

Together in Ministry



Collegiality * Competence * Centeredness

June 2020 Newsletter



The gifts Christ gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. - Ephesians 4:11-12

A Word from the President

TO EQUIP THE SAINTS... FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

A Word from President Randolph "RT" Miller

Across our beloved nation, voices are again rising to protest the systemic racial inequities and injustices that haunt and vex our life together. The recent killing of George Floyd following the killings of Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor have rekindled fires of outrage. We weep over these deaths.

American Baptists have long been shaped by the words of Jesus, "bring good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, let the oppressed go free, and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (jubilee)."

Know that your Ministers Council family is praying for your discernment and courage in these daunting days. We each need distinctive guidance and resourcing so that we might learn, listen and speak in obedience to the Holy Spirit.

Enclosed in this issue are various prayers and reflections we hope will serve to this end. We begin with the words of **Rev. Cheryl Harris** from her Pentecost sermon. For special effect, read them aloud:

"We can't fight our way out of violence, only love can do that.
We can't fight our way out of racism, only love can do that
We can't answer brutality with brutality, that the job for love to do.
We can't blame our way out of systemic racism, love has to do that,
love of ourselves, love of our families, love of our communities.
That will guide us to find a new way.
Because love is the most durable power in the universe – death is not..."

And our job as human beings on this earth and this country to
is to decide to become better not bitter.
As we press for justice, we must move with dignity and discipline,
using only the most powerful weapon, the weapon of love.

... We must avoid blaming, scolding, attacking, destroying.
We must avoid violence, we must avoid/destruction
We must focus on building not breaking –
on lifting not crushing, on helping and hoping.
Beloved, we must start to use our tender hearts that are so broken,
our beautiful minds that are so critical,
and our overwhelming grief to fuel a more excellent way.
Some say it's impossible, we've gone too far
... but we have never outpaced God.
We have never outpaced the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Perhaps it is time to revisit the [American Baptist Policy of Racial Injustice](#), ensuring these words “become flesh.” We add our prayers to these words and commend the recent proclamations of Interim General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Jeff Woods and Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Haggray, Executive Director of American Baptist Home Mission Societies. Follow the links in the boxes below:

In the Spirit of Jubilee,

Randolph Miller



Read a Prayer Letter from ABHMS Executive Director Dr. Jeffrey Haggray [here](#)



Read "Acts of Racial Injustice: A Letter American Baptist Churches' Interim General Secretary," Dr. C. Jeff Woods [here](#).



JUBILEE DEVOTIONS

- A Series Drawn from the National Leadership Team's February Retreat

Devotional, "Imagination and Jubilee" by The Reverend Cheryl Harris,
Download [HERE](#).

National Update

CODE OF ETHICS UPDATING

The subcommittee working on updating our Ministers Council Covenant and Code of Ethics has presented a nearly final draft to the national Leadership Team in May 2020. [Read more](#)

NEW FACEBOOK PAGE

We're ramping up for use of our new Facebook [page](#), which will allow for additional outreach and official updates and statements. Our Facebook Group (1.4K and counting) continues to be a space of vibrant resource-sharing and conversation among individuals in our ministerial family, the content of which is not the official communication of the Ministers Council ABCUSA. Are you connected yet? If not, visit us today and [join!](#)

Events and Webinars

Have you missed our recent MC Live webinars? We've had terrific gatherings with Dennis Johnson (his book of Walter Rauschenbusch's prayers and writings), Michael Harvey (dialogue methods in clergy groups), Erica Van Brakle (MinistrElife) platform and many many more. Visit the archive [here](#).



PRACTICING COURAGE IN MINISTRY: EMBRACING FEAR & INVITING CONVERSATION

THURSDAY, JUNE 18
7pm (Central)

Join us for reflection together on the inspiration behind and the lessons gleaned from **A Year of Courageous Conversation**, a project hosted by Dr. Zina Jacque, Senior Pastor of Community Church of Barrington, IL and Jessica Swoyer Green. In ten monthly talks over a year, participants explored how to better live together in difference as we become increasingly diverse and polarized in both politics and everyday life. The series was produced by Urban Consulate, a network of parlors for urban exchange.

Note: The MC Live Webinar Series will continue to be the third Thursday of the month, at 7pm Central Time.

Learn more about Dr. Jacque [here](#).

ZOOM INFO: [HERE](#)

Milestones & Prayer Requests

In Celebration of Pentecost

Litany of the Holy Spirit
By Dan Schutte

Come, O Holy Spirit, renew the face of the earth.
Come, O Bringer of Blessing, renew the face of the earth.
Come, O Font of Knowledge, renew the face of the earth.
Come, O Promise of Plenty, renew the face of the earth.
Come, O Word of Kindness, renew the face of the earth.
Come, O Mother of Mercy, renew the face of the earth.
Come, O Light of Wisdom, renew the face of the earth.
Come, O Giver of Gladness, renew the face of the earth.
Hope of all who hunger, renew the face of the earth.
Teacher of truth and justice, renew the face of the earth.
Breath of life eternal, renew the face of the earth.
Fullness of God within us, renew the face of the earth.
Voice of God within us, renew the face of the earth.
Dwelling of Christ among us, renew the face of the earth.
Song of joy and gladness, renew the face of the earth.
Author of Love's great story, renew the face of the earth.
Come, O Spirit of Jesus, renew the face of the earth.
Kindle your fire within us, renew the face of the earth.

Listen to the song at:
<https://youtu.be/nhFlfm8cy9w>

ADDITIONAL PRAYERS/REFLECTIONS SHARED ON FACEBOOK -

Charlotte W Myers (Northern California) --The implementation of violence as a means of control only creates rebellion, revenge and hatred. Throughout history from the first century to today we have seen the failure of violence and force to maintain peace. Systems that rely on violence and hierarchy require training that desensitizes you to the other person's humanity. It allows you to kill, because it is based on identifying another human being as your enemy. Add to that deadly system racism and social bias. Then you have what we are witnessing in America today on a daily basis. When will we embrace and understand that love and human dignity are the greatest force for good in this world?

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy'. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."

Matthew 5:43-48

B Michelle Horton Christ is calling, even and especially today in the midst of the miseries of mankind, Christ is calling.

May we hear the voice of God and answer the call to be wise as serpents and gentle as doves. May we hear God's voice proclaiming peace from the pain we inflict on each other. May we hear the voice of God reminding us that we have the victory and there is no need for such visceral and vicious behavior because we are all precious in the sight of God.

May we hear Spirit's whispers of wise counselor to do justly, to love mercy and walk humbly with our God. May we listen to God's instruction and inspiration to be loosed from laboring, lawlessness and the lust of the flesh. May we attune our ears to hear what this saith the Lord with a purity of heart so we do not misinterpret the Messiah. May we stop entertaining the voices of vanity, violence and vileness that tell us to kill, steal and destroy. May we start again and again, with each new day hearing the voice of God calling us from war and worry to wholeness, from murder and mayhem to mercy and from selfishness and sin to salvation and sanctuary. May we hear God. May we hear God. May we hear God. Amen!

"Incline your ear and come unto me: hear and your soul shall live..." Isaiah 55:3(a)

Steve Neal (Central Region Chapter) - Central Region Ministers Council met by zoom to begin work on our virtual Ministers Council Annual Meeting to be

held Thursday October 1st, 2020. Dr. Joe Kutter was a beloved mentor and leader all American Baptists and was special part of the Central Region. He will be deeply missed. (See special edition of this newsletter last week with our tribute.)

Also, please prayer for us in Kansas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas as we begin moving toward

Randall Harris (ABCOPAD) - Prayers for the nation regarding the violence, looting and murders.

Michael Willett Newheart (Wisconsin) - Prayers for us here in Madison WI. A state of emergency has been declared, and a curfew has been imposed. Pray for peace. Pray for me that I may know what to do.

Rev. Dr. Barbara Jim-George (Northern California) - My prayers are for God's direction on how to keep our people safe; how to level the playing field in terms of accessible, equal, and quality healthcare, access to quality education & jobs that provide a living wage, safe and secure housing for families, and access to quality and nourishing food for poor people of color in this country. I realize that change is slow, and that the only way to eat an elephant is one bite at a time, so I pray for God's Holy Spirit to direct the processes, and to protect all of the agents of change who are standing for & working toward justice from the darts of the enemy who works to interdict the work of righteousness.

Staff Reflection

Pause for the Cause

A Word from Lisa

Growing up I enjoyed spending time with my grandmother; she was one of the wisest people I knew. In my young adult years, she would always tell me, "slow down, life is about the journey not the distance traveled." I have thought about my grandmother countless times over the past three months and crave the wisdom that she would have given during this pandemic. I will always treasure the memory of my grandmother. She was my compass, and she kept me centered during times of anxiety.



It is safe to say that during this time of Corona, we are all very anxious due to a variety of reasons. Our cares and fears are amplified. We feel a sense of hopelessness as a result of the uncertainties that we face. We see ads, signs, and billboards reminding us that we are "strong" and "tough" and that "we will get through this." However, I think the true measure of our resilience is what we have been forced to do, and that is to hit the "pause" button. We have experienced a "pause" from the norm to ensure safety and survival.

Let us meditate on these scriptures as reminders of the importance to "pause for the cause":

Mark 4:39 ".... Peace, be still. And the winds ceased and there was a great calm."

Psalms 46:10 "Be Still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth."

Exodus 14:14 The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still..."



GUEST REFLECTION

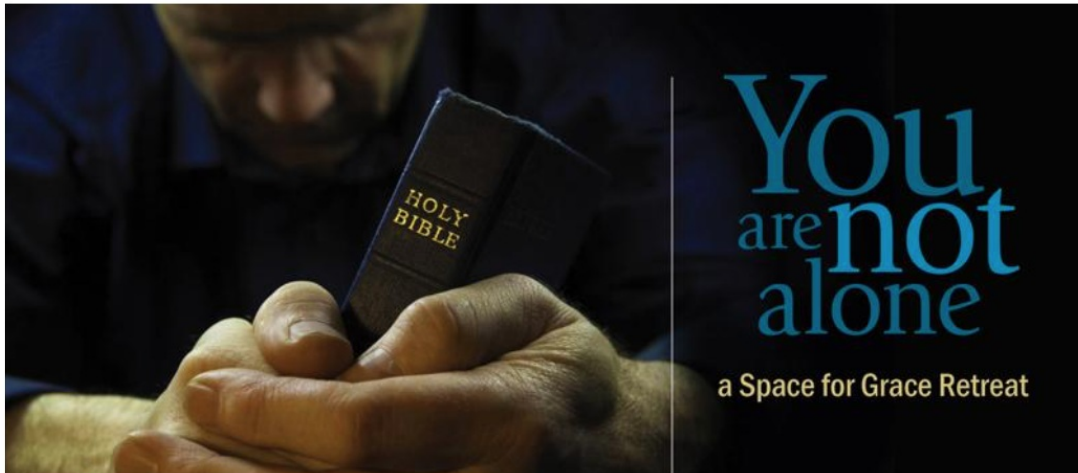
Editors' Note: We're glad when colleagues feel the Spirit Nudge to share a message in response to our probes for prayers and experiences. In these challenging times, our ABC leaders across the country are drawing on core convictions and experiences of Truth to gain the strength needed to serve with faithfulness and integrity in our

contexts. We give thanks to Rev. Dr. Dianthia Y. Gilmore for reaching out to share this devotional essay with colleagues, and pray it provokes your own self-examination.

The Truth Embedded in Pentecost Sunday

In the book of the 'Acts of the Holy Spirit' upon the prophets of the 1st-Century Church, we see profoundly Her acts. She comforted. She guided. She taught and empowered the leaders of the 1st-Century Church. Today, the precious Holy Spirit continues to comfort, guide, and lead us into greater truth. What is that truth? [Read more...](#)

ABC Announcements



Clergy (Pastors, Chaplains, Spiritual Caregivers) are invited to participate in ABHMS' virtual retreat.

Are you struggling with grief and loss due to the challenges during COVID-19? Are you struggling with grief as you try to minister to individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic?

You are invited to American Baptist Home Mission Societies' (ABHMS) three-day virtual conference

**"You Are Not Alone:
A Space for Grace Retreat"**

MORE INFORMATION: [HERE](#)

**Radical.
Redeemed.
Ready.**



**Celebrating
Ministering
Women**

The Planning Team has announced postponement of this significant milestone celebration. Join us in prayer and promotion for the gathering in 2022, details pending!

Reminders



How to reach us:

- By phone: (610)314-7837
- By email:
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- Address: 221 S. High
Street, West Chester, PA
19382
- We can generally be
reached in the office on
Tuesdays and Thursdays
(emails and voicemails will
be responded to during this
time)



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