



The Rocky Mountain American Baptist

A Newsletter of the American Baptist Churches in the Rocky Mountain Region



About this Edition

“Re-creation” after Covid-19

Note: Back in February when we were making

the decision to go to a bimonthly format, we identified the theme for this newsletter to be “Recreation” with an eye towards the coming summer months, camping and our human need to recreate. But apparently God had other plans. The coronavirus came to bear, and we now find ourselves not sure what the summer will hold for us either in the way of recreation, camping and the things we thought to promote and encourage.



One thing is clear though, God is using this time to RE-CREATE the church. Those churches that survive this time of shelter-in-place, stay-at-home and social distancing will have changed and will not be able to go back fully to the way they were!

And so, we introduce this edition of the RMAB with the theme of “Re-creation”



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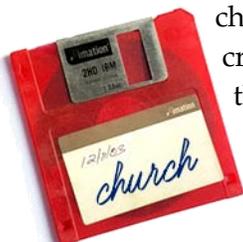
Go to abcrum.org for a digital version.

Servant Offering

Re-creating Church ‘Hardware’

The computer age introduced us to the concepts of hardware and software and their innate differences. With software, the same kind of hardware can do different things. Alternatively, there are times that you are unable to run specific software due to outdated hardware. Thus the importance of having up-to-date hardware.

As we look at the future of the church, especially post-Covid-19, it is apparent that the church will have to be able to adapt and to change quickly while at the same time preserving critical parts of the past. And, as with computers, the church may have to upgrade some of its hardware in order to do this. The church’s hardware are the physical things that are part of a church, things like our building, our style of governance, and our giving mechanisms.

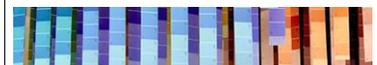


Church Buildings: Perhaps the most visible piece of a church’s

“hardware” is its physical building. While we all know *Continued on next page ...*

“The circumstances we ask God to change are often the circumstances God is using to change us.”

— Max Lucado,
Christian Author



the church is not the building, the reality is most of us form a mental link between “church” and the building. Traditionally, the church building has served three functions:

- **Temple or Tabernacle** – a place where the people come to encounter the Holy
- **Community Center** – think *Little House on the Prairie* and the role of the church building not only for worship, but also for school and for community meetings. Church buildings often have served as the place for large community gatherings
- **Mission Control** – The church building has served as the training and control center for the church’s mission. Whether it was a “knock on doors” evangelism effort or leadership training, the place to gather has generally been the church building.



... UPDATING ...

These functions will still need to occur in the future church, but the Covid-19 crisis has demonstrated yet again that the building serves the function, but the function is not dependent upon the building.

While the success of live-streaming might suggest that a physical space is no longer necessary, there is a reality that we form a powerful bond to a particular place and there will always be a need for Holy space. However, most churches will need to continue and to perfect their “live streaming” capabilities for prospective and new members.

Leadership Structure: The Covid-19 crisis has made it apparent that there is a need for a flexible and adaptive leadership structure in the church. While firmly committed to “congregational polity” for the overall vision and direction of a church, the rapidity

of change in modern culture dictates that the execution of modern ministry be guided by a smaller group. Many Baptist churches have moved from a traditional deacon board to an elder board who has the power to make the decisions necessary in this environment. In truth, smaller churches that have not adopted an “elder” system have often functioned *de facto* in this manner. Whatever form it takes, future leadership structure must allow for this rapid adaptability.

Funding and Stewardship: The final piece of church “hardware” I want to consider is the giving function in the church. Traditionally, our churches have provided for the function of their church through the Sunday morning offering.

We have understood our “tithes” to be an obligation of the members of the church to support the function and ministry of the church – whether the church was insistent upon the Old Testament mandate of 10% or more flexible. Gifts and offerings were understood as those contributions for other functions like missionary offerings and special ministries of the church as well as gifts from non-members done as an act of worship.

Today, not only is “cash no longer king” but in a culture where worship does not necessarily take place in the same place or time, the church must rethink how we receive tithes and offerings in the church. Churches must look at forms of electronic giving.

For “tithing”, the easiest function is often the giver’s online bill pay option at their bank. This allows regular giving without the church or giver incurring a user fee. But this does not help with those who are visiting the church, either online or live. For that reason, churches need to have options for people to give electronically both on the website and in some “app based” point of sale method. Experts advise that churches should first check with their accounting and church management software companies to see what integrated solutions might already exist. Failure to do so can mean the loss of potential ministry revenue.

*In Christ,
Steve Van O*

Pastoral Care Prescription *in times of*



One of the things we do as pastors is care for our flock. When life is “normal,” this can be a challenging task. When life gets turned upside down, like it is right now during the COVID-19 crisis, pastoral care can seem impossible! Here are a few things that I’ve learned to be important during this challenging season.

First, the same rule of thumb still applies when it comes to pastoral care: **presence is powerful**. However, with all of the restrictions in place, we can’t offer our presence like we once did. Hospitals and nursing homes are restricting access to clergy. Even if someone would welcome a visit into his or her home, it may not be wise to go. Thankfully we live in a time where we can circumvent this problem, at least to a degree. Utilize technology. I’ve had several care conversations over the phone, counseling appointments on Zoom, and I even sent encouraging texts or hand-written letters that have gone a long way. Just because we can’t be physically near, doesn’t mean we can’t still be present.

Second, empower people around you to care for those in your con-

gregation. It’s not news to any of us that we cannot care for everyone on our own. We need people to help, and further, God has spiritually gifted people within our congregations to care for others. With a little bit of coaching and direction, this can also go a long way. One of the things we’ve done is collected all of the names in our database of people who are in the 65-plus age range. I recruited a team of about 30 people who are willing to call 10 of those households each week to check in, assess any needs, “visit” with them over the phone and pray together. Just like that,

**When it comes to pastoral care:
presence is powerful.**



we have 400 people who are getting weekly care calls!

Finally, it is so important, possibly more than ever before, to engage our people with empathy. There are a lot of emotions floating around right now, and most of them go unprocessed since we are isolated. Feelings of grief, disorientation, loss, fear, and frustration are probably just a few of the things that people are feeling.

It’s so important to allow people to own and express what they’re experiencing without judgment or correction. We do that by empathizing with them. Listen. What are they saying? Why are they saying it? Empathy can go a long way in helping people feel “normal” during such a strange time.

Let’s allow the Holy Spirit to empower us and to bring about the healing salve of God’s presence to the wounded and broken hearts who need it. Be encouraged: we’re not alone in this time of uncertainty!

*Chris Amdahl,
Care Pastor at Crossroads Church*

Community Impact: Now more than Ever

Tim Keller in his book *Center Church* writes, “Ultimately, it is impossible to separate word and deed ministry because human beings are integrated wholes — body and soul. It is both natural and necessary that ministers of mercy also minister the Word while they are in the process of meeting human needs, and that communicators of the gospel also show compassion with regard to the material needs of the people they are trying to reach. An integrative ministry means weaving together word and deed ministry as much as possible.”

While the church and its operations are being challenged during this pandemic, the mission of the church remains the same. *But how? How do we as followers of Jesus who cannot gather and assemble at this time strategically and significantly move in united mission to make tangible gospel impact in the lives of others?* Three thoughts come to mind.

Continue To Make Others a Priority

Philippians 2:3-4 are good motivators for us, “... in humility count others more significant than yourselves ... look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

It’s a default setting in each of us to look out for our own safety, well-being and interests especially during a crisis. Christians are people who’ve been empowered by the love, grace and fullness of Jesus to live beyond ourselves. We are people who grow in compassion and love for others in demonstrable ways. We disadvantage ourselves for the advantage of others. We focus on service not selfishness especially when things are unsettled. That means in part that we



take substantial interest in how our neighbors are doing. We shovel snow, mow grass, send notes, deliver food, make a call, cause a smile, share a resource, offer assistance, pay a bill, offer prayer. We intentionally look for ways to look out for their interests, and act on what we discover, even if it’s inconvenient.

Connect People To God

It seems that times of confusion, fear and uncertainty are fertile places for people to see and hear the gospel of Jesus. Last week I challenged the five boys that work in my bike shop with

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Colo. ABW conference canceled due to COVID-19

Due to the current situation the country is in, the Colorado American Baptist Women’s Conference, Sisters Seeking Wholeness, scheduled for June 5-6, is cancelled. The committee decided it would be in the best interest of the conference goers to wait until next year so there is no financial hardship. If it is God’s will for us to meet next year, we will have the conference at the Embassy Suites by Hilton, Denver Tech Center North. We do not have a conference date at this time; as soon as we have a date, we will be in touch with you. Women of God please pray and stay in prayer



about the state of our country. Please check on your family, friends, and those who are vulnerable to the coronavirus. Pray for seniors in nursing homes, patients in the hospitals, our educational system, businesses, etc. James 1:2-4 tells us we will have trials and how we have to persevere. As we persevere during this time, we have to pray. We have to offer our prayers in faith and believe that God will give the scientists the wisdom to find a cure. James 5:16 tells us the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. As Women of God, let us put our faith together and pray and see how God moves during this time.

By David and Joyce Reed

RE-CREATING

SABBATH

“What will it look like to be Church and practice Sabbath after the shelter-at-home phase of Covid-19?” Honestly...I have no idea. I sense, however, that there is a significant and emerging God invitation to the “new thing” spoken of in Isaiah 43. The question is – “Can we perceive it?”

This Covid-19 experience makes me think of Walter Brueggemann’s book, *The Message of the Psalms*. He writes about Orientation, Disorientation, and Reorientation. Right now, we are in the middle of **disorientation** where we feel vulnerable, lost, angry, afraid, frustrated, and undone. It doesn't mean we lack faith, but it presents the question, “What does it mean to be a faithful presence during disorientation?” Disorientation is a time of more questions than answers, of waiting, listening, and trust. It is an invitation to spiritual discernment. And, it's uncomfortable. We tend to want to rush through disorientation because not knowing can be extremely uncomfortable.

Question: *What are your intentional spiritual practices of discernment during disorientation?*

For most of us, we begin to see and then seek immediate practical answers to the question, “What’s next?” Will we have to meter people entering the church? Will we need hand sanitizer and individual packets of Kleenex in every pew? How will we clean every community area? Will people need to sit six-feet apart? Will masks be required? Can we hug, shake hands, fellowship? What about communion? What if someone sneezes, or begins to weep? The people of the church will want answers.

Disorientation and discernment, however, are about deeper questions and a deeper shift. It invites lead-

ers to slow down, to linger with questions rather than rush through them to answers. *What is underneath the practical questions? What is God inviting us to see and become?* It’s like walking the road to Emmaus in the space between the resurrection and Pentecost. It’s liminal. Nobody saw anything until God “opened their eyes.” We don’t know what we’re saying good-bye to nor do we know what is emerging. In Easter terms, we don’t know what is dying and we

don't know yet what new life is emerging from the tomb(s). During disorientation, none of us have answers to the deeper questions of how Covid-19 is changing us and what is God up to. We're waiting, and discerning.

As I think about the question of church and Sabbath after Covid-19, I don’t think Sabbath has changed and that’s good news! Instead, I think we are being invited to change. How will we explore and discover who we are in response to the Sabbath invitation? Covid-19 is reminding us how deeply and desperately we need each other, that we cannot do this alone. This is true for community and its true for leaders.

What I sense emerging out of Covid-19 liminality is a **new community** where the vulnerability of not knowing is OK – even for leaders. It strips us of all certainties and as one people is turning our eyes and hopes to God. After this is all over – do we really just hope to go back to being the same as we were? Or, will we risk leaning into the “new thing” of Isaiah 43? I don’t have an answer, but God does. We are invited to sit in the liminal space until “our eyes are opened” and reorientation emerges from God’s heart.



Recreating Worship after “Shelter at Home”

April showers bring May flowers. Those of us who live in the Mountain West know that this saying is a *lie*. We know that May often brings bright sunny days that tempt us to plant our flowers, only to have a mid-May snow.



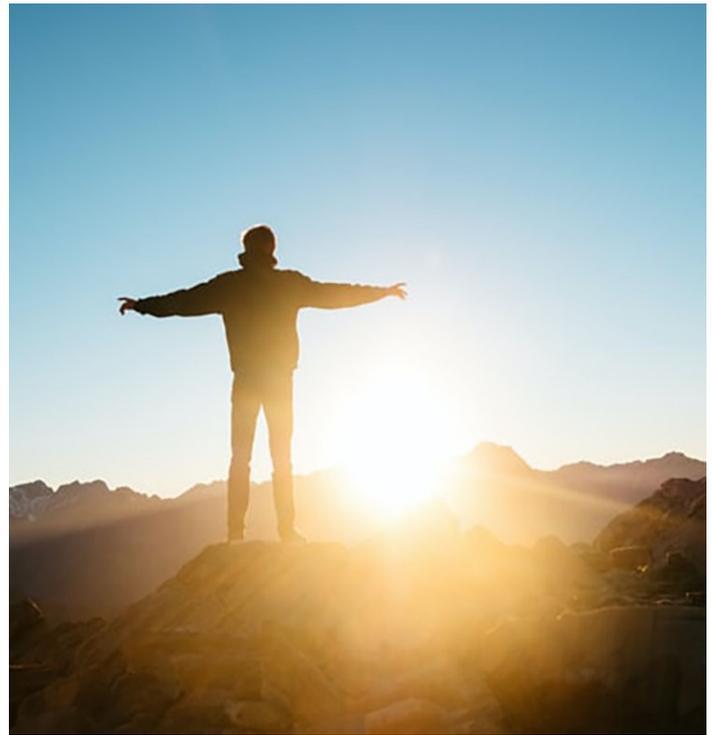
May will also bring new changes in the response to COVID-19. Colorado governor Jared Polis announced a new phase in the battle against COVID-19. Coloradans will be moving from “Shelter at Home” to “Safer at Home.” Some of the restrictions of businesses and faith communi-

ties will be relaxed in May. Wyoming has been in under less strict stay at home orders, but they too are anticipating the relaxing of the guidelines in May.

These new guidelines will not allow churches to throw open their doors and shout, “Ya’ll come!” In this “in between time” in which churches can gather for small gatherings, but still not for worship it will be incredibly frustrating for pastors and congregants as they try to figure out worship during this phase.

Brad Berglund (The Threshold, Denver) encourages pastors and worship leaders to seek to engage people in worship experiences that are authentic, relevant, and participatory; whether these worship gatherings are small gatherings, home groups, Facebook Live, or Zoom.

Authentic: Authentic worship reflects the culture of the congregation; it is indigenous. It is not about doing what is popular or what is “working” for the mega-church or the hot new church start down the street. It is focused on leading people into the presence of God. Authentic worship might include music that is traditional hymns, bluegrass, Taize, or rap. It might be contemporary, cowboy worship or liturgical in style. The message might be presented as an exegetical or narrative sermon; or dramatic or choral readings. The key is that it leads the congregation to engage whole-heartedly in worshiping God.



Relevant: Worship must be relevant to the lives. This does not mean that sermons are reduced to simplistic self-help lectures that could be pulled off YouTube or Ted Talks. Relevant worship speaks to the hunger of the hearts of the people. Relevant worship enables people to encounter a living and loving God. Relevant worship speaks hope and good news into the lives of hungry and thirsty people.

Participatory: This one might be the biggest challenge in the age of virtual church. For a time, people will be hungry just to engage with their pastor and might watch a worship service for a time. The reality is that peoples’ attention span is very short when engaging online content; even excellent content that few churches can produce. During this time, churches must find new ways of enabling people to participate in the worship. Zoom worship allows people to interact well, but it is not conducive for quality music. YouTube and Facebook allow churches to edit and create quality content, but they limit how people interact. Berglund reminds us that the people are not the audience watching a performance, but the actors in the grand drama of worship of the Lord Most High.

Community: Worship also shapes the people of God. Through great worship, people are moved from a people wandering in the wilderness to become the

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Community Impact: It's our time!

this, "I want you know that every day I pray for you by name asking God to show you how much He loves you. But I know that a big part of seeing God's love in your lives is being open and willing to see it. So, my challenge to you is this, while you're lying in bed tonight tell God you'd like to see how much He loves you and ask Him to show you. You might be surprised at what happens."

I delivered toilet paper rolls to my neighbor's porches two weeks ago with a note: "A smile for your Sunday. This too shall pass." Then I added a scripture verse.

The NextDoor app, like most of social media, is a good platform for encouragement. Turn your neighbor's thoughts toward hope and security in Jesus with kind and provocative words of faith. *Don't preach, just encourage.* Find a good quote or statement or pod-cast and share it.

It seems to me that this is NOT the time to be timid or quiet about our faith. People are open and hungry and listening. Let's just be kind, inviting and winsome in sharing it.

Care For Your Soul

I am convinced that the best way to do soul-care is to spend our lives on behalf of others in humble, grace-filled acts of love. But there's more. One cannot care for and serve others from an empty soul. This home-detention we're all experiencing can be a time of renewal and personal revival IF we lean into it.

Read good articles, books and postings that inspire faith. Listen to the music that makes your heart soar. Absorb the good material in podcast and YouTube offerings. Journal. Stay connected as much as possible with your spiritual buddies (Zoom, FaceTime, HangOut, phone, etc.).

Do things that keep you active and connected to God simultaneously. Pray, listen and respond while running, walking, biking. Let God take over that space in your life that otherwise would be occupied by shopping, scrolling, porn, gluttony, gossip. Form spiritual habits now while you have the time. Habits that feed and free your soul, fill your heart and center your

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mind.

Christians are change-agents in a world of unrest, fear and uncertainty. Imagine if all the billions of people around the world who identify as followers of Jesus actually took up our responsibility to be the hands and feet of Jesus (Matthew 25) starting right where we are, imagine how different our communities would be.

My high school senior class (1975) had a motto: *Our Time Is Now*. I know, kind of cheesy and lame, but back then it sounded cool. I guess I'm thinking that's not a bad motto for the Christian church. **Our Time Is Now.** *Community Impact*, the kind that makes a difference, even eternally, is open for business. Let's step into it with intentionality and wisdom for our good, the good of others and for God's glory.

Kim Skattum

Pastor-to-Pastor

Continued from previous page ...

Recreating Worship ...

true people of God. Great worship transforms us in ways that lead us to live our the faith we profess through loving our neighbors, caring for others in the congregation, and serving alongside people as the hands and feet of Jesus. Through worship we are built into the community that has been know for two thousand years as the church.

Mike Oldham

Ministry and Mission Coach



Coronavirus update: due to the concerns about COVID-19 and its continued spread, even through the summer months, the board members and camp leaders of **Camp Wyoba** and **Front Range Camp** will make a decision in the coming weeks in regards to the continuance of camp this summer. Additional information will be provided through a later news update.

ABCRM greatly values the safety and well-being of our campers and volunteers.



Real life discipleship in times of 'real' danger and Covid-19 crisis

What is a disciple? The word disciple literally refers to learner, student, or apprentice. In Jesus' day disciples would be under a Rabbi, follow the Rabbi wherever he went, and learned from his teachings. The student, disciple, of a Rabbi would mimic the Rabbi. They lived life together. It was impossible for the student to not end up like the Rabbi. In the second half of Luke 6, Jesus talks about common principles in living life as a His follower. But the verse that stuck with me from that passage is when Jesus defines a relationship between teacher and disciple. Luke 6:40 states, "The student (disciple) is not above their teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher." Jesus' life with his disciple was life-on-life discipleship.

Discipleship in our lives looks different yet similar. One thing I believe to challenge us in this time is what does life-on-life discipleship look like now. In our time, we do not go live with a teacher to be trained, but we do need to be part of one another's lives. I believe there are three main roles people in the church can provide: 1) a place at the table, 2) a sounding board, and 3) a relationship.



A place at the table simply means a safe culture and a safe place. A safe culture refers to our church community. I would define safe culture as a welcoming and loving place, where one is greeted and included. A safe place is literally around your kitchen table. A place at the table is inviting young believers or young people over to your house to be a part of your family without judgments. A place for them to be themselves and enjoy company.

A sounding board refers to being a safe heart. We cannot expect deep conversations quickly but living life together those conversations will come. As a lover of Jesus, we are to love first. This is what being a safe heart means. Loving others in the place they are in the present. We are not trying to change them but walk with them in the process. Discipleship is seen first and learned second.

A relationship refers to commitment. Being a disciple of Jesus means you are committed to loving others and showing God's love to them. When we are the teachers, our role is to not choose the road but to help

our students be competent travelers for themselves. We are there to equip, empower, and enlighten. In order to do this, we must be present regularly in our student's life.

Discipleship is giving a safe culture and a safe place for God's love to be seen and

heard. Discipleship is being a safe heart where love is given and no judgment shown. Discipleship is a relationship. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are to love God and love others. Loving God and accepting His love, allows each of us to be love in our communities. We need to challenge our churches to be present with their neighbors, their children's friends, co-workers, etc. Life-on-life discipleship at its core is living life together!

*Lauren Parliament
Youth and Camping Intern*

A prayer of trust to our God of the Heavens and the earth

Dear **Sovereign God**:

"Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. **Nothing is too hard for you.**" Jeremiah 32:17.

You are the creator of this earth and our miracle worker. I'm writing this letter at a time when our entire earth is fighting a war against COVID-19 and to be honest no one has a proven clue of how to solve these issues in a timely manner. This fight can't be handled with any political terminology, physical weapons, fancy words, financial plans, bullying or any current medical prescriptions.



God, all of our specialists and experts don't equal Your knowledge and wisdom. You are our God and Your Word tells us that there's nothing too hard for You. Jeremiah 32:27 tells us You said, "I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything **too hard** for me?"

God, this is too hard for Your People, we can't out run COVID-19 because it has taken all of our needed supplies, attached itself to more people than we can imagine, captivated the medical field to shake their heads in shock, snatching employment from millions, putting the universe on lock down, causing

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every hospital filled to capacity, other buildings turned into a temporary hospital and additional situations. God, I believe You already know ALL of this and You have probably already come down or looked down on us just as You did when the people were building the tower of Babel in Genesis 11:5-9. Some of what we are going through is because we don't understand each other.

However, the most wonderful news is that more people are praying to You and seeking Your help. Yes God, I know, it would have been nice if they had been doing it more often and I agree! But God,

I'm asking You, please forgive us and help us. Pharaoh asked the question, "Who is the LORD that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go." (Exodus 5:2).

God, we know You and we are waiting on You. Isaiah 40:31 told us, "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." God, we are waiting on YOU!

I close this letter with the words of Your only begotten son Jesus, Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with **God all things are possible.**" Matthew 19:26

God Help us!

*Rev. Dr. Katherine Farley, Co-Pastor
Faith Community Baptist Church
Denver, Colorado*

**May we pray each day
that God will grant us the confidence
to see his strength during this time.**



*Let the **joy** of the Lord bring us **delight** during these **difficult times**, times in which God grows our **confidence** for the **light** beyond the **storm clouds**—a brighter **dawn** that awaits **tomorrow**.*

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