

Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson, Executive Director

October 2016

From the Desk of the Executive Director



I had the privilege of attending and speaking at the 2016 Fall Reunion of Andover Newton Theological School. As a proud, two-time alumna, I approached the reunion with great emotion. As you probably know, Andover Newton announced plans to relocate and sell its 20 acre campus in Newton Centre, MA on November 12, 2015. The move was necessitated by financial challenges, chiefly large deficits. Thus the oldest graduate seminary in the U.S. will become an embedded institution with Yale Divinity School.

Since the breaking of the news, I have been a poster child for Elizabeth Kubler-Ross' stages of grief. I couldn't believe it last November. "How could this happen?" I thought. And like so many of my fellow alums, I wanted to know who we had spoken to, what options we had explored and what had we done to correct the situation. I was angry and I wanted answers. By the way, those are the first two stages of Kubler-Ross' process – denial and anger.

Then I became more strategic in my thoughts, or so I thought. Couldn't we talk to Rev. Dr. Molly Marshall? After all, Central Baptist Theological Seminary is an amazing turnaround success story. Couldn't she be engaged as a consultant? What about the rich tradition of the Boston Theological Institute and the number of storied institutions in the Greater Boston area. If a merger was necessary, couldn't we merge with someone locally? Even I sit on the board of a university. There has to be folks with whom we can talk. That was my argument. Stage 3 of Kubler-Ross – bargaining.

But unbeknownst to me, I was approaching the Fall Reunion having moved one step further along the process. However I did not know this until the closing worship of our reunion. For our closing worship, we engaged in what was called the Stations of the Quad, where we walked the main quadrangle of the campus and recalled the events at that station. It hit me when Rev. Dr. Gregory Mobley, Professor of Christian Bible, spoke of the learning that had occurred at Station One, Davis Hall. As he spoke of the classes we took and the learning that occurred as a result of our exchanges, tears sprang to my eyes. I had spent nine years "on the hill," most of my classes having been conducted at Davis Hall. I wrestled with Systematics in Davis Hall. I roasted during the summers and froze in the winters in Davis Hall. I watched classmates bounce my infant son as I balanced motherhood and student life in Davis Hall. So much of my ministry formation happened in Davis Hall and I was saying good bye. In that moment, I realized the depth of my sadness, depression even, as I walked each station, as I heard others speak of significant events, as I watched other alums similarly weep. Another stage of Kubler-Ross – depression.

The final step of the process is acceptance, but admittedly I'm not quite there yet. While my head understands, my heart still aches over my beloved alma mater. Cognitively I want my institution to continue and I know that having it continue, even as an embedded institution is better than it ceasing to operate at all. I also know that this change is no different than what we have experienced throughout Christianity. Even Jesus said that a grain of wheat had to fall to the ground and die in order to bear much fruit. Andover Newton, being "deeply rooted and radically open" will be able to carry out its mission educating inspiring leaders for the 21st century from a new haven, rather than Newton's center. And that's a good thing. So cleaving tightly to that good thing and looking ahead to that new haven, my fellow alums, who like me are still navigating the stages of grief, might actually make it to acceptance.

Burn Out

This article was shared with me by Rev. Dr. Lee Hagwood, Senior Pastor of Agape Bible Christian Fellowship of Martinsville, VA.

The Rev. Pete Wilson, founding pastor of the Cross Point Church, a mega church of 7000 members located near Nashville, TN, resigned in September because he was "tired, broken, and in need of rest." His story is just the latest in a long saga of clergy who have burned out in the midst of ministry. Dr. Hagwood, in his message to me, shared facts that come as no surprise:



Facts:

- 50% of pastors exit the ministry annually;
- Pastors are not super-humans, they can reach breaking points;
- Most pastors do not have people to whom they can pour their hearts;
- The only army that shoots its soldiers and lieutenants without any tangible offense is the church;
- Pastors regularly neglect their own needs to meet the needs of others;
- A man or woman of God is an ordinary man or woman in the hands of a mighty God.

What causes burnout? There are many causes, but we are reminded of a few that unchecked can take their toll:

- Ministering without being ministered to;
- Lack of delegation;
- Giving in to accusations and criticism;
- Zero retreat;
- No leave or vacation;
- Indifference to hobbies and recreational activities;
- Un-supporting partners;
- Frustrations for personal needs;
- Uncooperative team and associates;
- Oppression from mentors in the ministry;
- Lack of spiritual practices;
- Walking alone in ministry;
- Satanic counterattacks.

So who do we avoid burnout?

- Have a mentor, coach or spiritual director to whom you can pour out your heart;
- Take time away from your leadership context;
- Cultivate a pattern of relaxation by engaging in some recreational activities;
- Know when to retreat so that you don't surrender;
- Delegate wisely;

- Don't be a lone-ranger. Wisely relate and engage with other ministers and ministries because you cannot survive alone;
- Relate well with your spouse, partner and children. They are your inner circle;
- Send this message to every minister of God that you know. (Thanks Dr. Hagwood for sending this to me.

May God sustain you, oh servant of God, as you labor, day and night in God's vineyard.

Meet My Kneeler

This is my kneeler. I know you're tempted to say, "What's a nice American Baptist 'girl' like you doing with a thing like this?" Allow me to explain.

On September 19, I convened the fall cohort of the 7Rs of Sanctuary program at the Wisdom House in Litchfield, CT. Wisdom House was once the Connecticut location of the Daughters of Wisdom, a religious order founded in 1703 in Poitiers, France by Saint Louis de Montfort and Blessed Marie Louise Trichet. The aim of the order is to seek divine wisdom, bringing the message of Jesus Christ, divine wisdom incarnate, to people experiencing injustice, violence, poverty and oppression, especially women and children.

The order moved to Islip, CT years ago leaving the monastery as a retreat center. The beautiful chapel that is part of the building is not as widely used as it was once, and as such, some of the emblems of worship remain, unused.

Enter the kneeler. One of the members of the cohort inquired about the kneelers to learn whether they might be for sale. I don't know if you've priced a kneeler lately, but a padded kneeler can range from \$170.00 - \$250.00 or more. So when Sister Rosemary Greco, Executive Director of the Wisdom House, offered to sell the kneelers to us for \$25.00, well, we good American Baptists couldn't resist.

Because the kneeler features a folding bench, I had every intention to take it to my home office to become a regular part of my prayer practice. However, the kneeler has yet to make it to my basement office. It spent it's first week in my breakfast nook. Weekend house cleaning relegated it to my dining room, which is where it presently sits.

But I have to tell you that I'm loving my kneeler. Because it is in these conspicuous places in my house, I have found myself stopping for prayer several times a day. I am simply filled with gratitude every time my knees hit the bench. And then when I saw my 13 year old stop, kneel, and pray, I was moved to tears. My kneeler may never make it to the basement.

We each need to engage in spiritual practices as a way of life to strengthen us and help us be more like our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Maybe your practice isn't to use a kneeler, but I pray that you have practices and that they conspicuously show up in your daily life.





American Baptist Home Mission Societies
SINCE 1824

ABHMS publishes special online edition of ‘The Christian Citizen’ in response to social unrest

In response to heightened tension, divisiveness, polarization, terrorism and violence across the United States, American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) continues to encourage dialogue and promote healing by publishing “Healing Our Land,” a special online issue of its acclaimed print magazine, *The Christian Citizen*.

In this collection of thought-provoking and action-inspiring essays and quotations, a diverse group of national leaders, including American Baptists, examines a range of subjects—from brutality toward African Americans, Native Americans, the LGBTQ community and police to pragmatic approaches for dealing with trauma and grief.

“This year has brought historic unrest across the United States—from New York City to Chicago, Falcon Heights to Baton Rouge, Cleveland to Dallas, Orlando to Ferguson, and Baltimore to Milwaukee,” says ABHMS Executive Director Dr. Jeffrey Haggray. “The hour has come when the Christian community must reckon urgently with Christ’s call to us to be peacemakers. The pursuit of mutual understanding, reconciliation, justice and peace requires a special quality of moral discourse that is informed by faith in God, hope and unconditional love for others.”

American Baptists are encouraged to read the collection on ABHMS’ website at www.abhms.org > The Christian Citizen, and then engage in discussion in their churches and by posting comments on ABHMS’ “Creating a Groundswell for Racial Justice” group on Facebook.

For additional information about the ways in which ABHMS remains committed to social justice and healing communities, please visit www.abhms.org and click “Ministries.”



Award for Local History Celebration Announced

The American Baptist Historical Society is accepting nominations for the “**George D. Younger Award for Excellence in Local or Regional American Baptist History.**” **The deadline is May 1, 2017.**

Projects eligible for nomination include but are not restricted to church anniversary celebrations, congregational or regional histories, oral history projects, or other historical programs that promote Baptist history in the local community or region. The winner will be announced at the 2017 Biennial Convention in Portland, OR. Nominations will be accepted for projects completed in either 2015 or 2016.

Nominations should include the following documentation:

1. Cover sheet listing the name of the project and the name and contact information for the sponsoring church, group or institution,
2. A short (one or two page) description of the project or program, including a project timeline of the dates and locations of project events,
3. Supporting material, such as program bulletins, newspaper clippings, and comments by those who participated, either by creating the program/project or as part of the targeted audience,

4. Evidence of the quality (historical content and production quality) of the program or project,
5. Written evidence or evaluations of the project or program may be supplemented by other records of the program, such as videos, newspaper clippings, audio-recordings, or photographic images,
6. **Evidence of impact on the targeted audience, with special consideration given for impact on a broader than Baptist community.**

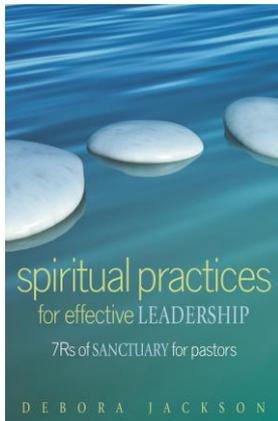
Mail nominations and supporting materials to be received at the Historical Society no later than May 1, 2017 to:

The Younger Award
 American Baptist Historical Society
 3001 Mercer University Drive
 Atlanta, Georgia 30341-4155

For more information please call ABHS at 678-547-6680 or email ABHS@abhsarchives.org.



Special note from Rev. Ivan Marable...



7 R's of Sanctuary Leadership Cohort led by Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson Held on September 19-21 (Wisdom House Retreat Center) Litchfield, CT

I attended the leadership cohort "7 R's of Sanctuary" led by Dr. Jackson. I gathered with seven other ministerial leaders from across the United States. Our leadership and retreat time together unfolded in a spiritual communion of worship, reflection, discernment, challenge, transformation, fellowship, and revival. The Cohort is based on Dr. Jackson's book the 7R's of Sanctuary.

Dr. Jackson led us on a path to explore our past, current, and potential leadership paradigms. She summoned literary exchanges and visions from the most cutting edge leaders and authors of the 20th and 21st centuries in hope of marshalling our ability to lead communities, congregations, and servants of the gospel toward healthy and supportive spiritual growth practices. As a participant, I can attest that the cohort was successful in the quest of prescribing sanctuary and spiritual growth for leaders in the service of the gospel. I am forever blessed and humbled to be invited and a participant of the cohort. My leadership and tools for healthy living have been blessed and enhanced.





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 the Greater Bay Area

Social Media and Ministry is the topic of a one-day seminar and the annual two-day retreat sponsored by MCGBA at [Redwood Glen](http://redwoodglen.com). From Monday, January 9 to Tuesday, January 10, "Why Church Wi-Fi: Mobilizing Faith for the Future" features social media strategist and author, Justin Wise, and will explore the impact today's technology is having on the church and our faith. The one-day seminar is intended for pastors and their tech teams to get on the same page, with the two-day retreat allowing the pastors to process the material and develop an action plan for their ministries at home. A flier for the one-day seminar is found here: <http://redwoodglen.com/leaders/2017oneday.pdf>. A flier for the full retreat is found here: <http://redwoodglen.com/leaders/2017retreat.pdf>. For more information, contact larry@redwoodglen.com.

ABC of Pennsylvania and Delaware

On Sunday, September 25, Tabernacle Baptist Church in Coatesville, PA ordained, Rev. Thelma Ann Wilson. Rev. Wilson is an Associate of the church under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Randy Harris. The service was attended by over 180 clergy, family and friends. Dr. Gradis Eggleston along with Pastor Harris and a host of other ministers administered the act of ordination for the candidate. What a delightful spirit filled evening for all that attended and witnessed this historical event. After the prayer, Dr. Harris presented Rev. Wilson with her Certificate of Ordination and then he announced to the church, "For the first time in the history of Tabernacle Baptist Church, I now present our first ordained female Reverend...To God Be the Glory."

ABC Rochester Genesee Region

Ordination Council: I would like to give a spiritual shout-out to Rev. Ebony J. Grison on her successful completion of her "ordination council."

Installation service: Congratulations to Rev. Brent Bowden and wife, Anna Bowden, Pastor First Baptist Church of Rochester. Pastor Brent will be installed Sunday October 02, 2016 @ FBCR. The body of clergy at FBCR will (@ least 10) participate in the service.

Our American Baptist "Rochester Genesee Region" was blessed during or Minister's/Leadership workshop and Annual Gathering by the prophetic teaching, preaching and vision of Rev. Glynis LaBarre and Rev. Dr. Charles H. Jones, Jr. They both offered spiritual optics and discernment in terms of Christian formation in the 21st Century from the context of Home Missions and International Missions.

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.

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](#).

Hope for the Children of Haiti

Category 4 Hurricane Matthew

I traveled to Haiti in 2011 with the organization “Hope for the Children of Haiti. I received notice that Hurricane Matthew will have a major impact on Haiti on October 3 and 4, 2016, and that the most devastating impact of the storm will be in western Haiti.

At the orphanage in Port-Au-Prince in which I served, wind and rain have begun. The intensity will build today. Wind is expected to top out at around 140 miles per hour and they are expecting over a foot of rain. Thankfully, the facilities provide safe shelter for them.

Emmanuel, Managing Director in Haiti, indicates that they are ready. Food and water are on hand and school has been cancelled.

Please pray for the children, our friends, their families and especially for the poorest people of Haiti who will suffer the most from yet another humanitarian disaster.

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 – Vashon Island, WA, October 24-26.
- ABCNYS Biennial, Syracuse, NY, November 4-5.

Ministers Council Contact Information

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