

SDB COUNCIL ON MINISTRY

2023-2024 Annual Report

COM Members During 2023-2024

Rev. Nathan Crandall (The Connecting Church-Milton SDB; Milton, WI)

Frank Mazza, *Chairperson*, (Shiloh SDB Church; Shiloh, NJ)

Pastor Norman Fearon (Fort Lauderdale SDB Church; Fort Lauderdale, FL)

Sharon Dailey, (Southeast Atlanta SDB Church; McDonough, GA)

Bethany Lawton (The Connecting Church-Milton SDB; Milton, WI)

Director of Church Development & Pastoral Services

Rev. John J. Pethtel (The Connecting Church-Milton SDB; Milton, WI)

Church Planting Coordinator

Rev. David Stall (Miami SDB Church; Hollywood, FL)

Contacts and Data Management Coordinator

Patricia Petersen (Frontier Church-Carbon Valley; Dacono, CO)

The work of the SDB Council on Ministry is divided into two areas: Pastoral/Church Services and Church Development.

Purpose of the Council on Ministry

The purpose of the SDB Council on Ministry is to develop healthy leaders and healthy churches for the SDB General Conference. It will do that through connecting and resourcing leaders and churches for the work of actively advancing God's Kingdom.

Pastoral/Church Services Purposes

- 1) Provide encouragement and guidance for those who are considering church leadership.
- 2) Provide for camaraderie, knowledge-sharing, mentoring, and mutual support among pastors.
- 3) Consult with churches without pastors and pastors without churches.
- 4) Assist churches and pastors in the licensing, ordination, accreditation, and endorsement processes.
- 5) Provide programs and resources that result in healthy leaders and healthy churches.

Church Development Purposes

- 1) Counsel with pastors and churches in conflict.
- 2) Encourage our churches to examine themselves for health.
- 3) Encourage our churches to participate in the work of starting new churches.
- 4) Provide new contacts with information about SDBs.
- 5) Assist churches who wish to identify as SDB with tools and resources to join the

Conference.

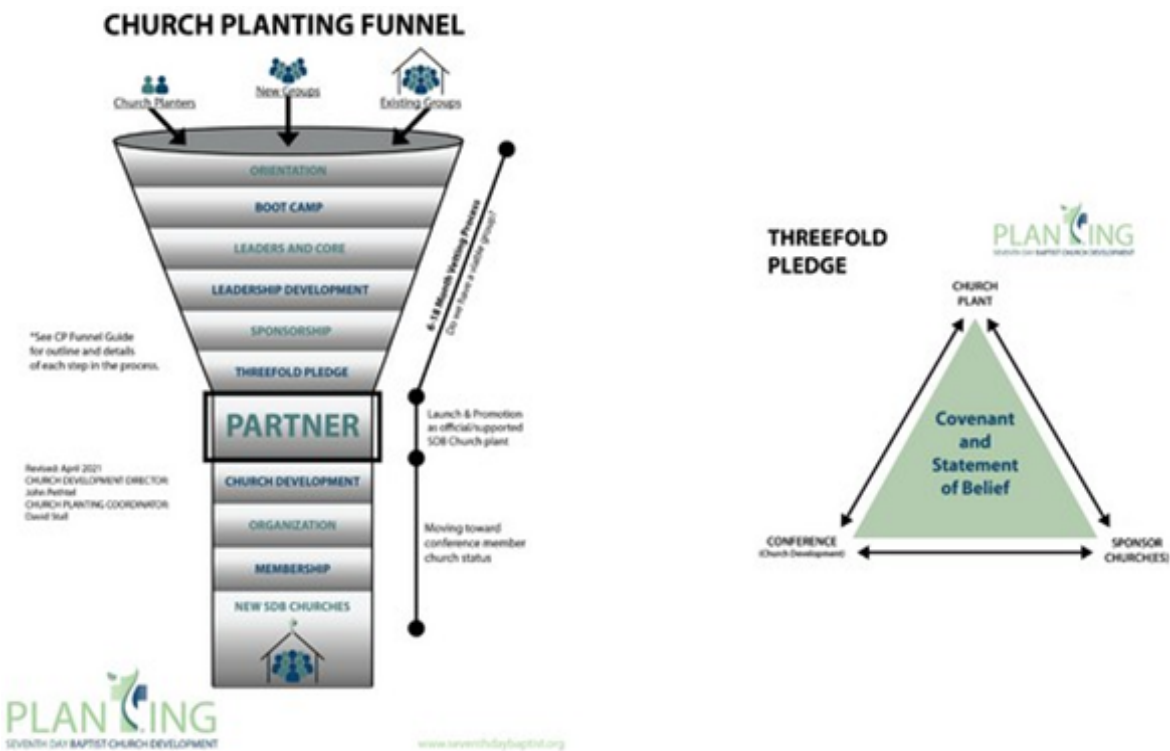
6) Provide resources to churches and/or leaders who wish to start or revitalize SDB churches.

CHURCH DEVELOPMENT

Church Planting Coordinator (submitted by David Stall)

I am now just over three years into this job as Church Planting Coordinator. The job remains less than half-time in terms of hours. I don't believe that is enough time to do what needs to be done, but I make the most of the hours I have.

Year one was about understanding the situation, assessing groups/contacts, and creating a process. The process we developed is the church planting funnel, which many of you have seen before (see diagram below).



In year two, we worked with over 20 groups in the funnel process. We added new contacts to those we already had, as new leads and inquiries come in monthly. There were some groups that were vetted and weeded out. Many things were added and altered in the process as we lived through it and worked through it. That refining is ongoing. We also began to experience problems, conflicts, pastoral transitions, and other setbacks within groups. Some of my work with these church plants shifted to conflict resolution, pastoral search help, mediation, spiritual guidance, and even dissolution.

By year three, we had three groups advanced to partner stage- meaning they had completed our funnel process. They were handed over to “Church Development” at conference last year as we wait and see what God does in the growth and success of those groups. In that third year, I moved to NC to pastor one of those partner churches, Good News SDB. That church has made excellent progress since we started on April 1, 2023 and is now ready to join our conference.

Since conference last year, we have a couple of new groups ready for partner status. We have 6-8 more groups on pace to be ready for partner status before next year’s conference. I am pleased to report that two churches are applying for membership in the conference to be voted on this summer. Ultimately, that was the end goal of this position: New churches in the conference. The two churches are Good News in North Carolina and the Phoenix SDB church (AZ).

We also added a church planter coaching program. I hosted a training session at our home in NC last fall. Nate Crandall is our “coach of coaches” and he provided a great program and coaching strategy to empower our new coaches. We trained five coaches in a coaching training weekend, six including me. 16 Church planters are now being coached by those coaches. We anticipate another training this year to add more coaches, since we have many more church planters and the need is great.

In addition, we started a series of events called “stir & spur” events. These are revival and encouragement events where the sponsor church and any other SDBs converge at a church plant location for an outreach and worship event. The first was held last month in Phoenix and was a great success. Upcoming events are planned for Iglesia Bautista del Septimo Dia de Auburn (the Spanish-speaking church in Auburn, Washington) and Followers of the Way in Nile, NY. We have a church planting intern, Joshua Coleman, who is working with me on these events. I meet with Josh and provide coaching and training so he can help coordinate these events with the recipient and sponsor churches. Many thanks to the memorial board for supporting “Stir & Spur” events with grant money.

As mentioned earlier, there have also been some setbacks. We have groups that lost a pastor, experienced divisions or other derailments, and a group in Puerto Rico that fell apart completely. These losses will happen. We are taking risks and trying things. Some groups just aren’t gaining traction or taking off like we would hope. At the same time, brand new sparks keep lighting up such as a group in Ocala, Florida, and maybe something new coming soon in Texas. Some of our groups in the funnel are seeing exciting additions, growth, and progress.

I give as much time as I can to the administrative tasks, meetings, opportunities to speak and share within and beyond our conference, administering grants, reporting, coaching, training, church planting boot camps, relationship building, managing conflicts, travel to church plants, and all other duties as assigned. As mentioned at the start, it really can’t be done with less than half-time hours. It’s a demanding job and a daunting task. For now, we

press on. I am encouraged by the work that's going on and I see good things on the horizon.

Please pray for the two new groups coming into the conference this summer and all of the other new things starting.

****Director of Church Development Note**** - Church Planting Coordinator David Stall has submitted his resignation effective July 31, 2024. We are incredibly thankful for his hard work in this pioneering role over the last three years and the springboard he has provided for future work.

PULSE Church Health Process

There is nothing more important to the vitality of the local church and the General Conference than to provoke and encourage ourselves to greater health. Healthy leaders lead healthy churches that disciple healthy leaders that plant healthy churches. While there are stages and resources recommended during each stage in the PULSE process, COM is encouraging every church to "take its pulse" soon. We are also excited about new PULSE initiatives such as "The Road to Revitalization" virtual event and an in-person gathering of PULSE champions planned. If your church is interested in starting or you have more questions, contact the Director of Church Development for more information or to schedule a visit from a PULSE facilitator.

Conference Membership Coordination

The Director of Church Development has taken on the role of Conference Membership Coordinator. In this role, he serves as the liaison between the prospective member and the Standing Committee on Faith & Order. There are groups in various stages of the membership process. Two groups are currently pursuing membership in the SDB General Conference: Good News SDB Church in Apex, NC and Phoenix SDB Church in Phoenix, AZ. Your church or association can help by becoming a sponsor to a new church looking to join the General Conference. Contact the Church Development Team for more information.

Contact and Data Management Coordinator

Patty Petersen has been serving for the last few years as our Contact and Data Management Coordinator managing new contacts to SDBs that come through social media, email, letter, and phone. Our CRM (Conference Resource Management) system has already started to become helpful in managing this data. Patty has been doing an outstanding job in shaping our new CRM to collect and report on data in a way that will be beneficial to us.

Communication with new contacts is the area of ministry in our General Conference that continues to need attention. If a new contact is referred to your church, please be timely in your response, have the correct information on your website and the Conference website, and be honest and helpful in sharing the identity and heritage of SDBs.

Directory of Churches

Directory information forms were emailed out in January 2024 with a deadline of April 1, 2024. Returning this form is a minimal expectation of our member churches. Failure to

return this form will trigger communication from the General Conference office. If there are concerns with how the information is being used, churches should be aware that the General Conference is currently working on an Information Policy about how information given to us is shared.

PASTORAL SERVICES

Pastoral Search

Churches without pastoral leadership are encouraged to contact the Director of Pastoral Services to assist them in the process of finding new pastoral leadership. A Pastoral Search Process Guide has become available and we are currently implementing a new and exciting algorithmic tool called MinistryMatch to be used in our Pastoral Search Process. Because pastoral leadership is crucial to healthy churches, we want to pray for pastors in all our churches and encourage those who are called to pastoral leadership to serve.

We currently have 22 member churches that do not have a called senior or lead pastor. Other churches are looking for additional pastoral help as well and some currently serving pastors will be retiring soon.

Recruitment

We are seeking out those who are called to serve in their local church or the mission field. There is a great harvest with new churches to be planted, mission fields to be served, and established churches needing leadership. If you know of any gifted or talented individuals who need encouragement to pursue ministry, please contact the any Conference Director.

Licensure

For over two centuries, SDB churches have licensed people to “preach” or to “ministry” for two main reasons. One reason is to provide the ability and recognition for someone to perform as a pastor before ordination takes place. The other reason is to encourage someone who feels called to ministry to exercise their pastoral gifts to further explore their calling, potentially leading to being recognized by a congregation. Both reasons are still a valid way to express and recognize pastoral calling in a SDB congregation today. If you have questions regarding licensing, please contact the Director of Pastoral Services.

Ordination

Ordination is the recognition of a person by a local SDB congregation as being gifted and called for pastoral ministry.

The following people were ordained to the gospel ministry in 2023-2024:

- **Saul Alonzo**, Central SDB Church
- **Tyler Chroniger**, Shiloh SDB Church
- **George Lawson**, Maranatha Community Church

Accreditation

Accreditation is a General Conference recognition of the ministry of an ordained minister in

a local SDB church. COM has worked to address concerns about the meaning of accreditation as a Conference-wide standard of ministry. The General Conference has suggested that continuing education, as well as acceptable service in pastoral ministry, should be benchmarks for SDB ministers holding accreditation. This has led to a process where accredited ministers will apply for renewal of their accreditation every five years. If you have concerns regarding this process or want to apply for accreditation, please contact the Director of Pastoral Services. Based on Conference Week action in 2023, we are currently investigating the creation of a “more meaningful” credential for pastoral leaders.

Endorsement

COM endorses ministers called to chaplaincy service when needed by the organization the minister serves. The Director of Pastoral Services typically serves as the Endorsing Agent. The following ministers were endorsed in 2023-2024 by the Director of Pastoral Services:

- Matthew Berg, Federal Bureau of Prisons
- Jerry Johnson, United States Army
- Byron Durant, United States Army
- Richard Perez, United States Army
- Timothy Bancroft, National Institute of Business and Industrial Chaplains

Ministry Staff Development Program

The purpose of the Ministry Staff Development Program “is to provide long-term mentoring opportunities in Seventh Day Baptist (SDB) churches for the development of pastoral leaders and assist churches in developing their ministry opportunities and potential.” This program will be moving under the guidance of the Director of Education to work closely with other leadership development programs.

Frontier Church-Carbon Valley (Christopher Galarneau) began its participation in this program in 2019-2020. They applied for and were approved for another 3-year term starting in July 2022. With the end of this term, we have decided to discontinue the Ministry Staff Development Program in favor of using our current and developing internship and grant programs.

The Summit (A SDB Pastors Conference)

The Summit 2024 was held in southern NJ at the Shiloh and Marlboro SDB Churches (April 26-28, 2024) with 70+ persons in attendance for a portion of the time. The theme was “The Shepherd Pastor”. We also added an optional and additional day with a preaching seminar which was attended by 30+ persons.

This type of event builds collegiality and friendship between our ministers and we want to encourage all our pastors (and pastor-type people) to attend. The Summit 2025 is scheduled for April 25-27, 2025 (Janesville, WI). More details will be going to pastors soon and can be found at seventhdaybaptist.org/thesummit. Please consider sending your pastor to these events. Continuing education funds may be available to help defray expenses. If your church is interested in hosting The Summit, please contact the Director of Pastoral Services.

Regional Pastors Meetings

Some of our pastors who are geographically located close to each other (within a 4-5 hour drive) have decided to meet regularly for encouragement, accountability, communication, and learning. We would like to encourage our churches and pastors to enable the same type of meetings to happen regularly in their areas. If you have questions about how to get started, contact the Director of Pastoral Services.

Pastor Forums

To keep in touch with our pastoral leaders, Executive Director Carl Greene implemented a series of Pastor Forums via Zoom every two to three months during the coronavirus pandemic. We have decided to continue these virtual meetings to inform, encourage, and support pastors in their ministry. All pastors and those called to be pastors and their spouses are invited to participate. If you wish to be on our invite list for Pastors Forums, please contact the Executive Director.

Study Leave/Sabbatical

Pastors who have the opportunity to take a spiritual retreat of a few days or a few months come back refreshed and renewed to serve their Lord and His church. We encourage churches to consider allowing a weekend or week (not vacation time) every year for their pastors to pray and plan. There are pastor retreats all around the United States that offer low or no-cost lodging for pastors and their families. We also encourage churches to consider giving their pastor up to 3 months off every five to seven years of service to spend time with family, in personal reflection, and prayer. COM wants to see this practice take place in our churches more frequently. Contact the Director of Pastoral Services for more information.

Stephanie Sholtz Wellness Fund

The Stephanie Sholtz Wellness Fund has been created in her memory as a collaboration between the Women's Society and Pastoral Services because she felt God calling her to be a greater asset to our conference of churches, especially to our pastors and their families. The wellness fund can be used by pastors or their families to help with any wellness issue (physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, etc.). Donations to the fund can be sent to the SDB Center. Contact the Director of Pastoral Services for more information.

Crisis Intervention/Consultation with Churches

As part of our endeavor to promote healthy churches and understanding that conflict is a part of healthy growth, COM and the Director of Pastoral Services (who also serves the Conference as the Crisis Management Officer) are ready to assist any church in need of help with internal communications, church discipline, or mediation on any matter. We encourage our churches to seek out this kind of help before a situation might escalate.

Pastor to Pastors

When there is a need for a sounding board, a person to vent to, or someone to help

resource the pastor to do what God has called him to, they frequently contact a Conference Director. We are happy to provide this important service to our ministry leaders but want our pastors to have friends and colleagues with whom they can discuss ministry and life as well. Encourage your pastor to participate in local, regional, and national pastor gatherings to create friendships and camaraderie.

OTHER AREAS OF MINISTRY

COSAR

The Director of Pastoral Services is the director liaison for the Conference's Standing Committee on Support and Retirement (COSAR). If you desire more information, please see the COSAR Report to the General Conference.

Hispanic Ministries Council (Concilio de Ministerios Hispanos de la Bautista del Séptimo Día)

The purpose of the Hispanic Ministries Council (HMC) is to provide a network for Spanish-speaking leaders in North America to communicate with each other and the General Conference concerning the needs for Spanish-speaking ministries and resources. Spanish speakers comprise one of our largest segments of new contacts in recent years and we are excited about doing our best to reach the growing Spanish-speaking population in North America. The Director of Church Development & Pastoral Services serves as the convener and facilitator for this group currently. This project is currently on pause as we seek a Spanish-speaking leader to head this group.

Document Update Responsibility

The Standing Committee on Faith & Order, with the help of the Director of Church Development and Pastoral Services, has taken responsibility for updating General Conference documents to be sure that they are correct and updated from year to year. These include our Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, Manual of Procedures, and Directory of Churches. Previously, changes were not made in a uniform way which led to confusion and miscommunication. We hope that a clear assignment of responsibility will lead to clarity and transparency in our documents going forward. We are hoping to begin a major revision of the Manual of Procedures soon.

Local Church Service

The Director of Church Development & Pastoral Services serves in his local church as a covenant member in good standing. This involves using gifts, experience, and talents to actively advance God's Kingdom where they live. This is held as a high priority for him. He is currently serving as the Operations Pastor (part-time) of The Connecting Church-Milton SDB Church.

SDBU

Because of the close working relationship and overlap of responsibilities between the Director of Church Development & Pastoral Services and the Director of Education &

History, both directors have been taking an active participating role in the development of SDBU. This program is crucial to our identification and training of SDB leadership and potential SDB churches. The Director of Church Development & Pastoral Services currently teaches 4 different SDBU classes.

Conferences Coordinator

The Director of Church Development & Pastoral Services has taken on the responsibility of coordinating our annual General Conference sessions (Conference Week) in conjunction with our elected Presidents. This duty has led to online Conference Weeks in 2020, 2021, and 2022 as well as a Winter Virtual Delegate Forum in January 2023 and January 2024. Conference Week 2023 took place from July 23-30, 2023 at Calvin University in Grand Rapids, MI with President Charlotte Chroniger presiding. Conference Week 2024 is set to take place from July 21-28, 2024 at West Virginia Wesleyan College in Buckhannon, WV with President Johnmark Camenga presiding. This role also assists in planning or executing other events as needed.

Crisis Management Officer

The Director of Church Development & Pastoral Services has been appointed by the General Council to serve as the Conference's Crisis Management Officer and to head a Crisis Management Team. This team will be responsible for policies related to child protection, abuse reporting, and other areas of potential crisis for the Conference and our network of churches. In this role, the Crisis Management Officer will be leading the General Conference to pursue accreditation with the Evangelical Council for Abuse Prevention (ECAP) as well as working with other directors to promote and advocate for better child protection and risk management practices in local churches and ministries.