



The Mid-Atlantic District of THE ALLIANCE

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Report of the District Superintendent District Conference 2022

²⁴ Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. ²⁵ Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. ²⁶ Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. ²⁷ No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. I Cor. 9:24-27

There are quite a few athletes among us. Some train for triathlons. Others are runners training for marathons. Some are cyclists, biking hundreds of miles a month. There are a few who are swimmers who strive to swim a mile. Others are walkers logging many miles each week. Some keep to a military fitness regimen.

Every one of these practices takes self-discipline. It is easier to stay in bed an extra hour, but you get up and put in the work even in adverse conditions. You have discovered that you like the results when you put in the extra effort. There is an inherent reward: better health, fitness, increased energy, improving your time, outdoing your personal best.

Paul applies this sports metaphor to his ministry. He trains and disciplines himself to achieve the purpose of his calling. He reminds the believers in Thessalonica of his toil and hardship, working day and night. These words are dirty words to the Greeks because they represent the work of slaves. He was extremely disciplined in the work of the ministry.

As we enter our second year of our strategic plan for district revitalization, I believe our circumstances call for a self-disciplined approach to ministry. Our approach should reflect hard work, sacrifice, singular focus, and tenacious pursuit of the purpose of our calling. I have been issuing the warning since 2019 that we are a **district at risk**. And the data supports that assertion. Now is the time for action, for focus, for leaving everything on the field.



Please consider the information from our reports to the national office.

Year	AM Attendance	Total Professions of Faith
2015	3702	358
2016	3582	356
2017	3474	261
2018	3667	324
2019	3257	181
2020	2634	187
2021	2340	184

We all recognize that 2020 and 2021 were not good years. But our communities are filled with people who don't know Christ; people who are frightened, confused, troubled and hurting. We must find a way to be **community transforming churches**. That is unlikely to happen if we keep doing what we are already doing. In most places the attractional model just won't work any longer. We need to go outside the walls of our buildings, find the confused and troubled and reach out to them with the hand of friendship and care.

President John Stumbo pointed out in his book, *A Stained Beauty*, The Church Ancient and Present that:

“When the church gets it right:

- Racism is revealed for all its ugliness and replaced with genuine respect and community.
- Materialism is revealed for all its shallowness and replaced with joyful stewardship and generosity.

When the church gets it right:

- Relationships are healthier
- Children are safer
- People are kinder.
- The planet is cleaner.

When the church gets it right – and she has, over and over, from era to era and community to community:

- Singleness is sanctified.
- Marriages are consecrated.
- Life is valued and protected.
- The elderly are cared for and respected.”

I urge us all to seek the face of Jesus; to ask Him how he wants us to serve our communities. Because when the church gets it right communities are transformed.

District Reclassification

Our situation led to the Board of Directors reclassifying us as a developing district. When we were approached with this information by Rev. Terry Smith, V.P. for Church Ministries, I presented this to DEXCOM with the recommendation that we embrace this and give it our full support. I did this for several reasons. First, we needed to acknowledge what was true about us as a district. I had watched too many churches wither and die because they insisted on living in denial. Second, the national office was offering both advice and financial support to help us address some areas of weakness. It is out of that financial support that we have been able to bring a Church Planting Director on board. Third, we needed to model willing submission to authority. We ask that of churches all the time and often they resist. We needed to model a healthy, biblical relationship to authority. We could never ask this of a church again if we were unwilling to do so ourselves. Reclassification was not an attempt to control us or punish us, but to help us return to health and gospel effectiveness.

Strategic Plan Update

As part of reclassification and revitalization we were to put together a strategic plan. A copy of that plan is attached to this report. The elements of this plan are a product of our district assessment and consultation with Terry Smith. Reclassification took effect in May of 2021. This report comes at about a year and a half into a 5-year process. Below is an update on our progress in executing this plan.

Prayer: A prayer team has been developed and meets regularly to pray for district revitalization and related issues. They are present and praying at District events. We are continuing to hold district wide prayer gatherings semi-annually. I urge you to lead your church to involvement in these prayer gatherings. I am asking for full participation for the two prayer gatherings in 2023. Please be there with others from your congregation or arrange for showing the livestream at your church. The dates for 2023 will be Friday evening, **February 10** and Friday, **September 15**. Locations are yet to be announced.

Mission and Vision: A fresh mission statement has been developed and is the theme of this conference.

The Mid-Atlantic District exists to advance Christ's kingdom by multiplying the number of thriving community-transforming churches, that are training and sending disciple-makers across the district and the world to do the same.

We have engaged Jeff Simpson to assist with branding efforts to keep this mission statement before our district in multiple ways.

Spiritual Assessment: Much of this year has been devoted to pursuing spiritual assessment through Blessing Point Ministries. In January we held a Church Cardiology Seminar in Frederick. Following the seminar, we put together a Healing the Heart (HTH) of the District research team (Jen Ashby, Yenory Orozco, Peter Daley, Charles and Mary Walz, Jonathan Thornton). Surveys were sent to all district pastors, former District Superintendents, and former

staff. In addition, the team conducted some one-on-one interviews. They thoroughly researched our history looking for those issues that may have been items that Jesus would hold against us as he did with the 7 churches of Revelation. Their work resulted in the Solemn Assembly that is to be held during the first session of this Conference. This is another area in which the National Office has provided funding.

Church Advance: The Church Health Team has been repurposed to serve as consultants trained in Changing Course Consultation and in the Peak Assessment process. At least three teams have been trained and are ready to assist churches in moving toward more effective ministry. Several churches have begun the process and early responses seem to be very positive.

Lay Leadership Development: In response to the feedback on the district assessment, we planned for three regional lay leader training events entitled “Improving your Serve.” DEXCOM approved special funding for these events so that they could be offered for free to those registered. The first was held in Silver Spring with over 60 lay leaders in attendance. The feedback was very positive. A second was planned for June on the eastern shore. The event was cancelled due to a lack of sufficient registrations. A third was planned for the Friday and Saturday at the close of Conference. This one also was cancelled due to the lack of sufficient registrations.

Church Multiplication: We are very pleased to be able bring Mark Brumley on staff as our Church Planting Director. Mark comes with experience planting in Burkina Faso and again in Erie Pa. He has extensive experience working cross culturally and has successfully led churches to healthy growth. This position will be funded by a series of declining grants from the N.O. The district will need to augment these grants with approximately \$500,000 over the next 5 years. The CPD will be tasked with the job of creating a multiplication strategy for our district. Please give Mark your full support as we seek to plant new churches and campuses across our district.

Evangelistic Effectiveness: We have been faced with a declining number of professions of faith and baptisms for quite some time. Not every element of this plan could be addressed in the first 18 months. With other items needed in our critical growth path, we determined to delay the implementation of this item until 2023. More will be said about this later in this report.

Pastoral Care and Support: It is evident from observation and the studies support the fact that many pastoral families are experiencing great stress, and this is occurring on a wide scale. This has led to a survival mentality and a low-level chronic depression affecting pastors, their families, and their congregations. To address this, we have offered several options for counseling and support.

We have made funds available for official workers and/or spouses for counseling. The Professional Development Clusters have been focused on soul care. The prayer team has been interceding for pastoral leaders as well.

The chaplains in our district have offered themselves as resources to assist pastors with issues of stress, depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues. These are trained professionals who understand both ministry and how to address the stresses of ministry. Conversations with them

are confidential. One of their wives has offered her services to pastors' wives who need someone to talk with. Please take advantage of these wise and skillful colleagues and the ministry for which God has equipped them.

Additionally, for those covered by the Alliance Benefits plan, First Stop Health offers virtual counseling for free as well as virtual medical visits. The services are free unless a prescription is written; then the cost is just \$25.00. This is an incredible benefit and is readily available with a phone call.

In the past pastoral retreats have been poorly attended. We are considering the possibility of reviving this practice. Is this something you would find valuable and be willing to attend? Your feedback on this idea would be greatly appreciated.

Brothers and sisters, no matter how well any plan is conceived and no matter how well it is executed, it will be ineffective without the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. We must seek the fresh filling of the Spirit. Would you join me in seeking a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit both personally and corporately? Can we agree that apart from the Spirit's empowerment we can accomplish nothing?

Next Steps

As indicated above we want to continue the elements of the strategic plan already in place. In 2023 we will be focusing on two additional steps. We will focus on Evangelism Effectiveness. We will be reviewing and providing a variety of forms of evangelism training that can be implemented in your church. It will be up to you to choose a plan and implement the training in your church. It is possible that we may also offer some seminar-based training for those who desire it.

The second focus will be on discipleship. It has been my observation that many churches do not have a plan for discipling new believers and many individuals currently in our churches have never been disciplined. Over the course of the year, we will be asking every church to create a plan for discipling new believers as well as those already in the church who have never been disciplined. A member of the district staff will be meeting with every pastor and church governance authority to review the plan, answer any questions and offer coaching as needed.

This request is born out of a desire to see every congregation living in obedience to the Great Commission in their own communities in addition to our global efforts.

Transitions

This past year we have experienced more transitions than in the previous 7 put together. Shortly after conference last year, my executive assistant, Yenory Orozco, informed me that she was leaving to pursue a career in HR. She had been working for several years to complete her degree in that field and was offered an opportunity to enter that field.

Near the end of October 2021, we hired Tess Ladino to fill the position vacated by Yenory. Tess has served in that role for the past 11 months. She recently informed us that she would be moving to the Williamsburg area to be closer to her daughter. Her last day in the office was September 15. As of this writing we are seeking a new Executive Assistant and Office Manager.

In early summer we were informed by Rachel Stalnaker, Administrative Assistant to Ira Towns, that she would be leaving to complete her master's degree which required a year of full-time teaching. We were able to hire Linsie Fish to take Rachel's role.

After several years of working with remote bookkeepers we were able to hire Shirley Maser to serve as our financial assistant. Shirley spent most of her time addressing our books and bringing them into conformity with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP). This required her to completely redo our books for 2021, set up a proper system for 2022 as well as provide the framework for a new budgeting structure. Because of her work we received a clean review from our auditing firm and are well prepared for a full audit of our 2022 records. Shirley moved to Williamsburg in August but continues to provide consulting services.

Linsie Fish kept the books for her father's business for 7 years and has agreed to take on the role of in-house financial assistant. This, along with her work for Ira, brings her to a full-time role.

In July Mark Brumley joined the staff as Church Planting Director. Mark has invested many hours in planning, training, and networking in these initial months. To support his role, we hired Jeddie Brumley to serve as his Administrative Assistant.

All these transitions resulted in a season of unending orientation, training, and learning. And it appears that this season of transition is not yet over. As a result, we have been doing our best, but have not always been able to deliver the services as we would like nor in the timeframe we would like. We will be coming to conference with year with support staff that have never served at conference before. As this season continues, we ask for your patience and prayer as we try to remain fully engaged in our mission.

District Transitions

Rev. Bill Schmeissing retired late in 2021 and Dr. Paige Adams was called to the role of Lead Pastor at Stanton Alliance.

Pastor Chaiwei Jau was called to serve as Lead Pastor of Gaithersburg Chinese Alliance Church. With the arrival of Pastor Jau, Rev. Michael Chang stepped down from his role as Advisory Pastor.

Rev. Julio E. Orozco was called to lead Gaithersburg International Christian Fellowship.

Rev. Rob Simone resigned from New Design Church effective January 1 of this year. The church has called Dr. Brian French to be its next Lead Pastor effective September 11, 2022

Pastor Ron Lucas became the lay pastor at Cross Point Community Church in Edgewood, MD

Mr. Samuel Chery joined the staff of West End Church as Associate Pastor of Ministry Development.

Chateau Community Church ceased affiliation with the Alliance.

Christ Community Church of Bowie, MD closed

New Hope Alliance Church of Williamsport, MD closed

Open Churches

Alliance Family Fellowship, Dover DE

Forrest Alliance Church, Forest VA

Sunnyside Alliance Church, Secretary, MD

In Memoria

We want to acknowledge the passing of Diana Glusko, wife of Rev. Dennis Glusko; and Marcella Whitmore, wife of Rev. Dennis Whitmore.

Additionally, several pastors and/or their wives have lost parents this year.

I am requesting that we take a moment to stand in memory of those who have gone and to take a moment to pray for the comfort of those who carry their grief and loss.

Conclusion

2022 has been filled with many events that required time and some expense. In 2023 we will be limiting district sponsored events to the few that we believe are critical to our redevelopment.

We will announce them as far in advance as possible. Please mark your calendar and make every effort to participate.

I want to extend a word of appreciation to Ira Towns who has partnered with me to guide our district to greater degrees of health and self-awareness. His friendship and cooperation, his wisdom and insight have been invaluable to me and have benefited you greatly.

I also want to publicly thank my wife, Julie, for her support and service to me and to our district. She has stood with me in prayer, encouragement, and moral support. She has prayed diligently for all of you, although her ministry is usually unseen. She has listened to my dilemmas, my occasional rants, and helped me process and discern what actions would be most appropriate.

Thank you all as well for the opportunity to serve you in this role. It is indeed an honor and privilege to do so. Your support and prayer, your encouragement and engagement are meaningful and motivating.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas G. Conley

<p>Prayer</p> <p>Prayer is the primary work of the people of God. It is the indispensable element of any redevelopment initiative. Prayer is encouraged at all levels of the district.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strategic prayer initiative is being developed under the leadership of Julie Conley. A core team has been chosen and the initiative will be expanded as needed. • We will continue to hold district wide prayer gatherings semi-annually and will continue to support the monthly prayer calendar. • Each church is encouraged to designate times for prayer focused on district redevelopment. • All District committees are encouraged to devote a portion of each meeting to a season of prayer for district redevelopment
<p>Mission and Vision</p> <p>It is evident that our district needs to revisit its mission and vision. It is important that the resulting mission and vision statements are clear and compelling, creating the desire for comprehensive buy in.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEXCOM has spent considerable time re-writing the mission and vision statements and has submitted them to the VP for his review and approval. • The VP has returned the statements to us with suggested revisions. Those revisions will be considered by DEXCOM for final approval or revision. • Once approved we will consult with those experienced in rebranding to promote the new mission and vision. • The new mission and vision will be featured prominently in videos, in all publications digital and physical. It will be featured in presentations to gatherings of lay leaders as well.
<p>Spiritual Assessment</p> <p>Our initial assessment covered many of the organizational and structural issues of our district. It seems prudent to engage in a spiritual assessment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The VP has suggested that we engage Mark Bernard of Blessing Point Ministries to conduct a spiritual assessment of our district. • It seems prudent to conduct this assessment early in our redevelopment process to uncover any spiritual hindrances or strongholds that may be impacting our effectiveness. • Preliminary conversation indicate that this might be possible in the early months of 2022. • The National Office is providing most of the funding for this assessment.
<p>Church Advance</p> <p>One of our challenges is that we have so many churches that are small and relatively ineffective in terms of Kingdom impact. We have been preparing to address this issue and will continue to do so.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Church Health Team has been re-tasked with becoming consultants trained in the Changing Course Consultation. • CCC training was completed August. • The teams will consult with the churches most willing and open to the consultation first and then seek to recruit others into the process. • All consultants have been trained in PEAK assessment for this process.

<p>Lay Leadership Development</p> <p>The assessment showed that the lay leadership feels disconnected from the district, due in part to the pastor-centric nature of our district. Additionally, there was a strong sense of need for intentional lay leadership development to assist the local church in developing new and existing leaders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This process was initiated with a survey of lay and pastoral leaders to determine the area of greatest felt need for additional training. • 3 regional training events are being planned for 2022 to address the issues identified in the survey • Additionally, these events will provide a platform for teaching on sanctification and the deeper life. • The events will focus on lay leaders and be designed to express appreciation for their service, give better connection with district leaders and opportunity for better engagement. • These events are intended to foster greater connection between church in each region. • DEXCOM will be asked to approve special funding for these regional functions. • Programs for use by local churches will be identified and promoted
<p>Church Multiplication</p> <p>A survey of district-initiated church plants shows that this approach is largely a failure. Yet the need for church planting is evident with less than 20% of the Mid-Atlantic region church. To address this need we are working with the AVP for Church Multiplication to implement a strategy to revive the passion for church planting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We sent 10 people to Exponential DC who are engaged in church planting or who have expressed interest in daughtering a church or satellite campus. • The DS in conjunction with AVP for Church Multiplication is in the process of searching for a District Director of Church Planting to assist in catalyzing a church planting movement in the MAD. • This new staff position will be funded by a series of declining grants from the N.O. The district will need to augment these grants with approximately \$400,000 over the next 5 years. • Once a CPD has been selected, he will be tasked with the job of creating a multiplication strategy for our district.
<p>Evangelistic Effectiveness</p> <p>Of great concern is the decline in conversions confirmed by baptism in our annual reports. This issue was raised in the assessment and is evident in a review of district statistics. Included in this concern is the sense by many that they are out of touch with the culture and don't know where to begin.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will identify a few potential evangelism training programs that can be used by the local church and present them at lay leadership training events. • We will explore Church Evangelism Institute Cohorts offered by the Billy Graham Center for Evangelism. • We will encourage the use community service efforts to assist churches in reconnecting with their communities in order to create platforms for evangelism. • We will seek some form of feedback to determine the effectiveness of each initiative and seek to raise the value of evangelism across all district churches.

Pastoral care and support

It is evident from observation and the studies support the fact that many pastoral families are experiencing great stress, and this is occurring on a wide scale. This has led to a survival mentality and a low-level chronic depression affecting pastors, their families, and their congregations.

- We currently support some counseling opportunities for those who request it, or those whose need we discover.
- Based on the “one anothers” of the NT we will seek to implement a prayer partner arrangement within each district zone.
- It may be prudent to engage a few district chaplains to provide more immediate counsel and care.
- A retreat for official workers that would focus on both spiritual and mental health is under consideration.
- Including a component for these items in future District Conferences is also under consideration.