Together in Ministry

The Ministers Council

Collegiality * Competence *Centeredness

November 2026 Newsletter



And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. -Colossians 3:15

GRATITUDE IN ACTION

Giving Thanks. Strengthening Community. Sustaining Ministry.

November invites us to reflect on gratitude. We give thanks for the blessings of family and friendship, for communities of faith, and for the many ways God's grace sustains us.

For those called to ministry, however, gratitude is not always simple.

We know the joy of walking alongside others in moments of celebration, but we also know the weight of accompanying people through grief, uncertainty and change. We carry the concerns of our congregations, respond to the needs of our communities, and sometimes find ourselves wondering whether we have enough time, energy or wisdom for all that is asked of us.

MORE

Gracious God,
For the gift of your presence, we give thanks.
For the communities we serve, the colleagues who sustain us, and the opportunities to share your love, we give thanks.
When ministry feels overwhelming, renew our strength. When the path ahead seems uncertain, grant us wisdom. When we grow weary, remind us that we are held in your grace.
Open our hearts to the needs of others. Strengthen our commitment to justice, deepen our compassion, and help us recognize your presence in the ordinary moments of our

days.
May our gratitude find expression in faithful service, generous hearts and renewed hope.
Amen.



BEYOND PASTOR APPRECIATION MONTH

Giving Thanks for Those Who Answer the Call

October is recognized as Pastor Appreciation Month, a time to honor the women and men who faithfully serve congregations and communities. But as we enter November and the season of Thanksgiving, we are reminded that appreciation for those called to ministry should extend well beyond a single month.

Pastoral ministry is filled with sacred moments. There is joy in welcoming new life, celebrating milestones, witnessing spiritual growth and accompanying people on their journeys of faith. There are also difficult days, when ministers carry the weight of grief, conflict, uncertainty and the needs of those entrusted to their care.

Much of this work takes place quietly, beyond the pulpit and outside the public eye.

A hospital visit. A late-night telephone call. A prayer offered at a bedside. A difficult conversation approached with compassion. A word of encouragement when hope seems distant.

These moments rarely receive public recognition, yet they are at the heart of faithful ministry.

For the Ministers Council, appreciation is more than an annual observance. It is reflected in our commitment to centeredness, collegiality and competence, creating opportunities for ministers to nurture their spiritual lives, strengthen relationships with colleagues and grow in their calling.

As we give thanks for those who serve, let us also remember that ministers need care and encouragement themselves. They need trusted colleagues, opportunities for renewal, time for rest and communities that recognize their humanity as well as their calling.

Perhaps the greatest expression of appreciation is not simply saying thank you, but ensuring that those who care for others are also cared for.

This Thanksgiving season, may we celebrate the gifts of ministry, honor those who have shaped our journeys and renew our commitment to walking alongside one another.

Because gratitude is most meaningful when it becomes action.

APPRECIATION THAT LASTS ALL YEAR

Consider reaching out to a colleague who has made a difference in your ministry. A handwritten note, a telephone call, an invitation to lunch or simply asking, "How are

you doing?" can be a meaningful expression of gratitude.
And remember: You, too, are worthy of the care, compassion and grace you extend to others.

National Updates



This Year's Featured Presenter: Rev. Margaret Marcuson
Clergy consultant and author of Sustainable Ministry: How to Lead (and When to Nap), Rev. Margaret Marcuson will lead us in exploring what it means to lead faithfully and effectively without losing ourselves in the demands of ministry.

Her work encourages pastors and ministry leaders to think differently about how we relate to our work, the people we lead, and ourselves.



PASTORS, I APPRECIATE YOU

A Reflection on Gratitude, Encouragement and Sustainable Ministry
October may be Pastor Appreciation Month, but the encouragement and care ministers need shouldn't end when the calendar turns to November.

In a thoughtful article for The Christian Citizen, the **Rev. Margaret Marcuson**, American Baptist minister, author and clergy coach, acknowledges the challenges of pastoral leadership while encouraging ministers to recognize the good they accomplish.

Too often, pastors focus on what remains undone rather than celebrating the ways their ministry makes a difference.

Marcuson offers a simple exercise: Reflect on the past year and write down 20 things you've done well in ministry. Then take time to celebrate!

Her reflection is a timely reminder that ministry is a shared calling, and no pastor is responsible for carrying the future of the church alone.

As we continue our season of thanksgiving, may we extend gratitude not only to our colleagues, but also to ourselves.

Read "Pastors, I Appreciate You" in The Christian Citizen

National Ministers Council Biennial Business Meeting

Tuesday, November 10, 2026 | In Person and via Zoom

The American Baptist Ministers Council invites members to participate in its Biennial Business Meeting on Tuesday, November 10.

The meeting will be held in person as part of the biennial gathering, with a Zoom option available for members who cannot attend in person.

Whether gathered together or joining remotely, members are encouraged to participate in the ongoing business and shared ministry of the Council.

Date: Tuesday, November 10, 2026
Time: 7:00 p.m. Eastern | 6:00 p.m. Central | 5:00 p.m. Mountain | 4:00 p.m. Pacific

Format: Hybrid (in person and via Zoom)

JOIN THE MEETING VIA ZOOM
Meeting ID: 816 9137 9751
Passcode: 007615

We look forward to gathering with colleagues, near and far, as we continue our shared work of strengthening and supporting ministry.

Chapter News

Chaplains and Pastoral Counselors: Ministry of Presence

The Ministers Council Chapter of Chaplains and Pastoral Counselors continues to foster connection and collegiality among those serving in specialized ministries.

From hospitals and hospice settings to counseling centers, correctional institutions and military communities, chaplains and pastoral counselors offer compassionate care, spiritual guidance and a ministry of presence during some of life's most challenging moments.

The chapter's quarterly newsletter, The Yoke, provides a space for spiritual reflection, chapter news and shared experiences, helping members remain connected across diverse ministry settings.

As we celebrate gratitude in action this November, we give thanks for these dedicated ministers and the many ways they bring compassion, comfort and hope to those they serve.

Interested in learning more? Connect with the Chapter of Chaplains and Pastoral Counselors to explore opportunities for fellowship, professional growth and mutual support.

Contact: **cocmincouncil@gmail.com**

Northern California Chapter: Finding Comfort, Building Community

The American Baptist Ministers Council of Northern California (ABMCNC) is nurturing connections among colleagues through prayer, fellowship, and opportunities for reflection.

Advent Brunch | December 9
Jim H and Karen invite chapter members to an Advent Brunch at their home in Oakland on Wednesday, December 9, at 10 a.m. The address will be provided upon RSVP.

RSVP: **labc4jim@gmail.com**

2027 ABMCNC Retreat | January 11–12
The chapter's annual retreat will take place January 11–12, 2027, at Redwood Glen.

This year's theme, “Retirement: Living It, Preparing For It,” will explore the opportunities and challenges of retirement, with leadership provided by the American Baptist Foundation.

Registration information will be available soon.

Prayers and Milestones



REV. DR. A. ROY MEDLEY RECEIVES INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AWARD

The Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley, former general secretary of American Baptist Churches USA, has received the 2026 Frank Wolf International Religious Freedom Award in recognition of his lifelong commitment to religious freedom, justice, peace and human dignity.

Presented by 21Wilberforce on October 27 in Falls Church, Virginia, the award honors individuals who demonstrate exceptional courage and commitment in defending freedom of religion or belief.

Throughout more than five decades of ministry, Medley has worked to confront racism and religious discrimination, build relationships across faith traditions and advocate for communities experiencing persecution and displacement.
His advocacy has included standing alongside Muslim communities facing Islamophobia, supporting religious freedom in Sudan and working with communities affected by violence and displacement in Burma.

Medley's ministry offers a powerful example of faith expressed through compassion, courage and a commitment to the dignity of every person.
As we celebrate gratitude in action this November, we give thanks for his faithful witness and the example he continues to offer the wider church.

Read the full story: **21Wilberforce**

Giving Thanks for the Journey, Holding One Another in Prayer

I thank my God every time I remember you. -Philippians 1:3

As we enter this season of thanksgiving, we give thanks for the faithful ministers, chaplains, pastoral counselors, educators and spiritual leaders who serve God's people in countless ways.

We celebrate the milestones that mark our journeys in ministry, remembering that every anniversary, new calling and season of transition represents a story of faith, perseverance and grace.

We also recognize that not every season brings celebration. Some among us are navigating illness, grief, uncertainty, congregational challenges or the quiet exhaustion that can accompany a life of service.

In all these circumstances, we remain connected through prayer, friendship and the shared calling that brings us together.

We Give Thanks

For colleagues celebrating ordination anniversaries, new ministry appointments, retirements and significant achievements.

For congregations discovering new opportunities for outreach, service and community engagement.

For mentors whose wisdom has shaped generations of ministers and for emerging leaders bringing fresh perspectives and renewed energy to the church.

For the relationships that remind us we do not walk the journey of ministry alone.

We Hold in Prayer

Those who are grieving: May God's comforting presence surround all who mourn the loss of loved ones, colleagues and members of their congregations.

Those facing illness or recovery: May they experience healing, renewed strength and the loving support of their communities.

Ministers experiencing fatigue or discouragement: May they find opportunities for rest, renewal and the reassurance that their worth is not measured by productivity or accomplishments.

Congregations in transition: May pastors and congregational leaders approach seasons of change with wisdom, patience and openness to God's guidance.

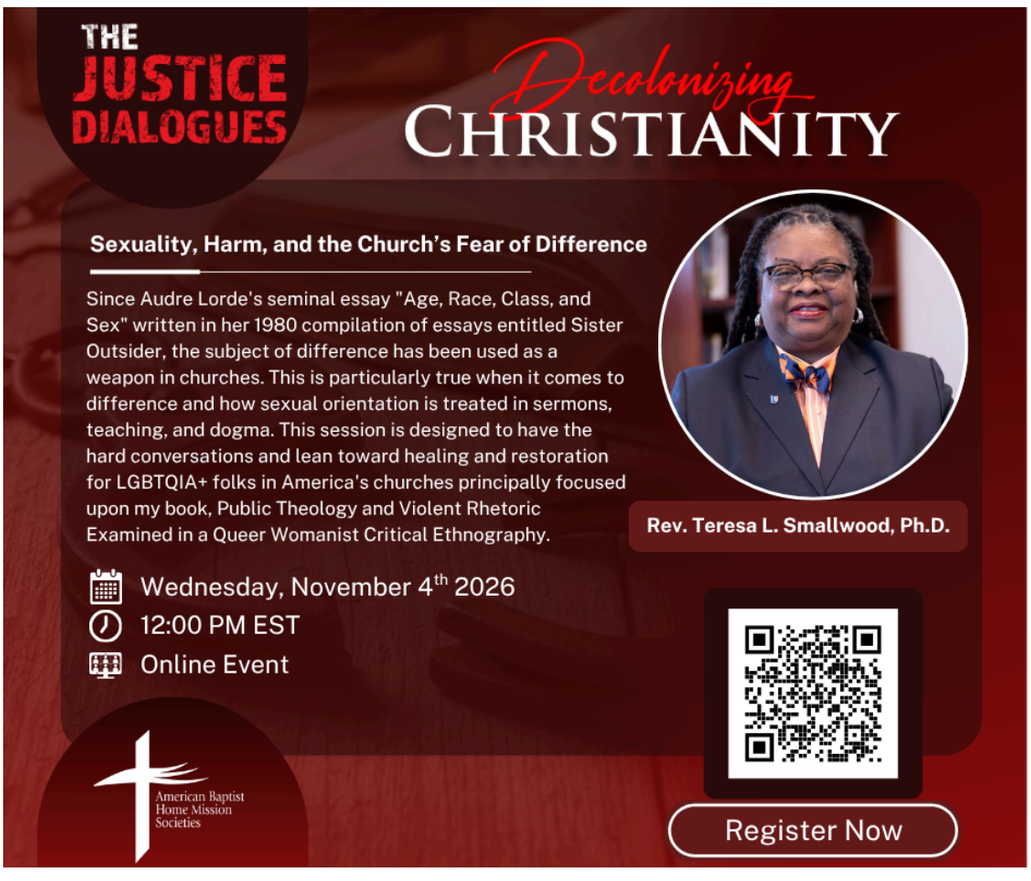
Communities experiencing hardship: We pray for those facing food insecurity, housing instability, violence, displacement and the effects of natural disasters. May our prayers inspire compassionate action and faithful advocacy.

Our nation and its leaders: As communities reflect on the November elections, we pray for wisdom, integrity, justice and peace. May we listen with humility, seek understanding across differences and remain committed to the dignity of every person.

Have a milestone to share?

We invite members to submit celebrations, ministry updates and prayer concerns for inclusion in future newsletters. Sharing these moments strengthens our connections and reminds us of the many ways God's grace is at work among us.

ABC Announcements



JUSTICE DIALOGUES: SEXUALITY, HARM, AND THE CHURCH'S FEAR OF DIFFERENCE

Wednesday, November 4 | Noon ET | Online

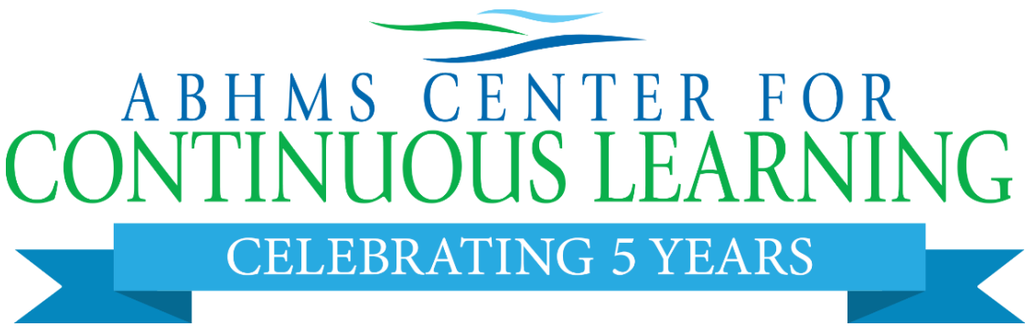
How can churches move beyond fear of difference and become communities of healing, restoration and belonging?

The American Baptist Home Mission Societies' Center for Continuous Learning welcomes the Rev. Teresa L. Smallwood, Ph.D., for the next installment of Justice Dialogues: Decolonizing Christianity.

Drawing from her book, Public Theology and Violent Rhetoric Examined in a Queer Womanist Critical Ethnography, Dr. Smallwood will examine how church teachings, sermons and doctrine have addressed differences in sexual orientation and the harm these approaches can cause.

Participants will be invited to reflect on the experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals within Christian communities and consider how churches can foster healing, restoration and belonging.
The webinar is free and open to all.

Register for Justice Dialogues



STORIES IN THE KEY OF LIFE

Monday, November 9 | Noon–1 p.m. ET | $10
Explore the power of storytelling through lived experiences, fables and music. This webinar examines how stories shape identity, faith and community while encouraging participants to honor and share the experiences of others.
Part of the Center for Continuous Learning's Storytelling: A Space for Grace series.
Register

THIRD SPACES AND FOSTERING BELONGING FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Friday, November 13 | Noon–1 p.m. ET | $10
How can churches create meaningful connections with young adults beyond traditional ministry settings?
This webinar explores the development of welcoming "third spaces" where authentic relationships and a sense of belonging can flourish in an increasingly digital world.

Part of the Chosen Generations: Ministry with Young Adults series.
Register

Lifelong Learning: A Journey of Discernment

Our sense of calling continues to evolve throughout our lives and ministries. New experiences, changing circumstances and unexpected opportunities invite us to reflect on where God may be leading us next.

The American Baptist Home Mission Societies' Center for Continuous Learning encourages ministers and ministry leaders to embrace lifelong learning as part of their ongoing vocational discernment.

The Center's Listen to Your Life course invites participants to reflect on their experiences, explore questions of purpose and consider how God may be speaking through everyday life.

For those interested in exploring additional learning opportunities, the Center also offers an Individual Subscription, currently available for a promotional price of $55, providing access to educational resources that can be explored at one's own pace.

Whether discerning a new direction or seeking renewal in an existing calling, lifelong learning creates space for curiosity, reflection and growth.

Explore the opportunities:
Listen to Your Life

Ecumenical Resources

Spiritual Care Week: Healing Through Presence and Grace



Although Spiritual Care Week was observed October 18–24, its 2026 theme, "Healing Through Presence and Grace," offers a message worth carrying into the months ahead.

Inspired by kintsugi, the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery with gold, this year's observance celebrated the ministry of chaplains, pastoral counselors, and spiritual caregivers who accompany people through grief, illness, uncertainty, and loss.

The image reminds us that healing does not always mean restoring what was. Sometimes it means discovering grace, beauty, and hope in the midst of life's wounds.

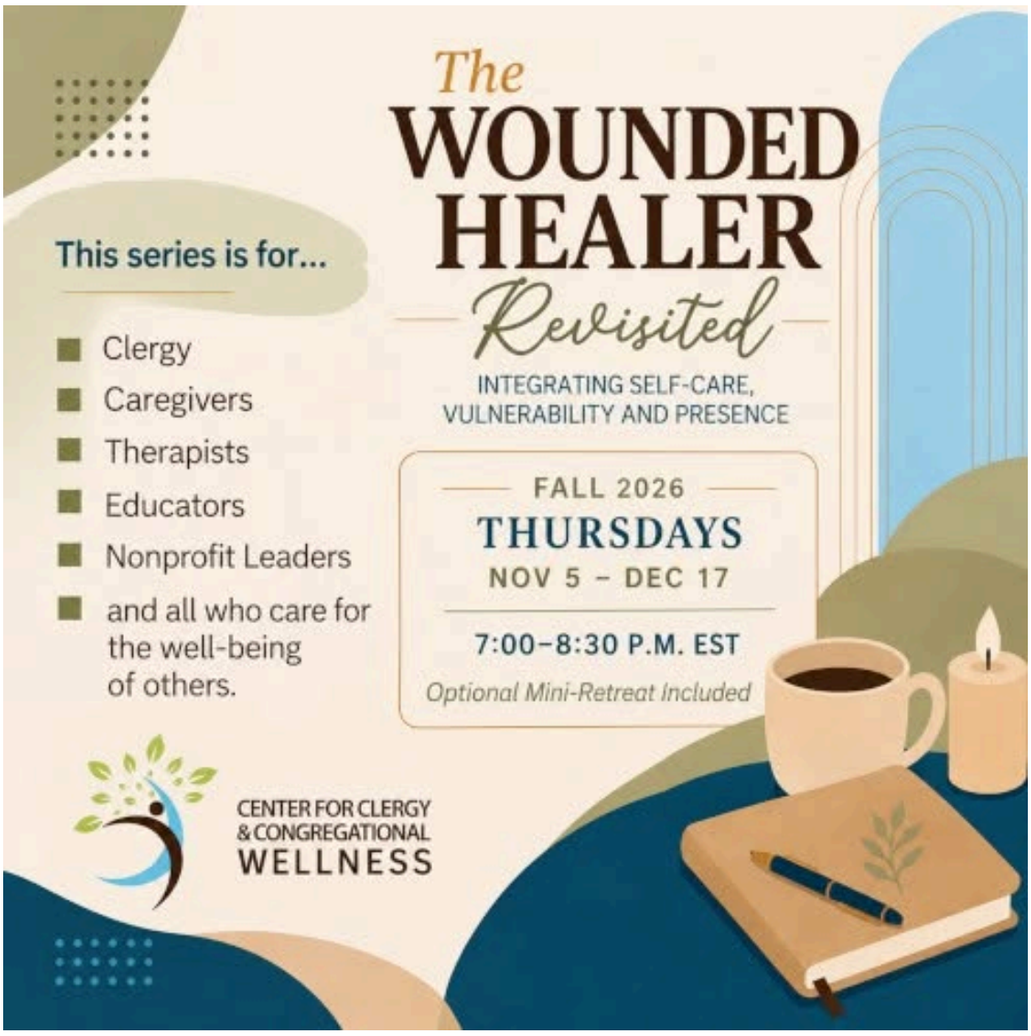
We'd love to hear from you!

Did you or your congregation observe Spiritual Care Week? How does the theme "Healing Through Presence and Grace" speak to your ministry?

We invite you to share a brief reflection, experience, or photograph for possible inclusion in our December Ministers Council newsletter.

Please send your contributions to **ministerscouncil@abc-usa.org**, with the subject line "Spiritual Care Week Reflection."
Learn more about Spiritual Care Week and its 2026 theme.


AN HOUR OF
Soul Care
November 20th
12-1pm EST
Via Zoom
Calling clergy to a Noon time to pause and be invited into a guided meditation and contemplative practice of breath. Give yourself an hour to step away from divisive conversations, polarizing statements, stirring newsfeeds and intentionally pause and receive gentle nourishment from the Holy Spirit. Make this hour a choice to sit, breathe and feed your soul. Rev. Sandra Dorsainvil will lead a guided meditation and time of silence.
To Register:
Email Erin at
admin@ccdmin.org
by November 17th
C C
D M



The Wounded Healer Revisited: Caring for Those Who Care for Others

Those who care for others often find it difficult to make space for their own care and renewal. This fall, the Center for Clergy & Congregational Wellness is offering The Wounded Healer Revisited: Integrating Self-Care, Vulnerability, and Presence, a six-week online learning and formation experience rooted in Henri Nouwen's classic image of the wounded healer. **clergyandcongregations.org**

Designed for clergy, chaplains, caregivers, therapists, educators, nonprofit leaders, and others in caring professions, the series will explore the hidden costs of caregiving, compassion fatigue, boundaries, vulnerability, healing presence, and sustainable rhythms for ministry and leadership. Sessions will include reflection, conversation, contemplative practices, and practical tools, with an optional online mini-retreat for deeper reflection and renewal. **clergyandcongregations.org**

The six-week online series begins November 5.
Learn more and register



PUBLIC THEOLOGY IN AN AGE OF CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

An Online Course from The Seattle School of Theology & Psychology
How can Christians remain faithful to their convictions while building meaningful relationships in an increasingly divided society?

Dr. Dwight J. Friesen leads a self-paced online course exploring the intersections of Scripture, theology, history, psychology and public life.

Through five lessons, participants will examine Christian nationalism, consider the relationship between faith and political power, and explore practices that encourage compassionate dialogue and faithful public witness.

The course also includes a devotional resource, a study guide and an optional live online gathering with the instructor.

Live gathering: **November 17, 7:30–9:15 p.m. ET**
Registration: $375
Registration closes: December 21

Course information and registration

An Invitation to Ecumenical Prayer

World Council of Churches Ecumenical Prayer Cycle

Christian unity begins not only in meetings and theological conversations, but also in prayer.

The World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Prayer Cycle invites Christians to pray each week for people, churches and communities in different regions of the world.

This simple practice can broaden our understanding of the global church while deepening our connections with Christians whose experiences may differ from our own.

Ministers Council members may find the Prayer Cycle especially useful for personal devotions, congregational prayers and worship planning.
Explore the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle: **https://www.oikoumene.org/**

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 December issue, send these to ministerscouncil@abc-usa.org by November 25.





How to reach us:

- Phone: 215-469-1859

Stay connected

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

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