

QuickLinks

■ ABHMS' latest online series introduces readers to recipients of the ABHMS 2015 Ministry Awards. Read about recipients' motivation as well as the impact and significance of their ministries in the slideshow at www.abhms.org.

■ Find out how children and young adults of incarcerated parents are uplifting and supporting their peers at ABHMS-sponsored camps designed especially for them. Visit www.abhms.org.



'Space for Grace' implores attendees to leave comfort zones, address injustice

At American Baptist Home Mission Societies' national "Space for Grace" gathering held at the Hilton Los Angeles Airport hotel in early November, attendees were implored to



Fong

emerge from their comfort zones to address a plethora of injustices.

During a plenary session, the Rev. Ken Fong, senior pastor at Evergreen Baptist Church of Los Angeles and executive director of the Asian American initiative at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, Calif., discussed the way in which an individual's view of God shapes how he or she views others.

Fong used himself as an example, reflecting 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

The Rev. Marie Onwubuariri, executive minister of American Baptist Churches of Wisconsin, preached during a worship service 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.

At another Space for Grace worship service, the Rev. Ernest R. Flores, pastor of Second Baptist Church, Germantown, Pa., said, "Jesus justice isn't our justice. Jesus



Flores

justice makes us uncomfortable. Jesus justice is not based on what we've done [earned], but on what we need."

Other plenary, worship and luncheon speakers were the Rev. Susan Sparks, pastor of Madison Avenue Baptist Church, New York City; the Rev. Dr. Raphael G. Warnock, pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta; the Rev. Dr. Jacqueline A. Thompson, assistant pastor at Allen Temple Baptist Church, Oakland, Calif.; the Rev. Dr. Marvin A. McMickle, president of Colgate Rochester (N.Y.) Crozer Divinity School; and the Rev. Dr. Robert Scott, pastor of Central Baptist Church, St. Louis, Mo.

'SPACE FOR GRACE' ATTENDEE: 'Best conference I attended in my life'

By the Rev. Dr. Barbara Jim-George

To say I was pleased with "Space for Grace" would be an understatement. The messages from every speaker exceeded my greatest expectations. Generally, I will listen to a presentation, nod my head in agreement and maybe even take a note or two. At this gathering, the relevance of materials presented went way beyond a nod or a note. While listening, I was literally formulating in my mind exactly how I would use the information in my own ministry.

The planning committee seemed to have addressed every possible consideration. Vendors were a great touch. The Labyrinth, areas designated for prayers and the people who were available at these locations were wonderful.

A professional visual artist before entering seminary, I was overwhelmed with excitement

when I saw all of the beautiful artwork in Innovators Hall. I was able to meet various artists and talk with them about their work. Inclusion of the "Night Owls" lounge area—with live music, DJs, spoken word, rap and dancing—was perfect for young adults.

This was the absolute best conference I have ever attended in my life. I extend my profound gratitude to those who planned this event.

The Rev. Dr. Barbara Jim-George is founder and CEO of the Oakland, Calif.-based Transforming Ministries Group, which trains congregations in establishing primary prevention education programs to mitigate risk of human trafficking victimization to minors.



Mission in America

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Be on the lookout for America for Christ Offering 2016 materials to arrive in your mailbox in January. This year's theme—“Discipleship: Becoming More Like Christ”—is based on Ephesians 2:10: “For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life” (NRSV).

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Daily Bible study is among gathering's highlights

A highlight of ABHMS' “Space for Grace” conference held recently in Los Angeles was the “Restoring Human Connection”-themed Bible study held daily by nationally known theologian, activist and author Brian D. McLaren.

During the first part of the study series—“Race, Sexuality and the Bible” (Acts 8:26-40)—McLaren discussed injustices committed throughout history in the name of Christianity.

In “Religion, Politics and the Bible” (Acts 10:1-48)—the study series' second session—McLaren pointed to the book of



Acts' inclusion of individuals of all languages, economic levels, physical abilities, sexualities, nationalities and even a persecutor (Saul before he became Paul).

“The scapegoat *du jour*,” said McLaren, “is who Jesus is speaking about when he says, ‘Just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me’” (Matthew 25:45, NRSV).

In the final session—“Power, Oppression and the Bible” (Acts 16:11-40)—McLaren compared Paul and Silas' jail experience to ABHMS' legacy of first reaching out to the “least of these” and then addressing matters of injustice with those in power. When God's act in the form of an earthquake freed the pair from jail, McLaren said, they first told the jailer how to be saved, or set free, then conducted the first “sit-in” in Scripture, refusing to exit the jail, bringing the matter to the magistrates' attention by demanding an escort, and visiting Lydia before departing the region.

Judson Press offers gift ideas

Seeking a daily devotional for the New Year? Judson Press has something for everyone. William Epps' “What Did Jesus Say? A Daily Devotional Journal” features Jesus' words for reflection. “Women at the Well: Meditations on Healing and Wholeness,” by Mary L. Mild, is a rich compilation of devotions from women across the country. And, for those who like to wake up singing, Leonidas A. Johnson's “Go Down, Moses! Daily Devotions Inspired by Negro Spirituals” provides spiritual lyrics each day.

Anticipating 2016 as a year of transition? From matriculation to midlife, “What's Your Function? Working It Out with God,” by Aaron M. Basko, offers a lifeline of practical content. For those considering a vocational call, Alice Cullinan's “Sorting It Out: Discerning God's Call to Ministry” is an ideal gift, and “I've Been Called: Now What?” by Adam L. Bond is a perfect “sequel.” For the seasoned leader, “When the Spirit Moves: A Guide for Ministers in Transition” is a great handbook by American Baptist regional executives Riley Walker and Marcia Patton.



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