



## June 2024 Newsletter



*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. -Romans 15:13*

### A Pastoral Reflection from the President

#### Is it Time to Lie Fallow?

*Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield, but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow...(Exodus 23.10-11, NRSV)*

While the above command from God at Sinai might seem oddly practical and theologically irrelevant, it was actually a profoundly theological statement. The Israelites had previously only known the rule of the Egyptian Empire, designed to maximize production regardless of the effect on the land or especially on the enslaved workers. So, when the command came that the Israelites must in effect *waste* an entire growing year, it must have felt jarring. And yet, God knew that for the well-being of the land long-term, it must for a time lie fallow. Be left alone for entire growing season....

Rest.

God was explaining that Sabbath rest is the way that all of creation operates. This year, our Leadership Team is exploring the concept of God's new thing springing up. Exodus reminds us that for a new thing to pop out of the ground, that ground must lie fallow for a time. The same is true for us. In fact, the very next verse in Exodus reminds the Israelites of this truth: *Six days you shall do*



*your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest... (Exodus 23.12)*

*...you shall rest...*

How is it time for you to lie fallow? Is the summer a slower time for your ministry, and a chance to take that long-needed vacation? Has your ministry been moving along at the speed of Empire for so long that it is time for a more intentional sabbatical? Our June 20 MC Live will explore "God's Invitation: Sabbaticals & Sabbath-Minded Ministry," featuring Travis Norvell, Jacki Belile and others for a panel on the importance of keeping "sabbath-minded." And on July 10, we will hold a session for folks about grants for Together in Ministry (peer groups) which could help create space for collegiality and rest. Each of these are invitations to help you think about how you and your ministry might lie fallow for a time. It may be what you both need for that "new thing" to spring up!

Matt Sturtevant  
Ministers Council ABCUSA President

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## **Retired Ministers and Small Churches Thriving Together**

I am a retired American Baptist minister living in central New York State. Several years ago, a person whom I knew in a church where I served as a short-term interim contacted me to ask if I would consider serving a church very part-time by leading its worship service on the "odd" Sundays - the first, third, and if there is a fifth, that Sunday also. That was it. This is a small United Church of Christ that cannot afford a full-time minister but is able to pay two ministers per diem to prepare the worship service and lead and preach on designated Sundays. Attendance hovers around 15-20 persons. Communion is served the first Sunday of the month, and a coffee hour is held after that Communion service. The people are gracious and appreciative of the leadership that the other minister and I give and do not expect more than leadership at the worship services for which each of us is responsible. However, if a need arises for pastoral care, they know they can call upon us, and we will respond. So...preparing a sermon every other week isn't so bad, and it keeps my mind working. And because there are two of us preaching every other Sunday, we try to stick to the Lectionary so we do not duplicate each other. It is a wonderful arrangement for the church and a couple of older pastors who enjoy a limited commitment. Oh, by the way, the other minister who does the "even" Sundays is a retired United Methodist - and both of us are serving this small, rural UCC church. I'd call this a wonderful arrangement for the small church and some older ministers. I'm sure this could work in some small American Baptist churches.

**-Rich Barron** (Officially the Rev. Dr. Richard H. Barron) - 81 years young

### **Thriving Stories**

Are you thriving in a particular area of your life/ministry? Do you have a story to share? We want to hear from you! Send us a brief note telling us what is going well and how God is one the move. Include a picture as well! Email [ministerscouncil@abc-usa.org](mailto:ministerscouncil@abc-usa.org) and share your story!

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## **National Updates**

### **LEARNING GUIDE UNDERWAY FOR CODE OF ETHICS**

The Ministers Council is turning in coming months to conclude the publication of a Learning Guide designed to be a companion to our national "Covenant and Code of Ethics." (The 2006 version of the COE was updated through a three-year process from 2019-2022 and became effective 2/1/23.)



The diverse eight-member editorial team collaborated for 15 months on the Learning Guide, which was shared in "beta version" with a couple gatherings in 2023 - an online "MC Live" session and a session of the Executive Ministers at the Biennial Mission Summit. Focus groups are being scheduled now with our denominational caucuses before its release this Fall. See a preview document highlighting the editorial team, processes and an excerpt [HERE](#) . For more information, contact Valerie at [ministerscouncil@abc-usa.org](mailto:ministerscouncil@abc-usa.org).



# ATTENTION MINISTERS COUNCIL FRIENDS!!!

IF YOU PAID YOUR 2024  
MINISTERS COUNCIL  
MEMBERSHIP DUES AND HAVE NOT  
RECEIVED YOUR MEMBERSHIP  
CARD AND/OR STICKER, PLEASE  
SEND AN EMAIL TO:  
[MINISTERSCOUNCIL@ABC-USA.ORG](mailto:MINISTERSCOUNCIL@ABC-USA.ORG)  
WITH YOUR CONTACT  
INFORMATION AT YOUR  
CONVENIENCE.

## Events and Webinars



3rd thursdays **mc live**  
WEBINAR SERIES

June 20, 2024  
5pm Pacific/7pm Central/8pm

**God's Invitation:  
Sabbaticals & Sabbath-Minded Ministry**



Our MC Live conversation features a panel and facilitated conversation on planning and reentry for formal sabbaticals. We will also share in encouragement and insights on keeping "sabbath-minded" on an ongoing basis, and accessing the gifts of sabbatical when a formal one seems currently out of reach. Join Revs. Travis Norvell, Jacki Belile and others for this important conversation.



**ZOOM INFO:**

Join Zoom Meeting by clicking here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88612223788?pwd=d2VYTHlrMDVEV1ppVDhmR2ljZ2t3dz09>



Or call in by phone and use  
Meeting ID: 886 1222 3788  
Passcode: 740763

Find your local Zoom number here:  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88612223788?pwd=d2VYTHlrMDVEV1ppVDhmR2ljZ2t3dz09>

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**SAVE THE DATE!**

**Thursday, July 18**

**8pm Eastern/7pm Central/6pm Mountain/5pm Pacific**

Next month we welcome Revs. Erica Van Brakle and Megan Biddle to share in an interactive orientation to MinistrElife, the "evolution of American Baptist Personnel Services." MinistrElife is a vibrant online hub designed especially for ministry professionals. Learn more about this platform designed for all ordained pastors, chaplains, specialized ministers, church musicians, religious non-profit executive directors, seminarians and those discerning a call to ministry. Van Brakle is the Director of MinistrElife and Biddle is the National Coordinator. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

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**TOGETHER IN  
MINISTRY!**

**Learn more about Grants for  
Clergy Covenant Groups (TIM)  
and Local Chapters (EIM)**



**Wednesday, July 10**  
**9am Pacific/10am**  
**Mountain/11am/Central/12pm**  
**Eastern**



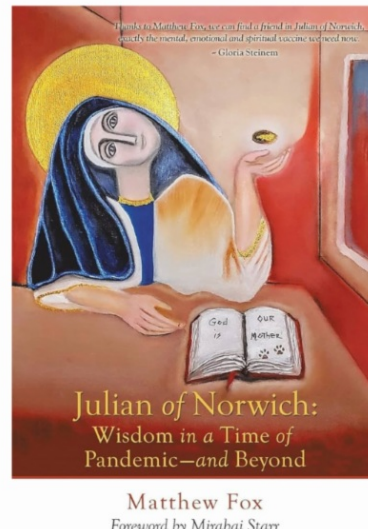
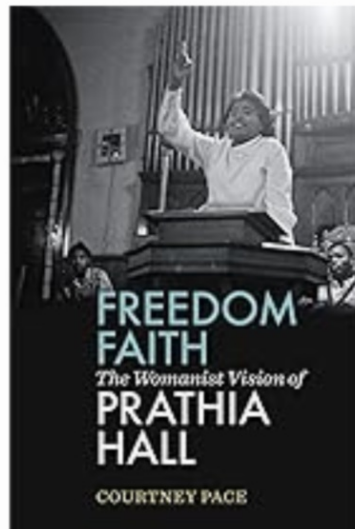
Since 2017 our missional passion has been "local, local, local." We've used grant funds to reinvest in a national network of clergy covenant groups ("TIM" applications submitted by individuals for small groups they convene) and local chapter events and projects designed for revitalizing and connecting local ministerial leaders (EIM). Join Rev. Lin Story-Bunce to learn more about these funds, testimonials from recipients and how to complete your applications. For more information, contact [linbunce@gmail.com](mailto:linbunce@gmail.com)

### **Zoom Info**

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

Or call in by dialing: 1-312-626-6799

Meeting ID: 295 416 6836



## **"Bear One Another's Burdens: Learning and Leading Together"**

**Tuesday, June 25**

**9am Pacific/10am Mountain/11am Central/12pm Eastern**

Join us for this devotional and resource-sharing time centered on Galatians 6:2. Share your own insights and join with others in praying for one another. Learn more about how your Ministers Council family is expressing care, as well as upcoming retreat and study circles being formed. Summer launches include discussions of *Freedom Faith: The Womanist Vision of Prathia Hall*, by Courtney Pace and *Julian of Norwich: Wisdom in a Time of Pandemic—and Beyond*, by Matthew Fox. For more information, contact Rev. Jacki Belile, Coordinator of Membership and Chapter Development.

### **Zoom Info:**

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

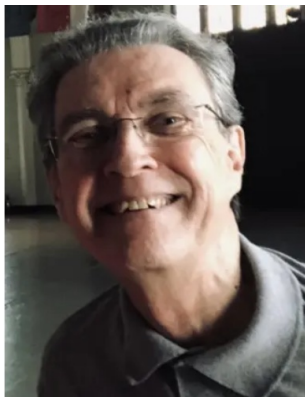
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## **Chapter News**

**Do you have Chapter News or Events to share?** Challenges or lessons?

## Prayers and Milestones



Prayers ascending for the family, friends, and colleagues of **Rick Harris**, who died May 22.

Rick served 26 years as pastor of the First Baptist Church of North Oxford, Massachusetts. During that time, he also served as the Executive Minister of the Northern Baptist Education Society. In 1996 he joined the staff of the American Baptist Home Mission Societies as an executive with the American Baptist Personnel Services.

[Read obituary](#)

We rejoice with the **Rev. Dr. Julie Vaughn**, who received her degree this past December 2023, conferred on May 7, 2024, at Loyola University Chicago. She is a board-certified Chaplain and conducts ethical consults as part of her workflow.



**From the Ministers Council**

## Staff Reflection





## FINDING PEACE RETREAT

At the end of April, Calvary Baptist Church of Newark, DE worked with local ministry partner Kingdom Connectors Inc. to put on a mini-retreat for self-care and mental health that was called "Finding Peace." A grant from their region, ABCOPAD, funded the event. The approximately 50 attendees and volunteers were greeted by welcoming and calming decorations and music. The event centered around four workshops of which each attendee chose two: yoga, mindfulness meditation, grief & loss, and faith & mental health. Dinner and childcare was provided. The event was part of a vision of having the faith community play a major role in people's overall wellbeing and healing, and providing spaces to process the overwhelming nature of life in these times.

Corey Fields



## ABC Announcements

### **ABHMS Center for Continuous Learning Offers Lifeline to Struggling Ministry Leaders with Vocational Discernment Course**

Years of unprecedented challenges stemming from the pandemic and political division have significantly strained servant leaders in ministry. The result: many are contemplating leaving the vocation altogether according to recent research. In response to this plight, the ABHMS Center for Continuous Learning announces Listen to Your Life, a four-day intensive course designed to help ministry professionals discern their path forward.

[READ MORE](#)



American Baptist  
**Women's  
MINISTRIES**

# WOMEN AND GIRLS' *Conference*

Thursday-Sunday  
**JULY 18-21, 2024**



**Rev. Joy Martinez-Marshall**  
First Baptist Church Lincoln  
Pastor



**Ms. Jasmine Turner**  
NBC12 News Anchor



**Rev. Dr. Gina  
Jacobs-Strain**  
General Secretary ABCUSA



**Rev. Barbara  
Florvil Laravin**  
Spiritual Director

**Roanoke College**  
221 College Lane  
Salem, VA 24153

[www.abwomensministries.org/events](http://www.abwomensministries.org/events)

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.

You can learn more about the speakers and agenda, and to register, go to [abwomensministries.org/events](http://abwomensministries.org/events).

## Ecumenical Resources



### Wounded Ministers Retreat for Clergy and Spouses

Sacred Heart Monastery, Cullman, AL  
July 8-11, 2024

Course Description: The Wounded Ministers Retreat for Clergy and Spouses provides a relaxed atmosphere and confidential setting for healing and encouragement to ministers and their families who have experienced a forced termination, or for those in conflicts possibly leading to termination. Competent and compassionate leaders guide the journey toward wholeness and health. The retreat provides opportunities for counsel, practical information, sharing, and rest, mindful of the emotional, physical, and spiritual needs of participants.

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER](#)

## 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 July issue, send these to [ministerscouncil@abc-usa.org](mailto:ministerscouncil@abc-usa.org) by June 27.*



Stay connected



**How to reach us:**

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

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

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