

Small Church Committee Annual Report

May 2024

The Small Church Committee is now in year number two since its being brought back to life. Here are some highlights of what we have been up this past year.

Each of our meetings consisted of a devotional, a training piece, and discussion of topics relevant to small churches. Devotionals included envisioning small churches as mustard seeds, being open to creative disruptions, and discerning the balance between structure and flexibility. Training topics included: healthy support-challenge balance, church life cycles, self-care for the leader, and mental models.

We discussed a variety of topics. Here just a few:

- How the committee might help a struggling church to revitalize;
- How the committee works within the framework of other ABCOM committees;
- The need to update the committee's ministry description in ABCOM's Constitution and By-Laws;
- The possibility of the committee playing a part in churches who are considering closing.

The Committee participated in last year's ABCOM Annual Meeting. We set up a display and engaged meeting-goers in conversation about their own local churches. In a couple of the main sessions, we summarized our work and highlighted an example of ministries and challenges in one of our own local churches.

Last November, we were privileged to interview Dr. Brandon O'Brien, the author of *The Strategically Small Church*. Topics we discussed with him included:

- How can we support churches who are wondering about their future?
- How can the committee encourage small churches and help avoid the mindset "bigger is better?"
- What are some tools that would help churches discern strengths and areas for growth?

In our most recent meetings, we have decided to Focus on three key areas: encouraging the local church, cultivating multi-generational relationships, and supporting new pastors. We would appreciate your prayer for wisdom and discernment in our moving forward. We desire to offer practical, "boots on the ground" help for ABCOM's local churches. Thank you for opportunity to serve Christ in the context of the American Baptist Churches of Maine!