

March 2025 Newsletter



Image: Christ of the Breadlines, wood-cutting, by Fritz Eichenberg

Holy and Loving God,
You have called us to walk with Jesus—
to follow His steps of love, mercy, and justice.
In this Lenten season, guide our hearts to deeper reflection,
our hands to acts of compassion,
and our feet to paths of justice. Revive our faith in Your power, our trust in
Your way, and the gift of unity in Your Spirit. Amen.



PRAY



FAST



GIVE

Resources for Lent

Lent is a season of reflection, repentance, and renewal. We are called to guide our congregations through this sacred time while also tending to our own spiritual formation. To support you on this journey, the Ministers Council of the American Baptist Churches USA has curated a selection of Lenten resources to enrich your personal devotion and enhance your ministry.

[READ MORE](#)

YOU ARE INVITED:
**SABBATH-MINDED
 MINISTRY**

Receiving Applications Now

This is an invitation to apply to a Cohort Group of Clergy and Pastors seeking more sustainable models of wellness in ministry. The cohort's purpose is to engage clergy and lay leaders in development of more sustainable models of wellness for clergy in their ministry context.

Application Deadline: March 1, 2025
Program: March 20-December 31, 2025

Rev. Dr. Eugene Downing, Jr.

Rev. Jacki Belile

MINISTERS COUNCIL, NEW HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH ANNOUNCE SABBATICAL PROJECT

New Hope Baptist Church in Denver, Colorado has received a Palmer Grant award for its project “Sustainable Models for Sabbath-Minded Ministry” in 2025. The Ministers Council of American Baptist Churches - USA will serve as project partner for outreach and content development. New Hope’s Pastor, Rev. Dr. Eugene Downing, Jr. and Rev. Jacki Belile, Interim Program Administrator of the Ministers Council will co-direct the project.

The project will support ten cohorts of pastor-lay leader teams serving in small to medium churches in the American Baptist Churches - USA. Participants will gather in virtual and in-person meetings to explore and implement “sabbath-minded ministry” shifts appropriate to their settings.

[**Sustainable Models for Sabbath-Minded Ministry: An Info Session**](#)
 (Run Time 18:03)

[**FAQS for Palmer Sabbatical applicants**](#)

[**Sabbath-Minded Ministry Cohort Application Form**](#)

[**Sabbath-Minded Ministry Press Release**](#)

From the Leadership Team



A Place to Find Hope? Brave Women Deserve Churches’ Acceptance, Solidarity, Grace

by Rev. Dr. Julio González-
 Paniagua Secretary, Ministers Council
 ABCUSA

In the times of her youth, a beautiful woman had a joyful life. She shared frequently with her family, was industrious at home, and attended parties and other activities. One day, when she least expected it, a young man wanted to abuse her. This man did not know how to achieve it, so he asked a friend to help him trick her so that both of them would be alone in a room and could rape her. The plan worked out, and this young man separated themselves from the others and forced her into bed. She asked him not to harm her, not to make her go through that shame and pain, but he held her tighter

and raped her. After this, the young woman's life was not the same. She cried bitterly, stopped dressing in bright colors, and did not want to leave the house. Indeed, her life was never the same.

[READ MORE](#)

CHAPTER REPS' CORNER -

3rd Tuesdays - 5pm Pacific/7pm Central/8pm Eastern

Convened by Rev. Dr. Dianthia Y. Gilmore,
National Coordinator of Chapter Representatives



Next Meeting:
Tuesday, March 18, 7pm Central
“Our Winter Seasons”

Winter Seasons

I love the works of classic writers and mystics. One of my favorite writers is St Teresa of Avila (*The Interior Castle*). It is a must-read of our spiritual journey through excellent and colorful analogies and soliloquies. *Dark Night* is a poem by the 16th-century mystic St. John of the Cross. Since then, that theme has expanded into multiple books by various authors describing the popular *Dark Night of the Soul* concept. The modern authors also elaborate on the positive spiritual development of our soul gained through adversity.

[READ MORE/ZOOM INFO](#)

Events and Webinars

3rd thursdays **mc live**
WEBINAR SERIES



MMBB Cares!

March 20, 2025

5pm Pacific/7pm Central/8pm Eastern
Join Rev. Earl Thorpe, Ph.D. for
Devotions and Info



Learn about FREE & CONFIDENTIAL
Coaching and Counseling Resources for All
Ministers.

[LEARN MORE](#)

A promotional graphic for a biennial event. The background is dark blue with a light blue curved banner at the top left containing the text "Ministers Council At 2025 Biennial". In the center, there is a circular portrait of Rev. Dr. Naomi Mitchell, a woman with blonde hair wearing a white jacket. To the left of the portrait, the text "COME SEEK LIVING WATER!" is written in large, bold, white capital letters. To the right of the portrait, it says "Preacher: Rev. Dr. Naomi Mitchell" and "Vice-President, Ministers Council ABCUSA". At the bottom, the date and time "JULY 3, 2025, 9:30am-1:30pm" are displayed in white.

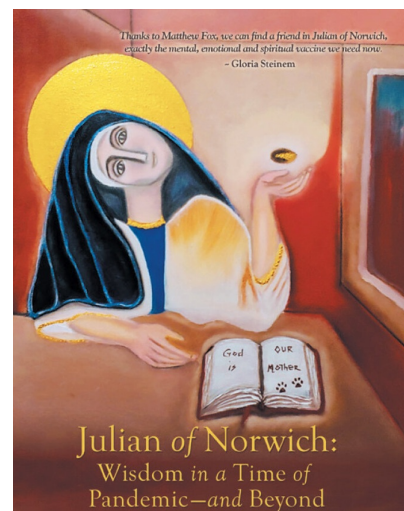
SAVE THE DATE!

Join us on July 3rd for our Biennial Program “Come, Seek LIVING WATER”. 9:30am-1:30pm (concludes w/ lunch buffet). Attendees will gather for grounding in worship, fellowship, healing ritual, Biblical proclamation and lunch.

[REGISTER TODAY!](#)

Julian of Norwich Book Study

Our current Julian study group is closed, but this offering will be repeated. Other study groups (4-6 weeks in length) are forming around books recommended by members. Do you have a title to suggest? Would you be willing to facilitate a study? Contact ministerscouncil@abc-usa.org for more info.



Staff Reflection

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and

you'll learn to live freely and lightly." Matthew
11:28-30 (The Message)

This passage has worked its way into my depths. Peterson's paraphrase text holds together the mystery of a Divine style "rest" and the realities of the sacrificial demanding lifestyle of those who take up Christ's cross (way). I love the word "I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you," as I discern what burdens I may be tempted to carry that are not actually placed on me by the Spirit. For those which ARE, I hold Paul's testimony: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."



I didn't grow up with Lenten observances, but this passage grounds me once again as I focus on the self-examination tasks of the season. Oh to walk with Christ and work with Christ in these times! To grow in my trust of the unforced nature of grace, to diligently keep company in prayer and study and community- these are the timeless practices that all disciples desperately need.

Does your servant leadership look more like prophetic or priestly work in these days? Are you tending more systems or more individuals? Are your burdens familiar or new and frightening? How are you experiencing the fast pace of change and divisions of these days? Are you tired, worn out, burned out?

Wherever you find yourself, trust the movement of honest reflection this season. Reach within to Your Source; reach out to supportive peers and resources. This is why the Ministers Council is HERE. Take in the resources in this issue and at our website... and contact us at ministerscouncil@abc-usa.org for more conversation on how we can serve you.

In Christ's Peace,
Jacki
Rev. Jacki Belile, CPC
Interim Program Administrator
Ministers Council ABCUSA

National Updates

NEED A GRANT? WE'RE HERE TO HELP...

The Ministers Council is pleased to announce we now have access to Grant Station Inc., an organization dedicated to assisting nonprofits in identifying potential funding sources for their programs or projects.

To obtain a list of potential grant sources please email information about the program or project for which you are seeking funds to Rev. Linda M. Bergeon at lbergeon@abccpc.org. Upon receipt of your request she will generate a list of grants you may be eligible for.



SEND DUES NOW FOR 2025

**Join or Renew Membership
by clicking the button below.**

We look forward to serving you!

**Join or Renew Your
Membership**

Prayers and Milestones

Gracious God,

As we embark on this Lenten journey, beginning with Ash Wednesday on March 5, we seek to draw closer to You through prayer, fasting, and acts of justice. Illuminate our hearts with the light of Your love. May this season be one of deep reflection, allowing us to recognize our shortcomings and earnestly strive for spiritual renewal. Help us to stand in solidarity with those who suffer, offering our support and embodying Your boundless grace.

God of mercy and righteousness,

We lift up to You the people suffering in war-torn lands—those in Ukraine, Palestine, Israel, Sudan, Myanmar, and beyond. Where there is conflict, bring Your peace. Where there is suffering, bring Your healing. Where there is injustice, raise up leaders who will work for reconciliation and righteousness.

Comforting God,

We pray for Your Church, especially in parts of the world where Christians are persecuted. We lift up our siblings in Christ in the Congo, and we ask for your peace for those mourning the loss of loved ones who were killed for their faith.

God of all people,

In a time of deep division, when political lines seem to run deeper than our shared humanity, we turn to You. Too often, we allow our differences to overshadow the truth that we are all created in Your image. Forgive us when we let fear, anger, or pride shape our hearts more than Your love.

Refine and strengthen us that we might work for Your will with Your heart.

Do you have milestones or prayer requests to share for April? Send to Ministerscouncil@abc-usa.org. by March 26.

ABC Announcements

Belonging

Women's History Month Conversations



March 3rd

Jayme Earhart
Founder of Elevate
Consulting Group



March 10th

Rev. Ryan Lindsay Arrendell
Emmy-Award winning
Journalist

Mondays in March at 12pm EST
www.abwomensministries.org/events

"True belonging doesn't require you to change who you are; it requires you to be who you are." - Brené Brown



Celebrate Women's History Month with Conversations centered around this year's mission focus, Belonging. God said that "we are all equally made in the divine perfect image" (Genesis 1:26-28). This webinar series features women who have made strides that inspire the belonging of women to various spaces, fields, and communities, as well as belonging to themselves.

[Click here for more details.](#)

SAVE THE DATE!

American Baptist Churches USA
BIENNIAL MISSION SUMMIT
July 3-6, 2025 | Omaha, NE

COME SEEK
LIVING
WATER

COME SEEK:

- ◆ New Life in Christ through dynamic worship services and learning opportunities.
- ◆ New Connections with other American Baptists. Build your network!
- ◆ What God has to share with you!

Come Seek Living Water



Helping clergy address their mental health & vocational well-being. Are you looking for professional development? MMBB Cares may be helpful to you. MMBB Cares is an initiative for clergy and their families to receive the mental health and vocational wellness resources they need to minister to their religious communities effectively. The goal of this program is to remove obstacles to counseling and coaching and to provide you with the resources you need to thrive in ministry and beyond. MMBB Cares counseling and coaching services are provided at no cost to clergy who register.

For more information, visit www.mmbb.org/mmbb-cares or email: mmbbcares@mmbb.org



You're Invited to the
2025 American Baptist
Churches Biennial!

Get ready for an unforgettable experience at the 2025 Biennial Mission Summit, kicking off on Thursday afternoon, July 3, 2025! From July 3 to July 6, we have a fantastic lineup of events and activities planned just for you. Be sure to check the schedule— we can't wait for you to experience all the wonderful happenings in 2025, and we don't want you to miss a single moment!

[MORE INFORMATION & TO REGISTER](#)

Ecumenical Resources

Final Call: Early Bird Conference Registration

Spiritual Directors International

Time is running out! Your final opportunity to take advantage of Early Bird savings for [SDI's 2025 Conference, *Spiritual Integration Beyond the Field*](#), from May 29th–31st in iconic Niagara Falls, NY, and online, will end on March 3rd!



Read more about the Conference [HERE](#)



give us one day,
we'll give you one year

Plan It - Peer Ministry is a program designed to help youth and church leaders develop peer-led ministry skills. It provides training, resources, and curriculum to equip young people to offer compassionate listening, care, and leadership within their faith communities.

We can come to your group!

We can equip you to facilitate your group!

We can even ZOOM with you!

Send a note and we can talk through the needs you have for your network!

EMAIL



Strengthening Church-State Separation: Upcoming Events

Join us on Tuesday, March 11, at 7 p.m. (ET) for a free 90-minute webinar featuring expert voices, including Dr. Sarah Bogue (Chandler School of Theology), Dr. Greg Carey (Lancaster Seminary), Dr. Riddick Weber (Moravian Seminary), and us. We'll explore historical and contemporary challenges to church-state separation and how Christians can advocate for a stronger democracy and gospel witness. Register today!

Online Course – March 17-April 11

Dive deeper with a four-week online course exploring church-state separation, legal and constitutional issues, and today's pressing concerns around Christian Nationalism. Sessions take place Mondays at 7 p.m. (ET) and will be recorded for flexibility. For just \$50, participants earn one Continuing Education Unit (CEU) credit. Sign up now to join the conversation.

Christian Nationalism is on the rise, but we can push back by strengthening the wall between church and state. Join us as we learn, engage, and take action.

Register now:



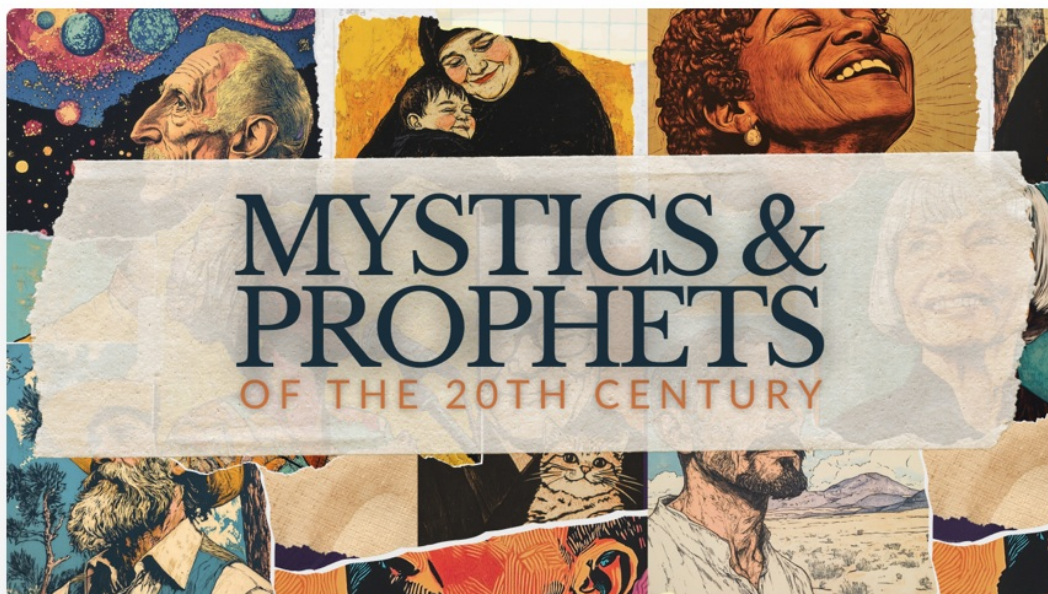
2025 IPD Summer Programs in Basel, Switzerland

Early Bird Application Deadline: April 30, 2025

Join the **2025 Summer Programs of Institute for Peace and Dialogue (IPD)**, which will be held in **Basel, Switzerland**.

- Basel Global Peace Conference: 4 August, 2025
- 15th Summer Academy: 5 - 15 August, 2025
- 3 Month Summer Research Program: 5 August - 30 October, 2025

[**MORE INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION**](#)



[**CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION**](#)

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 April 2025 issue, send these to ministerscouncil@abc-usa.org by March 26.



How to reach us:

- Phone: 215-469-1859

Office Hours: Tuesday - Friday
2-5pm (CT), other times by
appointment.

Stay connected

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

Ministers Council ABCUSA | 221 S High Street | West Chester, PA 19382 US

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