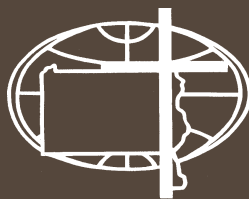


# Notes & News, Thoughts & Views



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 10

October, 2024

Recently, I attended morning worship at the First Baptist Church of Kittanning. Participating in Sunday School and witnessing a family of three make public professions of faith in Jesus in the waters of baptism was a joy. Rev. Jeff Smith (the lead pastor at the church) performed the baptisms and went on to preach a sermon from the book of Nehemiah. Pastor Jeff read from Nehemiah, Chapter 3, and looked at the team of families Nehemiah created to rebuild the wall around the City of Jerusalem. The walls and gates, intended to be the primary defense for Jerusalem, were in utter disrepair. No single individual or a single family could complete the monumental task. Nehemiah requests permission from King Artaxerxes to travel to Jerusalem to launch repairs, but it quickly becomes clear the rebuild would be no easy task. Pastor Jeff did an outstanding job drawing a parallel between the work of Nehemiah and ministry in a local church, requiring a team effort to accomplish God's work.

Hearing Pastor Jeff's sermon inspired me to reread the Book of Nehemiah. Every morning, as I drank my first cup of coffee, I planned to read a chapter of Nehemiah and pray, waiting to hear God's voice share a word of truth from scripture. It had been quite some time since I had read Nehemiah, and I was anxious to discover lessons I had forgotten hidden in Nehemiah's writing. (By the way, thank you, Pastor Jeff, for the inspiration.)

One of the first lessons I discovered as I read the opening two chapters of the Book of Nehemiah is the importance of focusing on the work. Nehemiah spends some time inspecting the damaged wall surrounding Jerusalem and its broken gates. He identifies the work that needs to be done and begins working on a strategy to address necessary repairs and rebuilds. Nehemiah does not spend time dwelling on the past or trying to cast blame on who is responsible for the situation. Nehemiah identifies the work that needs to be done and begins creating a plan to accomplish the task.

There are many reasons why churches are struggling today. We can spend massive amounts of time and energy trying to determine what causes have created the challenging situation we find ourselves in. There is no doubt our rapidly changing culture has negatively impacted congregations. The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated this. Like Jerusalem, many churches are in disrepair with "broken walls" and "fractured gates." Assessing what is broken and needs repair is essential, but we dare not get stuck there. We need to have a bias toward action.

Before the pandemic, ABCOPAD had been reducing its staff due to financial constraints. Over time, this reduction in staff meant less interaction with pastors, congregations, and associations. The pandemic accelerated this disconnect. While there are many reasons why our Region found itself with "broken walls" and "fractured gates," like Nehemiah, we needed to take action. Our Region took time to assess, but then it was time to rebuild. It was time to take action. I am grateful for a Regional Board and a dedicated staff who are people of action. Mere meetings and discussions of problems would never rebuild our Regional Ministry. The same is true for local churches. We must listen to God's voice, but all too often, the work that needs to be done while difficult is painfully apparent. What is required is that leaders and people be willing to jump in and do the work no matter how challenging the task is. Progress is being made in our Region because many people are rolling up their sleeves and jumping into the hard work of ministry.

In Chapter 3, Nehemiah is assembling a team and delegating work for this massive project. While the exact specifications of Nehemiah's wall are not available, a quick Google Search of the Jerusalem Wall reveals some insight into the project's scope. In 1535, the Ottoman Empire took on the project of rebuilding the wall around Old Jerusalem. Wikipedia sights, "The length of the

walls is 4,018 meters (2,497 miles), their average height is 12 meters (39 feet), and the average thickness is 2.5 meters (8.2 feet). The walls contain 34 watchtowers and seven main gates open for traffic, with two minor gates reopened by archaeologists.” The Wikipedia entry gives us some perspective regarding the project size facing Nehemiah.

Nehemiah creates teams of families and delegates sections of the wall rebuild to each team. The job is far too massive for anyone to do alone. It will take “all hands-on deck” to complete this monumental endeavor. Sadly, for many churches and ministries, there is the perception it is the pastor’s job to rebuild the church. Some might say, “We hired our Pastor to rebuild the Church.” Thinking the pastor is there to do it all could not be further from the truth. If a ministry hopes to be rebuilt, it will take a team effort, with many jobs being delegated to multiple people.

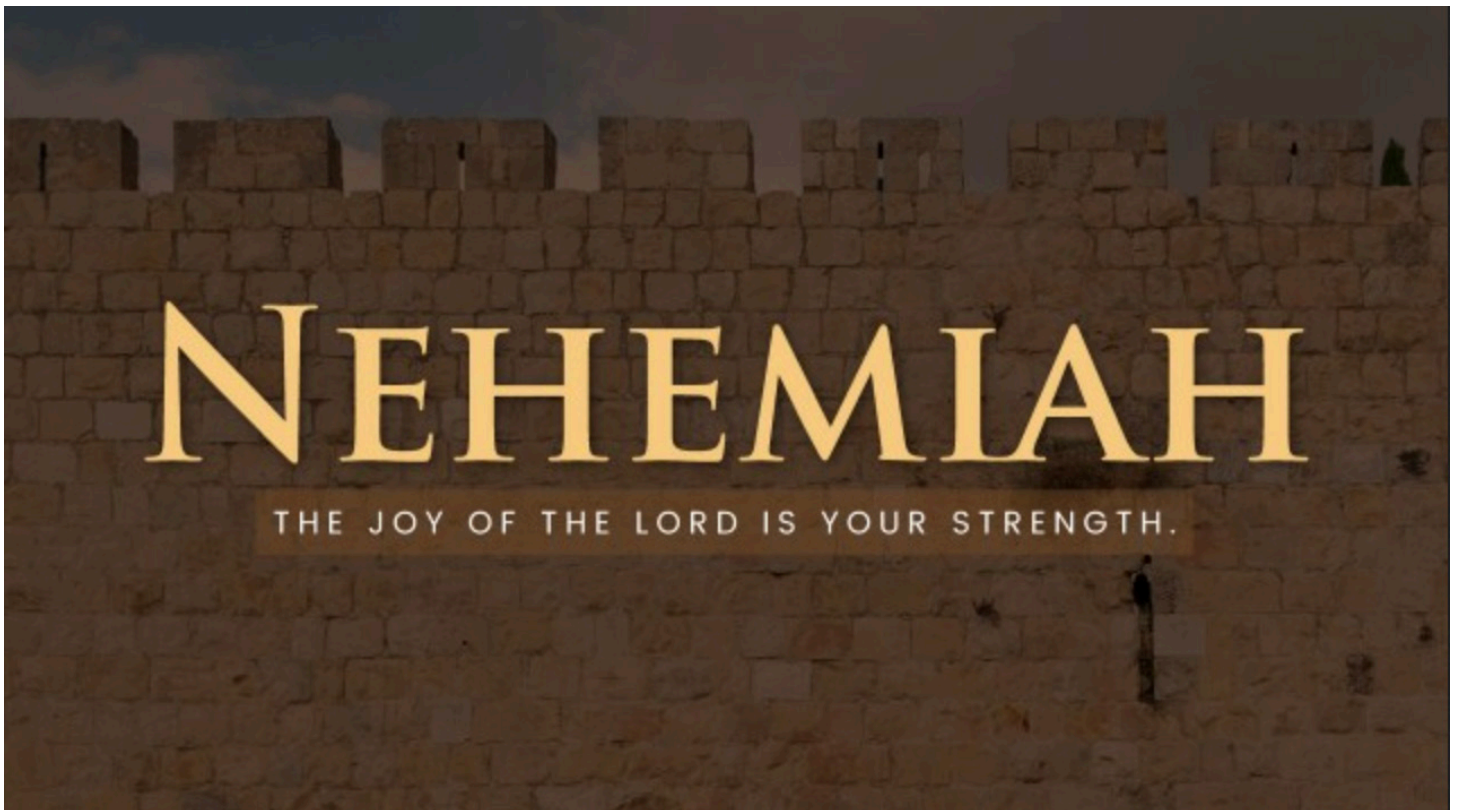
In scripture, God repeatedly refers to a team approach to ministry. Paul uses the metaphor that the church is the body of Christ, comprised of many members, all necessary for health and vitality.

When I began working as the Regional Executive Pastor in our Region, I recognized the need for a robust team approach with essential tasks delegated to various team members. It was a joy forging a team of Regional Ministry Associates (RMA), Geographic Pastoral Servants (GPS), Office Staff, Regional Pastors, our Executive Committee, and more, all working together to rebuild our Region.

A single Regional Executive Pastor was NEVER going to be able to accomplish this alone. Combining gifted, talented, hard-working people, willing to take on challenging tasks, would be the only way to restore health and vitality to ABCOPAD. This is true for any ministry, including the ministry of a local church.

We’ve only covered three chapters in the Book of Nehemiah, but two essential lessons have already been revealed. I hope you will join us next month as we uncover more lessons gleaned from Nehemiah. Thank you for your partnership in ministry. We appreciate you very much.

Blessings,  
Mark





**Rev. Rob Rice**  
**Regional Pastor**  
[pastor.rwrice@gmail.com](mailto:pastor.rwrice@gmail.com)

A few days ago, my brother sent our family group a picture of a giant skeleton he put on his roof. If I needed a reminder that Halloween was approaching, that was it. But I didn't need a reminder, because the date has been circled on my calendar all year. It has been since I became the pastor of Muncy Baptist Church; because, for us, Halloween represents an opportunity to share something far more valuable than that picture of a giant skeleton. It allows us to reach out to our community and shine the light of Jesus on what can be a very dark night.

Our church is situated right on the corner of a street that our town shuts down for trick-or-treating. Houses near us go all out with decorations and the street is lined with kids, teenagers and parents. We could choose to turn out our lights, hold some sort of worship service, or refuse to see the opportunity before us. But rather than rally against what's happening, we see it as a blessing and a chance to share the love of Jesus with our town.

As we have done in the past, we will open the doors of our church, and set up tents with apple cider and popcorn

outside. We'll hand out bags that are emblazoned with who we are, and what we hope to do this year. Those bags will be filled with treats, and a Gospel tract, a small way for us to show the kids in our community that we love them, and a reminder as they carry that bag, that we as a church are praying for them, and our hope is that they will come to know Jesus, who is the Light of the World (John 8:12).

The night will also offer us opportunities to interact with parents, grandparents, and the other adults who accompany the little ones as they Trick-or-Treat. Our goal is not to "beat people over the head" with the Bible but to share the love of Christ through our words and actions, instead. We pray and trust that on Halloween we are planting seeds that God will use to help people deepen their relationship with God, find a church, or come to faith for the first time.

Not every church has the opportunity we do on Halloween, but I do think the story of our Halloween Outreach can help us all think through the unique opportunities God gives us for ministry. Not every town has Halloween, but every community has their own major events and opportunities. Sometimes, as the church, we see these as obstacles and may even fall into the trap of complaining that these things are more important to people than coming to worship. Rather than see obstacles, let me encourage you to see the opportunities God gives you, and seek to shine the light of Jesus both on Halloween, and throughout the year, right where God has placed you!





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

**Take Charge!**

1 Corinthians 4:2 (NIV)

*Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.*

In 1792, the hymn “A Charge to Keep I Have” was first published in Wesley’s Short Hymns on Select Passages of the Holy Scriptures. Charles Wesley, John Wesley’s brother, authored the hymn. This hymn has staying power. Still today, it’s words give great insight into ministry in this post-COVID, church environment.

**A Charge to keep I have...** All of us have a charge to keep. Not one Christian is exempt from a call to ministry. Considering this statement often causes anxiety for those that are not called preachers and pastors. The reason: because we have been led to believe that the term “ministry” is synonymous with preaching and pastoring. Nothing is farther from the truth. Of course, pastors and preachers occupy an important role in our churches. But so do the moderators, deacons, musicians, janitors and prayer warriors.

As church leaders, we must endeavor to aid our congregations in finding their charge. Help them to identify what God is calling them to do. The first step, let them know that ministry is more than occupying the pulpit. **A God to glorify...** Whatever we are called to do, should be done to God’s glory. Therein lies the motivation to do ministry and to do it in excellence. Leaders, let’s open our proverbial ministry doors and welcome in new people, new ideas, new methods, and new energy. Remember, it’s not tradition that we are beholden to; it’s glorifying God.

**A never dying soul to save...** Without a doubt, not one of us can save anyone. But, we can create a “salvation atmosphere.” A space and place where people are led to Christ. Our churches—a space and place. Our food pantries—a space and place. Our VBS—a space and place. Please notice that creating such a space and place begins with ministry works, and ends in salvation. **And fit it for the sky.** Now that we have led the masses to Christ; we have the responsibility to fit them for the sky. In other words, to teach them how to live as God requires. To that end, our Christian Education opportunities should be at the forefront of our ministry.

As church Leaders, we have been given and have accepted a great responsibility. God has trusted us with the building and edifying of His kingdom. And in doing so, we must be faithful. Let’s join in singing, A charge to keep I have. On today, make the commitment to take charge.

1 Corinthians 4:2 (NIV)

Now it is required

that those who have been given a trust  
must prove faithful.



**Rev. Dan McDowell**  
**Southeast Geographic**  
**Pastoral Servant**  
**bigbaldpastor1@gmail.com**

Several years before I came to ABCOPAD, when I was serving as the Senior Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Olean, NY, the Lord called me into some work being done in Uganda. A member of my congregation (**Cari Matejka**, a teacher in the local school system) had heard **God's call to go to Uganda** on a series of short-term mission trips. Over time, she began an amazing ministry in an orphanage school there and soon our congregation was drawn deeply into the process of supporting the ministry there.

The longer this went on, the more I felt God tugging at me to go and see for myself what was happening there. When Cari returned home, I asked her to come see me. When she did, I expressed my desire to join her on her next journey to Africa. Her mouth fell open as I did this, and she exclaimed in surprise that she had been asked by the Ugandan pastor who founded the orphanage she was working with to bring me with her the next time. Call of God confirmed.

The pastor there had formed a coalition of Ugandan pastors to provide **better theological education** to church leaders in the nation – and more specifically to **debunk the “prosperity gospel”** that has been widely taking root throughout the continent of Africa. I felt honored to be part of a process that I feel has the potential to make a significant difference in Ugandan society and strengthen congregational life and integrity.

For several years I traveled to Africa with Cari and engaged in preaching tours throughout the country followed by Q & A sessions with pastors and other congregational leaders. We also offered resources to the churches like laptop computers and cattle that churches could use to become more self-sustaining.

You can imagine my surprise when quite suddenly, I clearly heard God's call to come to Phoenixville to assume the leadership of GraceCrossing Community Church. I struggled mightily, asking the Lord why He would call me into Uganda and then remove me from the church that launched me into that cross-cultural outreach. What if GraceCrossing didn't support those endeavors? How could I leave all of those pastors in Uganda in the lurch?

Providentially, upon arrival in Phoenixville I found that one of the members of GraceCrossing recently emigrated from Uganda! I even had the honor of attending her swearing-in ceremony as a newly-adopted American citizen. And the Leadership Team at GraceCrossing almost immediately asked me if I could help them launch a mission team to Uganda. It was music to my ears

– and even **further confirmation of God's call to bring me to Phoenixville, ABCOPAD and Uganda**. It has been a miraculous process!

It is important to know that **pastors in Uganda are mostly “home-grown”** within the churches they serve. Very few receive any financial compensation from the churches they serve and just as few of them have had the opportunity to engage in formal theological education. **They are hungry – starving actually – for practical training and guidance** for the ministries they have been called into. Again, I have always felt honored to play a small role in assisting them with those things.

I have been blessed by the theological education I received at the University of Sioux Falls, SD and Eastern Baptist (now Palmer) Theological Seminary; both of which are American Baptist institutions of higher learning. And just as importantly, I have been blessed by nearly 40 years of experience in pastoral ministry in a variety of Regions in the United States (Nebraska, Michigan, ABCOPAD and New York State). But in many ways I have felt woefully unqualified to assist pastors who provide ministries in a very different culture. **I especially feel out of place speaking to women in ministry**. Which is why I am reaching out to you.

**The pastors in Uganda have asked ABCOPAD to provide 2 conferences in July of 2025; a full-day event specifically for women in ministry and a 2-day pastors' conference.** In addition to this a youth and children's center called “The Heart”, which serves as a haven for displaced and homeless young people have asked us to offer **discipleship ministry to those young people**. The church that serves as a headquarters for the pastors' conference also needs to have **walls built** (it's currently meeting in a pavilion that gets flooded during the rainy season). And that's just the tip of the iceberg. There is a **LOT of work to be done in a variety of different ways**.

We need help! **Would you pray about this?** Is the Lord calling you to Uganda with us? I would love to tell you more! We had a **Zoom meeting** recently that was recorded that offers a lot more information and photographs of the work being done there. We would also **love to send representatives to churches, association meetings, ABW gatherings etc.** to explain the work being done and its importance. I can be reached at the email address above or on my **cell (716) 307-1326**. But the time is growing short. We need to register all of our participants for the 2025 mission team to Uganda by November. **A non-refundable deposit of \$250** is all it takes to reserve your spot.



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

After moving to a new area to begin a new ministry, one of the things I wanted to do was to get to know the community. In my mind, a good way to understand the community was to go to the local school's PTA meeting (my son is in 3rd grade at the school this year). I had participated in the PTO at my previous home by serving as the PTO president for seven years. It is a great opportunity to get to know families and the community.

At one point in the meeting (it was the May PTO meeting), the group entered into a 15- minute discussion about whether they should rent a bouncy house for Field Day in June. Many different points were brought up: would the school allow it; would the district allow it; would it be too hot; how can we get all of the kids through it; etc. There were pros and there were cons, but no decision could be reached. After about 10 minutes of listening to the discussion, I offered a thought – to think about renting a dunk tank. It would have solved most of the obstacles of the discussion. Everyone at the meeting thought it was a good idea. There was about five minutes of discussion about it – and then the idea was dropped without any resolution so the discussion about a bouncy house and everything else connected to field day could continue.

I didn't hear anything from the PTO throughout the summer. In August, I took my son to Back to School Night. After we visited his new teacher, we walked out to our car to head home. On that walk, we passed the PTO table. Someone behind the table recognized me and asked, "Weren't you at the meeting last year?" I responded by saying yes. She then said, "We need a treasurer. Do you want to be our treasurer?" I chuckled a little bit because I would be a terrible treasurer and politely declined. Also – I had only devoted one hour to the PTO – nothing more.

A few weeks later I went to the first PTO meeting of the year. It was a social in the parking lot. The PTO had tables set up in and had invited a few food trucks to provide food. It was really nice. I grabbed a bottle of water and sat down at a table by myself. After a few minutes by myself, I got up and sat with a family – (A man, woman and one kid). I started to be more social (tough because my introvert muscles were trying to flex hard in that environment where I didn't know anyone). After a few questions, the family stood up and walked away to the playground, leaving me by

myself. After a few minutes, someone from another table walked over and invited me to sit at their table.

These three interactions have led me to a bunch of questions about how our churches encounter and engage newcomers:

1. I have been fairly lonely at each of the PTO meetings I attended - Do our churches have an intentional hospitality plan while encountering a new person in the community?
2. I had a good idea with the dunk tank — What does it take for our churches to trust an outsider's voice?
3. Should a church trust an outsider's voice when making a programmatic decision? At what point do our churches need to hear an outsider's voice?
4. I felt quickly dismissed in the discussion at the first meeting – do we do that in our church under the guise of "These are the things that we do each year"?
5. I wish I had been heard in the discussion instead of being quickly dismissed - Are there opportunities in our congregations for outsider's voices to be heard and considered?
6. I had considerable experience in supporting schools through the PTO - How can we build trust with a non-stakeholder (outsider) and allow the non-stakeholder to build trust with us?
7. I don't know how many meetings I have to attend to add input to discussions — At what point does such a person in our church community have the ability to become a stakeholder?
8. I was asked at second sight to be the treasurer — Is there a pathway in our churches for someone to move from visitor to a trusted outsider to a stakeholder?
9. It is Nominating Committee time for many churches — how do we fill positions in the church — through the neediness of an open position...or through prayerful consideration?
10. Many of our church members complain that it is the same people doing all of the work at the church — but do our churches have a good understanding of the qualifications for leadership in their faith community?



# NOVEMBER 2024



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Counting blessings helps us to recognize that God is actively moving in our lives! Sharing our blessings helps others recognize God moving us to action. Name them one by one! Add a blessing each day to your calendar and a quarter to your Over & Above jar!					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

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Hello Region Family – what a joy it is to serve God in all seasons – whether we are planting, watering our harvesting or preparing for the next season – our God is so faithful!

In the fall of 2023, the Women’s Ministries leadership team recommended we no longer promote the National Love Gift offering, with one of the strongest reasons being the steadily decreasing amount of return we saw come back in to ABCOPAD. Some projections helped us see that in a few years there would be next to nothing coming back to help support our leadership with their ministry.

By developing the **Over & Above** giving with the goal of both raising funds from our Region and keeping those funds in the Region, we feel we are better supporting and serving the ministries of ABCOPAD with more longterm stability.

Our gratitude can not be measured for the generosity shown during the innaugural year of **Over & Above!**

*As per our goal of finacial transparency with those that help fund the ministry, we are sharing the inflows and outflows of the Over &Above Giving for 2023-2024*

**9/01/2023-8/31/2024  
Over & Above Giving**

<b>INFLOW</b>		<b>\$23,390.27</b>
<b>OUTFLOW</b>	<b>Partners in Ministry</b>	<b>\$13,000.00</b>
	<b>Mission Trip Support</b>	<b>\$400.00</b>
	<b>Region Camps Icthus, Carmel, Judson \$1,000 each</b>	<b>\$3,000.00</b>
	<b>ABCOPAD BIENNIAL SPONSOR</b>	<b>\$1,000.00</b>
	<b>Back Packs for RaceTrack Ministry Christmas Giving</b>	<b>\$2,375.07</b>
	<b>Dominican Republic River of Life Baptist Church Reconstruction – Fire</b>	<b>\$1,000.00</b>
<b>TOTAL OUTFLOWS TO DATE</b>		<b>\$20,775.07</b>
<b>YET TO BE DISTRIBUTED</b>	<b>TEAM MEETS OCT 8, 2024</b>	<b>\$2,615.20</b>

## News From our Associations ([www.abcopad.org](http://www.abcopad.org))

### Central Union

**New Hope Christian** would like to share another testimony from their outreach ministry 'Healing Rooms of Del. Co.' A gentleman came to the healing rooms after suffering years from Nightmares/terrors from his time in the Vietnam War. After praying and anointing him, he new something had change. He informed us afterwards that he had 90% healing from the nightmares. We are continuing to pray for a total and complete healing.

### Pittsburgh

#### FBC, McKees Rocks

1. On Saturday, Oct. 19, at 6 p.m. we will host the musical ministry of Randy & Marli Brown in Concert. The Brown's have been performing throughout the country for the past 36 years plus. They are a devoted Christian couple and their music is inspirational. Marli always gives a message of hope during each performance. There will be refreshments following the performance. All are welcome.

2. On Thursday, Oct. 31, 5 p.m. until all the treats are gone will be our annual Trunk or Treat. We range from 600-800 children each year.

3. On Sunday, Nov. 10, after Sunday Morning Worship Service we will have our annual Thanksgiving Dinner for those who attend with an invite going to our NA Group and their families.

### Reading Association

An Ordination Council is called for Kevin Sorensen on Saturday, Oct. 26, 10 a.m., at Cross Road Baptist Church; 201 South 2nd St; Bangor, PA 18013. Pastors and 2 delegates from each church are asked to attend.

### Puppet Ministry

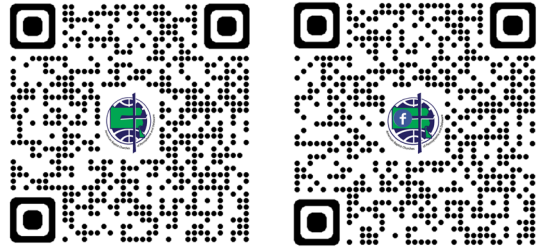
A variety of puppets, most are professional style similar to Kermit, and a stage made of PVC pipe with a curtain are available for free to an interested church. There are also some animal puppets. The puppets consist of people (white, green, blue) and animals such as St Bernard dog, mouse, another dog mutt etc. These puppets are not toys but tools to explain God's ways to children and adults.

If you are interested contact Nancy Bieberstein, FBC, McKees Rocks at [nabdab1@yahoo.com](mailto:nabdab1@yahoo.com)





	2024	2023
United Mission Basics	\$25,721.00	\$15,297.00
Love Gift	\$468.00	\$584.00
Partners in Ministry	\$22,671.00	\$13,562.00
Over & Above	\$1,177.00	\$0.00
Annual Offerings		
AFC	\$480.00	\$1,740.00
WMO	\$2,441.00	\$2,813.00
RMMO	\$576.00	\$1,790.00
OGHS	\$6,204.00	\$10,076.00



*The cumulative comparison figures*

United Mission Basics is behind thru Aug. 2024 by (\$22,218.)

The decrease in United Missions (includes UMB and Love Gift) amounts to (\$17,140.) less in actual dollars, that ABCOPAD received thru Aug.

Partners in Ministry is behind by (\$3,117.) thru Aug. This amount includes a \$30,063. from a charitable gift annuity

Over & Above is the ABCOPAD Womens Ministry offering.

AFC is behind by (\$11,550.) thru Aug. This decrease amounts to (\$3,388.) less in actual dollars, that ABCOPAD received thru Aug.

In actual dollars, from UM, AFC and PIM, ABCOPAD has received (\$23,644.) less thru Aug.

# Have a Blessed Autumn



**November, 2024 Deadline:**

**Items to be included in the Nov. issue of Notes & News need to arrive by 5 p.m., Thursday, Oct. 31.**

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)

# GROWTH POINTS

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

## Enhancing Community Through Building Design

Growing churches build a sense of community through team work, small groups, and good communication. But . . .

an overlooked aspect that impacts feelings of community is the building design itself.

Consider how you might incorporate the following insights to enhance community in your own church.

### Open and Flexible Layouts

- **Encouraging Collaboration:**
  - Use open floor plans to remove physical barriers, while encouraging conversation.
  - Deploy flexible layouts to allow for reconfiguration of spaces for various group sizes.
- **Visibility and Accessibility:**
  - Transparent spaces, such as glass walls and open corridors, create a sense of openness.
  - Accessible space ensures that all members can engage with one another effortlessly.

### Common Areas and Social Hubs

- **Central Gathering Spaces:**

- Position common areas, like lounges, to serve as natural hubs for interaction.
- Provide informal settings for people to gather, share ideas, and build relationships.

- **Multi-Functional Zones:**

- Establish spaces to serve multiple purposes, such as meeting rooms that double as social spaces to maximize opportunities for interaction.
- Cater to various needs for versatile spaces offering quiet reflection to lively group discussions.

### Intentional Pathways and Flow

- **Designing for Encounters:**

- Design intersecting pathways at key points to encourage chance encounters and informal meetings.
- Plan flow patterns that guide people through central areas to increase the likelihood of spontaneous interactions.

- **Minimizing Isolation:**

- Reduce the number of isolated or secluded spaces to prevent

feelings of disconnection and promote a sense of community.

- Ensure workstations, offices, and communal areas are interconnected to foster a cohesive environment.

communication and information sharing.

- Embrace smart office solutions, like booking systems for meeting rooms, to streamline the use of spaces and reduce friction.

**Natural Elements and Comfort**

• **Incorporating Nature:**

- Enhance well-being and invite people to linger and converse by using biophilic design, which integrates natural elements like plants and natural light.
- Include spaces, such as gardens and terraces, to offer refreshing alternatives for interaction.

• **Comfort and Aesthetics:**

- Create comfortable furnishings and pleasing environments to invite people to engage with one another.
- Pay attention to color schemes and lighting to influence the mood and atmosphere, encouraging positive interactions.

**Technology Integration**

• **Smart Design:**

- Integrate technology, such as digital screens and interactive displays, to facilitate

• **Virtual Connectivity:**

- Provide robust infrastructure for virtual meetings to ensure that remote participants can engage seamlessly with those on-site.
- Offer hybrid spaces in support of physical and virtual presence to foster broader participation.

**Privacy and Focus Areas**

• **Balancing Interaction and Privacy:**

- Promoting interaction is important, but providing areas for focused work and private conversations is crucial.
- Balance the need for interaction with quiet zones and private rooms for reflection and one-on-one meetings,

Effective building design goes beyond aesthetics; it plays a vital role in enhancing personal interaction and fostering a sense of community.

By incorporating some of the above elements, You can create spaces that not only serve functional needs, but also enrich personal interactions, strengthen communal bonds, and help build strong disciples.

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Pennsylvania and Delaware**

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Pittsburgh, PA 15213

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**ABCOPAD Disaster Relief Fund**

[https://www.abcopad.org/Mission\\_Resources/ABCOPAD-Disaster-Relief-Information/](https://www.abcopad.org/Mission_Resources/ABCOPAD-Disaster-Relief-Information/)

Following Hurricane Helene's devastation, ABCOPAD has received a number of inquiries from our churches asking if it will be organizing disaster relief teams to serve in North Carolina and Florida.

The area impacted by the recent hurricane is not ready to receive disaster relief teams, but it won't be long before volunteers are needed to assist with clean-up efforts and rebuilding. If you want to be a volunteer providing immediate assistance, I recommend contacting Samaritan's Purse or the Red Cross. Both are solid organizations that provide crucial, immediate relief to disaster victims.

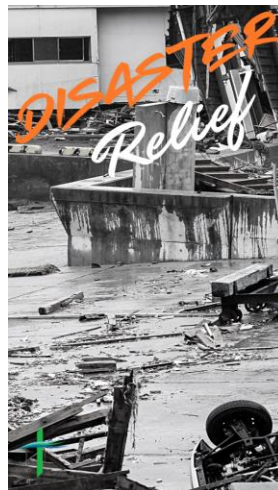
ABCOPAD will be working with congregations who express interest in serving. You can me if you would like to be kept apprised of disaster relief efforts.

ABCOPAD has a Disaster Relief Fund to help Disaster Relief Teams from our Region. 100% of every dollar given goes to support Disaster Relief Efforts in our Region or help teams from our Region serve.

**ABHMS Disaster Relief Effort**

[abhms.org/HeleneRelief](http://abhms.org/HeleneRelief)

You can also donate to the Disaster Relief Effort through the One Great Hour of Sharing fund. You can designate your gift to go directly to



Hurricane Helene Disaster Relief. Most churches give to OGHS through their local church via their monthly mission contribution. It is also possible to give directly through an online donation. Information regarding how to give directly is provided at the end of this message.

ABCOPAD will apply for One Great Hour of Sharing funds to assist Disaster Relief Teams. In 2021, ABCOPAD received funding from the American Baptist Home Mission Society through One Great Hour of Sharing, which helped send nine Disaster Relief Teams to Kentucky. I hope to once again partner with ABHMS in this disaster relief effort.

Thank you for your generosity and for being the Hands and Feet of Jesus for those in need. Know how grateful I am for your partnership in ministry. God Bless.

Mark Mahserjian-Smith

**YOU ARE NEEDED!**

Give today to help ABHMS provide immediate care and support longer-term renewal in the southern states devastated by Hurricane Helene. 100% of the monies given are allocated to domestic disaster relief.