



## Ministers Council Newsletter

*Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson, Executive Director*

*November 2013*



Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson and her Pastor,  
Rev. Dr. Wesley A. Roberts at Peoples  
Baptist Church in Boston.

### **From the Desk of the Executive Director**

Do you have a pastor? Chances are if you are the Senior Pastor of your church, you do not have a pastor. We are so accustomed to being the pastor that we do not think about having a pastor for ourselves. It is as if that need for a pastoral relationship is placed off to the side as soon as we come into our own pastorate.

Why is that? We would never suggest that there is no need for personal Bible Study because we had learned it all in seminary. We would never go without prayer believing that we are so holy or righteous to no longer need it. We even acknowledge the need to be in relationship with ministry colleagues who will help us to be healthy in ministry. I would contend that having a pastor is just as necessary.

I came to really appreciate this need over the last year. In my new role, and taking to heart the ethical mandate to move on from my church after resigning my position as pastor, I was without a church home. Hearing from colleagues who

intentionally used Sundays to visit the churches in their regions, I thought that I would be content to simply visit various churches. I quickly learned that that was not the case for me. I felt adrift. I learned first-hand the reticence that people have in visiting new churches. You are a stranger; you do not know the process of that church's worship; and often times no one would even speak to me upon entering the church. Immediately, I understood why many clergy, post retirement, opt not to affiliate with a church at all. Not only are many burned out from ministry, they also have difficulty finding a place where they can be welcomed. Notwithstanding, I wanted to be rooted and find a church that I could call home.

More than that, I wanted to have a relationship with someone whom I would see as a mentor for me in my ministry. As a Field Education supervisor and Watch Care pastor, I always encouraged my mentees to remain in relationship with their pastors. My counsel was that having such a relationship was beneficial in ministry, as questions arose or help was needed. It was also critical to have such relationships when difficulties or frustrations occurred in ministry. With pastoral attrition rates on the rise, I believe that mentor/mentee relationships can make the difference between staying in ministry or leaving.

Giving this counsel to so many for so long, how could I operate differently? I too needed to be in relationship with a seasoned mentor whose counsel I would value and seek. I too needed to be in a church home where I could be fed and nurtured as opposed to doing all of the feeding and nurturing. I too needed a pastor.

I spent the better part of a year visiting churches. Each week, I prayed prior to going to church saying, "God, if this is where you would have me be, please make it clear." I visited Peoples Baptist Church in Boston in late July. As I sat down to prepare for worship, I heard God clearly say, "This is home." The senior pastor, Rev. Dr. Wesley Roberts, was so gracious and supportive. He welcomed me into the church family. He opened the doors to allow me to serve. He prays for me. He asks me how I am doing. He calls to check on me. In short, he is my pastor and Pastor Roberts has made a tremendous difference in my life.

Who do you call pastor? You might be the pastor, but you have not outgrown the need to be in relationship with those who will care like a pastor will care for you. Consider being in relationship with someone whom you would call pastor. It will make a difference for you too.

## **Transformed by the Spirit – An Update**

From previous newsletters, you will remember updates provided about Transformed by the Spirit. This ambitious initiative of the National Executive Council (NEC) of American Baptist Churches USA engages local congregations across the denomination in a journey of identifying the significant challenges that face our churches, our regions, and our national bodies in today's culture. In the first phase of the initiative, teams worked to articulate the challenges that we are facing for which we do not presently have answers. The second phase will leverage the work of phase 1 to develop pilot activities that might help us to live into the future that God has for us. The hope is that churches and regions would be engaged in these phase two pilot activities that we might realize greater renewal even as we identify faithful ways forward.



The Ministers Council is responsible for three adaptive challenges: Women in Ministry, Pastoral Attrition, and now most recently, Clergy Health and Wellness. As we prepare for the first Mission Table gathering, it felt appropriate to provide an update.

The Women in Ministry Action Learning Team, led by Rev. Christine Smith, is continuing the work of the initial, "Transformed by the Spirit Adaptive Learning Team." The WIM ALT was charged with reflecting upon the adaptive challenges the ABC Denomination, churches and women clergy face as women answer the call of God to become senior/solo/lead pastors. The initial team identified search committees as the place where women's pastoral applications get stalled. The WIM ALT has taken that assumption some steps further. Questions arose concerning the primary focus of the adaptive challenge. Specifically the team considered whether their focus should be on barriers impacting women in ministry in general or whether the focus should be placed upon the barriers facing women in pursuit of solo pastoral ministry. The ALT determined that their focus would be to break down barriers that hinder clergy women from gaining access to paid senior/solo/lead pastorates. Given this focus, the adaptive challenge that they are addressing is how to change the hearts and minds of barrier keepers. How can we change or influence structures that maintain barriers?

It was acknowledged that only God can truly "change" hearts and minds, but in our endeavors to be "change agents," it is important to explore a variety of issues that influence and cultivate the mindsets, hearts and behaviors of barrier keepers. The ALT also discussed the importance of changing structures

that perpetuate discrimination against female clergy called to the pastorate. They are currently exploring ideas for “experiments to be conducted in targeted regions throughout ABC/USA.

The Pastoral Attrition Action Learning Team, led by Rev. Alan Selig, has been meeting since May. In these months the team has been familiarizing themselves with the current research on patterns and causes of clergy leaving professional ministry before retirement. The issue is complex, including both positive and negative reasons for leaving, a wide variation in the frequency of attrition across different denominations, and, they suspect, a difference in attrition frequency among various cultural and ethnic groups. As a result of their investigation, the ALT has now begun to seek out data from ABC sources in order to incorporate individual stories and more general statistics into a clearer picture of the scope of the issue for our churches and clergy.

The newest adaptive challenge team, Clergy Health and Wellness, currently being led by Debora Jackson, took shape over the summer. The team was convened and has begun the work of articulating the adaptive challenge. I am working with the Journey Team leaders to determine a date on which the ALT can be trained in the adaptive challenge process. The team also has the support of the Professional Ministries Team, which is supported from the Office of the General Secretary as we work to articulate the challenge and then develop initiatives in response to that challenge.

If you are interested in the work of the adaptive challenge ALTs, feel free to contact Rev. Chris Smith, [revcsmith1@cs.com](mailto:revcsmith1@cs.com), Rev. Alan Selig, [alan.selig@gmail.com](mailto:alan.selig@gmail.com), or Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson, [Debora.jackson@abc-usa.org](mailto:Debora.jackson@abc-usa.org).



## Together in Ministry – Current Status

The Together in Ministry Capital Campaign is still moving forward. We are conducting a pilot effort in three different regions to call folks and ask for their support. You want to know something? As colleagues call colleagues, it makes a difference. We give in support of one another.

But more than that, our churches will give in support of us too! The North Shore Baptist Church of Chicago, with pride and in honor of their pastor and our President-elect Rev. Doug Harris, has recently made a generous contribution to the Ministers Council. Have you asked your church to contribute to the Ministers Council's Together in Ministry Capital Campaign on your behalf? As the Bible says, you have not because you ask not?

And then what about your time and talent? I recognize that at times we are like Peter and John at the Gates of Beautiful declaring that we are without silver and gold. But what we have – our time and our talent – we can give joyfully in Jesus' name. Thanks to Rev. Dr. Marilyn Bennett who has generously contributed her expertise in the form of facilitation and retreat leadership as an in-kind donation.

So we have \$276,583.05 in cash dollars and \$68,280.00 in in-kind donations. Let's keep it moving. Remember your cash contributions are tax deductible and contributing couldn't be easier. Make your donations securely and electronically by going to <https://secure-q.net/Donations/ABCChurches/3796>, our service unique to the Ministers Council and available via ABCUSA. Move forward with the Ministers Council by coming Together in Ministry.

## Support for Pastors in the Stresses of Ministry

Ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is challenging and often takes a toll on pastors and their families. Pastors often face a “perfect storm” of unrelenting pressures from others, unrealistic expectations of themselves, and lack of safe places to process their struggles openly. You don't have to navigate these troubled waters alone! The American Baptist Churches and MMBB have arrangements with Ministry Development

Centers across the U.S. to provide professional, spiritually sensitive, and affordable consultations to ABC pastors. For more information you can contact any of these three Centers:

*The Center for Career Development and Ministry* (office near Boston) phone – 781-329-2100; email at [info@ccadmin.org](mailto:info@ccadmin.org); website [www.ccadmin.org](http://www.ccadmin.org)

*Midwest Ministry Development Service* (offices in Columbus, Chicago, Kansas City and Austin) phone 708-343-6268; email at [mmds69chgo@aol.com](mailto:mmds69chgo@aol.com); website [www.midwestministrydevelopment.org](http://www.midwestministrydevelopment.org)

*Center for Ministry in the West* (offices in Seattle, San Francisco Bay area, Los Angeles) phone 206-957-4693; email at [center4ministry@gmail.com](mailto:center4ministry@gmail.com); website [www.centerforministry.org](http://www.centerforministry.org)

## **American Baptists Continue Immigration Reform Advocacy Efforts**

American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) and American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA) were represented at [Church World Service's](#) Oct. 8 Global Summit on Immigration Reform in Washington, D.C.

The Rev. Aundrea Alexander, ABHMS national coordinator of Refugee Resettlement and Immigration Services, marched and attended a press conference at the event. ABCUSA General Secretary A. Roy Medley recited the following prayer: "We pray for legislators whose intransigence is breaking the backs of the poor and the immigrant. Raise up within their ranks those with an uncommon heart for the common good, with vision that sees past the next election and moral courage that isn't subservient to the next poll. Fill their hearts with compassion, and give them a belly full of courage that freedom's bell might ring in welcome in every corner."

The event brought together approximately 300 faith leaders, immigrants and refugees from 39 states, representing more than 18 faith traditions and 37 organizations. Presence at the event was the latest in a string of American Baptist efforts to encourage passage of humane immigration reform that keeps families together and creates a path to citizenship.

Consistently encouraging American Baptists to lend their voices by phoning senators to express support for immigration reform, ABHMS increased efforts in May—prior to the Senate Judiciary Committee's vote on the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act (S.B. 744)—by urging participation in Congressional in-district visits. To help individuals familiarize themselves with S.B. 744 and to learn about advocacy, ABHMS encouraged participation in [Interfaith Immigration Coalition's](#) free online immigration reform webinars. In addition, American Baptists were encouraged to attend another day of immigration advocacy and prayer that took place in Washington, D.C., in April.

Churches have been urged to participate in the [New Sanctuary Movement of Philadelphia's](#) "40 Days of Fasting, Prayer, and Action for Immigration Justice." [Central Baptist Church](#), Wayne, Pa., participated in July, and was visited by Alexander, who led the congregation in a special litany.

ABHMS offers a number of resources to assist individuals and congregations with immigration advocacy. For more information, visit [www.abhms.org](http://www.abhms.org) > Ministries & Programs > Justice Ministries > [Immigration and Refugee Services](#) or contact Alexander at [aundrea.alexander@abhms.org](mailto:aundrea.alexander@abhms.org) or 1-800-222-3872, x2430.

## **ABCUSA Announces the Fall Awards for its Matthew 25 Grant**

Each of the 37 active applicants received funding ranging from \$500 to \$5,000, with a total of \$88,092 awarded. The Matthew 25 Grant, sponsored by ABCUSA, is funded by a generous donor whose goal is to help meet the needs of "housing, feeding, education and health with regard to the less fortunate."

Ministries funded include:

- Ministries providing weekend food for students on free or reduced lunch at school
- Food pantry needs, including fresh food items
- Co-pays and pharmacy bills for medication for homeless persons
- Creation and support of homeless shelters
- Refugee and immigrant support
- Prison ministries, including a ministry working to create a “culture of pardon” for ex-offenders
- Preschool scholarships for immigrant or impoverished children
- After school programs
- And much, much more

Awards for the Matthew 25 Grant are made twice a year, in April and October, with application deadlines of March 1 and September 1. To view the guidelines and download the application form, click here.

To apply for the spring awards, go to <http://www.abc-usa.org/matthew25/>.

## 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](http://www.ministerscouncil.org) under the WHO WE ARE link.***

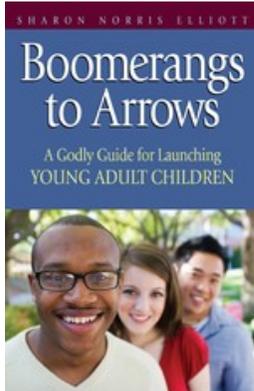
## Make the Vision Plain: Equity and Access for Women Clergy Conference Highlights, 2013

The Ministers Council was well represented by members attending Access and Equity for Women Clergy Conference sponsored by the Equity and Access for Women in the Church, a working community of the Alliance of Baptists. The gathering was a historic, ecumenical and multicultural gathering to strategize about expanding the role of women in church leadership hosted by Wake Forest Divinity School on October 25-26. Rev. Christine Smith, Judson Press author of the book *Beyond the Stained Glass Ceiling: Equipping & Encouraging Female Pastors*, was one of the featured panelists for the conference. Also in attendance was Rev. Patricia Hernandez, National Director of American Baptist Women in Ministry and Ministers Council Executive Committee Member, Rev. Dr. Marvin McMickle, President of Colgate Rochester Crozier Divinity School, who was a keynote speaker, and Rev. Marie Onwubuariri of American Baptist Seminary of the West. A full report from the conference can be found at Rev. Chris Smith's blog, Shepastor, <http://shepastor.blogspot.com/2013/10/shepastor-make-vision-plain-equity-and.html>.



Rev. Marie Onwubuariri, Rev. Christine Smith and Rev. Patricia Hernandez at the Equity and Access for Women Clergy Conference.

## Judson Press Offers Free Shipping for Ministers Council Members



Judson Press has generously offered this special benefit for Ministers Council Members to receive free shipping on Judson Press titles. Have you taken advantage of the offer? We have to continue to hone our craft through continued study and learning and Judson Press gives us the opportunity to do just that by offering wonderful titles to aid us in our ministry efforts. The latest is *Boomerangs to Arrows: A Godly Guide for Launching Young Adult Children*. It is a wonderful resource for those who have teens or are working with teens to help them get a great start into adulthood as godly men and women. Spend \$15.00 on this or other titles as a Ministers Council member and you get free shipping! Get the shipping code from your Council President.

## Register for Emerge!

Have you registered for EMERGE? It is the 2014 National Ministers Conference meeting and American Baptist Orientation to American Baptist Life for seminarians and new pastors to the denomination.



JANUARY 6-9, 2014 | ORLANDO, FLORIDA

The Ministers Council will be there in full force! We will be leading a workshop for ministers on Leadership Effectiveness. We will also provide an informational session as an Affiliated Ministry Organization of the ABCUSA on the Ministers Council. The conference will give you the opportunity to fellowship and interact with colleagues in ministry, while also enjoying a time of respite and spiritual renewal. Make your plans now to attend Emerge in Orlando, Florida, January 6-9, 2014, at the SeaWorld Doubletree Resort. Registration fees are \$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](http://abhms.org/education/seminarian_registration/register.cfm).

## Other Events

- Ministers Council Leadership Team Webinar – November 6
- Conference of Baptist Ministers of Massachusetts Convocation – November 9
- Mission Table, Green Lake, WI – November 11-13
- Massachusetts Baptist Multicultural Ministries Advisory Board – November 16
- Ministers Council Leadership Team Webinar – December 3

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](mailto:sue.sechrist@abc-usa.org).

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We welcome your comments or questions on this newsletter. Send your thoughts to [Debra.Jackson@abc-usa.org](mailto:Debra.Jackson@abc-usa.org)