

Getting to Know Alfred-Almond Bible Church

Who is Alfred-Almond Bible Church (AABC)?

AABC is a “Bible church,” in the truest sense of that word. This church has been founded on the truth of Scripture; the people of this church have been nourished by the Scriptures; and the leaders of this church are committed to continue equipping the saints for the work of ministry by bringing the Bible to bear on every area of life—whether in preaching, teaching, discipleship, or counseling.

We pursue obedience to Jesus’s Great Commission by seeking to present the gospel both to every person in the Alfred-Almond community and surrounding area as well as to the nations through our engagement with missionaries around the globe. We have a very committed Missions Committee, and we provide financial support for 17 missionaries or organizations. We also seek to establish believers in the faith through Bible-teaching ministry and through biblical counseling, and we provide opportunities for Christian fellowship and encouragement for all believers in our community who wish to fellowship with us.

We are a local body of believers in Jesus who seek to worship Jesus together regularly, bear one another’s burdens, love one another, and point each other to Jesus as the one who satisfies all our needs. We gather as a body on Sunday mornings, singing together with a healthy blend of hymns and contemporary worship music, led by a group of talented musicians who care much about the faithfulness of the lyrics as well as the excellence of the music, praying corporately, sharing the Lord’s Supper at least once a month, baptizing believers as often as we have the opportunity, and receiving God’s Word through the exposition of the Scriptures. Regularly, people can be found both before the service and after the service talking together, enjoying healthy fellowship. We carefully curate and maintain an excellent library, providing audio, video, and print material for all ages that provides helpful guidance for living the Christian life, studying theology, church history, and apologetics, and going deeper in our understanding of the gospel. We share our resources, we share our lives, and we share God’s Word— together.

We highly value Jesus, the gospel, and salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, for God’s glory alone. We highly value the Bible, sharing life together as genuine family, and life at all stages (conception through oldest age). We highly value God’s global mission of the gospel going to the nations, biblical counseling to bring help to the hurting, and transparency in our engagement with the Lord.

Our average Sunday morning attendance in recent months has been 115-130, including between 20-30 children, and we have about 100 total members. We are made up of a diversity of family dynamics. We have many homeschooling families, a handful of widows, several octogenarians, and a group of single young adults. Some parents send their children to local public schools, and some parents have sent their children to private Christian schools that are a little further away.

What are our current ministries?

Our current ministries to adults include:

- Expository gospel preaching (primarily progressing Sunday-by-Sunday through a particular book of the Bible, seeking to highlight the Bible’s wonderful unity by drawing connections all over the

Bible, recognizing how all of Scripture shapes the gospel message, and seeking to experience the transforming grace of the Holy Spirit)

- Adult Bible Fellowship (ABF; approximately 45 minutes following the service, giving small groups an opportunity to discuss the sermon together; we have also offered various classes during this time)
- Men's Discipleship Groups (currently 3 groups of between 5-15 men meet together weekly to study, pray, and fellowship)
- Women's Discipleship Groups (currently 2 groups of between 20-25 women, meeting on Sunday evenings or via Zoom on Saturday mornings, to study, pray, and fellowship)
- Care Groups (each group facilitated by an Elder, meeting weekly in a home or at the church mid-week, providing an opportunity for deeper relationships, some study and prayer, and taking responsibility for providing practical one-another care)
- Charge! (young adult ministry, which includes college students, singles, and married couples under 30ish, meeting weekly to pursue deep, fun, and caring relationships, rooted in fellowship, worship, Bible teaching, discussion, and prayer)
- Hope Counseling (currently five biblical counselors, certified through the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors, serve the unique needs of individuals, couples, and families both in our church and outside the church)

Our current ministries to children include:

- Nursery (provided during the Sunday morning worship gathering and ABF)
- Toddler Time (provided during the Sunday morning worship gathering for 2-4 year-olds)
- EPIC Kids/Junior Church (K-6th grade children are released after singing during the worship gathering for a Bible lesson from The Gospel Project curriculum, a time for games and snacks, and then, after the service, during the Sunday school hour, the children are gathered for small group discussion and Bible memory)
- EPIC Teens (7th-12th grade students gather on Sunday evenings for an exciting time of Bible study, using The Gospel Project curriculum, fellowship, prayer, and a lot of fun; there currently is no teen Sunday school class)
- VBS (Vacation Bible School program annually draws many volunteers and connects with many children in our community)

What is our church leadership structure?

Under Jesus's shepherding headship, expressed through the Scriptures, the leadership of AABC is conducted by the Board of Elders, which currently consists of six men. Two of these men are often referred to as "staff pastors" or, formally in our Constitution, "salaried Elders." We recognize a biblical equation between the terms pastor, elder, and overseer, so that authority and responsibility is shared equally between the Elders, though teaching responsibilities are primarily shared between the "staff pastors."

Our Board of Elders is also supported by a Board of Deacons, currently made up of six men, who effectively handle much of the administrative and physical facility needs of our church family. The Board of Elders currently meets twice each month, once with the Board of Deacons. These meetings are spent praying for the specific needs of our church family, studying something together as leaders, and sharing the burden of shepherding the sheep and planning. Both Elders and Deacons are accountable to the church family, and the congregation participates by voting for Constitution revisions, to approve the

annual budgets as well as large financial transactions, the selection of “staff pastors,” and the disciplinary removal of members.

What are our doctrinal distinctives?

As an independent Bible church, AABC is not affiliated with any particular denomination. Our Articles of Faith express a clear summary of our church’s core beliefs related to each of the traditional ten branches of theology, and we are unashamedly on the conservative side of the theological spectrum. The authority, inerrancy, and sufficiency of Scripture shines brightly in all of our ministries. Our Constitution also includes a precise articulation of our understanding of the traditional doctrines of biblical marriage and sexuality.

While we are generally on the Reformed side of the theological spectrum when it comes to salvation, we do not unite around particular positions on the extent of the atonement, the nature of the will, the resistibility of God’s grace, or election. Rather, we emphasize eternal life as a gift of God, offered to sinners because of the gospel events of Jesus’s life, death, resurrection, ascension, and promised return. Out of that emphasis, we do strongly affirm the eternal security of believers. We allow for “gracious disagreement” on some of the doctrinal conclusions that have historically proven unhappily divisive. We expect those who teach to honestly and humbly explain what they see in the Scriptures, while welcoming the reality that not everyone will see these matters the same way. At the same time, we are all seeking to grow in learning to live with the tensions present in Scripture, and, therefore, we seek to encourage dialogue.

Historically, our church has been uniquely impacted by *Answers in Genesis* and other creationist organizations. Nevertheless, our church stakes out no specific position on the age of the earth, while we do affirm Adam and Eve as the first human beings, implicitly but plainly rejecting “theistic evolution.” But, since we do not recognize the Bible positively teaching anything regarding the specific age of the earth, we can embrace those who might be satisfied with the arguments of Old Earth Creationism.

Our church also takes no official position regarding the controversial “gifts of the Spirit,” but, while affirming and celebrating God’s ongoing exercise of miraculous power in our world, particularly in the form of healing, we do not acknowledge any modern-day apostles or prophets, we do not see tongues-speaking in our setting, and we do not see individuals exercising miraculous power. We regularly recognize and discuss the work of the Holy Spirit, however, and certainly affirm the essential necessity of his ongoing work in the lives of believers. We baptize believers, and we practice “open communion,” celebrating the Lord’s Supper as a symbolic expression of our faith, memorializing the accomplishment of our salvation in the death of Jesus.

Finally, with regard to eschatology, our church has a long history of pastors who preached and taught within a dispensational framework. However, with regard to the sequence of events leading up to Jesus’s return, the church’s doctrinal statements have never been particularly specific. Thus, our most recent “staff pastors” have held to different perspectives with regard to how to understand the end-times tribulation. We do not avoid teaching about and discussing these topics; rather, we seek to cultivate an environment of humble dialogue, recognizing that different students of Scripture will come to different conclusions on many issues related to the sequence of end-times events. Our current Teaching Pastor encourages bypassing labels, recognizing tensions in Scripture, and being eager to learn from anyone.

How do we pursue community outreach?

Historically, our church has hosted an annual “Trunk or Treat” event around Halloween, a community Easter egg hunt, Vacation Bible School in the summer, and a major event around Christmas. We face a unique geographical challenge, in that our facilities are located up on a hill that reduces our visibility from the major highway. Nevertheless, our members are well-engaged in the Alfred-Almond community and surrounding areas, including several members who work in the Alfred-Almond Central School system. We have also participated in Almond Community Day by marching in the parade and hosting games and activities for families in the park, and our church has sponsored a youth baseball team.

What is the history of our church?

In 1975, two events providentially coincided. The Lord began stirring the hearts of two groups of believers—one group meeting for Bible study in Alfred, and one group doing the same thing in Almond—to consider forming a Bible-believing, Bible-preaching church in this area. At the same time, the year after joining AMOC (American Mission for Opening Churches, near Buffalo), Dan Kenyon was seeking the Lord’s guidance on where to serve and lead a new church plant. The two Bible study groups began meeting together in homes, Dan Kenyon connected with them, and came to preach at one of their gatherings once, and, in answer to a lot of dedicated praying, seven families came together to officially begin Alfred-Almond Bible Church, with Dan Kenyon as the first pastor, in January 1976, with the first official meeting held in Bob and Barb Baker’s home.

After several weeks, the small church began renting space at the Almond Grange for church services, while having Sunday school and Bible study classes in different folks’ homes. As the church grew to about 12 families, hopes began rising for a more permanent meeting facility, and by the end of 1977, the church shared their resources to purchase 8.6 acres of land, and construction of our current church building began in the middle of 1978. Easter week, on Maundy Thursday of 1979, the first service was held in the basement; a little over a year later, the first service was held in the auditorium; the main building was completed in May 1981; in 1992, the additional wing, with classrooms, library, and offices was added; then, in 2013, the South Wing was completed with a full kitchen and fellowship hall; finally, our gymnasium was added, without debt, in 2021. There are plans to finish the gym in certain ways, but the next phase of that project is on hold.

Several “staff pastors” have provided biblical leadership for AABC. Dan Kenyon led the church as pastor from 1975-1989; Bob Hibbard served as “staff pastor” from 1989-1995; and John Prince had begun serving as a youth pastor in 1985, and he became Senior Pastor in 1995. Pastor John served the church faithfully until his death in 2017. Ken Shutt arrived to serve as Associate Pastor in 2012, and then he stepped into the Senior Pastor role in 2017. As the Elders began seeking another “staff pastor,” they clarified their understanding of the Bible’s teaching with regard to shared plural leadership and how it could look here, and they decided that they would hire another pastor, but there would no longer be the titles of “senior” or “associate” pastors, since, according to Scripture, all elders are pastors and all pastors are elders. Then, in August 2019, Justin Langley moved from Texas to serve as Pastor alongside Pastor Ken and the lay elders. Now, in 2024, the Lord is moving Pastor Ken and his family to serve him elsewhere, and we are seeking another “staff pastor” to serve alongside Pastor Justin.