**ABHMS Board Studies Connection Between Spiritual Practice, Effective Leadership**

**VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 2/17/15)**—At American Baptist Home Mission Societies’ board of directors meeting in Charlotte, N.C., Feb. 10-12, the Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson, executive director of The Ministers Council of American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA), led members in examining the relationship between spiritual practice and effective leadership.

The meeting’s theme, “Breathe,” was based on John 20:22: “He breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’”

Jackson presented the “7 Rs of Sanctuary,” which form the foundation of her upcoming book published by Judson Press. Pastors and Christian leaders need to find sanctuary, or rest and restoration, she said, to shape their inner lives in their walks as disciples of Christ.

“How can we do all that we are called to do unless we are fed, unless we are nourished?” she asked board members.

As outlined by Jackson, the “7 Rs” are the following spiritual practices:

1. Retreating — intentionally stepping away from work;
2. Releasing — slowing down to “be” rather than “do”;
3. Reviewing — considering current challenges mindfully;
4. Reconnecting — remembering values and goals that led to current work;
5. Reflecting — looking forward with current challenges in mind and connecting those challenges with personal values and goals;
6. Recalibrating — embracing the new strategies and plans that have emerged; and
7. Returning to the work context with renewed sense of purpose.

Leaders who take time to attend to spiritual practice are more effective because those practices help leaders feel God speaking in their lives and foster growing alignment with God, says Jackson.

The meeting also included a visit to Friendship Missionary Baptist Church, an ABCUSA congregation in Charlotte. Board members toured the 100-plus-acre church campus and heard from the Rev. Dr. Clifford Jones Sr., pastor, about the congregation’s wide-ranging ministries that include a 26-bed transitional housing for single, homeless women; a catering division that provides culinary skills job training and nutrition education; and a resale boutique.

Founded in 1890 with 40 members meeting in residential living rooms, the church now counts more than 8,000 members. Jones is author of the popular Judson Press book “The Star Book for Stewardship.”

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

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