**ABHMS’ ‘Space for Grace’ Coverage Continues; National Event Urged Attendees to Create Positive Change**

**VALLEY FORGE, PA (11/17/15)**—American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) continues telling the powerful story of its national “Space for Grace” gathering. Held at the Hilton Los Angeles Airport hotel Nov. 4-7, Space for Grace featured prophetic preachers and presenters who urged attendees to examine their lives, accept the call to seek justice and create positive change in their communities.

Viewable in the slideshow at [www.abhms.org](http://www.abhms.org/) is a photographic essay featuring worship, plenary and luncheon speakers throughout the gathering, including the Rev. Dr. Ken Fong, pastor of Evergreen Baptist Church of Los Angeles and executive director of the Asian American initiative at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, Calif.; the Rev. Marie Onwubuariri, executive minister of American Baptist Churches of Wisconsin; and the Rev. Ernest R. Flores, pastor of Second Baptist Church of Germantown, Pa.

Fong discussed the way in which an individual’s view of God shapes how he or she views others. Using himself as an example, Fong reflected on an early pastoring experience and his then-rigid view of God.

Smitten with what he refers to as “PGA,” or “postgraduate arrogance,” Fong says that he refused to provide a Christian funeral for the 16-year-old son of church members. Although the boy was a member of the church’s Boy Scouts of America troop, he never attended services and didn’t consider himself Christian, Fong said. Nonetheless, the boy’s parents continued to attend the church, standing with Fong during the death of the infant that Fong and his wife were set to adopt.

Onwubuariri preached about privilege and the need to enter into grace with others who we believe are unlike us.

“We tell ourselves that it’s enough to only show up at a funeral, put a coat into a bin or that we take time to read an article posted on our newsfeed about the latest senseless tragedy,” she said.

Flores spoke about both grace and justice, relating a story of an unusual situation in which grace was extended to him.

“Jesus justice isn’t our justice,” Flores said. “Jesus justice makes us uncomfortable. Jesus justice is not based on what we’ve done [earned], but on what we need.”

Also, a collection of candid photographs from the gathering is available on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.1051758728191301.1073741874.186358048064711&type=3).

In addition, watch your postal mailbox during the week of Dec. 7 for delivery of the Mission in America newsletter and, in mid-December, for delivery of The Christian Citizen magazine—both of which will feature additional stories from Space for Grace.

The former will include a Space for Grace attendee’s first-person account, while the latter will include stories written by presenters, including the Rev. Ernest R. Flores, pastor of Second Baptist Church of Germantown, Pa.; the Rev. Dr. Jacqueline A. Thompson, assistant pastor of Allen Temple Baptist Church, Oakland, Calif.; the Rev. Susan Sparks, comedian and senior pastor of Madison Avenue Baptist Church, New York City; and theologian, activist and author Brian D. McLaren. Following delivery, both publications will be available on ABHMS’ website at [www.abhms.org](http://www.abhms.org/) > About Us > Publications.

Space for Grace featured exhibits by Christian painters, photographers, multimedia and other artists; late-night shows by Christian entertainers; a Labyrinth; and more than a dozen afternoon learning experiences, such as “Prophetic Voice: Proclaiming a Missional Gospel with Grace and Power,” “When God Calls Us in the Midst of a Crisis” and “Windows of the Heart.” Attendees were called to worship each night in various ways, including gospel and folk music by Kim and Reggie Harris; drumming in the Japanese Taiko style; and a six-piece Mariachi band.

For continuing coverage of Space for Grace, visit ABHMS’ website at [www.abhms.org](http://www.abhms.org/).

*American Baptist Home Mission Societies—the domestic mission arm of American Baptist Churches USA—ministers as the caring heart and serving hands of Jesus Christ across the United States and Puerto Rico through a multitude of initiatives that focus on discipleship, community and justice.*

*American Baptist Churches is one of the most diverse Christian denominations today, with over 5,200 local congregations comprised of 1.3 million members, across the United States and Puerto Rico, all engaged in God’s mission around the world.*