From the Desk of the Executive Director

I recently had the opportunity to participate in a women’s gathering with spiritual leaders across a spectrum of faith traditions and vocations. This group meets several times during the course of the year and it is always an uplifting opportunity of sharing and blessings as we come together.

To open our gathering, one of our members led us in using Barbara Frederickson’s Loving Kindness Mindfulness Exercise. It is a meditative exercise that starts with deep breathing and then a mantra to help us project loving kindness to the focus person of the prayer. After breathing deeply and resting in God’s presence and with one another, we uttered the words:

May I be safe;
May I be happy;
May I be healthy;
May I be at ease.

It was striking to sit with this mantra and project it toward myself. As ministerial leaders, we know that we have to take care of ourselves before we can take care of others, but when does this happen? More often, we extend ourselves to care for others without thinking about our own well being. Yet this simple mantra was a reminder. It was like hearing the flight attendant telling me to put my own mask on first in the event of a drop in cabin pressure. In response to a drop in my well being, I need to put my own mask on and offer the blessings to me. Like David, in 1 Samuel 30:6, at times we have to encourage ourselves. As I offered these blessings to myself, I felt warmth and peace.

But then as we continued in the mantra, we extended ourselves to others. Feeling safe, happy, healthy and at ease, we were able to make intentional eye contact with one another and extend loving kindness. We said together:

May you be safe;
May you be happy;
May you be healthy;
May you be at ease.
The spirit that was generated in that small space as we directed our loving kindness toward each other was amazing. It was a feeling of bursting forth and a sensation that was too great to remain among ourselves. And so, we continued to radiate outward, extending loving kindness further and further. Ultimately, we ended our mantra, saying:

May our government be safe;
May our government be happy;
May our government be healthy;
May our government be at ease.

And it was beautiful. We did not talk about whether we thought one party or the other was at fault. We did not talk about whether one was right or wrong. It was this earnest desire to see others around us be filled with the same peace and loving kindness that we were experiencing in the moment. Obviously, I was moved by the experience.

As I reflect on it now, two key points come to the fore. First, we have to come together to be in community to gain strength and support for one another. I have missed several of our women’s circle gatherings over the past year because of the demands of my job or just feeling like I was too busy. We are busy, but when we remain isolated in our busyness, we are also starving ourselves. There is no way that we can be effective in ministry if we think that we are going to go it alone. It simply cannot be done.

Secondly, I am reminded yet again that we need to take care of ourselves. That simple act of taking a few moments to extend good will and blessings to myself made it possible for me to generatively extend myself to others. And so, having prayed for myself, affirming in me the hope that I would be safe, happy, healthy and at ease, I extend myself to you. May you be safe. May you be happy. May you be healthy. May you be at ease.

Join the Ministers Council

I had the privilege of attending an ordination council recently. As the candidate read her concluding remarks, she noted, “I subscribe to the code of ethics set forth in the ABCUSA’s National Ministers Council,” and I was filled with pride. It was the affirmation of Yes! The Ministers Council is the professional society of ministerial leaders in the American Baptist Churches, USA. We uphold a set of standards for ordination and ethics. We are the advocates for ministerial leaders. We promote collegiality, centeredness, and competence. **We are the only organization within the American Baptist Churches, USA that is solely focused on ministerial leaders.** This is the organization for ministerial leaders. Are you a member? If not, why not?

Join the Ministers Council by paying your 2014 dues and receive the benefits of membership in this last quarter of 2013. Go to [http://www.ministerscouncil.org/Join/JoiningMCInfo.aspx](http://www.ministerscouncil.org/Join/JoiningMCInfo.aspx) or contact your local constituent council president. National dues are $50.00 for regular membership, $25.00 for seminarians, and $70.00 for clergy couples. Join your local council and get the full benefit of membership through connections with ministerial leaders locally. If you do not know your local council president, go to [http://www.ministerscouncil.org/WhoWeAre/RegionalPresidentsTreasurers.aspx](http://www.ministerscouncil.org/WhoWeAre/RegionalPresidentsTreasurers.aspx).

This is our organization. Join the Ministers Council today and encourage our colleagues to do the same.
American Baptists Respond to Colorado Flooding

American Baptist Churches has released $10,000 in One Great Hour of Sharing disaster relief funds through American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) to American Baptist Churches of the Rocky Mountains.

Causing injuries, fatalities and billions of dollars in property damage, the flooding was a result of heavy rain that fell in the region Sept. 9-15
“The flooding in Colorado affected many people—not only those who have been publicized but many downstream,” says the Rev. Dr. Steve Van Ostran, executive minister of American Baptist Churches of the Rocky Mountains. “Having worked with several disasters, I am keenly aware that one of the best ways to give to disaster relief is the One Great Hour of Sharing offering because we work through established and trusted partners who are already in the community. I encourage those who want to help to contribute to One Great Hour of Sharing.”

American Baptist pastors in Colorado will use the funds for Colorado residents who have been affected, including those who have no other source of help. Aid will be provided either through direct funds or provision of services by volunteers and professionals.

“Our hearts go out to the thousands who have suffered losses from the massive flooding,” says Michaele Birdsall, ABHMS deputy director and chief financial officer. “Communities that used to consider themselves immune from the devastating impact of natural disasters are now faced with the emotional, financial and spiritual challenges of short-term recovery and long-term rebuilding efforts. Your generous gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing Offering are a tangible way of extending God’s love to those in need.”

Donations designated to “One Great Hour of Sharing—Colorado Flood” can be mailed to the attention of Kim Wilkins at American Baptist Home Mission Societies, P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851. One hundred percent of donations go to relief efforts; no dollars are retained for administrative costs.

For more information, contact Wilkins at 1-800-222-3872, x2413, or kim.wilkins@abhms.org.

### Together in Ministry – Current Status

What are the latest figures for the Together in Ministry Capital Campaign? We have $274,583.05 in cash donations and pledges, and $66,360.00 in in-kind services. Do these numbers sound familiar? They should because the numbers are unchanged since last month. That’s the bad news. Now the good news is that contributions toward pledges continue to come in, which is great. We are diligent in honoring our support commitments. But we need to hear from you. Have you contributed to the Together in Ministry Capital Campaign? No? Well, here is your opportunity.

Maybe your church would be interested in making a contribution to the Capital Campaign to honor your ministry or the ministry of a former pastor. Maybe your region would be interested in making a contribution to the Capital Campaign in honor or memory of the pastoral leaders in the region. What about your Ministers Council constituent council? Would you consider giving to the campaign? If our campaign efforts are to be successfully, we have to reach beyond our current constituency for support.

And then there is the opportunity to make an in-kind donation. Remember how Peter told the lame beggar at Gate called Beautiful that he did not have money to give? That is the testimony of so many ministers. But you have expertise in other areas. Maybe you have expertise in meeting facilitation, group leadership, or technology. Maybe you can offer to lead a retreat or speak at a clergy engagement. Making an in-kind donation is as simple as telling us your expertise, and how many hours you are willing to donate. We can convert that offering into a monetary amount.

Online gifts can be made by going to [https://secure-q.net/Donations/ABChurches/3796](https://secure-q.net/Donations/ABChurches/3796), which is a new, secure service unique to the Ministers Council and available via ABCUSA. Contribute to the Together in Ministry Capital Campaign and help us achieve our goals and make a difference in the lives of ministerial leaders for years to come.
American Baptist Women’s Ministries is addressing the topic of prison and aftercare ministries through its fourth virtual mission encounter for women in 2013, “For I Was in Prison and You Visited Me: Prison and Aftercare Ministries,” November 4-8, 2013. Virtual mission encounters can be done while still attending to family and work responsibilities. The virtual mission encounter includes emailed daily activities, a private blog with more information or reflections and to enable conversation among participants during the experience, and evening conference calls with special guests who have experience and direct engagement in the topic of the day.

“For I Was in Prison and You Visited Me” offers participants the opportunity to learn about preventative ministries with at-risk youth, ministries with incarcerated individuals and their families, and aftercare ministries, as well as exploring the restorative justice movement. Guests include Rev. Julia Moses, Associate Minister/Minister of Christian Education, Covenant Baptist Church and Chaplain of The Cleveland Clinic Foundation; Miriam Grady, volunteer with COTAAN, an aftercare ministry; Rev. Fela Barrueto, ABHMS national coordinator for Prisoner Re-Entry and Aftercare Ministry; and Lorraine Stutzman Amstutz, co-director of Mennonite Central Committee’s Office on Justice and Peacebuilding, and author of several books on restorative justice.

Registration for the “For I Was in Prison and You Visited Me” five-day virtual mission encounter is $30 per person; deadline for registration is October 31, 2013. More information and online registration is available at www.abwministries.org, click on “Events.”

Women are invited to join us on “A Time to Serve: A Time to Prepare,” a three-night cruise to the Bahamas on the Royal Caribbean “Enchantment of the Seas,” and fellowship with your American Baptist sisters as you relax and renew in the tropical sunshine. Highlights include a welcome reception to meet all your American Baptist women cruise-mates, dinners together in the main dining room, sessions together for Bible study, worship, and inspiration, and plenty of time to enjoy all the ship has to offer and visits to Nassau and CocoCay.

During our sessions, keynote speakers Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson, executive director of Ministers Council, and Dr. Lisa Croft, family practitioner, will help us explore how we are prepared to serve in discipleship. How do we attend to our spiritual and physical health to help us be effective disciples for Christ? What practices can we adopt to help us continue to grow as women of faith while we are called into an ever-deepening relationship with God? Additionally, performing artist Joyce Sinclair Lake will bring us worship through song.
Deadline for registration is January 17, 2014. (Cruise bookings after that date are subject to availability and price increase.) Visit www.abwministries.org/cruise for information, program fee, cruise rates, and registration information. This cruise is sponsored by AB Women’s Ministries in partnership with American Baptist Women in Ministry.

EMERGE, the 2014 National Ministers Conference meeting along side of the American Baptist Orientation to American Baptist Life for seminarians and new pastors to the denomination will help you to “emerge” to become the servant God has called you to be. Workshops, presentations and particularly, an opportunity to fellowship and interact with colleagues in ministry over important challenges facing doing ministry today will stretch your thinking, equip you with ideas, and support you in your ministry by making new friends and being in prayer with one another. The conference will be held in Orlando, Florida, January 6-9, 2014, at the SeaWorld Doubletree Resort in Orlando. To register click on the link below. http://www.abc-usa.org/coordinatedcalendar/event-registration/

Registration fees will be $75 for seminarians, $100 for new-to-ABC ministers, and $150 for Ministers Conference attendees. Room rates at the Doubletree will be $99 per night. Seminarians are encouraged to enroll in the American Baptist seminarians’ database in order to receive communications about the conference. They can do so at http://abhms.org/education/seminarian_registration/register.cfm.

Livin’ On the Hill

Ministers Council Member and Pastor, Rev. Ron George, Jr. has written a book entitled Livin’ on the Hill: Living in Southern West Virginia (The Christian Mountain) (Volume 1). Find out more about the mission and ministry at www.christianmountain.org. Pastor George’s book is available through Amazon.com
Other Events

- Ministers Council Leadership Team Webinar – Council Presidents and Senators are encouraged to participate
  - November 6, 4:00 – 5:00 PM Eastern
  - December 3, 3:00 – 4:00 PM Eastern
- Professional Ministries Team Meeting – October 28, Mission Center.
- Conference of Baptist Ministers of Massachusetts Convocation on the Digital Church – November 9, 9:30 am – 3:00 pm Eastern, Rivers of Living Waters International Ministry, 204 Main Street, Marlboro, MA.
- Mission Table – November 11-13, Green Lake, WI.

Do you have events coming up in your regions? Share the word so that others might know your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Send email announcements to Sue Sechrist at sue.sechrist@abc-usa.org.

Remember Us!

When planning your estate, please remember The Ministers Council.

*Join the Ministers Council through your local constituent council. Contact information is posted on www.ministerscouncil.org under the WHO WE ARE link.*

Ministers Council Contact Information

Web: www.ministerscouncil.org
Mail: The Ministers Council
      PO Box 851
      Valley Forge PA 19482-0851
Phone: 1-800-222-3872, extension 2333, 2334
FAX: 610/768-2066

We welcome your comments or questions on this newsletter. Send you thoughts to Debora.Jackson@abc-usa.org