



**Assemblies of God**  
**Appalachian Ministry Network**  
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David W. Dillon  
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Dear Network Friends and Family:

Wow, 2014 is already halfway over! Can you believe it? Wherever you serve and in whatever capacity as a member of our Appalachian Ministry Network, I hope and pray that you are having a great summer. If things are going well with and for you, I rejoice with and for you. But if things are not, for any reason, then I am praying for you, that the Presence of the Father and the loving care and concern of Jesus (1 Peter 5:7) will be made very real to you through the work of the Holy Spirit. Remember the encouraging words given to us by the Lord in Galatians 6:9: *“Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season (at the right time, God’s perfect time) we will reap if we don’t give up.”* God’s got your back, your front, over your head and under your feet!

#### **NETWORK COMMUNICATIONS IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

Since summer is a busy time for us all, I’m writing to share brief bits of info concerning items of interest for our network ministry family. As I have said before, constant updates for you are posted on Facebook on the Appalachian Ministers group page, so if you’re on Facebook and not a member of the group then let me know and I’ll add you. (My wife also has a group for the ministry wives, so men, please pass this along to your spouse so that she can get connected with that group.) Occasional updates are also sent via e-mail so make sure my administrative assistant, Lana Bell, has your current e-mail address. More and more of our communications are being sent by these means since they are much more efficient and cost-effective. Soon, and on a related note, we will begin work on a total redesign of the network’s website and that too will be another important information portal for our ministers and churches.

#### **OPEN CHURCHES**

As of this writing, **seven** churches of our network are in need of a pastor. On the Virginia side, **Baptist Valley, Floyd, Pembroke, Raven, Stoney Ridge, and Wytheville** are open. Baptist Valley, Raven and Stoney Ridge are located in Section Two, where Jimi Watson is the presbyter. Floyd is located in Section Three, where Calvin Hickson serves as presbyter. Pembroke and Wytheville are in Section Four, where Joe Copolo is the presbyter. In West Virginia, **Mason** is open. This church is located in Section Eight and Mark Anderson is the presbyter. If interested in any of these ministry opportunities, please contact the respective presbyter.

#### **NEW PASTORS**

Congratulations to these ministers recently called to serve as shepherds of the following congregations:

- Clifton Forge (VA), First AG, Teddy and Pauline Bias
- Sydnorsville (VA), Harvest Worship Center, James and Tonya Craiger

#### **PAUSE '14 RETREAT INFO COMING SOON!**

Plans and promotional materials are being finalized for this year’s PAUSE retreat and will be in your hands soon. October 13-15 are the dates and Pigeon Forge, TN, will again be the place. PAUSE is being reformatted in hopes of decreasing the costs so that more of our ministers and spouses can attend. Rather than packaging the lodging and activities at one group price, you will be able to select your preferred hotel from a list with prices provided by the individual properties. More free time will be scheduled too so that you can make plans according to your desires. These steps will give you more control of your expenses. You decided where to stay and what to do! There will still be a couple of group sessions for spiritual refreshing and ministry development, as well as late night gatherings for fellowship, food, fun and prizes.

### **WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST TEAM MEMBER!**

Camile Moore has recently joined the network office team and will be working on a part-time basis in our finance and accounting department. She has many years of experience in church financial management and is very familiar with the nature of accounting procedures on the level such as that of the network resource center. Camile serves alongside her husband Dan as pastor and first lady of Princeton (WV) First Assembly of God. Many years ago Dan and Camile worked at the camp and conference center, so welcome back Camile!

### **NETWORK OFFICERS' MINISTRY AVAILABILITY**

From time to time in my travels or at a network event such as our annual conference, I am asked by a member of one of our churches, "How come you haven't been to our church in a while?" My answer is always the same: "Because your pastor hasn't invited me." As officers of the 111 churches comprising the network, the standing protocol is and has always been, "We go where invited." (Even in times of crisis requiring intervention and assistance by the network leadership in our General Council affiliated churches, that is done through the process of invitation by either the pastor, a majority of the church board, or a petition from 30% of the active membership. District Council affiliated and supervised churches operate under different guidelines in such circumstances. I explained this in greater detail in my report at this year's network conference. Check it out if you haven't seen it.)

Just as our ministers and churches are part of the Appalachian Ministry Network and have responsibilities toward that body, your executive officers and our network itself also have obligations to the Assemblies of God (AG) fellowship at large of which we are part. (We are a body—not isolationists—according to God's plan and design for His Church!) Yes, ministry to our network is the top priority but the additional responsibilities to the greater church that is our AG fellowship require occasional travel and attendance at functions elsewhere in the country and other parts of the world, thus taking up dates on the calendar. Also, it is necessary for us to schedule time for personal rest and restoration, something that most of us in ministry do very poorly, I'm afraid. So between ministry within the network, to the fellowship beyond our boundaries, and time for sabbath rest, empty spaces on the calendar fill up quickly. Simply stated, there's more to do than time to be done! I'm sure you can relate.

For those interested in scheduling an executive officer of the network for ministry at your church, please know that it is necessary to do so well in advance. With 111 churches, 240 ministers and 13,000+ constituents under our care and supervision, it is a mammoth task to be everywhere people desire and need us to be. As superintendent, I am normally booked **5-6 months** in advance. (Currently, my next available Sunday is December 13.) I'm not saying this to impress you, just to let you know the reality of my schedule. I love to visit all of our churches and am more than willing to do so but need enough advance notice to make that happen. I've just started working on my 2015 ministry calendar and will soon be booking dates for next year, so let me know if you're interested and we will see what we can schedule. Thanks for your understanding here. (And your prayers for strength and safety as I travel!)

### **FINAL THOUGHTS**

In just a week I will mark my third anniversary of service as your network pastor and superintendent. It hardly seems possible that three years have passed since I was asked by our ministers and churches to serve in this important office. Much has happened during this time and many things have been accomplished, but none of it without the Lord's help and the prayers and assistance of those around me. God has promised **GREATER** things to come, so let's purpose together to believe that what He has guaranteed for us in the supernatural will become a reality in the natural.

Please know that you are loved and appreciated and that Lisa and I count it a high honor and privilege to serve you. Blessings again to each of you.

For Christ and You,

*Pastor Dave*

David W. Dillon  
Network Pastor/Superintendent

## DEALING WITH CLUELESS CRITICS

We like to think that when “founded” or “constructive” criticism comes our way, we are ready to hear and be better. It may not be fun, but we do want to know. However, when a clueless critic presents their criticism, how do we handle that? Here are some thoughts on processing unfounded criticism, the good, the bad and the ugly.

1. **Do a preemptive strike.** Never wait for the critics to show up. Trust me, they’re out there. While planning for the best, always prepare for the worst when it comes to these people. Get ahead of the criticism. When you sense something may be coming your way, get ahead of it. As Barney Fife famously noted, “Nip it! Nip it in the bud!”
2. **Consider the source.** When the person is someone new to you or your organization and they have no history of involvement, I would place a low value on their criticism. Still listen but do not go far with it.
3. **Remember, it’s a small minority.** Usually the criticism comes from a small minority, grumbling and complaining. They do so stating that a lot of people are upset at what you are doing. This small minority seldom come to you directly with their criticism.
4. **Have in place a strong leadership team.** A strong board can be invaluable when a ruckus resulting in criticism starts in the church. This is where being preemptive comes in to play as well.
5. **Attempt to correct perception.** A critic may simply have wrong information. When you present accurate information to them sometimes they will listen, sometimes not. Be prepared for either.
6. **Don’t be drawn into typical debates.** Frequently the critic wants to engage you in a deep theological debate in which many have engaged in the past. While you are the spiritual leader of the church, please know there will be critics of your doctrinal stances and interpretations of scripture. Communicate to the one who disagrees with you most vehemently that folks a lot smarter than the two of you added together have debated the issues and never come to agreement. Stake out your position without engaging in a debate that will never be won with critics whose criticism is unfounded.
7. **SOMETIMES call the critic on unfounded criticism.** When criticism comes your way there are times to call the critic on the error of criticism. There are times when they need to know which end is up and that the leader is not some wimp they can attack at will. Don’t go looking for a fight but also don’t roll over when the critic is wrong.
8. **OR MAYBE it may not be worth the fight.** When unfounded criticism comes your way, do all you can to not give it emotional energy. That’s not easy to do, but remember, it is the Lord who brings vindication.
9. **Maintain your testimony.** Reacting poorly to **even** the most off-the-wall criticism is not worth it. Your testimony of what God has done in your life is far more valuable. Never forfeit that.
10. **Apply 1 Peter 5:7.** Your anxiety should be with the Lord, not with you and not with the purveyor of unfounded criticism. Cast it on Him because He cares for you.

At the end of the day you need to have your head screwed on straight with these critics. They are truly clueless and they can mess with your head. Do not let that happen. Be gracious and kind. Be forthright and clear. Pray for the critic and do not do so in a condescending way.

Even the best leaders in scripture, Old Testament and New Testament, had their clueless critics. Jesus certainly had his and you have yours. Give the care of these criticisms to the Lord and watch Him move your ministry forward in spite of unfounded criticism. In all things be secure in who God called you to be. It sounds trite, but when you do, God takes care of the clueless critics and their unfounded criticisms.

*Source: The Hardy Group, 7/1/14 E-mail Update*