

Notes & News, Thoughts & Views



For ABCOPAD Churches from Rev. Mark Mahserjian-Smith
Acting Regional Executive Pastor; Regional Pastor for Mission and
Communication — 570-435-2001 — msmsmail@abcopad.com

Volume 33, Number 12

December, 2023

Luke 2:4-7 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

On Monday, Dec. 4th, my wife Susan had hip replacement surgery. Before we go too far into this story, please know the surgery went very well, and Susan is on the mend, doing her physical therapy and getting stronger every day. Thank you for praying for my wife and our family; now on with the story.

The week before the surgery, I had numerous appointments that required me to be on the road. I planned to have a few family members clean and de-clutter the living area Susan would occupy once discharged from the hospital. There needed to be clear space for Susan to navigate when using her walker during recovery. So from Wednesday, Nov. 29 to Sunday, Dec. 3, I was on the road, first in Lansdale (Southeast ABCOPAD), then in Pittsburgh (Southwest ABCOPAD), and finally in Pottstown (back to Southeast ABCOPAD).

Upon my return home Sunday evening, while much had been accomplished, there was still quite a bit of clutter scattered about the house. Monday morning, I was up early, ready to take Susan to the hospital for her surgery. While I had recently blocked out vacation time for the week, the ABCOPAD Regional Board meeting scheduled two months ago now landed on Tuesday, Dec. 5, the day after Susan's surgery. This meant some loose ends needed attention before the Board Meeting. Susan's surgery took longer than I expected due to delays in starting the procedure. This caused my plans for the day,

including my own doctor's appointment, having one of our cars serviced, and finalizing reports for Tuesday's Board Meeting, to be crammed into a very small window of time Monday afternoon.

On Tuesday, Susan was out of bed and preparing for therapy. I would serve as one of her coaches so I needed to be with Susan for her morning and afternoon physical therapy to learn the exercises she would perform at home during her recovery. I also needed to pick up her medication from the pharmacy in preparation for her return home later that day. Of course, the Regional Board Meeting would still take place at 7 pm. Susan's discharge was at 4:30 pm. I would get her home, de-clutter the rest of the house, make dinner for us, and then jump on the Zoom Regional Board Meeting. My head was spinning. It was almost 9 p.m. when the meeting concluded (by the way, the meeting went very well), so after the meeting, I immediately checked on Susan. My son Luke was taking a shower that helped me discover we had a blocked drain from our home to the septic tank, causing water to back up into the house. Despite my best efforts with a plunger, I could not clear the obstruction, forcing me to admit I would need a plumber in the morning (and seeing big dollar signs thinking about the cost). Feeling my blood pressure rising, I cried to the Lord, "Why is my life so complicated? Why, Lord, can't anything be easy?"

In that moment of frustration, anger, and feeling overwhelmed, I heard God's voice clearly say, "I am in the complications of life." God said, "I am with you, and you need to trust me." God reminded me life is often complicated. God brought to mind the Christmas narrative found in the Gospel of Luke. Mary, Joseph and Baby Jesus endured one big series of complications that first Christmas. Nine-months pregnant, Mary is traveling to Bethlehem with Joseph, who is doing his best to assist her. They arrive in Bethlehem only to discover there

is no place for them to stay. Add to these complications, Mary goes into labor. Joseph needs to convert the stable he's secured into a delivery room, and following Jesus' birth, he is laid in a manger converted into a bassinet. The first Christmas was one long series of complications for the Holy Family, but God was in the midst of it all. God is always amid our complications. God spoke to me in the still, small voice He often uses, reminding me He is in my complications. God is in our complications.

Over and over again, God's people faced significant complications and challenges. Throughout scripture, we find God's people in the middle of complicated situations when it might be easy to abandon their faith and turn from the Lord, making the decision to lean into God instead of running away. While I struggle to understand whether or not God purposefully brings about complications in our lives, one thing is clear: God uses those complications to deepen our faith and help us mature as followers of Jesus. Paul, who had many complications could write, (2 Cor. 4:17 NLT) "For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!"

On Tuesday, Susan had already started feeling better. Some of the initial pain from the surgery had subsided. Family

members came to our home to help me tidy up the house. I tackled the project myself after calling a few plumbers to see if they could clear the drain. Two plumbers who were unavailable offered me free advice about what needed to be done to remedy the problem. While anxious about the process, I decided I could do this. I rented a plumber snake, and we cleared the drain with my daughter's help. I called the plumbers back and thanked them for their help and advice, letting them know we had been successful as a result of their shared wisdom. By Tuesday night, I felt a sense of accomplishment, knowing God had brought my family and me through these challenging days.

I know many pastoral leaders and members of our congregations are facing the crushing weight of life's complications (many far worse than mine), including the death of a loved one, serious health issues, the loss of a job, a church facing possible closure, and so much more. I hope you will hear God's voice saying, I am with you and experience God's presence through the complications. Know ABCOPAD stands with you.

Blessings, and I pray you have a wonderful Christmas and blessed New Year. M



December – where did you come from?!

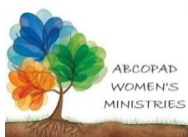
It seems the year passes so quickly and here we are at the end of another – didn't we just welcome 2023?



Time is precious and realizing yet another year is turning, it makes it all the more precious. J.B. Phillips translates the words of Paul from Ephesians 5:15-21 into every day, easy to understand language.

'Live life, then, with a due sense of responsibility, not as men who do not know the meaning and purpose of life but as those who do. Make the best use of your time, despite all the difficulties of these days. Don't be vague but firmly grasp what you know to be the will of God. Don't get your stimulus from wine (for there is always the danger of excessive drinking), but let the Spirit stimulate your souls. Express your joy in singing among yourselves psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, making music in your hearts for the ears of God! Thank God at all times for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And "fit in with" each other, because of your common reverence for Christ.'

As we think about how to redeem our time here on earth in the best possible way to bring glory to God and lost souls into the kingdom, how will we need to improve our use of time, wisdom & resources?



The American Baptist Women of Pennsylvania and Delaware have **measures** by which we can evaluate our personal growth.

- Am I thriving? (or just surviving?)
- Am I spending more time in prayer this year than last year?
- Am I reading the Bible more this year than last year?
- Am I spending time with women inside the ABW?
- Am I spending time with women outside the ABW?
- Am I involved in a local gathering, an associational gathering, and/or a regional gathering more this year than last year?
- Did I participate in a mission experience this year? (physically, financially, prayerfully)

How are YOU doing?

What resolution is on YOUR mind?

The passage from Ephesians speaks of *'making the best of our time DESPITE all the difficulties of these days.'* It would be so easy to focus on the difficulties, but this passage instructs us to *'know the meaning and purpose of our life, grasping the will of God for our lives, letting the Holy Spirit stimulate our souls to the point that we are singing praises to God, making music in our hearts to God and fitting together as the family of God.'*

Over 50 years ago, Bill & Gloria Gaither wrote and shared a song, *'Family of God'*. The lyrics are so appropriate to share as our time on earth seems to pass more quickly – and our family of God must strengthen and increase to make the best of these days, to the glory of God!

*You will notice we say "brother and sister" 'round here-
It's because we're a family and these folks are so near;
When one has a heartache, we all share the tears,
And rejoice in each victory in this family so dear.*

*From the door of an orphanage to the house of the King-
No longer an outcast, a new song I sing;*

From rags unto riches, from the weak to the strong,

I'm not worthy to be here, But, praise God, I belong!

I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God-

I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed by His blood!

Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod,

For I'm part of the family, the family of God.

Yes! I'm part of the family, the family of God.

As a part of the ABCOPAD Family of God, the women and girls of our Region wish to thank the churches, pastors, associations, leaders, and laity who shine the true light of Jesus and show us we are loved, supported and important to this family.

To our family across Pennsylvania & Delaware!



From our homes to yours,

Merry CHRISTmas!



Rev. Dr. Felicia Brock
Pittsburgh GPS
fbrock@abcpad.com

Focus

‘Tis the Season. We wish you a Merry Christmas. Joy to the World. O Come, Let Us Adore Him.

No matter our age, Christmas is one of the most looked-forward-to holidays of the year. It’s a time for us to share with family and friends; to exchange gifts; and to shower love and good cheer on one another. Although Christmas is greatly anticipated, for some it is greatly dreaded. Dreaded for those who have suffered varied losses throughout the year, and even in years prior. As hard as we try, we cannot help but to think about our loved ones that have gone on before—the empty chairs at the table. Of course, we miss them all year long; but during this season, it seems as if we miss them even more. There, however, is a way to assure that Christmas will be a day and season of celebration.

‘Tis the Season. Let’s keep our focus. Think on THE Baby Boy that was born for us. He left His home in paradise, so that we would be able to live lives filled with “jolly”. That’s what Christmas is all about. ‘Tis the Season for us to recognize “For He alone is worthy...Christ the Lord.”

We wish you a Merry Christmas. Let’s keep our focus. Think on our Savior. As Christmas approaches, sometimes depression and overwhelming sadness sets in. Yes, our

feelings are real; and should not be ignored. But we mustn’t allow these feelings to overcome us and cause us to miss the reason we celebrate Christmas. Jesus was born—so that He could die. This is why we glorify Him. We wish you a Merry Christmas! Bear in mind, that this Christmas we’ll give Him all the glory...Christ the Lord.

Joy to the World. Let’s keep our focus. Think on the blessings that we receive because of Jesus’ birth—death—and resurrection. Even if we are not experiencing sadness due to our own losses, this year, we are facing a world that is war-torn. As we witness such overwhelming destruction, it is easy to miss the joy that accompanies the Christmas holiday. This year, allow the Joy of knowing Jesus to shine through. We, the saved, offer joy to the world. And, we’ll praise His name for ever...Christ the Lord.

O Come, Let Us Adore Him. Let’s keep our focus. Think on the unity that abides because of Jesus’ birth. The saved and unsaved alike celebrate Christmas. Of course, there are some that don’t fully understand the reason for the celebration. Nevertheless, we know that Jesus is the reason. And, throughout this country and world, on December 25, 2023, we will all be celebrating Jesus’ birth. During this season, our differences seem to fade away. Let’s join together and sing songs of praise to our Savior. We are unified. O come, let us adore Him...Christ the Lord.

‘Tis the Season. We wish you a Merry Christmas. Joy to the World. O Come, Let Us Adore Him. During this Christmas holiday season, let’s keep our focus.

“[W]here is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose **and have come to worship him.**” Matthew 2:2

*O Come,
Let Us Adore Him!*



Rev. Randy Powell
North West GPS
pastorpowell@hotmail.com

From a pastor's point-of-view, the Advent season presents a choice: continue with whatever sermon series you are currently working through, or pause it until after Advent and do Christmas themed messages instead. Over the years I've done both, and the same pattern holds true for the Lenten/Easter season where sometimes I continue on and sometimes, I hit the pause button; but unlike Easter where there is a plethora of biblical passage to preach from about Christ's death and resurrection, including all four gospel accounts, the narrative story of Christmas is only told directly in two of our four gospels. Which means that after I've preached Mathew's account and Luke's account several times each, and along the way added in the various prophecies about the Messiah: Genesis 3:15, Isaiah 9 or 40, or on the flip-side the deep theology of John's prologue or Phillipian's 2's conversation about the humility that Jesus displayed in the Incarnation, I will come back to the next Advent season wondering, as I did this year, where do I go now?

Don't get me wrong, I could flip back and forth between Matthew and Luke year after year and still find joy in preaching a sermon that covers that same familiar ground,

and I think the congregation would be served well enough by this repetition; but a part of me has always itched for the opportunity to preach every verse of the Bible in my career.

So, when it comes to Advent related texts, I want to preach all of them. And yes, before you ask, I have a list that goes back to the start of my time here in Franklin, so I know that I've finished 18 books of the Bible already, leaving 48 to go that I'd like to finish, Lord willing.

Which brings me to what I decided to choose for my Advent texts this year: the threefold offices of the Messiah. Starting this week, I'll preach on Jesus as the greatest prophet (Deuteronomy 18), then Jesus as the greatest priest (Psalm 110), and finally Jesus as the greatest king (Ezekiel 37), which leaves both Christmas Eve morning and the candlelight service for passages from Matthew and Luke.

So, this Advent season, if your pastor keeps right on preaching, preaches about the Messianic prophecies or New Testament perspective on the Incarnation, or dives right into the familiar passages of angelic visitations, virgin birth, and shepherds wowed by angels, know that the person writing the sermon is a person just like you are, and that he or she probably feels the same things that I do: loving to hear the familiar and talk about it once more, and at the same time the yearning to bring new aspects of God's Word to share.





Rev. Rob Rice
North Central GPS
pastor.rwice@gmail.com

When I was little, every year I used to make a Christmas list. At first, that list was written to Santa, and when I got a little older it was written to my parents. Mostly, that list included toys and things that I wanted. Then I grew up, got married, and had kids of my own. I thought the practice of making Christmas' lists was something that I would outgrow and pass onto my kids. But one Christmas, my mom gave me all kinds of trinkets and ties that I probably wouldn't wear, because "I hadn't made her a list," I decided to take up the practice again. Now my Christmas lists include mainly things that I need or things I can use for my hobbies.

I'm not suggesting you take up the practice of writing a Christmas list, but if you have the opportunity to put something on a Christmas list (or have some year-end continuing education monies left), I wanted to share two books that will be beneficial for your ministry and walk with the Lord as a pastor.

Pastoring Small Towns by Ronnie Martin and Donnie Griggs
<https://www.amazon.com/Pastoring-Small-Towns-Ministering-Smaller/dp/1087764920>

Over my years in ministry, I've often heard and offered some of the same complaints about a lot of ministry books, they don't fit the context that I'm in. Many times, books are written by pastors in mega churches, in large areas, and talk about things that I know nothing about, such as multi-campus ministry, large pastoral staffs, and urban ministries. I understand that some pastors serve in these contexts, and many times there are gleanings and applications that I can apply to my own church, but I've often longed for a book that understands right where I am, in a small church, in a small town.

Having been in a setting like this for 10 years, and knowing that a lot of our pastors serve in similar settings, I know that there are some unique factors that make this kind of ministry challenging and difficult. In the book *Pastoring Small Towns*, Martin and Griggs help the reader address some of these issues and explore how to do ministry well in small towns. They don't just throw a list of suggestions at you, but come at this book with a heart for pastors and churches, and they both share personal stories about their own small-town ministry settings, which help

the reader understand their context better. They also provide encouragement and share some best practices for remaining faithful to the ministry that you have been called to serve.

Shepherding Like Jesus by Andrew Hébert
<https://www.amazon.com/Shepherding-Like-Jesus-Returning-Character/dp/B09VYL5R9B>

The tag line of *Shepherding Like Jesus* is "returning to the wild idea that character matters in ministry" and when I read this book, I was reminded of an LLC Book from several years back, *In the Name of Jesus* by Henri Nouwen. Much like Nouwen's book, *Shepherding Like Jesus*, encourages the reader to return to the heart of what ministry is, saying that what matters most is not our ability to preach sermons, lead bible studies, or conduct services, but instead the condition of our heart and character.

Using the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount as a foundation, Andrew Hébert explains the various character traits that we must work (with the help of the Holy Spirit) to develop in our lives so that we can minister to God's people. As I read this book, I was both freed from the need to measure myself on ministry stats, but also challenged to journey deeper with Jesus and spend the time in personal spiritual development that so often goes by the wayside amidst the busyness of ministry.

Along with the teaching based on the Sermon on the Mount, the book also includes a pastoral reflection to close each chapter. These come from seasoned pastors whose goal is to both share their own experiences and encourage the reader to pursue the traits that Jesus speaks of in the Beatitudes.

"Make Room for Jesus"

Everyone has their own Christmas traditions and styles of decorating, and our family is no exception. Every year, I bring our tree up from the basement, along with several totes of ornaments and other decorations that help make our house festive. While some people go all out with their Christmas decor and others do little more than a tree, we fall somewhere in the middle of the road. There's the standard tree, the stockings for our kids along our mantle, and just a few small wall hangings and a simple, yet beautiful, nativity set that sets on our front table.

When we put that nativity set up a few weeks ago, it stood alone, because we cleaned off the table that sits inside our front door. We put away or threw away the mail, school papers, gloves, hats, dog leashes, water bottles, and other stuff that naturally gathers there when your house includes four kids, a dog, a cat, and a husband who can't ever seem to put stuff away. We made room and prepared the place for the nativity set so it could stand alone and stand out; but within about a week, new stuff had gathered around Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. A sign that life was still taking place as normal in our home.

I don't know if you have a table or area in your household that catches the stuff of life, but even if you don't, all of us have stuff going on in our lives. Maybe you're busy with kids and activities. Maybe you're swamped at work. Maybe you're dealing with problems and situations that can't seem to be fixed and put in order. All of us, in one way or another, are dealing with the messiness and brokenness in this world that is a result of sin. Even though we sometimes don't want to admit it or let others see the truth, our lives aren't pristine and pretty, they are cluttered and messy, just like my front table.

But praise God, that even though our lives are in shambles, He didn't wait till we cleaned things up and got our act together to come to this earth. He stepped right into the

world and the stuff of life. He "became flesh and made his dwelling among us." (John 1:14). Jesus stepped into our world, with all its messiness and brokenness, to show us the glory of God, and to offer us grace that brings us salvation. While we were still sinners, Christ not only came to this earth, He died for our sins (Romans 5:8).

Amidst all the busyness of this season and the stuff of life, it's easy to overlook the help and hope that Jesus offers to us. But if we stop for just a moment, we would recognize that we desperately need Jesus, for Jesus alone can clean up the sin and brokenness in our lives, making us whole and granting us peace.

In this season of Advent, it's easy for us to allow the stuff to crowd out the reason for the season, and for us to miss the glory of God and the hope of salvation that Jesus wants to bring us. This season, I pray we will be able to look past the stuff of our lives and see the salvation that Jesus offers us. I pray that we will allow Jesus to step into our lives, meet us wherever we are, and then change us into the people He calls us to be. That begins with us making room for the Savior in our lives. This season, even if your life is a mess, take a moment, and say a simple prayer, asking Jesus to meet you where you are so that you might know the peace that only He can offer.

*Joy to the World,
The Lord has Come!*



Rev. Kelly Legg
South Central GPS
pastorkdl@gmail.com

It didn't hit me until Monday morning. On Sunday afternoon a few of us stayed behind to begin transforming the front of our sanctuary to add to our worship for Advent. I was so busy untangling obnoxiously knotted string that I didn't really notice. Honestly, all I marveled at in the moment was that the insanely talented woman in my congregation who snags my sermon series and then prayerfully considers how to create visuals that complement it did it again. And this time it required an engineering feat to design, build and then hang.

So, I didn't even see what she was portraying about our unexpected Emmanuel. I totally missed the visual cue pointing to a vital promise.

But then I walked into the lobby on Monday morning and looked down the center aisle to the front of the sanctuary and it hit like a ton of bricks. You see, the sign reads 'EMMANUEL' (GOD with us) and it hangs perfectly across the horizontal beam of the cross.

Emmanuel. On the cross.



That shouldn't go together. The sinless Savior on an instrument of shame. Life dying. God a man. God with us suffering for us.

Emmanuel. On the cross.

But it does go together. That's the beautiful, breathtaking, allegiance-demanding, freedom-giving, grace-soaked promise of Advent. Christ came to die. God was born in order that we might be born again, from death to life, because Emmanuel came to be tempted (without sin), to suffer all that we do and to defeat death so we can truly live.

Emmanuel. On the cross.

Sometimes we forget it this season. So busy purchasing gifts or making plans, wishing that all the family gathered around the table still, or cramming in the traditions that we miss the unexpected truth. This truth gets lost behind decorating sanctuaries, rehearsing elementary-aged shepherds and perfecting the cantata. But it's there. Just waiting to hit us like a ton of bricks. The most beautiful sight and most wondrous truth of all:

Emmanuel on the cross.

News From our Associations (www.abcopad.org)

Bradford

Kudos to Pastor Kevin Zufall (**FBC, Troy and East Troy**). He has authored several devotional books including "Every Day Devotion: Romans," "Sermon On The Mount," and "Every Day Devotion: James". Books are available for review and purchase on Amazon.

Delaware

ABCOPAD President (and Eastern Ambassador) Bryon Luke represented our Region at the 100-year Anniversary Celebration of **FBC, Holloway Terrace**. Bryon attended the morning worship service and presented Pastor Edward Emmell with a Certificate of Appreciation. Grateful for these partners in ministry celebrating 100 years of being the hands and feet of Jesus in the community.

French Creek

The folk at **FBC, Greenville** responded to the Operation Christmas Child opportunity and packed 299 boxes. Wowzer!

Monongahela

Great Bethel, Union Town welcomed a large gathering to their Thanksgiving Community Dinner. It was amazing! They planned for 90 and they had double that! Seven different churches were represented and participated in the service that followed. It was a God moment to witness the entire community represented and eating together.

Oil Creek

At **Wayne Park, Erie**, in the process for granting Certified Lay Minister recognition, a council recently met to examine ACTS graduate Pastor Dennis Horne.

Pittsburgh

The Walnut Grille in Fox Chapel welcomed a clergy group with open arms. Good conversation. Good food. Good fellowship. We spent time getting to know one another and are looking forward to spending more time together. Over the two days, we had nearly 25 ABCOPAD Pastors, Preachers, Ministry Leaders and spouses in attendance. The fire was ReKindled!!!

Reading

A team of men arrived at **Camp Ichthus** for a work project. Recent rains had created deep ruts on some of the pathways through Camp. The team moved gravel in wheelbarrows and a utility vehicle to fill in the ruts. It was fun serving as the hands and feet of Jesus to support Camp Ichthus in its ongoing ministry. This camp is a great resource to churches in Southeast ABCOPAD.

Over 30 men met at Camp Ichthus for our second **Men's Retreat of 2023**. GPS Dan McDowell (GraceCrossing Community Church, Phoenixville) and GPS David Hardin organized the event at FBC Bethlehem's campground. The Friday night speaker was Rev. Melvin Thomas (Calvary, Allentown) with Rev. CG Coats (FBC, Norristown) guiding the men in Praise and Worship. A great weekend!

Riverside

New Hope Christian Church On Sunday Dec. 3rd, New Hope Christian held their annual Christmas banquet. It was the first year that we held it in our new Multi-Ministry Center/gym. It was a catered meal and we enjoyed being entertained by our guest speaker/Christian comedian, Gordon Douglas. It was a truly blessed day.

Ten Mile

The Ten Mile Association was well represented during the **Waynesburg Christmas Parade!** Pastor Jim and Pastor Cathie Carpenter of WWJD had a float in the parade also passing out candy and sharing Jesus. FBC, Waynesburg with Pastor David Bess also had a float sharing candy and Jesus to the community. "The Way," an upcoming community center, was in the parade as well! The truck was being driven by Pastor Bob and Helen Mooney of Pursley BC! So many others from our churches were representing civic organizations throughout the community.



BEYOND THE BULLETIN —
Intentional Worship
Led by Heidi Clark

Online January 22 & February 3, 2024
with Synchronous Meet-Ups on
Saturday, 1/27, and 2/3 from 8:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Our God is intentional; therefore, our worship should be intentional.

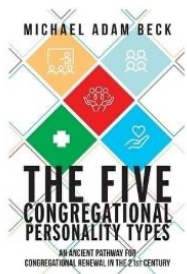
Beyond the Bulletin is a **free** two-week online course that addresses the need to educate and empower servant leaders in planning intentional worship that glorifies God and is relevant to their community. 1 CEU

To register, go to: www.beyondthebulletin.com

	2022	2023
United Mission Basics	\$22,058.00	\$21,266.00
Love Gift	\$2,308.00	\$423.00
Partners in Ministry	\$21,418.00	\$23,921.00
Annual Offerings		
AFC	\$1,474.00	\$418.00
WMO	\$20,737.00	\$21,071.00
RMMO	\$4,747.00	\$2,381.00
OGHS	\$12,507.00	\$1,777.00

The cumulative comparison figures

The decrease in United Missions (includes UMB & Love Gift) amounts to (\$18,838) less in actual dollars, that ABCOPAD received thru Nov.
 AFC is ahead by \$3,693 thru Nov. This increase amounts to \$1,083 more in actual dollars, that ABCOPAD received thru Nov.
 Partners in Ministry is ahead by \$16,521. through Nov.
 In actual dollars, from UM, AFC and PIM, ABCOPAD has received (\$1,234) less thru Nov. 2023



**ABCOPAD BIENNIAL
 OCTOBER 17-19, 2024
 ALTOONA, PA**

Save the Date!

Five Congregational Personality Types:
 An Ancient Pathway for Congregational
 Renewal in the 21st Century

Can churches in the 21st century stop, reverse, or prevent decline – and even become healthy, thriving congregations? Leading scholar and practitioner of congregational renewal, Michael Adam Beck, says they can. But the old cookie cutter ways of doing church won't cut it in today's world. If churches are going to stop the shocking rates of pastoral burnout and exodus from the pews, they must learn to be the church with new people, in new places, and in new ways.

January, 2024 Deadline:

Items to be included in the January issue of Notes & News need to arrive by 5 p.m., Thursday, January 4.

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



NEW...what comes to mind when you hear this word?

Exciting? Fresh? Unknown territory? Re-Start? Scarry? Anxious?

This past year for me as a GPS certainly brought all those thoughts from time to time as we were navigating NEW waters for ABCOPAD. Helping the Region through changes as God revealed His plan for us all.

It has been a privilege and a blessing to get to visit with pastors all around our Region listening to ministry celebrations, start of new ministries, people coming to know Jesus, Baptisms, and yes, even the heartaches that some churches are experiencing as well. KEY...it was a time for ABCOPAD to come alongside of all these ministers, churches, and congregations encouraging, celebrating, and praying together. The way God intended us to do ministry...not alone!

Because of your partnership with Partners in Ministry offering, we were able to fulfill the vision of our Region and what God has called us to for His Kingdom. The ministry that happened last year and will continue this year couldn't have happened if there weren't churches and people like you being a vital part of the Region through your financial giving. It has been a challenge at times but what ministry isn't? That is when we trust God to guide and direct us to the where, what and when within the **NEW!**

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for being a part of the GPS ministry and so many other ministries supported through the PIM offering. You are a vital part as we continue to navigate the **NEW** for our Region. We covet your prayers and know... **You are a blessing!**

“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.” Isaiah 43:18-19



Rev. Cristy Wise
Southwest GPS
cwise@abcopad.com

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.



**American Baptist Churches of
Pennsylvania and Delaware**

Pittsburgh Baptist Association
159 N Bellefield Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Pittsburgh, PA
Permit No. 379

Address Service Requested

The Essentials of Suicide Prevention for Busy Pastors

January 9, 16, 23, 2024, 7 – 9 pm - Register by Jan. 5

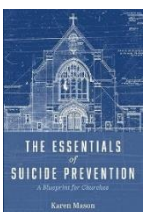
Instructor: Dr. Karen Mason

Professor of Counseling and Psychology / Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

Tuition: \$30 / Book Not Included - Up to 1 CEU



The U.S. suicide rate has steadily increased since 1999, though it briefly decreased during the pandemic. About 6% to 11% of your congregation may be thinking about suicide. Given the increasing numbers of lives lost to suicide and the presence of suicide in churches, it is imperative that pastors are equipped to help prevent suicide. In this course you will learn all relevant and basic aspects of suicide prevention. We will discuss the unique role of faith in protecting congregants from suicide. We will develop a theology of suicide and life (reasons for staying alive). You will learn how to help a suicidal congregant who reaches out to you for help. You will plan how to help loved ones and a community following a suicide death. We will also discuss how to develop a personal plan for self-care.



***The Essentials of Suicide Prevention:
A Blueprint for Churches***

This book will provide the resources needed to help prevent suicide in a church, even when a church does not want to start one more program.

Visit the ABCOPAD website www.abcopad.org to register.



For more information on this event or WIM, contact Pastor Apryl Crownover-Glunt, Regional Ministry Associate - Women in Ministry (aglunt@abcopad.com / 814-259-3083)