

## December 2023 Newsletter



Dear Friends,

Throughout this past year, the Ministers Council leadership team has been reflecting on the tree mentioned in Jeremiah 17:7-8, lingering for a time on sending out our roots by the stream, not being anxious in the year of drought, not fearing when the heat comes, and never ceasing to bear fruit.

As we enter into the season of Advent and journey toward Christmas, I am struck by the phrase in this passage noting that the tree's "leaves shall stay green." It has been a long-standing tradition in parts of the world where evergreen trees grow to bring them inside as decoration during the long, cold, dark winter months because their leaves and needles do not turn brown or shed. Over the centuries, this tradition has been adopted by Christians all over the world who call the evergreen trees (real and fake) that they bring inside Christmas trees and decorate them with candles, lights, garlands, and ornaments as they celebrate the birth of Christ.

Legend has it that Martin Luther, who lived in Germany where evergreen trees are native, used these trees whose leaves stayed green to teach about the everlasting, never ending love of God. They have become a symbol of hope and new life in the midst of harsh experiences like those a winter season can bring. And so I wonder, as we journey through this season of Advent, what practices we might embody to remind us of the never-ending love of God and how we can share that love with others. How do we prepare our hearts to receive and hold and share that love so that we, too, might be

Rev. Rebecca W. Driscoll,  
MC Vice President



# National Updates

## ER Pastoring for Troubled Churches

The Ministers Council Chapter of Chaplains & Pastoral Counselors is hosting a most intriguing and informative **webinar on Tuesday, December 12, at 5 PM Pacific/PM Eastern Time**. You won't want to miss it!

[See the attached flyer for details.](#)

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### Renew Your Ministers Council Membership

It's time to join or renew your Ministers Council membership for 2024. Please share this information with your ABC clergy constituencies. To make your payments, please visit the Ministers Council website at:

<https://www.ministerscouncil.com>

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## Events and Webinars

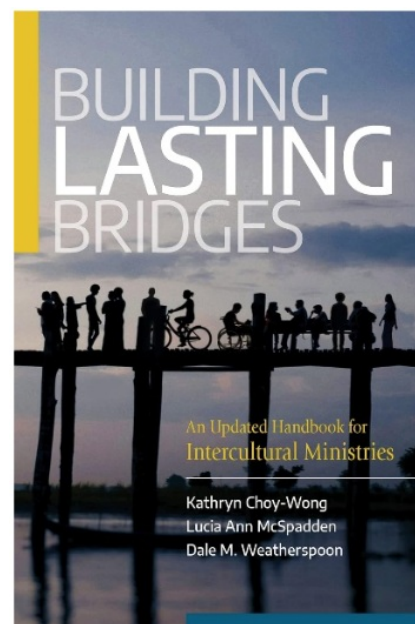
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**JANUARY 18, 2024**  
**5pm Pacific/7pm Central/8pm Eastern**  
**Rev. Katie Choy-Wong**

Join us in a discussion on Rev. Katie Choy-Wong's publication, *Building Bridges: An Updated Handbook for Intercultural Ministries*.

If you are looking for creative ways to relate to one another cross-culturally in a world of diverse people, this webinar is just for you! Invite your ministry leaders and congregation to join us in this time of mutual understanding.



## Staff Reflection

# Expect Miracles

by Rev. Lin Story-Bunce

*Consider a time when something remarkable happened – something miraculous even – that was beyond your full comprehension. Where can you find God in that moment?*



Miracles don’t always come in the packages we think they might, or should, or even hope that they will.

It can be tricky to talk about miracles. We want to live out our faith with FAITH – leaving room for the mystery of God – while also trying not to say anything too simple or thoughtless about God that doesn’t hold up in the midst of incredible pain and tragedy.

We want to be able to say something meaningful about God while acknowledging that anything we say is truly inadequate and limited – and so we often err on the side of saying nothing.

[MORE](#)

## Prayers and Milestones

O God of hope, peace, joy, and love come and illuminate our way.

We pray for peace for the anxious and unsettled, for all in seasons of transition and discernment.

May light shine for those who are overburdened, overstretched, worn out, and worn down.

Dear God, we pray for all who feel hopeless -- for prisoners, for patients with chronic illness, for individuals fighting to get out of debt, for relationships that have no clear way forward.

### Prayers of Intercession

For peace among nations,  
For safe return of hostages,  
In lament over acts of violence fueled by hate, prejudice, and fear,  
For areas of the nation facing winter storms,  
In thanksgiving for successful rescue operations following a tunnel collapse in northern India,  
For those injured and killed in a South African mine elevator accident, a  
For pastors, musicians, and all church leaders preparing for Advent.

***Please share your prayers and milestones for the January 2024 issue by sending an email to [ministerscouncil@abc-usa.org](mailto:ministerscouncil@abc-usa.org) before December 27.***





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## ABC Announcements

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**VALLEY FORGE, PA (11/29/23)**—American Baptist Churches USA is pleased to offer a new children's storybook video for the American Baptist family based upon the book, "I am God's Dream" by Matthew Paul Turner. Members of the National Executive Council provided the narration for the story and director Jeremy Fackenthal produced the video.

"I am God's Dream" is a celebration of children and their unique traits, and encourages children to be proud of who they are.

[view the video here.](#)

[Click here to view the news release.](#)

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Congratulations to **Rev. Dr. Gina Jacobs-Strain** who has been announced as the new General Secretary of ABCUSA

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## Reminders

*We are committed to an exchange of chapter news, as well as announcements of personal and communal milestones and prayer requests. For inclusion in the January issue, send these to [ministerscouncil@abc-usa.org](mailto:ministerscouncil@abc-usa.org) by December 27.*



### **How to reach us:**

- Phone: (610) 314-7837
- Office Hours: Tuesdays from 9am - 1pm (EST), and Thursdays from 2:30pm - 6:30pm (EST).



### **Stay connected**

- Visit us at our **website**.
- Join us on **Facebook**

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