



# American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania & Delaware

## REGIONAL PASTORAL STAFF

**Rev. Mark Mahserjian-Smith**  
Regional Executive Pastor  
(Acting)

Regional Pastor for  
Mission & Communication  
msmsmail@abcopad.com

## REGIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PASTORAL SERVANTS

### Northwest

**Pastor Randy Powell**  
pastorpowell@hotmail.com

### Southwest

**Pastor Cristy Wise**  
wisefour14@gmail.com

### North Central

**Pastor Rob Rice**  
pastor.rwrice@gmail.com

### South Central

**Pastor Kelly Legg**  
pastorkdl@gmail.com

### Southeast

**Pastor Dan McDowell**  
bigbaldpastor1@gmail.com



January 30, 2023

Friends:

Recently I participated in a Zoom Meeting with Regional Executive Pastors looking at ministry “post-pandemic.” While many feel the threat of COVID-19 is behind us, the repercussions of the global pandemic is still being experienced by individuals, families, and the local church. Rev. Dr. Frank Frischkorn, head of the “Impact of COVID-19 on Congregations Task Force” for the ABC, shared a report, compiling data collected through a national survey. Two of the Seven significant points revealed by the survey included: 1) The pandemic exacerbated/ magnified the challenges that were already present in local congregations and 2) Unfortunately, the responses seem to indicate that many churches and pastoral leaders are resistant to making the deep changes needed to assure a vibrant future.

One Regional Executive Pastor shared that a congregation in his Region is now creating a new form of church membership, titled Global Member, recognizing people who connected with the church through technology and faithfully attend a virtual service but may never be physically present in the church structure. The church is trying to figure out how to do a virtual baptism as individuals make commitments to Jesus but reside far from the brick-and-mortar church facility.

Pastoral and Congregational Leaders who once felt a high-level confidence in their community outreach and local witness now find themselves questioning the strategies and approach to ministry. They want to connect with other leaders to learn from one another and confirm what they are doing.

In 2022, ABCOPAD deployed Geographic Pastoral Servants (GPS) to connect with pastors and congregational leaders, to encourage and support them in ministry. Not only did our GPS meet with leaders individually, but they also promoted Associational gatherings and Regional Events like the Pastors and Spouses Retreat and the Biennial Leadership Conference. Our Regional Ministry Associate (RMA) for Leadership Learning Communities (LLC’s) helped to create and sustain LLC teams while our Student Ministry RMAs held our first ABCOPAD Youth Retreat since before the pandemic. Through all these gatherings, leaders found opportunities to dialogue with one another, experiencing confirmation of new ministry strategies and learning fresh approaches to ministry being lived out in other congregations. ABCOPAD invested time, money, and staff in bringing leaders out of isolation and into partnerships.

When you support our Partners In Ministry Offering, you make it possible for our Region to come alongside pastors and congregations during challenging and uncertain seasons of ministry. Your continued support makes ministry possible here in ABCOPAD, especially as we promote partnership in ministry. Thank you for your continued support and for being a partner in our ministry together.

*Mark*

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