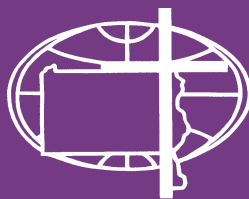


Notes & News, Thoughts & Views



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 5

May, 2023



**Exodus 18:17-18
(NIV) Moses' father-in-law replied,
"What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone."**

Recently a few people have expressed concern for me and the workload I am currently carrying doing ministry in ABCOPAD. Some have said I look fatigued, and others have noted my busy schedule over the past four months. The truth is, I have been tired, and since the start of the New Year, my schedule has been full.

The fact is, I underestimated the amount of time and energy required to implement the plans our ABCOPAD Leadership Team and I created for 2023. The plans included training our five existing Geographic Pastoral Servants to do visitation and now assist local congregations in their geography with pastoral searches and credentialing. In addition, the GPS would facilitate Leadership Learning Communities (LLCs) and help congregations secure interim ministers during pastoral transitions as both our Regional Ministry Associate for LLCs and Interim Ministry resigned. Along with training the existing five GPS, I needed to do recruitment to fill staff vacancies. Three new GPS to serve in ABCOPAD were required, and the Regional Ministry Associate for Women In Ministry needed a new leader. This meant recruiting, onboarding, and training four brand-new staff members.

continued on Page 2

Another important task was to work on the details for deploying our Regional Ambassadors to represent ABCOPAD at events around the Region. ABCOPAD no longer required GPS to be available on Sunday mornings to represent the Region at installations, anniversaries, and credentialing services. This meant I needed to provide some instruction for our new Regional Ambassadors and have them ready to deploy as needed.

Along with staffing, our Commission On Ministerial Leadership (COML) needed a new chairperson, and many of the Commission Representatives had terms that expired during COVID. These representatives had not been replaced, so COML needed to be rebuilt to serve pastoral leaders seeking credentials in ABCOPAD.

Throughout the first four months of the year, there were staff meetings, ABCOPAD Core Leadership Meetings, and pastoral visits. There were ongoing Search Committee meetings, credentialing meetings, and numerous phone calls with pastoral and congregational leaders who needed coaching or a listening ear.

I recognize I am not alone and not the first person to face this situation. I have talked to numerous pastoral leaders who have shared similar stories about ministry in their local congregations. Of course, this is true for full-time pastors, but it is almost always the case for part-time, bi-vocational pastors trying to balance a secular job, family, and ministry. Again, the words of Moses' Father-in-Law, Jethro, often come to mind. "The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone."

Fortunately for me, while there were no simple or instantaneous solutions at the start of the year, we now have well-trained part-time staff and a team of volunteers who are taking up many important tasks. A regular part of my day is now delegating work to members of our team who are anxious to serve. Often when replying to an email or voicemail, I will let the person I am talking to know I will be handing off this matter to another staff member who can assist them.

While there is still much to do, it has been rewarding and exciting to see a new generation of Regional Staff, even if it is only for a year, rising to serve ABCOPAD. God's economy is perfect, and He does not waste anything. Although I don't know what the future holds for our Region, I do know this season of ministry will have value in the years to come.

Jethro had it right when he offered Moses his coaching and wisdom. When I connect with Pastors who are stressed because their workload is overwhelming, I ask them what they are doing to train the next generation of leaders in their church. The solution is not instantaneous, and it requires purposeful ministry, recruiting, and training people to serve, but God's wisdom is still spot on.

Thank you for your patience and understanding during all the transitions taking place in our Region. Thank you for being so supportive of our ministry. I want to thank everyone who has joined our team to serve this Region. And most of all, I want to Thank God for his marvelous love for us and His provision amid ministry.

Grateful for our partnership in ministry,
Mark



AB MEN

Envisioning 2023

PREPARING THE WAY FOR AB MEN



Relax

Kickback in 100 acres of God's beauty. Enjoy time around the campfire with old friends and new.



Refresh

Restore your soul with meaningful times of worship, prayer and reflection.



Refocus

Dream together about a new season of ministry for AB Men, and how God is calling us to live into it.



CAMP ICHTHUS

2880 Stagecoach Rd. W
Palmerton PA

FOR MORE INFO CONTACT
DAVID HARDIN
PASTORDAVID@FBC-BETHLEHEM.ORG
610-865-4600

General Info

AUG 4-5

WHO

PASTORS AND ANY MEN PASSIONATE ABOUT
DOING MINISTRY TOGETHER

WHEN

AUG 4TH 6:00 PM- AUG 5 6:00 PM

WHERE

CAMP ICHTHUS RELAXING 100 ACRES IN THE
HEART OF THE POCONO MOUNTAINS

WHY

TO RECONNECT WITH FRIENDS AND DREAM
ABOUT THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN BAPTIST
MEN'S MINISTRY

COST

THE COST OF THIS WEEKEND IS ONLY \$20 PER
PERSON

SCAN THE QR CODE TO REGISTER

[HTTPS://FBC.BETHLEHEM.CHURCHCENTER.COM/REGISTRATIONS/EVENTS/1732542](https://fbc.bethlehem.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/1732542)

OR MAIL PAPER FORMS TO
FBC BETHLEHEM 3235 LINDEN ST. BETHLEHEM PA 18017





Rev. Tim Schwartz
Northeast Co-Geographic
Pastoral Servant
tschwartz@abcopad.com

Some of the most formative experiences in my life have occurred while participating in short-term mission trips.

In the summer after I graduated from college, I joined my home church on a mission trip to Latvia, a former part of the Soviet Union located on the Baltic Sea. We participated in some mission work in the capital city of Riga and had other opportunities to see the work of God in this country that was emerging from Soviet occupation at that time. At one point in the week, we visited an orphanage in Riga. During a time of questions and answers, the first questions the children asked us were, “What do you do with leftover food?” and “Why do you smile so much?”. Those questions have stayed with me for more than 25 years.

At the first church I pastored, we did many trips to the Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina. On the first trip, we went to the home of a woman named Pam. She had five feet of water on one side of her house and two feet of water on the other. She lost most of her possessions in the storm. In addition, Pam’s mother passed away after a car accident a few months earlier. She was struggling day after day to make it through the aftermath of the storm.

Over the course of a week, we were able to install drywall in her entire house — making it look like a house again. We were able to provide her labor resources that she did not have access to following the hurricane.

At the end of the week, I overheard her telling one of the team members, “You guys are the first silver lining in the cloud that has been following my life over the past six months.” That statement has stayed with me as well.

Martin Luther King Jr., in preaching about the Parable of the Good Samaritan, challenges his listeners to consider the questions the characters ask in the story. He says the priest and Levite ask the wrong question in the story. They ask, “What will happen to me if I stop to help this man that is beaten up on the side of the road?” Robbers could assault them as well. They would be defiled by the bloody man and not be able to do their work in the temple. What would happen to them? In contrast, MLK Jr. says that the Good Samaritan asks the correct question in the parable. The Samaritan asks, “What will happen to him if I don’t stop to help the man beaten up on the side of the road?” Will the man survive the attack? Will the man be able to recover from the pain of the assault? The Samaritan asked the right question and ministered to the beaten man on the side of the road.

In 2023, we have seen reports on tornados that have swept through communities and other high profile destructive events throughout the country and world. Summer is coming and that means that we are not far away from other destructive storms and weather events. We will hear reports of forest fires in other parts of our country. The fall is also not far off, where the entire Gulf and Southeast Coast will be on edge watching hurricane season. It is easy to forget such events in our high-paced news cycle — today’s news is forgotten by next week. However, at some point, do we need to ask the question of the Samaritan, “What will happen to them if I don’t stop to help them?”





Rev. Kelly Legg
South Central Geographic
Pastoral Servant
pastorkdl@gmail.com

Not long ago I had a phone call with a pastor in another church. He asked me to serve as a consultant with his congregation by leading them through a few vision exercises, so I was asking him some background questions to get a feel for what was prompting this request. He started to tell me about the past. Quoting numbers right and left, he talked about how many people used to sit in pews and how many bucks used to fill the plates.

“Now,” he said, “we’re a completely different church. We don’t have the resources we once did and we can’t engage in the ministry we once could.” He sounded defeated.

I let the silence linger for a bit before asking, “but is God completely different, too? Are His resources tapped out?”

The truth is, most of us can and will utter those same words and feel that same sentiment at some point in our lives. We’ll look at the trends of declining church attendance across the U.S. and rising prices and say “we’re so different than we were 40 years ago.” Or we’ll look at our age and stage and think “I don’t have the same bandwidth or opportunities to serve that I once did.”

But the question still requires an answer: “Has God suddenly become limited to our resources? Is He different, too?”

Part of what has me thinking this way is a conversation the deacons in my own ministry context began in January. Our chairperson asked what the members of the board sensed God wanting us to do and be in this year. Every single specific example came back to one word: blessing. God wants us to bless our community.

We could argue about whether or not we have the resources or the bandwidth or the gifting or the time to genuinely be a blessing to our neighbors — to identify the needs that are present in our town and its surrounding areas and then go to work meeting them in the name and love and absolute truth of Jesus Christ. We could focus on our perceived lack and be paralyzed by how little we have to offer.

Or we can trust that God is not and never has been confined by our resources. After all, Jesus could take a little boy’s lunch and turn it into a lavish feast. He can do the same for my friend whose church is, on paper, extraordinarily tiny and lacking, if they will offer their “lunch.” And He’ll do the same with yours, as you seek to bless your community.

Praise God, He never changes. And His desire to see entire communities, one family at a time, transformed by the Gospel, never fades.





Rev. Rob Rice
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Pastoral Servant
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You Matter to God, You Matter to Us

There are some parts of the Bible that can be difficult to get through as you read through the totality of Scripture. One of those parts that was somewhat challenging for me was the multiple genealogies and lists of hard-to-pronounce names found throughout Scripture. They aren't the most interesting reading, unless you are trying to impress people with your skills in pronouncing names that don't often make the list of top ten favorite or most well-known Bible characters, and so we're often left to question, why put these lists in the Bible at all?

One of the places that forces us to wrestle with that question is the end of the book of Romans. Though much of Romans is a masterful theological treatise that helps us better understand the depths of God's love for us, and has favorite verses for many people like Romans 1:16-17, Romans 5:8, and Romans 12:1, we might wonder why Paul spends the last chapter almost exclusively on personal greetings. We know some of the names, like Priscilla and Aquilla from other places in Scripture, but I'd challenge you (even if you're a well-versed theologian) to name one or two things about Urbanus, Aristobulus, or Olympas.

We don't know these people at all, but to Paul's original audience, they were partners in ministry, friends, and key individuals that helped Paul share the hope of the Gospel. Their names don't appear on the "who's who" list of Bible characters, but they mattered to Paul, and more importantly, they mattered to God.

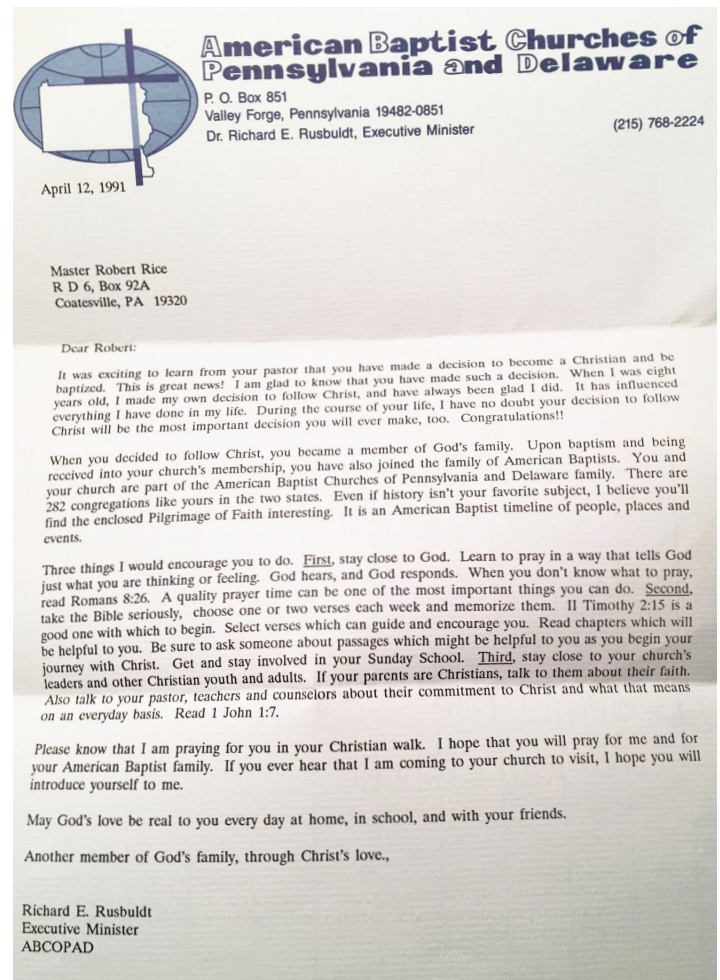
Our churches, associations, and Region are filled with many men and women who aren't well-known or famous. Unless you've attended the church I pastor in Muncy, or are local to the greater Muncy area, you probably don't know the names Patty Woodruff, Tom Smith or Tom Henninger. Outside of Northumberland area, you might not even know names like Kathy Staje, Jamie Dries, or Deb Copeland. And even names that are well known in our Region, like Frank Frischkorn and Mark Mahserjian-Smith probably aren't known much beyond the greater ABC family (unless there is some other personal connection).

These names might not be of any great fame, but they matter to me and they matter to us. The work of the Kingdom of God in our Region doesn't happen apart

from these people, and more importantly it doesn't happen apart from you. Regardless of who you are, your background, your age, and things like that, you matter to our Region, but more importantly you matter to God.

That truth has always been part of the DNA of our Region, and that was confirmed to me several months ago when my mom, who had been going through my things found a letter that was sent to me when I was baptized. It came from the then-Executive Minister of ABCOPAD, Dr. Richard E. Rusbuldt, and it was a reminder that I was now a part of God's family and that I mattered to both our greater ABCOPAD family, and to God.

Amidst all the changes in technology, and the different roles and responsibilities that the staff of our Region has taken on, we probably won't be able to get back to the practice of sending letters out to everyone, but take this as a letter from me to you, that you matter to God, and you matter to our Region!



News From our Associations (www.abcopad.org)

Abington

At **Shiloh, Scranton**, this year marked the congregation's 40th Annual Good Friday Fish Fry.

There is a large population of Welsh immigrants in the Scranton community, and **United, Taylor** recently marked the observance of St. David's Day, (the patron saint of Wales). Lead Pastor, Rev. David Barrett, did a great job both recognizing the day as well as preaching a solid message from Luke 9, lifting up the need for each of us to take up our cross and follow Jesus. The service concluded with Communion.

During Holy Week...The Maundy Thursday service at **Berean, Carbondale** featured a Tenebrae service which invited everyone to consider Jesus' final night through the eyes of his disciples.

Several of our ABCOPAD pastors are employed bi-vocationally, providing an excellent pulpit ministry as well as valuable service to their communities. For example: Pastor Jack Healy serves at **FBC, Bentley Creek**; during the week he drives a school bus in New York. Pastor Don Hickey serves at **FBC, Abington** (Waverly, PA); during the week he is a police chief and first responder with the Roaring Brook Police Department. You'll have to ask them which job is the hardest!

Bradford

The pews were packed...with standing room only... as members of the church and community gathered to celebrate the completed renovations done to the sanctuary at **Coryland**.

Central Union

It was an absolute awesome evening of music, praise, testimony, and fellowship at **Lower Providence** as they hosted Grand Ole Opry veteran Daryl Mosley. Daryl has an amazing talent of being able to turn life experiences into song while sharing his faith in the process.

President Bryon Luke and other ABCOPAD leaders were present for the historic merger of **FBC, Malvern** with **Valley Creek**. After 190 years of ministry, FBC Malvern and Valley Creek have partnered together to continue ministry in the Malvern Community and beyond.

In the summer of 2023, a team from **FBC, Norristown**, will once again be the hands and feet of Jesus. Volunteers will be heading to Eastern Kentucky to serve others in the wake of recent devastations in that area.

Delaware

Eleven members of **Calvary, Newark** participated in Habitat for Humanity's build event Framing Futures Through Faith. The team built the initial wooden frames of walls, windows and doors, and the projects were blessed the following day.

Harrisburg

West Shore, Camp Hill is partnering with Galveston Urban Ministries, a ministry focused on intentionally engaging people with the love of Christ, equipping churches, businesses, and individuals to combat systemic poverty, and empowering their neighbors to live healthy, sustainable lives. A mission trip is planned for October when a team of volunteers will serve in home construction and/or GUM facility improvements; projects may include painting, drywall, flooring, etc.

Monongahela

Working on a Women's Mission Project, ladies of the **Olive Branch, Belle Vernon** created Valentines cards for the "Day of Love" for an orphanage/school in Brazil. Each of the 125 students will receive a personalized card. It was an enjoyable time full of laughter and friendship. Being the hands and feet of Jesus!

Northumberland

It was a glorious Easter at **Muncy** when the congregation witnessed the baptism of seven people into the family of God. It was a joy to see both young and old profess their faith and be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Oil Creek

During Holy Week... At **Wesleyville, Erie** an adult Sunday School examined the linkages between the Old Testament Passover Feast and Jesus' sacrifice on Good Friday.

Pittsburgh

During Holy Week... At **FBC, Pittsburgh** the congregation welcomed the University of Pittsburgh Treble Choral Ensemble and the Pittsburgh Jazz Nonet on Easter Sunday. Both ensembles delivered inspiring special music performances during the worship service.

Riverside

New Hope Christian Church would like to share a testimony from their outreach ministry **The Healing Rooms of Delaware County**. For the past couple of weeks, the Healing Rooms haven't been very quiet. However, recently we had four people come for healing prayer. Two of those

individuals came all the way from Wilkes-Barre to be prayed for and anointed. As Psalm 103:3 reminds us; "He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases."

Ten Mile

Kudos to Marge Cole upon her retirement as Director/Teacher of the Christian Sandbox Preschool at **FBC, Waynesburg**. The preschool started in 1991 under SW GPS Cristy Wise who served for 10 years; then Marge was hired and served for 22 years. Dr. Ed Peirce serves as pastor at FBC, Waynesburg and will soon be retiring as well.

Several ABCOPAD congregations participated in the HUGE community egg drop at the Waynesburg airport where 12 churches participated. Our own **WWJD** and **FBC, Waynesburg** were a part of the event. Between 2,000 — 2,500 people attended and 50,000 eggs dropped for all ages. Christian music was playing as churches had booths set up along with food available. Great opportunity for the community! May God be glorified as these churches continue to work together for the Kingdom.

	2022	2023
United Mission Basics	\$22,154	\$22,627
Love Gift	\$1,575	\$1,458
Partners in Ministry	\$22,227	\$42,197
Annual Offerings		
AFC	\$10,867	\$14,274
WMO	\$3,109	\$1,465
RMMO	\$807	\$1,378
OGHS	\$15,069	\$6,192

The cumulative comparison figures

The decrease in United Missions (includes UMB & Love Gift) amounts to (\$3,673) less in actual dollars, that ABCOPAD received thru April.

AFC is ahead by \$2,483 thru April. This increase amounts to \$728 more in actual dollars, that ABCOPAD received thru April.

Partners in Ministry is ahead by \$12,583 through April.

In actual dollars, from UM, AFC and PIM, ABCOPAD has received \$9,639 more thru April 2023.



June, 2023 Deadline:

Items to be included in the June issue of Notes & News need to arrive by 5 p.m., Thursday, June 1.

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

GROWTH POINTS

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

Changing Careers: Part 1

Pastors don't like to think of ministry as a career. Yet, some aspects of pastoral ministry are similar to a career, and it's wise to give heed to practical aspects of changing roles, locations, or, yes, even a complete change of career.

Two Types of Calling

Pastors tend to think of their calling in two parts: *General Call* and *Specific Call*.

A *General Call* to ministry implies that a pastor feels called to make their financial living from the gospel. While a *Specific Call* implies a pastor feels called to serve in a definite role, location, or position.

While a *General Call* to ministry may not change for most pastors, it's common for a *Specific Call* to change throughout a lifetime of ministry, with pastors often having three to six specific calls in their lifetime.

Allow me to give a personal example. Throughout my life, I've felt called to work in some field of ministry (*General Call*). I've served in at least seven different ministry roles—youth pastor, Christian education director, pastor, consultant,

professor, speaker, writer—(*Specific Call*). Throughout all of these, my place of ministry changed from Colorado to Oregon to California to national and international locations. As you can see, my *General Call* played out in several *Specific Calls*.

Life Changes

It was common centuries ago for a pastor to experience a *General Call* and a *Specific Call* as one. In the 1700s it was rare for pastors to change churches in their lifetime. Travel was not easy, and fewer ministry roles existed. Travel today, of course, is easier, and there are numerous and various opportunities for ministry.

Life change impacts ministry in other ways, too. A ministry position that once appeared perfect may now seem all wrong. Pastors may need a change due to family situations, or perhaps they've outgrown the current role, or they desire to pursue new interests.

Some pastors just fell into their positions at some point without much thought. Now, after ten to twenty years of experience, they find themselves stuck in an ill-fitting position, with no satisfaction in what they're doing.

Changing a General Call

Let's consider for a moment the major challenge of a complete career change, i.e., a change in the *General Call* of ministry.

If you feel you've made a mistake in understanding your *General Call* (career?), it's important to take some time *now* to think about who you are, and what are your gifts and passions?

Consider some . . .

Valid Reasons to change—

- You've been haunted for years by a vision or passion for work outside of traditional pastoral ministry.
- You don't fit in ministry positions even though you've tried for years.
- Your love for ministry is not there, and you dislike going to work.
- You've been fired or let go from ministry positions two or more times.
- Your values are not in sync with ministry work.

Invalid Reasons to change—

- Because security or money is the motive.
- Because you've experienced a bruised ego and are hurt.
- Because a friend or relative has a fabulous or lucrative career you could join.
- Because you're tired or burned out.
- Because you're running away from problems that are likely to surface in a new career.

In short, you shouldn't jump careers just because you're facing tough times or fantasizing about a different position.

Prior to making a major change, evaluate your *General Call* to ministry.

First, spend personal time in prayer asking God to guide you.

Second, talk and listen to close family members and key friends.

Third, find a ministry or life coach to walk with you as you consider a change.

(Continued next issue.)



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**Rev. Dan McDowell, ABCOPAD Southeast GPS / dmcowell@abcopad.com
Re-Envisioning American Baptist Men's Ministry in ABCOPAD**

My personal spiritual journey can be inextricably linked to the sudden death of my father when I was just 5 years old. His influence, his absence and his family legacy led me to a place where the AB churches I grew up in became, in a very real sense, my extended family. I came of age looking up to the men in my congregation (including my paternal grandfather) as father-figures.

For that reason alone, men's ministry has always been a vital part of my spiritual journey. But the Lord poured gasoline on my fire while I was leading a small struggling church in upstate New York. Through a series of Spirit-led events, the men of my church were captivated by the Promise Keepers movement. Over time, the entire congregation was revitalized as those men's faith caught fire and they stepped up into leadership.

Over the years, the AB Men of PA & DE (ABMOPAD) have devoted significant attention to disaster relief projects and to a yearly conference focusing on discipleship and equipping men for ministry. Those events are a treasured legacy of ministry in our Region but the time has come to evaluate our priorities for the future. As you may have heard, the 2023 ABMOPAD Men's Conference at Shippensburg in July has been canceled due to dwindling attendance and a lack of leadership manpower to support the event.

ABMOPAD President Rob McQue, ABMOPAD Chaplain Rev. Eric Kraihainzel and several ABCOPAD staff members have met in the aftermath of that decision to explore steps going forward. **We are calling for a "Vision Retreat" for the eastern side of the Region to be held at Camp Ichthus in the Poconos (2880 Stagecoach Road in Palmerton, PA) on Friday, August 4 – Saturday, August 5.** This retreat is aimed with an entirely different goal than the men's gatherings held previously.

We are asking ABCOPAD pastors of central and eastern part of the Region to identify and invite leadership caliber men to join together for a time of prayer, inspiration, discussion and vision casting for ABMOPAD ministry going forward. Expenses for this retreat are being largely underwritten by the generosity of ABCOPAD and the First Baptist Church of Bethlehem, so it will only cost \$20 per man, including food and lodging.

We are hoping to launch a similar event for the western half of ABCOPAD sometime this fall or winter. Please respond by July 15 with advance registrations for the August retreat at Camp Ichthus.

