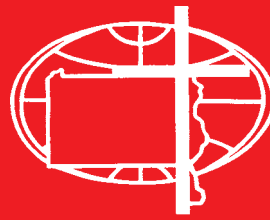


NOTES & NEWS, THOUGHTS & VIEWS



FOR ABCOPAD CHURCHES FROM
REGIONAL EXECUTIVE PASTOR REV. FRANK FRISCHKORN



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GREETINGS IN THE MATCHLESS NAME OF THE SAVIOR!

As you read this, I'm sure you are "hip-deep" in all of the plans, preparations and practices that are part of this wondrous time of the year. Each of us have those traditions that help define these days, and for our family one of those practices is the yearly writing of the Christmas Letter that accompanies our Christmas Card and catches family members and friends up on the comings and goings of Frank, Carolyn, Eryn and Rebekah. Each year we take turns writing the letter, and this year the task fell to the "baby" of the family, Rebekah.

When Bekah sent the rest of the family her draft for editorial review and alteration, she started out by saying that we would play a game in the letter — she would describe each family member, and those reading the letter would need to guess who she was referring to by the comments she made. I have to admit, I was more than a little curious to see how my now 22-year-old (her birthday was Dec. 11 ☺) would describe me. As I began reading the letter in anxious anticipation of the word picture to come, the Holy Spirit took my breath away with a question: "Frank, you seem very concerned with how Bekah sees you, but which opinion matters more to you, hers or mine?"

Throughout the birth accounts of the Savior recorded in the Gospels,

we find example after example of individuals who longed for God's favor in their lives, even when it meant that their status in the eyes of those around them might suffer. Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph — each of them were, I'm sure, the butt of many jokes and the fodder for many conversations in the months leading up to the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus, but rather than allow the pressure and scrutiny of the world to alter their course, they stayed true to the One in whom they had put their hope and trust.



While none of us are confronted by those same types of pressures to conform, there is still a not-so-subtle push in our culture to have us blunt the power of the message of Christmas in our lives. "Happy Holidays" replaces "Merry Christmas," the giving of gifts and the commercialism that surrounds it seeks to eclipse the reality of the Giver of all Good Gifts, and a push toward secularism seeks to discount the wonder of a God born in our midst — a God born to die so that we might live.

Sure, I care deeply what my baby girl thinks of me, but more than that I desire to honor and bless the heart of my Heavenly Father, especially in these days when the wonder of the Incarnation should be on display for the world to see.

One of the deep joys of my life is the privilege I have in serving in partnership with you and our regional staff here in Pennsylvania and Delaware, and my prayer for you this Christmas season is that you and those you love may know the Joy and Peace that only our Living God can bring.

Merry Christmas!

Frank



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My grandmother lived to be 96 years old, only passing away in 2010. She could remember when the first telephones came to her community in rural upstate New York near Saratoga. Grandma described the party line phone. The phone would ring and anyone with a telephone could pick up and listen to the conversation taking place. Basically a single telephone line for an entire community. Up until that time, if you wanted to convey a message to someone you had two functional options:

1. You could write a letter and send it by mail.
2. You could travel to the location of the person you wanted to communicate with and speak to them face to face.

In just under 100 years communication has changed dramatically. In one or two generations, communication that was only dreamed of by my grandmother is now a well established fact of life. Today most of us monitor multiple communication streams. A person may or may not have a landline telephone at their home or office (today many people are giving up their landlines altogether). Most people carry a cellphone with a telephone number unique to them. Along with the cellphone (voice communication) most people have an email address or use text messaging to send written correspondence. There are Facebook® accounts for sharing with the wider world along with Twitter® for quick messages to those who are following your life. Skype® communication now allows free video conferencing so you can *see* the people you're talking to.

When we use a device to communicate with someone, that is called mediated communication. Since my Grandmother was born, mediated communication has been growing with no end in sight. Marshall McLuhan, author of *Understanding Media, The Extensions of Man*, recognized that for everything media gave to humanity something was lost. A phone call or text message is helpful to convey content but emotional nuances are lost. Every time we choose mediated communication, for what we gain something is lost. Author Peggy Kendal in her book *Reboot: Refreshing Your Faith in a High-tech World* writes: "The difference between mediated ideals and reality can be significant. If Christ is calling us to minister to our community, it would seem that we need to understand the real people and events surrounding us using more than the sound bytes we receive on the evening news or the stereotypes spooned up by Hollywood producers, bloggers and YouTubers. Caring for our world means understanding our world from the inside out. It means connecting with real-life needs of the people whom God puts right in front of us. Shared stories can be powerful, but not as powerful as shared lives."

God did not settle for mediated communication, connecting with us through angels, prophets or just the written word. He took on flesh and dwelt among us. Emmanuel, God with us. Jesus is God's unmediated communication to us. In the midst of the busy Christmas season all of us need to find time when we leave our communication devices behind and have some face to face time both with family as well as those with whom God wants us to share the Gospel. Unplug this Christmas and spend time with Emmanuel as well as with a world He loves and wants us to reach for Him. ■





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Isn't Christmas a wonderful time? People smile more at Christmas, have you noticed this? I was at Sears the other day and this little girl, I'd say about 3, was having a melt down. "Mom" had no patience for the whining or the crying, which I think was a coping mechanism. At her breaking point, she picked up her cell phone and called her husband who came zooming around the corner with the other four kids, including the baby. The little girl, amidst the meltdown, looked at me several times. In no time the little girl and I were both smiling and mom's nerves were quieting.

People are stressed. People are also fearful. We are worried about our finances and how our homes are affected. We are worried about our jobs, communities, our nation and our world. Not that we necessarily wish to be, but there are people in the news constantly telling us about the worries of the world and this impacts us in tremendous ways, and fear is the big elephant in the room.

Give all your worries to Him, because he cares about you. (1 Peter 5:7)

Do not worry about anything, but pray and ask God for everything you need, always giving thanks. And God's peace, which is so great we cannot understand it, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

Let the peace that Christ gives control your thinking because you were all called together in one body to have peace. Always be thankful. (Colossians 3:15)

You Lord, give true peace to those who depend on You, because they trust you. (Isaiah 26:3)

My God will use His wonderful riches in Christ Jesus to give you everything you need. (Philippians 4:19)

I don't know about you, but I see a theme here:

1. Seek God's wisdom for each need — seek.
2. Give our worries to the Lord – let them go — give.
3. Trust that peace will be yours because God loves you — trust.
4. Receive what you need — receive. (NOTE: what you *need*, not what you *want*)

Seek, Give, Trust, Receive.

I believe we (individuals and churches) tend to think about it backwards. We tell God what we want/need; when He grants that we trust Him; then we give Him some more lists of things to accomplish on our behalf and let go little by little; and then maybe seek His wisdom about living differently next time.

This came alive for me in Haiti last month. What if you had nothing, what would you worry about? I found it overwhelming to consider 1.5 million people homeless. That is the size of Philadelphia. Can you imagine if all of sudden, every person in Philly was homeless and the buildings were in rubble? What would you worry about?

I left four things in Haiti:

1. A pair of work boots for a Haitian friend.
2. A Bible Promise book – scriptures selected by topics.
3. My first guitar to help a brother in Christ there teach someone else how to play.
4. A lot of worries because quite a few of my priorities changed — and a commitment to seek God first before I tell Him all my thoughts.

We are that little girl in tears at Sears. Red in the face and at the end of our rope. We're also the mom ... a bit numb to our surroundings. We are the homeless people of Haiti — wondering if God really does care about us ... for our every daily need ... God does care. This is the message of the manger, the cross and the empty grave. This is what makes Christmas such a wonderful time. The message is reborn every year.

May you sense God's smile today. May you be that smile as you strive to be the hands, feet and peace of Christ in your home, community, ABCOPAD and to the ends of the world. It is a joy to serve alongside you as your brother in Christ.

Merry Christmas friends and partners in ministry. ■





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I continue this month with my ongoing articles regarding measurables. I am well aware the measurables I put forth these past few months may seem to some to be an old school way of judging church health and vitality, BUT when we turn things upend and look at HOW these measurables are achieved, we quickly realize we have moved from a traditional to a missional modality, even though I continue to use traditional and familiar language.

Before I get into that, let me get into this. The best way to get people in the church house is to first get them in your house. There is no better time than the holidays, (these Holy Days) to make that happen. Throw a simple “Happy Birthday Jesus” party in your home and invite your church and unchurched neighbors to share in the experience. Some great books to assist you in this experience include *The Joy of Hospitality: Fun Ideas for Evangelistic Entertaining* by Yvotte Bright as well as *When God is the Life of the Party* by Norm and Becky Wretlind.

Okay, let me get back to those “measureables,” or at least add to the ones I have so far in these articles shared. Based on Arn’s work, which is due for re-release in 2012, “*for every four new members, one of them should be fully assimilated into the life of the church within their first year.*”

When I grew up in the 1970’s, I was taught repeatedly that any minute Jesus could return. It was immediate and imminent. I believed that then and still believe that today! However, little emphasis was made back then on being a disciple of Christ. It was just about getting decisions for Christ. There wasn’t much

time to do anything else, so we believed and so we were told. That was more than 30 years ago. Countless people during that decade and subsequently came to faith but never grew in it. We have done a whole generation a terrible spiritual disservice.

For discipleship to be holistic, it must be rooted in scripture and meet all three basic human needs. It must first include transcendence, connecting people to God. It must include community, connecting like-minded people with each other in some type of small group, relational, learning, growing experience. It also must include significance, connecting people with a purpose larger than themselves outside themselves; connecting them in a missional, meaningful, sustainable way with their context (community). The best way to get people to grow closer to God and each other is to serve other people together. That is true assimilation, not into A church but rather into THE Church, the Body of Christ. Fully assimilated (fully disciplined) doesn’t mean helping a struggling church maintain its status quo. It often means being and doing something different. Not being “like us,” but being like Jesus and doing what Jesus would do.

Next month we will talk about the fourth point ... *For every board, committee, or team member, one out of five should have joined the church in the last two years.*

Oh, before I sign off, wouldn’t it be great if every day of the year was like Black Friday, where we could get church folk committed to getting up real early, going out into the world, and willing to sacrifice their priorities and at times their pride. We need to be as committed to giving The Gift that lasts forever as we are to knocking ourselves out buying a gift that will most likely be broken or forgotten a month later. We seem to be more worried about our savings, than His Savings, which is why He came in the first place ... “*to save all people from their sins*” (Matthew 1:21). May your holidays be Holy Days! ■



NEWS FROM ACROSS THE REGION

CENTRE ASSOCIATION

Karen Smith, AB missionary to Thailand, will be in the Centre Baptist Association Oct. 10-14, 2012.

Karen leads the programs of the New Life Center Foundation (NLCF). The NLCF works exclusively with young ethnic minority women throughout the Mekong sub-region who are at risk for, or victims of, human trafficking, forced labor and sexual abuse. Since its inception in 1987, the NLCF has partnered with the Royal Thai Government and international NGOs to provide legal, psychological and repatriation assistance.

If your church would like to host Karen, please contact the ABCOPAD Western Office at 1-888-687-0883/412-687-3940 or go to pghbaptist@aol.com. ■

FRENCH CREEK ASSOCIATION

Good news! The French Creek Association has been very helpful in supplying 20 new mattresses for the Life Building Ministries campus in Cochran, Pa. The need was presented to the Wayland Baptist Church at the time of the annual mission sharing event we have with them. Pastor Harlan began to contact other churches in the French Creek Association to solicit help in getting these mattresses. There was help provided from a few of the churches. Pastor Harlan approached the Association's board of directors with the need at the fall business meeting and they gave a gift to cover the full cost of the mattresses. We give thanks to all the French Creek churches, and Arthur F. Schultz furniture and their staff, for their help in providing for a very great need. ■

MONONGAHELA ASSOCIATION

The next Clergy Gathering for the Monongahela association will be Monday, Feb. 20, 2012, at Oak Hill Baptist Church near Smithfield, Pa.

Star Junction (*Don Bowser*) celebrated our Savior's birth with a Christmas Concert by *Shepherd's Voice*, on Saturday, Dec. 10, at 7 p.m. There was a love offering taken for the ministry of this group, and

light refreshments were served after the concert. *Shepherd's Voice* has a unique sound that was enjoyed. ■

RIVERSIDE ASSOCIATION

Middletown, Media (*Jeff Evans*) would like to share another testimony from their outreach ministry, The Healing Rooms of Del.Co.: "This experience did not take place in the Healing Rooms but during morning worship. A lady in our church had double knee replacement a couple of weeks ago. The one knee was doing well but she was having complications with the other knee. She said if things did not change they were going to have to manipulate the knee which is a very painful process. We invited her up for prayer and members of the church came up to lay hands on her. (James 5) We then anointed her with oil and prayed for the muscles, ligaments tendons and the knee itself to be whole and healed. As she was leaving church, she expressed that she felt something working in her knee and that it was feeling better. She came back the next week and informed the church that there was an increase in mobility and flexibility in the knee and they do not have to do the surgery. Praise the Lord! Exodus 15:26 — 'I am the Lord who heals you.'

"Also, for the past couple of years the church has celebrated Pastor Appreciation Sunday. Every year they do something special with a special gift. This year they had a luncheon for myself and my wife, Lorraine. and then gave us a gift of a weekend away with 'Family Life Ministries: Weekend to Remember.' It feels good to be appreciated." ■

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

Don't forget to check out our website often at www.abcopad.org! ■

AMERICAN BAPTIST MISSION TRIP

The American Baptist Men of Pennsylvania and Delaware will lead a team to Haiti from Feb. 25 to March 5, 2012. The cost is \$1,650. Both men and women are welcome! For more information, contact Bob Swan at swantown@aol.com.

For information on any mission trips, contact the ABCOPAD Western Office at 1-888-687-0883 or pghbaptist@aol.com.

Please be in prayer for this team. While you are praying, listen for God's call to reach out to the people in Haiti and share God's love to a people in deep need. ■

SAVE THE DATES! OCT. 11 – 13, 2012

are the dates for the 2012 ABCOPAD Biennial, which will once again be held at the Blair County Convention Center in Altoona, Pa.

Beginning Thursday evening, Oct. 11, the Biennial will feature a continuing education event for pastors and other key church leaders.

Continuing through to Saturday morning, it is always an exciting spiritual and fun-filled time!

Be watching our website and your mail for more details, but for *now*, be sure you reserve the dates for what is sure to be another outstanding event!

Celebration of Mission Giving

This single month compared to the same single month last year.

	2010	2011
United Mission Basics	\$59,633	\$54,847
Love Gift	\$4,095	\$3,397
Partners in Ministry	\$8,742	\$15,817
Annual Offerings:		
A.F.C.	\$433	\$909
O.G.H.S.	\$1,087	\$7,522
R.M.M.O.	\$2,978	\$1,549
W.M.O.	\$43,603	\$48,328

To view your own church's current giving amounts, visit our website and on the home page click on *World Mission Reports*.

The cumulative comparison figures

United Mission Basics is behind through October 2011 by \$44,921. The decrease in United Missions (includes UMB, Love Gift and Designations) amounts to \$31,011 less in actual dollars that ABCOPAD received this year.

A.F.C. is behind by \$3,113. The decrease amounts to \$913 less in actual dollars that ABCOPAD received this year.

Partners in Ministry is ahead by \$18,511.

JANUARY 2012 DEADLINE

Items to be included in the Jan. issue of Notes & News need to arrive by **noon, Thursday, Jan. 5.**

Please send all material to Carol Bicking.

Regular mail:

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Thank you!

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