

Notes & News, Thoughts & Views



For ABCOPAD Churches from Rev. Mark Mahserjian-Smith
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February, 2024

This past January, I had the opportunity to teach the Mission portion of our ACTS Mission and Evangelism course. Rev. Eric Kraihanzel, lead pastor at First Baptist Church of Lansdale and ACTS Program Director, was the primary instructor for the Evangelism section of the course. Both course segments were taught online, and Eric and I had guest presenters assist us with our classes. Pastor Eric had Rev. Tony Tilford assist him in exploring evangelism while I was joined by Rev. Dr. Marie Onwubuariri, Director of Intercultural Ministries with the American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) and Global Servant with International Ministries Brian Smith, currently serving in the Dominican Republic. Each of these guest instructors taught students in their areas of expertise.

One of my favorite scripture passages when teaching mission is Acts 1:8: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Our ABC family has organized a mission using this scripture text. Jerusalem represents ABCOPAD (local), ABHMS (national), Judea and Samaria, and International Ministries (global) cover the ends of the earth. While in my current role as Acting Regional Executive Pastor, much of my time is spent doing administration; the Mission class helped remind me my heart remains passionate for the mission, knowing people encounter Jesus in ways only a mission experience can provide.

It was a joy teaching the Mission Class, sharing how dramatically missiology has changed in the past thirty-plus years, and hearing mission stories from our guest presenters and the students who took the course. Our time together, helped remind me just how much I love hands-on missions and their importance in the spiritual formation of every follower of Jesus.

Since I began teaching the course in 2008, I have used a portion of the Mission Class to explain how God uses hands-on mission experiences for spiritual formation in the life of a believer. Mission trips (away from home) and missional endeavors (local mission projects) allow people to practice what they have been learning in their local church during Bible Study, Sunday School, and Sermons. Mission trips and endeavors become the anvil where God forges our lives, and spiritual formation takes shape.

During the hands-on mission, Leadership Development grows. Over and over again, I have witnessed people step out of their comfort zone and become team leaders for various projects. People reluctant or resistant to leadership in their local church will step up during a mission trip or endeavor. While in their local church, it was easy to defer to the predominant leaders in the congregation, but on the mission field, those leaders are not present. People step up and discover leadership is less scary than they first believed. I watched people who seemed somewhat timid step out in faith, becoming more confident leaders not just on the mission field but returning home with those skills.

Mission trips and endeavors also provide excellent opportunities for team building. Relationships formed during a mission trip, last far beyond the actual days of service. It is not unusual for friendships formed during a mission trip or endeavor to last a lifetime. It has been said trust is created in the midst of actual work. While church members might get to know one another during Sunday services or while serving on boards or committees, deep relationships built on trust are created during a mission trip. A team living together, away from home, working side by side, builds deep trust quickly. Watching a group of people who did not know one another on day one of a mission trip quickly learn to trust one another and work as a team by day two or three. At the end of the trip, this team soon resembles a family with deep love and respect for one another. Team members on a mission trip watch out for one another's safety and well-being, often willing to sacrifice their own needs for the team's sake.

Growing leadership skills and team formation produce missional energy. Working together, the missional energy created during the mission trip often returns home to the local church. Energized by their experience, team members return from the mission field ready to tackle new challenges in their congregation. Having spent quality time with Jesus during a mission trip, team members bring their missional enthusiasm back home, ready to be the hands and feet of Jesus in their communities.

Next month, we will explore more ways Jesus uses mission trips for spiritual formation in the life of a believer. As you plan for 2024, I hope you will consider joining a Mission Team

this year or creating a Mission Endeavor in your community. ABCOPAD has had teams serve in the Dominican Republic, with other trips to Mexico and Uganda in the works. A student ministry mission trip to West Virginia is being planned, and other summer mission trips are being considered. ABCOPAD can be a

helpful partner when considering a mission trip or project. Jesus wants you to be his hands and feet, sharing the Gospel through word and deed.

Thank you for your partnership in ministry, and God Bless, Mark





Ms. Caryl J. Casey
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Sometimes an easy response is, well that was before churches could support the Region through Partners in Ministry. The first year that Regions were allowed to have their own offerings was 2004. That year we received \$936,279 in United Mission Basics and \$37,000 for Partners in Ministry. By 2013, when the United Mission Basics total was \$560,840, as noted above, Partners in Ministry was \$197,152.

For those of you who aren't sitting there with your phones in hand, tapping on the calculator app, I'll supply the math. The decrease in total dollars flowing through our mission books for UMB and PIM from 2013 compared to 2023, is (\$174,920). If we subtracted out the gifts received for PIM from two church closures and the support from the ABCOPAD Women's Ministries, the decrease would be (\$209,632) in just ten years' time.

So, what's the point or purpose of being reminded? If it's only to look backwards or longingly remember those days in our past when things were different, I'm not sure how that benefits our congregations, influences Regional Ministries in a positive way or helps us live out the promise we were given. Jeremiah 29:11 – "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." I hope we believe in the assurance of our future and that we are looking forward with hope, committed to ensuring that the churches in Pennsylvania and Delaware will continue to minister here in our two states, across the U.S. and in other countries.

Caryl

I have always loved quotes, and when I read one or see something that strikes a chord for me, I copy it and save it. As I looked at the December mission report and thought about what I should say about the giving in 2023, two very similar quotes came to mind:

"People need to be reminded more often than they need to be instructed."

Samuel Johnson

"The greater part of instruction is being reminded of things you already know."

Plato

These two quotes encouraged me to remind us of the things we already know. We all know that United Mission Basics is decreasing. We all know that it has been decreasing for years. It is good to be reminded that we are talking about real people and important ministry when we look at those numbers. In 2003, just 20 years ago, the amount received for United Mission Basics was \$917,692 for the year and in 2013, ten years ago, the amount received was \$560,840. In 2023, the (UMB) amount received was \$258,485.





Rev. David Hardin
Northeast Co-Geographic
Pastoral Servant
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Dear Friends,

As I reflect on the spiritual life of our church, I am filled with an abundance of thankfulness and hope. Like the Apostle Paul writing to the Philippian Christians, I thank God for all of you every time I remember you (Philippians 1:3). Our community of faith has weathered many storms over the years, and through it all, your love, generosity and commitment to Christ and to each other has shone brightly as a beacon of God's grace.

I think back to how our churches came together so supportively during the pandemic. Encouraging pastors, equipping churches to go virtual, learning together in such a whirlwind season. When natural disasters have ravaged our area, you have been there with open arms and compassionate aid no matter the personal cost. And in seasons of relational strain or spiritual doubt, you have provided gentle counsel and uplifting prayer. Our fellowship has cultivated true Christ-like love. Even in difficulty, the Spirit of God has moved mightily among us, because we stir up one another toward perseverant faith.

As the writer of Hebrews reminds believers, we are called to spur one another on to acts of love and service (Hebrews 10:24). It is not an option or an occasional pursuit – provoking our fellow believers to dig deeper spiritually is part of living out our calling in community. Scripture makes clear that the Body of Christ thrives when each part does its work (Ephesians 4:16), when we rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep (Romans 12:5). Our lives are intertwined by covenant love.

We all go through desert seasons where our faith feels tired or strained due to hard circumstances, sin that entangles, or doubts that arise. It is then that we need the encouragement of fellow believers to reenergize our tired souls and inspire us to press on. The writer of Hebrews says we need to know that others walk faithfully alongside us on this journey – we were never meant to walk alone. As a faith community, we must be devoted to caring for the spirits of those struggling among us.

In this current season of change for our region, I feel God stirring in our hearts – calling us through His Spirit to draw even closer together and to be even more intentional about provoking one another to put our faith into action. Let's reflect honestly about ways we can build each other up, not just through our words but also through living out the gospel through compassionate service to our community. Christ has abundantly blessed our fellowship; let's respond joyfully by pouring out that love to abundantly bless others in His name.

With overflowing gratitude and hope,
 David Hardin



Rev. Cristy Wise
Southwest Geographic
Pastoral Servant
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If you hang around me very long, you will know that I have 4 grandchildren and love getting to attend as many events in their life as I possible can. Yep...I have pictures ready to share as well!! I am that grandma!

Have you ever seen the commercials about “you know you’re becoming your parents when...”? We love those. Maybe because they hit home, and we are in that season of our life! Not sure what they advertise, but we love the 30 second – 1 minute story. Haven’t seen them? You need to look ‘em up.

Recently, we have attended a lot of basketball and wrestling to watch and support our 2 oldest granddaughters as they are cheerleaders. They are following in the steps of their mother and grandmother! But as I watched them cheer the other night, God reminded me of a devotion He had laid on my heart years ago, the year with Habitat for Humanity work crews. It was about 6:15 a.m. and usually on Thursday when the work crew is tired.

The first week, I left my 15-minute devotion time discouraged. I felt they all just slept and didn’t pay attention at all. Because

they did! Then, my past kicked in. God reminded me I used to be a cheerleader...be a cheerleader for me! WHAT? Yep, and that is what I did.

Remember pep rallies? Break up the crowd...VIC/TORY! Repeat over and over getting the crowd pumped up. When I got there the following week, I split the work crew into 2 sections one group would say: WE ARE.... the other group MORE THAN CONQUERS! Over and over trying to out shout each other. They were awake!!! Then I said: You just memorized Romans 8:37!! Conquers over what? Glad you asked, Romans goes on to say: “I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels, nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

WOW! So many things can weigh us down in life. Things in the world, our personal health, events or situations we are dealing with, our jobs, family, and the list could go on and on.

Remember...NOTHING can separate us from the love of God in Jesus!! NOTHING!! Again...NOTHING!!! God loves us no matter how crazy our life is.

As you navigate whatever season of life you are in, may you be reminded of this powerful verse and truth. Remember...WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS through Jesus! Hear these words, read these words, and believe these words! Jesus loves YOU!



Rev. Rob Rice
North Central Geographic
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My Valentines

Every year, my wife and I have made it a habit of buying little gifts for our kids each Valentine’s Day. It’s a small way to show our kids how much we love them, and this year, it will be extra special for my daughter who just started college to receive something in the mail. As we were out shopping for the gifts, I was reminded of something that one of my favorite podcasts, Planet Money (I’m a bit of a nerd:)) does each year around Valentine’s Day. On their show, each host gives out “Valentines” to things and people that have been particularly meaningful to them each year. In that spirit, let me share a few “Valentines” that I’d like to give out.

A Valentine for Denise and Caryl, our behind-the-scenes support staff. What would we as a Region do without Denise and Caryl? I have a clue that not much would happen at all. Denise is always ready to send an email message, provide helpful reminders, and share encouragement whenever I need her. Caryl makes sure that our Region stays financially sound, is always able to help with questions around mission giving, and sees that all of us receive the resources we need to do ministry.

A Valentine for Mark, our acting fearless leader. Mark’s leadership for our Region in this time of transition has been crucial in holding us together as a Region. Mark is always ready to help encourage and guide us and has personally provided great guidance and encouragement as I’ve taken on the role of a GPS, and found myself helping churches through difficult situations. Mark has been a great friend, and I can’t thank him enough for what he’s done for me and our Region over the years.

A Valentine for Bryon, Lori, and all of our Region Board. Leading a Region through a time of transition, planning a biennial, forming a vision and search committee, and still making sure our Region staff can do the work that is before us, is a high and noble calling, and our President, Vice President, and the rest of those who serve on the Board have humbly been willing to serve us and lead us as we seek to understand the future.

A Valentine for our pastors, associations, and churches. Are there days when things are difficult? Absolutely. We are forced to walk beside churches and individuals going through trying times, yet, every time I have the privilege to meet with someone or a group, I leave giving thanks to God for the partnership we have, and the awesome opportunity I have to help be part of the leadership of the Region.

A Valentine for my LLC Group. I could tell you stories of our adventures, but many of them are confidential :) Instead, I’ll just simply say thank you to Mark, Tim, Pete, Chris, and Dave for sticking with me through thick and thin, and always being ready and willing to pray for me and encourage me.

A Valentine for my church, Muncy Baptist. Muncy has helped me grow as a pastor and an individual and afforded me the great opportunity to ministry there, and throughout the Region. I am blessed to serve such a great congregation and lead such great people, who are supportive and loving all the time.

And most importantly, **a Valentine for my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.** While I was still a sinner, Christ came and died for me. He’s led me, guided me, and empowered me by His Spirit each and every day. And while I know I’m still a work in progress, He is ready and willing to forgive and keeps molding me and making me into who I am supposed to be.

I hope this list of Valentines does two things. I hope it helps show my thanks and gratitude for all those in my life, and I hope it inspires you this season, to say thank you and show your love to those special individuals that God has placed in your life as well.

The ABCOPAD Foundation

The **ABCOPAD Foundation** exists to support our regional ministry through investments, planned giving and partnerships with individual donors.

THE HARVEST ENDOWMENT was established to support the vision of the *American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania and Delaware (ABCOPAD)* by providing current financial resources for our regional partners today while securing long-term assets for their future. We are grateful for your partnership with ABCOPAD through your giving to the ABCOPAD Foundation.

When you give to ABCOPAD, you are partnering with us to build healthy and vital partnerships with our pastoral leaders, local congregations, and our American Baptist family worldwide.

For more information to help you plan a comfortable future and continue to support the ministries you are passionate about

Go to: www.abcopad.org/ABCOPAD-Foundation



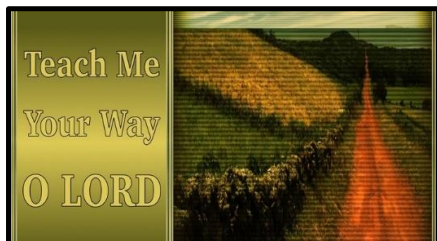
Psalm 25:4, 5, 9, 12

Show me Your ways, LORD, teach me Your paths.

Guide me in Your truth and teach me.

**He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them
His way.**

He will instruct them in the ways they should go.



When the psalmist David poured out his heart in distress, in brokenness, or filled with joy, he didn't know that *two thousand five hundred years* later and for all the time between then and now, those exact words would affect the lives of people everywhere. When God inspires His people to speak, those words are active, alive, eternal. When we seek daily to dig into God's Word, that same power is released in our lives. God continues to speak encouragement and hope through his people in all times!

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy in his second letter, *'All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.'* (3:16)

Martin Luther wrote, *'I have held many things in my hands, and I have lost them all; but whatever I have placed in God's hand, that I still possess.'*

Helen Keller *'thanked God for her handicaps, for through them she found herself, her work and her God.'*

Charles Spurgeon said, *'Train up a child in the way he should go – but be sure you are going that way yourself.'*

Billy Graham stated, *'Being a Christian is more than just an instantaneous conversion – it is a daily process whereby you grow to be more and more like Christ.'*

What words would God have you learn and share today?

English author/composer, Mansell Ramsey (1849-1923) penned the words of *'Teach Me Thy Way, O Lord'*. These words continue to touch my life much the same as the words of David. Whether you are familiar with this hymn or this is the first time you are reading the lyrics, I pray the words bless you and encourage you to let God teach you, His ways.

*Teach me Thy way, O Lord, teach me Thy way!
Thy guiding grace afford, teach me Thy way!
Help me to walk aright, more by faith, less by sight;
Lead me with heav'nly light, teach me Thy way!
When I am sad at heart, teach me Thy way!
When earthly joys depart, teach me Thy way!
In hours of loneliness, in times of dire distress,
In failure or success, teach me Thy way!
When doubts and fears arise, teach me Thy way
When storms o'erspread the skies, teach me Thy way
Shine through the cloud and rain, through sorrow, toil,
and pain*

*Make Thou my pathway plain, teach me Thy way
Long as my life shall last, teach me Thy way!
Where'er my lot be cast, teach me Thy way!
Until the race is run, until the journey's done,
Until the crown is won, teach me Thy way!*

And for your listening pleasure.....

[Teach Me Thy Way O Lord \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)



COMING EVENTS

February 12, 2024

Zoom Virtual Circle Meeting

March 2, 2024

Westover Baptist Church Ladies tea
Jodie Vasbinder sharing *'Tea Talk'*

April 19-20, 2024

Leadership Team/Women at Large
Spring Planning

May 4, 2024

South Western PA Women's Event

June 20-22, 2004

ABGirls/Young Ladies Retreat at Camp Hebron

August 16-18, 2024

2024 THRIVE RETREAT at Camp Hebron

October 17-19, 2024

ABCOPAD Biennial in Altoona, PA

*Questions about these scheduled events, please contact
President Sue MacDonald 717-682-8516
Spiritual Enrichment Coor/Director Jodie Vasbinder
814-845-2355*

**SAVE THE
DATE!**



“RENEWAL FOR THE 21ST CENTURY CHURCH”

*Biennial Leadership
Conference*

OCTOBER 17-19, 2024

Join us in Altoona at the Blair County
Convention Center for this year’s conference.
More details and registration coming soon!



Keynote Speaker
and Facilitator

**REV. DR. MICHAEL
BECK**

News From our Associations (www.abcopad.org)

Bradford

The ministry at **Gillett Baptist Church** includes a Food Pantry that serves many in their community. For nearly 1.7 million Pennsylvanians, food insecurity is a daily part of life. The generous donations of members sustain a significant outreach to their neighbors in need.

Central Union

When you enter the sanctuary at **The Baptist Church of West Chester**, you'll see The Grace Space! This quiet space is for those who find it helpful to have more room for their body than a pew can offer. Quiet toys and books are always available. This area is just one way the congregation tries to demonstrate their core value of "Unbiased Hospitality."

More than a dozen new believers gave witness to their faith through the ordinance of baptism. Disciples representing many generations entered the water. It was a glorious day of rejoicing at **Siloam, Norristown!**

Ten members of **New Hope Full Gospel, Norristown**, received CPR and First Aid training. It was an excellent day of hands-on learning as trainees were taught the basics. And each person received an American Heart Certification good for 2 years!

Kudos to the team from **FBC, Norristown**, who participated in a local clean-up project during this year's MLK Day of Service. A truckload of trash and debris was gathered and hauled to the dump. The neighborhood looks so much better thanks to the crew of serving volunteers.

Each month the folk at **Hatboro** church reach out to their community through a "Meals-To-Go" ministry. The drive-thru service has provided over 18,000 meals to needy families. Their ministry motto: "All Are Welcome — No Questions Asked."

Harrisburg

The MLK Day of Reading was a huge success as the most amazing people celebrated the life of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr! The event included many volunteers from the **Greater Zion Missionary, Harrisburg**, who took time out of their schedule to read to families. It all took place at a beautiful location, the Whitaker Center in Harrisburg.

Northumberland

Upon arriving at **Montandon** church on Dec. 24th for morning service, we received an overwhelming blessing from God. As we entered into the sanctuary, there was a young adult mid 30's looking intensely at the tract table. I introduced myself and began asking simple informational questions and greetings. Then I asked, "What brought you here this morning?" He openly shared events of his life; trying alcohol and atheism, but the reason he came to church is because during an episode of staring into nothing, he received a glimpse of Hell, realized he wouldn't survive there and didn't want to go there. God swung his heart doors wide open and I shared the Good News. We prayed a prayer of Salvation through tears of Joy! What a Glorious Gift God gave us on Christmas Eve day and we rejoice in what He is

going to do in this young man's heart and the congregation of Montandon church, Pastor Ron Wagner

Pastors and spouses from the **Northumberland Association** and **Northern Tier** gathered for their annual post-Christmas dinner. All enjoyed a delicious meal prepared by the hospitality committee at **Muncy** church, and there was great fellowship with one another.

It was a wonderful day at **Hepburn** church, as the congregation gathered to install Tim Schwartz as their new pastor. A number of local and regional pastors participated in the worship and celebration.

Pittsburgh

AMOS Mission Update: Many joined Adam Balduff, Missions and Donor Relations Associate with AMOS Health and Hope, at the North Hills Community Baptist Church on Sunday, Feb. 4 at 6 PM, to hear an update about the ministry we support in Nicaragua. He reviewed what has happened last year, provided their goals for 2024, discussed the AMOS Experience and how you can get involved, and answered questions. Dessert was provided.

Ten Mile

Meet two generations of preachers in the Ten Mile Association. Pastor Jim Cannon (Dad) serves at **Mt. Zion, Waynesburg**; Jacob Cannon (Son) has just completed his ACTS schooling and is eager to get started in ministry! It's a joy to see the enthusiasm of Jacob as he wanted to know what was next to keep moving forward. It will be exciting to see how God unfolds this new and upcoming pastor! Certainly, be praying for him as well. Keep watching to see what God will do in the life of these two men of God!

2023 Cooperating Church Annual Reports have been mailed to all ABCOPAD churches

If you prefer, you can fill it out online. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Denise Veselicky (888) 687-0883 dveselicky@abcopad.com, or Caryl Casey (800) 932-9442 ccasey@abcopad.com for assistance.

ABMEN National Day of Prayer Breakfast Sponsored by ABMEN NY

Saturday, Feb. 24, 2023, 9 a.m. (coffee, 8:30 a.m.)

First Baptist Church; 14 Baldwin Ave., Addison, NY 14801

All men are welcome and encouraged to bring a guest (sons, grandsons, dads, uncles, friends).

At a Prayer Breakfast, men come together to pray for each other, our loved ones and seek to build and strengthen relationships with each other, bearing one another's burdens. Now, more than ever, it's imperative that Christian men gather to lift each other, our families, our churches and, especially, our country up in the Mighty Name of Jesus Christ. Come, be Blessed and be a Blessing in Jesus' Name. RSVP Dave Cross 570-867-0015 or treasurer@abmen.org.

Region Totals for 12/31/2023

	Dec-23	Dec-22	\$ Diff.	YTD Dec 23	YTD Dec 22	\$ Diff
United Mission Basics	\$25,648.07	\$35,750.16	-\$10,102.09	\$258,985.42	\$296,251.89	-\$37,266.47
Love Gift	\$1,397.19	\$2,346.70	-\$949.51	\$15,222.39	\$18,658.18	-\$3,435.79
Total for UM	\$27,045.26	\$38,096.86	-\$11,051.60	\$274,207.81	\$314,910.07	-\$40,702.26
AFC	\$2,600.66	\$2,508.10	\$92.56	\$63,233.44	\$59,448.38	\$3,785.06
WMO	\$10,671.10	\$12,241.32	-\$1,570.22	\$82,808.11	\$81,567.29	\$1,240.82
RMMO	\$42,481.73	\$35,090.86	\$7,390.87	\$77,241.24	\$70,703.48	\$6,537.76
OGHS	\$8,315.44	\$7,392.50	\$922.94	\$92,225.39	\$160,476.74	-\$68,251.35
PIM	\$50,748.52	\$50,336.20	\$412.32	* \$324,087.82	\$307,154.89	\$16,932.93
ISP	\$2,582.74	\$3,466.41	-\$883.67	\$29,251.13	\$38,703.42	-\$9,452.29
Specifics **	\$29,588.71	\$18,700.80	\$10,887.91	** \$191,966.34	\$159,483.66	\$32,482.68
Targeted Giving	\$25,672.96	\$17,802.89	\$7,870.07	\$239,477.98	\$252,336.47	-\$12,858.49
Total ABMS	\$199,707.12	\$185,635.94	\$14,071.18	\$1,374,499.26	\$1,444,784.40	-\$70,285.14
Campaigns						
Misc. Objectives	\$173.00	\$775.82	-\$602.82	\$948.99	\$6,084.28	-\$5,135.29
Total Remittance	\$199,880.12	\$186,411.76	\$13,468.36	\$1,375,448.25	\$1,450,868.68	-\$75,420.43

* \$25,000 one time gift from FBC Malvern and a \$6,089. gift from East Side B.C., Sharon included in that amount

**Specifics include \$3,623.98 for the ABCOPAD ABW Ministries Over & Above Giving (Oct thru Dec)

The decrease in United Missions (includes UMB & Love Gift) amounts to (\$25,857) less in actual dollars, that ABCOPAD received thru Dec.

AFC is ahead by \$3,785 thru Dec. This increase amounts to \$1,110 more in actual dollars, that ABCOPAD received thru Dec.

Partners in Ministry is ahead by \$16,933 through Dec. *

In actual dollars, from UM, AFC and PIM, ABCOPAD has received (\$7,814) less thru Dec. 2023

Without the \$25,000 & \$6,089 gifts for PIM and the ABCOPAD ABW Ministries gifts of \$4,000, we would be (\$19,157) behind thru Dec.



March, 2024 Deadline:

Items to be included in the March issue of Notes & News need to arrive by 5 p.m., Thursday, February 29.

Please send all material to Denise Veselicky via one of the following:

Mail: ABCOPAD • 159 N. Bellefield Ave. • Pittsburgh, PA 15213-2609 • **Email:** dveselicky@abcopad.com

Phone: 888-687-0883 • **Fax:** 412-687-3941

Thank you! Donna L. Schneff, designer • deeschneff@gmail.com



American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania & Delaware

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January 31, 2024

Philippians 1:3-6 I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

One of my favorite books in the Bible is Paul's letter to the Philippians. Paul writes this great letter of encouragement and thanksgiving to a congregation he deeply loves. In the opening verses of chapter 1, Paul expresses his gratitude and joy for the partnership he shares with this church family.

Philippians 1:3-6 is the scripture passage that ABCOPAD uses to form the bedrock of our vision, "To Build Healthy Partnerships with Churches, Pastoral Leaders, and our Wider AB Family, to Fulfill Christ's Mission in our World." For our Region, ministry is all about partnership and like the Apostle Paul, ABCOPAD is forever grateful and joyful for the many partnerships we share.

Throughout the course of a year, our churches come up with new and brilliant ideas for ministry. God grants these churches a glimpse of what could be, but the question of how to make vision a reality is hard. ABCOPAD becomes a faithful partner providing coaching through its Regional Staff, seed money through its grants and wisdom and insight by connecting leaders with experience with congregations ready to try something new.

For other churches in our Region, ministry in this post-pandemic era is challenging. For some congregations, their aging buildings that can seat a hundred or more people, now have a fraction of that number using the space once or maybe twice a week. Gifted pastoral leaders who served the church for years have retired or will retire soon but finding the next pastor is difficult and overwhelming. Our polarized culture spills over into the church making conflicts in our congregations nearly insurmountable.

Every day, our pastors and churches pick up the phone, or write an email at their computer or compose a text message reaching out for guidance, support and encouragement. And every day, ABCOPAD staff are the people at the other end of the phone, email or text, standing ready to help.

When you support Partners in Ministry, you make it possible for ABCOPAD to have a ministry of presence. You make it possible for us to be partners in ministry. As the Apostle Paul wrote, "I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now." Thank you for your partnership in ministry and thank you for your generosity, donating to our Regional Offering. Through your gifts, ministry happens.

Mark

Mark Mahserjian-Smith
ABCOPAD Acting Regional Executive Pastor
and Regional Pastor for Mission and Communication

PARTNERS IN MINISTRY HARK, THE HERALD!



In his classic book, Models of the Church, Avery Dulles speaks of the church as “herald” – *ie*, one who receives an official message with the commission to pass it on. Just as Jesus came as the herald of the Father, proclaiming and demonstrating God’s love for the world, so the Church is called to be a herald community. She is called to proclaim the love of God, especially expressed in the passion, death and resurrection of his son, Jesus Christ. She is also tasked to proclaim the dignity of every person and the coming of God’s kingdom.

It’s a life-changing, world-changing message which ABCOPAD seeks to herald. With a vision “to build healthy partnerships with churches, pastoral leaders, and our wider ABC family, to fulfill Christ's mission in our world,” the region has built a strategy of communication to share the gospel. Through its website, social media platforms, Constant Contact, YouTube, ZOOM, and more, ministry examples and mission opportunities have been shared with thousands. [Last year, over 60,000 connections were made through ABCOPAD Facebook!] In so many ways, local and international stories have been proclaimed and celebrated.

A few highlights from 2023 include:

- *Substance Abuse and Addiction Webinar* ...learning how to identify and support individuals with a substance use disorder.
- *Private, Public, and Pulpit Lives* ...examining the various aspects, dimension, and complexities of pastoral life.
- *Town Hall Listening Sessions* ...a series of online opportunities for church leaders to communicate with the ABCOPAD Regional Executive Search Committee.

When you support **Partners in Ministry**, you make it possible for ABCOPAD to herald the good news. And there’s nothing more important than getting the Word out!



To Build Healthy Partnerships with Churches, Pastoral Leaders, and the Wider ABC Family to Fulfill Christ's Mission in Our World.

You can give to **Partners in Ministry**...

1. Through your local congregation’s weekly offering by designating your gift to ABCOPAD - Partners in Ministry.
2. Through ABCOPAD’s Online Giving option, available on the regional website (www.abcopad.org). Your church can receive mission-giving credit for your online gift.
3. By giving through your mobile device (www.abcopad.mobile).
4. By sending your check (made payable to ABCOPAD WMS) to:

ABCOPAD
P.O. Box 421
Hatboro, PA 19040

Thank you for your giving to **Partners in Ministry** and for your partnership as we minister together in Pennsylvania and Delaware.

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In my past, I participated as an instructor for a church planting institute. We encouraged pastors and leaders to embrace change and innovation to be productive in ministry. One of the lines we impressed upon planters was: "If you continue doing what you have always done, the results will be the same as you've experienced in the past." So today, I want to encourage you as an employer, and your staff as members, to change your retirement.

This may be as simple as encouraging pastors and church staff to STOP and CONSIDER adding an extra \$10 or \$20 a month to their retirement account through MMBB's Member Contribution Plan (salary reduction). Form A-13a allows members to save any amount over \$10 from their take-home pay before they have a chance to spend it. Invested over time, this change will produce a significant outcome.

If churches are considering a salary increase for staff, please remind them to email in their A18 salary compensation form immediately. The deadline for these changes to show on the FEB 2024 invoice has passed, but they may begin with MAR if Form A18 is returned to forms@mmbb.org by 2/15/24; be sure I am copied when submitted. One-Time/Periodic contributions can also be made for special recognitions such as a gift or bonus, as a retirement contribution to a member's account. Form A13b is used for this process; however, churches need to have previously adopted this provision and will need to reach out to me to verify eligibility. (All forms available at www.mmbb.org.)

I am looking forward to serving you in 2024. Please remember that I am always available for you. Email is the most effective means of getting a hold of me. I will always respond to you in a timely manner and find a way for us to connect.

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