

THE CHURCH'S FIRST PRIORITY

Dr. Charles Revis,
Executive Minister
ABCNW



Once, when I was a pastor, I became curious about all the various roles I assumed in my ministry. I conducted an inventory. My total count was high, off the charts high. My

list included preacher, teacher, worship designer, congregational leader, staff supervisor, hospital chaplain, writer, planner, fundraiser, counselor, spiritual director, leadership trainer, computer tech, desktop publishing critic, building usage logician, etc., etc. I must have listed over 23 roles. No doubt, I had taken on too many roles. I would have been a better pastor and more focused if I had limited my roles.

A multitude of possible roles is a danger area for both pastors and congregations. The more roles, or things we try to do, the greater the risk that we will never excel at any of them. And, the greater the possibility that we will not give our best to that which is most important.

There are a myriad of ministries and emphases a congregation can pursue. Among the dizzying array of possibilities it's important to sort out the top priorities. Although vilified by some, Rick Warren helped many churches identify and focus on five biblical priorities through his Purpose-Driven Church methodology. More recently the book *Simple Church* demonstrates that the less a church does the more effective it will be. It's a counter intuitive insight, yet backed up with extensive church research. Dr. Dane Aaker said the same thing at the recent Tools For the Trade gathering in Belfair, WA. His assertion comes from a twenty-six year legacy of continuous church growth. Dane said, "The simpler we got, the more we grew."

Which, in Dane's terms means they became more effective at making new disciples.

So, among all the choices, what is the church's first, non-negotiable priority? I believe it is to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ so that more and more people will come to know Him as Lord and

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Savior. There is overwhelming biblical support for my assertion. Consider the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20. Or, the central thrust of the early church as it grew exponentially as recorded in Acts (Acts 4:19-20; 31, 33). The Apostle Paul continuously stressed that we have been given a charge and a responsibility to be ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor 5:18). There is no greater and more urgent priority for the church than to disseminate the Gospel. It is job number one for the church.

This struggle to keep the Gospel as the church's first priority is an ancient one. In Acts 6 we encounter the story of a disparity between food relief given to the Greek widows as compared to the Jewish widows. A complaint was registered with the apostles. Reading between the lines the message was, "Jump to it, apostles, straighten out the situation, and provide more food to the Greek widows." The apostles responded differently than expected. They delegated the "widows feeding ministry" to a select group, perhaps the first "deacons". And, in turn,

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Growing Healthy, Mission-Focused Churches that Multiply Disciples and Churches

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the apostles renewed their commitment to two top priorities: prayer and preaching the word. That is, they knew they could not allow disseminating the Gospel to be pushed aside for other priorities, even good ones.

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“The simpler we got,
the more we grew.”*

Unfortunately, over time most churches allow evangelism to slide down the priority scale. I believe it is our sinful nature that drives this dynamic. What do I mean by this? We have a natural, sinful tendency to serve ourselves first. This self-serving focus can capture an entire congregation. Meeting the needs, desires and preferences of church members can completely squelch the God-given mission of the church. That’s what almost happened in Acts 6, but the Apostles were on their toes, and refused to let it happen.

I recall hearing Bill Hybels talk about this. He said that their church pursues five things. Of these five the one that always needs extra attention is Growth—their word for evangelism and discipleship. He said, “I’m always having to light a fire underneath our passion for reaching the lost. Otherwise we stop making disciples. It is a natural drift we always have to counteract.”

Over the last several years I’ve seen a significant number of ABC-NW churches renew their commitment to evangelism. I rejoice in this because we are a Region that emphasizes being mission-focused. We support worldwide missions. We support people going on mission trips. We’ve even organized some Region-wide mission trips. But, at a more essential level we believe the passion for missions is stoked locally. That is, we believe that reaching our immediate community for Christ should be our top priority.

Reaching the lost in our immediate communities energizes us. That’s because there is nothing more fulfilling and exciting than being on

mission with Jesus Christ. It was His mission to seek and to save that which was lost. And, it is our privilege to join Him in this bedrock, fundamental, first priority to which Jesus calls the church. I encourage you to examine your church’s priorities.

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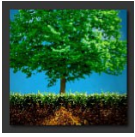
Come to terms with what really drives your congregation. See to it that the proclamation and dissemination of the Gospel remains as your highest priority.



Rev. Terry Oliver Joins Region Staff as “Stewardship/Funding Consultant”

As the Region seeks to serve its constituent churches we are expanding our services in the realm of helping churches with stewardship and funding. Changing demographics, the recent recession and competition from other non-profits are making it increasingly difficult for churches to fund their ministries.

The Region has hired Rev. Terry Oliver to assist ABCNW churches on a part-time basis in the realm of stewardship and fundraising. He will start out working one day a week while continuing as the full-time pastor of Union Community Church (WA). Terry has done a great job planting and growing the Union church with excellent presence in its surrounding community. He also has background experience in fundraising and financial planning. His initial focus will be churches in western Washington State. Terry will also be available to advise churches in their support of the Region’s mission and other ABC-USA missions. Please open your heart and your office doors to Terry when he calls!



Region Board News

Jim Amend, President ABCNW

Greetings from the Region Board.

We have recently finished our first Region Board meeting of 2011 and I am happy to tell you that we continue to be thankful as we observe our Executive Minister, Dr. Charles Revis, in his recovery from his accident. Charles was able to be with us for all of our meeting time though he was tired in the evenings. His Doctor continues to call him the “miracle-man” because of the way he is making progress in his recuperation. While he is doing remarkably well, he still has a ways to go before he will be back to his fullest strength. In the meantime, the Region Board has assured him that we intend to work with him to redistribute some of his normal obligations—especially those requiring travel. While Charles is able to work at a better than expected capacity with day-to-day responsibilities he finds travel and prolonged exertion to be fatiguing and potentially harmful to his recovery.

Among the blessings that God has given us during this time are Patti Duckworth and Cherie’ Vidovich. These two hard-working people have gone the extra mile in fulfilling Region responsibilities in both ministry and administrative ways. The Region Board officially recognized their over and above efforts in our last meeting. What we have seen in the past few months since Charles’ accident is a wonderful

display of teamwork as all of our Region staff have worked together to share each other’s burdens in new ways. Mentor Pastors and LLCs are taking on greater responsibilities. Search consultants and numerous other Region volunteers are pitching in as well. In some ways it has made our staff stronger, and our Region better.

The Region Board would also like to acknowledge the support we have received from concerned Regions in the ABC, the Office of General Secretary and people from the national program boards. Various Regions from the west coast to the east coast have offered to help us with resources and people. In fact, ABC of New Jersey paid to send their Executive Minister, Dr. Lee Spitzer, to meet and share with us at our last Region Board meeting. Growing Healthy Churches is donating four days of work each month through the services of Dr. Bill Hoyt. Dr. Hoyt has already conducted two church assessments for ABCNW churches (Olive Drive Church in Bakersfield, CA and First Baptist Church Puyallup, WA). Even as we are learning to work more cooperatively within our Region, we are also seeing a greater level of mutual support from our sister Regions.

This is all very important as our Region embarks on the restructure, which was recommended by our Region Assessment. Dr. Spitzer

shared with us that most of the healthier Regions are engaged in some kind of restructure as we all strive to advance the Kingdom of God across our nation. As we do this, rest assured that your Region staff is working in cooperation with your Region Board and the assistance of other Regions to move us forward. While Charles’ convalescence is progressing we are also progressing in building new kinds of relationships. If you are in need of the many services offered by ABC-NW just call the office and you will find that we continue to be here to support you in your efforts to advance the Gospel in your church.

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Did you know that you can subscribe to our Email Update and/or Prayer Connection lists from our website? Visit abcnw.org and head to the bottom right corner of the home page. You can also access us on Facebook and Twitter from there!



The Role of Mentor Pastors in ABC Northwest

Dr. Charles Revis, Executive Minister ABCNW

About nine years ago now delegates to the 2002 ABCNW Biennial established Leadership development as one of four Region Landmarks. In 2004 Dr. Charles Revis instituted Leadership Learning Communities (LLCs) as a foundational delivery system for attaining this Landmark. These monthly gatherings of pastors meet for the express purpose of developing the full potential of each participant who joins the learning community.

Presently there are eleven LLCs meeting each month around the Region. Each meeting follows a simple format of leadership development, encouragement, accountability and dreaming together (L.E.A.D.). Members of the LLC offer support at a deeper level than the older model of clergy clusters. They share a common commitment for church renewal and ministerial effectiveness. Overall the participating pastors say the LLC has been extremely helpful as they shepherd their churches in today’s challenging ministerial context. The next step in the development of LLCs is to extend this ministry to the lay leadership of the Region’s churches. The Region is still in the early stages of this work.

Each LLC is led by a Mentor Pastor appointed by ABCNW. These leaders are compensated by the Region and are considered part-time Region staff. The Mentor Pastors come together twice a year for training, coordination of the LLC ministry, prayer and mutual encouragement. These local Mentor Pastors and the participating LLC members are available to assist local churches and

their leaders with needs that they may have. Some churches in the ABCNW have not been aware of this reality, due in part to their pastor not being connected with the local LLC. The Mentors consult and coordinate with Dr. Revis and Rev. Duckworth when there are needs among sister churches. This is one of many ways that our Region is seeking to serve local churches in an era of financial constraints, not to mention the challenging geography of the ABCNW. A list of Mentor Pastors may be found online at www.abcnw.org under the “Pastors” tab.

Want More ABCNW News?

Sign up for ABCNW Email Updates –

Additional news will come every other week to your email box. This is a timely, inexpensive way to stay in touch with the most current events and announcements from the Region. Sign up by sending a request to communications@abcnw.org or go to abcnw.org bottom right hand corner. Sign up for “ABCNW Prayer Connection Request” in the same way.

Like American Baptist Churches of the

Northwest on Facebook – Receive up-to-date information by selecting “like” on Facebook. You will find stories, pictures, resource links and current news on our Facebook page.

Pray for churches searching for pastoral leadership:

- **Washington:** FBC Kelso; Central Baptist, Spokane; Blessed Life, Bellevue (Cantonese-speaking pastor); Gorst Baptist Community, Gorst.
- **Idaho:** Community Baptist, Melba; FBC Filer; Community Baptist, Arco.
- **Montana:** FBC Helena; FBC Hardin; FBC Eureka.
- **California:** Olive Drive Church, Bakersfield.

Congratulations

- **First Baptist Church, Victor, Montana,** celebrated 125 years of ministry on May 15. It is among about a dozen of the oldest continuing Baptist churches in Montana.
- **First Baptist Church, Ogden, Utah** celebrated 130 years of ministry May 15. They’re the oldest Baptist church in Utah and one of the oldest in ABCNW. Rev. Karl Dumas is Pastor.



Seven Principles for Sharing Christ with a Busy Summer Schedule

Larry Moyer, President and CEO Evangelism.net

The summer months provide excellent opportunities to cultivate relationships with unbelievers and tell them about our Savior. However, finding time to do so can be a challenge. After all, our summers are often filled with vacations, outdoor events, children’s activities, etc.

How do we take advantage of the summer months to impact the lost for Christ even in the midst of a busy schedule? Here are some principles to remember and put into practice:

Be balanced – How balanced is your life between non-Christians and Christians? There is nothing Biblical about spending all your time with believers. Jesus Christ spent time with sinners. He was even known as their friend (Matt. 11:19). We cannot have personal evangelism without personal contact.

Be proactive— View relationships with the intent to see the unbelievers come to have the greatest relationship there is – an eternal relationship with Christ. Go to them. Don’t wait for them to come to you. Consider the broad

base of non-Christian contacts you already have including:

- Immediate friends and family
- Neighbors, co-workers, employees, landlords
- Newspaper carrier, mailman, barber or hairstylist, grocery store checker, waiter or waitress
- Car dealer, insurance agent, accountant, attorney, banker
- Doctor, dentist, nurse, pharmacist
- Plumber, electrician, mechanic
- Teacher, professor, coach, classmate

Be intentional—Take the initiative. Look at everything you are doing this summer. Then ask, “Could this be done with a non-Christian included?”

Be sensitive—People that take time to listen are rare in our fast paced culture. Take the time to give someone your undivided attention. Letting them know you care may provide an opportunity to tell them about Christ.

Be prayerful – We are totally dependent on the Holy Spirit in evangelism. Pray that the Lord will provide opportunities, give you the sensitivity to recognize them, and give you boldness to share the gospel.

Be prepared—Move into the gospel presentation as God gives you the opportunity. If you don’t know what to say, Evan Tell offers free on-line evangelism training at www.act111.org. Get trained so that when God gives you the opportunity, you’ll be ready.

Be creative – For practical tips on how to develop relationships with non-Christians during the summer check out this blog series. Go to www.evangelism.net

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Transitions

- Eureka, MT, First Baptist Church: **Jan Van der Poll** serving as interim pastor beginning April 10, 2011.
- Hardin, MT, First Baptist Church: **Noah Heckmann** serving as interim pastor beginning March 1, 2011.
- Melba, ID, Melba Community Baptist Church: **Tom Romberg**, serving as pulpit supply beginning April 3, 2011.
- Bakersfield, CA, Olive Drive Church: **Joshua Kirstine** and **Bill Magsig**, serving as co-interim pastors.
- Payette, ID, First Baptist Church: **Duane Vaughn**, called as pastor – May 1, 2011.
- Pocatello, ID, First Baptist Church: **Bob McQuaid** completed ministry as interim on May 15; **Mike Popovich** starting as senior pastor on May 16, 2011.

Leadership Tune-Up

“Transforming the Church; Transforming the World”

September 26-28, 2011 Ross Point Camp, Post Falls, ID

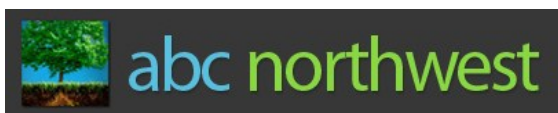
Mark your calendar now and plan to bring your team to the “Leadership Tune-Up” at Ross Point Camp, September 26-28, 2011. This annual gathering of pastors and church leaders continues to be one of the most inspirational and educational events for the people of ABCNW. The main focus continues to be on equipping church leaders to be more effective in developing missional churches. This year’s theme is “Transforming the Church; Transforming the World.”

This year’s speakers are:

Dr. Willie Nolte – Mission Lead for Transformational Ministries; served sixteen years as senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Fresno, CA. Willie has served as a congregational coach, pastor mentor, community leader, conference presenter and board member for Growing Healthy Churches (ABC West).

Rev. Shannon O’Dell – Lead pastor of a multi-site campus ministry located in the metropolis of Bergman, AR (pop. 445). During his six-year tenure at Brand New Church Shannon has lead transformation through an emphasis on evangelism, vision, excellence and innovation. Shannon is committed to reaching out to small struggling churches around the country and the world. He is the author of *Transforming Church in Rural America* (LLC book selection for February 2011).

Discover more at www.brandnewchurch.com



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