

Maranatha Advent Christian Conference Annual Report
President: Lou Going

It has been my honor and pleasure to serve the Maranatha Advent Christian Conference of churches since 2020. Last year I transitioned from the position of Minister of Church and Pastoral Health to president of the Conference. I have the privilege of working with some wonderful brothers in Christ who serve with me on the Board of the conference: John Aron, Roger Brown, Joshua Brown, David Asettline and Jerry Blanchard. The one drawback to my transition was the loss of Chris Barton who had served on the board for many years. Chris was able to step down as Roger came on to serve as our Vice President and Representative to the Eastern Regional Association Board of Directors. This allowed Chris to become more involved with the ACGC International mission efforts in Africa working with Jeff Walsh and Bryce Whiting.

So, what have we been doing as a Conference Board?

Sadly, we have been involved in the closing of three of our churches: The North Springfield Vermont Advent Christian Church and Second Advent Christian Church of Pittsfield, New Hampshire and the Maple Street Church of Barnstead, NH. This was a process for each congregation filled with heartache. While we are sad for the end of these ministries of many years, together with our brothers and sisters from each church, we have yielded to the will of our wise and sovereign Triune God and pray that the proceeds from the sale of two of the churches' respective facilities will be used to further Christ's kingdom.

It was the closing of these churches that sparked our concern to prevent any further closings from happening in our conference but instead to see at least one church planted and possibly a church replanted and all our churches revitalized. Thus, the theme of this year's annual meeting: Plant, Replant and Revitalize. As a board all we can do is to recommend and possibly influence each of our churches that through our Pastors and leaders each congregation may prayerfully assess the vitality of their Gospel maturity. We hope that by your hearing from Roger Brown and Adrian Dixon you might be encouraged to see your church seriously assess the level of Gospel maturity and vitality present in the life, community and ministry of your churches.

We would urge the leadership boards of each church, which may be struggling with such issues as not having enough laborers for ministry, drop off in attendance, stretching financially to meet the budget, lack of genuine Gospel conversions and little evidence of maturing disciples, to use three particular tools to help make both an assessment of your church's situation and provide some helpful wisdom as how to address these matters. Two books by Thom S. Rainer are simple and straightforward and provide helpful counsel in making a necessary assessment of the maturity and vitality of the local church: "Autopsy of a Deceased Church - 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive" and "Anatomy of a Revived Church - Seven Findings About How Congregations Avoided Death. Even our churches, which have great attendance and are meeting their budgets, would benefit from a careful and prayerful reading of C. John Miller's book "Outgrowing the Ingrown Church." A church can have all the overt signs of life but suffer from blindness to their being ingrown.

So, we want to encourage our pastors, elders and church leaders to think more pointedly about how their particular local bodies are faring with regards to church life, ministry and mission. We want to move away from the church health model toward the church maturity emphasis, which the New Testament calls local churches to cultivate. The Gospel supplies both the power and motive for believers to pursue maturity in their corporate life together. It is this maturity in Christ that gives vitality to the churches and fosters both mutual ministry (without becoming ingrown) and the sincere desire to reach their communities for Christ.

There are certain values and practices that need to be functioning in the life and ministry of any local church to move from languid immaturity to Christ-centered maturity and thereby experience God-honoring revitalization. Here are a few:

- Maturing Local Churches will know/believe the Gospel and cultivate a Gospel culture
- Maturing Local Churches will value people over property - members will really love one another
- Maturing Local Churches will exercise wise stewardship over their property
- Maturing Local Churches will value sound Biblical teaching and orthodox theology
- Maturing Local Churches will embrace a sound Biblical ecclesiology
- Maturing Local Churches will be committed to prayer
- Maturing Local Churches will be engaged in Gospel outreach in their communities
- Maturing Local Churches will make whatever changes needed that comport with Biblical teaching to advance ministry.
- Maturing Local Churches will appreciate the past yet not be stuck in the past but will have a present and future focus

We will be working more closely with the leadership at ACGC to draw from their resources and wisdom. Some exciting things are occurring in the area of church planting and church replanting that Adrian Dixon will be presenting at today's annual meeting. We are asking for each of our churches to join us in praying for a renewed thrust in our conference's home mission efforts in seeing both a church plant and one or two of our struggling churches replanted.

We have also been working closely with the Northside Community Church of Massena, NY. With the unexpected resignation of their pastor last fall, Chris and Melanie Barton have been traveling monthly to Massena to work with the church. We have been working with their worship leader, Adam Facticeau and with Ian Dominique, who has shown pastoral gifts and who will be taking over the weekly preaching responsibilities as he heads to MTI this fall. Together with the New York Conference (of which the Massena church is the remaining church) and our conference Ian tuition to MTI for their three year pastoral track will be covered. Both Chris and I will continue to mentor Ian and Adam and have genuine hope that God is at work and that the church will be renewed in its life and mission. The congregation has been encouraged by our prayers and labors among them.

Also, the conference will be covering the MTI tuition costs of Joshua Buttrick from Family Bible church in Loudon. Joshua also has been called to pastoral ministry and he and his family are actively involved in Family Bible Church and he is being mentored by Pastor Steve Ludwick. Joshua will also be enrolled in the three year pastoral track at MTI.

On Saturday March 29, 2025 the Conference ordained David Alan Young Jr. David, Anne and their sons Caleb and Colin reside in North Springfield, VT and the ordination service was held at the church they are presently attending, Calvary Baptist Church of Springfield, VT. David faithfully pastored the Advent Christian Church of North Springfield for the years that the church was struggling with decline. He cared for the church and pastored them through the very difficult and final days of ministry. David's desire and prayer is to return to pastoral ministry with the Advent Christian Denomination.

Our conference has spearheaded for the last two years together with the Region the annual Pastors and Church Leaders Conference held at Alton Bay. This year it will be June 3-5. Please take a look at the information for this conference provided in your packet.

I want to also note the excellent work of our Board's secretary, John Aron. He certainly makes my work easier. John had to step down, however, due to his need to care for his beloved wife Micki. Please be in prayer for John and Micki. The Lord also blessed us by sending Linda Flewelling as our new conference secretary.

Finally, I do appreciate our faithful pastors and church leaders who care for the churches of our conference. They labor tirelessly and bear the weight of concern for the churches they shepherd and labor to lead. I would encourage each of our churches to take the directory of our conference and weekly during the pastoral prayer to pray for one of the other churches and their leaders.