



Ministers Council Newsletter

Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson, Executive Director

February 2015

From the Desk of the Executive Director

On January 18, 2015, I had the privilege of preaching the Evergreen Association of American Baptist Churches' Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Worship Celebration. For this month's newsletter, I thought that I would share excerpts from my remarks with you.



.Our Social Justice Legacy as American Baptists calls us to loosen the bonds of injustice and let the oppressed go free; it calls us to welcome the stranger and clothe the naked. Our social justice legacy reminds us that we have historically spoken out against slavery and oppression and championed the social gospel. Even as a denomination, our legacy, through resolutions, has been to rail against discrimination and unemployment; advocate for training programs and environmental protections; and demand access to health care. And if this is our social justice legacy, why have we strayed from it?

In their book *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*, Christian Smith and Michael Emerson suggest that evangelicals, and based on our beliefs Baptists largely fit the definition of evangelicals, do more to perpetuate the racial divide than they do to tear it down. This happens as a result of isolation. Most of us operate in fairly homogeneous environments. I served as a pastor in a suburban community. It was an upper-middle-class town, with a highly educated workforce. Only 3% of the population were persons of color. And on any given Sunday, my family might be the only black people that my congregation would see in the course of the week.

So when our worldview becomes that isolated, it is hard to see and identify with "the other." The other becomes the people that you see on TV, or the people that you read about in the news. They are not people you see on the street, or people that you relate to, or people that you know because most of us don't typically see people who don't look like us.

In this homogeneous worldview, we struggle to recognize how truly racialized our society has become. Racial handles become the distinguishing characteristics of other people: that black man, the

Latina woman, an Asian girl or a Native American boy. In addition, the expectation of this worldview is that people in the minority will adopt the norms of the majority. Minorities must learn the culture and colloquialisms of the majority, while opposite is not true.

As a result of operating from this isolated worldview that is undergirded by a framework of unrecognized privilege, the gospel mandate somehow becomes limited and our ministries operate on the margins. We buy coats for the homeless, but will not try to engage the source problem as to why there is homelessness or poverty. We read about marches in Ferguson or New York, but we would not dream of going there because it's not our problem. We know that thousands of people are here in the shadows working in low-wage, menial jobs, but we do not speak out and advocate for them because too many have forgotten that their great, great, grand somebody immigrated here too.

But operating in this way is not the gospel and this is not our legacy. Jesus lived to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, to recover the sight of the blind, and to let the oppressed go free. And Jesus died that through faith in him all may be reconciled unto God. The gospel compels us to make the plight of the oppressed and marginalized our plight, for these are our neighbors, our brothers and sisters. And our legacy as American Baptists is in line with this, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So how then do we reclaim our legacy? First we need to engage with one another. We must create intentional opportunities to come together. We also need to personalize relationships so that we don't regard one another as the other - that faceless minority with whom we have no contact or relation. One Sunday, I shared with my congregation that my husband was stopped "driving while black" one block from our home and questioned by a police officer who demanded that he, "State his business for being in the neighborhood." This event personalized racial concerns in my congregation and my congregants were outraged. Relationship does that. My problem becomes your problem and your problem becomes mine. And just maybe if we build relationships in this way we will learn that the plight of others really is our business, not because we know one another, but because all are God's children.

Secondly, we need to strategically engage to tear down the walls of our racialized society and create real opportunity for all. After the success of the Montgomery bus boycott, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. realized that a decisive moment in history had arrived. I would daresay that we have reached another such moment in time. For after Trayvon and Michael Brown, after Tamir Rice and Eric Garner, after countless others, we have come to a point in time where we must say "No more!" Yes we protest now, yes we march in the streets, but we must come together to plan-fully and strategically determine next steps. What are the needs here? How can our efforts bear tangible fruit? And if we are successful how might we model that learning so that other communities might be helped? This is the American Baptist way.

Thirdly, we must operate out of our faith. In Revelation 7:9, John sees a vision that takes place in heaven at the throne of God. "After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands." That's what it will look like when we all get over there.

But I don't believe that we're supposed to just wait until that great gettin' up morning for that worldview. I don't believe that we're supposed to wait until that undetermined time to start operating in unity. Our faith calls us to be in relationship now. Our faith compels us to serve and love one another without exception now. Our faith in Jesus Christ tells us that we are each other's keepers now. So I don't want to operate from a limited purview. I don't want to operate from a narrow point or perspective. I want to be faithful to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

And I am not the only one. This is our faith. This is our legacy. We are people of social justice. We are people of advocacy. We are a people with a history of interceding for the last and the least and the left out and the left over. We are people who, in the spirit of Dr. King, beat a drum for justice, refuse to remain silent, and stride toward justice in unity. This is our legacy. Let us reclaim it!

Festival of Young Preachers

coming to

the American Baptist Biennial Mission Summit



Overland Park, KS
June 26 – 28, 2015

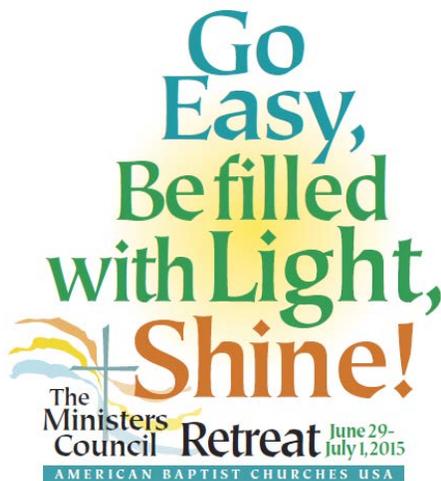
Save the Date! June 26 – 28, 2015

2015 American Baptist Biennial Mission Summit

ABCUSA is partnering with the Academy of Preachers, a national, ecumenical initiative energized by the conviction that gospel preaching is a vocation of public and social significance, a calling worthy of the very best and brightest of our young people.

Preaching theme: "Tell me a Story." Nominate a young preacher (14-28) from your church to participate.

To learn more about the Festival of Young preachers, visit www.americanbaptists2015.com. For more information contact: Heather Enrekin – hentrekin@cbs.edu.



Save the Date The Ministers Council Retreat June 29 – July 1, 2015

Make plans now to join your clergy colleagues for a post-Mission Summit Retreat hosted by the Ministers Council. We will retreat to Unity Village Hotel and Conference Center in Unity, Missouri. Our retreat theme is: Go Easy, Be filled with Light, Shine. Registration opens soon. But as you plan your travels to Mission Summit, plan to stay to retreat with the Ministers Council.

Lenten Self Care

Lent comes early this year. February 18 marks Ash Wednesday and the beginning of the Lenten season in our congregations. Lent is often a season of spiritual significance for our congregations, but for the ministerial leader, it is a time of additional work. How might you use this time to engage in intentional self-care even as your work load increases?



Consider a fast. I engage in a Daniel fast every Lent, eating only fruits and vegetables as was done in Daniel 1. But rather than be caught up in thoughts of denial, what if you considered a fast as a means of opening up a deeper relationship with God? It is the opportunity and invitation to slow down rather than speed up. We want to create some emptiness – not just in our bellies – but in our lives so that God can fill the spaces with God's spirit. It is about letting go of things that make us more reliant on ourselves rather than God.

Try going to bed earlier. What if during Lent you committed to being in bed by 10:00 nightly? That would be a big deal for me, someone who is still wandering around the house after midnight. While it feels counterintuitive, getting more rest and having more down time during busy times increases our productivity when we are working. Having that time of dormancy provides the refreshment that we need to be at our sharpest.

Memorize scripture. Now I know that probably sounds funny to suggest this to clergy because our occupational hazard is to quote scripture at the drop of a dime. But I find my scripture quoting is typically in response to someone else's situation and not mine. Instead consider the words that you need right now to soothe your soul and heal your spirit. Find passages that speak to what you need God for in this moment. Write them down on note cards and post them in prominent places in your house. Read and try to memorize these passages on a daily basis that the word of God might minister to you.

And then for Lent: Do what you can, then stop. This inspiration comes from the parable of the Good Samaritan. You remember the parable.

"A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.'"

He left! The Samaritan tended the wounds; he saw to the man's safety; made provision for his care, and then left. The Samaritan did not stay at the Inn and tell the innkeeper how to care for someone who had been injured. He didn't see about food preparation or to make sure that the man was comfortable. The Samaritan did what he could do and then he stopped and left. How many of us would be so much healthier in ministry if we would stop over performing? We need to do what we can do and then stop.

The Lenten Season does not have to be drudgery if we care for ourselves along the way. This is a season where we all can be nurtured by the spirit of the Lord. May God bless you richly as you seek a closer walk in this season of Lent.



Your New Ministries Team

It is a new year and Ministers Council is busy implementing the changes voted in last year. One of those is establishing the new Ministries Team. As Debora Jackson wrote in the January newsletter, 'Our Local Chapters come together as a Ministries Team to share, collaborate and determine the programmatic work of the Ministers Council.'

I have been asked to coordinate the Ministries Team. I am honored to work with you to create a vibrant center of activity within the Ministers Council. The first step is learning who the Local Chapter Representatives will be this year. It is my hope to get to know you and introduce you to the other Local Chapter Representatives so that we may begin our sharing and collaboration in this new way.

Please don't hesitate to be in touch with me with any questions you may have about the Ministries Team. And, if you have not yet let me know who your Local Chapter Representative is for this year, I would love to know. Here is my contact information:

The Rev. Holly Vincent Bean - hollyvincentbean@gmail.com

Join the Ministers Council

Are you a Member of the Ministers Council? Our Local Chapters are gearing up for Membership drives. Don't miss out. You can join today and be a part of a network of ministerial leaders to strengthen clergy relationship, deepen spiritual, and increase professional competency through our gatherings and events. Membership fees at the National level are based on a personal income sliding scale as follows:

\$55,000+	\$100
\$25,000 - \$54,999	\$50
\$10,000 - \$24,999	\$25
< \$10,000	\$10

Become a member or renewing your membership in the Ministers Council. Contact your local council or go to www.ministerscouncil.com for more information.

Sojourners Blog Post

Sojourners carried a blog post that Debora Jackson wrote for ABSW. See that post at: <http://sojo.net/blogs/2015/01/29/widows-orphans-and-blacklivesmatter>.



Local News Anyone?

What is going on in your local chapter? Share the word so that others might join in. Did you know that more than 2000 people view this newsletter every month? What better way to share your news.

Northwind Institute

Supporting effective local church ministry in postmodern settings



The Ministers Council helps ministerial leaders become more effective practitioners of the arts, skills, and gifts of professional ministerial leadership by:

- Encouraging opportunities to learn from one another
- Establishing and maintaining professional and ethical standards of Christian ministry
- Sponsoring continuing education programs

Northwind Institute is proud to support the work of The Ministers Council with special offers for Continuing Education and Clergy Coaching.

Continuing Education Courses

Start with a free course!
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The Ministers Council and Northwind Institute are developing and offering Continuing Education courses designed for Transformational Ministry.

Each course features faculty who hold a Doctoral degree and are experienced pastors

The courses are offered in an online classroom which is available 24/7 and features video-based micro-lectures, discussion forums and project-based assignments. The courses have required textbooks available from Amazon in either print or Kindle editions.

Member Rate : \$75.00 Per Course
Non-Member Rate: \$100.00 Per Course

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Our Clergy Coaching is designed to increase your effectiveness.

We coach via Phone or Skype.

Sessions may be scheduled on a weekly or monthly basis.

A written Action Plan is provided as a blueprint towards your goals for effectiveness.

We offer Board Certified Clergy Coaching for:
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- *Financial Goals*

Member Rate : \$75.00 Per Session
Non-Member Rate: \$100.00 Per Session

Course List - [Enroll Now](#)

Session fees are invoiced via PayPal

Technology & Social Media in Preaching:

This course explores how to use Technology and Social Media in your preaching to develop a before, during and after experience. This is a condensed version of the course offered in the Drew Doctor of Ministry Program.

Local Chapter News

Are you in the Chicagoland area? Check out the events for the **Metro Chicago Ministers Council**:

- Saturday, Feb. 7th: Our next fellowship and business meeting will be over lunch following the Region's Family Council meeting at First Baptist Church, Park Forest.
- Lenten Spirituality Retreat led by Rev. Keith Cerk and Rev. Steve Heaviland. This "Day Away" is inspired by Lenten themes of embodiment and abundant life gleaned from Isaiah 55. It will be on a Tuesday between Feb 17 and March 24. Co-sponsored with ABCMC. Details finalized this week.
- Christian Educators Appreciation Breakfast. A Saturday morning following Easter. Co-sponsored with ABCMC.

The Greater Bay Area Ministers Council announced the opportunity for clergy colleagues to come together for fellowship and training.

- The Evergreen Association of American Baptist Churches is sponsoring a two-day workshop called **Gracious Leadership** on **Friday, February 13**, from 9 am to 9 pm and then continuing on **Saturday, February 14**, from 9 am to 5 pm.
- This event is open to all Bay Area American Baptist churches. Churches are encouraged to bring a group of leaders from their congregation. Facilitated by the **Kaleidoscope Institute** and hosted by **Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church**, participants will engage in thoughtful consideration, conversation and self-reflection on the subjects of power and powerlessness as they relate to ministry in diverse environments. Participants will experience and learn gracious leadership skills and tools to build inclusive multicultural communities. The primary text is *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb* by **Eric H.F. Law**. The cost is \$150-500 per church group. Please register by January 30 through <http://www.kscopeinstitute.org> (click on "Local Workshops" and select the Feb. 13-14 workshop). For more information, contact The Evergreen Association (253) 859-2226.



Need information on Health Care?

Health care is a tremendous issue for clergy and many of you have questions as to how best to provide coverage without subjecting ministerial staff to undue tax burdens. Our partners at MMBB have updated their website to provide additional information to clergy and churches with questions about health care. Go to <https://www.mmbb.org/healthcarereform/> for more information.



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– Reid Trulson, IM Executive Director

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The Ministers Council encourages wise stewardship and does not promote indebtedness.

* APR = Annual Percentage Rate effective 01/01/15 and are subject to change without notice. Membership eligibility requirements apply. [Terms and Conditions](#)

ABHMS Plays Role in God’s Plan Begun More than a Century Ago

When Sang Fen became a pastor in the Chin state of Burma more than a century ago, neither he nor the American Baptist missionaries that inspired him could have known that God’s plan would come full circle in 21st-century America with Sang Fen’s grandson, Chan Hnin Thui. American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS)—related denominationally to the very same missionaries who inspired his grandfather—recently awarded Thui a scholarship that he credits with helping him to earn a graduate ministerial degree in the United States.

Full-time youth minister at Dallas (Texas) Chin Baptist Church, Thui, 34, graduated in May 2014 with a Master of Divinity degree from Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas. ABHMS had awarded him a \$4,000 scholarship from the International Baptist Seminary Scholarship Fund for the 2012-2013 academic year.

“ABHMS may not know the impact of the money that they donated to me. It is making a difference in the lives of people,” Thui says. “I always felt that when you get help from folks at ABHMS, it’s always special because of the long-standing connection between the people of Burma and American Baptists.”

Thui was born into an American Baptist family in Burma’s Zokhua Village. His grandfather, he says, became a pastor after American Baptist missionaries arrived at the village in 1899.

“My grandfather changed the lives of many people forever,” says Thui. “I have dedicated my life to following in his footsteps by serving God in the country where our missionaries are from.”

In 2000, when he was 20, Thui followed his parents to the United States. Online, Thui met Chin, the woman who would become his wife. Chin came to the United States from Malaysia in 2010, and the couple married in 2011. Today they live in Garland, Texas, with their 2-year-old old son, Bik Bik.

Thui plans to begin pursuing a doctoral degree at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, Calif., in fall 2015. He earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Texas at Dallas in 2006. The most satisfying part of his ministry, he says, is welcoming, connecting and comforting newcomers to the United States through God's word.

"A lot of our folks don't speak the language, they don't know the culture, and it's a new country. So you can imagine how disconnected they feel," he says. "But when I preach and let them know that God is always with us—no matter the situation—that is, of course, encouragement for them. If they know that God is with them, that's pretty much it."

ABHMS supports immigrants and refugees through its Office of Immigration and Refugee Services. In addition, ABHMS provides continuing education scholarships to American Baptists.

“Crisis at the Border: What Could I Do?” A Virtual Mission Encounter for Women from AB Women’s Ministries

“Crisis at the Border: What Could I Do?” March 2-6, 2015, is a virtual mission encounter for women offering the opportunity for participants to delve into issues around immigration and unaccompanied minors.

In 2014, over 60,000 children arrived unaccompanied at the borders of the United States, seeking refuge from rampant violence and poverty in their home countries. Although the numbers of new arrivals have decreased in recent months, those who arrived earlier are still in limbo.

Romans 12:9-21 calls Christians to a most radical love. We are to extend hospitality to all, reaching beyond our own comfort zones and fears. We are to outdo one another in showing honor and mutual affection, and we are to overcome evil with good. Scripture tells us again and again to defend those who are unable to defend themselves, and to show our love of Christ through loving others. The children seeking asylum need us desperately; our faith compels us to respond.

This virtual mission encounter will help participants explore the stories of refugees and immigrants in the Bible; understand the difference between refugees and immigrants and see why that forms the crux of the dialogue around unaccompanied children at the border; learn about life in the countries the children are fleeing; understand better the children's needs once they arrive here in the United States; and learn about possibilities for advocacy and involvement.

Special guests for “Crisis at the Border” include Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Congdon-Martin, retired director of Supervised Ministries at Palmer Theological Seminary, who recently traveled to Guatemala with a group from her church to live and serve among families there; Mary Clark, Esq., executive director of Esperanza Immigration Legal Services; and Jen Smyers, associate director for Immigration and Refugee Policy with Church World Service. (Other speakers to be announced.)

Virtual mission encounters are a way for women to explore mission topics more deeply while still being able to attend to their responsibilities at work, home, church, or in their communities. Suggested activities to explore each day's focus are emailed to participants: each participant determines how many activities she may have time to do within her daily schedule. Activities may include such things as reading the newspaper, exploring websites, reading and responding to blog posts, taking prayer walks, researching a topic of interest further, listening to audio files or watching videos, and so forth. Every evening includes a conference call featuring a special guest with particular expertise or stories to share on the daily theme; participants may attend as many or as few conference calls as their schedule and interest allow.

For more information, speaker bios, and online registration, visit www.abwministries.org/vme. Spread the word in your congregation about this excellent opportunity to explore today's critical issues.

New Resource Produced in Partnership between AB Women’s Ministries and AB Women in Ministry

American Baptist Women’s Ministries and American Baptist Women in Ministry announce the release of *Caring for You and Your Ministry*, a printed resource for women learning how to find balance in their lives and attend to the health of their ministries. *Caring for You and Your Ministry* offers guidance and support from clergy and lay women, as well as medical and counseling professionals. It addresses the issue from the perspective of individual health as well as attending to these same issues in a ministry setting.

“Women engaged in ministry, whether as a professional or a layperson, must attend to their spiritual, physical, and emotional health in order to be effective leaders,” noted Virginia Holmstrom, executive director of American Baptist Women’s Ministries. “I am glad for the partnership with ABWIM to provide a resource that is relevant to all women who practice servant leadership.”

Rev. Patricia Hernandez, national director of American Baptist Women in Ministry, agreed. “Finding balance in caring for ourselves and our ministries fosters health in our ministries and well-being in our personal lives resulting in a spirited vitality overall, one that is healthy in heart, mind, soul, and strength.”

Caring for You and Your Ministry [Item #4940/\$13] may be purchased at www.abwministries.org/store. Profits will benefit both American Baptist Women’s Ministries and American Baptist Women in Ministry.

Upcoming Events

- Ministers Council Board of Governors Meeting, Overland Park, KS – February 1-4, 2015
- ABHMS Board Retreat, Charlotte, NC, February 10-13, 2015.
- In Valley Forge, February 23-4, 2015.
- McKee Consultation, Atlanta, GA, March 11-14, 2015.
- National Leadership Committee, Green Lake, WI, April 7-10, 2015.
- Prairie Pastors Conference, Omaha, NE, April 13-15, 2015.

Give to the Ministers Council

Support the work and ministry of the Ministers Council through the Ministers Council Endowment. Visit <http://ministerscouncil.com/the-ministers-council-endowment> for more information.

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