

THE YOKE

*The newsletter of the Chaplains and Pastoral Counselors Chapter
of the Ministers Council, ABCUSA*

March, 2024

IN THIS EDITION

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ELECTIONS ARE COMING
(NO, OURS)

YOUR INVITATION



Hope of the Resurrection, *by Rick Barnes:*

Easter is this week! In the churches, pastors are preparing their sermons in anticipation of probably their largest crowds of the year. Some of us who have worship services as part of our portfolio are gearing up for Easter as well. There will be celebration, be it with the finery of immaculately dressed people in decorated sanctuaries, or in my case, with grape juice and bread at sunrise in a recreation yard or the facility garden.

I'm often struck with the question "what happens on Monday?" "Is it all over?" Sadly, for many people it is all over. But I think of the Substance Abuse class I am leading. I had one of the attendants of the class say he is terribly frightened that as much as he wants to change, as soon as he gets out, he will go back to using again. He has good reason to be frightened, both personally in relapses and statistically, where the rate of recidivism is so high. It's tempting to throw in the towel.

Many of us encounter situations where it is easy to become cynical or hopeless and think things will never get better. Be it our personal struggles or looking at broader parts of society or of the faith's seeming to wane in influence, it's tempting to just say "enough"

Then, I remember the old hymn "Because He Lives" For the resurrection, of course, implies eternal life. But if the resurrection didn't have meaning for my personal life here and now, I doubt I would have the faith to hang on. It's because Jesus lives post-death and life to the full (John 10:10) has been given to us that I have hope. And because I have hope, I have the strength to be present with people who are facing tremendous struggles in ways that encourage them, like preparing that resident in the class and so many more. My prayer for each of us is that we continue to see the power of the

resurrection and model it in encouraging ways to those around us. Happy Easter!

MMBB Is Pleased to Announce the Launch of MMBB Cares
Helping Clergy Address their Mental Health & Vocational Wellbeing



We understand that being in ministry can be stressful, and often, compounded by financial concerns, burnout, and family issues. We also know the importance of professional development. That's why we are excited about the launch of **MMBB Cares**, an initiative for clergy and their families to receive mental health and vocational wellness resources they need to effectively minister to their religious communities.

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 has partnered with the **National Employee Assistance Program (NEAP)** to deliver confidential, effective mental health counseling services. Our partners who will provide coaching services to participants are the **Center for Career Development** and **Ministry and the Ministry Development Network**.

Let us serve you so you can serve others. Click on the link below to learn more and to find out how to register.

[MMBB Cares Details](#)



SPACE FOR GRACE
& SPIRITUAL CAREGIVERS CONFERENCE

Engaging Intergenerational Faith
April 9–11, 2024 | King of Prussia, PA

<https://abhms.org/space-for-grace-spiritual-caregivers-conference-2024/>

Why We Serve



Lee Axtell

Secretary/Treasurer

Navy Chaplain serving the Marine Corps, Honolulu, HI

As an active duty Navy Chaplain, it seemed I was either deployed, or getting ready to deploy so I didn't have the opportunity to serve as a Board member. When I transferred to a shore duty position, I knew the opportunity presented itself to serve. The benefit I receive serving as the Secretary and Treasurer is the ability to interact with our membership on a close personal basis as I process their membership dues. I send a short email confirming receipt of their dues, and this often turns into a discussion of prayer requests, accomplishments and family situations. I am able to pray with our members when I would not have the opportunity to pray with them on this close of a level. I also voluntarily serve on the ABCUSA Professional Ministries Team which connects me with the denomination on a national level. My dream is that the chapter will continue to serve Christ in the fantastic way it is currently doing so, and members will invite others to join to enhance collegiality between our American Baptist Chaplains and Pastoral Counselors.



Petra Van de Water, C&PC Member-at-Large

and chaplain at Stanford Children's Hospital

My vision is to empower, equip, and affirm American Baptist chaplains in their professional growth, visibility, and self-care, as well as optimize their potential and ability to serve others spiritually and emotionally.

Through collaboration, webinars, workshops, resources, and well-being initiatives, we can support chaplains in excelling and ensuring they feel valued and well-equipped.

As Micah 6:8 instructs, we are grounded in our faith by bringing justice, mercy, and humility to individuals in our care, especially those belonging to marginalized minority groups. As 1 John 4:16 reminds us, our God is love, and by caring for ourselves, we optimize our compassionate care and loving presence to those we serve.

Being on our executive committee is rewarding and fulfilling. We work together professionally in a shared vocational mission and support each other through ups and downs with humor and humility. We encourage each other to utilize our passions, skills, and gifts, maintain work-life balance, and believe in prayer to guide our work.



Rick Barnes, C&PC Member-at- Large and chaplain at Imperial Regional Detention Facility, Calexico, CA.

I live in the California desert, about 10 miles from the Mexican border. The nearest American Baptist church is approximately 100 miles away. This is hard for me, as I want to have more involvement with the American Baptist family than I do. I am a chaplain in fulfillment of a call of God. So it is natural for me to involve myself in something that affirms part of our family and focuses on building up each other as professional colleagues at the same time. My prayer for the future is that we continue to strive for deeper, more relevant opportunities within our chapter, and that we would find more ways to minister with the larger body of American Baptists.



Nat Milton, C&PC Member-at-Large and pastoral counselor at Peninsula Pastoral Counseling Center, Newport News, VA

I serve on the Executive Committee of Chaplains & Pastoral Counselors because of what Jesus illustrates in Mark 10:43-45 “But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and give his life for many.” NRSV

It is amazing that the benefit of serving is the satisfaction of making it possible for others to experience the impact of the resources that we share. We provide the logistics so that others can benefit by feeling relieved, rested, renewed and ready to journey on. We then are filled with gratitude!

My hopes and dreams are for those who meet us will let others know about their connection with us and decide to join us. Then Jesus said to the disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. “



Sarah Fogg, President of the C&PC Chapter and retired chaplain and spiritual care department head

My motivation for serving our Chapter “evolved.” At first, I felt an obligation to the denomination which I had thought myself too busy to serve when working full-time. In 2013, then working part-time, I accepted an appointment as Treasurer even though it wasn’t what I usually like to do. Imagine my surprise at how rewarding it was to get to know American Baptist colleagues all over the US as I dealt with their questions and comments about paying dues!

First, a little history. Our chapter relaunch began in 2019. We conducted a survey of chapter members' current denominational loyalties, offered a free dinner at the 2019 Biennial in Virginia Beach to any endorsed chaplain or pastoral counselor willing to show up, discussed with attendees our survey results, and took their suggestions for what was needed to re-ignite chapter participation. Dinner attendee, Dale Pracht, agreed to help. Together, in 2020, we held a chapter vote to revise the by-laws (which required filling more positions than we thought possible), chose a nominating committee, and held an election.

Our first executive committee meeting held on September 1, 2020, included me as President, Karen Pickler as Past President, Lee Axtell as Secretary/Treasurer, and Members-at-Large, Rick Barnes, and Greta Wagner. At the 2021 Biennial, we elected Nat Milton Member-at-Large to fill Greta's position, and later in the year, Petra Van de Water stayed on as an additional Member-at-Large after Rick Barnes' return from a 6-month sabbatical.

From that first day in September, our Executive Committee has met monthly for the next 41 of the last 43 months with hardly a single absence from anyone. Together, we served our membership and other chaplains and pastoral counselors at denominational biennials, webinars, and with many newsletters. We developed close bonds of camaraderie, sharing our personal joys and sorrows as we met so often together. They walked with me faithfully as I recovered slowly from the after-effects of breast cancer and took on many of my responsibilities. They comforted me as I grieved Karen's death. I had told Karen many times that I could not lead this group without her, but these dear friends who remained proved me wrong. Serving with them has been one of my greatest privileges and deepest joys.

My advice to those who will become our next chapter officers? Don't do as I did—wait to be asked. Be sure you've joined as a chapter member in 2024 and then volunteer to serve. You'll be glad you did.

Chapter Elections Coming Soon

Later this Spring, you will be hearing from the Nominating Committee about the upcoming election of chapter officers. The Bylaws remind us that,

The Officers of the Ministers Council Chapter for Chaplains and Pastoral Counselors shall be a President, immediate Past President, and Secretary/Treasurer...elected by the body to a four-year term. At least two members-at-large shall be elected...to four-year terms, and where possible, In two-year staggered terms.

Sarah Fogg, Lee Axtell, and Richard Barnes—serving as President, Secretary/Treasurer, and Member-at-Large respectively, will complete four-year terms by September 1, 2024. Nat Milton and Petra Van de Water will complete four-year terms in June and October 2025. The Chapter will elect a new President, Secretary/Treasurer, and Member-at-Large in June.

Only current Chapter members are eligible to vote and/or run for office. If you have not yet paid your 2024 Chapter dues, please do so immediately by filling out the Membership Information Sheet on page 8 and sending your \$25 check to the Treasurer.

The goal is to elect more than one new Member-at-Large officer to lighten the load for everyone on the Executive Committee and provide more perspectives to serve you better. Please consider running for one of the open positions. Send an email to sarahfogg4@gmail.com to let the Nominating Committee know of your interest. The Committee is hopeful that some of the new officers will have specific skills, such as Excel familiarity or newsletter production. If any of this sounds like you or someone you know, please let the Chapter know.

Be Looking For This

Our next webinar is tentatively set for late May, and will be focused on the new ACPE standards for chaplaincy training-spiritually integrated psychotherapy. More details to follow!

An Invitation to Join Us



Greetings in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ!

We cordially invite you to join the Chaplains and Pastoral Counselors Chapter of the ABCUSA Ministers Council for the year 2024. Our ongoing purpose is to “build up the Church of Jesus Christ by sustaining and improving the professional church leadership of the American Baptist Churches USA in general, and chaplains and pastoral

counselors in particular.” We focus primarily on member support and raising our profile within the wider denomination.

Since our formation in 1991 at the ABC Biennial in Charleston, West Virginia, all endorsed American Baptist chaplains and pastoral counselors have been invited to join our chapter of the ABC Ministers Council. This larger, national body gives us many opportunities to connect with and find support from fellow ABC clergy, something many of us, working in non-congregational settings, often find difficult to do. We also recognize that our training, plus our experiences in varied secular environments, gifts us with much to offer back to our denomination and colleagues.

2023 was a banner year for our chapter. We were able to bring you four webinars plus two others through our parent group, the Ministers Council. And, of course, there was the ABC Biennial in San Juan, Puerto Rico. It was wonderful seeing, meeting, and getting to know some of you for the first time at our Thursday evening dinner meeting. Thank you so much for taking the time to be with us in San Juan and when you joined us throughout the year on webinars. This year, it is our plan to put more of our webinar recordings on the Ministers Council website. Look for ones you wanted to attend but had to miss. You will find them on the website soon.

You may pay your dues in either of two ways 1) to us, by completing the attached application form and enclosing a check for both the National Ministers Council and our chapter of the Ministers Council, or 2) through the National Ministers Council website, which allows you to pay them and us. Either way, please fill out and return the attached membership application, including your areas of expertise, so that we may know you better and be more aware of the depth of talent and gifts otherwise hidden in our chapter membership. Don't forget to note the sliding scale for national membership dues. We would like to have all our members paid up and onboard no later than June 30, and much earlier, if possible.

Our chapter officers continue to represent you in various ways throughout American Baptist circles—at the Professional Ministries Team meetings in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, at the Chapter Representatives meetings of the Ministers Council and at other venues where ABC clergy gather and fellowship. Thank you for your confidence in us to tell your story. Do let us know when you celebrate milestones or minister in some new way. We want to share these blessings with your colleagues.

May God continue to bless you in your ministries.

Your Executive Committee

President: Rev. Dr. Sarah L. Fogg

Secretary/Treasurer: Rev. Lee Axtell

Member-at-Large, Chaplain: Rev. Richard Barnes

Member-At-Large, Pastoral Counselor: Rev. Nathaniel Milton

Member-At-Large, Chaplain: Rev. Petra van de Water



Name: _____ Title: _____

Date: _____ ABHMS Endorsement Year: _____

Submitted my 2024 or plan to submit) my annual report to our Ecclesiastical Endorser.
Date: _____

Preferred Mailing Address: _____

Preferred Email Address: _____

Phone Number: Home: _____ Cell: _____

Place of Ministry: _____

Job Title: _____

Areas of Expertise: (lecture, workshop, etc.) _____

1) Ministers Council Dues (choose one from below)

Annual Income of:		\$ _____ .00
\$60,000 or more:	\$100.00	
\$25,000-59,999:	50.00	
\$10,000-24,999:	25.00	
Under \$10,000:	10.00	

2) C & PC chapter Dues \$ 25.00

3) Total Dues Submitted: \$ _____ .00

Mail your check and this completed form to:

(Check payable to **Ministers Council**)

Rev. Lee Axtell, Secretary/Treasurer
C & PC Ministers Council
1248 Onioni Street
Kailua, Hawaii 96734

Once your check is processed, you will receive a membership card and/or this year's sticker for your permanent card.