



Christmas Eve Worship Services: The Christmas Eve candlelight worship service was the highlight of the Advent season. The church was normally packed with church families and many visitors. Sometimes we would worship in the early evening, or on occasions at 11:00 p.m. My favorite was the 11:00 p.m. because it would conclude at midnight with the singing of Silent Night as everyone held candles as a symbol of Christ being the light of the world. One year because of bad weather the electricity went out and we actually worshipped in complete candlelight.

These memories, along with many others, cause me to be thankful that God called me to be a pastor. I am thankful that God has sent me to ABC/Ohio to come along side you to equip the church to proclaim the Gospel and transform lives.

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**Year-End Reflections
From a Grateful Pastor**



As the November and December church bulletins arrive at the Region office I am again reminded of how hectic life is from

Thanksgiving through Christmas. It is a glorious opportunity for worship, fellowship and outreach. When I visit churches during this season I reflect on how great a privilege it is to be a pastor of Christ's church. I reflect on many memories when I lead a church family through the celebration of Christ's birth. It is a blessing beyond description. There are two ministry memories that stand out as outreach opportunities that I'd like to share with you.

Year-End Stewardship Challenge



The Advent season is also a wonderful time to be good stewards of God's treasure. Many churches have special Christmas giving opportunities that are worthy of our support. I want to encourage you to be faithful to God and give generously to your church with a special offering to say thank you to God. Perhaps an extra financial gift equal to what you spend on a loved one would help your church reach its ministry goals for 2007.

Community Thanksgiving Worship Services: Churches in the communities I served would gather for worship the Wednesday evening before Thanksgiving. We would normally rotate from church to church so that we would have an opportunity to experience worship in a church other than our own. One of the pastors would bring a message and participating churches would provide music. Normally there were a good number of visitors attending who simply wanted to go to church before Thanksgiving. It was an opportunity for the churches to demonstrate unity and cooperation as a witness to the community. The thing I appreciated the most was the opportunity to work with pastoral colleagues. It was truly a blessing and opportunity that I miss.

I would also challenge your church to be faithful in its mission giving to the American Baptist Churches of Ohio. November and December are important months for our ministry. Please do what you can to support the ongoing ministry efforts of ABC/Ohio. Our staff, Rev. Bob Cassady, Rev. Jane Gibbons, Rev. Dan Taylor, Rev. Rachel Lee, and Rev. Alvin Lee consider it a privilege to be called to serve you. We pray that God will bless each of you during the Advent season.

Lawrence O. Swain, Executive Minister