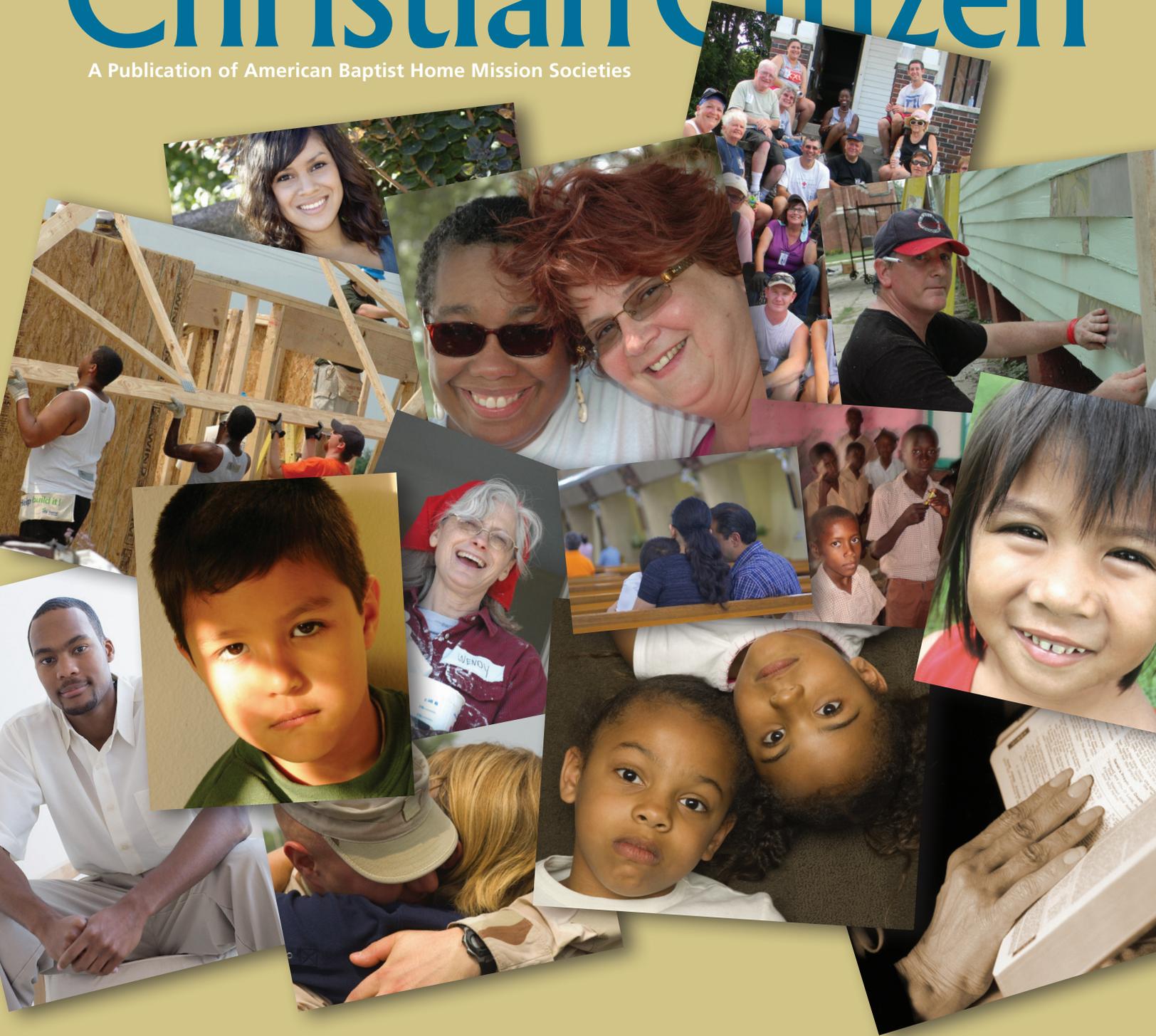
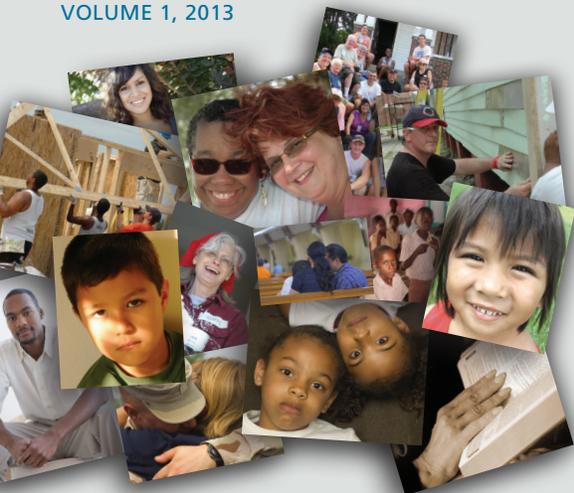


THE Christian Citizen

A Publication of American Baptist Home Mission Societies



Supporting **Discipleship**
Building **Community**
Seeking **Justice**



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Dr. Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins III

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

AMERICAN BAPTIST HOME MISSION SOCIETIES



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Contents

- 1 EDITORIAL Discipleship, Community, Justice
- 2 Grant Recipients Exemplify Discipleship, Community, Justice
- 4 Go and Make Disciples . . . but How?
- 5 Building Community
- 6 CECALI XXI
- 7 Meaningful Ministry with and for Children
- 8 Prisoner Re-entry: Hope for Justice
- 9 Network for Mission at missionalnetworking.org
- 10 Volunteering through American Baptist Home Mission Societies
- 11 The Ministry of Socially Responsible Investing
- 12 On Justice
- 13 On Discipleship
- 13 Book Excerpt: Faithfully Filtering Financial Decisions
- 14 Religious Liberty: A Matter of Discipleship, Community, Justice
- 15 Libertad religiosa: Un asunto de discipulado, comunidad y justicia
- 16 Faith and Disability Rights: Moving Forward Together
- 17 Churches That Work: Community-based Mission
- 18 The Inseparable Nature of Discipleship, Community, Justice
- 20 Crossing Cultures: Ministry with Native Americans

Discipleship, Community, Justice

In the midst of the busy-ness of our daily lives, where do we turn to nurture the call and claim of Christ upon us? What do we do to grow as disciples—those who follow Christ following baptism? How do we nurture healthy growth in the wider communities of which we are a part, from the church itself to our places of employment and the public spaces in which we live much of our lives? What does it mean to seek justice in our own time, and how might we nurture a passion for the same in those who will follow in our footsteps? How can we effectively bear witness to the Gospel in the midst of a pluralistic and increasingly secular society?

American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) has been wrestling with questions like these since our very beginnings in the early 19th century—always imperfectly, yet hopeful that in our attempts to do so we might ever more closely model the example set for us in Christ and the kingdom he inaugurated. Our mission emphases—discipleship, community, justice—are rooted



in priorities and practices of those who have come before us, and they are evident in the mission and ministry with which we are currently engaged.

In this issue of *The Christian Citizen*, we offer a taste of our work as a Christ-centered mission organization. You'll learn how we are working with community-based ministries for the benefit of those on the margins of society, and how we are working on behalf of children through such efforts as our annual Children in Poverty

grant process and The Penny Project. You'll have a better understanding of the resources and training we're providing to help churches create a sense of welcome and inclusion for returning citizens following incarceration. You'll develop an appreciation for the ways in which personality types can be utilized in the building of communities and in the building of *the* community. You'll know what CECALI XXI and MCLE are and how these processes are helping, respectively, to equip pastoral and lay leaders in regions with large Latino populations and to help churches find new life in mission in their communities.

You'll also learn how we are partnering ecumenically and with organizations representing other faith traditions to further the good of all within our society: in the ministry of socially responsible investing through the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility; with the Baptist Joint Committee to defend and extend God-given religious liberty for all; and with the Interfaith Disability Advocacy Coalition to support people with disabilities by bringing the prophetic voice of the faith community to the 21st-century disability agenda.

Throughout this issue, you will also find excerpts from the rich catalogue of Judson Press books on discipleship, community and justice as well as a summary of available ABHMS print resources in these areas. You'll learn how we're attempting to facilitate mission on the new frontier of social networking through missionalnetworking.org, a website designed to connect faith communities with volunteers, resources and each other for the purpose of transformation.

A mission organization that first found its calling responding to the needs of a growing nation along an expanding frontier, ABHMS continues to seek new opportunities on the frontiers of our own time, whether in the communities in which American Baptist congregations are located or the socially networked space between. We invite you to join us in this mission as, together, we seek to encourage discipleship, build community and do justice.

Curtis Ramsey-Lucas is managing director of Resource Development for ABHMS.

Grant Recipients Exemplify DISCIPLESHIP, COMMUNITY, JUSTICE

Discipleship, community and justice are exemplified in the efforts of 18 ministries to which American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) awarded American Baptist Foundation-administered 2011 grants from the Virginia and Gordon Palmer Jr. Trust. Among the awardees are Georgia Avenue Community Ministry, Atlanta; Rainbow Acres, Camp Verde, Ariz.; City Gate and Urban HANDS, Washington, D.C.; and The Hope Center at Pullen, Raleigh, N.C.

Georgia Avenue Community Ministry

Georgia Avenue Community Ministry oversees six food cooperatives, each feeding 50 families. An alternative to a food pantry or soup kitchen, a food cooperative is run by its member-clients, who pay a minimal \$3 handling fee and distribute the food themselves. While all of the cooperatives are housed within the same building in southeast Atlanta, each meets at different times every other week. Members greet the food truck, unload approximately 1 ton of food and divide it according to family size. (A family of medium size receives food valued at approximately \$100 retail.)

“In a food pantry, someone walks in and they’re given food that somebody has put together, and I’ve heard of people feeling humiliated,” explains Chad Hale, Georgia Avenue Community Ministry’s executive director. “This model gets abundant food to people in need in a way that provides the community with dignity.”

In addition to members singing, praying and reading scripture onsite, they also participate in educational meetings that focus on nutrition, leadership training and preventing homelessness.

Community is an intentional part of the ministry. “We create community,” says Hale, “so that they [member-clients] can help each other outside of the place.”

The grant from the Palmer Trust allowed founding of the sixth food cooperative.

Approximately two-thirds of the staff are former clients, says Hale, noting that they are paid a living wage.

With one in two individuals in the United States in poverty or considered low income, based on figures

from Census data, as cited in a 2011 Associated Press story, Hale hopes that the food cooperative model will spread and that churches will become involved not only in the spiritual facet of individuals’ lives but also the economic aspect.

Rainbow Acres

Rainbow Acres is a 37-year-old ranch-style facility that provides residence, holistic programs and vocational training to adults with developmental disabilities caused by a variety of conditions, including Down syndrome, Fragile X syndrome, Cerebral Palsy and Prader-Willi syndrome.

Rainbow Acres “fosters a sense of self-worth through family-style living in a loving and accepting community,” according to a brochure. “Job skills, social standards and self-help methods are highly valued, and are taught and encouraged by employees and volunteers motivated by Christian values of love and concern. Rainbow Acres strives to provide every opportunity for residents, called Ranchers, to pursue lives of dignity, purpose and respect.”

The campus features modern private rooms, a state-of-the-art community center and spaces for fitness, fine arts and recreational activities. Offerings include Neurodevelopmental Therapy (physical exercises to improve visual, auditory and tactile awareness and sensitivity),



equestrian training (therapeutic horse riding, horse and stable care, and classroom learning), Special Olympics and Rancher Choir.

Clients who are employed onsite are part of vocational crews who care for the horses or do landscaping, horticulture, weaving, crafts, painting and food service. Those who work off-campus at restaurants, grocery stores or recycling facilities in the area receive support with such employment-related issues as transportation, scheduling and money management. Rainbow staff members coach them in writing a resume, searching for a job, applying and interviewing.

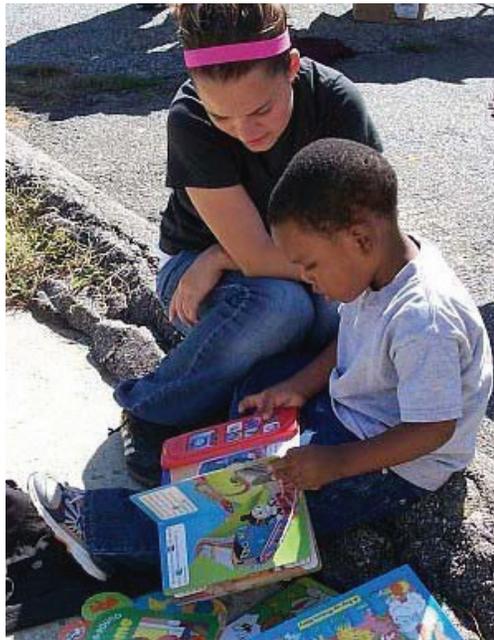
The grant from the Palmer Trust allowed Rainbow Acres to institute a day program for individuals who live offsite. Now nonresidents benefit from the same services as residents.

“Our goal was to begin a program that would allow people in the surrounding community to come,” says Christine Roush, D.Min., Rainbow Acres’ vice president of Advancement and Church Relations.

City Gate and Urban HANDS (Helping Another in Need by Demonstrating Servanthood)

City Gate is a program that serves children and youth in Washington, D.C.’s wards 1, 7 and 8 by providing free after-school programs and a nine-week summer day camp. Two of the three sites are in public housing complexes, where, according to City Gate, more than 90 percent of residents live below poverty level and most children perform below grade level.

“In the Bible, the gate is where the poor, widow and orphan receive justice, and the immigrant receives welcome,” says Dr. Lynn Bergfalk, City Gate’s execu-



tive director, explaining the significance of the organization’s name.

The after-school program provides children and youth with homework help, academic exploration, computer-based learning, recreation and a nutritious supper, while camp offers field trips, for-

foreign language instruction, sports and three meals daily.

City Gate’s Urban HANDS program allows individuals, groups and mission teams of all ages and abilities from across the United States to minister to “the least of these” by participating for a day, week or longer in volunteer mission outreach at City Gate’s sites.

“I’m humbled by what God is doing in places with limited resources,” Bergfalk says. “We’re pleased to work with groups that come from all over—people come with such beautiful hearts.”

Urban HANDS arranges not only the volunteer work, but also housing, meals and worship.

An emphasis is placed on participants’ using their experience and newfound understanding to impact their own communities.

“It’s not just mission work in D.C.,” Bergfalk says. “It’s about taking it back to the home churches to make them more missional.”

Groups can also choose to participate in an Urban HANDS-facilitated poverty simulation. Designed to let participants “experience” poverty and learn its realities, the simulation nudges participants beyond their comfort zones, helping them to face their materialism and cultural values.

“When we do poverty-simulation training, we come out at the end of the week and look at people with needs differently,” says Paget Rhee, City Gate’s program director. “We can look a homeless person in the eye because they’re just like us.”

The Hope Center at Pullen

The Hope Center at Pullen helps homeless and at-risk individuals and families to rebuild their lives by offering a variety of personalized services, including case management, mental health assessment and counseling, learning assessment and education counseling, career planning, life skills coaching, job-readiness coaching, job-placement assistance, long-term mentoring and connection to housing. The goal is long-term financial and social stability, including permanent employment and housing.

“We say, ‘Jobs for today; opportunities for tomorrow,’” says Diane Daily, The Hope Center at Pullen’s executive director.

The Hope Center shares the story of Alana, who was homeless and unemployed after escaping an abusive marriage of 11 years. She spent a year in The Hope Center’s program, receiving intensive case management and mental health counseling. With the help of her mentor, Alana obtained full-time employment and has saved enough money to move herself and her young daughter into a home of their own.

The grant from the Palmer Trust empowered The Hope Center to expand its program for homeless adults to young adults who have aged out of the traditional foster-care system. The expanded program seeks to aid ages 17-22 in earning a long-term living wage and avoiding homelessness.

Receiving mental health services, mentoring and stable housing, 20-something-year-old Monica was the first to enter The Hope Center through the new program. Because her mother was mentally ill, she had previously been placed in foster care. Monica now works in food service at Rex Hospital, Raleigh, and is set to graduate from Wake Technical Community College, Raleigh, in 2013.

Nadine Hasenecz serves as communications associate at ABHMS.

Go and Make Disciples ... but How?

Henderson Memorial Baptist Church needed more disciples to fill the pews again, so we agreed to send a team to the Missional Church Learning Experience (MCLE), hoping it would help our church to grow. The first session was held the day before Pentecost; a mighty wind was blowing. Glynis LaBarre, transformation strategist at American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS), challenged us to realize that the world had changed, while the church had not. Therefore, church was no longer relevant to people outside the building. She shocked the congregation by saying that the world is uninterested in saving our church. The church is called to go out into the world and help save it “on mission with God.” But how?

... the world is uninterested in saving our church. The church is called to go out into the world and help save it ‘on mission with God.’

Leave the building. Find out where God is already at work in the community. Enter into partnership with others to help God bring about a new reality. Farmington, Maine, is in a rural county with a significant poverty rate. Strangers call the churches daily to seek financial help for electric bills, heating fuel, rent, security deposits and homelessness. Our homework was to go out into the community and talk with people outside the church about what the church could do *for them*.

Do justice. A consensus arose from conversations with United Way, Emergency Management and Seniors

Plus that the greatest need was to help people stay warm in their homes. In Franklin County, 19.6 percent of households qualify for the federal Low Income Heating Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Most heat with oil but LIHEAP covers only a portion of the cost. Most income-eligible individuals are elderly or disabled and live on fixed incomes. They are simply unable to accumulate enough money to pay for the minimum 100-gallon delivery. They become prisoners in their own freezing homes.

Pray for God’s leading. We prayed about the possibility of opening our Fellowship Hall for guests to visit and be warm one day weekly. Through the Meals on Wheels program, Seniors Plus provided food, served family style, to all guests on a donation basis. Emergency Management organized boxes of games, puzzles and crafts supplies. A grant through MCLE paid for extra oil to heat the church during the ministry’s first season. Two other churches agreed to host the Warming Center on other days. Every time we were stymied by insufficient resources, God urged us to multiply the blessings by continuing to form partnerships.

Build community. In its fifth season, the Warming Center is open every Tuesday and Thursday from January through March. People may not attend church on Sundays, but they come faithfully on Warming Center days. They love hearing God’s story and the prayer before lunch. They love the warmth and the hot, nutritious meal, including homemade soup. Most of all they come for the socialization. They’ve made friends, and they like to contribute what they can. Coming to the Warming Center gives meaning and purpose to their lives.

Make disciples. No, the church has not gained new members. But the Warming Center has a faithful following of community volunteers who return to help every year. Like the disciples of Jesus, the Warming Center disciples are outsiders, but they learn about God’s kingdom by taking part in it and bringing the good news to life.

The Rev. Dr. Susan Crane is pastor of Henderson Memorial Baptist Church, Farmington, Maine, where the missional pattern continues to replicate itself in new ministries.

Building Community

Building community involves acknowledgement of, appreciation for and appropriation of the diversity that exists within that community. Diversity includes age, gender, ethnicity, culture, country of origin and socio-economic status.

A factor that transcends all those mentioned above—and is found across the spectrum—is personality. Although personalities differ, the fact that all human beings possess a personality is a commonality among us. Each person has a personality, regardless of his or her age, gender, ethnicity, culture, country of origin and socio-economic status. Therefore, personality is inclusive and nonexclusive.

We are born with personality. Throughout our lifetime, it is developed and refined, but it is with us from the beginning of our days.

Acknowledgment and acceptance of personalities honors God's creativity. "We are fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14) isn't merely a reference to that which is evident to the human eye. It also refers to that which distinguishes us. The Psalm mentions our inward parts—not our internal organs, but our internal wirings.



While some propose as few as two personality types, others acknowledge as many as 16. Still others suggest a

number between the two. I focus on six personality types within two broad-based categories: those who primarily engage their world through what they say, or words, and those who primarily engage their world through what they do, or works. Chapter 4 of 1st Peter speaks to the importance of the cooperative, collaborative efforts of these two groups: "whoever speaks, does so realizing God gives them the words *to say*" (11a); "whoever serves, does so realizing God gives them the strength *to do*" (11b), "so that in all things God may be known" (11c).

Personality types range from the assertive (take charge, in control), to the analytical (processes every-

thing), to the storyteller (experiences life as a connected narrative), to the relational (people-oriented), to the invitational (event-oriented), to the incarnational (need-oriented). Everyone is somewhere on the spectrum. Individual nuances exist, and few individuals are merely one personality but, rather, a mixing and melding of at least two.

Building community includes an understanding of personalities—not only our own but those of others, too. It is natural to speak out of our own personality. It happens innately. True community is experienced when we speak *into* the personalities of others, especially those personalities that we are not. To respect our differences, we must acquire personality-based communication skills that create community that acknowledges greater-than-skin-deep diversity.

No one personality is better than another. However, the vast majority of the human population is relational and/or incarnational; therefore, to truly build community, we must connect people and construct things, improving people's lives on both the inside (emotional/spiritual) and outside (tangible/temporal).

Building *the* community involves collaboration of personalities—that is, allowing each person to live in a way that complements but neither contradicts her or his own personality nor competes with others' personalities. The best way to make this collaboration happen is to create eclectic teams of various personalities who work together, experience interdependence and complement each other, completing the spectrum of personalities created by God. It takes all of them to relate fully to the diverse population of our world.

Dr. Jeffrey Johnson is national coordinator of Evangelism and New Church Planting for American Baptist Home Mission Societies and associate executive minister of American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania and Delaware. To understand more about personality styles in general and how to use your personality to share your faith in particular, check out Johnson's book, "Got Style? Personality-based Evangelism" (Judson Press, 2009).

CECALI XXI



Centro de capacitación para líderes del siglo XXI (CECALI XXI)—or Center for Training 21st Century Leaders—was born as a dream in the Latino Ministries office at American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS), in collaboration and consultation with Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking pastors and leaders. The program also has the loyal support of the Hispanic and Portuguese-speaking caucuses.

The main purpose of CECALI is to equip pastors and lay leaders with practical tools for more effective ministry in churches and communities. The goal is to train 220 pastoral leaders and a multitude of lay leaders by the year 2020 in regions with large Latino populations. To date, approximately 140 pastoral leaders and 260 lay leaders from 14 states and Puerto Rico have participated in the program.

The training consists of two three-day seminars and two online courses. Pastoral leaders complete pre-assessment surveys to establish the group's baseline needs, which are plotted along a capacity-building matrix. A post-assessment survey measures progress along the capacity continuum. Through this program, participants have the opportunity to grow in areas of discipleship, community and justice.

CECALI not only equips pastors and leaders to serve their congregations and others more effectively, but also offers guidance and support for pastors and leaders to find emotional and spiritual balance in their own lives and those of their families. It reminds them of the critical need for renewing their own spiritual vitality.

The program provides practical guidance for important ministry areas in the Hispanic community: innovative communication concepts to help preachers reach listeners and lead them to transformative action; motivation to explore various styles of worship; strategic planning, administration and stewardship; principles of spiritual direction and pastoral care; and guidance in developing youth and children's ministries, which some churches have neglected because of the ever-changing climate in which our youth and children live.

Participation in CECALI is more than networking; it is experiencing and enjoying community among church

leaders—individuals who often experience loneliness. “Definitely, this has been a transformative learning and fellowship experience,” says a participant. “Even more than what has been learned in the sessions, the one thing that is particular in CECALI is the opportunity to fellowship with my ministerial colleagues in a more intimate setting.”

Through the “Baptist Identity” session, CECALI emphasizes the importance of being a community, not only as a local church but as part of American Baptist Churches USA. Participants review American Baptist history, explore present and future challenges and proudly pass the mantle of responsibility of ministry to our children and grandchildren.

Through the “Conflict Transformation” session, participants consider a gospel-based model for living and create a culture of peace, justice and reconciliation. Explored are various ways to transform conflict to enrich community life. The “Challenges for a Ministry with Immigrants” session seeks to equip pastoral leaders for Christian response to immigration legislation while responding with integrity to the call to minister to all people who are ignored, poorly treated or exploited.

CECALI does not pretend to take the place of capable seminaries. Instead, CECALI is meant to be a catalyst that creates hunger for and movement among pastors to continue learning, growing and renewing so that their ministerial “tool box” is filled with tools that meet today's demands. That mission is being fulfilled.

As one Hispanic coordinator remarked, “I believe the conflict transformation workshop should not only be given to pastors but also to church members, or at least lay leaders of the churches.”



The Rev. F. Salvador Orellana is ABHMS national coordinator for Intercultural Latino Ministries.

Meaningful Ministry with and for Children



American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) cares for children with direct and indirect ministry and support.

Within the United States and Puerto Rico, 16 million children (1 of every 5 children) are not confident they will have food to eat, a place to sleep, quality education or good health care. This number has increased from 14 million in 2008. While church and community center outreach services appear to be increasing, the number of individuals in poverty is not decreasing.

In 2012, nearly 70 percent of incarcerated persons had at least 1 child under the age of 18, leaving 2.7 million children (1 out of every 28 children) with at least 1 incarcerated parent. More children under age 16 are being institutionalized for misbehavior. In zero-tolerance school systems, offenses that once meant a trip to the principal's office or after-school detention now result in arrests and criminal records.

ABHMS is providing support and interceding on behalf of children through efforts such as:

- 85 Children in Poverty grants that support creative and practical needs in education, including vacation Bible schools, healthcare and nutrition;
- special grant designations that support youth violence prevention in Chicago, Ill.;
- special grant designations that support Children's Defense Fund Freedom School initiatives in Charlotte, N.C., and Los Angeles;
- training to help congregations offer effective care to formerly incarcerated returning citizens and their families;
- annual support to 17 ABHMS' Christian centers that provide safe places for children to play and learn during out-of-school hours;
- more than half of Missional Church Learning Experience participating churches developing outreach projects that directly impact the lives of children in need in their communities;
- volunteers in long- or short-term service opportunities—Native American reservations, urban centers and residential homes—throughout the nation, where they are the presence of Christ's love to children who feel isolated;

- approximately 900 young people serving in various ministries to children in need in Washington, D.C., during Immerse, the 2012 national gathering of American Baptist youth; and
- more than 150 people under age 22 serving among volunteers in New Orleans during a brutally hot week in August 2012—many of whom want to return in 2013—as part of Ecumenical Work Week, which has been occurring for the past seven years in response to hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

The practice and formation of Christian discipleship for children and adults occurs through multifaceted opportunities to live out faith and watch others do the same. The Penny Project (www.14millionpennies.org) is an example of an intentional discipleship effort that reflects the interconnectedness of discipleship, community and justice. Started in 2009 to help raise awareness

Discipleship, community and justice are interwoven components of the faithful walk with Jesus.

of children living in poverty in the United States and to encourage action on the local level, the project has seen 238 congregations as well as campus and community ministries around the nation collect 7,840,000 pennies and donate them to organizations that work on behalf of children. The goal is to collect 14 million pennies.

Discipleship, community and justice are interwoven components of the faithful walk with Jesus. As we are called by Christ to allow children to get as close to him as possible, ABHMS sees every ministry that touches the life of a child as vital ministry for the kingdom.

The Rev. Lisa R. Harris is national coordinator of ABHMS Justice for Children Initiative and American Baptist Christian Centers.

Prisoner Re-entry

HOPE FOR JUSTICE

*The LORD has told you, human, what is good;
he has told you what he wants from you:
to do what is right to other people,
love being kind to others,
and live humbly, obeying your God
(Micah 6:8, NCV)*

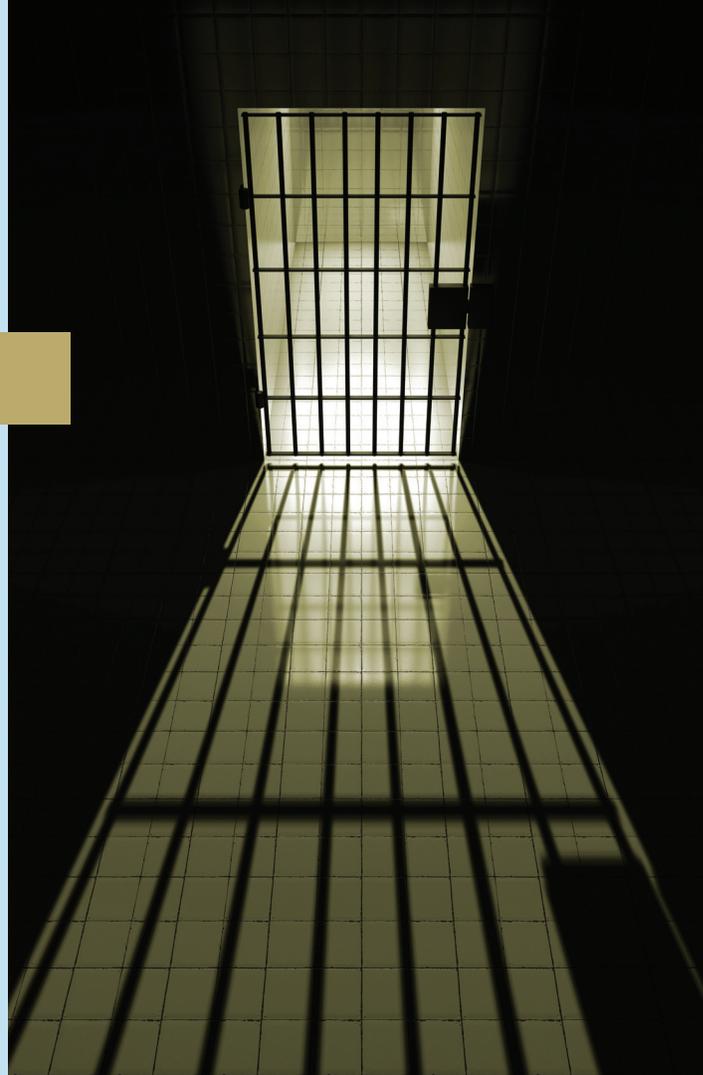
The prophet Micah reminds us that one of God's mandates is to do justice. The Prisoner Re-entry and Aftercare Ministry of American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) has been working toward fulfilling that call with people affected by the painful and cruel reality of incarceration.

According to "Collateral Costs: Incarceration's Effect on Economic Mobility," a 2010 report by The Pew Charitable Trusts, more than 1 in 100 adult Americans are behind bars. That's 2.3 million people, including 120,000 mothers and 1.1 million fathers, which means, in turn, that 2.7 million children—1 of every 28—have a parent who is imprisoned.

Incarceration not only affects the person behind bars, but also his or her family, community and church. In every church I have visited to speak about prisoner re-entry, members' lives have been affected by incarceration. While many suffer in silence because of shame, at least one person will always approach me about a loved one in prison.

"I have become aware of a tremendous need that our congregation and community have for ministering to parents of prisoners and folks re-entering society," says a new American Baptist pastor. "Within two weeks, I learned of six church families or individuals who were or are dealing with these related issues."

We are the hands and feet of Jesus, called to be prophetic and to proclaim justice for individuals who, in one way or another, are involved or have been involved in the criminal justice system and require the ministry and presence of the church. It could be a victim of crime who needs healing from trauma; the incarcerated, or his or her family; or a returning citizen asking for a second chance from an unwelcoming society. The church is



called to be the place where love and mercy, justice and truth will meet (Psalm 85:10) and offer healing to people.

ABHMS provides prisoner re-entry resources and training to local churches and regions. Training sessions use the "Healing Communities" model, which calls for churches to begin by healing their own members who are suffering with the incarceration issue. Clusters of churches discuss ways in which they can minister to "the least of these" (Matthew 25:40). Training includes practical tools to help churches with the process of creating a sense of welcome and inclusion for returning citizens, as well as ways to reduce stigma and shame.

Transformation and healing begin when a church acknowledges and discusses this painful issue. The person returning to society finds in such a church a community that is aware of his or her need for support, and to whom he or she will be accountable. The family receives support, and the community receives the witness of a church that is a place for restoration and redemption—a place where forgiveness and justice can occur. There is hope for justice.

The Rev. Fela Barrueto is ABHMS national coordinator of Prisoner Re-entry and Aftercare Ministries. She welcomes comments and suggestions by e-mail at fela.barrueto@abhms.org.

Network for Mission at missionalnetworking.org

American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) is sponsoring startup of a social networking project—a website known as Missional Networking—committed to working ecumenically to empower mission and ministry across the United States and Puerto Rico. Using the combined power of social media and Google Maps, this new resource is designed to connect faith communities to volunteers, resources, each other and a wide range of services intended to transform the lives of individuals and communities. No fee is charged to post to or search the site. The hope is that the site will foster a network of mutual support and service among users as they search the missional map and make connections with others.

“Our desire is that this network will bring together a diverse community across denominational and methodological lines that shares a desire to witness the Kingdom of God at work and engage in the mission of Christ in their own communities and in the world beyond,” says the Rev. Brian Hastings of Fond du Lac, Wis., one of several missional-minded American Baptist pastors who contributes time and skill toward this experiment in home mission-focused social networking.

Readers are invited to use the Missional Networking site in multiple ways:

1) The missional map page displays information on potential connections for partnership and collaboration in social services and biblical justice. When posting an address pin, submitters use email and other provided contact information to encourage interaction and to follow up with a particular site or group. By clicking on posted address pins, users will note four types of groups that post to the map:

- blue pins for “Mission Fields” requesting volunteers and assistance in their mission;
- red pins for “Volunteer Teams” seeking places to serve;
- green pins for “Resource Sites” offering a variety of resources to groups and individuals wanting to be engaged in mission; and

- yellow pins indicating “Faith Communities” (churches and faith-based organizations) that identify themselves as actively engaged in facets of home mission.

Once you’ve created a map post, your submission will be reviewed and posted, usually within a day. You may also edit or delete your posting if you wish.



2) Missional Networking blogs are for promoting open discussion, sharing links and making further connections with other missional-minded individuals and groups. If you have a blog, a Twitter or Facebook account, or other resources you think may be helpful to others, send Missional Networking an email and your potential contributions will be reviewed for addition to the blog’s page of links.

3) Missional Networking invites submission of articles and short narratives related to engaging faith-based communities in facets of home mission. Submissions may be sent as attachments, along with contact information, to mail@missionalnetworking.org. All entries are subject to review and approval.

To join the conversation and share the mission, visit www.missionalnetworking.org.

The Rev. Dr. Ron Carlson serves as a missional church strategist for ABHMS.

Volunteering through AMERICAN BAPTIST HOME MISSION SOCIETIES

Dictionaries usually define the noun “volunteer” as *a person who voluntarily undertakes or expresses a willingness to undertake a service, does something without being forced to do it or does work without getting paid to do it.* For American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS), a volunteer is an extension of Christ, or an individual serving as the hands and feet of Jesus. A volunteer is a person who has heard the call and responded as did the prophet Isaiah: “And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ Then I said, ‘Here am I! Send me’” (Isaiah 6:8).

As a clearinghouse for mission and service-related opportunities, ABHMS’ office of Volunteer and Disaster

Response Ministries is instrumental in assisting American Baptist volunteers serve others. The office develops cooperative connections, promoting volunteer service and matching skilled people with opportunities in more than 100 mission sites throughout the United States and Puerto Rico.

In 2012, more than 1,550 volunteers answered God’s call and made a difference, transforming lives from Puerto Rico to the Gulf Coast to Alaska.

Over the years, American Baptist volunteers have worked as teachers and aids in a Native American school, as tutors and mentors to children in need and as vacation Bible school leaders in multiple settings. They have built an outdoor worship facility in Puerto Rico. They have collected, repaired and sent Bibles and other Christian reading materials to places around the world without access to materials that many of us take for granted. Volunteers have fed the hungry, cleaned community parks and local rivers, and led community festivals, neighborhood block parties and cook-outs, serving food for both body and soul to those less fortunate.

They have assembled back-to-school bags for children who otherwise would have no school supplies. And they have assembled health kits for individuals experiencing homelessness or simply needing a little extra help.

Over the years, American Baptist volunteers have answered God’s call by responding to natural disasters. Volunteers responded to the 2008 Cedar Rapid, Iowa, flooding by joining with ecumenical partners to rebuild 14 homes for affected residents. In 2010, they helped with clean-up and rebuilding following flooding in the Dakotas and Minnesota. Volunteers continue to respond to communities in Joplin, Mo.; Bayboro, N.C.; and Henryville, Ind., by helping those who are rebuilding from the tornadoes that ravaged their homes over the last few years. And American Baptist volunteers continue to respond to one of our nation’s worst natural disasters—Hurricane Katrina. For this response alone, more than 3,000 volunteers have served throughout the Gulf Coast since 2005, building 65 new homes, repairing and rebuilding hundreds of others, and completing hundreds of other community-service projects.

Volunteers also make a difference in their own lives and in their churches, schools and communities. Following their assignments, many volunteers find that they have made lasting and meaningful friendships through their service. Volunteer groups frequently report that their churches are revitalized after they return from a volunteer experience.

Increasing 1.5 million from the prior year, 64.3 million Americans volunteered in 2011 through a formal organization, such as a religious organization, according to the Corporation for National and Community Service’s “Volunteering and Civic Life in America” 2012 report. Americans provide 7.9 billion hours of volunteer service yearly, the report states. It is good to know that many American Baptists are counted among these servants.

Victoria Goff is national coordinator of Volunteer and Disaster Response Ministries for ABHMS. To learn how you or your church can volunteer, visit www.abhms.org or contact Goff at victoria.goff@abhms.org or 1-800-222-3872, x2449.



The Ministry of Socially Responsible Investing

In 1971, American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) became one of the founding members of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR). Currently celebrating its 41st year, ICCR is the pioneer coalition of active shareholders who view the management of their investments as a catalyst for change. With more than \$100 billion in assets under management, the 300 member organizations of ICCR have an enduring record of corporate engagement that has demonstrated influence on policies promoting justice and sustainability in the world.

In 1972, ABHMS' board of directors adopted "Guidelines Relating to Social Criteria for Investments," voting that all ABHMS financial resources be recognized as a resource for achieving social and program objectives.

ABHMS' justice initiatives stem from the belief that caring for "the least of these" is not only a mandate for Christ's disciples, but also a matter of personal well-being, according to Michaele Birdsall, ABHMS treasurer and CFO.

As Martin Luther King Jr. penned in his 1963 "Letter from Birmingham Jail," "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly." Complex issues such as poverty, immigration reform and the prison industrial complex must be confronted on multiple dimensions. For example, ABHMS strategically holds enough stock in two of the largest private prison systems to enable the organization to participate in corporate dialogue and advocacy efforts aimed at convincing these corporations that profits should come neither at the expense of safety and decent conditions nor through incentives that encourage mass incarceration rates, particularly of immigrants and minorities.

The Rev. Margaret Cowden, former ABHMS treasurer and CFO, believes that one of the greatest strengths of ICCR is the commitment of member organizations to focus on what unites them rather than on what divides them. ICCR partners see investment portfolios not merely as a source of funding for ministry and mission but as vehicles for mission.

Referring to socially responsible investing efforts

as a "direct outgrowth of our peace and justice ministries," Cowden notes that this work is simply part of a seamless strategy to live faith values in every aspect of ABHMS life in partnership with other people of faith, allowing ABHMS to address the larger systemic issues



that contribute to oppression and injustice in society. Further, Cowden notes that moving the larger economic system toward greater justice will require new methods and approaches in an increasingly complex global economic system.

Socially responsible investing is "an incredibly important, complex and often emotionally charged issue," says ABHMS Executive Director Dr. Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins III. This lesson was learned many years ago when ABHMS led the denomination in calling for American Baptist-related mission entities to divest funds from organizations that conducted business under apartheid in South Africa.

The Christian church, in all of its expressions, has tremendous opportunity to effect change. Its holdings of significant assets embed it within the markets, systems of finance and fabric of the economy.

Calling us to a "theology of abundance, rather than scarcity," Wright-Riggins reminds us that, while most moments of human history have been marred by unequal distribution of resources and widely disproportionate experiences of abundance, people invented policies and practices, and people can change them.

Adapted from the ICCR member profile of ABHMS in The Corporate Examiner (Vol. 37, No. 8, Summer 2012), an interview with Michaele Birdsall, Dr. Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins III and the Rev. Margaret Cowden, Ph.D.



On Justice

Another Struggle for Civil Rights

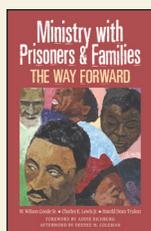
Working for Justice in the Criminal Justice System

Today, one in three young African-American men is involved in the criminal justice system. Having overcome slavery and state-sponsored discrimination, the Christian community must devote itself to undoing the overrepresentation of African Americans in the criminal justice system. This is the civil rights struggle for the twenty-first century. Churches must decide what their role will be in this new crusade.

The Body of Christ was established to bring people to God and some order to the world. In bringing people to God, the Christian church is charged with alleviating suffering—preaching good news to the impoverished, healing the brokenhearted, liberating those in captivity, and providing sight where there is none (Luke 4:18).

Let us open our arms and our doors to those who are caught in the system yet wanting to pursue other paths in life. Let us minister to those who are currently incarcerated and welcome returning citizens into the fellowship, and also ensure that adequate housing, employment, and social services are in place to meet the needs of these individuals.

Social justice and social ministry must be the order of the day. We have the moral imperative to lead the fight against mass incarceration, seeking allies in various sectors of society, and advocating for justice for all people. If Jesus came that all of God’s children might have a path to an abundant life, then neither the prison gates nor the gates of hell can prevail.



Adapted from “Ministry with Prisoners and Families: The Way Forward” by W. Wilson Goode Sr., Charles E. Lewis Jr. and Harold Dean Trulear (Judson Press, 2011), 191-98.

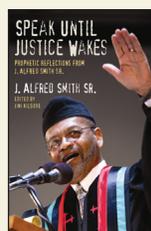
The Justice of God

Justice calls for health and harmony within relationships, which requires the appropriate levying of power. Justice means the eradication of all those forms of inequality that enable some to harm, exploit, and dominate others. Justice considers the degree of love that can be achieved in the presence of conflicting interests among people who pursue their own advantage at the cost of the greater social good.

Love cannot be substituted for justice in a society that is not committed to the Christian ethic of “love thy neighbor.” Therefore, since people need rules to guide decisions that maintain community life, justice is required. Justice provides the rules—bringing order, balance, and harmony to society. Justice at its best uses power to enforce its requirements for social welfare, but power must be used carefully because power without justice constitutes institutional injustice.

Love at its best willingly sacrifices the self for the good of others, but love without justice is irrational sentimentality and meaningless emotionalism. Therefore, in a selfish and greedy world where love is often absent, justice is most necessary. Thank God for the people of God who work for justice. Their lives help community to be born from the womb of chaos and the clashing notes of conflict to be harmonized into melodies of compassion.

I know that in some areas of life evil dominates, truth is buried, and waiting justice sleeps. But I also know that the call of the future is the call of justice. Justice is an expectant mother, pregnant with a hope that promises us that the unfulfilled possibilities of justice will run down like rivers of water.



Excerpted and adapted from “The Justice of God and Eternal Life” in “Speak Until Justice Wakes: Prophetic Reflections from J. Alfred Smith Sr.,” Jini M. Kilgore, ed. (Judson Press, 2006), 73-75.

On Discipleship



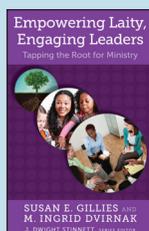
Mission Possible: Ministry in Daily Life

When a believer chooses to follow Christ in believer's baptism or confirmation, the pilgrimage as a disciple has begun. That pilgrimage requires prayer, study, worship, fellowship within the body of Christ, and faithful action in the world. Many struggle with what being a disciple means. Discipleship is not a nine-to-five job. Nor is it a Sunday nine-to-noon job. To become a disciple of Jesus Christ is to become totally committed to living as Christ would have us live.

Christ's call to discipleship doesn't come in a vacuum. We live in the world, and that's where our discipleship will be most often demonstrated. Regardless of the field to which God calls us—education, health care, civil service, politics, sales, manufacturing, or full-time parenting—that's our primary arena for service. And service is what ministry is all about. In those ministries of daily life we are urged to lead a life worthy of our calling (Ephesians 4:1-3).

All too often, the church has been silent on the subject of the church at work, focusing instead on church work. The people who *go* to church *are* the church. Therefore, 99 percent of a church's ministries take place outside the physical walls of its Sunday morning gathering site. Or to frame it differently, the church deploys to the workplace on Monday morning.

Only when Sunday lessons help congregants to affirm their daily life and work as ministry will the church's Monday impact be distinct.

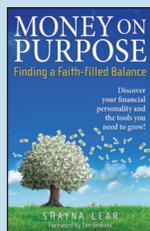


Adapted from "Empowering Laity, Engaging Leaders: Tapping the Root for Ministry," by Susan E. Gillies and M. Ingrid Dvirnak; J. Dwight Stinnett, ed. (Judson Press, 2012), 52-53, 59-60.

Faithfully Filtering Financial Decisions

A filter is used to sift the unwanted portions out of something in order to use what you actually need. When we are constantly bombarded with media advertisements for this and that, it can be difficult to filter through them to determine what is really going to benefit us and what is going to benefit the agenda of our society. Here is where the filter of God's Word comes into play. The sheer number of Bible verses having to do with money and resources reveal that God does care about how we handle our resources. With that in mind, consider some of the verses on spending. Meditate on passages such as these and allow them to serve as seeds planted to help you make better spending decisions: Proverbs 21:5; Ecclesiastes 5:10; Matthew 6:31-33; Philippians 4:11-13.

These Scriptures and others like them can help you avoid hasty buying decisions and focusing on the accumulation of wealth and material possessions. If we truly grow in our relationship with God, our spending will be a reflection of our growing spiritual maturity. Our hearts will grow closer to God's desires and not our own. We won't have to worry about overspending and getting into debt, because we will find our contentment in the Lord. We will be more generous with what we have and not seek to impress our neighbors and friends with our possessions. These things become futile in the presence of our God. And we always have the Holy Spirit with us to guide us and steer us back on track if we get lost.



Adapted from "Money on Purpose: Finding a Faith-filled Balance" by Shayna Lear (Judson Press, 2012), 32-33.

Religious Liberty

A Matter of Discipleship, Community, Justice

As Baptists, we embrace Roger Williams—often called the “Apostle for Religious Liberty”—who came from England to Massachusetts Bay in 1631, preaching and teaching “soul freedom.” Soul freedom is the liberty of conscience that we all receive simply by virtue of how God chose to relate to us. This idea was not popular with Puritan leadership: Williams was forced to leave the colony, and eventually landed in a place he would call “Providence.” There, he founded the first Baptist church in America.

The theological principle of soul freedom and its ethical mandate—religious liberty for all—has been a driving force behind the Washington, D.C.-based Baptist Joint Committee (BJC) for Religious Liberty for more than 75 years. It undergirds the biblical concepts of discipleship, community and social

justice, threads of which run throughout the work of the BJC, and which help to form the tapestry of its ministry.

The essence of discipleship is to follow Jesus. For this allegiance to be carried out boldly and passionately, it must be rooted in a voluntary decision and free of government interference. Government should try neither to advance religion, nor to inhibit it. The BJC encourages Christian discipleship when it advocates that public schools refrain from promoting religion. At the same time, the committee accommodates the rights of students to practice their religion in ways that do not disrupt the education process or interfere with the rights of other students. Religious freedom is a fundamental right of students in public schools, and the BJC works diligently to protect it.

The BJC’s emphasis on individual choice and soul freedom cannot be divorced from the importance of church community. Individual choice must be exercised

in the nurturing, admonition and accountability that the church provides. Likewise, the benefits of community are integral to the ministry of the BJC.

Stan Hastey, former BJC staffer and denominational leader, has described the organization’s “jointness”—that is, bringing together Baptists from across the spectrum—and ecumenism, working with groups outside of Baptist life, as a distinguishing mark of the BJC. The decision by three Baptist organizations—the Southern Baptists, then-Northern Baptists and National Baptists—to work together on Capitol Hill created a new model in which 15 Baptist bodies now support the BJC’s work. While it is the only religious agency devoted solely to religious liberty and the separation of church and state, the BJC works with a wide range of religious and civil liberties groups, including several coalitions that work on Capitol Hill. The BJC’s work is strengthened when it stands shoulder-to-shoulder with others.

Social justice is also an important part of the BJC’s work. The BJC’s commitment to defending religious liberty for all speaks volumes for justice. Because prisoners are, by definition, dependent on legislative accommodations for their free exercise of religion, they need special protections. As such, the BJC defends the right to religious freedom for prisoners and other institutionalized individuals. The BJC also continues to monitor court cases involving the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA), a law that it and a BJC-led coalition helped to pass in 2000. Recently, the BJC filed a friend-of-the-court brief in a case before the U.S. Supreme Court, arguing that prisoners have a right to the free exercise of religion. Prisoners may also seek damages against the state, under federal law, when their rights are violated.

The efforts of the BJC to defend and extend religious liberty for all, in partnership with American Baptist Churches USA and other member bodies, make possible genuine discipleship and social justice in the context of Baptist communities everywhere.

J. Brent Walker is executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty.





Libertad religiosa: Un asunto de discipulado, comunidad y justicia

Como bautistas, acogemos a Roger Williams, a menudo llamado “el póstol de la libertad religiosa”, quien vino a la bahía de Massachusetts desde Inglaterra en 1631, predicando y enseñando sobre la “libertad de conciencia”. La libertad de conciencia es aquella que todos recibimos simplemente en virtud de cómo Dios eligió relacionarse con nosotros y nosotras. Esta idea no era popular entre los líderes puritanos: Williams fue forzado a abandonar la colonia, para finalmente llegar a un lugar que él llamaría “Providencia”. Allí, fundó la primera iglesia Bautista en América.

El principio teológico de libertad de conciencia y su mandato ético—la libertad religiosa para todos, ha sido, por más de 75 años, la fuerza impulsora detrás del Comité Bautista Unido por la Libertad Religiosa, BJC por sus siglas en inglés (*Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty*) con base en Washington DC. Esto afirma los conceptos bíblicos de discipulado, comunidad y justicia social, hilos con los cuales se teje el trabajo del BJC, y que ayudan a formar el variado tapiz de su ministerio.

La esencia del discipulado es seguir a Jesús. Para que esta lealtad se practique audaz y apasionadamente, debe estar basada en una decisión voluntaria y libre de interferencias del gobierno. El gobierno no debe intentar promover la religión, ni inhibirla. El BJC promueve el discipulado cristiano cuando defiende que las escuelas públicas se abstengan de promover la religión. Al mismo tiempo, el comité apoya los derechos de los estudiantes de practicar su religión de maneras que no interrumpan el proceso de la educación ni interfieran con los derechos de otros estudiantes. La libertad religiosa es un derecho fundamental de los estudiantes en las escuelas públicas y el BJC trabaja arduamente para protegerlo.

El énfasis del BJC en la opción individual y la libertad de conciencia no se puede divorciar de la importancia de la comunidad de la iglesia. La opción individual se debe ejercitar en la iglesia, donde se provee edificación, exhortación y responsabilidad. Asimismo, los beneficios de la comunidad están integrados al ministerio del BJC.

Stan Hastey, antiguo empleado de BJC y líder denominacional, ha descrito la “asociación” de la

organización—es decir, la reunión de bautistas de todo el espectro—y el ecumenismo, trabajar con grupos fuera de la vida bautista, como una marca distintiva del BJC. La decisión de tres organizaciones bautistas —Bautistas del Sur, Bautistas del Norte y Bautistas Nacionales—de trabajar juntas en Capitol Hill creó un nuevo modelo gracias al cual 15 organizaciones bautistas apoyan ahora el trabajo del BJC. Siendo la única agencia religiosa dedicada exclusivamente a la libertad religiosa y a la separación de iglesia y estado, el BJC trabaja con una amplia gama de grupos pro libertad religiosa y civil, incluyendo varias coaliciones que trabajan en Capitol Hill. El trabajo del BJC se fortalece cuando se hace hombro a hombro con otros.

La justicia social es también una parte importante del trabajo del BJC. Su compromiso con la defensa de la libertad religiosa para todos y todas dice mucho sobre la justicia. Porque los presos y presas, por definición, dependen de decisiones legislativas para el ejercicio libre de su religión, necesitan protecciones especiales. Como tal, el BJC defiende el derecho a la libertad religiosa para los presos y presas y otros individuos institucionalizados. El BJC también continúa supervisando casos en la corte que involucran el la ley conocida como RLUIPA (siglas de *Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act*), una ley que gracias a una coalición con el BJC se ayudó a ser aprobada en el 2000. Recientemente, el BJC presentó un expediente de *Amigos de la Corte* ante la Corte Suprema de Estados Unidos, exponiendo que los prisioneros tienen el derecho al ejercicio de la religión libre. Cuando sus derechos son violados, los presos y presas pueden también denunciar daños contra el estado, bajo ley federal.

Los esfuerzos del BJC para defender y para ampliar la libertad religiosa para todos y todas, en colaboración con las Iglesias Bautistas Americanas USA y otras organizaciones, hacen posible un discipulado auténtico y una justicia social en el contexto de comunidades bautistas de todos lados.

J. Brent Walker es director ejecutivo del Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty.

Faith and Disability Rights

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) is the nation's largest disability rights organization, promoting equal opportunity, economic power, independent living and political participation for people with disabilities. Central to achieving our mission is the work undertaken in partnership with faith communities across the United States through our Interfaith Disability Advocacy Coalition (IDAC). IDAC is a diverse, nonpartisan coalition of religious and religiously affiliated organizations,



So I was proud to find that ABHMS views its ministry to people with disabilities as a justice ministry.

whose core spiritual values affirm the rights and dignity of people with disabilities. American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) is one of our strongest partners.

The mission of AAPD's Interfaith Initiative is to support people with disabilities and their families as they seek spiritual and religious access, and to bring the prophetic voice of the faith community to the 21st-century disability agenda. The coalition mobilizes the religious community to speak out and take action on disability policy issues with Congress, the president and administration, and society at large.

The first time I viewed ABHMS' website, I expected to find the disability ministry listed under the heading

"Caring" because many traditions view people with disabilities as helpless, needy and requiring repair. My own experience speaks to this phenomenon. I am blind in my right eye and, as a boy, was taken to many unsuccessful faith healers. The message I received was that I was broken. As I left each encounter, still unable to see, I mistakenly believed that God's grace was out of my reach. Later in life, I was drawn to Matthew 9:1-7, which reads:

Some men brought to [Jesus] a paralyzed man, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, "This fellow is blaspheming!" Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, "Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "Get up, take your mat and go home." Then the man got up and went home.

Jesus' priority was not to heal or take pity but to forgive sin. This passage helped to redefine my views. So I was proud to find that ABHMS views its ministry to people with disabilities as a justice ministry. ABHMS calls on American Baptists to increase awareness and employment opportunities for people with disabilities, and to ensure access to places of worship.

The American Baptist "Resolution on the Church and Ministry of Disabilities" says: "The Church often expressed a condescending attitude which is paternalistic, and which treats such persons as objects of good work." ABHMS matches its philosophy with tangible efforts. For instance, ABHMS joined with AAPD's IDAC members to sign a support letter on Medicaid—a prime target for cash-strapped states but a crucial program for persons living with disability—which was sent to all 50 governors. Partnerships such as the one between AAPD and ABHMS give me hope for a brighter future with greater justice for all people.

Mark Perriello is president and CEO of AAPD.

Churches That Work COMMUNITY-BASED MISSION

In the first century, the Jewish followers of Jesus struggled to accept Gentiles into their understanding of God's redemptive work, but they did adjust, making it possible for the gospel to be shared across the Roman



Empire. Even in modern times, there have been great upheavals over "new" practices, including choirs, organs, and Sunday school. In the twenty-first century, the rate of change is increasingly exponentially—and we are faced with an additional challenge: several generations of young people

raised with computers, video games, and smartphones, but with little knowledge of the gospel or the church.

Across the land churches are increasingly aware of the massive cultural changes, and they are asking, "How can we fit in with God's work now?" The missional movement is one way Christians are responding, by becoming involved with people outside the church to live out the gospel of Jesus Christ. These Christians believe the gospel of Jesus was intended to have practical impact on the world, as the first fruits of the coming new heaven and new earth.

Christians in the missional movement choose to become actively involved in alliances with their community. They have discovered that acting on the truth of Christ's gospel makes a difference in the world. They form authentic relationships with others—Christian and non-Christian—while addressing community problems. These efforts lead to true partnerships in which love, respect, and dialogue can arise as a natural part of working together. Community involvement is viewed as a testimony of God's love for people. As the book of James says, "Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. . . . I will show you my faith by my deeds" (James 2:17-18).

At American Baptist Home Mission Societies, the Missional Church Learning Experience (MCLE) was designed to offer a road map for churches who want to practice community involvement as an expression of their faith.

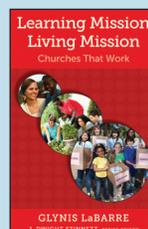
The MCLE helps churches ... move their mind-set from 'come to church' to 'take the church to the streets'...

*—Rev. Joan Friesen, Executive Minister,
American Baptist Churches of Greater Indianapolis*

The MCLE invites churches to travel together for a period of time, learning from one another in a practical, hands-on process. This experimental model encourages conversation among church teams about the changes they are experiencing. It provides action steps to try new ideas within their communities, and a safe environment to discuss what they learn. The MCLE opens the door to creative exploration of the opportunities God is offering through the changes. It equips God's people in a simple step-by-step process to build mission teams that create healthy relationships and repeatable patterns for partnership with the community.

We have tried connecting with our community and see that we can be a vital part once we get outside our own doors. [We have] readjusted our sights so that we show our love for the Lord in ways the community recognizes."

*—Laura H. Austin, member of
First Baptist Church, Mansfield, Conn.*



Adapted from excerpts of "Learning Mission, Living Mission: Churches That Work" by Glynis LaBarre (Judson Press, 2012), 7-10, 14-16.

The Inseparable Nature of DISCIPLESHIP, COMMUNITY, JUSTICE

When Jesus called his very first followers, he called several together (Mark 1:16-20). His was a call to follow him *in community*. While the Western mind often separates personal morality from social responsibility, both the Old Testament (*tzedek*) and New Testament (*dikaioisunē*) use a single concept that encompasses both righteousness and justice. As followers of Jesus, we live out discipleship in all that we do, with no separation of private behavior

As followers of Jesus, we live out discipleship in all that we do, with no separation of private behavior and public presence.

and public presence. Similarly, the authentic community of faith lives out the call of Jesus in all aspects of its life.

While it is axiomatic to say that the church differs fundamentally from a business, social club or civic organization, it is important to be explicit about that fundamental difference. Built around the very presence of the risen Lord, Chris-

tian community is called to both an exceptional interior life and a unique role in the world. The ways we relate to each other—not just on Sunday mornings, but during our meetings, in our budgeting, in response to our disagreements—are measures of the fullness of our faith. Likewise how we relate or choose not to relate beyond the walls of our churches is a benchmark of faithfulness. Scripture speaks of the church as the first fruits and a foretaste of God’s kingdom, a royal priesthood and the body of Christ. These images remind us that faith communities are called to be God’s emissaries to the world, challenging sin in all its manifestations with the justice/righteousness of the Kingdom.

American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) strives to provide resources to help local congregations

move toward greater faithfulness. While some emphasize the interior life of the church and others focus on social responsibility, all take seriously the interrelatedness of discipleship, community and justice.

- ABHMS Discipleship Web pages (www.abhms.org > Ministries & Programs > Discipleship & Christian Education) offer numerous practical resources* for discipleship formation, including articles, a life-span development chart and a guide to selecting curriculum materials.
- The Discipleship Planning Guide, a practical resource with a planning calendar, articles, and resource recommendations for nurturing discipleship in the local congregation, is published annually and distributed to all regions, churches and individuals by request. It is also posted online.*
- “Children, Poverty and the Bible” is a five-part Bible study developed in support of the Justice for Children initiative. It is available in print (item #4829) or online.*
- “A Church Stands With Its People”: a video that tells the story of American Baptist ministry in World War II internment camps where more than 120,000 Japanese American men, women and children were relocated. The video can be viewed at www.abhms.org, or a DVD can be purchased for \$7 each by contacting ABHMS’ Karen Drummond at kdrummond@abhms.org or 1-800-222-3872, x 2394.
- “A Matter of Stewardship: Eco-justice in Biblical Perspective” is a six-session Bible study that frames care for creation as a divine mandate. It is available in print (item #6025) or online.*
- “Race and Poverty,” a downloadable* five-session study that examines attitudes and perceptions about race and poverty, was developed in response to hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

- Forty-three free Workshops for Church Life and Leadership (with several in French, Spanish and Karen) are offered on topics ranging from age-specific discipleship ministries, to church leadership. Several multi-session topical studies suitable for small group study are also included. Download at www.abhms.org > Workshops for Church Life & Leadership.

One of our most recent publications—“What Do These Stones Mean?”—provides information and reflections on 13 memorials and historic buildings in Washington, D.C. Originally published for Immerse, the 2012 national gathering of American Baptist youth, “What Do These Stones Mean?” prompts us to consider the ideals and aspirations these memorials represent as well as their testimony to God’s presence in the midst of tribulation. It is an excellent resource for individuals, families and church groups who want to view the sights in a new light when they visit the nation’s capital. The following is an excerpt from the entry on the Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism during World War II.

The Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism honors the bravery of Americans of Japanese ancestry who fought in World War II and those who were relocated to internment camps. A central feature of the memorial is a 14-foot bronze sculpture by Nina Akamu. The sculpture depicts two cranes struggling to free themselves from barbed wire, reminiscent of internees who were, as inscribed there, “Allowed only what they could carry,



families . . . forced to abandon homes, friends, farms and businesses to live in ten relocation centers guarded by armed troops and surrounded by barbed wire fences.”

On Feb. 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which led to the relocation of more than 120,000 Japanese-American men, women and children from their homes to centers in desolate areas of the West. Nearly three-quarters

were U.S. citizens. The Supreme Court upheld this action, although it violated the 14th Amendment and was largely about bowing to “public hysteria and political pressure rather than factual data” (J. Edgar Hoover analysis) and was not wholly related to security. “A great many West Coast people distrust the Japanese and various special interests would welcome their removal from

good farmland and the elimination of their competition,” said Attorney General Francis Biddle in a report to the president on Feb. 17, 1942.

In his memoirs, former attorney general of California, Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote:

“I have since deeply regretted the removal order and my own testimony advocating it, because it was not in keeping with our American concept of freedom and the rights of citizens. . . . It demonstrates the cruelty of war when fear, get-tough military psychology, propaganda, and racial antagonism combine with one’s responsibility for public security to produce such acts.”

In 1983, the Federal Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians found that there had been no military necessity for the internment, and, in 1988, Congress passed legislation providing redress with a formal apology being issued by President George Bush in October 1990.

The evacuation and internment of Japanese Americans during World War II is a reminder of the dangers inherent in majority rule and of the injustices to which democracies are vulnerable. In the struggle for ratification of the U.S. Constitution, James Madison argued that a just partition of power was necessary to check its potential abuse. The Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism during World War II reminds us that in extraordinary circumstances even those precautions may prove insufficient.

In “Serious Injustices” (American Baptist Quarterly, June 1998), Paul Nagano, an American Baptist pastor serving at one of the camps, noted Justice Warren’s evolution into “a stalwart defender of individual freedoms, a crusader for social justice,” and suggested that the internment might have been averted if Warren “with his Christian background, had taken a stand for justice and upheld the fundamental principles of the Constitution of the United States.” In such instances, it is imperative that Christians stand firm for what is right, in so far as God gives us the ability to know what is right, as advocates for those who are in jeopardy and without access to power. Such stands may make us unpopular, but that is the cost of discipleship. If we are faithful, perhaps future generations will have less cause to ask how things might have been different had we, with our Christian backgrounds, taken a stand for justice.

* Request print materials through Judson Press customer service at 1-800-458-3766. Download items at www.abhms.org > Ministries & Programs > Discipleship & Christian Education > Resources.

The Rev. Cassandra Carkuff Williams, Ed.D., serves as national coordinator, Discipleship Resource Development, at ABHMS.

Crossing Cultures

MINISTRY WITH NATIVE AMERICANS

And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock with one shepherd (John 10:16).

Every believer was included in the heart of Jesus when He spoke about himself as the “good shepherd.” The emphasis in John 10 is on those who would receive eternal life as a result of his ongoing ministry through the body of Christ. We can celebrate the fact that being in this group of “others” does not make us less important; we are equally a part of the body of Christ.

Our history is filled with attempts to live out the equality of God’s love through outreach ministries among those who are considered “other” in world systems. Such mission efforts have extended the Christian family, shaped our fellowship and provided us with joy over God’s harvest. What greater miracle is there than for someone to pass from death into life eternal by hearing of Jesus and believing in the one who sent him (John 5:24)?

Since the 19th century, American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) has maintained an outreach to Native Americans—a group of between 2.5 million and 4.1 million people—who are often considered “other.” In Native Americans’ 10 largest population areas exists a 10 percent rate of homelessness, a 42.67 percent poverty rate among families with children (versus a 9.2 percent national average), and a nearly 40 percent poverty rate for individuals (verses the national average of just under 12.5 percent). The numbers also indicate a high rate of other negative statistical factors, such as infant mortality, drug abuse, disease impact, poor quality of health care, poor quality of education and poor economic development. This group generally faces conditions that are three- to five-times worse than the national average.

U.S. policies toward native peoples is generally stated as five historic phases: 1) avoid and eliminate, 2) assimilation, 3) reservation, 4) relocation, and 5) self-determination. Native Americans have a long history of being unwanted and unseen. They remain a mystery to most of us. How many of us have Native American friends or have visited a reservation? How many know basic facts—such as that the Bureau of Indian Affairs recognizes 564 tribal entities and 334 reservations—or the truths

beyond the statistics, such as the resilience and cultural wealth of these people groups or the centrality of family in Native cultures? Within Native American communities, a person’s importance is not focused first on personal accomplishments but on family and community relationships. Family is their wealth and locus of identity. A person with large sums of money but no family may be considered poor; one with little money but a large family may be considered wealthy.

Few of us will know what it means to be welcomed into a Native American home, and fewer will experience the wealth of being made part of a Native American family. Some members of our American Baptist family have fostered such connections, however. First Baptist Church



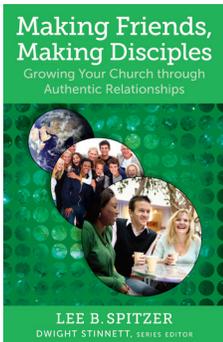
of Indianapolis has sustained relationships with Crow families in Montana for 20 years through community-focused ministries. In summer 2012, American Baptist Men, in cooperation with ABHMS, began the ongoing renovation of Sunlight Baptist Mission on the Hopi reservation in Second Mesa, Ariz.

ABHMS stands ready to serve as a point of meaningful connection with our Native American brothers and sisters. Together, we can ensure that those whom the world classifies as “other” experience equality as part of the family of God in Christ.

Harvey Stewart serves as ABHMS’ western coordinator for Indian Ministries.



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—Paul J. Wadell, Professor of Religious Studies, St. Norbert College, De Pere, Wisconsin; author, *Becoming Friends: Worship, Justice and the Practice of Christian Friendship*

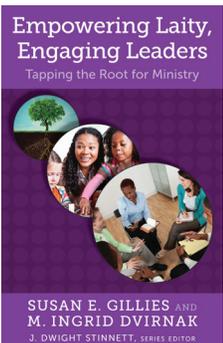
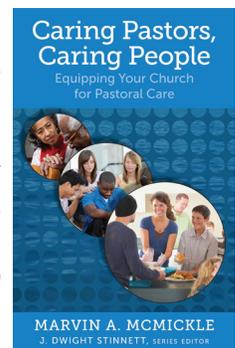
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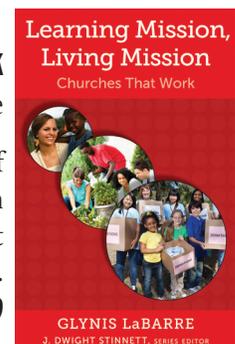
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