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The ADC 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.

Anchored in Historical Anabaptism

Part I

by James Yoder

Anabaptists meeting secretly in Peter Piersz's boat. Illustration by Jan Luyken, Wikipedia.

Considering this is the 500th year since the first rebaptism transpired in the early years of the Reformation, we would do well to consider some of the historical tenets that anchored our particular strain of reformers and the values that still warrant our consideration today.

No culture remains static forever; in fact, it typically results in drifts of various sorts. Without doubt, the Anabaptist community and culture of 2025 is no different and has altered in various ways since its inception. We know that not all change is inherently wrong, yet every generation must determine what values are important to keep and what weights need to be set aside.

It is easy to devalue doctrines and practices that others have set into motion when we do not fully understand how they differentiate us from others, particularly our Protestant cousins. Yet it's my persuasion that we (of Anabaptist descent) are positioned with a unique "voice" in this world if we anchor ourselves in these historical doctrines and use them as a tool for evangelism rather than distance ourselves from them. We will never be effective in our outreach if we are not convinced that what we have is worth promoting.

At the same time, I'm not suggesting that we hold our culture so tight to ourselves that we are incapable of seeing inconsistencies within our culture that need to be course-corrected. A proper posture, I'd suggest, is to humbly realize that we've been gifted the honor of having men and women in our history who embraced the way of Christ and were passionate disciples of the Rabbi, Jesus Christ. Though imperfect in many ways, they died willingly for the cause of Christ. I challenge you not to waste this resource that has followed us for many generations.

As I think of my fellow ADC churches, I call you to consider a few historical tenets that have anchored us in the past and still serve us well today. Though the following points are not an exhaustive list of historical distinctives, these are a few of the more dominate themes that distinguished early Anabaptists and continue to anchor us today.

1. Believer's Baptism —

The Anabaptists disputed the common practice of baptizing infants, the order of the day among Catholics and Protestants, who believed they could regenerate babies in baptism. However, to the Anabaptists, baptizing infants or anyone who did not produce fruit in keeping with repentance, was no baptism at all.

Menno Simons contended that *"infant baptism will remain a horrid stench and abomination before God."* He further taught that *"only adults could bind themselves to the Lord Jesus, and in so doing they bind themselves in baptism to live no longer in sin."* In other words, baptism was the mark of change in the inner man, something infants were incapable of doing.

Menno also taught, *"The word of God must be taught and understood before baptism. To baptize before that which is represented by baptism, namely faith, is found in us, is as logical as to place a cart before the horse, to sow before we plow, to build before we have the lumber on hand, or to seal a letter before it is written."* Leonhard Schiemer also wrote, *"Whoever baptizes a child puts his seal on a blank document."* This persuasion came with a price. Consequently, many Anabaptists would die by the hand of those who opposed them.

"To become re-baptized . . . was to sign one's own death sentence . . ."

The sacrament of baptism literally pictured life and death to the Anabaptists. To become re-baptized (Anabaptist or *wiedertaufers*, "again baptized") upon one's confession of faith was to sign one's own death sentence in the sixteenth century. Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin had mercy on rebaptized people and only beheaded them. But in Roman Catholic countries, this was considered far too mild a punishment. Beheading was reserved for only those who recanted. Baptized adults were usually burned at the stake or bound hand and foot and thrown into the river.

But persecution did not silence the reformers. Menno Simons wrote regarding the person who experienced an inner washing: *"They profess their faith through baptism and declare that they will live no longer according to their own will, but according to the will of God. They declare that they are prepared to forsake their homes, possessions, lands and lives. They declare that they are ready to suffer hunger, affliction, oppression, persecution, cross and death, for Christ."* And thousands of them did.

The push for child evangelism in the 20th century is a nod toward the fallacies we exited nearly 500 years ago. Caution must be given that we don't give a false sense of hope by baptizing someone who has not *"counted the cost"* nor has experienced deep inner cleansing. The words of Jesus in Luke 14:26-33 puts incredible weight to the decision of being a disciple of Christ.

I wonder at times whether we've been influenced by the "easy believism" so prominent in the West today more than we care to admit. If we baptize those who have not *"counted the cost,"* then should we be surprised when they defect later in life when pressures increase? Instead, we should help our youth weigh the cost to be a disciple of Christ. For our forefathers, this decision often meant death. Today, many are taught that following Christ guarantees a life of ease and pleasure. May God give us wisdom to know how to develop true disciples of Christ.

2. An Outward Expression of Faith —

The Anabaptists believed that salvation came by faith through grace, but that such faith must bear visible fruit in repentance, conversion, regeneration, and obedience. They believed in a heart-penetrating repentance that was finished with sinning. They insisted on outer evidence of an inner transformation. *"Both inward and outward baptism,"* the Anabaptists taught, *"are incomplete in themselves."* They tied both of these together into one event.

To this Conrad Grebel wrote, *"Baptism is for those who want to better themselves, take on a new life, die to immorality, get buried with Christ and rise out of baptism to newness of life. Baptism is the mark of a change in the inner man."* Much Scripture in the New Testament called for evangelical obedience and if God called for it, the Anabaptists argued, it must be His will and it must be possible to do. Works were the outward expression of faith and not simply the *"fruit of faith"* as Luther had accused them.

Luther saw a conflict between grace and works. Influenced by Augustine rhetoric, he did not discern between the Law of Moses, particularly in his interpretation on the book of Romans, and any other "law" or instruction given in Scripture, including the words of Jesus. Hence, he vehemently rejected anything that smelled or tasted of works and strongly promoted a *"by faith alone"* salvation.

". . . a person is justified by works and not faith alone!"

The Anabaptists, however, considered all of Scripture, including the words of the Apostle James when he argued, *"You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone"* (James 2:24). Interestingly, the only time the words *"faith alone"* are used together in the New Testament is in an argument that salvation changes a person from the inside out and then produces works of righteousness. The Anabaptists believed that *"if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* (II Corinthians 5:17). For them, a life-style change was inevitable.

Those from the Protestant camp misread these sincere actions and responses and blamed the Anabaptists for being *"legalistic"* and teaching a *"works righteousness."* Peter Riedemann wrote this response: *"Many say of us that we seek to be good through our own works. To this we say 'No,' for we know that our work, in so far as it is our work, is naught but sin and unrighteousness; but insofar as it is of Christ and done by Christ in us, so far is it truth."*

The Anabaptists did not see any conflict between faith and works as did their Protestant contemporaries. According to Luther, *"works play no role in our salvation."* Paul would agree that works are not necessary for our initial salvation. However, Paul does teach, *"God… will render to every man according to his deeds (works)"* (Romans 2:6). The Anabaptists taught that godly expressions or works are essential if we are ultimately going to inherit eternal life.

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James Yoder serves as lead pastor of Berea Christian Fellowship in Nappanee, Indiana. He and his wife, Gladys, have six children.

Ladies Corner

The Room of My Life

by Mary Herschberger

As I was reflecting on my life, I found myself in a room in my heart. The room was plain, almost featureless, but its towering walls were lined with countless drawers. These were no ordinary cabinets- they seemed infinite, stretching beyond sight.

Curiosity mingled with unease as I stepped closer. Each drawer bore a label, and the titles struck an unnervingly personal chord: Things I have done that hurt others, Lies I have told, Books I have read, Negative thoughts that I had, Things I have muttered under my breath about those around me, Bitterness and grudges that I held toward my friends and family. It was a catalog of my life. When I opened the first drawer, my breath caught. Every name written on the card inside was unmistakably familiar, each tied to a vivid memory I thought I had long forgotten. These weren't abstract records- they were living, breathing moments captured in perfect detail.

I began opening more drawers, each one a reflection of a piece of me. Some cards stirred bittersweet joy, others brought sharp pains of guilt and regret. There was a drawer with "Friends I have made" next to "Friends I have betrayed." I found a drawer titled "Things I have done in my anger and frustrations," which left me raw. The sheer enormity of it all overwhelmed me. Could I have really lived long enough to fill all these drawers? And yet as I examined each card, I couldn't deny its authenticity. They were written in my own handwriting, signed with my name. When I opened the drawer labeled "People I have shared the gospel with," I was struck to the core. The drawer was bright, its handle shiny, but inside I only found a handful of cards. The weight of my failure pressed down on me and I collapsed to my knees, tears streaming down my face.

A desperate urge flowed within me – I had to destroy these records. I grabbed a drawer and slammed it to the ground, but the cards remained secure. I tried tearing one apart, but it was unbendable just like steel. Exhausted and defeated, I slumped against the wall, despair flooded my heart. That's when I felt His presence. I looked up and I saw Him -JESUS. My shame was immediate and unbearable. Of all people, why Him?

I watched, helpless, as He began opening the drawers. One by one, He read the cards. He didn't skip the worst ones; in fact, He seemed to seek them out. His face was solemn, His sorrow deeper than my own. I wanted scream, to beg Him to stop, but I couldn't find the words. Then something unimaginable happened. Jesus walked to my side, wrapped me in His arms, and wept with me. When He stood, He did something even more incredible. He began taking cards from the drawers and writing over them. His name-JESUS- written in crimson red, covered my own. I cried out, "No! These are my sins, my mistakes!" But He just smiled gently continued. He moved with impossible speed, covering every card, every drawer, until at last He closed the final one. He turned to me, His eyes filled with a love and compassion that broke me entirely, and said, "It is finished."

As He led me out of the room, I glanced back. The drawers were still there, unlocked and waiting. I knew more cards would be written. But I also knew would bear His name, not mine.

This left me with a deep sense of reflection. If such a room exists for each of us, what would yours look like? How many drawers would be filled with love, kindness, or courage? How many might hold regrets or moments you would rather forget?

Yet the greatest truth of the story isn't in the drawers themselves- it's in the crimson blood of Jesus, the one who wrote His signature on each drawer and card, that offers hope, Grace and redemption. We can't undo the past, but Jesus invites us to bring every drawer, every card to Him.

Challenging questions I needed to ask myself… What drawers in my life am I avoiding? How can I invite Jesus into those places of shame, regret, fear, and pain? Who in my life might need to hear about the grace that Jesus offers?

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9

Remember, the room in your life is not the end of the story. With Jesus, every wrong will be made right, and the chapter of your story rewritten.

Mary Herschberger, based in Walnut Creek, OH, serves at Freedom Hills Ministries where she works with single women of all ages and backgrounds. Having experienced deep spiritual transformation in her own life, Mary is passionate about helping others discover the same freedom and hope she found in Christ. With a heart for ministry and a message centered on Jesus, she dedicates her life to caring for single women and walking with them on their healing journeys.

Missions Update

As I reflect on the last few months, I'm filled with gratitude for God's goodness and for your continued support in the work of Impact International. Your support and prayers are a vital part of what makes this mission possible.

It was a blessing to connect with many of the youth leaders at the recent ADC Youth Retreat. I was encouraged by the depth of care you show for the young people in your church. I'm very optimistic about this next generation, and believe they will do great things for the Kingdom.

Summer Camp

One of the highlights this quarter was sending nine youth from Colorado, Ohio, and Pennsylvania to serve at a summer camp in India. Their week was intense—the team was with the children and teens during the day and bunked with them at night, creating a fully immersive experience. While it was challenging, it allowed for deep relational connections and real spiritual impact. They did an excellent job and represented their churches and our broader ADC community very well. The staff in India were deeply impressed by their humility, eagerness to learn, willingness to serve in any way needed, and the modest, respectful way they conducted themselves. Their example was a powerful witness.

We plan to offer an opportunity like this every year. If you're looking for a cross-cultural experience that will stretch you and grow your faith, we invite you to consider joining in the future.

Thank you again for your support. I truly believe God is preparing people in our churches to step into the opportunities He is opening. If you—or someone in your church—are sensing that call, let's start a conversation.

Tim Byler, Director

Make a difference in India

We shared the following opportunities at the Youth Retreat. These are not just for youth! If you want to know more, please contact us!

SHORT-TERM OPTIONS (6-months)

- Teach English and IELTS at Doon Language Center
- Coach/serve slum kids at Weliketohelp NGO
- Care for people in leper camps
- Teach basic computer/IT skills to teens
- Help Gina with homeschooling
- Help Gina start a bakery employing underprivileged ladies

LONG-TERM OPTIONS (12-months)

- Manage and scale Doon Language Center
- Teach at Harbor International School
- Launch new BPO service under Prosynergy
- Start a bakery employing under-privileged ladies

IMPACT INTERNATIONAL

PO Box 21

Sugarcreek, OH 44681

www.impactintl.org

ADC Church Profile —

Rosebud Bible Chapel, Rosebud, Texas was founded in January 2015.

The current pastoral team consists of Chris Troyer, Pastor and David Boyer, Elder.

Current membership is ten.

RBC was founded when a few local brethren developed a burden which became a vision of a church with an intentional mission to share Christ in a practical way to the local community. The church was founded with four families and a single brother. A few more joined in the next year.

David Boyer and Elmer Slabaugh were the founding elders, but there was no ordained pastor until January 2020 when Chris Troyer was called by the voice of the church and ordained with the assistance of Brother Dale Smucker from Pennsylvania.

RBC members have been blessed to see a few conversions in the local community and believe it is the mission of the church to continue sowing the seed and interacting with locals in a Christlike and redemptive manner.

RBC is blessed to have partnered with a local agency to distribute free food to the community. This has been one of the most visible and influential ways that members get to interact with the people in Rosebud and the surrounding communities. RBC also just started a weekly Bible Study geared especially toward community men seeking fellowship and a closer walk with God.

Strong Tower Christian Academy was founded primarily to educate the children of church families but is also open to others who wish to have their children attend. An auction is held to raise funds for the school every August/September.

RBC hosts an annual pancake breakfast at the church which is open to all. Several times throughout the year RBC hosts Sunday evening gatherings outside around the firepits with hot dogs, marshmallows, pizza, popcorn, etc. where community folk can gather and socialize.

One Sunday evening a month one of the member families hosts a family night that is often well attended with visitors.

Chris Troyer is the coordinator for the Texas Rapid Response team with Christian Aid Ministries. This has given members unique opportunities to respond to local storms and assist with disaster relief.

Interesting trivia - the building which houses RBC's church, school, and food ministry functions was an old Rural Electrical Coop Building with a flat roof. In April 2021 the roof was completely ruined during a major hailstorm which, of course, caused major interior damage. Consequently, the interior has been majorly renovated. Also, there is a 190' tall tower on the building grounds that used to be used for radio communication when the power company had it. Now it is used by a wireless internet company and is also known as the tallest Christmas tree in this part of Texas.

PASTOR SPOTLIGHT

Ryan and Teresa Good serve at Emmanuel Mennonite Fellowship, Amanda, Ohio.

They have six children – Joey (in service at New Horizons); Madison; Brennon, married to Chantel; Axtyn; Amber; and Annie.

Ryan was ordained 2001 as a minister and in 2014 as Lead Pastor.

Ryan works as a trucker.

Ryan reflects on his pastoral journey – "In 2024 I stepped down as Lead Pastor. I like to tell people that I am semi-retired. Serving the people of Emmanuel has been my life's greatest calling. I was actually commissioned in 1999, so I have been preaching for 26 years now. When I started in 1999, we were a struggling outreach church with three families. I was a very young pastor (24) and was privileged to be mentored by the older pastors from Haven Fellowship - Raymond Kauffman, Dan Hostetler, and Noah Beachy. Today, we are a thriving, growing church with a little over 30 families, not because of anything that I have done, but because of God's work and the people that are here. It has been such a blessing to watch the church grow. We have many young families and lots of children. A few years ago, we embarked on the first stage of a building/expansion project. We are currently in the beginning stages of our second building project phase. Since we have outgrown our sanctuary, this new phase involves completely remodeling our old building and including a new sanctuary. I am so thankful for the pastoral team that we have. I can truly say it has been a wonderful journey working with them. We have recently ordained two younger pastors including a deacon and I am excited to see how God will use them."

Thank you Ryan and Teresa for your service to the Church of Christ!

Leadership Committee Announcement

The following churches have voted to become affiliated with ADC since our Annual Assembly in January.

1. **As One Church** *Detroit, Michigan* — Elders Joe Kuepfer and Jonny Sommers
2. **Canton Anabaptist Church** *Canton, Ohio* — Pastor Tim R Miller
3. **Gospel Revival Fellowship** *Loudonville, Ohio* — Pastor, John Kauffman
4. **Skyline Mennonite Church** *Cañon City, Colorado* — Pastor, Nelson Hoover
5. **Redeemed Christian Fellowship** *Lancaster, Pennsylvania* — Pastor Dean Zimmerman

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