

Together in Ministry



Collegiality * Competence * Centeredness

April 2024 Newsletter



Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. -John 20:21-22



We look forward to a good week at the Space for Grace Conference. While you are there, please drop by **our booth #3** to learn and share with **Rev. Dr. Valerie Andrews**, our Program Administrator and **Rev. Dr. Julio González-Paniagua**, secretary to National Leadership Team, and other friends.



Rev. Dr. Valerie Andrews



Rev. Dr. Julio González-Paniagua

A Pastoral Reflection from the President

Take a Breath

I mean it. As you read this in the days after Easter, it might be just the reminder that you need. After all, you have probably been planning and leading some extra worship services, conducting baptism classes, running the Lenten Bible study series, and cutting the pollen out of the Easter lilies so that Ms. Lucille doesn't have an allergy attack during her organ prelude. Whew!



Take a breath.

Two events this month have allowed me to change pace, while also representing you to two larger groups in our denomination. I was invited to participate in the National Leadership Council March 11-14, where I joined with executive ministers and other denominational leaders, advocating for clergy health, highlighting clergy collegiality, and encouraging the practice of our Covenant and Code of Ethics. Then March 18-20, I represented you at the annual Prairie Pastors conference, joining with other pastors from the Central, Nebraska, Mid-American, and Dakota Regions, in worship and fellowship, and in celebrating the birth of a new Ministers Council chapter partnership between the Central and Nebraska regions. Both events were busy weeks, but also allowed some space to slow down and...

Take a breath.

As your Leadership Team for the national Ministers Council, we are taking our own advice and doing just that. Beginning April 15, we will be gathering for retreat at the Portiuncula Center for Prayer in the Chicago area. We gather to prepare for the remainder of this year, including our national MC biennial meeting and retreat this Fall. I invite your prayers as we plan, pray for you and your ministries, slowdown from the busy schedule of the last several weeks, and ask how God is at work in this season of the Ministers Council. As a part of our week, we have the special opportunity to join with ministers serving in Wisconsin and Metro Chicago for a time of retreat, embrace of God's creation, and fellowship at table. In addition, what is our title for the shared gathering?

Of course, "Take a Breath."

Please pray for us, as we pray for you, your work, and your holy breath-taking.

Matt Sturtevant
Ministers Council ABCUSA President

Staff Reflection

"How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity."

-Psalm 133:1

On Thursday, April 4, I had the pleasure of attending the Open House event sponsored by the newly appointed, General Secretary of ABCUSA, the Reverend Dr. Gina Jacobs-Strain. Permit me to share a few highlights of this joyful event that indeed exemplified the words of the Psalmist!

As the event commenced, the ABCUSA Staff welcomed the guests by sharing the functions of the OGS office. In addition to gathering the denomination, the OGS seeks to support congregations, regions, and national organizations, as

well as create space for local and global issues. The staff provided an OGS-101 course that helped anyone new to the denomination understand “*in a nutshell*” what the office does.



The Reverend Dr. Patricia Hernandez (Associate General Secretary for Women in Ministry and Transition Ministries) proceeded them, and introduced the honoree of the day in such a fashion, that left the attendees feeling as if they were a participant in the introduction. Shortly thereafter, Dr. Jacobs-Strain came forth with a warm smile, and welcomed everyone to “our home.” She explained the purpose of the event was to gather everyone together to become acquainted with the facility, and to learn about ABCUSA. We also had the opportunity to hear greetings from significant partners, including Michaela Birdsall (*ABHMS*), Rev. LaThelma Yenn-Batah (*ABWM*), Rev. Jim Bell

(*International Ministries*), Rev. Earl Thorpe (*MMBB Financial Services*), Valoria Cheek, Esq. (*ABEC*), and Kris Lutton (*ABF*). Each partner brought salutations from their specific offices, described the services they offered, and shared congratulatory remarks with the General Secretary.

[Read more](#)

MINISTRY RESOURCES FOR CELEBRATING CREATION--

Earth Day 2024 and All Year Long

Here's a comprehensive guide to some of the most valuable resources and websites to help us celebrate Earth Day and honor God's creation.

Creation Justice Ministries:

<https://www.creationjustice.org/>

Creation Justice Ministries, formerly known as the National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program, is a coalition of Christian denominations, including ABCUSA, dedicated to environmental advocacy and eco-justice. Their website offers a wealth of resources, including educational materials, worship resources, advocacy tools, and information on upcoming events and campaigns.

Green Chalice:

<https://www.greenchalice.org/>

Green Chalice is an environmental ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) that collaborates with ABCUSA and other faith communities to address environmental concerns. Their website provides resources such as guides for conducting eco-audits, tips for greening church buildings, and information on environmental justice issues.

American Baptist Home Mission Societies:

<https://abhms.org/ministries/creation-justice-network/>

The Creation Justice Network focuses on creation care and environmental justice. Their website features educational resources, toolkits for organizing community initiatives, and information on how to integrate environmental stewardship into congregational life.

Creation Care Study Program:

<https://www.creationcsp.org/>

The Creation Care Study Program offers immersive educational experiences that combine academic study, practical application, and spiritual formation centered around environmental stewardship. Individuals and churches can participate in programs such as semester-long courses, study tours, and workshops to deepen their understanding of creation care.

Green Congregation Certification Program:

<https://abhms.org/ministries/green-congregations/>

ABHMS offers a Green Congregation Certification Program designed to guide American Baptist congregations in becoming more environmentally sustainable. The program provides step-by-step guidance, resources, and recognition for churches that demonstrate a commitment to environmental stewardship through actions such as energy conservation, waste reduction, and community engagement.

Inspiring ministerial excellence for the glory of Jesus Christ since 1935

. . . to equip the saints for the work of ministry,
for building up the body of Christ, until all of us
come to the unity of the faith and of the
knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the
measure of the full stature of Christ.

—Ephesians 4:12-13



Since 1935, your national Ministers Council family has strived to provide opportunities for Collegiality, Competence and Centeredness. We've created resources articulating the challenges and ideals of an "excellent" (not perfect) minister in the Baptist contexts of ministry. Today, we connect chapters and developing affinity groups, host monthly webinars, and provide grants for clergy covenant groups and chapter events. Your Annual Dues ensure this work continues, and expresses your commitment to the "building up" of yourself and your colleagues. Renew for 2024 today!

To make your payments, please visit the Ministers Council website at: <https://www.ministerscouncil.com>

Contact **Rev. Dr. Valerie Andrews** at minutescouncil@abc-usa.org if you need contact info for your local treasurer.

National Updates

Ministers Council Survey **Deadline Friday, April 12**

The national office of Ministers Council is interested in learning what your professional and personal needs are as clergy. We would love to hear from you about specific opportunities that would be most beneficial to you. Your feedback will help us to make adjustments and prioritize ways we are able to serve you. The survey should take 3-5 minutes, and your responses are completely anonymous.

We appreciate your input!

The Ministers Council Leadership Team [TAKE THE SURVEY](#)

Events and Webinars



3rd thursdays **mc live**
WEBINAR SERIES

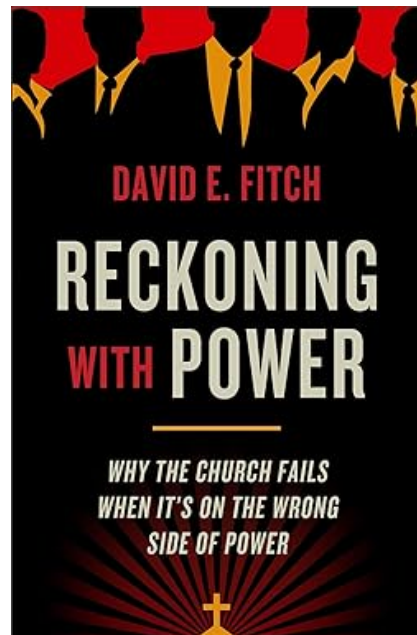
April 18, 2024
5pm Pacific/7pm Central/8pm Eastern

We look forward to this conversation with the Rev. Dr. David Fitch, author of the timely book *Reckoning with Power: Why the Church Gets it Wrong When It's on the Wrong Side of Power.*"

[READ MORE](#)

ZOOM INFO:

Join Zoom Meeting by clicking



here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83404699633>

Or call in by phone and use Meeting ID: 834 0469 9633 Find your local Zoom number here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83404699633>

SAVE THE DATE

May 16, 2024
5pm Pacific/7pm Central/8pm Eastern

Alphabet Soup:

How We Relate (or Don't) to Our ABC Partners

MC, ABCUSA, IM, ABM, OGS, BRC, NLC, BNG, ABNS, BPFNA-- what do all of these letters mean? And why does it matter? Join Rev. Sarah Strosahl-Kagi of our national Leadership Team for a lively discussion about our ABC family-- who is who, what is what, who does what, and how we can work together to be the people God calls us to be!

ZOOM INFO:

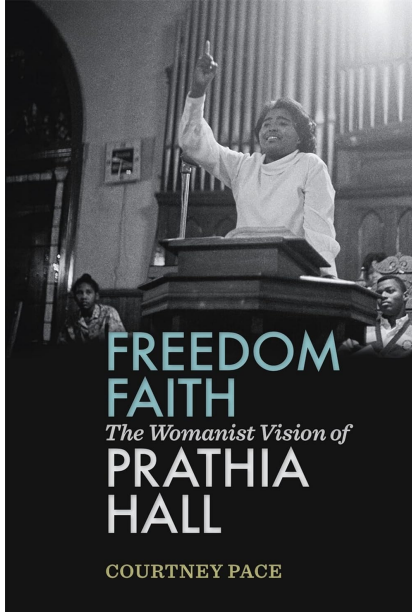
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Or call in by phone and use Meeting ID: 834 0469 9633 Find your local Zoom number here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83404699633>

Three-Part Discussion
Beginning in April -

Organizing Session Monday, April 29
10:30am Central



ZOOM: <https://ministrelife.zoom.us/j/2954166836>

We'll hold an Eastertide Class inspired by Rev. Dr. Prathia Hall through the lens of *Freedom Faith: The Womanist Vision of Prathia Hall* by Rev. Dr. Courtney Pace. Continue breathing in the resurrection truths we see in the liberating stories of our faith, through the lens of Hall's life and the great cloud of witnesses who know death and oppression do not have the last word!

We're convening a 3-part discussion of this inspiring text. Suggested donation of \$25 will cover the cost of your book and a donation toward the sessions which will be part class, part coaching with a diverse team of leaders. Interested? Join those who have expressed interest so far in an organizing call Monday, April 29 10:30am Central. Contact jacki@livingwellministries.net for more info.

Prayers and Milestones

Gracious and Loving Creator, We come before you with reverence for the Earth, our home, and all the living beings it sustains. Help us to recognize our interconnectedness with every part of creation and to honor the delicate balance of life.

In the midst of busyness and chaos, we pause to acknowledge the importance of self-care. As we navigate the demands of life, grant us the wisdom to prioritize our well-being. In moments of rest, may we find rejuvenation. In moments of silence, may we find clarity. And in moments of stillness, may we find peace.

We lift up those who have been affected by recent natural disasters across our country. Comfort those who have lost loved ones, homes, or livelihoods. Grant strength to first responders and volunteers as they provide aid and support to those in need.

Please share your prayers and milestones for the May 2024 issue by sending an email to ministerscouncil@abc-usa.org before April 27.



ABC Announcements

ABHMS Urges Immediate Student Action on Scholarship Applications—With its scholarship application deadline approaching, American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) urges all eligible undergraduate, graduate and seminary students to take advantage of this valuable opportunity for financial assistance. The application window for 2024-2025 scholarship cycle closes April 15 at 5 p.m. EDT.

[READ NEWS RELEASE](#)



Mark your calendar for July 18-21, 2024, at Roanoke College in Salem, Virginia, where Women and Girls of all ages across the United States, including Puerto Rico, will gather for an opportunity to deepen their understanding of God's word and to unlock the leadership potential within them.

Highlighting our two-year 2023-2025 Ministry Focus, "Be Strong, Be Courageous," we will feature inspiring plenary sessions, engaging workshops, and enriching Bible studies to uplift and strengthen your faith.

We urge you to save the date and start planning to be a part of this transformative gathering. Stay tuned for more updates.

You can learn more about our speakers and agenda, and to register, go to www.abwomensministries.org/events.

Ecumenical Resources



CHAPLAINCY Innovation Lab

**SPIRITUAL
GENERALIST
TRAINING**

for Healthcare
Clinicians



Brandeis UNIVERSITY UNION CHAPLAINCY Innovation Lab

This program introduces clinicians to the importance of spirituality for patients and families. It also teaches how to conduct basic spiritual care needs assessments and document spiritual care plans. All healthcare clinicians are invited, with contact hours available for some. [Learn more and find a link here - share with clinicians and those involved in planning continuing education programming!](#)

After seven years of live cohort experiences our partners at Glean Network are proud to widen access to START via a self-paced program. This program is designed to deliver immediate access to 10 proven modules to move you from idea to impact in spiritual entrepreneurship. Learn more [here](#).



Glean Network

CIL Members: Use code READYFORSTART to receive 40% off START self-paced!

START

The MBA-Level Entrepreneurship Course for Faith-Rooted Leaders

Apply Today
visit gleannetwork.org/start

START Live Cohort is our proven 11-week multi-faith, virtual cohort, designed for you to learn and launch together in a generative, accountable, and radically supportive container. Learn more [here](#).

Apply to the 2024 cohort of START: The MBA-Level Spiritual Entrepreneurship Course taught by Glean Network and Venture for All. Head to <https://gleannetwork.org/start> to apply today.



Religious and Spiritual Connection in Dementia

A webinar from the Transforming Chaplaincy Elder Care Research Network

May 17, 2024 - 1 PM Eastern

Dr. Katherine Britt will discuss the importance of religious and spiritual connection for people living with dementia. Learn more and register [here](#).

SHELLY RAMBO



SPIRIT AND TRAUMA
A Theology of Remaining

FOREWORD BY CATHERINE KELLER

CIL Book Club

Facilitated by Chaplain Jon Pope

Spring 2024 Selection:
Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining
by Professor Shelly Rambo

April 25, 2024 - 7 PM Eastern
Chapter 4 (newcomers welcome)

Register [here](#) and find the book [here](#).

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 May issue, send these to ministerscouncil@abc-usa.org by April 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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