



## The American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania & Delaware

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Dear Friends:

While watching television, there are a couple of insurance company commercials that never fail to secure my attention. Allstate Insurance has a series of ads featuring a character called Mayhem. Mayhem is always at work bringing about some catastrophic calamity in the life of an unsuspecting individual or family. The commercial ends with an announcer asking the viewer if they have protection from Mayhem and assuring them they are in good hands if they are insured by Allstate.

State Farm has a similar line of advertisements. The commercial begins with an individual or family in some crisis or emergency. A person starts to sing the jingle, "Like a good neighbor State Farm is there," and instantly a State Farm agent appears on the scene, ready to assist. The clear message of the commercial is if you have State Farm insurance you are never alone in the midst of calamity.

Last year many congregations and pastoral leaders experienced crisis. For some congregations, extreme weather struck their communities, leaving many devastated. Some pastoral leaders found themselves battling significant medical issues. For these pastoral leaders, the challenge they faced was how to provide pastoral care for their congregation while in need of pastoral care for themselves and their family members. Some congregations wrestled with unexpected conflict that threatened to tear their church family apart. Other congregations struggled with how to re-envision ministry in this rapidly changing cultural climate. Still other churches faced the challenge of trying to figure out how to move forward following the retirement of a 15, 20, 30 or 40 year pastoral leader. These are just a few examples of the "crazy" situations ABCOPAD staff were called to.

Reflecting on these and other situations that occurred in 2016, a few of the crises came as no surprise. However, many of the crazy situations Regional staff encountered last year were completely unexpected.

At one point, I realized it was not a matter of, if craziness will strike a congregation, it is only a matter of when. Given the fast-pace movement of our culture, the unpredictable nature of our world and the constant devastating consequences of sin, at some point every congregation will face "crazy." It is at that moment, it is good to know you are not alone. By being part of the ABCOPAD family, there is Regional staff that stands ready to assist congregations and pastoral leaders in the midst of crisis. By being part of this Region, you can pick up the phone, send an email or dispatch a text and have someone there to listen and come to your aid. There is a team that stands ready to help when crazy strikes.

When you support Partners In Ministry, you make it possible for our Regional staff to live out its vision to create healthy partnerships with pastors, churches and the wider ABC family to fulfill Christ's mission in the world. Fortunately, this does not always involve intervention in a crisis; but when crazy does strike, it is comforting to know that a team stands ready to help. **Thank you for contributions to Partners In Ministry.**

Serving Jesus together,

Mark Mahserjian-Smith  
Regional Pastor for Mission and Communication

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