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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.

Reclaiming Shared Commitments

Discipleship or Legalism?

by Jeremy Miller

Editor's note – the following article is not intended to be an endorsement of Rosedale Bible College's non-adherence to certain Biblical doctrine but rather an invitation to employ an introspective spirit as we as ADC churches examine and reflect upon our own journeys in church life. President Jeremy Miller makes a strong case that for a church to thrive, boundaries and clear expectations are necessary. May our ADC churches always provide stable, sound church environments so intentional Biblical discipleship and practice can flourish.

In December of 2024, the *New York Post* published an article which pointed out the steep increase in the number of evangelicals turning to Eastern Orthodoxy, particularly young men. Shortly after reading this article, I was eating lunch with a group of RBC students. I asked why they thought young people might leave evangelical churches for Orthodoxy. Without hesitation they articulated with uncanny precision the arguments laid out in the *NY Post*.

- It is tied to the past; there are deep and lasting traditions.
- We don't get to make it up. We submit to something larger and longer lasting than ourselves.
- It feels steadfast. The structure provides a sense of stability and durability.
- The evangelical church seems overly focused on feelings and personal expression.
- It requires actions like fasting and prayer, and people are taught how to do those things.
- It isn't about us or how we feel, it's about God.

The general longing seemed to be for a greater sense of clarity, order, expectation, and discipline.

The above-mentioned inclinations stand in some tension with much of the RBC constituency. Many grew up in churches with maximal clarity, order, expectation, and discipline. There were guidelines for how men and women dressed, appropriate leisure activities, and even the color of one's car. Expected hair and veiling styles for women were spelled out. Men's hair couldn't be too short or too long. The goal was faithfulness to Jesus and becoming a distinctive group of people who were "separated unto God."

This kind of clarity is often associated with conservative Anabaptist groups or Bill Gothard's Institute in Basic Life Principles. Gothard's Institute wasn't a church but taught clear and orderly patterns of living. Many families from a variety of denominations adopted these teachings. I also have Baptist friends who remember their denomination's prohibitions against dancing and rules defining "modest dress."

The downsides to many of these orderly versions of church life have been well documented. Both former conservative Anabaptists and Bill Gothard adherents speak of the tendency these communities have of trapping people in a state of spiritual adolescence without the need to learn the skills of discernment and response to an ever-changing world.

Some speak of the abuse of power from those responsible for the enforcement of community expectations. Perhaps most personally for many, critics of these highly codified forms of church life speak of the absence of warm personal faith.

Against this backdrop, and in an age of antiinstitutionalism, it seems inevitable that we would see the rise of evangelical churches which minimize personal and corporate expectations while maximizing the endeavor to feel close to God.

For the last 30 years, very few evangelical churches have said anything about hair, but almost every church has invested significant resources in sound, lighting, and other modern worship essentials. This shift has also lessened the need for membership, a longstanding component of church life. Membership serves little function if there aren't firm expectations.

So, what's the problem?

Change is afoot. The church is a living body and in a continual state of reformation. As the children of church minimalists are growing up, they are noticing the gaps in a church devoid of discipline and shared commitments.

Topping the list is the devaluation of scriptural authority. Over the last 15 years, pastors, Bible teachers, and statisticians like George Barna have decried the loss of biblical literacy. This should come as no shock if our primary emphasis is on personal experience with Christ and a skepticism of structure and discipline.

The pages of the New Testament are filled with teaching about who God is and what He asks of His people. The NT straightforwardly addresses the ways we should live and interact with God and neighbor. There are demands on our lives. We discover them through the often-dry discipline of reading scripture. How do modern Christians deal with uncomfortable words that intrude into our inspiring worship experiences? All too often, we avoid the Book.

Recently one of my dear friends left a large evangelical church to join a smaller, very intentional church. At his new church, members painstakingly preach/teach through books of the Bible on Sunday mornings. They gather on Sunday evenings to learn systematic theology. His life bears witness to the impact of his search for God through the scriptures. He witnesses to coworkers, gives generously, consciously avoids sin, and teaches his young children the church catechism. He says that God's Spirit is transforming his family through a church that takes the scriptures seriously.

This story is only one of many friends and acquaintances who are moving toward more disciplined communities of faith.

Minimalist church structures have also led to increasing loneliness. No organization (business, church, family, or non-profit) thrives without boundaries or clear expectations. Shared commitments with enforced boundaries and expectations help give identity and promote belonging.

One reason many Christians feel lonely in church is that we have removed the very mechanisms that facilitate meaningful relationships. Individuals can simply believe what they want, do what they want, and move in and out of church groups with minimal discomfort. In communities of deep belonging, this level of spiritual autonomy is impossible.

I recently preached in a church where a former member shared with the elders her intent to transfer to another church. When this news was shared publicly with the congregation, they prayed a prayer of blessing over the one who left. This church showed practically that membership means something, that they care about their members' decisions.

But what about all those who fled from the "legalism" of their highly ordered church communities over the last four decades? The reasons for their departure are not insignificant.

A test case for Christian community

While we are not a church, RBC is a sort of test case for Christian community. Forty years ago, our campus community looked very different. I suspect we were not accused of having too few rules!

In the mid 2000's, the Administrative Council felt strongly that we needed to stay in closer step with many of the churches we were serving. We reduced the number of rules and expectations. Our handbook became smaller, but we worked hard to be intentional about spiritual formation and Godly expectations for our life together. Our students today don't generally feel "smothered", but they also know that life on campus comes with demands on their time, relationships, and activities.

The teachings of the Bible and our worship of Jesus are central to our ordered life together. We expect students to follow the scriptures as we understand them. We have daily morning worship, twice-weekly chapels, weekly discipleship groups, and church services on weekends. All students spend time serving a minimum of one hour/week in non-profit ministries. We have stated expectations for how students treat each other.

While the rhythm of life at RBC is an adjustment for many students, by the end of the first year, most are rewarded with a kind of community life of faith they hadn't experienced heretofore, and they flourish.

Could it be that our church communities might benefit from a clearer set of expectations for life and practice? If students can find belonging in a disciplined RBC community, might they not also find belonging in a disciplined church community hungry to help each other follow Jesus? In His last words to His first disciples Jesus said, "teach them to obey **all things** I have commanded you." (Matt. 28:20).

But what about intimacy with Christ? Can intimacy with Jesus and a disciplined church community coexist?

The Bible holds many spiritual principles together that seem at odds with each other. For instance, true freedom in Christ requires submission to Him and His body. Spiritual intimacy comes as we align with Christ's instructions. (*The one who has My commands and keeps them is the one who loves Me.* – John 14:21 CSB)

What's next for the Church?

To be sure, systematic plans to spell out Christian beliefs and practices for a group can overreach and lead to spiritual adolescence and the loss of communal harmony. This does not mean that wise church communities disregard the entire enterprise of shared commitments.

As Martin Luther's "grace" swung Protestants away from the rigidity of Roman Catholic works/rituals, Anabaptists tried to walk the tightrope of "grace" expressing itself daily in "word and deed" rituals. We agreed that following Christ daily affects every area of life – our speech, our attire, our finances, our free time, our jobs.

If older generations focused too much on "works" and rigid church standards, and the following generation fled "legalism" for total "freedom in Christ," is it time for another correction?

Many young men and women are hungry to commit to a church that is "distinct and disciplined," clearer about the scriptures and Christ's call on our lives.

What should that look like? Perhaps this generation will help us rediscover the beauty of a more disciplined body of Christ.

We have 500-year-old roots in a renewal movement whose watchword was, "show us from the Scriptures." We don't look to our "feelings" to lead us. We look to the ancient paths of Jesus and the early church. We yield to a community of like-minded brothers and sisters who are committed to "seeking first the Kingdom" in the power of the Holy Spirit.

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Jeremy Miller ('00) is the president of RBC and lives in Rosedale with his wife Sarah and their four children.

Mission: *Update* India

The mission work in India has continued to grow and develop through the faithful labor of the team serving there. In February, board member Gene Beachy and his wife Kristina traveled to India alongside the mission director and his family for an official ministry visit focused on encouragement and fellowship with the team on the field. Kristina shares some reflections and highlights of their trip.

We were told that visiting India would be a life-changing trip. I remember being skeptical, which makes me laugh now. India is a land of colorful, incredible beauty. It's diverse and loud and vibrant—a land of sensory overload that we will never forget! With 1.4 billion people, India is the world's most populous nation. More than 80% are Hindu,13% are Muslim, and only 2.3 % are Christian. Other religions include Buddhism, Sikhism, and Jainism, all of which began in India.

The actual traveling part ended up being more adventure than we bargained for when the war with Iran broke out and we ended up having to take the long way home around the world, leaving a few days later than we had originally planned, because we couldn't fly back through the Middle East. This meant we traveled the entire way around the globe in one trip! Our departing flights: Chicago > Abu Dhabi > India. Returning flights: India > Sri Lanka > Australia > LA > Chicago.

As former MKs (missionary kids), we enjoy experiencing new cultures and meeting people from around the world. Gene and I both lived in Kenya for multiple years with our families, and then we spent parts of 3 years in Belize with our own girls; so, the foreign field will always tug on our heartstrings and reel us in.

On this trip we were privileged to travel across India, seeing the majestic Himalayans in the north, the mountains of Munnar, with its deep valleys, panoramic views, and lush, rolling tea plantations, high altitude grasslands in a national park, and the hot, tropical south.

Multiple times a day, we stopped for a cup of delicious hot chai. The Indian people were quite hospitable, and we were served some of the most delicious, mouth-watering, and often spicy! dishes. Drinking fresh coconut water, right out of the coconut, is a fun experience. The many kinds of Indian breads—Kerala parotta, bhatura, & masala dosa—were some of our favorite things to eat in India. Since beef is off the menu, some places serve buffalo, which we got to eat at a tasty Tibetan restaurant. It was important to eat only the foods our friends told us were safe to eat, since we have weak American stomachs and cannot handle the level of spice or the bacteria on food washed with unclean water, or fresh fruits that had been cut and sitting out for hours.

Some of the traditions we learned: always take off your shoes before entering someone's home. Your left hand is considered unclean and must not touch people or food, therefore you eat only with your right hand. Men and women do not touch, so avoid shaking hands unless the person you greet offers first. Place your palms together and bow slightly instead. We did this many times throughout the trip, repeating "Praise the Lord!" to our hosts as they said it to us.

Along the way, we got to know a man whose grandfather knew Amy Carmichael. He is a third-generation Christian today because of the influence she had on his grandparent's life! We also were privileged to see a temple where it is highly likely that Amy rescued slave girls from. We were planning to tour the inside, but upon learning they wanted us to put a red dot on our forehead, we decided against going in. The red dot, called a bindi, represents the "third eye", promoting spiritual vision, is worn for daily prayers, religious rituals, and is also a part of traditional wedding attire.

Visiting Tim & Gina Kuepfer and their sweet family was a big highlight of the trip! They were amazing hosts, and we greatly enjoyed touring their town and learning more about their life in northern India and their business, Prosynergy, that employs local Indians to do bookkeeping & accounting for businesses and individuals from the states.

We also got to visit the Living Hope Center which is sponsored by Prosynergy. The Center offers sewing classes, an after-school education program for children from the slums, and computer classes. It was inspiring to see the hope the Center brought the Indian people but also overwhelming to see the vast needs, with so many more people wanting an opportunity to improve their lives.

Halfway through our time there, I realized that India was "wrecking" me--in a good way. Weeks later, I'm still processing all I saw and heard…I feel so unworthy to live where I do and have the opportunities and freedom I have. I could have been born a Hindu, believing I needed to worship 33 million false gods, hoping to appease them even though they are deeply flawed. (Some of their gods commit adultery and permit child sacrifice, just to name a few of

their "flaws".) I could have grown up believing that cows are sacred and represent divinity. (Interestingly enough, India has the highest cattle population of any country in the world! We often had to drive around them as they meandered down the roads.)

It was incredibly faith-strengthening to hear first-hand how God is calling believers out of the Hindu religion and showing them Himself—the One True God. The One Who Heals. The One Who is above all other gods. These brave believers are sharing Jesus throughout their villages and the cost is high. Suffering from persecution, some of them are losing their families, friends, and communities.

As we listened to the believer's supernatural life stories, we learned several things:

> God is still doing miracles today! We heard story after story of how God healed the sick and dying and how He brought them back to life, saved people from suicide, provided for their exact needs, changed their lives forever, and brought them out darkness and into His marvelous Light.

One pastor told us that he used to be a fortune teller, but when he accepted Christ, his life completely changed. He didn't know how to read or write, but one day, God gave him a song, and he picked up a pen and began to write. He's been able to read and write ever since! He joyfully sang his sweet, simple song for us in his native tongue, while some of the other pastors rhythmically drummed their fingers on their chairs, smiling from ear-to-ear. It was a moment I'll never forget.

> God does miracles through the obedience & faith of His people. Every miracle we heard about involved someone showing the unbelievers the Way by asking them to step out in faith or involved praying for them in faith.

A pastor recounted the story of his 7-year-old sister who had a disease where her flesh was rotting off the bone and worms were coming out. She had very little time left to live, but a pastor came and prayed for her, and she was miraculously healed. We met her that day we heard her story. She served us little cups of coffee, bananas, coconut biscuits, and crispy chips. She wrapped me in a welcome blanket and hugged me, then held my hand as we walked. We couldn't speak the same language, but we could smile at each other with Jesus's love. This love, crossing all barriers, brings tears to my eyes when I think about it.

> God does miracles primarily for the unbelievers. We heard many unforgettable testimonies of God performing miracles for unbelievers. But here's the kicker: the miracles often stopped once a person was a believer. Now this doesn't mean He didn't answer their prayers or provide for them anymore—far from it! But as Christians, we know that suffering for Him is a part of carrying our cross. He doesn't promise a safe and comfortable life after choosing to follow Him, but He is always with us, working things out for our good!

There are 700,000 villages in India and every one of them has a deity tree, a shrine, or a temple called mandirs. In fact, most villages have more than one—there are an estimated 2-4 million mandirs in India! As we drove through many villages, dodging past thousands of people and animals, tiny shrines, and lavish temples, our Indian driver played worship songs over the car stereo. Gene and I sang along with him, and at one point, we began singing "Holy Forever".

"A thousand generations falling down in worship
To sing the song of ages to the Lamb
And all who've gone before us and all who will believe
Will sing the song of ages to the Lamb
Your name is the highest
Your name is the greatest
Your name stands above them all
All thrones and dominions
All powers and positions
Your name stands above them all."

It was a deeply impactful moment. Here we were, worshiping the One True God whose name stands about them all, in a land where so many are trying to appease their innumerable gods every day when they could be free indeed in Christ. Pray for them…Pray especially for the believers. God is doing an extraordinary work there and they need our prayers and our support. And go visit—you will not regret it!

iMPACT INTERNATIONAL

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ADC Church Profile —

Skyline Mennonite Church, Cañon City, Colorado was founded in 2004.

Skyline has 78 members with regular attendance of over 225. The presence of New Horizons Ministries' volunteers results in many attendees attending for one to three years and still maintain membership at their home church.

The current pastoral team consists of Scott Hostetler, Pastor; Nate Helmuth, Administrative Pastor/Deacon; Kendrick Miller, Teaching Pastor; Nelson Hoover, Elder; Asher Witmer, Elder.

Skyline was founded in 2004 for the purpose of creating a church for New Horizons Ministries' (NHM) staff. Through the years, Skyline and NHM have worked together to provide a church for NHM staff and many others that move west for various reasons. Skyline members are grateful for the blessing of having NHM staff being a part of their body! Having ministry staff make up a significant portion of our attendees brings unique blessings, opportunities, and challenges that continue to invite all to learn to walk in love and grace with each other.

Skyline has experienced the blessing of planting two churches over the years – the first being in Westcliffe, CO and more recently in Florence, CO. Skyline is once again bursting at the seams and praying to discern God's direction for their future.

Cañon City is nestled in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains in an area known as the "banana belt of Colorado" because of the way the mountains push a lot of winter weather around the area. As a result of this, Cañon City has a warmer and drier climate than most of Colorado, with an annual average rainfall of 13".

A widows' ministry was started in a member's home thirteen years ago and has grown to serve 200+ local widows several times per year. Royal Gorge VBS is a full, fun week of sharing the Gospel with 200+ children from our community every June. Skyline encourages, and many members find personal avenues of ministry to offer the gifts they have been entrusted with.

Interesting trivia: the first meeting place for Skyline was at a Jewish church building. They used it on Saturday and Skyline's members met there on Sunday. This arrangement continued for several years until members were able to purchase a Nazarene church in the heart of Cañon City that was closing its doors.

PASTOR SPOTLIGHT

Jase and Donna Yoder serve at Woodlawn Church, Goshen, Indiana.

Jase was ordained July 21, 2024 as Youth Pastor and is employed in sales.

Jase reflects on his pastoral journey – "This was a new position for our church, so I am learning along the way, but it has been a huge blessing and reward to be youth pastor. My goal is to be an encourager to our youth, listen to them, challenge them, and help them in a positive way in all aspects of life. I want everyone to recognize that our youth are the church of today, not just the church of tomorrow! I have also learned so much by my being a part of the rest of the pastoral team as well. I have been strengthened by them and I'm learning how to lead well and work together for the common goal to bring honor and glory to our Savior!"

Jase serves on the Woodlawn school board and the church Medical Aid board.

He recommends *The Insanity of Obedience* by Nik Ripken; *Wild at Heart* by John Eldredge; most books by Frank Peretti; and any book written by Nathaniel Philbrick (Jase enjoys American history). He also enjoys podcasts concerning soil and regenerative farming and would specifically recommend podcasts by Greg Judy and Joel Salatin.

Thank you Jase and Donna for your service to the Church of Christ!

The ADC Disciple

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Awake Cafe | Detroit

Awake Café is more than a coffee shop—it's a community hub in the heart of Midtown Detroit where quality coffee, handcrafted treats, and genuine human connection come together.

SHIFT LEADER

We are seeking a dedicated and people-focused Shift Leader who thrives in a team environment and is passionate about building meaningful relationships with customers.

Position Overview As a Shift Leader, you will play a key role in daily operations, guiding your team to deliver exceptional service while fostering a warm, welcoming atmosphere. You'll set the tone for each shift—leading by example, supporting your coworkers, and ensuring every customer interaction reflects the heart of Awake Café.

What You'll Do

- Lead and support a team of baristas during daily shifts
- Cultivate a positive, team-oriented work environment
- Build genuine relationships with regulars and first-time customers alike
- Ensure consistent quality in beverages, food, and customer experience
- Handle shift operations including opening/closing, cash management, and workflow coordination
- Train and mentor team members to grow in skill and confidence
- Report directly to general manager and attend weekly management meetings

What We're Looking For

- A commitment to teamwork and collaboration
- A passion to connect with people and create memorable customer experiences
- Servant leadership with a humble, service-oriented mindset
- Reliability, organization, and attention to detail
- Coffee or food service experience preferred, but not required

BARISTA

We are looking for a friendly, team-oriented Barista who takes pride in their work and genuinely enjoys building relationships with people.

Position Overview As a Barista, you are the face of Awake Café. You'll create high-quality drinks, deliver exceptional service, and help cultivate an environment where customers feel known, welcomed, and valued. This role is perfect for someone who loves working alongside a team and sees every customer interaction as an opportunity to make someone's day better.

What You'll Do

- Prepare and serve coffee, espresso drinks, and specialty items with consistency and care
- Provide warm, attentive customer service in a fast-paced environment
- Build meaningful connections with regulars and first-time guests
- Work collaboratively with teammates to maintain a smooth and positive workflow
- Keep the café clean, organized, and inviting
- Learn and uphold Awake Café standards for quality and hospitality

What We're Looking For

- A genuine love for working with a team and contributing to a positive culture
- Strong interpersonal skills and a passion to connect with and care for people
- Attention to detail and a commitment to quality
- A positive attitude and willingness to learn
- Reliability and the ability to stay composed in a fast-paced setting
- Coffee experience is a plus, but not required—we're happy to train the right person

Why Awake Café? This role offers more than just a job—it's an opportunity to experience life in an urban setting while being part of a supportive and close-knit team.

- Experience Midtown Detroit: Immerse yourself in one of the city's dynamic neighborhoods and discover what urban life in a major city is like
- Community-Focused Work: Be part of a coffee shop that values relationships over transactions
- Personal & Professional Growth: Develop leadership skills, deepen your ability to connect with others, and grow within a hospitality-focused business

If you're someone who values people, thrives in a team, and is excited about the opportunity to live and work in a vibrant city environment, we'd love to hear from you.

Join us at Awake Café —where great coffee meets meaningful connection. To apply, contact Melissa Kauffman, manager at 617-939-8737.