

“Autumn arrives in the early morning, but spring at the close of a winter day.”

— Elizabeth Bowen

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— Norma Jean-Jacques, Editor

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Spotlight on Rev. Dr. Charles Revis

Executive Minister,
Mission Northwest



A famous 80-something actress once declared, “Age is just a number.” **Reverend Dr. Charles Revis** is living proof that this adage is true. When he isn’t leading the Mission Northwest region of ABCUSA or spending time with his wife and children, the 70-year-old squeezes in treks in the wilderness on his mountain bike or alpine skiing on the slopes. You might also find the shutterbug and outdoorsman snapping photos at a scenic location or flyfishing in the expanse of a Northern Idaho river. He brings that same gusto to his work as Executive Minister of Mission Northwest even after 18 years in the role and half a century in ministry.

What keeps him energized and inspired about his calling after all these years? He explains, “Making sure that local churches in my region are healthy and supporting pastors in spreading the good news of Jesus Christ motivates me.” According to Rev. Revis, a decade ago, Mission Northwest could provide 10 to 15 good prospects to a church looking for a new pastor. Today, the pool is two to five good candidates. The region is able to recruit 10 to 20 good candidates in a given year to be considered by various open churches.

With the number of pastors decreasing and congregations shrinking, his focus at Mission Northwest is to foster pastoral leadership, church transformation, and planting and restarting churches. At the same time, he encourages the association of 142 churches in his region, which spans Washington state, Montana, Idaho and Utah. With those priorities in mind, Rev. Revis has instituted many programs in his region to support pastors and churches.

Shaping Pastors into Life-Long Learners through Peer-to-Peer Learning

Mission Northwest runs Leadership Learning Communities (LLCs) to help pastors become life-long learners in leadership. At monthly meetings, LLCs provide friendship, encouragement, accountability, resources and mutual support through prayer. Senior pastors are encouraged to develop leaders in their local churches by replicating LLCs for local church leaders in their own congregations. “No church has experienced transformation without a transformational leader at the helm,” expresses Rev. Revis, “That is why Mission Northwest is invested heavily in the development of pastors as transformational leaders.”



Rev. Revis has harnessed the wisdom of retired ministers to serve as transitional pastors for churches engaged in major changes. These transitional pastors have led rebirth and growth at these congregations in just nine to 18 months.



Each LLC is a group of ministry peers who meet nine times a year to enhance their effectiveness as leaders. All groups use a common core curriculum and are facilitated by a mentor pastor. The mentor pastors receive training through the Mission Northwest region, giving significant time to this ministry beyond their local church duties.

Another learning opportunity is the annual Leadership Tune-up that takes place in the region. This yearly conference seeks to equip pastors in the challenge of shepherding 21st century, mission-focused congregations.

In the current church climate, Rev. Revis feels local churches must be prepared to shift from full-time pastors to bi-vocational ministers. His region has a special ordination track for co-vocational pastors who have completed training elsewhere. For example, a rancher in Montana was chosen to earn lay certification and became a pastor of a small church of less than 50 people in his local town. According to Rev. Revis, that church would have had trouble finding a pastor otherwise.

A Role for Seasoned Pastors

Among the successes in his region, Rev. Revis points out that two churches on the verge of closing were adopted by other churches. Also, Mission Northwest has seen solid turnarounds of some congregations, which didn't know if they'd survive.

To facilitate these church restorations, Rev. Revis has harnessed the wisdom of retired ministers to serve as transitional pastors for churches engaged in major changes. These transitional pastors have led rebirth and growth at these congregations in just nine to 18 months. In addition, Mission Northwest has benefitted from retired ministers serving as interim pastors. In this capacity, they've shepherded churches that were looking for a new pastor. Rev. Revis sees a third role for retired ministers in the church: being a supporting and empathetic presence because they have walked in the pastor's shoes and want the pastor to succeed.

A Fresh Look at Membership

"Membership is active engagement, not just a name on a list," Rev. Revis posits. "Each local church has to figure out what active engagement in their congregation looks like for themselves." He has lectured on a white paper he

wrote called "Reimagining Church Members for a Renewed Church," which discusses factors to consider when determining church membership standards. You can find this paper at missionnorthwest.org.

Mission Northwest has taken a page from the Fresh Expressions movement, which began in the United Kingdom and has crossed the Atlantic to the U.S. This movement involves forming small communities of faith outside the local church around subjects of interest or specific groups. These faith communities are designed especially for those who have never been involved in church or who have left the church.



Age 70 is the new 60. Rev. Dr. Charles Revis is pictured hitting the ski slopes when he was just shy of his 70th birthday.

At Mission Northwest, a Central Washington State congregation has implemented a "dinner church" to meet the needs of people of lower economic status by providing meals and worship for 75 lower income individuals. Rev. Revis concludes, "Church can happen in a setting that is not a formal congregation, where some people may not be comfortable."

He adds, "We've had success with thinking out of the box to find new ways of reaching people. I'd love to see more of it."

Celebrations

The Rev. Dr. Curtis Whitney and Mrs. Ruth Whitney, formerly of Brooklyn, NY, celebrated their 61st wedding anniversary on March 12, 2022, at Rehoboth Beach in Delaware with family and close friends.



Rev. Whitney graduated from Drew Theological School in Madison, NJ, receiving a Doctor of Ministry Degree in May 1991. In 1975, he was ordained by the Union Baptist Church in Harlem, NY. Mrs. Whitney is a graduate of the State University of Old Westbury, NY. The Whitneys were married at the Union Baptist Church in Newark, NJ.

In addition to their partnership on the home front, the Whitneys teamed up professionally. Rev. Whitney and Mrs. Whitney served on the board of ABC Metro New York for several years. Also, they served churches in Westbury, NY, and Brooklyn, NY. Rev. Whitney's last pastorate of 33 years was at Mt. Sinai Baptist Church in Brooklyn, NY, where he was designated Pastor Emeritus. The Whitneys now reside in Frederica, DE, basking in the glow of their retirement years.

Kingsbury Baptist Church in Washington County, all in New York. He also served the United Church of Canada on Wolfe Island in Ontario. In addition, he was on the Board of Managers and the Division of World Mission Support for the New York State Baptist Convention.

Also, he was a managing partner of the Development Company Higgs and Crayford in Kingsbury. In retirement, he resided on Wolfe Island, Ontario, before settling in Pultneyville, NY.

He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Barbara; and three sons: Robert V. (Lisa), David K. (Ruth), Theodore J. (Heidi); grandsons: Ian R. and Colin D.; nieces: Eliana and Elizabeth; nephews: Reese and Dr. David Higgs; as well as several cousins.

Dr. Barbara Atkeson Smith, beloved wife of MMBB member Dr. Donald A. Smith, went to her heavenly home in September 2021.



Dr. Barbara Smith earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Carroll College in Waukesha, WI and a Master of Arts Degree from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. She was a poet, author, and editor of many books and novels and a feature writer for *Outdoor West Virginia* and *Goldenseal Magazine*. In 2010, she received an honorary doctorate in literature from Alderson Broaddus University.

Dr. Smith was a commissioned missionary as well as the Director of the National Baptist Student Movement of ABCUSA when they were headquartered in New York City. After she was married in 1957, she retired from that position and turned to academia. For over 37 years, Dr. Smith taught at Alderson Broaddus University and was the Chairperson of the Humanities Division for 20 of those years.

Serving her God and her community was a priority for her. Dr. Smith was a founder and benefactor of Mountain Hospice of Barbour County in West Virginia, where she served as a member of the Board of Directors and as a volunteer since its inception. On the religious front, she was a trustee and moderator of the Philippi Baptist Church in West Virginia. In addition, she was a member of the

In Memoriam



Rev. David Higgs passed into the arms of his Savior on Saturday, January 2, 2021, at Newark Wayne Hospital. He was born in Brattleboro, VT, on November 5, 1936, to Rev. Vivian G. Higgs and Louise Lotee.

Rev. Higgs was educated at Rochester Institute of Technology in New York, Kalamazoo College in Michigan, and Colgate Rochester Divinity School in New York and was ordained by the New York State Baptist Convention. He served as pastor of Morton Baptist Church in Monroe County, the West Baptist Church in Oswego and the

Baptist Peace Fellowship, Amnesty International and many other civic organizations.

In 2011, she received the President's Award from the Barbour County Chamber of Commerce. For her altruism, Dr. Smith earned the Volunteers Foundation Award from the National Hospice & Palliative Care Association in 2019.

She is survived by her husband of 63 years, Dr. Donald A. Smith of Philippi; a daughter, Jean (Roger) Ramoth; David Smith; daughter, Carolyn Smith (Charles) Burggraf; and six grandsons, Seth, Nate and Ty Burggraf, and Andrew, Bryson and William Smith. She was predeceased by two sisters, Annette Atkeson Simonson and Thelma Atkeson.



Rev. Henry H. Mitchell, Th.D., transitioned to his eternal home on Saturday, January 15, 2022, at 102 years of age. Rev. Mitchell was a long-time MMBB member, having enrolled in MMBB's benefit plans in 1945.

Rev. Mitchell was born in Columbus, OH, in 1919. He earned a Bachelor's degree from Lincoln University, PA; Bachelor's and Master of Divinity degrees from Union Theological Seminary, NY; a Master's degree in linguistics at California State University; and a Doctorate in black church history and theology from Claremont School of Theology, CA.

From 1945 to 1959, Rev. Mitchell served as an American Baptist regional staff person in Northern California. He spent the next seven years as pastor of Second Baptist Church in Fresno, CA and then three years as pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Santa Monica, CA. From 1969 to 1974, he was the first Martin Luther King, Jr. Professor of Black Church Studies at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School (CRCDS).

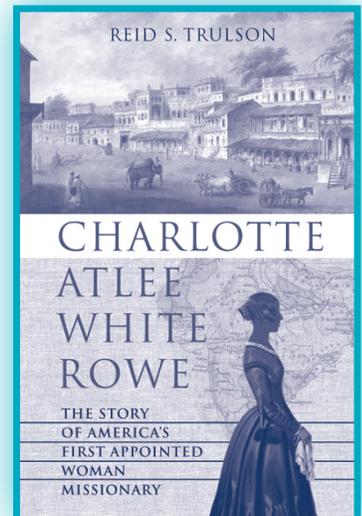
Turning to academia, Dr. Henry Mitchell served as founding Director of the Ecumenical Center for Black Church Studies in Los Angeles before semi-retirement from ministry. From 1982 to 1987, he was Academic Dean and Professor of History and Homiletics at Proctor School of

Theology, Virginia Union University. CRCDS appointed him professor emeritus in 1992.

Rev. Mitchell was an accomplished author, having written or co-authored more than half a dozen books. From 1988 to 2000, he and his wife Rev. Ella Mitchell taught as visiting professors of homiletics at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Georgia while co-mentoring in the Doctor of Ministry Program at the United Theological Seminary in Ohio for 10 years. On the personal front, they raised three children together. The Mitchells were married until Rev. Ella Mitchell passed away in 2008. Rev. Henry Mitchell is survived by his three children and six grandchildren. You can find more information about Rev. Mitchell at www.mmbb/mitchell.org.

Book Review

Charlotte Atlee White Rowe: The Story of America's First Appointed Woman Missionary shines a light on a pioneer in missionary history. In 1829 after a decade of ministry in India, Charlotte White Rowe returned to the United States. She was the first American woman officially appointed as a missionary



by any denomination or mission agency. The scandal of Charlotte White's 1815 appointment by American Baptists required her to prevail over gender bias, survive attempts to revoke her appointment, and surmount the challenge of insufficient funding.

The consistent omission of Charlotte White Rowe from early mission accounts was further compounded by her subsequent absence in histories of missionary and gender studies. Rev. Dr. Reid Trulson, retired Executive Director of American Baptist International Ministries, has now reclaimed her story. Based on sources in England, India

and America, Trulson has corrected numerous inaccuracies in the few earlier references to her. The contributions she made were a key element in the century-long process through which single and married women finally gained equal missionary appointments with men.

Mercer University Press released Charlotte Rowe's biography in November 2021 as part of the James N. Griffith Endowed Series in Baptist Studies. This series on Baptist life and thought offers analysis and examines the role of Baptists in societies and cultures around the world.

Rev. Dr. Reid S. Trulson previously served as the American Baptist representative to Europe in Austria and the Czech

Republic, area director for Europe and the Middle East, Scripture Union regional secretary in Ghana, and was an American Baptist pastor in California and Wisconsin.

Any views or opinions presented in this book are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of MMBB. We welcome all submissions of books for review in News & Notes. Because of the large number of submissions received, we are not able to publish a review of all of the books sent to us. We are grateful for the suggestions you share with us and look forward to publishing some of them during the year.

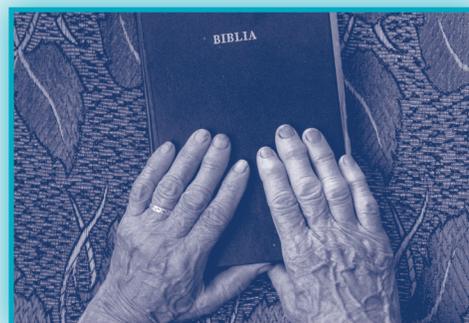
Five Traits Centenarians Share

“Don't fight the day; just let it be. Get up and be positive,” declares centenarian Gussie Levine when asked why he has been blessed with such longevity. It turns out that he's right.¹

The secret to a long life might surprise you. According to recent studies of people 100 years old or more, longevity isn't just about good luck or good genes. It's also about good habits.

Today, with more access to better health care, the average life expectancy in the United States is around 80. Some Americans live into their 80s, 90s and even reach the big 100. According to the Medline Plus, genetics only accounts for 25 percent of centenarians. About 75 percent of those who live to 100 do not have a family history of this type of longevity.² However, there are some habits that centenarians have in common, making them less likely to fall ill and more likely to recover when they do get sick.

1. Having a positive attitude or being a cup-half-full type of person.
2. Remaining active, whether joining a chess club, engaging in volunteer efforts or part-time work.
3. Maintaining or building connections with friends and relatives to avoid isolation.
4. Exercising regularly.



5. Maintaining a healthy diet, including lots of plant-based foods.

As we reported in the “In Memoriam” section of this edition, MMBB member Rev. Henry Mitchell was over 100 when he passed away recently. *News and Notes* would like to celebrate active MMBB members who are marking a 100th birthday this year or have celebrated one recently. If you are a member who is 100 years old or more, or know a member who is, please email communications@mmbb.org. Include the name of the member, the date of their 100th birthday and a brief one-sentence highlight of their career. We will list this information in a future *News and Notes* story recognizing MMBB centenarians.

1. Gwen Weiss-Numeroff, *Extraordinary Centenarians in America: Their secrets to living a long vibrant life*, Agio Publishing House, November 14, 2012, as cited in “25 Inspiring Quotes from Extraordinary Centenarians,” Katie Neal, March 28, 2013, *Spryliving*.

2. MedlinePlus [Internet]. Bethesda (MD): National Library of Medicine (US); “Is Longevity Determined by Genetic?” [updated 2022 March 23; reviewed 2020 Sept 18; cited 2022 March 22]; [about 1 p.]. Available from: <https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/understanding/traits/longevity/>.