It was the 1950s. My grandmother, Edith Jackson, was shopping in downtown Elkhart, Indiana. As she passed a department store window, the display stopped her in her tracks.

A lovely white woman was posing next to a brand-new washing machine. Next to this was a mechanized, fat, black woman with a bandana on her head, reminiscent of Aunt Jemima, laboring over an old-fashioned scrub board.

This image incensed my grandmother. She marched right into the store, demanding to see the manager.

“You take that display down,” she said. “We wash our clothes just like everybody else. You take that down!”

Understand that my grandmother was 4 feet 10 inches tall and weighed hardly 100 lbs. She would not have intimidated anyone based on her stature. Moreover, people in an overwhelmingly white, Midwestern city in conservative Indiana would have hardly felt pressed to comply with the demands of an African-American woman.

And yet the store manager removed the display immediately. In response to the demands of my grandmother, he took the display down.

I never knew my grandmother. She died before I was born. But I heard this story many times growing up, and I realize now that this story — and the retelling of it — formed me as a leader. It influenced how I lead as an African-American woman, and makes me sensitive to the fact that much of what many would consider the cultural fabric was foundational in determining who I am as a leader.

My realization stems from the power of story. History is often just that: his story -- the story of the victor. The most heralded lessons of leadership are not written by people that look like me.

Much of what’s promoted as the pearls of leadership wisdom are really the learnings from a Eurocentric, patriarchal experience; of what we should do and how we should do it to be the most effective in our leadership.

And in many instances, these learnings have served me well. I understand how to be an adaptive, emotionally intelligent, self-differentiated leader who is able to effectively motivate diverse teams of individuals to collectively engage and learn so that the organization can make progress on confronting challenges.

These are important capacities for leadership, but they don't tell the whole story of who I am as a leader.
You see, I am a product of African-American ancestry, two generations removed from slavery, by people who left the stain of segregation in the South to seek a better life and opportunity in the North.

I was raised by parents who were the first in their generation to be college educated, and who instilled in me the message that education was paramount to future success. Although I am decades from the South, my Southern roots are at times reflected in my ways of being and speaking.

Where are these capacities harnessed and nurtured? How do I bring my full self to the leadership table? It is through the stories and narratives that have been passed from generation to generation.

It is through the stories that were re-told or overheard when I was a little girl sitting between my mother's knees having my hair braided. Stories told at the kitchen table when the old folks got together. These were the stories that the women told as they snapped beans, shelled peas, or picked greens.

These stories were often funny. But the wisdom, passion, and assertion of personhood was not laughed away. Growing up and hearing the stories, I learned of the faith of patriarchs, the assertiveness of matriarchs, the joys and struggles of bygone days, and the persistence of a people who continued to strive from then until now.

In short, I found my voice and a sense of self through the stories. Just consider the story of my grandmother.

What did I learn from her confrontation with the store manager? I learned of an indomitable spirit that would not be quenched. I learned of righteous indignation that would not back down. I learned of a fearless consciousness of justice. I was reminded of Jesus Christ, who stripped the mask from the oppressive powers of the day to demonstrate what was right, just and true.

Most importantly, I learned that when these capacities are combined, not only could I lead, but I could lead in ways that made a difference.

The result was an empowering affirmation of self that I believe is transformative for leaders now. Many of us realize that our experiences are not found nor fully expounded upon in leadership theory. But I have come to recognize that as we unearth and re-tell the stories of our own cultural heritage, those stories can powerfully enhance who we are as leaders.

I am a witness to this. Because of story, I found my voice, and I can authentically lead from my whole self.

This essay is being featured by Duke Divinity Faith & Leadership, and can be found at https://www.faithandleadership.com/debora-jackson-how-my-grandmothers-story-helped-me-lead-african-american-woman. Read more at www.faithandleadership.com.

Eppinger Named American Baptist Historical Society Executive Director

The American Baptist Historical Society welcomes Rev. Dr. Priscilla Eppinger as the next Executive Director. She will begin her duties on August 15. Dr. Eppinger comes to the Historical Society from Graceland University Community of Christ Seminary in Lamoni, Iowa, where she has been Professor of Religion since 2002. She was educated at Agnes Scott College (BA), Andover Newton Theological School (M.Div), and Northwestern University and Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary (PhD). At Graceland University, she has been teaching religious studies, theology, and church history to seminary students and undergraduates.

Her roots in American Baptist Churches (ABC) life run deep, having served as a missionary to Zaire and on staff for the American Baptist Home Mission Societies. She has also been a member of the General Board of ABC and the board of ABC Educational Ministries, as well as on the ABC biennial planning committee. As an ordained minister, she served churches in Massachusetts and Illinois.

A public welcome is being planned by the Board of Managers for Friday, September 30.
As a youth, my maternal grandmother suffered from Parkinson's disease, diabetes, and hypertension. As she aged, these illnesses crippled her mobility. This was a woman who was devoutly religious. Faith was an integral part of her life. During her illness she requested readings from the Gospel of John chapter 14. Whether she was hospitalized or homebound, that reading soothed her during her suffering. This was a spiritual practice that enabled my grandmother to find solace in suffering. This was a spiritual practice that enabled her to come to terms with an illness that had invaded her body but not her spirit or mind.

Spirituality is an essential element in healthcare. Plato noted, “The cure of the part should not be attempted without the cure of the whole. No attempt should be made to cure the body without the soul and if the head and the body are not healthy, you must begin by curing the mind.” Spirituality is defined as that which gives a person meaning and purpose in life, leads to the development of personal value systems, and connect one to something larger than self.1 In times of crisis, specifically a health crisis, individuals search for meaning concerning their suffering. Their spiritual practice enables them to address and raise those existential questions. Modern medicine has advanced tremendously within the 21st Century. However, suffering continues to be the agony that plagues those who are ill.

When patients are admitted the hospital to be cared for, the whole person enters. They enter with their beliefs and the spiritual journey that fuels and feeds them. The Joint Commission for the Accreditation of Hospital Organizations (JACHO) requires that a spiritual history be taken on every patient admitted to an acute care hospital or nursing home and that a spiritual history must be documented in the medical record.2 Patients and Pastor need to be aware that the Healthcare Industry views spirituality as part of the patients care. Pastors are well within their scope of ministry when encouraging members of their congregation to request prayer in the hospital. Many times, members may be reluctant to initiate this request when their pastor is not present. However, according JACHO, this spiritual practice as well as many others are encouraged.

As a chaplain, I have the opportunity to sit with patients and inquire about what's important, what grounds them and what enables them to persever through challenges similar to their current healthcare crisis. Prayer is often the practice that many patients find comforting and grounding. Congregants associate with churches are grateful to have a spiritual leader walk with them on this journey. “Spiritual and compassionate care involves serving the whole person, the physical, emotional, social and spiritual.” Clergy are an asset to the congregant when they are involved in the care of their congregants. Many pastors are not always able to serve their congregants in this intimate capacity. However, it is noteworthy to establish a ministry that is able to do so. This further grounds the relationship of the congregant with their community of faith as well as supports them during a major time of anxiety.

Reverend Dr. Greg Johnson is currently the Senior Pastor of Cornerstone Community Church, located in Endicott, New York. Dr. Johnson serves also as a Chaplain of Ascension Health Lourdes Hospital, in the city of Binghamton, New York. Along with the many other organizations Dr. Johnson is affiliated with he is the currently the President of the Board for the ABCNYS. In addition Dr. Johnson is the author of the book, “Merging with Grace” http://www.xulonpress.com/bookstore/bookdetail.php?PB.ISBN=9781498466660&HC.ISBN=.

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2 Joint Commission for the Accreditation of Hospital Organizations, http://www.jointcommission.org/AccreditationPrograms/Hospitals/Standards/FAQs/Provision+of+Care/Assessment/Spiritual_Assessment.htm (last revised January 1, 2004).
Register now for the 7R’s of Sanctuary Program

Registration for the 7Rs of Sanctuary program is now open and applications are being received for a year-long cohort to begin in September 2016. Apply now by clicking here.

The 7Rs of Sanctuary is a program designed to help leaders realize greater personal and professional efficacy in leadership by integrating contemplative, spiritually-grounded practices, both personal and communal, into their daily lives. Through this 12-month program, participants will engage in a variety of contemplative practices, alone and together, while learning strategies that will help them address some of the most pressing leadership challenges. The results will be transformative as leaders attain increased well-being and wholeness for themselves in community, while mastering skills that will strengthen their organizations. The program features one three-day residency to be held September 19-21, 2016 at the Wisdom House Conference Center, 229 East Litchfield Rd., Litchfield, CT; four one-day follow-up sessions to be scheduled quarterly, supplemented by reading, reflection and peer group learning.

As the research clearly articulates in the book Spiritual Practices for Effective Leadership: 7R’s of Sanctuary for Pastors, leaders who take time apart to engage in spiritual practices are more effective in their leadership. Leaders must become competent in taking an action and simultaneously reflecting on the action to learn from it. The challenge is in making space for that time of reflection so that leaders can restore their sense of purpose, put issues in perspective, and regain courage and heart. This is the goal of the 7Rs of Sanctuary program. In this time apart, participants are revitalized, and decision making is enriched in a spirit of peace and certainty.

The cost of the year-long program is $1000. However, as a result of a generous grant from the Pastoral Excellence Network, scholarships covering up to 75% of the program expense are available.

Click here to register. Space is limited for the program and registration closes on August 15, 2016. Program acceptance and financial aid decisions will be communicated by August 29, 2016.

Support the Ministers Council

It was the first funeral I was asked to perform, and it was for a pillar of our church. Our Senior Pastor was on vacation and the responsibility fell to me, the recently-hired Minister of Christian Education. It could have been an awkward, even disappointing, event. But my colleague and mentor had prepared me. He had taken me with him to a prior funeral and explained the procedures he followed, from interviewing family members to remaining with the casket during transport. He freed me to do it my way, but I knew the basic expectations and was not nervous about them.

This is the value of ministers connecting with other ministers: learning from one another and increasing our effectiveness in ministry. Ours is not the solo profession it so often appears to be; we are better ministerial leaders when we lean on colleagues.

That same mentor introduced me to the Ministers Council in 1991, and I have not let go of it since. From regional retreats, to intense Senate debates, to “ending well” and easing into retirement, I have turned to the Ministers Council for advice and encouragement. And you have been there for me. Thank you!

Rev. Dr. Darla (Dee Dee) Turlington

The Ministers Council exists because of the generous support of folks like you. We are an autonomous, professional, multi-cultural organization of ordained, commissioned and lay Christian leaders within the American Baptist Churches, USA. And we do the work of encouraging collegiality, fostering spiritual centeredness, and promoting professional competence among clergy so that we are our most effective and best selves for the cause of Christ and those we serve. Won’t you help us by contributing to the work of the Ministers Council? Go to www.ministerscouncil.com and click the donate link to make your tax-deductible donation today and thank you for your support.
Register Now for the Webinar: Using Technology to Transform Ministry

Wednesday, August 3, 2016 at 2:00 PM EDT

[Image]

Register Now For The Webinar: Using Technology To Transform Ministry
Wednesday, August 3, 2016 at 2:00PM EDT

https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/3220244533217005015

You’re invited to attend a presentation and discussion on how American Baptists can use today’s most popular technologies to spread Christ’s loving message. This presentation is ideal for anyone interested in discipleship, social justice, and preparing today’s youth to be tomorrow’s faith leaders. The webinar will also address cost effective, easy to use tools to spread the message of Christ.

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

[Image]

That link again is https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/3220244533217005015.

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.
Women in Ministry: The Soul of Leadership

Co-led by Dr. Margaret Benefiel, Executive Director of Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation and Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson, Executive Director of the Ministers Council, ABCUSA

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.


The Hilton Washington Dulles Airport Hotel, 13869 Park Center Rd, Herndon, VA 20171

This is a unique opportunity to gather with other women in ministry and to reflect on the challenges of leadership while reclaiming our call to ministry.

Description

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?

Outcomes:

- Learn what soulful leadership is and how it is manifested in practice.
- Identify the times in your life when you have led with soul and the times you haven’t
- Reawaken your dreams and learn how to make them become reality.
- Learn the power of gratitude in an organization.
- Learn how to operationalize the mission in day-to-day organizational life, no matter what your context of ministry
- Learn how individual and organizational transformation dovetail and support one another.

Come together to connect with other women in professional ministry, reconnect with one’s calling, and reflect on the soul of leadership.

To register by click on the link on the ABWIM website: www.abwim.org

For questions about registration, please contact Wendy Clemmer: 610 768-2288
For questions about the event, please contact Rev. Dr. Patricia Hernandez, National Director American Baptist Women in Ministry: 610 504-6842.

This After Event is offered as a partnership between the Ministers Council and American Baptist Women in Ministry (ABWIM).
A Closing Thought

I believe that the violence that we have seen of late in our cities is born of fear and hopelessness. It is fear: the fear of change, fear of the other, and the fear that results from prejudice. It is hopelessness: a hopelessness that drives people to nihilism where nothing, not even life, seems to matter. Over the past month, we’ve seen a purportedly radicalized but possibly closeted man shoot people enjoying a night out at a club. We’ve seen a police officer shoot a man selling CDs, and another shoot a man at what should have been a routine traffic stop. We’ve seen a combat-trained former vet assassinate police officers. And as a result, there is a hopelessness that pervades as we mourn the deaths, rehash the same conversations, and recognize that for all the progress that we thought we had made, so much more is left to do.

And in response, I find myself wanting to assert personhood. While I do believe that all lives matter, I don’t want to gloss over the need to lift up those who have been historically disinfranchised, the evidence of which stands before us today. Not so long ago, African Americans were counted as 2/3rds of a person in this country for the purposes of census tracking. So to say that Black Lives Matter is an important assertion since our nation’s history hasn’t always embraced that sentiment. Not so long ago, the outbreak of AIDS and HIV was deemed as punishment for those who engaged in that “lifestyle.” So to say that Gay Lives Matter is an important assertion because all are precious in God’s sight. But let us also assert that Blue Lives Matter because these men and women put their lives on the line daily to serve and protect their communities. And it’s only as we affirm these truths that we can also assert that all lives matter because this is the bedrock principle upon which our country was founded.

But as people of faith, we must ultimately turn to the word because I believe that the Bible depicts for us the images of what we are seeing today. In 2 Chronicles chapter 7, God notes the calamities that will happen in the land. He says that the heavens will be shut up so that there is no rain, locust will devour the land, and that there will be pestilence sent to the people. Are we not seeing a dryness and dearth of compassion that has impaired our ability to love our neighbors? Is there not a plague of hate and fear that has seemingly afflicted us? And the killings. Have they not become like a pandemic in our midst? But God said in response to these calamities, “If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

This is the hope and we’ve got to give the people hope. We’ve got to seed our land with love. We’ve got to inoculate the virus of hatred with the peace of Jesus Christ. We’ve got to demand justice and advocate for fairness so that we can break up the fallow soil of hopelessness. And if we will stand together and do these things, then I believe that God will hear from heaven and heal our land. It’s up to us to be “the hands and feet of Jesus Christ.” It is our mandate because all lives matter.

If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. -- 2 Chron. 7:14
Travel Schedule


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