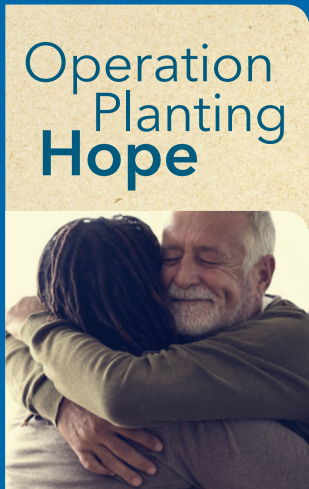


QuickLinks

In October, ABHMS' "Rebuilding, Restoring, Renewing Puerto Rico" initiative held the free, virtual Spanish-language workshop "Estrategias para almacenamiento seguro de alimentos" ("Strategies for Safe Food Storage"). Read more at abhms.org/newsroom.

During a virtual meeting in November, the board of directors affirmed ABHMS' vital, engaged ministry in the face of the continuing pandemic. Visit abhms.org/newsroom to learn more.

Curious about Operation Planting Hope? View a video at abhms.org/ministries/healing-communities/operation-planting-hope/.



Mission in America

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AFC 2021 supports Christian leadership development and faith formation

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

EPHESIANS 4:11-13 (NIV)

This year's America for Christ Offering (AFC)—"For the Purpose of Equipping Saints," grounded in the Ephesians verse above—focuses on American Baptist Home Mission Societies' (ABHMS) Leadership Empowerment and Discipleship ministries.

When you contribute to AFC, you help us nurture and strengthen faithful followers who find their call and life's work as the hands and feet of Christ. You partner with us in fulfilling the biblical mandate in Ephesians.

ABHMS' Discipleship Ministries sends more than 5,000 Discipleship and Christian Education Guides to regions, churches and individuals annually and provides more than five dozen Church Life and Leadership workshops in English, Spanish, French and Karen, available for download at abhms.org. On average, more than 1,000 Bible studies are distributed yearly, and, in 2019, several hundred American Baptists attended discipleship workshops.

Our 2019 Leadership Empowerment work broadened a three-year Lilly Endowment grant focused on fostering clergy financial literacy. More than 35 ministry partners and ABHMS staff were trained to integrate a related toolkit into a variety of congregational and community ministries. In addition, college and seminary students are offered scholarships, while the Co-Creators Incubator nurtures individuals seeking to bring their ministry ideas to fruition.

Give during the upcoming designated Sunday at your church or visit abhms.org/AFCnow. For questions, contact Kim Wilkins, development coordinator, at 610.768.2413.



ABHMS hosts third installment of Intercultural Leadership Institute

In November, ABHMS' Intercultural Ministries held the third installment of its Intercultural Leadership Institute via Zoom on the ministrElife social media platform. Present-



Rev. LeDayne
McLeese Polaski

ing on the subject of "Skills and Tools for Delving into Diversity and Difference" was the Rev. LeDayne McLeese Polaski, executive director of MeckMIN Mecklenburg Interfaith Network, Charlotte, N.C., and former executive director of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America-Bautistas por la Paz.

Among the concepts that Polaski introduced was "The Diversity Welcome" to be used at the beginning of meetings. In this case, the person running the meeting would list as many types of diverse individuals and feelings as possible followed by the word "welcome" after

each list. For example, "If you're Black, white, Latinx, Native American, Asian, welcome." "If you're gay, lesbian, bi, straight, cisgender, welcome." "If you're excited about being here today or if you're annoyed about being here today, welcome." And "If you're frustrated, bored or engaged, your being here enriches this space, welcome."

Polaski also discussed trauma. She explained that executive functioning in the brain is bypassed during trauma, and the individual reacts from the primitive brainstem with fight, flight, freeze or fawn. "Fawning," she said, refers to attaching oneself to someone or something that makes one feel safe.

The first Intercultural Leadership Institute session was face-to-face in 2019 at ABHMS' Leadership and Mission Building in King of Prussia, Pa. The second was a virtual meeting held on ministrElife.

ABHMS’ The Christian Citizen—passionate about justice, mercy and faith—produces award-winning content that is provocative, timely and relevant. What started 25 years ago as a print publication is now digital-first, while still maintaining a commitment to print. As it’s adapted to today’s digital world, a weekly e-newsletter and podcast have been added, and its social media presence continues to expand. Last month, the magazine added a member support program—Christian Citizen Ambassadors, which includes early access to digital content and a free Judson Press book.

■ [Learn more at https://christiancitizen.us/members/.](https://christiancitizen.us/members/)

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New York church expands summer lunch program despite pandemic

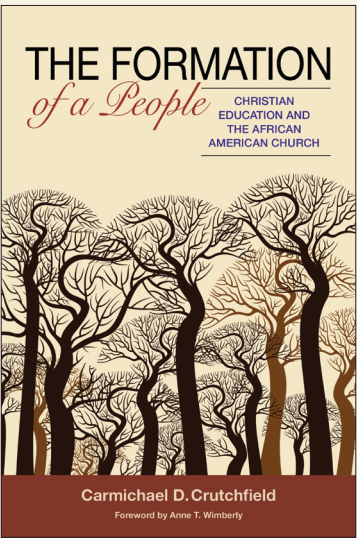
“God showed up in every aspect of the program,” Karen Jones reported about First Baptist Church of Ballston Spa’s pandemic adaptation of its summer lunch ministry that reached out to children who live with food insecurity. In the face of the global health crisis, the New York congregation’s ministry attracted more volunteers, expanded into two additional trailer courts, incorporated virtual vacation Bible school (VBS), and delivered healthy lunches to more than 100 children.



The established program received a \$10,000 grant from American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS)—made possible by the Louise Burchard Pierce Memorial Fund—among other community support. “COVID-19 was an unexpected challenge,” Jones noted. While the increase of volunteers willing to help with meal distribution solved one challenge, organizers still had to determine how to prepare and distribute lunches following “stringent” sanitizing procedures and social distancing guidelines. Church members thought the pandemic meant no 2020 vacation Bible school, but, as the summer lunch delivery system fell into place, they realized the program could also “deliver” VBS. Craft materials and snacks were delivered along with lunches, and craft instruction, stories and songs were made available on YouTube. “[God] provided for us to feed the hungry, spread the gospel, share financial blessings, role model Christian love, and work as a community of believers for a good cause,” Jones wrote in her ministry report, adding, “We saw the Holy Spirit at work in the almost flawless operation of the whole program.” Ballston Spa, Saratoga County seat, features great disparity between the very wealthy and those living in poverty. The county has more mobile home parks than any other county in New York state; 20 parks alone are located in the Ballston Spa vicinity.

Judson Press book perfect for Christian education study

A contribution to the study of Christian education, the newly released book “The Formation of a People: Christian Education and the African American Church” is steeped in current scholarship and a lifetime of experience in the African American church. It expands our understanding of education to encompass the larger life and ministry of the church—from practices of testimony, worship and preaching to more traditional classroom contexts of Sunday church school and midweek Bible study.



The book provides constructive definitions of Christian education and faith formation, as well as clarity about formation processes across all ages and life seasons. It examines faith formation as it occurs in the historic and contemporary African American church context, where those who do ministries of Christian education, faith formation and discipleship often have a wide range of training and experience—from no formal theological education to specialized seminary degrees.

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