

New Life Conference President's Report 2015

Why am I an Advent Christian? This year marks the 40th year that I have served in the Advent Christian denomination in some capacity. In 1976 after graduating from Berkshire Christian College I took the position as pastor of the Blake's Chapel Advent Christian Church in Hampstead, NC. Since then I have served as full time pastor in two other AC Churches in Bishopville, SC and Melrose, MA and as an interim pastor at Advent Christian Churches in Seabrook, NH, Charlton, MA, Windsor, CT, Torrington, CT, Sheffield, MA (2 times), and Westfield, MA. I have served in many capacities at Hope Church in Lenox for over 16 years, a church for which we moved to Lee, MA so that we could be a part of the church. When we move from Lee to Gill, MA sometime this year, Laura and I will transfer our membership to the Vernon Advent Christian Church in Vernon, VT without even considering any other churches. I have served as New Life Conference President for approximately 10-11 years (1 year I served as Vice President because of term limits) and served on the Eastern Region Advent Christian Board for all of the same years. We raised 4 children in Faith Evangelical Church in Melrose, MA and Hope Church in Lenox, MA. Two of our children continue to serve in Advent Christian Churches. Kathleen is the wife of Derek Irvine, Associate Pastor at the Vernon AC Church and Daniel is the Minister of Youth at the Garner Advent Christian Church in Garner, NC.

So why has the Advent Christian Church been such a big part of our lives for the past 40 years? For Laura the Advent Christian Church has been part of her life from birth (and even before). Is it theology? I came to Berkshire Christian College as a Conservative Baptist with the intention of serving in that denomination. But through the eschatology course taught by Dr. Freeman Barton at BCC I came to embrace the Biblical doctrines of Conditional Immortality and the Unconscious State of the Dead. That was the beginning of my commitment to the AC Denomination. As important as these doctrines are this is not the primary reason for my commitment to the AC Church. Is it a longtime heritage in the denomination? Laura's family's ties to the denomination go back to her great grandparents who were instrumental in starting the First Advent Christian Church in Augusta, GA and her grandfather who was instrumental in starting the Bethlehem Advent Christian Church in Augusta, GA. Now a fifth generation continues on through Kathleen and Daniel. As important as a heritage is, this is not the primary reason for my commitment to the AC Church. Is it the ministry of the Advent Christian Denomination? Certainly the thousands and thousands that are coming to Christ around the world through AC Missions is vitally important as well as ministries such as the Advent Christian Retirement Communities and the Advent Christian Village. But this is not the primary reason for my commitment to the AC Church.

So why am I an Advent Christian? It is the PEOPLE and the RELATIONSHIPS that I have developed through the years! It began with my days at BCC with the relationships I built with men who continue to pastor in our denomination to this very day. It is men like: Bruce Burks, Bryce Whiting, Wes Ross, Brent Ross, Rob Buchannan, Glenn Fell, Clayton Blackstone, Sam Warren and many more. It is the pastors in our conference: Allen Latimore, Corey McLaughlin, Doug Foss, Wes Ross, (his wife Suzanne's family and Laura's family grew up together in the Bethlehem AC Church), Mike Tuttle, Sam Cobb, Merle Beal, Jonathan Price, Joel Peck, Bryce Whiting, Jim Caron, Larry Gardner, Mark Ellis, Bruce Burks, Derek Irvine, and Hal Patterson (now retired from the Margaretville AC Church. It is people across our denomination such as Steve Brown, President of the Berkshire Institute for Christian Studies, Larry Knowles, Director of Meeting House Village and President of ACRC, Brad Ellis, Director of ACRC, Vernon, VT,

Sam Warren, Director of Nurture for ACGC, and Greg Twitchell, Eastern Region Superintendent. All of these men and many more are those who I know love me and care deeply for me and I can call them at any time and they will be there for me and pray for me. But it is also people in the churches that I have served. It is people like Ken, Nancy, Sheri, Duane in Melrose; Mabel in Westfield, Alma in Torrington; Bob and Chris in East Norwalk; Allen, Deb, Vic, Kathy, Frank and Cheryl in Windsor; Bob and Sandy in Bristol; Colleen in Vernon; many people in Lenox; and many more.

Too often people think of church as a place that you attend. The faith of many is seen as an individualistic event, it's disconnected from the church. But the church is so much more than a place that I just attend. It is a family! A family that lives, loves, rejoices, and cries together. I have been greatly blessed to have been part of a church family that has been a great part of my life but as you can see I have been part of a denomination that has been a great part of my life. Those of you who have experienced these blessings in your church and in your denomination know what I am talking about. If you haven't experienced these blessings then there is only one thing that is keeping you from them, YOU! Finally, you are why I am an Advent Christian.

Respectfully yours in Christ,

Rev. George Karl / President