
The Disciple

Anabaptist Disciples of Christ is an affiliation of Conservative Anabaptist churches seeking likeminded fellowship, instruction, and accountability in church administration and congregational life in the Biblical pattern of the Apostolic church.

The Man They Need You to Be

Letter to Myself as a Young Pastor

by Anthony Kidd

Playwright T.S. Eliot wrote, “In my beginning is my end.” The statement has been interpreted in many ways, but I see in it a reflective note of someone older who realizes that who we end up becoming is set in motion and already at work at the beginning of our lives. Oh, how I wish I had known that when I began my ministry.

This year I turned 52 years old and I am realizing very quickly that my end is closer than my beginning. As I reflect on 20 years of ministry, I wish I could go back and tell my younger self a few things — things that had I known at the beginning of the race would surely have served me, and others, well. If I could go back in time, here are four pieces of counsel I would share with my younger self.

1. Knowing the Bible is not the same as knowing Christ.

The apostle Paul said, “I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). That was his greatest passion: to know Jesus, to experience his resurrection power, to participate in his sufferings so that he might be conformed into his image. And that ought to be your greatest passion.

Seminary training is great. A working knowledge of Hebrew and Greek will serve you well. Reading your Bible, learning doctrine, and preparing gospel-saturated sermons are a must. But none of those is the same as having and cultivating a vibrant relationship with the risen Christ, fueled by regular drinking from the fountain of living water — Christ himself.

Never stop studying the Bible. But above all, never stop pursuing Christ. He is the pearl of great price and the greatest treasure in the universe. He laid hold of you so that you might spend the rest of your life growing in intimate knowledge of him. This might surprise you, but I have learned that the greatest need of your people is your personal knowledge of Jesus Christ.

2. Preaching sermons is not the same as loving people.

Don't get me wrong: preaching is important. You will spend the bulk of your ministry proclaiming God's word. It's your duty, one to which you will be held accountable. But as Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, “To love to preach is one thing, but to love the people

to whom you preach is quite another.” And let me tell you, God's people will inevitably know the difference.

Preaching is only part of being a faithful shepherd. You are called to model your shepherding efforts after Christ himself, of whom it is written, “having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end” (John 13:1). To love like that is to love not only in word from the pulpit, but also in deed with your presence amid people's pain, heartaches, and sufferings.

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You will discover that a congregation who knows you love and care for them will overlook a multitude of your flaws and endure any number of weak sermons. As pastor Albert Martin once said, “It's a false sense of piety of those who love to study who say, ‘I show my people I love them by sweat in the study,’ but then neglect them outside that realm.” Don't be a “noisy gong” or a “clanging cymbal” — be an unfeigned lover of Christ's blood-bought people. Show them that you love them.

3. Teaching godliness is not the same as being godly.

Private home life qualifies you for public ministry life. The home is simply a microcosm of the church. What you say and do in your home will either add weight to or erode your credibility in the church. So, never forget: ministering to your family is your primary calling.

Gathering the family for daily devotions will yield eternal dividends, but I have come to realize that my wife and kids watch me more intently than they listen. And confessedly, I'm sure I've spoiled some of my influence in their lives because of the gap between what I've taught and how I've lived. It's one thing to teach patience and something else to practice it.

Some of the most powerful words that you'll ever utter to your family is when you say to them with integrity, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). Strive to model the graces

ADC Church Profile —



of the gospel in your own life. Your family may not always listen to you, but trust me: they are always watching you.

Robert Murray McCheyne once wrote, “What a man is on his knees before God, that he is, and nothing more.” That’s true. But let me respectfully tweak it by saying, what a man is in his home before his wife and kids, that he is, and nothing more. Endeavor to be, by God’s grace, as Christlike as possible.

4. Defending yourself is not the same as defending the gospel.

Ministry is going to be tough. If you stay faithful to the gospel, you will be attacked, maligned, misunderstood, and criticized. The temptation will be to defend yourself at all cost. After all, no one likes to have his name dragged through the mud — trust me, I know.

Somewhere along the way, though, I learned that I was more concerned about my own name than I was about Jesus’s. It was my unmortified pride and ego that were bruised, so I fought back, only to realize that the more I fought, the more I made things about me. And the more things were about me, the less they were about Christ and his gospel. I lacked the humility of John the Baptist, who said, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

“What a man is in his home before his wife and kids, that he is, and nothing more.”

As I determined not to defend myself and only defend the gospel, I began to see in my life the reality of God’s promise in Exodus 14:14, “The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.” The best defense against personal attacks is maintaining “a good conscience” as you defend the hope of the gospel “with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15–16).

Well Worth It

Time travel is impossible, so I’ll never have the opportunity to counsel my younger self. But if you’re reading this and just getting started in ministry, perhaps you can take some of what I’ve shared to heart and spare yourself, your family, and God’s people some grief. If that’s the case, my hard knocks will have been well worth it.

John Newton called ministry “a sorrow full of joy.” That’s pretty accurate. But let me tell you, there is no greater work than giving yourself to the service of the all-glorious Savior who alone saves, sanctifies, and satisfies the soul.



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Anthony Kidd is the preaching pastor at Community of Faith Bible Church in South Gate, California. He and his wife, Sherry, have five children.

Abundant Grace Fellowship, Harlan, Indiana was founded in 2021. Current membership is at 13 and the pastoral team consists of Lester Zehr, Lead Pastor and Samson Eicher, Associate Pastor.

The church began when a group of families left an area church due to administrative differences. This group of families formed Abundant Grace Fellowship and began meeting in a rented building in Harlan, IN. Since the members of AGF desired affiliation with a group of like-minded churches, AGF applied for and received membership in ADC in 2021.

The current rental building is located about ten miles east of Fort Wayne, Indiana. Many of the families live farther north of Fort Wayne.

AGF’s ministries includes a single lady serving at Hillcrest Home, Harrison, AK. AGF is also involved with Gospel Echoes. Some of the members are involved in street ministry, an inner city camp, and in prison ministry. The pastors also preach regularly for a neighboring congregation and are sometimes involved in weekend meetings in other communities. AGF desires to expand congregational ministries as they become more established.

AGF maintains a presence on Facebook and the church website is abundantgracefellowship.net.

PASTOR SPOTLIGHT

Paul A. and Barbara Ann Miller serve at Gracepoint Church, Dover, Ohio. Paul has served in several ministerial positions – he was ordained as a minister at Maranatha Fellowship in 2000; served as lead pastor of Crosspointe Mennonite Church from 2015-2020; and is currently serving as an Associate Pastor at Gracepointe Church.

Paul and Barbara have five children: Joshua, married to Cora Hershberger; Julianne; Micah, married to Evie Nissley; Christopher, married to Stephanie Smucker; and Zachary, married to Jana Burkholder. They have nine grandchildren.

Paul is the Executive Officer of Anabaptist Financial. He is currently serving ADC as its Secretary-Treasurer and has done so since ADC's inception. He is a board member of Zollikon Institute, a newly established Bible institute offering accredited courses and non-accredited classes in business and Bible training for adults.

Paul reflects on his pastoral journey: "To be called to feed the flock of God and provide soul care for others has been an exhilarating journey in which I learned more personally than I ever taught others." 😊

Paul is an avid reader as evidenced by his recommendations:

"What books would I recommend? Here are some favorites from different sections of my lifetime reading list: For Bible study—my Bible reading was revitalized and my study grew in breadth and depth through a series of books written by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart. I recommend first reading *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, then reading *How to Read the Bible Book by Book* as a companion volume to your Bible reading. *Biblical Eldership* by Alexander Strauch has helped shape my thinking about church governance. *The Sending Church*



Defined by Zach Bradley helped me capture a biblical vision for planting churches. *The Cost of Discipleship* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer and *How God Became King* by N.T. Wright helped my theological development. For personal inspiration, *Radical* and *Something Has Got to Change* by David Platt have moved my heart. I found *An Introduction to Mennonite History* by Cornelius Dyck to be the most comprehensive overview of Anabaptist history. I learned much from *The Earth is the Lord's* by John L Ruth about how Anabaptist conferences and communities work and don't work. While not technically a Christian biography, *From Head Hunters to Church Planters* by Paul Hattaway is a favorite in this category. While not a Christian biography, much can be learned about pastoral teamwork from *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, by Doris Kearns Goodwin. Finally, I understand my own Amish upbringing better from *Unser Leit* by Leroy Beachy."

Thank you Paul and Barbara for your service to the Church of Christ!



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