, leadership and church supplies. The center also stocks Advent Christian materials including hymnbooks, books by Advent Christian authors and pastoral helps. If you have any questions about any of these services, contact Matt Larkin.

At the last Executive Council Meeting in September the focus on Church Health has become a key focus of our directors. The need for our churches to evaluate their health and strive to become healthy churches that will then lead to growth

in their church and planting healthy churches as a part of their ministry is a key factor in our fulfilling our strategic plan on all levels. ACGC is committed to developing or identifying a tool to help churches accomplish diagnosing their health and working with all levels of our denomination to strengthen our churches and help them reach healthy goals.

As I serve in the position of Executive Director it is exciting to see how God continues to use our churches, conferences, regions and our ACGC departments to further the kingdom of God around the world. Our outreach continues to expand as we work with various agencies dealing with refugee crisis, student ministries, church health and church planting. Please be in prayer as we strive to be good stewards with our resources and provide support to all of our churches.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rev. Steve D. Lawson
Executive Director ACGC