

Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson, Executive Director

March 2016



### From the Desk of the Executive Director

This month, I have the privilege of working with an organization to help them begin their strategic planning process. Strategic planning, you say? It was a tough sell for this organization too.

“We’re a faith-based organization,” some insisted. “We don’t do strategic planning.”

Have you ever heard such sentiments in your churches or organizations?

Yes, I come from a corporate background where strategic planning might

have been more common place, but I have come to recognize it as a spiritual practice as Gil Rendle and Alice Mann assert in their book *Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations*. And if you haven’t engaged in strategic planning in your congregations or organizations, perhaps I can commend it to you.

Years ago, I led a strategic planning effort for a church and I remember we sang the song, “Woyaya” in our opening gathering. The lyrics said,

*“We are going, heaven knows where we are going, we’ll know we’re there. We will get there; heaven knows how we will get there. We know we will.”*

I love the sentiment, but I believe that we as leaders have a responsibility to help our congregations and organizations figure out where we’re going and how we’re going to get there. But here’s the kicker: it’s not the leader’s responsibility to figure out this plan and path in a vacuum. Yes, the leader may have a vision or sense of God’s leading; however, to fully realize that plan and path others are required. The community, the congregation or the organization, must be in conversation together so that the plan and path are carved.

There are some exercises that I really enjoy using with groups as a way to begin the conversations that lead to strategic planning. In his book *Transforming Church Boards into Communities of Spiritual Leaders*, Charles M. Olsen suggests a story telling technique. Story telling is a marvelous way for congregations and organizations to begin talking about themselves and their experiences. For this particular technique, the group sits in a circle and the first person starts the story off by saying, “Once upon a time...” Then he or she provides a short snippet of their experience. It doesn’t matter if the individual does not have a long history with the church or organization. They tell the story as they are in it. After their sharing, the next person in the circle says, “But before that,” if their snippet occurred before the previous speaker, or “And after that,” if their snippet occurs afterwards. The process progresses around the circle until everyone has had a chance to participate. Continue the process with a second or third round if there is energy for it. The result is a group story that everyone owns because everyone was a part of crafting the story.

Another technique that I use with churches is adorning a tree. Draw a large tree trunk on craft or butcher paper and post it on a wall. Then create leaves from construction paper: Green, Yellow, and Brown. Participants are asked to consider the ministries of the church and categorize them from their own perspectives. Have them list the name of a ministry on an individual leaf: Green for ministries that are new or flourishing; Yellow for ministries that are mature, but perhaps showing signs of decline; and Brown for ministries that are dying or dead. Allow people to adorn the tree with their color coded listing of ministries. The result is a colorful, yet stunning snapshot of people's perspectives about the ministries of the church.

And I love the good old SWOT analysis. This stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. A SWOT analysis looks at the congregation or organization internally and externally. Strengths and Weaknesses come from that internal look. As we consider ourselves, what are our strengths? What are our weaknesses? Opportunities and Threats consider the external view. As we look at the community, what from the larger culture serves as an opportunity for what we offer? What serves as threat against what we offer? The analysis provides a fuller perspective from which the organization or congregation can plan. In the planning you answer question, "How do we leverage our strengths and opportunities, while mitigating our weaknesses and threats?"

Regardless of the technique, the goal is conversation. When a congregation or organization comes together, we have the opportunity to talk and to hear what others think. This helps us to gain perspective about what is and is not important in the organization. But more than that, we are gaining the opportunity to hear the voice of God in community and discern God's direction together. And as we hear, we are able to begin to map a direction. Of course this is only the beginning of a longer, more involved process, but the desire for community together to work remains the same. This is what makes strategic planning a spiritual practice. We come together in community to discern God's will, be conformed as churches and faith-based organizations to embody Christ, and live out our mission as disciple-making disciples.

Hopefully you are engaging your congregation or organization in this kind of intentional, spiritual practice of strategic planning. If you need help, you can always contact me. The overarching point is this: if we do these things, truly we can say that "We are going." But hopefully as we come together in community for strategic planning, we will know where we are going and how we will get there.



## **March Madness? Only if You're Not a Member of the Ministers Council**

Have you forgotten to renew your membership or become a member of the Ministers Council? Well, don't be mad; you can still do something about it. Go to <http://ministerscouncil.com/subscriptions/>. It's the easiest way to renew or become a member for the first time.

The Ministers Council exists to equip ministers to be effective in ministry. Local chapters offer programs such as retreats, lectures with compelling speakers, and luncheon gatherings. Nationally, the Ministers Council advocates for ministers. We collaborate with partners to make resources available to you. And we provides programming that will enhance and strengthen you in ministry like the 7Rs of Sanctuary.

Renew or join today. You can contact your local chapter or you can access the Ministers Council website and pay your dues electronically at <http://ministerscouncil.com/subscriptions/>. National dues are incredibly affordable and scaled to income levels.

It's March, but you don't have to be mad because you haven't paid your dues yet. Do something about it. Join the thousands of ABC clergy, lay leaders, counselors, and seminarians who recognize the benefits of collegiality, centeredness, and competence. This is your organization. Be a part of it.

**SAVE THE DATE**

**August 22-25, 2016**

*for the*

**2016 Ministers Conference**

**Holistic Maintenance of the Ministry**

*at the*

4H Youth & Conference Center  
Chevy Chase, MD



The 2016 Ministers Conference will be held at the National 4H Conference Center, <http://www.4hcenter.org/>, in Chevy Chase, MD right outside of Washington DC. Come for respite and retreat as we engage in the spiritual practices and professional development competencies that will ensure the *Holistic Maintenance of the Ministry*. Your hosts are the Office of the General Secretary Board of General Ministries, American Baptist Foundation, American Baptist Home Mission Societies, MMBB, the Ministers Council, and the Regional Executive Ministers Council (REMC).



Our Conference featured leaders are [Jennifer Davidson, Ph.D.](#), Associate Professor of Worship and Theology/Director of Chapel at American Baptist Seminary of the West, and [Brad Berglund](#), pastor, musician and worship leader, who will lead us in contemplative worship practices through [Rhythms of the Spirit](#).

The schedule for our conference, listed below, features spacious time for worship, spiritual practice, opportunities for fellowship with colleagues, and professional enrichment. In addition, partners from MMBB, American Baptist Foundation, and Rhythm of the Spirit facilitators will be on hand for individual and small group experiences.

Monday, 8/22	Tuesday, 8/23	Wednesday, 8/24	Thursday, 8/25
Registration	Registration 7:00 Breakfast 9:00 Morning Worship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rhythms of the Spirit</li> </ul> 10:45 – Workshops <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clergy Health</li> <li>Networking</li> <li>Economic Challenges facing Pastors</li> </ul> 12:00 – Lunch 1:30 – Sabbath Free time 5:30 – Dinner	Registration 7:00 Breakfast 9:00 Morning Worship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experiencing Rhythms of the Spirit</li> <li>Plenary Session</li> </ul> 12:00 – Lunch 1:00 – Workshops <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clergy Health</li> <li>Networking</li> <li>Economic Challenges facing Pastors</li> </ul> 2:30 – Individual Experience time 5:30 – Dinner 7:00 Worship	7:00 Breakfast 9:00 Morning Worship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rhythms of the Spirit</li> <li>Communion</li> </ul> 11:00 Dismissal 11:30 Lunch

**Registration will open in April.** Registration packages include a Full Package, A la Carte, Family and Commuter plans, which start at \$433.11.

With a focus on “The Holistic Maintenance of the Ministry,” the 2016 Ministers Conference will provide a well-rounded view of healthy ministry. Come to connect with colleagues and realize a time of renewal and respite. In addition you will learn strategies for sustainable living in ministry and practical actions as outcomes. You will emerge with energy to continue in ministry and tools for ministry longevity. Save the date, register, and join us.

## Persevere in the Passion



There is pain in the passion.  
People, who cheer you one day, demand your destruction the next.  
You are beaten and chastised for your beliefs.  
And supposed closest allies leave you hanging with no support.  
Only the marginalized remain, and no one counts them.

You die a painful death, remaining true to your call.  
Mocking crowds jeer at your defeat.  
And you breathe a plea for forgiveness with a waning breath.

But even in death you are not dormant.  
You reconcile to yourself the dead who did not know you.  
But coming for the "quick," the story does not end.  
You rise on the third day with all power in your hand.

So persevere through passion my brother and sister.  
Carry high your cross; it is one of redemption.  
Remain in the struggle; Jesus Christ will be with you.  
And one day your cross will be a crown.



## Give to the Ministers Council

Support the work of the Ministers Council. Use our [Donor Information Form](#) to contribute to the Equipping Ministries Endowment Fund, Together in Ministry Endowment Fund, General Fund or to a designated ministry effort that you specify. As you support the Ministers Council, you make ministry happen.

## Local Chapter News

### **A Note from the Ministers Council President, Rev. Doug Harris:**

Everyday heroes are all around us. This is as true of ministerial service as it is of any other helping profession. You, without a doubt have noticed a ministerial colleague who faithfully discharges his/her duties with great effectiveness, or who has taken up a cause out of commitment to the Lord and the church, even if it has been costly.

That is the person I would like to know about. He/she is a worthy candidate for the Ralph Garfield Schell Presidential Award granted by the Ministers Council. Since 1996, this recognition of excellence in ministry has been awarded to a pastoral leader who has been faithful in carrying out the principles of the Ministers Council's Code of Ethics.

The Ralph Garfield Schell Award is named for the first President of the national Ministers Council, who served in the late 1930's, while also leading the Baptist Churches in Chicago and serving on various denominational and ecumenical Boards.

This award will be presented at the 2016 Annual Meeting of the Ministers Council at the 4H Youth Conference Center in Washington DC area on August 22nd. We need your assistance in identifying nominees for this award. Please use the simple nomination form below to make your nomination. All nominations must be submitted no later than July 1, 2016. Please submit those nominations via email at [joyce.moon@abc-usa.org](mailto:joyce.moon@abc-usa.org).

### **Philadelphia Baptist Association Ministers Council**

On March 9<sup>th</sup>, the PBA Ministers Council is presenting the workshop "Clergy Thinking Soberly" A challenge to hold ourselves accountable in our role as those whom God has designated to lead His people. We must make self-examination a priority if we are going to continue to be effective in our ministry to God's people. The theme scripture for the workshop comes from Romans 12:3. The facilitator for the gathering is Rev. Carmena D. Pyfrom, M.Div., The Church of the Redeemer Baptist, Inc. Social gathering is from 9:30 to 10:00; the workshop is from 10:00 – 11:30; and the business meeting is from 11:30 – 12:00. The gathering will be held at the PBA offices, 8711 Ridge Avenue, Philadelphia.

### **Ministers Council of Greater Bay Area**

In January, the Ministers Council of the Greater Bay Area gathered for its annual retreat at Redwood Glen. We had nearly 40 people join us as we explored the theme: "On the Edge of Chaos: Loving Life's Transitions" with John Landgraf, former director of the Center for Ministry in Oakland. It was an inspiring time of questioning, praying, and seeking as a number of pastors in the group had recently left or were leaving ministry positions. We were blessed to have a range of experiences and ages (from 26 to 86), laughing and learning together, with new pastors in the area along with our wise retired sages. We were also blessed to have friends from the Oregon Ministers Council join us. This spring, just after Easter, we are planning a one-day event featuring a panel of our retired ministers sharing what they have learned in ministry.

### **Rochester Genesee Ministers Council**

The Ministers Council sponsored an "Ash Wednesday Devotional Continental Breakfast" on February 10. Approximately (7) ministers/pastors attended the devotion. Region Executive Minister Alan Newton led the devotion we engaged in scripture reading, prayer, reflection, and discernment. For me the experience was very spiritual and vision casting triggering challenges and opportunities pressing-up against the church in the twenty-first century. Alan provided attendee's with a book to keep and use through-out the Lenten season "The GOD We Can Know" *Exploring the "I Am" Sayings of Jesus*, by Rob Fuquay.

Subsequent to our Regional MC meeting 01/04/16: A mechanism was established to offer a region sponsored webinar highlighting the "Hartford Report" a new study identifying what churches are doing to attract young adults. Our ministerial team agreed the "Report" would be a great resource and discernment tool for pastoral and lay leadership. The report highlights strategies for church growth, conflict, church idleness, church decline, and the socio-economic/socio-cultural realities church leaders and congregations seem reluctant to embrace or give voice too. Alan recommended the webinar be offered as a pre-Easter event (perhaps the 6<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, or 20<sup>th</sup> of March).

Our Regional Executive Board has agreed on a date for our Spring 2016 weekend Retreat "April 29-30. The retreat will be held @ Notre Dame Retreat Center in Canandaigua NY overlooking Lake Canandaigua. Goals for the Retreat: Expand on discussion from last year on living fully into our region reality (How to strengthen the "WE") and the question of a new name for the region.

### **The Ministers Council of Oregon**

The Ministers Council of Oregon, in partnership with the Executive Minister of the American Baptist Churches of the Central Pacific Coast, recently hosted a 2-day conference entitled, "The Joshua Strategy," spearheading the conversation around the question of how to become more effective in ministry and mission with fewer resources. This conference was developed in partnership with and facilitated by Dr. Anthony Pappas, recently-retired Executive Ministers of the American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts, who led some 70 pastors and key lay leaders from more than 15 churches and ministries through this 2-day process of interactive dialogue and discovery so that leaders will be better prepared to identify, ask and experience the challenging questions that affect their current climates and cultural contexts toward the future. As a result, both powerful questions and powerful statements were identified throughout the weekend and sent to participants and churches for further conversations in their ministry contexts as well as for consideration when the Ministers Council Leader Team and the Executive Minister determine ways to promote follow-up across the region.

### **The Conference of Baptist Ministers in Massachusetts**

In January workshops on Clergy Taxes were led by Hazel Roper.

In February we began planning a series of programs with the Center for Career Development and Ministry, including a Professional Boundaries Workshop, a Couples Program, and A Retirement Planning Workshop.

On April 1, we will sponsor a "7 R's of Sanctuary for Pastors" led by the Executive Director of the national Ministers Council, Debora Jackson.

On April 13, we will hold our annual Advanced Interim Ministry Workshop. This year's subject is "Sacred Space for Difficult Conversations" led by Cheryl Harris.

On May 5 is our annual ABROM (American Baptist retirees of Massachusetts) Spring Luncheon with special guests, Mary Day Miller, Executive Minister of TABCOM, and Cynthia Maybeck, Storytelling Minister.

May 13 is our Annual Meeting at the TABCOM Annual Gathering. We will also be planning our Fall Annual Gathering with the Massachusetts Baptist Multicultural Ministries, building on the momentum of last year's Dialogue Program.

In October we will have an Introduction to Interim Ministry Workshop. We are planning Spiritual Practice Programs during this year. We have a team which is developing a Mentoring Program.

## Women in Ministry: The Soul of Leadership

July 24 - 27, 2016  
Washington DC

Women in professional ministry serve in a variety of roles and lead in a variety of ways. But the model for leadership in twenty-first century Western culture is one in which leaders are rewarded for their drive, decisiveness, productivity, and long work hours. What would it look like for leaders to step off the treadmill, reclaim their calling, carve out time to cultivate the inner life, and take time apart for personal reflection? What would leadership arising from a core of spiritual groundedness and compassion look like?



This event will be co-led by Margaret Benefiel, Ph.D., the new Executive Director of Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation and the Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson, Executive Director of The Ministers Council and is offered as a partnership of ABWIM and The Ministers Council.



American Baptist Women in Ministry (ABWIM) and AB Women's Ministries are partnering to offer a women's intercultural/interfaith spiritual pilgrimage to the Republic of Georgia on August 3-13, 2016. Participants will include up to 20 Baptist and Muslim women from the U.S. The purpose of the pilgrimage is to break barriers and build bridges between Christians and Muslims, generations, Georgians and Americans, and lay and ordained women.

In the Republic of Georgia, the American women will be hosted by the Georgian Muslims Union and Georgian Baptists. Participants will experience homestays with Muslim families, reverent reflections in mosques and ancient Christian churches, worship experiences with the Evangelical Baptist Church of Georgia community, seminars to deepen understanding of Christianity and Islam, respectful dialogue between Baptists and Muslims, advocacy for gender justice, hiking, and the country's unique hospitality, cuisine, and folkdance. For additional information, itinerary, and registration materials, visit [www.abwministries.org/Events](http://www.abwministries.org/Events).

### National Event for American Baptist Women and Girls in Washington, D.C.

American Baptist Women's Ministries invites you to two concurrent events for women and girls this summer at the Hilton Washington Dulles Airport hotel in Herndon, Virginia, in July, 2016. "Dwelling, Discovering, Discipling/ Dedicando, Descubriendo, Discipulando," based on Romans 12, is the theme of the national conference for women and the national gathering for girls.

The women's conference will be using "unconference" principles throughout the event, including dialogue and conversational groups for Bible study and topical discussion. It will be inclusive of young adult women and older women. Rev. Dr. Trinette McCray of McCray Consulting will be facilitating Bible study dialogue and table conversations, and worship experiences will be led by the members of the intergenerational planning team with music coordinated by Valeria Foster, Gospel Choir Director at the National City Christian Church in Washington, D.C. In addition to the conference programming, young adult women will also have opportunities to gather together for fellowship and learning. A semi-formal banquet celebrating the 65th anniversary of American Baptist Women's Ministries will be on Saturday evening, and will include recognition of former presidents and executive directors of the organization and highlights from the history of the ministry.

The women's conference, including components for young adult women, begins Thursday, July 21, with evening worship, and ends Sunday, July 24, with morning worship. From Sunday evening, July 24, through Tuesday evening, July 26, there are four optional seminars for women, focused upon such topics as hunger and advocacy, leadership capacity development, Baptist-Muslim dialogue and, in partnership with American Baptist Women in Ministry and Minister's Council, women in professional church vocations.

The conference for girls who have completed grade 6 through seniors in high school begins on Thursday, July 21, with evening worship, and concludes Tuesday, July 26th, with evening worship. Participants in the girls' event will join with the women's conference in worship and conversation in significant ways through the weekend, as well as having their own times of worship and learning planned by the national leadership team of AB GIRLS. A highlight of the girls' conference is two days of hands-on mission in the Washington D.C. area.

For information on each event, visit [www.abwministries.org](http://www.abwministries.org). Registration is open now. A downloadable flyer and bulletin insert are available on the event page.

### **Walk with Generosity: A Devotional Journal, written by Rev. Sandra Dorsainvil, Designed by Kate Smith.**

Sandra Dorsainvil provides us with a handy resource for a 40-day reflective journey with God. It can be used for a liturgical season but is not limit in its application. Rather Rev. Dorsainvil's guide provides us with an opportunity to put our faith in action, whether it is in reflection, journaling, or actually giving of ourselves and our resources. She provides us with an opportunity to pattern our lives and actions after our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, that we might be better servants. Contact Rev. Dorsainvil directly to obtain your copy at [s\\_dorsainvil@yahoo.com](mailto:s_dorsainvil@yahoo.com).

### **ABHMS calls for Children in Poverty grant applications by April 27**

Congregations, regions and community ministries related to American Baptist Churches USA are invited to [apply](#) for 2016 Justice for Children Initiative Children in Poverty (CiP) grants from American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) for support of [projects](#) that address the needs of children in poverty.

At least 10 grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000 each will be awarded. Projects should address at least one of the following three areas: access to quality public school education, access to quality health care and livable wages. Deadline is April 27, 2016.

The CiP grant has been supporting the child-empowering projects of American Baptist congregations and related organizations since 2009. In seven years, \$372,000 has been awarded to 90 projects that have sought to improve children's math and literacy skills, provide nutrition and basic needs, raise awareness of children's needs, prepare youth for college, provide English as a Second Language classes and job training for parents, address bullying and partner with schools to benefit children. Read more about CiP grants online. For a grant application, visit [www.abhms.org](http://www.abhms.org) > Ministries & Programs > [Children in Poverty](#), or contact the Rev. Lisa Harris Lee, ABHMS national coordinator of the Justice for Children Initiative, at [lisa.harris-lee@abhms.org](mailto:lisa.harris-lee@abhms.org) or 1-800-222-3872, x2158.

Applications can be submitted online or printed and sent by postal mail. No applications will be accepted via email or fax. Applications must be received by or postmarked to ABHMS by April 27, 2016.

### **Local News Anyone?**

We want to share news and events from local Ministers Council chapters, and ABCUSA organizations that want to promote their good works across the country. Do you have news to share? Forward your stories and information to Joyce Moon at [joyce.moon@abc-usa.org](mailto:joyce.moon@abc-usa.org). We want to share your happenings with others.

### **Ministers Council Contact Information**

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