

AMERICA
FOR CHRIST
OFFERING
2017



CULTIVATING LEADERS

EQUIPPING
DISCIPLES
HEALING
COMMUNITIES

Luke 4:18-19

Training Missionally Minded Leaders

Can a declining congregation, with limited finances and no pastoral leadership become once again engaged in mission in its community? American Baptist Churches of Wisconsin (ABC of WI) believes it can and has begun a training program for missional interim leadership.

Building on its experience with the biblical study resource “Mission *From* the Gospels” and in partnership with missionally trained leaders, the region has launched an intentional missional leadership training journey.

“Often in declining congregations, leadership falls to leaders who are open to very low pay, who often then have other jobs to balance and/or have limited experience in successfully leading a congregation,” says the Rev. Sam Brink, minister of Church Resources for ABC of WI. “It’s our hope that we can reverse the trend in decline in leadership and mission through a collaborative effort among specifically trained leaders and invested congregations going skillfully beyond superficial challenges to the heart of the missional demands of



the gospel. ‘Mission *From* the Gospels’ has helped us address this void in church leadership by creating a resource pool of missionally focused leaders.”

ABC of WI believes it has found a way to connect missionally gifted leaders with congregations searching for a return to mission engagement in their communities. “Mission *From* the Gospels” was initially developed in Wisconsin in collaboration with American Baptist Home Mission Societies.

Your gifts to America for Christ help to fund this important missional ministry.

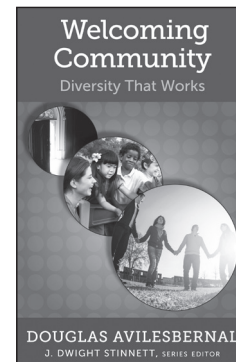
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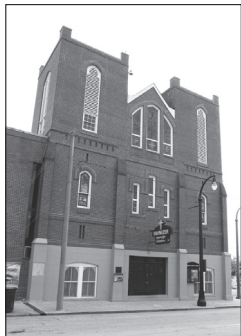
Cultivating leaders as instruments of God's peace

By the Rev. Sandra Dorsainvil

What is peace? What does it look like? As a denominational leader for mission and stewardship in Massachusetts, I often find myself challenged by these two questions.

The word *peace* took on deeper meaning during a civil rights pilgrimage of clergy and laity to Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia in 2014.

We heard testimonies of trauma, hurt, oppression and forgiveness from Sarah



Collins Rudolph—survivor of the 1963 bombing of 16th Street Baptist Church, Birmingham, Ala.—and the since-deceased Amelia Platts Boynton-Robinson—among those injured by law enforcement officers on the Edmund Pettus Bridge, Selma, Ala., in 1965. Peace lived in their hearts, and they taught me as we conversed.

Before returning home, we gathered at the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta, where American Baptist Home Mission Societies' Rev. Dr. Brenda Halliburton-Williams reflected on James 1:22. "Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves," she challenged us. "Do what it says."

We were confronted with our individual and corporate calls as leaders to be better instruments of God's peace. Whether on a pilgrimage or delivering God's Word from the pulpit, as a leader and missionary, I strive to show God's light of peace.

When you support the America for Christ Offering, you help ABHMS to cultivate leaders who are instruments of God's peace.

The Rev. Sandra Dorsainvil is director of Mission and Stewardship, American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts.

Photo: Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta

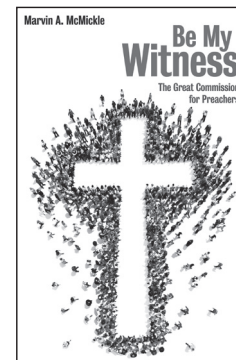
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Program lets young adults 'build' their futures

By Angie Mason

Milwaukee's riots last summer were a sad reminder of the city's greatest need: opportunities for all young people to succeed. Since 2004, the Milwaukee Christian Center's (MCC) YouthBuild program has offered just that.



Each year, 23 young adults sign on for a year of service, learning how to construct a home while attaining their GED. For many, it's a transformative experience, challenging their self-perception as they assemble—from foundation to roof—a new home for a family eager to invest in the neighborhood. They become "doers," shaping not only a house but also a future of providing for themselves and their families.

Ariel Dotstry, a recent graduate who earned his GED and is now advancing his career as an apprentice for a Milwaukee-area construction firm, reminded those present that, to succeed, youth need determination and grit.

"I haul a whole lot of concrete in my new job," he said. "But, at the end of the day, I'm proud of providing for my little girl."

MCC's YouthBuild is all about challenging Milwaukee young adults to believe in themselves, in their community, in Milwaukee.

MCC is one of American Baptist Home Mission Societies' 16 Neighborhood Action Program (NAP) Christian centers. Your gift to America for Christ supports NAPs and their programs, including MCC and its YouthBuild program.

Angie Mason is MCC's Resource Development director.

Photo: Ariel Dotstry helps to construct a home.

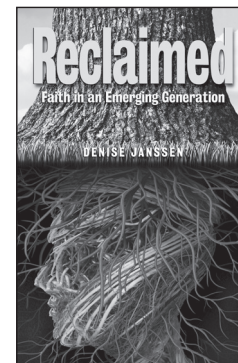
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**"Reclaimed:
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Denise Janssen

Why do Millennials leave the church? What brings them back? An insightful resource for congregations seeking to welcome young adults and engage them in ministry.

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Another Side of Leadership

By the Rev. Kristy Moeller

“FALL IN!” screamed the noncommissioned officer. Welcome to ground week, the first of three weeks of Army Airborne School!

The only female officer in my group, I was in charge of 18 men. Before sun up until after sunset, it was my responsibility to ensure that we successfully accomplished every task assigned—all in highly shined boots, perfect uniforms and presentable gear, despite Georgia’s mid-summer heat. Any deficiency in my team would result in countless push-ups for all of us.



During tower week, each of us was lifted 250 feet with a parachute canopy above us to learn how to land without injury. “Moeller, you’re first!” the officer yelled. “Men, if this here female can do it, so can you!”

Finally, jump week! I was first to exit the airborne plane. “You are going to freeze in the door, aren’t you little lady?” sneered the officer. I silently prayed that all of us would survive. Looking back into the belly of the plane, I saw my team’s heads bowed in prayer, too. The door opened. Commands were given. I jumped. Our prayers were answered. After our fifth and final jump, we were awarded our jump wings.

Your contributions to the America for Christ Offering allow American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) to cultivate leaders equipped to serve in diverse and difficult scenarios. Together, we are engaging our nation with the transforming power of the Gospel.

The Rev. Kristy Moeller now develops leaders as ABHMS’ director of Chaplaincy and Pastoral Counseling Ministries.

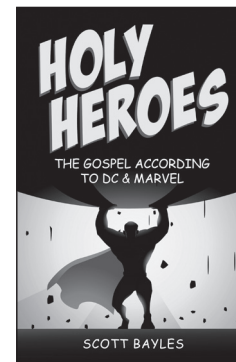
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Scott Bayles

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AFC-supported Leadership Training Makes a Difference

Supported by American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) through the America for Christ (AFC) Offering, Nehemiah Leadership Network (NLN) is a unique and highly effective ministry that provides leadership development and training for pastors.

Now in its 15th year, NLN provides a powerful growth experience to the best and most promising pastors in American Baptist life to equip them to be effective leaders of change.

“The Nehemiah Network is wonderfully crafted to help us tap into ourselves and critically engage our call and commitment to be effective in the context in which we serve,” says NLN graduate the Rev. Rodger Harris Jr., pastor of Mt. Hermon Baptist Church, Irvington, N.J. “NLN has greatly aided in my transformation as an effective pastor and servant of Christ. I thank God for the vision of my American Baptist family that has made this process of growth possible. I’m a better man and pastor for this experience.”

During the intensive, three-year NLN journey, each pastor does the following:

- identifies a set of learning goals and actions for his or her own leadership growth;
- meets regularly with a colleague-group of three to five NLN pastors, under the guidance of a mentor/coach; and
- participates in a four-day annual learning conference, featuring prominent speakers on themes related to leading change.

NLN has graduated more than 75 pastors since 2004, and more than 30 pastors are currently enrolled in the program.

Your contributions to the AFC Offering make NLN and so many other crucial ministries possible. Together, we are building vital churches that are better equipped to engage our world with the transforming power of the Gospel.

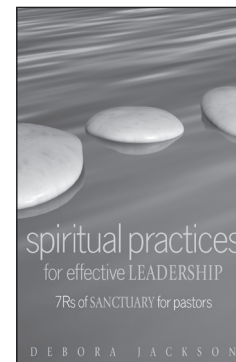
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Debora Jackson

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