

Alternative Ministerial Education Program (AME)

Many Christians feel the call to ministry early in life, but for various reasons do not follow the call. The urge to serve the Lord in this way never leaves as they build their lives, form their families, and make a living. God waits patiently. At some point, mid-life or even after retirement, they return to the beginning and accept the call.

Many churches struggle to find pastors. The traditional pastoral situation becomes less and less possible, for various reasons. But among their number the church sees lay ministers who have the gifts, and they recognize the signs of God's call. They draft them to do pastoral work within the congregation, without the title, and soon someone says, "Why don't you become a pastor?" That awakens the latent call, and they wonder, "Why don't I?" But they can't leave their family and job to go away to seminary, nor can they afford to do it.

This is where the Alternative Ministerial Education program of the American Baptist Churches of the Great Rivers Region enters the picture. You can get the basic training for the pastoral tasks, and pursue regional ordination, while remaining where you are. The Lord will use you without necessarily uprooting you.

AME involves ten courses.

- Five are academic --- to be taken online or on campus from an accredited Christian university.
- Two are electives --- allowing you to specialize according to your gifts and passions.
- Three are under the direct supervision of the GRR:
 - ***Baptist History and Polity*** -- Offered each year
 - ***Professional Boundaries*** -- Offered each year
 - ***The Practice of Congregational Ministry*** -- a mentoring program, where an experienced pastor leads the student in learning how to do the things that pastors do.

Some students enter the AME program with confidence that God wants them to be a local church pastor. Some enter not sure, but pursuing God's will. Others enter AME just to be better lay leaders in their churches.

My job, as the Dean, is to supervise their work, keep their records, advise, encourage and help their progress, plan and find or hold the classes they need.

To be an AME student you must be an active member of Great Rivers Region American Baptist Church, and your church must affirm and endorse you.

Do you feel that call growing stronger within you? The Holy Spirit is patient, but He is unyielding. Do you see that call in someone in your church? Contact me. I will be glad to help. Our churches need leaders. You may be the answer to that need.

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