From the Desk of the Executive Director

Disclaimer: This is not meant to be a partisan political piece. Oh sure, there are politics involved. And yes, I am a political junky who loves presidential politics. However, this is not the time or the place. There is a bigger issue here for me.

I was listening to a commentator talking about the presumptive Democratic and Republican candidates and as he spoke, I heard a sigh escape from his mouth. I understood. This is going to be the nastiest, ugliest presidential race that I can remember in my lifetime and I, for one, am not looking forward to it. What I am looking for is Jesus. I’m trying to find Christ in political life and I will tell you that I’m pretty hard pressed to do it.

I cannot find Christ in mean-spirited, vitriolic debate. When I was in high school, I competed on the debate team, so I know what it means to spar with an opponent. I know how to attack an argument and offer countervailing points. That is what vigorous debate does: it contrasts the views and opinions of one against another so that individuals are swayed and moved to choose. However, in the sparring, the attack was not personal. It was not hurtful or harmful to the individual. We attacked the argument and not the person. But this is not spirit of what we are seeing on the national stage. I’m trying to find Christ in political life. And in that search, I am reminded of the covenant that members of my church recite on the first Sunday of the month:

“We further engage to watch over, pray for, to exhort and stir up each other unto every good word and work; to guard each other’s reputation, not needlessly exposing the infirmities of others…”

Now one could argue that we are covenantant to do this with fellow believers of the church. However, I would counter that we should see evidence of that covenant keeping in our daily walk, regardless of who the individual is. And if our political figures would do this – to debate the issues, not lob personal attacks and attempts to assassinate personal character, we might find Christ in political life.

I cannot find Christ in the prejudiced racial, ethnic, or gender based comments and insinuations that have characterized the political climate. Sly & the Family Stone offered words that summarize what we see in too many instances: “There is a yellow one that won’t accept the black one, that won’t accept the red one that won’t accept the white one…” It is a sad state of affairs that
just should not be. From the start, this country was a country of racially diverse peoples: indigenous peoples who were here before the "Forefathers" arrived; European immigrants seeking freedom; Africans who were first indentured, then enslaved; later Asians and peoples of Middle Eastern heritage. We came; and in the coming we are, as is inscribed on the Statue of Liberty, the huddled masses yearning to breathe free. And whether our ancestors came 200 years ago from Great Britain, or two years ago from Central or South America, we are trying to live out the promises of this country. So for that reason alone we should be seeking to create a united republic that affirms the motto "out of the many, one."

But more than that, our Judeo-Christian heritage compels us to come together. We are told to welcome the stranger. We are reminded that in doing so we might be entertaining angels unaware. We are to care for the widowed and the orphan. We are to be the champion for the marginalized and oppressed. And given these mandates, I can’t find Christ in political arguments that suggest that I should be suspicious of you because of the color of your skin, where you are from, your gender, or orientation. No, this is not the way of the Savior. We will find Christ in political life when we love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

Finally, I cannot find Christ in the polarizing religious positioning that suggests that God loves you if you believe as I do and hold the values that I hold. I was watching the movie “Kingdom of Heaven” and found myself amused by some of the rhetoric of this historical narrative. Christian crusaders declared war against a militarily superior Muslim cavalry. Their rationale: “because God wills it.” And when the movie’s protagonist suggested that maybe Christians and Muslims were meant to share Jerusalem, the word “blasphemy” was cried out in response.

The setting of the movie was the 12th century, but it’s alarming how some things have not changed. We express fear and distrust from people who believe differently than we do. And we can be critical and condemning of people whose faith traditions are different than ours. Admittedly, this is one of the things about being Baptist, in general, and American Baptist, specifically, that I love. Within our “Four Fragile Freedoms” we espouse the freedom of, for, and from religion that says that we defend the right of people to believe as they do even if that belief is different from ours. We would all do well to remember that God is not a respecter of persons. And we would find Christ in political life when we realize that anyone who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to God.

So it is true that it’s going to be a really long five months until the election. And if these early days are any indication, it’s going to get far worse before it gets better. But if some of us will endeavor to find Christ in political life: to love our neighbor, to welcome the stranger, and to promote religious liberty, maybe what we do, what we say, and how we act might be infectious and others will emulate.

Did you Miss “An Abundant Life... Even for Ministers?”

The Ministers Council sponsored a webinar entitled, An Abundant Life... Even for Ministers? Testimonies and Tools for Thriving in Your Ministry. Did you miss it? Rev. Dr. Steve Neal and Rev. Jacki Belile were wonderful and those who were able to participate in the webinar were truly blessed.

Oh, you didn’t make it? Never fear. Thanks to the wonders of technology, we were able to capture the content and it is as close to you as a click of the mouse. Go to https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/66628579835402753 and you can listen at your convenience.

In addition, we would remind you that the Ministers Council is interested in continuing this webinar series where we have an opportunity for “iron to sharpen iron” as colleagues learn and share together. If you have webinar ideas or topics in which you would be interested, contact the Ministers Council so that we can continue to serve you.
New Bulletin Insert Available

Spanish American Baptist Seminary, begun in Los Angeles in 1921 by the AB Home Mission Society, is the focus of a new bulletin insert available from the American Baptist Historical Society (ABHS), website. This is one in a series of bulletin inserts the Historical Society has developed to celebrate home and foreign missions, Baptist Heritage Day, and women in ministry.

The seminary was established to teach pastors in the Los Angeles area, but soon attracted pastors from Mexico, Central and South America. Women were included in 1944. Rev. John Francke Detweiler served as the first president and dean of the school which closed in 1964.

Official records for the school were deposited with the American Baptist Historical Society. ABHS staff would welcome additions to these records, particularly stories about their training and ministries from individuals who attended the Spanish American Baptist Seminary. Stories can be submitted by email to abhs@abhsarchives.org or regular mail, to AB Historical Society, 3001 Mercer University Dr., Atlanta, GA 30341.

There is still time! There is still housing! But scholarship money is going fast!

If you know someone God might be calling to become a global missionary, encourage them to attend “Hear the Call”. To learn more about this high-intensity weekend of discernment, and to register, go to: http://www.worldmissionconference.org

Hot Off the Press from Judson Press
Holy Heroes: The Gospel According to DC & Marvel
By Scott Bayles

Maybe you saw X-Men: Apocalypse. Maybe you rushed out to see Captain America: Civil War. You’ve seen every comic book hero known to humanity, be it Superman, Spiderman, or Ant Man. If so, then this book is for you. Scott Bayles teaches us spiritual lessons through comic book heroes. In parable-like fashion, he connects the truths about God’s word to the stories of Batman, Wonder Woman, the Green Lantern and others. And it will come as no surprise that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the greatest superhero of them all. This is a great book for teens, young adults, or anyone who loves comic book heroes. And the best part: Ministers Council members receive free shipping of orders over $15.00.

Go to www.judsonpress.com for this and other titles. And if you want to get your super hero persona on, click here and get Holy Heroes today.
Register for the 2016 Ministers Conference:

August 22-25, 2016
4H Youth and Conference Center

Registration for the 2016 Ministers Conference is open! Plan to join us as we focus on “The Holistic Maintenance of the Ministry.” Featuring Dr. Jennifer Davidson and Rev. Brad Berglund in worship, ABC Partners with workshops and program offerings, space for rest and renewal, this year’s conference promises to be a highlight of the summer and opportunity for you to learn strategies for sustainable living in ministry and practical actions as outcomes. The schedule for the Conference is listed below:

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<td>12:00 – Lunch</td>
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Are you interested in registering? Do you want to learn more? Full retreat details can be access by clicking here. You can download the pdf version of the registration form by clicking here.

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 Debora Jackson at Debora.jackson@abc-usa.org. We want to share your happenings with others.
News from Ministers Council Local Chapters

Tremendous activities are occurring in our local chapters of the Ministers Council. Below is an update from a few of our chapters from our recent Ministries Team Meeting.

**ABC of the Rochester Genesee Region**
Ivan Marable reported that Alan Newton, the Regional Executive Minister is on sabbatical. The recent local chapter retreat was well attended. Topics included pastoral care and growing churches. He updated us on the decision of Colgate Rochester Crozier Divinity School to sell their campus and relocate the school.

**Ministers Council of ABC of Pennsylvania and Delaware**
Randy Harris reported that a men’s retreat is planned for July. He is grateful for the number of ordinations in his region, four of them in the congregation he serves. It is a hopeful sign.

**Ministers Council of Michigan**
Jim Kent reported on the April retreat in his region. There were 37 in attendance and presenters were drawn from within the group. It was a good time for all; even the weather cooperated.

**Ministers Council for Metro Chicago**
Jacki Belile reported that, for the third consecutive year, Metro Chicago's chapter co-sponsored event tracks at the region’s annual meeting. One track this year was the first for Christian Educators, led by Rev. Dr. Denise Janssen and Rev. Randy Creath; this launched a new Christian Educators Network in Chicagoland. In addition, Dr. Claudio Carvalhaes from McCormick Seminary led a dynamic preached workshop entitled “Metaphors of Preaching.” This chapter also co-sponsors Sisters in Service, which focuses on bringing lay and clergywomen together to support their respective "spheres of significance" (concept credit to Dr. Trinette McCray). A book study of Kindling Desire for God: Preaching As Spiritual Direction by Kay Northcutt will be led by Dr. Thomas Aldworth, pastor of Morgan Park Baptist Church.

**Ministers Council for Indianapolis, Indiana & Kentucky**
Dan Hopkins reported that their local chapter dues have changed from $20 to $30 and asked to have that reflected on the Ministers Council website. Their local chapter just finished their spring retreat on Managing Conflict with Tim Gardner and it went very well. In September, the region’s Biennial will occur. Susan Gillies will speak at the region-wide event and at the Ministers Council event as well. In the spring of 2017, they plan for Matt Bloom to talk with the local chapter about Flourishing Congregations and Pastors.

**Conference of Baptist Ministers in Massachusetts**
Michael Harvey reported that the Massachusetts region’s annual meeting was held. The region’s emphasis on addressing common issues collaboratively is a high priority at this point.
Women in Ministry: The Soul of Leadership – 3D: National Event for Women of All Ages After-Events

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.

Come together to connect with other women in professional ministry, reconnect with one's calling, and reflect on the soul of leadership. For additional information, itinerary, and registration materials, visit www.abwministries.org/Events.

Join the Ministers Council

Join the thousands of ABC clergy, lay leaders, counselors, and seminarians who recognize the benefits of collegiality, centeredness, and competence through the Ministers Council. You can join the Ministers Council and reap the benefits of being part of a covenanting community of clergy who care. You can contact your local chapter or you can access the Ministers Council website and pay your dues electronically at http://ministerscouncil.com/subscriptions/.

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