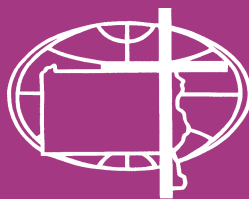


# Notes & News, Thoughts & Views



For ABCOPAD Churches from Rev. Mark Mahserjian-Smith  
Regional Executive Pastor; Regional Pastor for Mission and  
Communication — 570-435-2001 — [msmsmail@abcopad.com](mailto:msmsmail@abcopad.com)

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April, 2024

**John 21:1-14** Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So, they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." So, Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

"What is Trauma? SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration) describes individual trauma as an event or circumstance resulting in: physical harm, emotional harm, and/or life-threatening harm. The event or circumstance has lasting adverse effects on the individual's: mental health, physical health, emotional health, social well-being, and/or spiritual well-being." <https://www.samhsa.gov/trauma-violence>

The days leading up to the crucifixion and resurrection were filled with traumatic events for the Disciples. The arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane included the betrayal of Jesus by a member of their own group, followed by armed men seizing Jesus, resulting in weapons being drawn and one individual having his ear cut off. Jesus stops the quickly escalating violent clash by ordering his disciples to put away their swords, ending the altercation.

If that event was not traumatic enough, Jesus is swept through a series of unjust legal proceedings, ending with him being brutally beaten and whipped. For the Disciples, this must have been horrific. Then, they are forced to watch their leader and friend march through the streets carrying a cross and publicly executed by crucifixion.

In the scripture passage, we meet a traumatized group of disciples who had to feel overwhelmed and exhausted. For solace, the group has retreated to a job they know. Despite his

*continued on Page 2*

emotional, mental, and physical fatigue, Peter tells the group he is spending the night fishing. I guess, if you can't sleep, you might as well keep busy. Maybe Peter hoped to be left alone, but the group decides to do this together. It is hard to say whether these experienced fishermen were actually trying to catch fish or simply going through the motions. Still, the evening fishing expedition produces nothing but additional frustration. Now, on top of everything else, they can't even catch fish.

I am forever grateful this story is included in scripture. There have been many mornings when I have felt the same way I believe the Disciples did: traumatized, overwhelmed, and exhausted. On those mornings, I am thankful I can have breakfast with Jesus.

Jesus does not appear angry or frustrated with his Disciples. He meets them where they are and begins to heal them from their feelings of being

overwhelmed, traumatized, and exhausted. He redeems the evening's frustration with a miraculous catch and then serves the Disciples breakfast by the lake. Later, he will begin the hard work of redeeming Peter.

So often, after a challenging and stressful season of ministry, I realize just how much I need breakfast with Jesus. It is never elaborate, often just a cup of coffee and a bagel, but most importantly, just time with Jesus. If I can be outdoors, that is even better. I think of Lamentations 3:22-23, "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."

Following such a busy season of ministry, I pray you've found time to have breakfast with Jesus.

Blessings, M





**Rev. Dan McDowell**  
**Southeast Geographic**  
**Pastoral Servant**  
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Recently, I was asked by another pastor and regional staff member to share some insights and experiences I have had with the one-board leadership structure that we adopted in my congregation over ten years ago. I have served four previous congregations during my four decades as an American Baptist pastor. My previous congregations all had multiple board leadership structures (Deacons, Trustees, Christian Education and Missions). I can say without hesitation that the system I am currently serve with has proven to be best suited for the “new now” of ministry.

But I am not going to drill down on the details of the one-board system here. In fact, I am quite sure that there are more leadership systems out there under the umbrella of one board than the one I am serving with. And I am not saying that multiple boards can’t work together successfully. (And by the way, I did not implement this system in my congregation, it was adopted long before my arrival at GraceCrossing). I want to focus this article primarily on something that is more important than the system; on the culture that surrounds the system. At GraceCrossing, we don’t have “chairpersons” on our Leadership Team. We have “coaches”. There are eight coaches over various areas of ministry:

1. The Head Coach (Church Moderator)
2. Adult Ministry Coach
3. Youth Coach
4. Children’s Coach
5. Outreach Coach
6. Facilities Coach
7. Financial Coach
8. Clerk (Secretary)

And in recent years, we have tried to find newer or less experienced people who have gifts and passion for those areas of ministry to come on board as co-coaches or assistant coaches. These folks shadow the coach they are primarily working with and are mentored by them. They attend the Leadership Team meetings and retreats and become part of the team and as the “heir apparent” to those ministry areas going forward.

Many of you know that I am a certified referee with the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA). I officiate football and basketball at the varsity level and below. Currently, and in the past, I enjoyed the opportunity to coach those sports.

One of the things I learned, both as a coach is the fact that there are a lot of successful systems that can be implemented on a team. It is not the “X”s and “O”s that create success as much as it is a variety of other factors. A successful coach needs to do a lot of things well to help his/her team improve.

- Tailor the system and plays to the talents of the individual players.
- Give every player an opportunity to “shine”.
- Teach the players the basic techniques and give them the tools to improve.
- Develop a relationship of trust and mutual respect between the players and one another as well as the coaches and players.
- Have clear expectations and boundaries that apply to everyone on the team.
- Encourage, teach, mentor, and model acceptable behavior and establish shared goals and common commitment to those goals.

One of the first lessons I learned as a coach was taught to me by a more experienced colleague when I was first getting started. He said it was a mistake to send in the “second team” all at once. He said if you put a less talented player between two players with more talent, that lesser player will work harder to live up to his/her teammate. And the more talented players need to understand their role in helping their teammates to get better. When the guy/gal next to you expects you to play well and is helping you to get better, you will try harder to live up to the expectations of the team. It builds a culture of success and camaraderie.

Those team concepts are also applicable in the church. We need to build a culture that is rooted in our common mission, founded on biblical principles and built on the strength of our love for one another and for those outside the church. It is a mistake to keep doing things the same way just because they used to work in the past. The wishbone offense may have been the most successful offensive system in football during the 1950’s but you don’t see it much anymore. Because it no longer works. The culture of football adapted.

How did that happen? Because coaches and team leaders talked to one another, learned from one another and improvised. The game didn’t change. The goals didn’t change. But systems did. We can learn a lot from that in our church Associations and Region. We are better together! If we share mutual commitment to our common goals and mission God will do great things! He always has!





**Rev. Randy Powell**  
**Northwest Geographic**  
**Pastoral Servant**  
**pastorpowell@hotmail.com**

**Amid personal triumph,  
 Jesus weeps over Jerusalem**

The history of Jerusalem is a tale of violence. Calculations as to the total numbers will vary, but Jerusalem has seen a multitude of battles, dozens of sieges, and has been conquered, re-conquered, and liberated over and over again. From David’s conquest to take the city from the Jebusites, to the failed Assyrian siege in 701 BC, to the Temple’s destruction during the Babylonian conquest in 586 BC, we fast forward to the brutal Crusader ravaging of the city in AD 1099, Mameluke conquest in 1244, Ottoman in 1517, British in 1917, and finally Jewish in 1967 during the Six-Day War. In the middle of that blood-soaked history is the Roman period, and as Jesus ascends Mount Zion on Palm Sunday while the crowds wave branches and shout, “Hosanna!”, the Roman annihilation of the Temple and burning to the ground of the city lies only a generation away in AD 70. Jesus knew that the children whom he blessed would themselves be parents unable to protect their own children from the coming destruction.

Jesus knew how devastating it would be to Abraham’s descendants, his own people, to lose the Temple, the priesthood, the festivals, and so much of what knit them together.

And so, on that day of triumph, with his own Passion set to begin in four days, Jesus paused to lament the tragedy that was coming, one that could not be avoided (Luke 19:41-44). Had his people embraced him as their Messiah, all of them and not just the minority who supported him, things would have gone differently. But they didn’t, and that’s not unexpected, for his fate would be that of the prophets of old: scorned by those he came to save. This was a generation that saw the visitation of God in the flesh, a generation to whom was given the long-awaited Messiah, but they failed. Why they failed is a complex question, but its answer isn’t the racism of antisemitism that shamefully too much of the Church through the centuries has embraced to answer it. Whatever historians or theologians theorize about why Jesus wasn’t embraced by his people, scripture tells us clearly that he was rejected. Our task then, as a Church, in addition to sharing Jesus’ grief over Jerusalem’s violent history and coupling that with prayers of our own for its peace in the present and future, is to ensure that we learn from the tragedy that caused Jesus’ tears so that we recognize “the time of God’s coming” to us. When God moves among his people, when his Spirit calls, we must have eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts willing to repent.

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**Clergy Ethics – Friday, May 31, 2024, 6 p.m. to Saturday, June 1, 2024, 3 p.m.**

Taught by Rev. Mark Mahserjian Smith and Rev. Kevin Walden, this course is designed to help ministerial leaders better understand the various ethical issues that impact one’s ministry. The course meets from **6 - 9 p.m. on Friday, May 31** and **8 a.m. - 3 p.m. on Saturday, June 1** via GoogleMeet. The GoogleMeet link will be provided via email. Contact **esiegrist@actsministrieschool.com** or **ruth.moore@actsministrieschool.com** for more info.





**Rev. David Hardin**  
**Northeast Co-Geographic**  
**Pastoral Servant**  
**[dhardin@abcopad.com](mailto:dhardin@abcopad.com)**

The recent article in *The Atlantic*, “The True Cost of Church Going Bust,” reveals the alarming decline in church attendance across the country and the profound impact this trend has on our communities and society as a whole. With the percentage of religiously unaffiliated Americans rising from 5% in the 1970s to 30% today, we stand at a critical juncture in our history. It is time for us to rise up, come together, and demonstrate the enduring value of the church in our communities.

As churches, we have long been a cornerstone of the social fabric, providing spiritual guidance, support, and purpose. We have been at the forefront of community service, offering assistance to those in need, fostering relationships, and promoting values that contribute to a strong and healthy society. Now, more than ever, we must unite and work together to preserve these essential elements that bind our communities together.

In the face of this challenge, we have an extraordinary opportunity to respond with courage, determination, and unity. As it is written in 1 Corinthians 12:12, “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.” By joining forces as area churches, leveraging our collective strengths, and adapting to the changing needs of our communities, we can become a powerful force for positive change and a beacon of hope in a world that desperately needs it.

Now is the time for us to come together and serve our communities with renewed passion and purpose. By collaborating on community outreach projects, sharing

resources, and supporting one another in our ministries, we can have a far greater impact than we ever could alone. Through joint efforts, such as food drives, clothing donations, or mentoring programs, we can show the tangible impact of our faith in action and inspire others to join us in making a difference.

Furthermore, we must be bold and innovative in our approach to ministry. This may involve exploring new ways of reaching people, such as through joint digital platforms, collaborative community events, or shared ministry initiatives. By being creative and responsive to the changing needs and preferences of our communities, we can demonstrate the continued relevance and value of the church in the modern world. One of my greatest joys in Denominational life is working on the Mission Allocation Committee, and seeing all the innovative ways churches in our Region are already doing this. Doing it together is more essential than ever in our current environment.

As we embark on this journey together, let us hold fast to the promise found in Matthew 18:20, “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.” As we unite as area churches with a shared sense of purpose and determination, we can trust that God will be with us every step of the way, guiding and empowering us to be a light in our communities.

Let us seize this moment to show the world the transformative power of Christ’s love in action. As we work together, serve others, and adapt to the changing needs of our society, we can help to rebuild the social fabric and demonstrate the enduring value of the church. May God bless our efforts and use them for His glory as we unite as area churches to make a lasting difference in our communities. Let us be the hands and feet of Christ, bringing hope, healing, and transformation to all those we serve. The time is now, and the opportunity is ours. Let us go forth with courage, faith, and unity, knowing that with God, all things are possible.



**Rev. Cristy Wise**  
**Southwest Geographic**  
**Pastoral Servant**  
**wisefour14@gmail.com**

This is one of my favorite pictures hanging in my home, [Jesus Laughing](#) portrait. It was a gift from my family, and I love it. I move it around in the house from time to time, so I keep it in view when navigating life. Right now... it hangs in my office and is a reminder today of Easter as we spent a lot of time laughing with family. Telling stories, catching up on life, and even laughing through the difficult parts. Later that evening I received messages from my daughter and my sister thanking me for the time we were together as they just needed to laugh!



Wow...healing power in laughter.

Scripture says that Jesus experienced all the qualities that humans have. Why is it that we tend to only see Jesus in such a serious expression? I can see Jesus sitting with His disciples and laughing about the size of the fish Peter said he caught, haha...Proverbs tell us to have a cheerful heart.

Let me ask, how is your sense of humor? In Proverbs, Solomon lays it out really clear by warning us that 3 things will occur when we lose our sense of humor. 1. Our Spirit breaks; 2. We shrivel up emotionally; 3. We lose our vitality and health. Research reveals that people with a sense of humor have fewer symptoms of physical ailments.

Allen Klein, who lectures on healing through humor, claims that children laugh 400 times a day while adults laugh only 15 times a day. Is it any wonder that our nightly news is so negative and dreary while Sesame Street and Elmo are so bright and full of songs? Perhaps we need to spend more time with 3-5 year olds and instead of trying to get them to be like us, try to be more like them. Didn't Jesus say unless we become as children, we would not see or experience the Kingdom of God?

Norman Cousins, former editor of [Saturday Review](#) and a professor at UCLA's School of Medicine wrote about his life-changing experience with humor and these deep belly laughs. In his book, [Anatomy of an Illness](#), he documented his story of dealing with a serious collagen disease. *"I made the joyous discovery that 10 minutes of genuine belly laughter had an anesthetic effect and would give me*

*at least 2 hours of pain-free sleep."* He began to surround himself with videos of some of the great comedians.

Cousin's goes on to say that laughter is **"inner jogging."** Every system in our body gets a workout when we have a hearty laugh. Our cardiovascular and respiratory systems benefit more from 20 seconds of laughter than from 3 minutes of exercise on a rowing machine. Muscles release tension and endorphins are released into the blood stream, creating the "runner's high" which long-distance joggers experience.

It has been proven that laughter has an immediate and direct effect on the heart rate, muscle activity, brain activity, and finally, the way our body handles disease through activating our immune system and fighting infection. Pretty impressive, isn't it?

Proverbs 14:30, Solomon gives us a wise formula: **"A relaxed attitude lengthens life..."** Are you on edge, wound tight, worked up, and strung out? God's prescription is a sense of humor for those struggling with tense moments.

Mark Lowry, Songwriter/singer/comedian even wrote a song about this picture [Jesus Laughing](#) and how it really can put our problems into perspective if we allow Him to do so. Check it out.

I read somewhere that **laughter is the lotion for the sunburns of life.**

Our attitude will color our entire personality. We can't always choose what happens to us, but we can choose our attitude toward each situation. We have a choice to what we allow into our minds. We need to fill our thoughts with the positive, the pure, and the good things of life.

We need to laugh more. The laugh lines on our face and around our eyes should be marks of faith. As we share the Gospel to the unbeliever...do we smile? Are we a positive, cheerful example of what the hope of the empty tomb represents?

As a GPS visiting with pastors in the SW, there are struggles in our churches without a doubt. But it is a joy when we can brainstorm solutions and especially when we can even laugh through some of those moments. Helps create a healthier outlook. Then time slips away as we laugh together.

As we mature (age...haha), may we resist becoming the cranky, old person we swore we would never be. Then... may we experience an **ever-laughing life** on Earth and an **everlasting life** in Heaven!



**ABMOPAD – Men’s Retreat  
September 13-15, 2024  
Camp Hebron  
957 Camp Hebron Road  
Halifax, PA 17032**

Calling all Men of PA and Delaware, and surrounding areas. Just wanted to let you know that the Men’s Retreat is alive and well. We are reorganizing the Board with some of the current committed leaders we had in the past. We have Rev. Mark Mahserjian-Smith (Regional Executive Pastor), Rob McQue Sr. (Secretary), Jim Dunson (Treasurer), Rob McQue (Registrar), and Ron Stock (Acting AB Men’s President).

Let me give you a brief introduction to myself (Ron). I attend FBC of Factoryville, PA, assist the church in Sunday Worship, currently going thru the ACTS classes, as of Jan 7, 2024 started an outreach at Marworth Treatment Center with a “Bible Chat”. \* Important: This is only accomplished with the help of God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and many others.

So, let’s get to the heart of this announcement —

Luke 10:2 Then He said to them, “The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.

It is “you” that are needed. You are needed to fill open positions on the ABMOPAD Board, you are needed to attend and invite others to the Men’s Retreat this year.

This time of fellowship is truly special. We have the opportunity to lift each other up. To know that we are not alone, have the support of each other, and grow strength from one another. This time is what we make of it, but it is needed. A couple days to get away from everyday life and to spend time with your fellow brother in Christ. Jesus himself, sent them out 2 by 2. We cannot do life alone. We need the help of the Holy Spirit and the help of each other. Mark your calendar, invite a friend, contact ABCOPAD and see how you can help. Many hands make light work.

Q: What kind of chocolate do they sell at the airport?  
A: Plane Chocolate

OK, maybe corny, but it was a little funny. We want to let you know that your ABMOPAD board is meeting monthly to prepare for this year’s Men’s Retreat. We are hoping for a good turnout of Men (both young and old). There is something about coming together that we can draw strength from God and from each other. And yes, have a few laughs along the way.

Our hope it to give you some time away from your everyday schedules of life. A chance to come together with other Christian Men, enjoy each other’s company, spend Spiritual time together, “sing the praises of our Lord and Savior”, play some games, have some fun, and relax. Meet new people, make a connection, grow together. God does not want us to be alone. He wants us to come together. To lift each other up, absolutely; also, to break bread together. Spend time together, lean on one another, learn from one another. God has given me these words as a reminder to myself and maybe for you as well, “If you don’t change you know what happens.....nothing”.

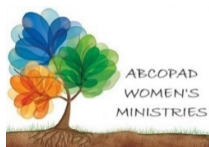
If you have never come before, please make plans to attend. If you have come before, come again. If you would like something different, “please” let someone know. This is our time to come together. This “time” together is what you make of it.

Hoping to see you at Camp Hebron September 13-15.  
Your Servant in Christ,  
Ron Stock  
Acting AB Men’s President



## GENERAL FUND

Every ministry needs operating funds. By giving to the *GENERAL FUND*, you are helping support this ministry of women, by women, for women.



- Provides funds to come together for ministry business meetings, event planning, developing programs and sharing ideas throughout our Region.
- Provides dollars needed to print and distribute information by mail.
- Provides communication and training in various avenues.
- Director of Women's Ministry stipend
- Provides coordinators (Spiritual Enrichment, Mission and Service, Hands-On) the financial freedom to get resources into the hands of ladies across the Region.
- Covers fees that occurred due to online registrations and donations.

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Our new offering for the ABCOPAD Women's Ministries.

100% of your giving dollars will remain with the ABCOPAD Women's

Ministries, which means the decisions of how the funds are divided and used will be made by your Leadership Team and YOU!

**OVER & ABOVE** giving will support our Region's women's ministries and our network of Region leaders as we work together in ABCOPAD to ensure we carry out Christ's Mission in the world.

We chose the name **OVER & ABOVE** giving because that's exactly what it should be! Please DO NOT move money from what you may already be giving to *Partners in Ministry*, nor should it come from your designated giving to our *Region Project* or our *General Fund*. This **OVER & ABOVE** giving could be the money previously donated as *Love Gift*.

**OVER & ABOVE GIVING AS OF MARCH 31, 2024**  
**\$7,664.52**

[8 ThingsToKnow.LoveGift.pdf \(abcopad.org\)](https://www.abcopad.org/Docs/01_ABWM/2023/5%202023%202024%20REGION%20PROJECT%20FLIER.pdf)

## 2023-2024 REGION PROJECT

Bill & Ann Clemmer are currently serving in the Democratic Republic of Congo.



**REALITY 2021** – A devastating volcanic eruption destroyed the city of Goma, leaving thousands of children homeless and orphaned.

**RESPONSE 2022** – An American couple supplied the funds needed to build a center that the Clemmers use to care for children, but it's not large enough to care for them all. There is much more to be done.

**REALITY 2023** – The ultimate goal is to find permanent homes for thousands of children, one at a time. Volunteers wash clothes, teach, bind wounds, and feed them. Food is a huge cost.

**RESPONSE 2023-2024** - You can help ensure continued care and feeding of these children. It costs 75 cents per day to feed a child. Three shiny quarters will provide the daily food for a child! How many quarters can you give?

[https://www.abcopad.org/Docs/01\\_ABWM/2023/5%202023%202024%20REGION%20PROJECT%20FLIER.pdf](https://www.abcopad.org/Docs/01_ABWM/2023/5%202023%202024%20REGION%20PROJECT%20FLIER.pdf)

**REGION PROJECT GIVING AS OF MARCH 11, 2024**  
**\$7,269.71**

Donations by check may be written to 'ABWMOPAD' and mailed to Treasurer Sally Breski, 1381 Butler Road, Worthington, PA 16262; or sent with your ABCOPAD Monthly Report to Caryl Casey; or online [Give \(ministrylink.com\)](https://www.ministrylink.com) Your generous gifts support much needed ministries in the Kingdom of God.



## Upcoming Events

**May 4, 2024**

South Western PA Women's Event

**June 20-22, 2024**

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 or

Spiritual Enrichment Coor/Director Jodie Vasbinder 814-845-2355



## News From our Associations ([www.abcopad.org](http://www.abcopad.org))

### Abington

Members and friends of **United, Taylor**, celebrated the ministry of Rev. David Barrett. Pastor David and his wife Judy will soon move to Indiana after accepting a call to a Baptist Church in ABC of Indiana and Kentucky. Pastor Dave gave a powerful sermon looking at Jesus' divinity, being the head of the church, and the need to have Jesus as the focus of every ministry. Pastor Dave recounted how Taylor shared Jesus with their community and one another during his tenure as pastor. Grateful for the many ways Pastor Dave not only served Taylor but also served as a partner in ministry in ABCOPAD.

The **Abington Association** gathered at the local Denny's to share a meal and plan for the coming year. They elected new officers for the coming year and started making plans for events together. We spoke about the possibility of using grant funds from ABCOPAD to continue the fellowship and work of the churches. It was a good time of fellowship and friendship with partners in ministry.

### Central Union

*Did someone say baptism?* ABCOPAD Southeast GPS Dan McDowell writes: "With Holy Week 2024 behind us, we continue to celebrate the spiritual resurrections across the Southeast quadrant of ABCOPAD! Baptisms were witnessed at **The Baptist Church of West Chester, GraceCrossing Community Church, Phoenixville, and FBC, Kennett Square**. He is risen indeed!

### Delaware

*Did someone say baptism?* **Calvary Baptist, Newark**, celebrated the ordinance during the Easter season.

Dr. Deborah Bullock met with an ordination council at **Canaan, New Castle**, and passed muster with flying colors! Her testimony, her obvious calling, and her gifts for ministry greatly inspired those of us who had the honor to witness them at this council. On April 14, Dr. Debbie will become Rev. Dr. Debbie at a worship celebration to be hosted by her church family at Canaan Baptist.

### Harrisburg

*Did someone say baptism?* **Thrive Community, Lancaster**, celebrated the ordinance during the Easter season.

### Laurel

**Westover** in Southwest ABCOPAD held a wonderful springtime ladies tea. The food was delicious, but the hospitality and warmth of spirit were even better. What a joy as the women gathered in community to share stories, God's Word, and really scrumptious delights!

### Northumberland

The folk at **Montandon** celebrated several baptisms on Palm Sunday. After their profession of belief in Jesus Christ, Pastor Ron baptized Mary Reeder and then Joshua Fowler. Beth Fowler's daughter, Cora, entered the water as a new believer. She accepted the Lord at a recent Good News Club. She is strong in her belief and loves to sing His praises. Upon her profession of faith, Pastor Ron allowed her father to immerse her. It was a very special day.

*Did someone say baptism?* **Hepburn** celebrated the baptism of eight students and one adult. It was a wonderful morning as Pastor Tim Schwartz had the privilege of baptizing two of his three children!

### Oil Creek

Meet the new pastor of **FBC, Centerville**: Shane Thompson. Shane has been helping Centerville with pulpit supply for several years and has now accepted the call to serve as their pastor. He comes to ABCOPAD having served as an assistant chaplain in the Army and a youth pastor in Illinois. Shane will be a bi-vocation pastor (a growing trend in ABCOPAD and the American Church in general), M-F he works for Gannon University in Erie, PA. Welcome to ABCOPAD Shane!

### Pittsburgh

The **Clergy & Church Relations Ministry Team** met with the **Pittsburgh Karen Baptist Church** on March 10 and unanimously voted to recommend them for membership. The Pittsburgh Association churches will meet both in person and/or on Zoom on May 19, 3 p.m., at First Baptist Church of Pittsburgh; 159 N. Bellefield Ave; Pittsburgh, PA 15213 to vote on their proposed membership. We are excited about this opportunity to possibly welcome a new church into the Association. Your participation is important. Please make every effort to attend to represent your church. Please contact 412-687-3940 / [pghbaptist@aol.com](mailto:pghbaptist@aol.com) to confirm your attendance so we can assure that we have a quorum.

**Sixth Mt. Zion Baptist Church** will celebrate their 125th Anniversary & Homecoming on May 17, 6 p.m., at the Wallace Event Center honoring not only their rich history and the legacy of those who came before, but also looking forward with anticipation to the future.

### Reading

A blessed day at **FBC, Bethlehem**, as the congregation gathered for the ordination service of John Spatig Jr. John has been serving as youth, and now associate pastor of FBC, Bethlehem for many years now, and is a '20 graduate of Palmer Seminary. Congratulations John. We are excited to see how God will continue to use you in ministry.

**Calvary, Allentown**, held a "Parent's Night Out" in February. The elementary-aged kids watched movies and had pizza while their parents spent a kid-free night out. The kids had a great time. The movie idea was so popular that they have started a new ministry for our "seasoned saints." The church now holds movie matinees for our mature members, including lunch, on the first Tuesday of each month. Fourteen folk attended the first matinee.

### Ten Mile

On Easter Sunday, Keith Rishell (**Bethlehem, Ruff Creek**) graciously filled the pulpit for a local Baptist church in need. Well done good and faithful servant!

Several members of **FBC, Waynesburg** joined a few other churches for a 3-mile Cross Walk. They were blessed with a couple of devotions along the way, then had lunch together at the Hewitt Presbyterian Church. There were 65-70 people in attendance. Just beautiful being a witness for Jesus.

Pastor Cristy Wise had the privilege of presenting Jacob Cannon with his diploma from ACTS at **Mt. Zion, Waynesburg**, where his father, Pastor Jim Cannon has been the pastor for over 20 years.

Embrace the opportunity of a lifetime on the Journeys of Paul tour. Experience the Word like never before! Join with others from ABCOPAD as we follow in the footprints of the Apostle, visiting sites on land and sea. You won't want to miss this unique adventure! Check the ABCOPAD website for details.

**Join us on an 11-day\* tour of Greece and Greek Isles.  
Pastor Bud Russell (ABCOPAD Web Coordinator RMA)  
will be hosting a tour with Educational Opportunities, Inc.**



If interested, please contact me at:  
budcarol.russell@gmail.com or  
302-736-6633

Region Totals for 02/29/2024

	Feb-24	Feb-23	\$ Diff.	YTD Feb 24	YTD Feb 23	\$ Diff
United Mission Basics	\$16,618.62	\$21,194.53	-\$4,575.91	\$32,584.60	\$36,897.45	-\$4,312.85
Love Gift	\$1,366.24	\$1,137.50	\$228.74	\$1,680.27	\$1,934.14	-\$253.87
<b>Total for UM</b>	<b>\$17,984.86</b>	<b>\$22,332.03</b>	<b>-\$4,347.17</b>	<b>\$34,264.87</b>	<b>\$38,831.59</b>	<b>-\$4,566.72</b>
AFC	\$2,679.19	\$5,952.00	-\$3,272.81	\$2,832.19	\$6,111.30	-\$3,279.11
WMO	\$479.63	\$4,339.67	-\$3,860.04	\$1,989.13	\$9,935.39	-\$7,946.26
RMMO	\$5,674.39	\$6,932.75	-\$1,258.36	\$22,875.40	\$19,331.98	\$3,543.42
OGHS	\$1,922.58	\$7,923.43	-\$6,000.85	\$2,733.68	\$10,996.73	-\$8,263.05
PIM	\$15,877.23	\$18,522.81	-\$2,645.58	* \$61,382.97	\$35,164.73	\$26,218.24
ISP	\$665.80	\$921.43	-\$255.63	\$1,658.98	\$2,510.82	-\$851.84
Specifics	\$11,061.13	\$10,821.86	\$239.27	** \$21,335.12	\$20,268.20	\$1,066.92
Targeted Giving	\$15,503.88	\$13,377.02	\$2,126.86	\$30,554.12	\$29,998.64	\$555.48
<b>Total ABMS</b>	<b>\$71,848.69</b>	<b>\$91,123.00</b>	<b>-\$19,274.31</b>	<b>\$179,626.46</b>	<b>\$173,149.38</b>	<b>\$6,477.08</b>
Campaigns			\$0.00			\$0.00
Misc. Objectives	\$138.00		\$138.00	\$313.00		\$313.00
<b>Total Remittance</b>	<b>\$71,986.69</b>	<b>\$91,123.00</b>	<b>-\$19,136.31</b>	<b>\$179,939.46</b>	<b>\$173,149.38</b>	<b>\$6,790.08</b>

\* includes a \$30,000 gift from a charitable gift annuity

\*\* Specifics include \$1,634.99 for the ABCOPAD ABW Ministries Over & Above Giving (Jan thru Feb)

The decrease in United Missions (includes UMB & Love Gift) amounts to (\$2,914) less in actual dollars, that ABCOPAD received thru Feb. AFC is behind by behind by \$3,279 thru Feb. This decrease amounts to (\$962) less in actual dollars that ABCOPAD received thru Feb. Partners in Ministry is ahead by \$26,218.

In actual dollars from UM, AFC and PIM, ABCOPAD has received \$22,343 more thru Feb. 2024

Without the donor gift of \$30,000 to PIM, we would be (\$7,657) behind thru Feb., in total.



*April Showers Bring May Flowers!*

**May, 2024 Deadline:**

**Items to be included in the May issue of Notes & News need to arrive by 5 p.m., Thursday, May 2.**

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](mailto:dveselicky@abcopad.com)

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

Thank you! Donna L. Schneff, designer • [deeschneff@gmail.com](mailto:deeschneff@gmail.com)

# GROWTH POINTS

With Gary L. McIntosh, D.Min., Ph.D.

## Building an Evangelistic Church

Researchers agree that most growing churches in the USA do so from transfer growth. There are, however, churches that are considered High Conversion Rate (HCR) churches.

A HCR church is one that grows at a ratio of 20:1, or 5% per year by conversion growth. These churches see one new adult convert for every twenty people in average attendance.

### Insights from HCR Churches for Building an Evangelistic Church

#### 1. Build an evangelistic conscience.

- Preach and teach the Great Commission.
- Share your own passion for reaching the lost.
- Reframe evangelism as a privilege, rather than a duty.

- Reframe evangelism as a ministry of conversation.

- Write your own church's story like the book of Acts. Feature stories of people who came to faith in your church.

- Reinforce evangelism when it happens through interviews, highlights, testimonies, and recognition.

#### 2. Focus on your extended congregation.

- Help others see the unreached people around them.

- Assist church attendees to identify people in their own social networks.

- Encourage prayer and care for the people in their social networks.

- Focus your people on building the relationship before giving an invitation.

- Teach people that they will likely be many links in the chain of relationships and invitations before a person believes. All links in the chain are important, not just the last link!



### 3. Train your people in stages.

- Train everyone to be involved.
- Train everyone to be an inviter.
- Train 50% of your people in conversational evangelism.
- Train 10% of your people in verdict evangelism.

### 4. Design safe events for members to bring their friends and family.

- Rethink your public worship service.
- Redesign old events and programs.
- Start new groups and classes.
- Engage in missional opportunities.
- Emphasize BIG days.

### 5. Develop side-door ministries.

- God's policy is to reach people with troubles, trials, and temptations – recovery groups
- Jesus ministered to zealots, as well as the poor, blind, and lepers (those expressly bared from the temple) – support groups.

- People gather around special interests – affinity groups.

### 6. Strengthen your connection ministry.

- Evaluate all the stages in your welcome ministry from first engagement with your church to participation in ministry.
- Recruit newcomers to work in your welcome ministry.

- Visit other churches to learn best practices in welcoming and involving newcomers.

### 7. Reward those who participate in evangelistic activities.

- Remember: What gets rewarded gets done; what gets praised gets repeated.

The good news is that people are receptive to the Gospel. The prediction that people would lose interest in religion and spirituality as a society became more secular has not proven accurate. Secular, post-modern people are more interested in faith and spirituality today.

Putting some of these practices from HCR churches will help you improve your evangelistic outreach.

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## Partners in Ministry Fulfilling Christ's Mission in the World

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### Rev. Robert Rice North Central GPS rrrice@abcopad.com

Over my years in ministry, I've had the opportunity to attend several Installation Services. As a local church pastor, it's a joy to celebrate with a church as they

begin a new season of ministry. I love having the opportunity to participate in the service in any way, even if it involves simply being present to lay hands on and pray for the person beginning a new ministry.

In recent years, since I've been called upon to serve as a GPS, I've gained a greater appreciation for Installation Services than ever before. Before, I would often overlook all the work that led to this moment of celebration and a new beginning. Sure, having gone through the interview and candidating process myself I had some sort of idea of the time involved and the journey that it takes to call a new pastor, but as I got a chance to work with search committees, I got to live out the ups and downs, struggles and joys of that process.

Early this year, I was privileged to attend the Installation Service of my friend, Pastor Tim Schwartz at Hepburn Baptist. I would have been there anyway, since Tim and I are good friends, and since Hepburn is part of our Association. But this time, I came with a different perspective, because I walked with Hepburn Baptist as they searched for a new pastor. As the chair of the search committee briefly shared a timeline of events, I nodded along as I remembered meetings, phone calls, email messages, and all the twists and turns that the search went through to get to the place they were now at, a new beginning as pastor and people.

It was a joy to remember the process and see its results. It also reminded me of our need for partnership in times like this. We need one another and the Region to see us through challenging times. As a GPS, I can't say that I have all the answers or a magic wand to make the time of searching easier (and contrary to popular belief, we don't keep a closet of pastors we can pass out to churches 😊) but I can say, it was a privilege to work with Hepburn Baptist and hopefully bring a sense of peace and encouragement to the process.



Of course, a ministry like this one doesn't happen without your generous support of the work of our Region through Partners in Ministry. Thank you for allowing me to serve, and thank you for your partnership!

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### 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](http://www.abcopad.org)). Your church can receive mission-giving credit for your online gift.
3. By giving through your mobile device.
4. By sending your check (made payable to ABCOPAD WMS) to:  
ABCOPAD; P.O. Box 421; Hatboro, PA 19040



Thank you for giving to **Partners in Ministry!**

**ABCOPAD**  
WWW.ABCOPAD.ORG



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**2024 RETREATS**

**“AN INVITATION FROM GOD”**

**OPEN TO PASTORS AND SPOUSES**

**COST: \$150 (INCLUDES MEALS/LODGING)**

**EARLY BIRD RATE: \$125 (UNTIL 3/15)**

**2024 Pastors and Spouses Retreats**

Retreat is a strategic withdrawal from the battle lines, whatever and wherever they may be in your life, to take a breath, physically and spiritually, and reconnect with God. This year, ABCOPAD welcomes you to do precisely that. To intentionally retreat and purposefully say ‘yes’ to God’s invitation to take refuge, to rest & to return encouraged and strengthened to join in His work. We will be led by Rev. Jeni Pedzinski, spiritual director and Director of Mission Mobilization at International Ministries (IM).

Our clergy & spouse retreats provide the space to worship and relax, pray and play. And this year we’ve added a second location in the western part of the state to make the experience even more accessible to all!

Join us at [Laurelville Retreat Center](#) in the western corridor May 15-17 or at [Harvey Cedars Bible Conference Center](#) in New Jersey June 19-21. Cost is \$150/person, providing lodging & 5 meals, and the retreats are open to all ABCOPAD clergy and their spouses.

Scan the QR Code to register and pay online.

If cost is an issue, please contact Rev. Rob Rice or Rev. Kelly Legg. We have resources to help make it possible for you to come to the retreat.

