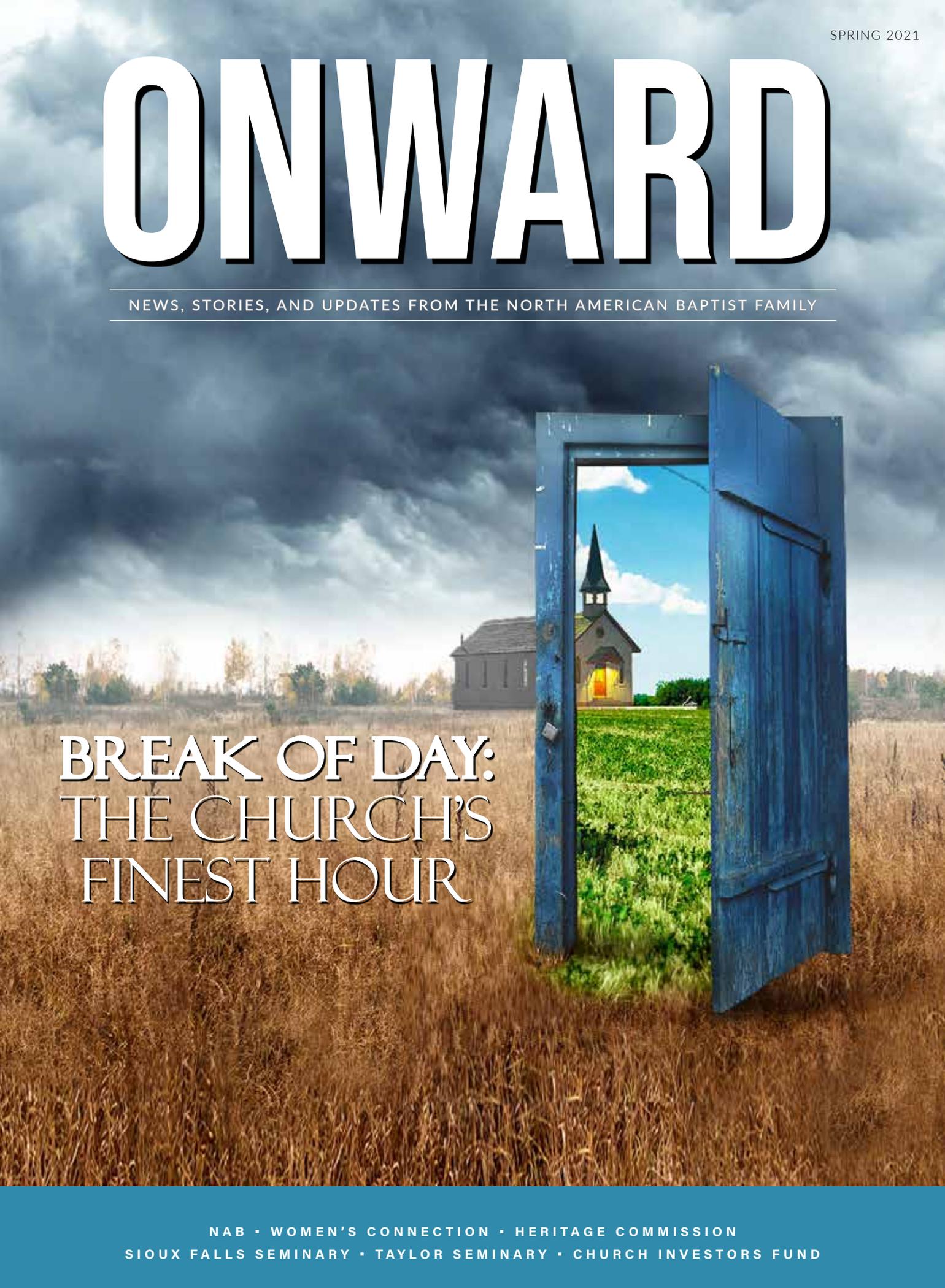


# ONWARD

NEWS, STORIES, AND UPDATES FROM THE NORTH AMERICAN BAPTIST FAMILY



BREAK OF DAY:  
THE CHURCH'S  
FINEST HOUR

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I've watched firsthand over the last few decades what a difference it makes to have leaders in the church who recognize the changing times in which they find themselves. I've heard it said, "The first job of any leader is to define reality accurately." I am not sure it's so simple, but rest assured most of us have read volumes on leading well through change. In this turbulent and exciting season, I contend that the most valuable work before us has not changed at all. Our collective call as a redeemed people is to gather with friends around God's word, in step with the life and teachings of Jesus, present to the Father's holy presence, and discerning how best to join the Spirit's work in our midst.

My vantage point on the changing times we are experiencing has been somewhat unique recently. I spent the early months of 2021 on sabbatical. It was my first full sabbatical since I began pastoring back in 1999; that's a long time to be "in the forest," if you will. I have now seen the trees.

As Christians all across North America continued to acclimate to a church life where the bulk of their communal contact was experienced watching something on video from their home while wearing pajamas, I too was acclimating to a new weekly rhythm of church experience, free from the built-in connectivity with church leaders provided through meetings and free, too, from the deadlines and expectations that go along with leading in my local church. I have seen firsthand the opportunities this season is delivering to our doorsteps.

We are in the midst of what most futurists believe to be a seismic shift in the way people engage with church and the way churches fruitfully equip and empower people to join God on mission in their communities. While the unknown of our current reality is unsettling to us all, I rest in the knowledge that God's beautiful and redeeming Gospel is at work in our midst.

In this edition of *Onward*, we have sought to explore the change in which we find ourselves. And the change is aplenty. Inside you'll find resources that help you continue your journey of ministry in a global pandemic, ways to continue navigating learnings in racial righteousness, updates around our first-ever virtual Triennial Conference, and a profile on our newly appointed executive director, Harry Kelm.

It is a high honor to experience the break of day with you. I believe this could well be the church's finest hour.



**Stu Streeter**

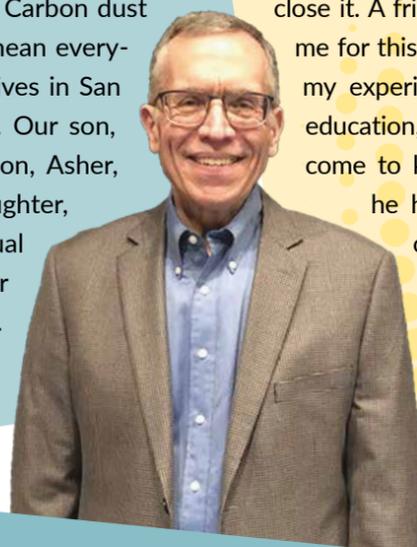
Vice President of Ministry Advancement & Church Multiplication

# Dr. Harry Kelm

Newly Appointed  
NAB Executive Director

**Most people in the NAB know you as a long-time local pastor in both Canada and the US, as well as former Moderator of the Governing Board. Can you tell us a bit about yourself that we might not know?**

I was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I cheered for the Milwaukee Brewers, Bucks, and Green Bay Packers. My parents immigrated to the US from Germany in 1956. Neither of them knew English. German was my first language. We attended a German NAB church called German Zion Baptist. I did not worship in English until junior high. I worked in a carbon brush factory for electrical motors with my Dad in the summers. Carbon dust is very fine and gets everywhere, and I mean everywhere. Our youngest daughter, Lauren, lives in San Diego, California, with her husband, Ian. Our son, Lucas; his wife, Tamara; and our grandson, Asher, live in Edmonton, Alberta. Our oldest daughter, Sara, lives in Fort Worth, Texas. I am a dual citizen of Canada and the US. Whenever I cross the border, I am welcomed home. Something unusual is that I like to add a little regular Pepsi to my diet Pepsi.



**There were a number of conversations that led you to the role of executive director. How did you see God at work in and through those conversations?**

When the position of executive director opened up, I had a number of people ask me if I would apply. My initial response was to dismiss it. A trusted friend then challenged me to actually pray about it. In praying, I sensed that God wanted me to apply. I knew who was serving on the Search Committee, and I knew that the search process would be rigorous and God centered. I had confidence that God would either open the door or close it. A friend suggested that God had prepared me for this role. They pointed to my background, my experiences, the places I have served, my education, my citizenships, and the people I have come to know. In my conversations with God, he has reminded me that it is God who calls and we are to follow. Moses at the burning bush responded to God's call with saying, "But who am I?" God replied, "I will be with you" (Genesis 3:12). That is God's message to me.

**You've often said you love to have fun. What's an ideal day off of fun look like for you?**

An ideal time off would be traveling to a favorite location. My favorite cities are San Francisco, California; Washington, D.C.; and Victoria, British Columbia. Some of my favorite locations are Siesta Key, Florida; the west coast of Vancouver Island; and the Pacific Northwest coastline.

An ideal day off starts with a long cup of coffee or two. My ideal day off is spent doing things (almost anything) with my wife, Cindy. This can be errands or projects around the house. We often go to Costco or perhaps a thrift store or consignment shop. Cindy and I will often take a walk in a park or just in the neighborhood. In the evening, we like to chat with our kids on FaceTime or Zoom. We also have a liking for British crime mysteries on PBS.

**For the last fourteen years, you have been senior pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Calgary, Alberta. What memories stand out in your mind of your time there?**

During our time at Grace, we celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of the church. Grace started out as the German Baptist Church of Calgary. In this latest chapter of Grace, we have become a church of many ethnicities. For our hundredth anniversary we displayed sixty flags from all of the nations represented in our church family. The blessing of the diversity of races and ethnicities is something that I cherish.

The people of Grace have always been willing to try new and different things with our services. For a time we had beach week in the winter. Sand was brought into the church gym. On Sunday, we had a beach service on the sand. One Sunday while looking at the book of Jonah, we turned off the lights and considered what it must have been like in the belly of the whale. My memory is of an openness to do things differently.

I had an opportunity to go with a group of men from Grace to a rural area of Ethiopia. Here we saw national missionaries working with local people in developing sustainable practices in farming and in clean water, at the same time loving these local people in the name of Jesus.

**As you look to the future of the NAB, what is it about our conference of churches that gives you the most hope and joy?**

I am hopeful and joyous for the future because of who God is. God pursues; God convicts; God forgives; God heals; God redeems; God renews; God restores; God leads. This a sinful world. As humans, we keep figuring out new ways to bring brokenness to ourselves and others. God is at work, and I believe God wants to use the NAB Conference of churches.

I am hopeful and joyous because I believe in the direction that the NAB is heading. In some areas we are seeing great movement, and in others we are still establishing that momentum. We are committed to having a vibrant mission witness where we are partnering with God's people in places very different than our own. We are also committed to being on God's mission in the places we live and work and play. We are committed to the importance of church planting, using various strategies to multiply churches. We are committed to spiritually healthy pastors and missionaries. We are committed to encouraging emerging leaders in understanding where God wants them to serve him. We are also growing in our awareness of our need to face racial intolerance and injustice in us and in our society. These are

not just good things, they are God's priorities for us as an NAB family.

I am hopeful and joyous because of the team of leaders that we have in the NAB that I will be able to work with. The Executive Team and the staff of the International Office are very skilled, but they also have a heart for ministry. Another group that is a blessing to the NAB are the regional ministers. They serve strategically and selflessly in their various associations and regions. This blessing extends to the pastors and churches of each association and region. I am excited to see how God will continue to work.

I am hopeful and joyous about the future for the NAB because we strive for a peace-centered focus. This is not peace at any cost or peace at all costs. This is seeking the peace of God in Jesus, which brings a wholeness to our lives and the lives of others. We know there will be differences in what we believe. The NAB has made a point of seeking to agree on our core truths. When we differ, we are committed to talk to each other and learn from each other. We might agree to disagree, but we remain committed to one another. This is so unique in our world today. This is needed in the midst of the hostility, divisiveness, and antagonism that is so much a part of our world. I do believe that God wants to use the NAB.

# Transition: A Journey Forward



By Jean Ewing

Women's Connection Leadership Team

The women of the NAB family have a rich history of giving to local and global projects, faithfully praying for missionaries, studying God's word, and participating in the local church. These practices were common as the work of women in the NAB continued to change between 1907 to 2017. The transitions were driven by the needs of the time and the changes in society.

In 2017, it was apparent to the women's leadership team that the focus of specific work among women in local women's ministry groups was no longer relevant. Many churches no longer had women's ministry groups. The women supported church-generated projects and were part of local small group studies. It was time for another transition!

The result of our time with God, each other, and faithful influencers was a challenge to provide a ministry of support and resourcing to women in leadership in the local church. Investing in one transforms many.

The name change to Women's Connection signaled our plan to engage with women as God works through their lives. Our desire is to help them on their journey by providing leadership opportunities and passing on resources and support to enhance their ministry efforts.

A further goal is to help these women network with each other for support and sharing of resources.

In an effort to flesh out our purpose more specifically, we decided to meet with women in leadership in the churches of our twelve NAB regions. In NorCal, twice in the Alberta Baptist Association (Calgary and Edmonton), in the British Columbia Baptist Association, and in the Eastern Association, we gathered over lunch to seek suggestions for ways of supporting women in leadership. The team was challenged with the common regional needs of:

**We are drawing our strength and direction from a dependence on the power of God, knowing he will lay out creative plans for the future.**

- providing relevant gospel-centered resources.
- finding a way to bring women together in each region, especially for creating a network of women in leadership.
- providing a place of online connection in each region so that resources and encouragement can be shared.
- encouraging and equipping leaders—especially the younger generation.

In 2020, the Women's Connection Leadership Team—Amber Dowd, Fabiola Campos, Heather Senges, and myself—was ready to connect with women in the Saskatchewan Baptist Association, the Great Lakes Association, and the Northwest Region, but in March, COVID restrictions cancelled all plans and the momentum to meet with NAB women in leadership and allow them to meet each other was lost.

During this reflective season, our team is connecting with the NAB family through our TouchPoint newsletter and by encouraging women to be a part of Light Blue Ocean, which further equips them with an understanding of missional theology. We are also working on a plan to bring connection with and within the regions of our conference.

During this time, we are encouraging new, deeper connections with God through pouring over his word, finding new ways to connect with friends by inviting them into our stories, and exploring new ways to intentionally join community in meeting pandemic needs.

The journey of our transition has been slow. We are drawing our strength and direction from a dependence on the power of God, knowing he will lay out creative plans for the future.





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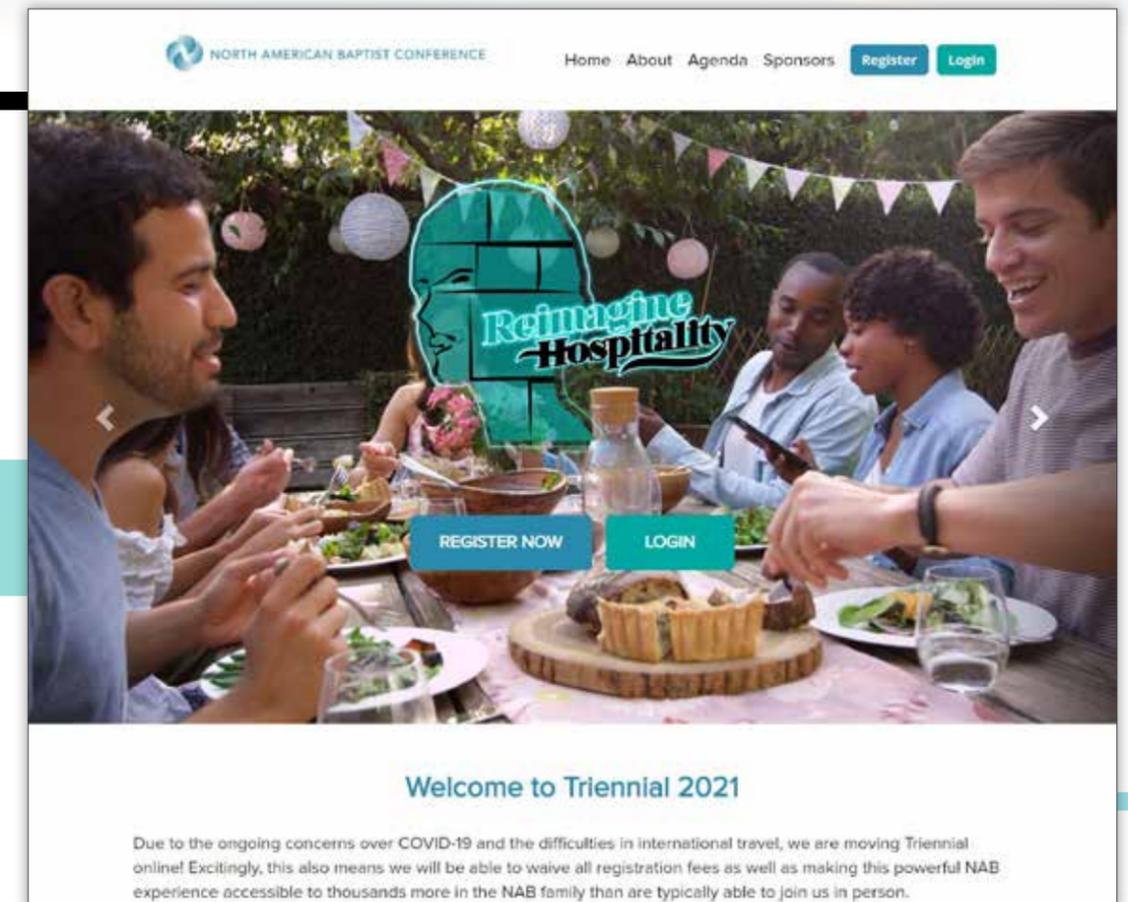
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# Following the Spirit Together



**By Greg Henson**

President, Sioux Falls Seminary

**By David Williams**

“What in the world are you doing, Lord?” The question is as universal as it is simple, at least for those who claim the name of Christ. It’s a question that can express both a deep confidence in God’s providence as well as the recognition of our own limitations. It can also express the despair of dashed hopes and unfulfilled promises. It is a question that is most often asked when things are not going as we had expected. When we like what is happening, or when we have expected things to happen as they are happening, we presume to know what God is doing, whether we really do or not. But when things are not going as we expect, the question erupts almost spontaneously.

A little over a decade ago, that question erupted for both Sioux Falls and Taylor Seminaries as both schools faced the existential question as to whether or not God was finished with these two institutions. Increasing costs, diminishing numbers of students, mounting debt, and the financial collapse of 2008/2009 ultimately forced the question for Sioux Falls Seminary; for Taylor, it was all those things compounded by the closing of the university college. For both institutions, the question of being a part of God’s work in the future, or what that work would look like, was a live question.

AS SEPARATE  
COMMUNITIES  
AND TOGETHER,  
WE TALKED, WE  
QUESTIONED,  
WE EXPLORED  
POSSIBILITIES, WE  
DREAMED, AND  
WE PRAYED.

That was a long time ago, and the journey has had many twists and turns for each institution since then. For Taylor, it was ten years of prayerfully and thoroughly investigating potential partners, ever asking, “what would a partnership look like if we joined together with you?” and trying to discern if that was the future into which God was calling us. Along the way we had to resist the temptation to make things work, one way or the other, so we could end all the ambiguity and just get on with things. Patience was the watchword, prayerfully waiting for the Spirit to lead in clarifying the details and in creating consensus across the community as to what God was doing.

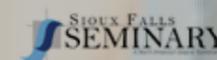
Sioux Falls’ journey required patience as well, though in a different way. Discerning in 2014 that God was calling them into a new approach to theological education, they felt called to take this journey in partnership with Taylor. Having so discerned, they committed themselves to waiting on the Spirit to confirm that discernment across the Taylor community.

Our commitment to discernment was a commitment to waiting on the Spirit, believing that the discernment process could be trusted even if it took more time than

sometimes seemed wise. Central to this process was trying to listen: to God and to each other. As separate communities and together, we talked, we questioned, we explored possibilities, we dreamed, and we prayed. We talked to those within our respective institutions and those from without. We believed it was important to listen to as many voices as possible so we could process what moving forward together might mean. We waited for questions to be answered and for fears to be set aside and for everyone to trust that God was at work. In this process, we committed ourselves to following where the Spirit was leading us rather than simply asking God to bless our ideas of what we thought we should do.

This part of the process culminated in 2019 when the boards of Taylor and Sioux Falls unanimously agreed to follow the Spirit into the future together through Kairos. After so many years, we finally embraced our answer to the question, “What are you doing, Lord?” Our witness is “that it seemed right to the Holy Spirit and to us” that God is weaving our institutions together in order to walk into God’s future for us.

Today, Kairos is a global network focused on stewarding followers of Jesus who flourish in their vocations for the sake of the world. With bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral programs, Kairos functions like a university system. With partners in Alberta, South Dakota, Texas, and Pennsylvania, Kairos encompasses five seminaries, thirty-five partner organizations, and more than 1,000 mentors, and more than one hundred faculty and faculty mentors, and it serves over 900 students from forty-two states, six provinces, twenty-eight countries, and six continents with programs offered in Spanish, French, English, and Portuguese.



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# INTENTIONALITY: AN INTERVIEW WITH ED MCCARTHY



**Cam Roxburgh**

Vice President of Missional Initiatives



**Ed McCarthy**

Deacon Chair, Pittsford Community Church

Ed McCarthy is the deacon chair at Pittsford Community Church and a member of the NAB Executive Director Search Committee. He participated in the original Blue Ocean (then called Future Travelers) and has a story to tell about the impact it has had on his life, the life of the church, and others God has led him to be involved with.

**CR:** Ed, tell us about how you got signed up for what is now Blue Ocean?

**EM:** I had been elected by our congregation to be the deacon chair and was invited by our senior pastor, Dana Goodnough, to join him at what is now Blue Ocean. The NAB was seeking to create a missional/formational movement and so was looking for leaders across the conference to attend.

**CR:** How did Blue Ocean impact your life and influence the church?

**EM:** It was refreshing. It was a chance to get away from

routine to fellowship with Christian brothers and sisters. The training shook me up and pushed me to remove the excuse that I was too busy to join God on mission. I learned that he sent me to my neighborhood, workplace, and recreational opportunities. Each of us should be looking for ways to be used by God in the normal events of our days. We become his instruments for healing a broken world. This call was not added to my already busy schedule but making it something that could be integrated into my current life.

This missional training also had a profound impact at PCC. We integrated it into our culture and refreshed our mission statement, dedicating ourselves as a church

to creating fully formed followers of Jesus Christ. We began to see ourselves as part of a neighborhood, realigning our ministries and resources to look outward. We trained our people to become local missionaries through sermons, small groups, and spiritual practices. We held missionary boot camps for our leadership teams and then for our members. We created positions within our leadership structure and set aside resources to support this effort. We challenged all of our ministries and small groups to look for ways to engage their neighborhoods more deliberately and opened our church doors to support community events.

**CR:** The changes God was making in your own life had a further reach into the neighborhood. Tell us what happened.

**EM:** My perception of what God expected of me completely changed. I realized how many opportunities that God was placing before me at work, in my neighborhood, and in my play time to work alongside him. As a twenty-year Marine Corps officer, exercise was something that I did daily, often riding bicycles with others for several hours a day. I began applying the simple missional principles that I learned at Blue Ocean in those contexts with groups of those who did not yet

know Christ. It was amazing to watch the Lord work as I began to look at these workouts as a mission field opportunity. Now my cycling group has grown from two to three people on a summer ride to thirty year-round riders. It is filled with all ages and abilities and has formed a deep sense of community. This cycling group has led to many opportunities to talk about faith, help them with needs, develop relationships, and even to pray together. As the cycling group grew, I invited other church members to join me. This has allowed for deeper connections as each brought their unique gifts. Some of the new riders were already followers of Jesus, which enabled them to have conversations of faith with

other riders I would not have connected with.

Our riding group, began to reflect the diversity of Rochester when a number of cyclists joined us from other countries and faiths. The conversations are rich. Recently, I had the opportunity to discuss my faith and church with a Muslim doctor who emigrated from another country, which would not have been possible without God's help and building up a relationship with him over many hours together on a bicycles. It has been a tremendous blessing in my life.

**CR:** What encouragement would you have for others who are seeking to join God on mission but perhaps are holding back?

**EM:** The Nike theme of "Just do it" comes to mind. Remember that we have been placed by God in our neighborhood, that he is already operating there, and as Christians we are invited and blessed to work alongside him. We need to be sensitive of the missional opportunities that he places before us in our everyday life, as faith is not something that is

confined to Sunday morning in church. Joining God's missions does require intentionality, but it does not require more of your time or another event on your calendar. Take a creative look at happenings and people that are already in your life.

To join in this journey we are calling a missional/formational movement through taking part in Blue Ocean or hosting The Discovery Project at your church, contact Sara-May Cardy at [scardy@nabconf.org](mailto:scardy@nabconf.org).



# Mission of Discernment:

An Interview with Jason + Erin Bergman and Raffaele + Sylvia Gaudio



By Nicole Weidokal  
Executive Director of Operations at  
Heartland Community Church in Medina, Ohio



Bergman Family



Gaudio Family

“Discernment, in a most general sense, is the capacity to recognize and respond to the presence and the activity of God – both in the ordinary moments and in the larger decisions of our lives,” writes Ruth Haley Barton in her book *Pursuing God’s Will Together*. Who better to talk to about “the larger decisions of our lives” than two couples who have discerned a call to the field as they prepare to be sent as NAB missionaries. I had the privilege and the pleasure recently of talking with Jason and Erin Bergman and Raffaele and Sylvia Gaudio specifically around their experience of discernment.

While they’re both in similar stages of raising support and preparation to go to the field, their stories of how they arrived here couldn’t be more different. The Bergmans were pursuing the North American dream, and serving as missionaries couldn’t have been further from their minds. In fact, Erin shared that she’s a homebody who hates traveling and becoming a missionary was one of her worst fears! For the

Gaudios, missions has always been a part of their lives and their marriage. They’ve served in the Middle East, and Sylvia remembers feeling called to be a missionary when she was only six years old. And yet, with their individual, beautiful stories, we find patterns of what discernment looks like.

## A STIRRING

“God started to do a work in our hearts.” “We got a sense of God stirring us to something new but not knowing what that was.” “There was a feeling of being unsettled.” As they recalled how their journeys began, for both couples God seemed to first build a desire within them. For the Gaudios, this came through an intentional seeking of what God had for them next as COVID brought about changes in their ministry at Creston Baptist Church in Creston, British Columbia. “We went through a process of Ask – Seek – Knock,” shared Raffaele. “And as some doors closed, others we had a lack of peace about, knowing they weren’t for us.”

For the Bergmans, looking back they could see how God started planting seeds in them years prior when they each went on separate short-term mission trips. And then, in 2018, as a family of six they went to Camp Falcon Rock in Romania for three months. During that trip, “God was developing a heart in us for what was happening there,” shared Erin. But even then, she wasn’t fully ready to commit.

## AFFIRMATIONS

Discernment is not simply an individual process of hearing from God; it is also meant to be practiced in community, as we develop “an attitude of listening to God in all of life,” writes Rose Mary Dougherty in her work *Discernment: A Path to Spiritual Awakening*. In both couples, the first voice of discernment came from those closest to them.

Raffaele recalled waking one morning, sharing with Sylvia what he felt God had revealed to him of their calling to

serve as missionaries to Japan. Because sharing revelations like that in the past had not always been warmly received, it pleasantly surprised him when Sylvia was excited right from the beginning! Later that same day, as he was sharing with Rick Bettig, his senior pastor and friend, Rick was equally enthusiastic, saying, “I think this is of the Lord.” As Raffaele and Sylvia visited the NAB website together, they found (much to his surprise) that the NAB not only was highlighting a need for missionaries to go to Japan, they were needing church planters – which was a perfect fit with the Gaudios’ experience and passion. All of these things felt like affirmations of what Raffaele had sensed God was calling them to as they remained humble and open-handed.

With the three-month visit being an affirmation in itself for the Bergmans, it was further confirmed through others, including a prayer group they had invited others into at their church. They’d asked the group to pray for them as they

Continued on Page 29

# BREAK OF DAY: THE CHURCH'S FINEST HOUR



**By Kerry Bender**  
Vice President of International Missions

As this edition of *Onward* is being sent out and read during the spring of 2021, there are hundreds of thousands of farms throughout Canada and the United States busy planting crops. As a child, I had the privilege of growing up on one of these farms in North Dakota. I remember one day as a young child I was out in our family garden with my mom. She held a seed in her hand, probably of corn or carrots; she looked at

me and then she looked at the seed and then back at me. With awe in her eyes, she said, "It's a miracle that this little seed will go in the ground and die, but then it will sprout and grow into a plant and feed our family. We serve an amazing God." It's a conversation that I remember having with my mom on numerous occasions, sometimes next to a truck full of wheat, other times as we hoed potatoes. Nearly four decades later,

"TRULY, TRULY, I SAY TO YOU, UNLESS A GRAIN OF WHEAT FALLS INTO THE EARTH AND DIES, IT REMAINS ALONE; BUT IF IT DIES, IT BEARS MUCH FRUIT" (JOHN 12:24).



as I spoke to her recently by phone, she said almost the exact same thing to me again, and we talked once more about Jesus's words in John 12:24, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (ESV).

For many, it feels like the church in North America, and more broadly the church in the West, is standing some-



where between the dying of a seed and the bearing of much fruit. Christendom, “the name given to the sacral culture that has dominated European society from around the eleventh century until the end of the twentieth,” is for the most part dead or at least dying.<sup>1</sup> The Church is no longer the center, literally and figuratively, of our communities and our culture.

The analytical part of me could spend hours reading and analyzing why this shift has taken place as the world has become smaller due to technology, the ease of modern travel, and the loss of societal homogeneity. The part of me that loves history could spend even more time exploring the good, the bad, and the ugly of Christendom that came with adopting the power

In addition to these analytical and historical parts of me, I must confess that at times the romantic part of me longs for the “good old days,” the days when the Church was at the center of the power structures of the West and had the positional authority to change the course of nations and cultures. As a white male within the Church, however, I must confess that the “good old days” of Christendom weren’t so good for those who stood outside the privileged center of power within the Church during this time. This was true not only for those who stood outside of the Church but also for many of my brothers and sisters in Christ of different races. This is a confession that the Church must make and a sin we must repent from.

## WITH ITS DEATH, LIKE THE PLANTING OF A SEED, NEW LIFE IS BEGINNING TO SPROUT, AND THE PROMISE OF MUCH FRUIT CAN BE ANTICIPATED.

structures, growth strategies, and positional authority that came with the Church embracing its place at the center of Western culture and life. It should be noted that both of these tasks have their place and Christians would do well to spend some time on these endeavors.

However, after all of the cultural analysis and historical exploration and after all the feelings of loss, along with confession and repentance of abuse, the fact remains that Christendom is dead, or at least dying. With its death, like the planting of a seed, new life is beginning to sprout, and the promise of much fruit can be anticipated. This is evident in multiple ways within the Church, but briefly let us consider just two of them.

Firstly, with the loss of the Church of the West as the center of Christendom, the Church is becoming more and more diverse than ever before. While it is true that on a typical day the

<sup>1</sup> Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost, *The Shaping of Things to Come*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 8.



church in the West is shrinking daily by nearly 5,000, the church is growing in sub-Saharan Africa alone by over 16,000.<sup>2</sup> Even within our own churches in Canada and the US, the struggle that comes with racial diversity and reconciliation are not just signs of the death of Christendom but are signs of great hope and promise that the Spirit of God is working on making the people of God more into the image that he has for his Church. We must celebrate this hard work and work alongside him, for we are seeing the beginning of the fulfillment of God's promise in Revelation that a host is gathering of every tribe and people.

THEN HE SIGHED, AND WITHOUT LOOKING DOWN AT ME, HE SAID, "KERRY, WE'RE FARMERS; IF THAT'S NOT A GAMBLE, NOTHING IS."

Secondly, the Church is becoming more dependent upon what God has always called his people to be dependent upon. The annual budget of the apostles was nil. Their growth strategy seemed to be more dependent upon the persecution and scattering of the Church than upon their own strength and influence. There was no building, no growth strategy conference to attend, no political protection for proclamation. They were dependent upon the power of the Father, not the power structures adopted from the culture around them. They were dependent upon the discerning work of the Spirit within the community, not the growth strategies borrowed from the marketplace. Most importantly, they

were dependent upon the example of Jesus Christ as a servant to all and a guest in a world that knew him not rather than on the positional authority bestowed upon Christendom from princes and kings.

On another spring day long ago on that farm in North Dakota, I remember asking, "Dad, as Baptists, do we believe in gambling?" My dad was quiet for a long time. Then he sighed, and without looking down at me, he said, "Kerry, we're farmers; if that's not a gamble, nothing is." Allowing the winter of Christendom to end is a risk. Recognizing that Christendom is a seed that needs to die so the Church can be reborn into a new season of growth and promise of much fruit in the future is a gamble. Letting go of the power structures, the growth strategies, and the positional authority of Christendom leaves some of us with very little left in our churches. Well, very little of ourselves anyway, but it places us squarely in the dependency of power of the Father, the discerning work of the Spirit, and the spiritual authority of the servant who gave his

life for his Church, which, from the first century to the twenty-first century, is the most hopeful and joyous place to be. Like farming, it's a gamble worth taking if we hope in the resurrection and the one who promises much fruit.

<sup>2</sup> Timothy C. Tennet, "Theology in the Context of World Christianity - Session 1 - Global Discourse."



# Legacy GIVING

From the beginning years of the NAB, legacy giving through estates, wills, trusts, and memorial gifts have been transformational in establishing new fields, launching new ministries, and planting new churches. Your legacy giving provides the next generation with essential resources for where God will direct them to expand the Gospel's reach in North America and around the world.

***If interested in leaving a legacy gift to NAB ministries by committing a portion of your end-of-life assets, contact us at (916) 797-6222.***

# ENGAGEMENT AND DETACHMENT:

## Pastor and Board Discernment



By Kent Carlson  
Regional Minister of NorCal Association

This tumultuous season of the pandemic, racial strife, elections, church conflict, and general uncertainty has motivated many churches and church leadership teams to consider the practice of communal discernment. We discover that we really need God. I have spent the last couple of years working with several churches in various iterations of a year-long process where pastors and church boards dig deeper into their personal and communal formation as we seek to create space to attend to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I have been deeply impressed with the desire of leadership teams in churches to learn new skills and spiritual practices in order to facilitate this. It has been a fascinating and enjoyable journey. We have learned much together.

Central to an understanding of an interactive, authentic relationship with God is the confidence that God will communicate with us. This is done, of course, through his Word but also through various other means. In the book of Acts, we see this especially when it comes to the leadership of the church discerning the mind of God. In Acts 13, we read of the Holy Spirit telling the church at Antioch to set apart Barnabas and Saul for the work he had called them to. In Acts 15, the phrase used by the leadership of the church is that it “seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us.” In light of these and many other passages and examples in scripture and Christian history, we can trust that it is God’s desire to communicate with his people. This is not to say that every decision the leadership of the church makes is to be discerned as the voice of God. It simply means that God, through his spirit, will be involved in the affairs of the church and we can depend on him to guide us.

Discernment, though, is a communal and cooperative process with God (“it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and

to us”) that is dependent upon our communal spiritual maturity as a team. Because discerning the voice of God can be a tricky, difficult, and sometimes overly “ethereal” pursuit, many church leadership teams are wary of it and, consequently, often untrained in the process. Therefore the default setting with many becomes strategy and decision-making as opposed to discernment. Now, there is nothing wrong with strategy and decision-making. In fact, they are crucially important. But I am suggesting that a church leadership team must move the default setting from strategic thinking and decision-making to a discernment model. We must operate under the assumption that God is at work, that he is up to something, and as we attend to him and each other we will, communally, receive guidance from him.

Central to the process of communal discernment is the embracing of two seemingly contradictory or paradoxical pursuits: engagement and detachment. Every leader on a well-functioning leadership team must be committed to these pursuits. Engagement means that we show up. We come to the meetings on time and prepared to work. All of us know when others and ourselves have tuned-out of meetings or would prefer to be somewhere else. I understand that. I get it. Often life gets crazy and we are overwhelmed, and sometimes the best we can do is to drag ourselves to a meeting and try to stay awake. But that can never be the norm. If I find myself regularly disengaged in our leadership meetings, this should be a sign that some discernment is needed to understand what is behind that. Staying disengaged is not an option.

Being engaged means that I come with energy. I come to the meeting willing to share my thoughts, express my opinions, and argue my points of view. Thriving leadership teams have people who show up big, care, have opinions,

*Continued on Page 30*

# BEYOND ACKNOWLEDGMENT: The Western Church Engaging with the *Global Church*



By **Randy Schmor**  
NAB Gateway Director

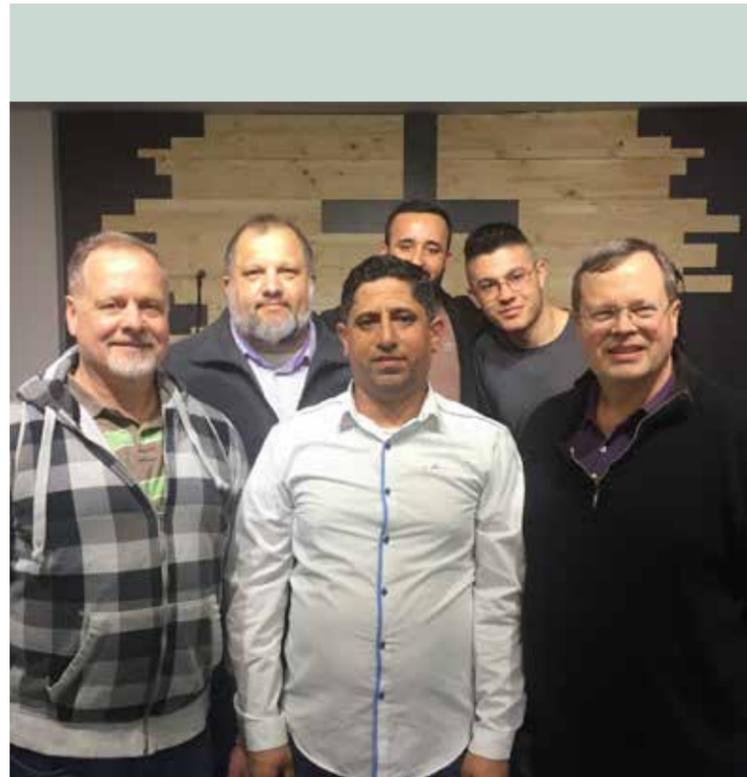


For more than twenty years, the challenges and opportunities of the church have been described in many different ways. The plates are shifting. The norms are changing. The center of gravity has moved. This begs the questions: Are we embracing and engaging in meaningful ways as the worldwide body of Christ as that body actually exists today? Or have we heard enough to merely acknowledge facts, such as there being twice as many Christians today in Africa than there are in North America (and that some fifty years ago the opposite was true)?

I believe it's beyond time for the church, especially here in the West, to acknowledge that the shift of inevitable influence toward the Global South has already taken place in the *global church* and that the Western church needs to engage with this reality.

Interestingly, some of this reality has been made more clear of late by way of our current global pandemic. For many churches in the West, the main struggles the pandemic has revealed are that of loss of relationship and identity. "Who are we," churches seem to be asking, "if we lose our normal Sunday

morning worship time?" For some, this loss has exposed a misplaced sense of identity and the fact that real community was possibly never really there in the first place.



The words of Australian missiologist Graham Hill in his book *GlobalChurch* seem to speak well to these struggles: "Those of us in the West need a new narrative. It's time to abandon our flawed Eurocentric and Americentric worldviews. We need a new, global and missional narrative, and for that we must turn to the churches of the Majority World and indigenous cultures."<sup>1</sup> Quite possibly, the answer to who are we as the Western church was never meant to be found in ourselves alone but rather in the global church.

Once we've made a commitment to our collective identity as a global church, perhaps then we can collaboratively discover how to serve together in mission and how to do this within the worldwide body of Christ as equal partners. It's this very source of identity that should result in partnership and mission with our brothers and sisters in the Global South, who stand ready to speak to us if we'll be open to intentional, integral, mutual relationships.

The challenge for the Western church is whether we will engage in the real world where the church's center of gravity has firmly moved to the Global South or merely acknowledge the existence of this global church yet function in a world, and as a church, that no longer exists.

Interested in learning more about intentional, integral, mutual relationships between your church and churches in the Majority World? Find out more about NAB Gateway's Sister Church Partnerships at [nabonmission.org/get-involved/nab-gateway/gateway-global-2](http://nabonmission.org/get-involved/nab-gateway/gateway-global-2).

<sup>1</sup> Graham Hill, *GlobalChurch: Reshaping Our Conversations, Renewing Our Mission, Revitalizing Our Churches*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016), 16.



Photo Left - Worship at Kurdish Good Shepherd Church in Beirut, Lebanon, with Pastor Nihad (center).

Sahag and Aida Kassabian (center) run a ministry in Tripoli, Lebanon, that holistically serves many residents of this tent community.

# BACK TO THE BASICS



By Randy Tschetter  
Director, NAB Heritage Commission

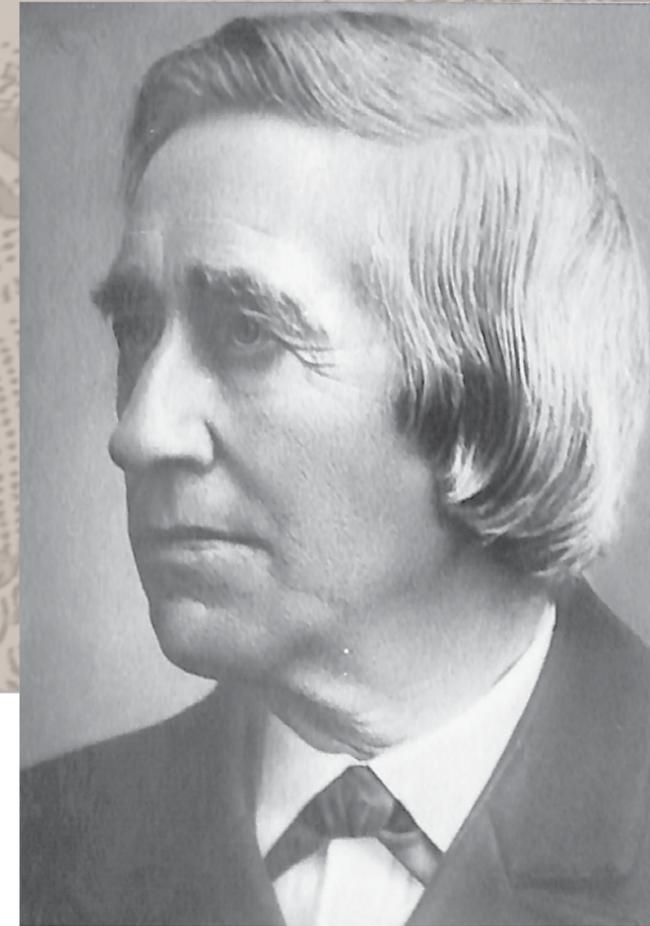
When asked a seemingly unanswerable question about how best to please God, Jesus surprised his challenger with two simple directives: love God wholly and love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:34–40). Spend some time in the NAB Archives and you will discover that from its earliest beginnings some 175 years ago NAB ministries and missions have followed the approach of sticking to the basics. In the midst and aftermath of a worldwide pandemic, it may be that God is calling the church to focus less on "adopting power structures and growth strategies," as Kerry Bender puts it in his article on page 16, and more on a return to the basics of just loving God and our neighbors.

The very first conference of the German Baptists in North America was held in Philadelphia in November 1851. Attendees included pastors such as Johannes Eschmann, Alexander von Puttkammer, Konrad Fleishmann, and August Rauschenbusch. With no set agenda, much of the time involved fellowship (getting better acquainted) and encouragement (as personal testimonies of faith and God's call were shared). At the conference, which lasted six days, only three items of business were decided: 1) finances were

needed in printing a confession of faith; 2) hymnbooks in the German language were needed to enhance worship; and 3) the importance of publishing a periodical to communicate with the various German churches was stressed.<sup>1</sup> A heavy lift perhaps, but the emphasis was on faith, worship, and communication.

Historian Arthur A. Schade describes a period of Baptist expansion following the Philadelphia conference in which "churches were being organized all the way from the Atlantic seaboard to the Mississippi River."<sup>2</sup> The challenges of travel led to the formation of the Eastern and Western conferences. However, the desire for fellowship and the need for cooperation "could only be brought about by an occasional joint meeting." Held in Wilmot, Ontario, in the fall of 1865, this General conference or "Bundes Konferenz" became the first of what North American Baptists now refer to as Triennials.<sup>3</sup> Delegates to that first Triennial established three priorities:

- 1) Missions: out of their concern for missionary activity, they "incorporated as a General Missionary Society;"



J.C. Haseluhn, pastor, evangelist, editor of "Der Sendbote" and secretary of the German Baptist Publications Society from 1878-1892.

Philip W. Bickel, 1829-1914, pastor and editor of "Der Sendbote" and other publications, including "Der Wahrheitszeuge," the official organ of the Baptists in Germany.



An early colporteur of the German Baptist Publication Society.

- 2) Education: seeing a need for theological education, they "organized as The Educational Union;"
- 3) Communication: to promote communication, they "organized as a Publication Society."<sup>4</sup>

For sure technologies and methodologies have changed, but the emphases chosen in 1865 seem to be an accurate reflection of what the NAB has been up to over the decades and continues to be in 2021. Home and foreign missionaries continue to respond to God's call. Theological education remains a priority. Publications such as *Onward* provide challenges, encouragement, and information to readers around the world.<sup>5</sup> In our COVID, and hopefully post-COVID, world, we might do well to simply live into our history as we love God and love others.

1 Frank H. Woyke, *Heritage and Ministry of the North American Baptist Conference* (Oakbrook Terrace, IL: North American Baptist Conference, 1979), 3–5.

2 Herman von Berge, ed., *These Glorious Years: The Centenary History of German Baptists of North America 1843–1943*, (Cleveland, OH: Roger Williams Press), 41.

3 von Berge, *These Glorious Years*, 42.

4 von Berge, *These Glorious Years*, 44.

5 Publications such as *Der Sendbote* and *Baptist Herald* provided inspiration and information to NAB churches for many years prior to the advent of more electronic forms of communication.



[nabconference.org/nab-heritage-commission](http://nabconference.org/nab-heritage-commission)

[nabarchives@nabconf.org](mailto:nabarchives@nabconf.org)

# RESOURCES

## BOOKS:



**Pursuing God's Will Together: A Discernment Practice for Leadership Groups**  
by Ruth Haley Barton

Meetings can sap our energy, rupture community, and thoroughly demoralize us. They can go on forever with no resolution. Or they can rush along without consensus just to “get through the agenda.” What if there was another way? Church boards and other Christian leadership teams have long relied on models adapted from the business world. Ruth Haley Barton helps teams transition to a much more suitable model—the spiritual community that discerns God’s will together. This book will help you discover personal and group practices that will lead you into a new way of experiencing community and listening to God together.

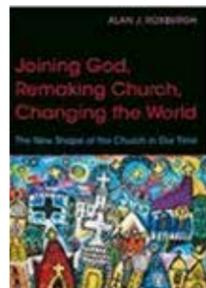


**Follow the Cloud: Hearing God's Voice One Next Step at a Time**  
by John Stickl

There is a big difference between being set free and living free.

How do I know what to do with my life? How do I hear God’s voice? Maybe the answer is easier than we

think. When God led the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land, he gave them a cloud to follow. He led them in an intimately personal, ever-present way one next step at a time. He led them without revealing the whole picture because he wanted them to follow by faith.



**Joining God, Remaking Church, Changing the World: The New Shape of the Church in Our Time**  
by Alan J. Roxburgh

Exhausted with trying to “fix” the church? It’s time to turn in a new direction: back to the Holy Spirit. In this insightful book, internationally renowned scholar and leader Alan

Roxburgh urges Christians to follow the Spirit into our neighborhoods, re-engage with the mission of God, and re-imagine the whole enterprise of church.



## VIDEO:

**Giants in the Land: Communal Discernment & Racism**  
Moderated by Marion Platt

Pray and join us for a conversation about race and justice at the intersection of the Christian faith.

Watch Video: [youtu.be/H6\\_jGj-xSCo](https://youtu.be/H6_jGj-xSCo)



## ARTICLE:

**Discernment as a Way of Life**  
by Ruth Haley Barton

Discernment is much more than mere decision making; it is, first of all, a habit, a way of seeing that can permeate our whole life. As it makes clear in John 9, it is the movement from seeing things merely from a human perspective to seeing from a spiritual vantage point, continually looking for evidence of the work of God in order to join him in it.

Discernment is a quality of attentiveness to God that, over time, develops into the ability to sense God’s heart and purpose in any given moment. We become familiar with the tone, quality, and content of God’s voice. We notice how God is present for us in the moment. We wonder, *Where is God unfolding his work of love and redemption? and What is my most authentic response?*

Read Full Article: [christianitytoday.com/women-leaders/2012/june/discernment-as-way-of-life.html](https://christianitytoday.com/women-leaders/2012/june/discernment-as-way-of-life.html)

Continued from Page 14  
Mission of Discernment

discerned what God was up to. One Sunday, a woman shared with them a vision she had, the exact vision Erin had seen while they were on their trip in Romania. Much like the Gaudios saw how God would be using their past missions and ministry experience, both Jason and Erin had extensive camp and youth ministry experience. Their past experience lining up with the need seemed to be another affirmation in their discernment process.

## FRUSTRATIONS + SILENCE

Yet, as we talked it was clear that the path of discernment isn’t just full of open doors and positive affirmations. There are also closed doors along the way, as well as periods of silence and wrestling.

“After we came back from the three-month trip to Romania, we intentionally waited,” shared Jason. “We didn’t want to force anything. And all we heard was silence – for six months.” Jason shared that during that time his patience grew. There were also opportunities to grab control when other needs came up, like missionaries sharing at their church. While they wanted to raise their hands, they could see that they really weren’t a fit, so they continued waiting and listening in a posture of surrender. It was frustrating, and at times they doubted.

“It really put me through the gauntlet when the enemy was speaking his lies to me,” Erin shared, “making me question myself and being able to handle the calling.”

For the Gaudios, those voices of doubt and discouragement came from some of those closest to them. Sylvia’s mom, who has always prayerfully supported her and her missions work, shared that she didn’t think they should be going. That was hard and confusing for Sylvia, but she and Raffaele prayed for God to change her heart. It was just a few weeks ago that her mom called, encouraging them to go and assuring her that she is praying for them.

Prayer and listening has been an important part of discernment for both couples. Jason said, “When we’re moving a hundred miles an hour, we can miss God’s voice.

I needed to be patient and be quiet enough, in the waiting, to hear him.”

## THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

With discernment being a both/and process, holding the tension between the affirmations and the waiting, as well as both an individual and collective wisdom, there is an important role for the church to play with those we send.

“It’s important for the church to understand their role as the sender,” Jason said. “It’s not simply sending money, though that’s an important piece of it. All of our supporters are a part of the team, and it’s a team that’s going. It’s not just us. We are affirmed when God brings these people into our lives.”

Raffaele offers this encouragement to churches: “God is still on the throne, and there is still a mission of the church to make disciples of all the nations. And this is all about relationships. It’s important that within the (church) body that we nourish them.”

As we enter into sending through discerning together in relationship, we learn and grow together in what it looks like to discern God’s voice in our lives, in our callings, and in our churches.

Nicole oversees the Global Missions team at Heartland and is currently enrolled in Sioux Falls Seminary’s Kairos project, pursuing a master’s in Bible and Theology, as well as a certificate in Spiritual Direction.

Continued from Page 23  
Engagement and Detachment

and are unafraid to share them. If someone shows up too big or begins to use “power over” to force their opinion on others, then other engaged leaders must call this out, and the spiritual formation of the overly assertive leader will allow them to apologize and dial it down a notch. But full engagement, even passionate and overly enthusiastic engagement, is always more helpful than passivity or disengagement.

Detachment, on the other hand, is the ability to abandon outcomes. In this context, detachment is not an alternative option to engagement. It is actually a dance between the two pursuits. In the ideal, we are learning how to be fully engaged and fully detached at the same time. The journey to detachment is a profoundly spiritual one. Detachment is always a journey into a deeper trust in God, a letting go, a discovery that the world does not need me and my opinions as much as I imagine, that my will is not the most important thing. Usually the process of embracing detachment involves coming to a fuller understanding of, and a moving away from, my false self. My false self is the way I have learned to live in the world that protects me from others and helps me get what I think I need. Moving away from this, and learning how to embrace my truest self, created in the image of God, usually involves a deepening awareness of my brokenness, my anger, my fear, my insecurities, and my inadequacies. Moving into detachment often involves sadness and grief, for many of the precious pursuits of my false self, which make up so much of my false identity, will need to be left behind. One can feel pretty alone and empty at these times, like an addicted person without their drug of choice.

At one of the retreats I led for a leadership team going through a year-long discernment training, we were debriefing a recent conflict this leadership team had over a decision that needed to be made. It was an incredibly small and inconsequential decision, except to one person who felt the decision was of supreme importance. His particular view of the situation was the minority view, but he was fighting assertively for it. He was embracing wonderfully

the importance of engagement. He was showing up in all his argumentative glory. What he hadn't embraced yet was detachment. His will was preeminent. And as we took a closer look at this conflict, this wonderful leader heard his fellow elders giving him authentic feedback as to how he was being experienced. They shared how his over-attachment to his will felt like a “power over” play. They pointed out his use of an ultimatum aimed at assuring that his will would be followed. And right in the moment, in real time, this man realized that his over-attachment to his will was getting in the way of hearing God's voice. Without changing his perspective as to how the decision should go, this man, in the presence of his fellow leaders, owned his power play, and he detached himself from his will. He abandoned the outcome. In that moment, and this felt miraculous, there was a communal sense that they had heard the voice of God. All it took was for one person to be indifferent to their will.

Detachment is the path to spiritual maturity and communal discernment. In Ignatian terms, I am learning how to be indifferent to my will. I have a will. I recognize it. It is a part of what it means to be a human being created in God's image. But then I learn, when necessary, how to be indifferent to it, because I am learning how to deeply trust in God. I am learning how to pray Jesus's prayer: “Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done.” Or as the prayer of Ignatius of Loyola puts it:

Take, O Lord, and receive my entire liberty, my memory, my understanding and my whole will. All that I am and all that I possess You have given me. I surrender it all to You to be disposed of according to Your will. Give me only Your love and Your grace; with these I will be rich enough, and will desire nothing more.

A church leadership team that embraces these pursuits of engagement and detachment is a truly beautiful thing to experience. God shows up there because room is made for him.

# Be Prepared



By **Bob Glim**  
Vice President, Church Investors Fund

“The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it” (Psalm 24:1). We live in a world that values the gathering of things. Whether as an individual, a business, or even a church, we strive to gather more and more so that we can obtain or accomplish more. I believe as a church we are to be an example to those we serve.

The Bible is filled with lessons to help us manage what has been entrusted to us in a way that is honoring to God. 1 Corinthians 16:2 reminds us: “On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come.”

As a church, it is one thing to have the foresight to make provisions for the unknown storms that lay ahead, but it's another to actually do it. The reality is that it can be very difficult to see past what is in front of us. We are passionate about the ministries we feel led to pursue and feel we cannot do without them because they are vital to the church's success.

The comment often spoken is that “I don't worry. I trust God to provide.” This is of course a very true statement, as God has proven over and over again that He does provide; but again, He often provides not only for today, but for tomorrow, because He sees the storms well before we do.

It is amazing how God provides for the church's needs, often ahead of time. Unfortunately, we tend to live in the moment and neglect to see down the road—maybe even a tumultuous road.

## Line of Credit for Churches



If you are looking to give your church additional flexibility in your financial planning, consider a **Line of Credit with Church Investors Fund**.

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\*Actual rates you would earn depends upon the then current rates and the dollar amount invested. We invite you to call us or visit our website at [www.ChurchInvestorsFund.org](http://www.ChurchInvestorsFund.org) to review the most current rates.

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There is no way anyone could have seen the pandemic that laid ahead when 2020 first started. It is unlike anything we have experienced in our lifetime.

Over the past year, Church Investors Fund has been in communication with a number of churches and the best way to describe what we have seen from churches throughout the pandemic has been resilience. Many churches saw giving remain the same, or even increase, from the previous year. Some saw reductions in giving, but they were offset by the savings resulting from ministries being halted. Unfortunately, some churches were unable to prepare, for various reasons, and became dependent on grants or loans, such as government PPP loans, in order to stay afloat.

If only we all adhered better to Ecclesiastes 11:2 as it instructs us to “divide your portion to seven, or even to eight, for you do not know what misfortune may occur on the earth.” And Proverbs 30:25 challenges us with, “the ants are not a strong people, but they prepare their food in the summer.”

Although it appears we might be seeing a glimmer of light that will guide us out of this pandemic, we also don't know what other storms might be off in the distance.

Only God knows what the future holds and so we must be ready. Therefore, now more than ever, churches need to be prepared financially for the unknown.

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