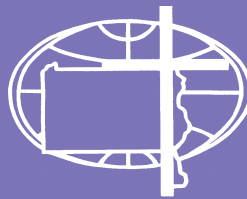


# Notes & News, Thoughts & Views



For ABCOPAD Churches from Rev. Mark Mahserjian-Smith  
Regional Executive Pastor; Regional Pastor for Mission and  
Communication — 570-435-2001 — [msmsmail@abcopad.com](mailto:msmsmail@abcopad.com)

Volume 34, Number 6

June, 2024

Exodus 18:17-24 (NCV) Moses' father-in-law said to him, "You are not doing this right. You and the people who come to you will get too tired. This is too much work for you; you can't do it by yourself. Now listen to me, and I will give you some advice. I want God to be with you. You must speak to God for the people and tell him about their disagreements. Warn them about the laws and teachings, and teach them the right way to live and what they should do. But choose some capable men from among the people—men who respect God, who can be trusted, and who will not change their decisions for money. Make these men officers over the people, to rule over groups of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. 2Let these officers solve the disagreements among the people all the time. They can bring the hard cases to you, but they can decide the simple cases themselves. That will make it easier for you, because they will share the work with you. If you do this as God commands you, then you will be able to do your job, and all the people will go home with their disagreements solved." So Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said.

In recent weeks, I have been thinking about this passage of scripture. Moses finds himself overwhelmed with responsibilities. Through God's guidance, power, and provision, Moses has led the Israelites out of slavery in the land of Egypt into a new chapter of life in the wilderness. There is much work to be done in this new stage of life, and Moses is trying his best to do it all.

Thankfully, Moses' Father-in-Law, Jethro, arrives on the scene and is a person of great wisdom. Jethro recognizes a significant problem in Moses' leadership style and has a solution. Moses must learn to delegate, not only to bring peace to his own life but also to the life of the community he seeks to serve. Jethro begins to teach Moses a different leadership strategy that will be far more effective than the current model he is using.

Doug Powe wrote an article on the Lewis Center for Church Leadership website, "5 Leadership Insights From Jethro." Powe shares these 5 points:

1. It's not about you. Moses became the center of attention in the Israelite camp hearing all the cases and problems of the people from morning to evening. Jethro observed this taking place and asked Moses, "What are you doing?" In other words, he was asking, "Why are you making yourself the center around which everything has to revolve?" Moses' response (my paraphrase) is typical for many of us who are leaders. "The people expect me to have all of the answers!" Jethro holds no punches. He tells Moses this is not a good thing. You cannot lead in a manner where it's all about you.
2. Instruct the people. Jethro tells Moses to communicate to the people, to "teach them the statutes and instructions and make known to them the way they are to go and the things they are to do." (Exodus 18:20) I believe Jethro is telling him to help the people understand the vision so they can picture where they are headed and what is needed to get there.
3. Build a team. Jethro makes it clear to Moses that, if it is not all about him, he must build a team. Jethro suggests that Moses mentor leaders who can share in the responsibility of leading. In fact, he suggests that the team must not only help Moses, but also mentor others to be leaders. Jethro understands the importance of developing a leadership team and knows the best way to do this is to create a leadership pipeline — a process of being mentored and mentoring at the same time. Building a strong team not only helps to address current needs, but also sets the stage for a strong future.
4. Trust the team. Jethro makes it clear that it is not enough just to build the team. Moses must give them appropriate responsibility. Jethro suggests that the team hear the issues first and resolve those that

are less complicated, allowing Moses to focus on the critical issues and not to wear himself out.

5. Listen to good advice. One of the key lines of the text is, "Moses listened to his father-in-law." (Exodus 18:24) Although what Moses was doing was working, he still listened to his father-in-law because there was room for improvement. It is important for leaders to listen to others. This is especially true when it seems like everything is going well and we do not need advice.

At the May 2024 Regional Board Meeting, the ABCOPAD Board acted on the recommendation of our Executive Committee to call two part-time Regional Pastors. Rev. Rob Rice (former GPS and pastor at the Muncy Baptist Church) and Rev. Kelly Legg (former GPS and pastor at the West Shore Baptist Church) were called to these new roles. The Regional Board recognized the need for additional staff members to assist me with significant Regional projects, assist in supervising our large part-time staff, and watch over ABCOPAD when I am unavailable due to vacations, mission trips, and denominational work that takes me out of the area. Pastors Rob and Kelly have already demonstrated great capacity to work on Regional projects such as the recent ABCOPAD Pastors Retreats, Re-envision our ACTS Ministry and assisting in planning and organizing the upcoming Biennial Leadership Conference.

As Doug Powe notes in point 3 of his article, we have Full-Time Office Staff, Regional Pastors, Geographical Pastoral Servants (GPS), Regional Ministry Associates (RMAs), and now Association Representatives in Ministry all serving and growing. We continue to mentor the next generation of leaders and provide opportunities for valuable experience doing ministry among Churches and Pastors.

As I close, I am reminded of another powerful Moses story. "Exodus 17:10-13 (NIV) So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went to the top of the hill. As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset. So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword." We all need Partners In Ministry to stand beside us as we serve. I am grateful for our Regional Staff and the partnerships we share.

God Bless. M





**Rev. Dan McDowell**  
**Southeast Geographic**  
**Pastoral Servant**  
[dmcdowell@abcopad.com](mailto:dmcdowell@abcopad.com)

## **Navigating the Fundamental Baptist Tenet of Soul Liberty in our Associations**

One of the watershed moments in my life occurred over 40 years ago when I was serving as a youth minister in Nebraska. I had just graduated from Sioux Falls College (an American Baptist school) and made arrangements with the First Baptist Church of North Platte, NE to serve them for a few years before enrolling in seminary.

Although I was born and raised in an American Baptist home and congregation, I found myself at the time questioning whether ABC/USA was the right “fit” for me. The churches I always belonged to were pretty conservative theologically as was (and am) I. But my horizons had expanded somewhat during my college years while preparing for the ministry. I did not leave college believing all of the same things I believed when I arrived there. College will do that to you.

In the 1970’s and 80’s the hot button issues in the church seemed to largely focus on women. Specifically, women in ministry and issues surrounding the legality of abortion. I was still struggling to wrap my mind around those issues biblically when another issue confronted me; how should the church respond to people who endured unsuccessful marriages? As I said above, I was serving as a youth minister at the time. A young couple began attending and I could see that they related well to young people so I asked if they would consider leading one of our youth groups. Their response has always haunted me.

Sheepishly, they told me that they were not qualified to serve in leadership because each of them had been divorced previously. They had been told in their previous (Southern Baptist) church that they would never qualify for leadership because of the failure of their previous marriages. This led me to discuss with them the differences between Southern and American Baptists, at least as far as the First Baptist Church of North Platte was concerned.

And that is the rub, isn’t it? All Baptist churches are autonomous and one of the fundamental Baptist tenets is soul liberty (the right and privilege to interpret the scriptures as we each, individually and corporately as autonomous congregations feel led by the Holy Spirit to do so). Of course, even within the American Baptist Churches, USA we do not walk in lockstep with one another. And we certainly don’t walk in lockstep with Southern or Independent Baptists.

I was happy to tell that gifted couple that the First Baptist Church of North Platte did not consider them disqualified for leadership in the Christian ministry. We certainly found scriptural cautions about divorce. And since the Bible is our sole foundation for faith and life practice, we took those teachings seriously. But as an autonomous congregation we had arrived at the conclusion that divorce was not an unforgivable sin (if it is even a sin at all). Marriages are complex relationships and we did not find it helpful (much less necessary) to paint all those situations with the same brush.

As I mentioned, this was a watershed moment for me. It opened my eyes to how I wanted to pursue ministry in the future. As my awareness of American Baptist life increased during my emergence into the ministry, I saw “statements of concern” debated at denominational gatherings. The outcomes of those votes often did not reflect my personal beliefs and interpretations of the scriptures. That is what frustrated me to the point that I considered cutting ties with ABC/USA and continuing my theological education outside this denomination.

My experience with that couple proved to me that I would much rather serve in an atmosphere of true freedom and soul liberty than one that imposed values and interpretations of the Bible that I did not share and could not support. And it led me to another conclusion.

I will always need to find symbiotic relationships in ministry with other pastors who take the Bible very seriously. The scriptures are THE foundation for our faith and practice. Without that agreement between those of us in direct church leadership, everything else in cooperative ministry breaks down.

Once we have that agreement established, I need to open my mind and heart as to WHY someone might interpret the scriptures differently from me. To do that successfully I need to respect that person and their right to disagree with me, yet still serve beside me in ministry. And to trust that both those who agree and disagree with me will treat me (and my conclusions) with respect as well. That can’t happen if we don’t engage one another in deep conversations.

For hundreds of years Baptists have voluntarily associated with one another to have those deep conversations so we could hold ourselves accountable and edify one another – and so we could accomplish more TOGETHER in ministry and mission. There are more issues than ever that threaten to divide us. We cannot allow ourselves to retreat into echo chambers if God is going to use us to successfully reach the lost people who surround us and desperately need us!



**Rev. Dr. Felicia Brock**  
**Pittsburgh Geographic**  
**Pastoral Servant**  
**fbrock@abcopad.com**

### A Season of Growth

Leviticus 26:3-5 3 If you follow my statutes and keep my commandments and observe them faithfully, 4 I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. 5 Your threshing shall overtake the vintage, and the vintage shall overtake the sowing: you shall eat your bread to the full, and live securely in your land.

One of the best things about Spring and Summer is watching the growth. Here's how it works. Seeds are planted in soil that appears to be without life. Soil that was hardened by the cold Winter days and nights. Although there appears to be no life, we plant seeds with the faith that in due time we will experience a season of growth.

Once the seeds are planted; there are days, weeks, and depending on the type of seeds, months before we begin to witness any growth. Patience is key. Because

although we cannot see the evidence of growth, growth is occurring—UNDER THE GROUND. So, we wait. Now, while waiting, there is plenty of work for us to do. We provide care to the soil that holds our seeds. Till the soil. Pull weeds from the soil. Pray for rain. And thank God for the Sun. Each important to the growth process.

In due time, we will witness the benefits of our planting. The seeds turn into seedlings. Small, yet identifiable as the product of the planted seeds. From seedlings into strong plants—able to stand firm, with a little assistance. Perhaps add a stake to stand by its side. And now the fruit. Dangling from the plant's branches and developing more and more every day. Keep waiting. Because in these early days, the fruit of our labor is not ready to eat. But one day, we will check on our seeds and find that they are ripe and fully ready to serve their intended purpose.

I pray that we recognize this season of growth in our varied ministries. Please, let's engage our faith. I know it looks as if some facets of our soil are without life. Nothing is farther from the truth. With a little planting. With a little faith. With a little patience. With a little caring. With a little tilling. With a little pulling of weeds. With a little prayer for rain. With a little praise for the Sun. We will reap the harvest! We are in a season of growth.



**Rev. Randy Powell**  
**Northwest Geographic**  
**Pastoral Servant**  
**pastorpowell@hotmail.com**

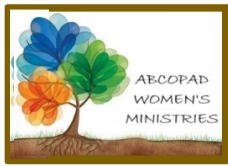
### The notes people write to a pastor.

This week, one of the pastors of a church in my area of responsibility shared with me an email sent by a member of the congregation that expressed gratitude for a time when that pastor comforted her and her family the day before a surgery. It was a heartfelt and encouraging note of the type that we in ministry long to receive. Over the years, I've been given a variety of notes, letters, cards, and emails that were unsolicited. Of these, probably half have been following a funeral, some of the others have been inspired by a sermon (Always a plus to get those, you know somebody is listening!), or were the enigmatic anonymous letters sent to the pastor of the church containing long and odd diatribes about various theological and cultural issues. In all honestly, that last category has never provided any help to me, curiosity typically compels me to at least scan them, but they lack any relational quality or any connection to my current ministry, so even if I were to agree with what the mystery author wrote, it wouldn't do anything for me emotionally. On the other hand, it does

warm my heart to know that the cathartic process that I go through each time I officiate at a funeral had an impact on the family. Given that helping them is my 2nd goal, after glorifying God, it is encouraging to know I was able to do that with enough of the grace God has given me that it helped them in their time of grief.

But the ones that leave the biggest impact upon me, and no doubt upon most pastors, are the out-of-nowhere letters from the people in our congregation, or the larger community, that simply say in effect, "I know and appreciate what you are doing in ministry." The specifics of course vary, but those words will always be appreciated. Why? Because being in ministry will inevitably lead you to moments, days, or even seasons, when you wonder if you are really making any difference at all in people's lives. As much as we say, and believe, theologically that God is the only one who can make the plants grow, we begin to wonder if we're watering and fertilizing properly when that growth is missing or sporadic. In times like that, even a brief word of encouragement after church on Sunday or a card in the mail can be a ray of sunshine breaking through the storm clouds.

All that to say, thank you to everyone who has written their pastor a card, letter, note, or email of encouragement over the years, God bless you for that act of love.



Your Leadership Team of ABCOPAD Women's Ministries celebrates as we see God moving and molding women all over the Region! We thank God for placing the desire in our hearts to intentionally schedule events that will allow ladies from all over Pennsylvania and Delaware to reconnect – network – in ministry for Jesus locally, regionally, nationally and worldwide.

We currently have three one-day events on our schedule. Mark your calendars and join us as these gatherings come near to your area!

**Saturday, November 2, 2024**



NW Area one-day event  
First Baptist Church Franklin

1041 Liberty St. Franklin, PA 16323

Visit the church website to view information & registration brochure

[First Baptist Church of Franklin \(1stbaptistfranklin.org\)](http://1stbaptistfranklin.org)

**Saturday, March 22, 2025**



SE Area one-day event  
First Baptist Church of Lansdale

700 North Broad St Lansdale, PA 19446

**Saturday, April 5, 2025**



Central/NE one-day event  
First Baptist Church Milton

316 Golf Course Rd Milton, PA 17847

**THRIVE Retreat 2024**

Registrations have filled up rather quickly, but there is still room for you/your group to join us at Camp Hebron on Friday, Aug. 26 through Sunday, Aug. 18 for this ladies event. Pastor Kelly Legg is our speaker, and that is a blessing in itself! We will be looking closely at the 23rd Psalm...it's more than just something you memorized as a child — HONEST!

<https://www.abcopad.org/Ministries/ABWM/ABWMOPAD-Thrive-Retreat-2023.aspx>

Kristi Young has served as the AB Girls coordinator for several years and will be leaving that position as of the end of August. She has brought a great dynamic to our planning meetings as well as being an awesome person with the young gals. Kristi has served during a very challenging time – 2020 – and going forward. We so appreciate the energy and wisdom she brings to the table! She has begun her new career as a certified life coach – **Abundant Life Coaching** – where she helps others transform their lives from the inside out. While we may not see Kristi with a group of AB Girls, we will have the joy of hearing her speak at the scheduled one-day events this fall and the spring of 2025.

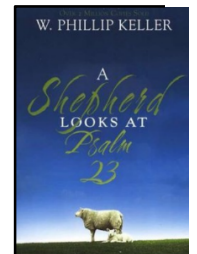


Also completing her time as Secretary for the Leadership Team is Lori Jennings. Lori is the current Vice President of the ABCOPAD Board and is fine tuning details for the October 17-19, 2024 Biennial Leadership event in Altoona, PA. I don't think she will mind (wink, wink) if I put a plug in for that! [ABCOPAD Biennial Leadership Conference](#) Lori has such a heart for Jesus and sharing Him with others and we are happy to have her stay active as one of the ladies at large on the Leadership Team.



**RECOMMENDED SUMMER READING**

As I have been preparing for the THRIVE Retreat with the focus on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm and our new annual focus of Restoration, these books have just blessed and challenged me. Each book is written from the perspective of a shepherd caring for sheep; the challenges, the total commitment, the dangers, the joys...how much more precious and deep the reality of 'my LORD, my Shepherd'. And then He calls us to shepherd as He shepherds. Thought provoking, worth investing your time.



Jodie Vasbinder  
Spiritual Enrichment Coordinator



## In Other News

### Central Union

**Piano for Sale** — \$3,000; **Samick Baby Grand Piano** in excellent musical and cosmetic condition (includes custom padded cover). Professionally tuned and maintained. Buyer to arrange transport. Contact: Abington Baptist Church 215-884-4569 / [pastor@abingtonbaptistchurch.org](mailto:pastor@abingtonbaptistchurch.org)



American Baptist Men of Pennsylvania and Delaware

Men's Weekend Getaway

### Delaware

**Two Free Pulpit chairs with arms.** Cross Engraved in back rest. Located at First Baptist Church of Holloway Terrace, New Castle, DE 19720. Must pick up yourself. Contact Paula at 302-250-1412.

### Pittsburgh

**Free Hymnals...** Worship and Service Hymnal: Approximately 50 copies in bright red, published 1963 and 16 copies in dark red published 1970 and 8 copies in Green, Junior Hymns and Songs published 1927. Call Penn Hills Baptist at 412-793-6640 for more info.

### Camp Hebron — Sept. 13-15, 2024

Gentlemen, we are trying to put together a weekend of fun and fellowship. We are happy to let you know that Rev. Melvin Thomas will be our Guest Speaker. If you have never had the opportunity to hear Pastor Thomas, you are in for a treat.

We will have 5 cabins available, each cabin having 5 bunkbeds. We are looking forward to having 2 morning sessions of growth in God's Kingdom. Saturday afternoon will be setup with fun activities.

The cost is only \$100 per person and we look forward to seeing you there!

#### 2024 Feb Notes News Jan Missions

	2024	2023
United Mission Basics	\$19,408	\$22,627
Love Gift	\$1,179	\$1,458
Partners in Ministry	\$29,732	\$42,197
Annual Offerings		
AFC	\$19,156	\$14,274
WMO	\$1,004	\$1,465
RMMO	\$1,893	\$1,378
OGHS	\$1,227	\$6,192

*The cumulative comparison figures*

United Mission Basics is behind through Apr. by (\$8,179)  
 The decrease in United Missions (includes UMB and Love Gift) amounts to (\$6,391) less in actual dollars, that ABCOPAD received thru Apr.  
 AFC is behind by (\$3,804). This decrease amounts to (\$1,116) less in actual dollars, that ABCOPAD received thru Apr.  
 Partners in Ministry is ahead by \$6,967.  
 Thru Apr. PIM received a gift of \$30,063 from a donor in 2024  
 In actual dollars, from UM, AFC and PIM, ABCOPAD has received (\$540) less thru Apr.



Have a safe  
and happy  
summer!



### September, 2024 Deadline:

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

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](mailto:dveselicky@abcopad.com)

**Phone:** 888-687-0883 • **Fax:** 412-687-3941

Thank you! Donna L. Schneff, designer • [deeschneff@gmail.com](mailto:deeschneff@gmail.com)



# THE AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF PENNSYLVANIA & DELAWARE

## ABCOPAD Spring/Summer Region Update from President Bryon Luke and Vice President Lori Jennings

Happy Spring ABCOPAD! The renewal that spring and summer brings and the beauty that emerges from the dead brown earth is indeed a blessing from God, the Creator! We pray this missive finds you looking around you for all of the goodness in the world. God is at work, and we pray His peace fills your life.

The ABCOPAD Regional Board had their Spring Meeting on May 10, 2024, in Breezewood, PA. This email contains some updates for you to be aware of, all good stuff!

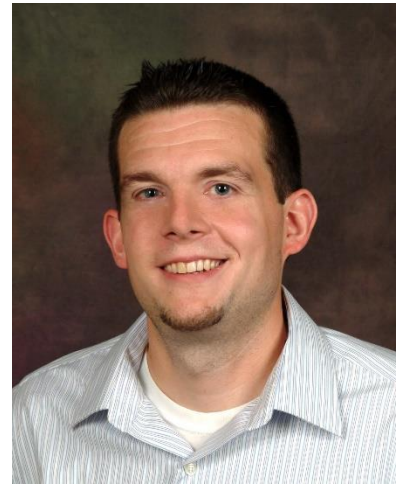
### Updates to Region Staffing:



[pastorkdl@gmail.com](mailto:pastorkdl@gmail.com)



[msmsmail@abcopad.com](mailto:msmsmail@abcopad.com)



[pastor.rwrice@gmail.com](mailto:pastor.rwrice@gmail.com)

Our ABCOPAD Leadership Team continues to look for creative and innovative ways to support ministry in our Region.

Upon recommendation of the Executive Committee, the Regional Board has extended a call to Rev. Rob Rice and Rev. Kelly Legg to serve as part-time Regional Pastors and take on Regional projects like Pastors retreats, re-envisioning our ACTS Ministry, rebuilding Associations and supervision of our current staff, just to name a few. They will also provide coverage for our Region when our Regional Executive Pastor, Mark Mahserjian-Smith takes a much-needed vacation or is unavailable due to other Executive Pastor responsibilities.

### Association Representative in Ministry (ARMs)

In addition, upon recommendation of the Executive Committee, the Board also approved the creation of the new part-time positions of Association Representative in Ministry (ARMs). Each Association will be assigned at least one ARM, depending on its size/area. The ARM's responsibility will be to represent ABCOPAD in local churches on Sunday mornings, special events and connecting with new pastors and re-connecting with current pastors in ABCOPAD. When needed and available, they could provide pulpit supply, offering a pastor a Sunday off. Many of our GPS are currently serving churches and are not available on Sunday mornings.

Both the appointment of part-time Regional Pastors and the ARM's are temporary solutions to creatively bridge the gap and allow connection and work in the Region to reignite or continue our relationships with our local churches while we come up with permanent solutions.

## Geographical Pastoral Servants (GPS):

Since 2022, ABCOPAD deployed Geographic Pastoral Servants (GPS) to care for Pastors and Congregations in our Region. GPS will continue to serve our Region with a few changes.

**Rev. Dr. Felicia Brock** (Pittsburgh)

fbrock@abcopad.com

**Rev. David Hardin** (Northeast)

dhardin@abcopad.com

**Rev. Dan McDowell** (Southeast)

Bigbaldpastor1@gmail.com

**Rev. Randy Powell** (Northwest)

pastorpowell@hotmail.com

**Rev. Tim Schwartz** (North Central)

tschwartz@abcopad.com

**Rev. Cristy Wise** (Southwest)

Wisefour14@gmail.com

## Grants for ABCOPAD Ministries



During the Spring Grant Cycle, 11 churches or ministries in our Region received the blessing of Release God's Power grants, 16 churches or ministries received grants from Ministries of Christian Discipleship and 2 churches or ministries received Legacy grants.

Do you have an idea for a ministry or outreach opportunity that you just need a bit of help financially to make happen? ABCOPAD wants to help you! Reach out to your GPS or other ABCOPAD staff to find out how to apply for a grant this fall. Don't miss the blessing of this opportunity.

**Eligibility Requirement:** Your congregation must have given to Partners in Ministry (our Regional Offering) last year and are planning on supporting it this year, and must have submitted the Cooperating Church Annual Report for the prior year.

## Don't Forget to Register for...



ABCOPAD Women's Ministries Thrive Retreat at Camp Hebron August 16-18. Space is limited and we are filling up fast!

<https://www.abcopad.org/Ministries/ABWM/ABWMOPAD-Thrive-Retreat-2023.aspx>

AB Men's Retreat at Camp Hebron, September 13-14.

More info on registration is coming soon.

## Biennial Leadership Conference:

Renewal for the 21st Century Church - October 17-19, 2024, in Altoona, PA. Take advantage of the Early Bird and/or Group Pricing. Pastors can also take advantage of earning 1.0 CEU for participation in the Biennial sessions, reading the book-5 Congregational Personality Types by Rev. Dr. Michael Beck and submitting a written Reflection Paper. <https://www.abcopad.org/Events/ABCOPAD-Biennial-Leadership-Conference.aspx>

Have a blessed rest of the spring and summer. Please reach out to us if you have any questions. We thank you for your continued support, prayer and partnership with the ABCOPAD Region.

Respectfully and prayerfully submitted:

Bryon Luke, President / (bryon.k.luke@gmail.com / 215-206-1738)

Lori Jennings, Vice-President / (lorijennings0316@gmail.com / 610-209-5929)





---

# ***GROWTH POINTS***

---

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

---

## **Church Conflict**

“It’s all about power and control.”

When it comes to church conflict, the above statement is pretty much reality. Multiple studies reveal about 85% of all conflict in churches is related in some manner to different groups or persons seeking to gain power and control over a decision.

Unfortunately, conflict often is not settled in a gracious manner. Angry outbursts lead to damaged relationships, further misunderstanding, and decline in attendance.

It’s common for people to rationalize conflict theologically. Yet, debate over doctrine is found in less than 25% of church conflicts.

Power and control issues are the primary reason for church conflict. This is especially true in churches with less than 200 attendees.

One in five pastors (20%) are experiencing some level of conflict in their church right now. And, it’s likely confined to a small group of people, with less than one-fourth of the congregation knowing what’s going on.

Pastors are easy targets for criticism from disgruntled folks. Due to their position, pastors appear spiritually and emotionally strong. However, pastors are not as strong as many perceive, and some pastors are rather fragile.

The top criticisms of pastors circle around their approach to ministry, preaching style, or leadership vision for the future of the church.

About 40% (two out of five pastors) have left a church due to conflict. The hurt and pain is not easily forgotten or forgiven. Most of the time it’s a small number of people—less than ten—who cause enough pain to push the pastor out.

## Lessons Learned

All conflict is not bad, and pastors who have experienced it are wiser. One pastor noted, “There are two ways to gain wisdom. One is by making mistakes; the other is by watching others make mistakes.”

What are some points of wisdom pastors have learned while going through conflict?

1. Conflict doesn't go away on its own. Ignoring it usually makes it worse. The longer conflict is ignored, the longer it has to fester. Conflict scarcely heals while being ignored.
2. What first appears to be a small issue may evolve into a larger problem. Don't take small issues lightly. Instead, keep them in view being ready to face them if they start growing larger.
3. It's best to address conflict earlier than later. Looking back, most pastors report they wish they'd dealt with the conflict sooner. One pastor put it this way: “You can have short-term gain with long-term pain. Or, you can have short-term pain with long-term gain.” It was his way of

expressing it's better to face it and get it over with as soon as possible.

4. Some people thrive on histrionics or drama. They enjoy creating disagreements or making others upset. Pastors soon learn that those who create conflict one time are likely to do it again. “Past practice is future practice” is a way to say it.
5. Reckless words are not helpful. It pays to keep one's cool in the midst of conflict. The person who appears calm and collected has the advantage.
6. Listening skills are crucial to mediating conflict. While it helps to mirror another person's actions to show you're listening, in a conflict it's best to do the opposite. For example, if a person is angry and stands up, it is often best for you to sit down. If they sit down, you might stand up.
7. During conflict, a pastor always has an ability to calm things down—prayer. If conversations become too heated, call a time out for prayer. Things get better after doing so.

These are few words of wisdom from other pastors. What words of wisdom can you add?

*Growth Points* is published twelve times a year. Individual subscription is \$29 (US Funds) per year. Permission is granted for use in a local church. Executive subscribers for wide distribution available for \$150 (US Funds) per year.

Copyrighted 2024 ISSN 1520-5096

# ABCOPAD BIENNIAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

## RENEWAL FOR THE 21ST CENTURY CHURCH

OCTOBER 17-19, 2024

### Blair County Convention Center

One Convention Center Blvd  
Altoona, PA 16602



## MICHAEL BECK

PASTOR...PROFESSOR...COACH...CONSULTANT...AUTHOR

Michael is currently the Director of the Fresh Expressions House of Studies at United Theological Seminary, Director of Fresh Expressions Florida, and Director of Fresh Expressions for The United Methodist Church. He serves as the co-pastor of Wildwood UMC, St Marks UMC, and Compassion UMC with his wife, Jill, where they direct addiction recovery programs, a jail ministry, a food pantry, an interracial unity movement, and house a faith-based inpatient treatment center. Wildwood and St. Marks are traditional congregations AND a network of 13 fresh expressions that gather in tattoo parlors, dog parks, salons, running tracks, community centers, burrito joints, and digital spaces.

Michael guides leaders in an individual, regional, statewide, and national capacity. He is a spiritual guide who helps people heal, love, and unleash imagination to create better lives, organizations, and communities. He also teaches as an adjunct professor at several educational institutions. He coaches entrepreneurs across the theological spectrum and has consulted with hundreds of churches, districts, denominations, networks, and dioceses. As an active ministry practitioner, he has started and developed businesses and planted missional communities most of his life. Michael has done this for over a decade while pastoring in the local church. His coaching and consulting work are not theoretical only, but experiential. He believes in maintaining a practitioner's ethos: "I eat my own cooking and share experimental recipes."

Beck earned a Master of Divinity from Asbury Theological Seminary and a Doctorate in Semiotics and Future Studies at Portland Seminary. He's the author of 14 books, including *The Five Congregational Personality Types* and *Deep Roots, Wild Branches: Revitalizing the Church in the Blended Ecology* and 3 ebooks.

*Biennial Guest Speaker*

WWW.ABCOPAD.ORG



American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania and Delaware

# Biennial Leadership Conference

## RENEWAL FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY CHURCH

### October 17-19, 2024

Blair County Convention Center, Altoona, PA 16602

## Registration Form - Please Send One Form for Each Person

Is this Your First Biennial?  Yes  No Clergy  Lay Person

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Delegate:  Yes  No  
Last First Title (Pastor, Rev., etc.)

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Church: \_\_\_\_\_ Association: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

✓ **One, Church Resident Membership:** Under 125 \_\_\_\_\_ 125-250 \_\_\_\_\_ Over 250 \_\_\_\_\_

## Registration - Take Advantage of the Discounts for Early Registration

### Early Registration Discounts:

**Child Care Not Available**

**Discounted Hotel Rates Available**

Biennial Leadership Conference: **Individual Registration** ..... by July 31, 2024 ..... \$100.00 \_\_\_\_\_  
by August 31, 2024..... 115.00 \_\_\_\_\_  
by September 30, 2024 ..... 130.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Biennial Leadership Conference: **Group Registration** ..... by July 31, 2024 ..... \$85.00 \_\_\_\_\_  
Must be from the Same Church and Sent Together by August 31, 2024..... 100.00 \_\_\_\_\_  
by September 30, 2024 ..... 115.00 \_\_\_\_\_

### No Group Registration After September 30, 2024

Biennial Leadership Conference Registration on or After October 1, 2024 ..... \$175.00 \_\_\_\_\_

### Two Meals (Dinner) Are Included with Registration Fee:

**Scholarships Available**

- Thursday, October 18, 2024 – Dinner Buffet – No Choice Necessary
- Friday, October 19, 2024, Please Select One: \_\_\_\_\_ Salmon or \_\_\_\_\_ Herb Roasted Chicken

### Optional Meals: Friday, October 18, 2024 – Additional Cost Not Included with Registration Fee

- Biennial Breakfast ..... \$17.00 \_\_\_\_\_
- ABCOPAD Women’s Ministries Mission “Box” Lunch ..... 20.00 \_\_\_\_\_
- I will attend the Lunch Gathering for Pastors Age 50 or Under (Location to be Determined) Free \_\_\_\_\_
- Box Lunch – to be Eaten on Your Own and NOT Attending ABW Mission Lunch ..... 20.00 \_\_\_\_\_

**Box Lunch** (for both the ABW Mission Lunch & the “To Go” Box) Includes: Sandwich, Chips, Beverage

**Please Select Box Lunch Sandwich Preference** \_\_\_\_\_ Pulled Pork or \_\_\_\_\_ Turkey & Swiss

**Total: Registration Fee Plus Any Optional Meals..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

**Special Dietary Needs** (Explain) \_\_\_\_\_



**Partners in Ministry**...wow just the name of this offering/ministry with ABCOPAD is one that brings comfort, strength, and restoration. We are not alone. That is one of the things that God has blessed me in being a GPS is that God calls me to let Pastors, churches, colleagues, and friends know they are not alone in the journey. We desire to **Partner** with you in the celebrations and the heartaches of ministry.

At times search committees feel overwhelmed and it is a privilege to **partner** with them to realize God is in control and desires the best for His church whatever that may look like for them. Seeking God's plan...working as **partners!**

Pastors at times can feel overwhelmed and alone. So blessed to **partner** with them to encourage self-care just as Jesus did when He went to His mountain to spend time with the Father.

When churches/pastors celebrate special events, baptisms, anniversaries, new pastor installations, and so much more, it's a joy to worship/**partner** with them and praise God for what He is doing in their midst. **Partnering** within the celebration!

If you are in the SW area...one thing I always ask is: Where is your mountain? What is your mountain? How often to you get there? Jesus went often to the mountains...to pray, spend time with His Father...recharge. **Partner** with His Father! Mountains are a visual of power and strength. We all need our mountain! We ALL need to **partner** with our Heavenly Father.

Can't find your mountain? Not sure what to do? Contact the GPS in your area...they certainly would love to **Partner** with you to help you find it. Maybe...start with the Pastors' retreat just around the corner! **Partner** with other pastors!

Thank you, to each of you, for financially supporting **Partner's in Ministry**. Without your financial support we could not **partner** with you...but so glad we are **partners** through your love and generous giving!

*“After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone...”*

*Matthew 14:23*



**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](http://www.abcopad.org)). Your church can receive mission-giving credit for your online gift.
3. By giving through your mobile device.
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



## **Seeking a New Part-Time ACTS Administrator**

ACTS Ministry School is an online school of the American Baptist Churches of PA & DE dedicated to providing excellent lay ministry theological education & continuing education for both pastors & lay leaders. As ACTS continues to strive to best meet the needs of current & future students, we are seeking a new part-time member of our ministry team to work directly with our students as the ACTS Administrator. The ACTS Administrator oversees the day-to-day functioning of the online ministry school component of ACTS. As such, he or she serves as the primary liaison between ACTS students and Kairos University, their individual academic coaches & their mentors. Qualified candidates for this position possess a love for Christ, a commitment to providing excellent lay theological education, and a wide variety of administrative skills.

An application is available on the ACTS website [www.actsministryschool.com](http://www.actsministryschool.com)

Completed applications should be sent to Rev. Kelly Legg, chairperson of the ACTS Council, at [klegg@actsministryschool.com](mailto:klegg@actsministryschool.com) by **June 30, 2024**.