



Merry Christmas!

Last night I had an untimely wake-up, a short but vivid dream that started me on a journey of prayer, tossing, turning, and more frustration than I care to admit (I hope my lack of sleep isn't creating undue tensions in the office!). But it did get me to think of a line in the Christmas carol, *Oh Little Town of Bethlehem*. "Yet in the dark street shineth the everlasting light. The hopes and fears of all the years are met in Thee tonight." What are you afraid of? What are your hopes? Jesus, the one born on that Bethlehem night is the answer to both your fears and your hopes. If you are afraid (like the shepherds were), or if you need hope in the way forward (like the Magi), then we can trust in that "everlasting light" on our dark street.

May you, this Christmas, experience Jesus as the One who meets you in your hopes and fears.

Paul J Loewen (ABMB Conference Pastor), on behalf of the Alberta team—Executive Board (Kerry Dyck, Dennis Wiens, Connie Neufeld, Elroy Senneker, Laurence Hiebert, Nelson Senft), Ruthie Kopp (Executive Assistant), Johnny Thiessen (C2C)

Pastor's and Spouse's Retreat

On October 5-7, 48 pastors and spouses shared in the fun, rest, relationships, and re-energizing of the weekend. The theme of the weekend, "CORE" gave focus to the central call of the church—to make disciples. Our time together ended with communion and a very meaningful prayer time led by Terry Lamb. Cory Alstad from BC, our worship leader, really helped us focus as well. Some of you missed out on this incredible experience together – plan to join us next year (date?).

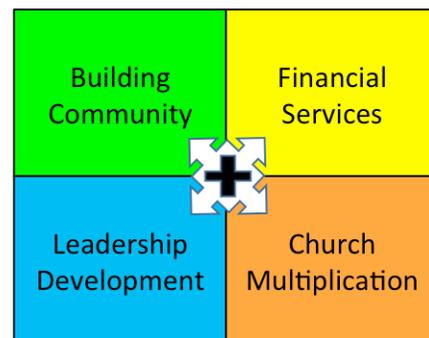
Some of the pastors have asked me to come to their boards to expand on the disciple-making or the APEST seminars. If any of you would like me to be part of your church's leadership team in this way, contact me at paul.loewen@abmb.ca and I'll be happy to book in some time with you.



Regional Meetings (November 3-5)

Commonly known as the "Road Show" these regional meetings highlight some of the key events, issues, and plans of ABMB (along with the National Conference - CCMBC). This time is also when ABMB church leaders can ask questions of the Conference and engage in dialogue. We had good discussion at each location (Coaldale, Edmonton, Calgary), although each one with a different emphasis. Special thanks to Willy Reimer for engaging us well regarding national/provincial concerns. Here are some highlights:

1. **The National-Provincial Partnership** is moving forward with more clarity. Essentially all of the monies given to the Conference (both nationally and provincially) are processed through the same desk and so one combined cheque is sufficient and preferred (payable to CCMBC). The CCMBC budget identifies the ABMB portion as a "CCMBC project"; the provincial conference is expected to speak into the budget development and will be responsible for its fiduciary through the ABMB Executive Board and ABMB constituency (at ABMB Convention). More details will be presented at the Convention in March (20-21), along with the "Four Services Model"—Building Community, Developing Leaders, Multiplying Churches, and Financial Services.



2. **Church Operations** is an important aspect of church life and we are looking at how to help churches better manage things like insurance policies (exploring the idea of a unified provincial policy to which all ABMB churches participate), "Safe-Place" policies and procedures, CCLI (worship music) licensing, HR policies such as job profiles for staff and volunteers, and compliance issues with CRA. Although these seem technical they are also extremely important should anything not go well in any of these areas (as some churches are realizing this the painful way). The ABMB office is sending out a survey to every church to ascertain places of gaps and what we can do to assist you in this. Ruthie Kopp will be following up with you on this so please complete the questionnaire as soon as possible. Thank you!

Convention, March 20-21

"Disciple-Making that Transforms" (Leadership for life-change in the local church)

Mark your calendars as you will not want to miss what we are lining up. Friday is a ministry and leadership development day that is open to everyone. We are planning to include some of the following equipping ideas (some in TED-talk style):

- Kids Ministry that Develops Disciple-Making Leaders
- Preaching for Transformation
- Altering the Call—inviting people to decide
- Checking Out—why the next generation is leaving unchanged
- Worship that Transforms the Heart and Mind
- Managing the Ministry (why policies, procedures, and personnel systems matter to ministry)
- IMPACT churches don't have to be Mega!
- Boards that Work
- Making Disciples Across the Generations
- Church Multiplication For Everyone!
- Coaching

Friday night we begin with our ABMB Family Dinner that will be a celebration with stories of what God is doing in our churches and ministries.

Saturday is our "business session" in which we will hear reports, dialogue further on our relationship between ABMB & CCMBC, decide on our vision and plan financially accordingly. We will begin at 8:30am and plan to be done no later than 2:30pm.

I can say with confidence that those who will join the conversation at Convention will be blessed by God's Spirit, will be encouraged in their friendship with others in ministry leadership, and will see their church encouraged as they move toward exercising generosity with one another. We will do everything possible to make this experience helpful, participatory, relational and life-giving, and we look forward to having you join in full participation. We expect to see every ABMB church well represented!

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