



# minister

## MAGAZINE

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## Chaplains and Counselors

Photo Credit: Michael Saylor

### Presence

Bill Painter



I learned the power of presence early in my ministry at Judson Park. Gerald was near the end of life. For weeks I had given support to him and his family. On one of my visits all I could really do was stand at his bedside and hold his hand while he slept. As I did, his wife Martha, arrived for her daily vigil.

Several months after Gerald's death Martha told me that through the entire experience what meant the most to her was that day she saw me

holding her husband's hand. She found hope and comfort in that simple gesture. More than any words or prayers I could have said, my presence nurtured healing in the midst of sorrow. It is in our being that love and the divine are most genuinely revealed.

The phrase "ministry of presence" is often used to describe what it is chaplains do. I believe the chaplain's ability to be present is the key to effective pastoral and spiritual care. It is difficult to define but we know when it happens. Those we serve will know if we are not open to them. They will also know when we are with them in their trials.

Henri Nouwen's concept of the "Wounded Healer" is fundamental to my belief about the ministry of presence. Nouwen writes, "The minister is called to recognize the sufferings of his time in his own heart and make that recognition the starting point of his service" (Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*, Doubleday, 1972). Being open to the wounds caused by life in myself and others nurtures spiritual presence.

It is humbling to know that as a chaplain my presence personifies the very presence of God. I demonstrate not only my love, but also God's. My willingness to be with others, even in the bleakest of circumstances, is perhaps the most powerful symbol of divine presence I bring to those who struggle.

When I asked Jean what she needed from her chaplain she responded, "To be reminded that I am a child of God." In her words one hears the fear that God has abandoned her. My presence as I listen affirms that God is present as well.

My presence becomes authentic for those I seek to support as I listen with an ear to the deeper meaning of their experience. Their words reflect the yearnings of the spirit as they seek to make sense of what is happening. As their chaplain I cannot respond in a meaningful way if I have not heard their inner voice.

The power of presence also creates opportunities to inspire hope in the midst of despair. John and Teresa were in love and excited about their approaching wedding. A second marriage, later in life, was an unexpected blessing. Then John suffered a devastating stroke causing serious disabilities that seemed to crush hopes for the future as well. The specter of long-term nursing home residency was a cruel blow to their plans for life together. Marriage was out

of the question, at least for the foreseeable future. Yet their deepest yearning was to honor their love and relationship.

Together we planned a celebration to bless their relationship. Family and friends gathered in our chapel to celebrate as they publically declared their love for one another. Their “special day” was filled with joy. It was a moment of healing when a cure could not be expected. As their chaplain I had the honor of acting for and with them to give voice to their deepest desire.

In countless encounters like those above, I have discovered that if I am willing to be open to the Spirit in myself and others the power of presence brings us together. Betty, a Judson Park resident, understands the chaplain’s presence. She says, “We need to be in it together.” When those I serve are confident I am with them no matter what happens, ministry becomes transforming. If, however, I lack needed insight, my presence will not provide spiritual support. Meaningful presence as a chaplain challenges me to sharpen skills for ministry.

It is the union of spiritual presence with pastoral skill that empowers authentic spiritual care. Chaplains must be competent in the disciplines of ministry. One must be well versed in the practices of pastoral care, clinical assessment, psychology, theology and more. One must also be committed to continued growth in order to provide transformative ministry.

Clinical Pastoral Education, for me personally, was the right setting in which to develop the skills needed for effective ministry. CPE raised my awareness of my own wounds and nudged me along a path of healing. It also opened my spirit to the wounds of others. The rigorous attention to learning and reflection provided insight. My greatest revelation while in CPE was that my vulnerability with those who suffer was a conduit of healing.

As I challenged myself to be open to new growth, the experience of ministry became even more rewarding.

I believe the CPE experience provides a strong foundation for ministry. Being exposed to the discipline of personal reflection with a trained supervisor enabled me to discover new spiritual resources. I encourage those who ask me about a career in chaplaincy, whether clergy or laity, to consider completing a program in Clinical Pastoral Education. The CPE process will be of benefit to whatever ministry setting one might be called. More information about CPE can be found at the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education website ([www.acpe.edu](http://www.acpe.edu)).

I also believe a solid foundation for viable ministry of presence requires an ongoing commitment to continuing education. For instance, as the nature of health care

changes, the practice of spiritual care changes as well. Chaplains must keep pace with advancements in their field of ministry to provide appropriate support in an often confusing environment.

Many seminaries, colleges and universities offer courses that will enhance skills for ministry in the modern health care setting. Specialized institutes, like the George Washington Institute for Spirituality and Health ([www.gwish.org](http://www.gwish.org)), offer advanced degree and certificate programs. Continuing Education Units can be obtained through the Association of Professional Chaplains ([www.professional-chaplains.org](http://www.professional-chaplains.org)) and other health care organizations.

Professional Certification and Ecclesiastical Endorsement are also valuable resources for enhancing professional skills. Membership in the Association of Professional Chaplains ([www.professionalchaplains.org](http://www.professionalchaplains.org)) supports continued professional development. Endorsement by one’s faith tradition also encourages ongoing attention to standards for ministry. Information about endorsement for specialized ministry within American Baptist Churches USA is available at the American Baptist Home Mission Societies ([www.abhms.org](http://www.abhms.org)) website. Click on the link for Chaplaincy and Pastoral Counseling Services.

As a chaplain I have been privileged to share in countless sacred moments. The marriage of spirit and professional skill has drawn me to the thin places where the divine touches human experience. I have learned that the mystery of divine presence can affirm hope even in the context of suffering. I have also been humbled when divine grace has nurtured spirit even in my weakness. The power of presence, human and divine, is the grace of my calling that unites me in hope with those I serve.

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*Bill Painter earned a BA from Bethel College and an MDiv from Bethel Seminary. He served two congregations prior to completing Clinical Pastoral Education at St. Joseph Hospital in Tacoma, Washington. He is endorsed for institutional chaplaincy by the ABCUSA and Board Certified by the Association of Professional Chaplains. He has served as Chaplain, Director of Spiritual Services at Judson Park Retirement Community in Des Moines, Washington since 1983.*

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# Ministers Council Preaching Pavilion

## ABCUSA Biennial

### San Juan, Puerto Rico

9 am – 12 noon

Saturday, June 25, 2011

**9:00 am - Rev. Dr. Sarah L. Fogg** (Chaplain), Director, Pastoral Care Department, St. John's Riverside Hospital, Yonkers, NY; 18 years in ordained ministry, all as Founder and Director of (2) pastoral care departments in community hospitals; author and former college professor at Illinois Wesleyan and Clemson Universities; MDiv from Union Theological Seminary in New York City and PhD in Comparative Literature from Indiana University; member of Ministers Council 18 years; expository and personal preaching style.

**9:30 am - Rev. Marc Fields** (Seminararian), Associate Minister, Riverview Baptist Church, Richmond, VA; May 2011 will complete MDiv at Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology, Virginia Union University, Richmond, VA; August, will begin hospital residency for the MS in Patient Counseling at Virginia Commonwealth University School of Allied Health Professionals; Marc plans to pursue a doctorate in theology; dialectical preaching style.

**10:00 am - Rev. Miriam Méndez** (Latino/a-American), Pastor, Esperanza Church, a new ABC Spanish church in Portland, Oregon; a native New Yorker and Puerto Rican; 15 years in pastoral ministry in both English and Spanish speaking congregations; MDiv and multiple Spiritual Formation Certificates from George Fox Evangelical Seminary, Portland, Oregon; certified Spiritual Director and Adjunct Professor at George Fox Seminary, teaching in the field of spiritual leadership, grief counseling, and spiritual direction; Ministers Council Senator and ABC of Oregon Ministers Council Executive Team and Pastoral Services Committee; preaching style is "expository, narrative, exhortation with eye on application."

**10:30 am – Rev. Dr. Stephen Hre Kio** (Asian), Pastor, Indiana Chin Baptist Church, Indianapolis, IN; BD from William Carey's Theological College, West Bengal, India, in 1963 - the first BD graduate from Chin State, Burma (now Myanmar); ordained in 1963 by the Hakha Baptist Association; PhD from Emory University, Atlanta, GA, 1979; 15 years in local church ministry as Pastor of Falam Baptist Church in Burma and 25 years as Bible Translation Consultant throughout the Pacific with the United Bible Societies; translator of the entire Bible into the Falam Chin dialect and author of books on Baptism and Pastoral Theology; currently training Baptist Pastors in Burma, writing commentaries on the NT, and pastoring a church of more than 900.

**11:00 am - Rev. Dr. Zina Jacque** (African-American), Senior Pastor, Community Church of Barrington, IL; MDiv and ThD from Boston University; degrees in theology, personnel administration, and psychology; 13 years in ministry, serving on staffs of multicultural, urban, and suburban churches, both large and small; Founder and Director for five years of the Pastoral Counseling Center at Trinity Church, Boston; extensive work in educational administration, counseling, and support programs; Secretary for regional Ministers Council Executive Committee and participant in the Women's Colloquium sponsored by MMBB; preaching style is narrative, expository.

**11:30 am - Michael Harvey** (European-American), Executive Director, The Conference of Baptist Ministers in Massachusetts; 45 years of ordained ministry, including a rural church in Kentucky and two urban churches in Chicago; MDiv from Trinity Evangelical, Deerfield, IL; Ministers Council Senator; dialogical preaching style.



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Published periodically as a forum for issues and events that pertain to ministry as observed and practiced by ministerial leaders of the American Baptist Churches USA

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# ministers council membership

You are eligible for membership if you are either

- ordained
- commissioned • a lay professional or
- a student in seminary
- eligible for inclusion in the

Directory of Professional Church Leaders of the American Baptist Churches USA and serving an American Baptist Church or auxilliary organization

- paying dues through a constituent council or to the National Office of the Ministers Council

Join the Ministers Council through your local constituent council. Contact information is posted on the web at [www.ministerscouncil.org](http://www.ministerscouncil.org) under the "Who We Are" link.

# mission

The Ministers Council is the professional association of ministerial leaders within the American Baptist Churches USA. We are working together to:

Connect colleagues through Together in Ministry groups and Communities of Practice

- Establish and maintain professional and ethical standards of the Christian ministry
- Give support to the members of this body and be an advocate for them in their professional relations
- Resource ministry through our web site at [www.ministerscouncil.org](http://www.ministerscouncil.org)
- Interpret the appropriate roles of professional ministerial leadership to the constituent parts of our denomination, and to our local American Baptist Churches
- Encourage the recruitment and nurture of candidates for the various church vocations
- Provide a means of expression and debate by members of this body on issues that affect the professional ministerial leadership of the American Baptist Churches USA
- Cooperate with the appropriate units of the American Baptist Churches USA in matters of mutual interest and concern, including recruitment, placement, compensation, continuing education, and counseling

