**With New Leadership, ABHMS Presses On, Sharing God’s Reconciling Love Across the Home Mission Field**

**LOS ANGELES, CA (ABNS 11/5/15)—**“We are here today looking back at where we come from, realizing we are still on a journey because our work is not finished,” said the Rev. Dr. Laura Sinclair when she opened the Nov. 3-4 board meeting of American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) with worship.

Relating the ongoing work of ABHMS with the meeting’s Philippians 3:14 theme — “I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (NIV) — Sinclair reminded the board of the need to continue pressing on. “That pressing on,” she said, “needs to be continued relentlessly.”

Executive Director Dr. Jeffrey Haggray, in his first report to the board, said he is “consumed by the moving forward, monitoring and measuring of mission.” Thanking board members for their trust and support as he takes on the Home Mission Societies’ mantle following the retirement of Dr. Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins III, he said, “I am humbled, grateful and encouraged by this opportunity to serve my American Baptist family as we continue responding to God’s call to share the Good News of God’s reconciling love and grace on the American mission field.”

The board unanimously affirmed Lydia Flora Barlow for commissioning as an American Baptist home missionary. Via an Internet connection, Barlow, a member of Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Seattle, Wash., gave passionate testimony to her work addressing social and criminal justice issues through restoration of the lives of incarcerated individuals and their families.  “Commissioning,” said Barlow, “will make a difference in how I am able to involve churches in my own denomination and other denominations. It will formalize for the people I minister to, including prison guards, that I come with a Christian and spiritual lens.”

The Rev. Dr. Eddie Cruz, associate executive director of mission advancement, announced the 2016 America for Christ Offering theme—“Discipleship: Becoming More Like Christ,” based on Ephesians 2:10—and thanked board members along with their churches for support of the 2015 offering. These members were recognized for notable giving among board member congregations:

• The Rev. Kevin “Scotty” Robertson, pastor of  Millcreek Baptist Church, La Porte, Ind., accepted a certificate recognizing his church for the highest per capita contributions;
• Wendy Hagn accepted a certificate on behalf of First Baptist Church, Franklin, Ind., for the largest increase in giving;
• The Rev. Lauren Ng received a certificate acknowledging her church, First Baptist Chinese Church, San Francisco, Calif., as the highest giving; and
• First Baptist Church, Pontiac, Ill., pastored by the Rev. Dr. James O. Wolfe III, was recognized as a top 250-giving church.

In other business, board members shared in strategic conversations aimed at identifying specific discipleship-, community- and justice-related issues and opportunities that could strengthen mission focus and increase ministry impact. Also, the meeting included a time of reflection and study of the Judson Press book “Church on Purpose,”—by Adam Bond and Laura Mariko Cheifetz, editors—to consider the possibilities of reinventing discipleship through the lenses of ecological, sexual, financial and political literacy.

The Rev. Dr. Clifford Johnson, in his report, shared “how proud” he is of the Home Mission Societies and its work, and expressed his gratitude to God for the opportunity to serve the Board of Directors as its president

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

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