

Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson, Executive Director

September 2016

From the Desk of the Executive Director

Inspired from the book *By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept*, by Paulo Coelho, allow me to share the following slightly modified story...

A pastor runs into a clergy colleague who was always known for carrying the weight of his ministry on his shoulders. Seemingly carefree, the colleague asks the pastor if he'd care to go into a nearby café and have a cup of coffee. The colleague, demonstrating his happy mood, buys coffee for everyone. The pastor stunned by this asks his friend about this remarkable change of attitude. The colleague responds that until only a few days ago, he had been living the role of the "Other."



"What's the Other?" the pastor asks.

"The Other is the one who taught me what I should be like, but not what I am. The Other believes that it is our obligation to spend our entire ministry thinking about taking care for everyone else while disregarding self. The Other tells us that we are to give of ourselves until we are depleted. The Other makes us think that this is the faithful way to serve, doing so until we are burned out and disillusioned in ministry."

"And you? Who are you?" the pastor asked.

"I am just like everyone else who listens to their heart and the Spirit of God who resides therein. I am a person who is enchanted by the mystery of life. Who is open to miracles, who experiences joy and enthusiasm for what they do. It's just that the Other, afraid of being deemed a failure, kept me from taking action."

"But there is suffering in life and we have to minister to that suffering," the pastor said.

"Yes there is suffering, and there are defeats. The Bible tells us that many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers us from every one. So instead of focusing on the suffering, we persevere knowing that as we strive, the God who promised never to leave us nor forsake us will see us through."

"That's it?" the pastor asked.

"Yes, that's it. When I realized this, I resolved to become the person I had always wanted to be. Sure, the Other stood there in the corner of my room, watching me and waiting for me to revert back to my old self. But I will never let the Other into myself again – even though it has already tried to frighten me, warning me that it's risky to live in such a carefree way."

Impressed by his friend, the pastor decided that he too needed to make a change. From that moment on, he ousted the Other from his life, and the Divine Energy of God began to perform its miracles.

Certainly I took a few liberties with the story, but even as I read it for the first time, this was the version that was ringing in my head. We learn to minister in ways that are stunting and stifling because somewhere in our psyche, we believe that that is how it is supposed to be done. We carry the burdens, we work ourselves to exhaustion, and we keep going because we believe that somehow that this is what we are called to do. This is the “Other” about whom our story warns. The Other says we are indispensable. The Other tells us that we are never off; that there is no down time. The Other makes us feel guilty when we are not productively engaged. We need to oust the Other.

What can you do to oust the Other? How might you get back to listening to your heart and hearing the voice of God? What can you do to experience anew the joys of life, the miracles in your midst, and the God who wants to bless you to overflowing? I am certain that if we would oust the Other, we could walk into the fullness of what God wants for us. And that would be miraculous indeed.



Recap of the 2016 Ministers Conference

The 2016 Ministers Conference was held from August 22-25, 2016 at the National 4H Conference Center in Chevy Chase, MD and it was a glorious event. Sponsored by the ABCUSA Board of General Ministries, the American Baptist Foundation, the American Baptist Home Mission Societies, MMBB, and the Ministers Council, 90 attendees engaged in a time of respite and renewal, devotion and development.

The conference kicked off with worship on Monday evening. Our guest preacher was Rev. Dr. Wallace C. Smith, Senior Pastor of the historic Shiloh Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. He reminded us of what happens “When the Power Goes Out,” a sermon motivated from Acts 9:36-43. Dr. Smith noted many examples of power outages in the church where we have strayed away from God’s word. But when we are willing to go where God wants us to go, the lights come back on. The high time in the Spirit that Dr. Smith inspired was only enhanced by the Shiloh Baptist Church choir who favored us with several selections.



For our conference plenary program, we were blessed by Rev. Dr. Jennifer Davidson, Associate Professor of Worship & Theology and Director of Chapel at American Baptist Seminary of the West. She led us through the process of establishing a Rule of Life, a gracious way of achieving holistic wellness and balance. With a mantra of “In all things... grace,” and leveraging the work of Debra K. Farrington, Dr. Davidson walked us through the eight elements of a personal rule of life: God is the foundation, with facets of prayer, work, study, spiritual companionship,

care of your body, reaching out, and hospitality. Using this as a basis for our rule of life, Dr. Davidson provided us with the most generative ways of looking at our lives to determine how we were engaging the eight elements. Her expansive way of sharing created space for participants to reflect and consider practices that would be life giving. In addition, she provided us with numerous resources including her presentation, reference books, and online resources to help us continue refining our rule of life far after the sessions were complete. It was such a rich time.

To set the stage for our plenary sessions, Rev. Brad Berglund led us in worship. Well known for leading Taize-style worship, pilgrimages and retreats, Brad opened us each morning and made us alive to the power of the Holy Spirit.

Through song, scripture, meditation and reflection, we were able to sense the rhythms of the spirit as a means of starting each day. We were also favored by the gifted Paul White, who served as our musician and musical director. An accomplished artist, Paul was well versed in sensing the move of the spirit and providing just the right song that would help to fan the flame.

The spirit of worship was so amazing that several asked whether the services were taped and available for sale. Worship leaders Rev. Dr. Liliana DaValle, Rev. Jabulani McCalister, Rev. Dr. Shane Kinnison, and Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson enlivened our worship. And Dr. Jeremy Fackenthal provided audio and visual enhancements that further enriched our gatherings.



Our conference also featured powerful workshops. Rev. Dr. Perry Hopper, MMBB, and Rev. Jamaal Nelson, ABHMS, presented on Economic Challenges Facing Clergy. Given the expertise of the presenters, the sessions covered far more than the Lilly funded initiative awarded to both MMBB and ABHMS. According to Dr. Hopper, discussion extended to a wide range of concerns faced by those serving in congregations and other specialized ministries. The spirited discussion demonstrated that workshop attendees were appreciative in receiving the information.

Rev. Doug Harris and Rev. Holly Bean presented a session on clergy networking. In their session, participants gathered to reaffirm the power of coming together as colleagues to network and lend support. When we take the time for networking, we increase our awareness of the resources that are available to us through others. It was exciting to see the exchange of contact information after each session, providing the impetus to remain in contact and engage clergy colleagues for support and friendship.

Rev. Dr. Shane Kinnison and Rev. Randy Pearson led the session “Coaching for Life and Leadership.” Both certified life coaches, Dr. Kinnison and Rev. Pearson helped participants understand the need for coaching and how coaching provides a powerful means to help people who might feel momentarily “stuck” in some aspect of their life. Specifically, the presenters demonstrated that coaching can help people realize hopes and dreams, gain new focus, clarify goals, and overcome hurdles.

We also offered specialized activities for participants. Rev. Brad Berglund introduced participants to the ancient practice of walking the Labyrinth. Revs. Renee Colson Hudson and Judy Fackenthal were available for spiritual direction, helping others to see the power of spiritual friendships. Rev. Perkin Simpson shared strategies for helping churches tap into different avenues for financial resourcing. And workshop presenters made themselves available for one-on-one conversations.

One of the features of the conference was the intentional time for Sabbath. Rather than fill each moment with programming, Tuesday afternoon was dedicated to spaciousness. Attendees had time to enjoy the Washington, DC area, take a nap, or simply spend time talking to colleagues. Several pastors shared that their decision to attend the conference was based on the fact that there was space in the schedule for restoration.

Wednesday evening worship was a treat in that our guest preacher was Rev. Edgar Palacios, Associate Pastor at Calvary Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. Attendees were among the first to learn that Rev. Palacios had been appointed by his native El Salvador to be the Ambassador to Canada. In his sermon motivated from Romans 1:8-15, Rev. Palacios reminded us that we are Ministers of Reconciliation and that we have a responsibility to serve even as we share the gospel of

Jesus Christ. Teresa Blessing and Dr. Cheryl Branham, from Calvary Baptist Church, graced our worship with song as did our music director, Paul White.



Our time together concluded with communion which was led by ABCUSA President, Rev. Judy Fackenthal. She reminded of us “the messiness of the communion table,” where we are encouraged to bring the messiness of ourselves to that table. We were truly re-membered as we served one another at the Lord’s Table.

The 2016 Ministers Conference was a wonderful time of fellowship, worship, and learning. It was also a wonderful example of the power that results when members of the ABCUSA family collaborate together. Thank you to the members of the planning team: Judy Fackenthal and Don Ng, Board of General Ministries, Perkin Simpson, American Baptist Foundation; Laura Miraz, American Baptist Home Mission Societies; Perry Hopper, MMBB; Doug Harris and Holly Bean, Ministers Council; and Patricia Hernandez, American Baptist Women in Ministry. Special thanks are extended to Rev. Dr. Robert Cochran of the District of Columbia Baptist Convention for providing scholarships to DCBC Ministers so that they could attend the conference. We hope that more of you will take advantage of this tremendous gathering when we convene in 2018 for the next Ministers Conference.



American Baptists respond to Louisiana flooding, Indiana tornadoes

In response to recent natural disasters in Louisiana and Indiana, American Baptist Home Mission Societies’ (ABHMS) Disaster Relief Office has distributed Emergency Disaster-relief grants from American Baptist Churches USA’s One Great Hour of Sharing funds.

More specifically, \$10,000 was released to American Baptist Churches of the South (ABCOTS) in response to torrential rain and flooding in the Baton Rouge, La., area, while \$5,000 was released to American Baptist Churches of Indiana and Kentucky (ABC-IN/KY) in response to tornadoes in the Kokomo, Ind., area.

Louisiana

In Louisiana, Shady Grove First Missionary Baptist Church, Baker, and Greater New Guide Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, are ministering to their own displaced congregants as well as to other families.

Shady Grove’s congregation has been unable to meet in the church since the flood occurred, according to the Rev. James M. Harrison, executive minister of ABCOTS, because the building’s interior sustained damage from 22 inches of water, and burial vaults from a nearby cemetery were observed floating on church property. In addition, the homes of congregants and the church’s pastor were affected, Harrison says, and the pastor faces removing soaked sheetrock from his own home.

Greater New Guide’s congregation has resumed meeting in its church building after missing one Sunday because of receding flood waters, Harrison reports. An estimated 40 families are seeking immediate housing, he says, and some may need to be housed out of state.

Indiana

In Indiana, Kokomo and surrounding areas were affected by destructive winds of up to 165 mph from multiple tornadoes. Homes, businesses and infrastructure have reportedly sustained severe damage.

According to the Rev. Soozie Whitten-Ford, executive minister of ABC-IN/KY, Calvary Baptist Church, Kokomo, will coordinate American Baptist relief efforts.

"I just got home from helping one of our older saints pull a large tree off of their roof, cut it up and drag it to the street," said the Rev. Jeff Sexton, Calvary's pastor. "We will be setting up a team to go to one of our low-income housing projects to work there."

How you can help

Donations designated to "One Great Hour of Sharing/Southern floods/Storms" and/or to "One Great Hour of Sharing/Indiana/Kentucky tornado" can be mailed to the attention of Kim Wilkins at American Baptist Home Mission Societies, P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA, 19482-0851. One hundred percent of donations go to relief efforts; no dollars are retained for administrative costs. For more information, contact Wilkins at 1-800-222-3872, x2413, or kim.wilkins@abhms.org.



News from Ministers Council Local Chapters

Tremendous activities are occurring in our local chapters of the Ministers Council. Below is an update from some of our chapters.

ABC Chaplains and Pastoral Counselors

Endorsed Chaplains and Pastoral Counselors have a special chapter they can join for only another \$25 in dues. Because of our mission- our specialized ministry, we are often isolated from our ABCUSA peers. 2017 is a membership building year when we endeavor to get to know each other, affirm our skills and leadership in the denomination and assess our needs. Want to join us? For more information contact: Rev. Elizabeth (Betsy) Ritzman Betsyritz@comcast.net or Rev. Sarah Fogg sarahfogg4@gmail.com"

ABC of Rhode Island and Connecticut

October 27-29, Retreat for Bivocational Pastors and Spouses. Taber Inne – Mystic, CT. Co-sponsored by ABCORI & ABCONN.

November 5, Baptist Heritage Day - This year's event features Brent Walker, retiring executive of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty. The BJC is a Washington, DC based group that monitors the federal legislative process for issues of religious freedom and the relationships between governments and faith communities. It is supported by a wide range of Baptist organizations. For more about Brent see: <http://bjconline.org/brent-walker/>. This event will be held at Emmanuel Baptist Church, 529 Charles St., Providence, RI 02904. For more information: Charles Hartman – (508) 336-0799 or revdochart@gmail.com.

November 7, lunch with Dr. Susan Gillies, Interim General Secretary, ABCUSA. 12 noon at Meadowood Conference Center.

March 6, 2017, Ministers Council Annual Meeting, 12 noon – Luncheon Meeting with special speaker. ABCORI Annual Meeting at 7:00 PM

May 1-3, 2017, Annual Retreat at Block Island. Save the date! Watch for program specifics.

ABC of Oregon

The Ministers Council of Oregon is hosting a One-Day Leader Summit on September 20, bringing together constituent members from across the state to participate in a visioning conversation that is designed to enable us to create a focus and action steps for the direction of our Ministers Council for the next 12-24 months. It will also allow us an opportunity to increase our Ministers Council Leader Team with those who will serve by leading our organization. We are still living with the positive effects of the ministry of Tony Pappas, retired Executive Minister of ABC Massachusetts, who facilitated a 2-day conference for clergy and lay leaders last spring around the issue of being more effective in mission and ministry with fewer and fewer resources. Our hope is to build on this interest and momentum as a continuing focus of the Ministers Council of Oregon for the next couple of years.

Mid-American Baptist Churches

The Mid-American Baptist Churches are planning a Ministers Council Retreat, October 17-19 - **“Healthy Congregations.”** We will gather for fellowship, worship, and continuing education in a beautiful setting at Camp Quaker Heights, just outside of Eldora, Iowa. The camp features a new lodge and is located along the Iowa River, adjacent to Pine Lake State Park.

Our presenter for the retreat is Ed Ruppert. Ed is a counselor in private practice in Ames. His career experience includes work in residential treatment, refugee resettlement, child welfare, marriage and family, and mental health counseling; as well as, congregational consulting and clergy training. His training includes studying the integration of theology and psychology.

Through teaching and small group interaction, we will be exploring how to have stronger and healthier congregations as we see our churches as living organisms – family systems – and become more thoughtful leaders in these systems.

The retreat begins with registration starting at 4:00 p.m. and supper at 5:30 p.m. on Monday. The program ends Tuesday evening; you are welcome/encouraged to stay through breakfast on Wednesday morning.

For More information and to register, [CLICK HERE](#).

ABC Rochester Genesee Region

Thursday, September 8 – Saturday, September, 10 the ABC Board of General Ministries Executive Board is Meeting at the "First Baptist Church of Rochester" Also, Sunday, September 11 past ABCUSA president Rev, Dr. Ng is preaching!

American Baptist Churches Rochester Genesee Region Annual Gathering: Friday Sept. 23-24, Theme: "Responding to the Call"

- Friday September 23- Minister's & Church Leader's Retreat: Speaker, Rev. Dr. Glynis LaBarre, American Baptist Home Mission Societies. Location: Greece Baptist Church Rochester, NY 14626
- Friday September 23- Clergy Recognition Dinner: Special Entertainment - Leslie Lee and Steve Gretz - Location: Fairport Baptist Homes, Fairport, NY 14450
- Saturday September 24- Annual Gathering "Responding to the Call" Keynote Speaker: Rev. Dr. Charles Jones, International Ministries - Location The Baptist Temple Rochester, NY 14610.

ABC of New York State

The Ministers Council of New York State is holding its annual Ministry Enrichment Day on Monday, September 19 at the First Baptist Church of Syracuse. Speaker will be Dr. Dottie Brooks, speaking on Social Justice and the Old Testament. The official annual meeting for our region's ministers council will be held at the same time.

ABC of Massachusetts

TABCOM Creation Care Ministries and the ABC Creation Justice Network are sponsoring a Creation Justice Celebration and Dinner Church on Thursday, September 22, 6:00-8:00 p.m. at Common Street Spiritual Center, 13 Common Street, Natick, MA 01760.

Church leaders from around the country are coming to MA for the first ABC Creation Justice Network steering committee meeting on Sept 22-23. This is a new national network forming to respond to American Baptists' growing sense of call to care for creation and seek eco-justice.

As part of this meeting, the ABC Creation Justice Network is teaming up with TABCOM Creation Care Ministries to host a "Creation Justice Dinner Church." Rev. Sarah Buteux, founder of the Common Ground Dinner Church at First Churches of Northampton will lead us in this experience. We'll have a chance to worship together in a spirit of gratitude, share table fellowship, network, talk with state and national leaders in creation justice, and dream together about how we can respond to God's call to care for creation in our state and nationally. If you'd like to be part of the kitchen team, you're welcome to join us at 5:00 p.m.

Ministers Council of the Philadelphia Baptist Association

The next Ministers Council meeting will be held at the PBA office, 8711 Ridge Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19128 on Wednesday, September 14th, 9:30am. The schedule is outlined below:

- 9:30-10:00 a.m. Social Gathering (Coffee, tea, etc.)
- 10:00-11:30am Presentation: "Lovest Thou Me More Than These... Feed My Sheep" (Caring for the TOTAL Well Being of God's Flock) – John 21:15
Facilitator(s): Rev. Valerie Andrews,
St. Paul's Baptist Church of West Chester
- 11:30am-12:00pm Business Meeting

Lunch will be provided immediately after the business meeting, so please confirm your attendance by contacting Mrs. Rosalyn L. Martin (phone: 215-482-8222 x 10; fax: 215-482-8232; or email: rlmartin@philadelphiabaptist.org) upon receipt of this communication.

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/>.

Travel Schedule

- 7Rs of Sanctuary Cohort - Litchfield, CT, September 19-21.
- Andover Newton Theological School Reunion – Keynote speaker, Newton Centre, MA, September 23.
- 7Rs of Sanctuary Cohort – Vashon Island, WA, October 24-26.
- ABCNYS Biennial, Syracuse, NY, November 4-5.



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