

AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES USA

Greetings from ABWIM's National Director

This past year—and especially this past month—has been a time in which the goodness of God's people and the greatness of God have become eminently clear. I know for a fact that I am where I am today not because of my own doing but only because of the grace of God and the prayers of God's people. With that in mind, I start this new position full of gratitude and absolutely overwhelmed by the grace and generosity of so many friends, family and colleagues in ministry. Thank you!



Rev. Patricia
Hernandez

As I begin my ministry, the words of Frederick Buechner come to mind, "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

The world needs women in ministry. The world hungers for the gifts of women clergy. I acutely feel this need and my heart longs to respond. Equally acutely my heart jumps with joy—or, in Buechner's words, "deep gladness"—for women in ministry, and I have a deep desire to address this need in a way which supports women in the living out of their call and the utilizing of their gifts.

Early in my ministry I was part of a wonderful group of women ministers who strengthened and supported my ministry. When we gathered, I would often bring my kids, which at that time were my two daughters. (Two sons have since been added to the mix!) One time the church I was pastoring happened to be hosting a community service at which a male pastor was going to be preaching. When he arrived, decked out in ministerial garb, my then 5-year-old, Danica, exclaimed to me, "You mean, men can be ministers too?!" I hadn't realized the impact this group of women ministers had in shaping her perspective! When the gifts of all God's people are fully shared, our perspective changes; our world is transformed.

To that end, I want to be part of working towards the full participation and full partnership of women and men in ministry. When we live as partners in mutual ministry we more fully live out God's image in our lives and God's design for our ministry. How can we do that?

This past Mother's day this same daughter and I ran the first ever Kalamazoo marathon. Yes, 26.2 miles. I am still feeling every one of those miles and especially that last .2 of a mile even as I now write! She ran because of me; I finished because of her. Together we did what neither one of us could do alone.

As women in ministry we can partner with each other to do together what none of us can do alone. As we begin this journey together I hope ABWIM can be a place and a paradigm of partnership that we may live into and live out the dynamic and transformative partnership of God's new creation.

I began by saying "thanks!" and that is where I end. I am thankful to be here! I am here quite literally because of you. Yes, YOU! And I am here for you. More exactly, we are here for each other. Let's connect!

In closing, I want to especially thank Rev. Holly Bean and the ABWIM search committee, all of whom have been patient with the process, persistent in their prayers and passionate about the work to be done. Indeed, there is much to do; together we can do it! I invite your participation and your prayers as we begin this journey together. 26.2 miles is suddenly sounding short! Would you run this race with me—not just a marathon but this multi-faceted, many colored, mosaic of ministry?!

God is doing a new thing. Won't you join me...

Your partner in ministry,

Pat

Patricia.Hernandez@abc-usa.org

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Rev. Patricia Hernandez

Rev. Patricia Hernandez was born in Geneva, Switzerland, and spent the first two years of her life in Yugoslavia before her parents, who were missionaries at the time, returned to the United States. She received her B.A. from the University of Chicago, MDiv. from Colgate Rochester Divinity School and a Certificate in the Foundations of Christian Leadership from Duke Divinity School. Having a passion for the life of the Spirit she has studied at Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation as well as spent time at the community of Taizé with Brother Roger in France and L'Abri with Francis Schaefer in Switzerland. After serving in a ministry to migrant farmworkers, she pastored churches in New York and Pennsylvania before being called to serve the American Baptist Churches of Michigan as the Consultant for Leadership Development. In all aspects of her ministry, she strives to reach out to those who have been rejected, empower those who have been disempowered, and heal those who have been hurt by sharing with them the accepting, loving, and healing power of the Spirit.

More than degrees or position, what is important to her is to love God and love others as she lives out God's call on her life, inviting others to do the same. "In all that I do," she says, "I hope to be a Christ-bearer, a witness to the Good News, so that by my example, others will know Christ and be called to live accordingly. My ministry is not separate from my life. For me, being a minister is not my job...it's my life!"

American Baptist Women in Ministry Report of Work September, 2009 – June, 2011

BACKGROUND

In the summer of 2009 the full time position of Executive Director for American Baptist Women in Ministry (ABWIM) was discontinued for lack of funding. The ABWIM endowment funds had declined to a level that no longer could support a full time executive director. General Secretary Roy Medley asked Rev. Mary Hulst to lead a review and reassessment of the needs of ABC professional women in ministry and to develop a financially sustainable staffing pattern to meet those needs.

In the fall of 2009, Mary invited the following women to serve on a steering committee: Rev. Holly Bean from the New York area, Rev. Alice Greene, from Chicago, and Rev. Lauren Ng from the San Francisco area. The Steering Committee's purpose was to gather information and reassess how work on behalf of American Baptist women in ministry can be most effective at the national level. During the first meeting in the fall of 2009, the Steering Committee

agreed to take a year (2010) to make the reassessment and form a recommendation. It's first step was to convene a meeting of certain American Baptists to ask for input.

In late January 2010, the Steering Committee gathered representatives of various ABC entities in a roundtable meeting to hear their thoughts on current realities of ABC women in ministry. The participants were asked to share what they were doing currently in relation to women in ministry, what roadblocks face clergywomen at this point, what resources exist and what their hopes are for the future. The meeting produced a rich collection of observations and reflections for the Steering Committee to begin its work. In addition, a decision was made to engage Rev. Holly Bean as an ABWIM consultant for two days a week to coordinate the development of the new staffing pattern and to work with Joyce Lake, the ABWIM Administrative Assistant, to administer ongoing ABWIM work in 2010.

After the roundtable meeting, more information was gathered in meetings with women in ministry groups around the country and in conversation with executive ministers and other denominational leaders. The ABC database, ABCIS, was also consulted for current data on American Baptist women in ministry. The Steering Committee met by conference call to review the information. In July 2010, the Steering Committee gathered in Chicago to prepare its proposed plan for the new staffing pattern. The plan was presented to the General Board Executive Committee in September and to the General Board in November. Both groups responded with enthusiasm. What follows are the basic elements of the plan:

VISION AND MISSION STATEMENT

The Biblical record and history teach us that through the Holy Spirit, God uses both men and women to fulfill God's purposes. Both male and female are created in the image of God. Both male and female are called to ministry in God's plan.

Yet, there is injustice in the treatment of women who are called by God to ministry:

There is denial of women's calls to ministry. Women's gifts for ministerial leadership are too often not recognized or honored.

Because of this injustice, our churches suffer from imbalance without the gifts of both men and women.

Therefore, we, the American Baptist Churches, through ABWIM and its partnerships, seek to:

- Educate the church for better understanding of the ways theological and biblical material support women in leadership roles in the church, as well as the many ways women have given leadership to the church throughout history;
- Advocate for placement and recognition of women in ministry;
- Cultivate women's call to ministry and strengthen and embolden women serving in ministry; and
- Celebrate and lift up the gifts women bring to the life of the church.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR 2011 – 2015

The following strategic priorities for the five-year period 2011 to 2015 will produce the greatest progress towards fulfilling ABWIM's vision and mission:

- Establish and/or strengthen an active and available network and available resources for women in ministry in every American Baptist region.
- Educate church congregations about American Baptist women in ministry by conducting at least one event in each region and developing the resources to support the events.
- Charge the ABWIM Advisory Committee to identify a measurable goal for increasing the number of women employed in ministerial positions.
- Create an award recognizing an ABWIM advocate to be presented at the Biennials.
- Establish a practice of recognizing inspiring women in ministry from diverse fields every 3 months, using the ABWIM website.
- Create and distribute to women in or considering seminary a resource list of seminary opportunities and events that explore and encourage cultivating a ministerial call.
- Develop an annual retreat or conference resource for women in ministry to strengthen mutual support and celebrate women's gifts.
- Develop specific projects to strengthen support and advocacy for African American women in ministry, Latina women in ministry, Asian women in ministry and Native American women in ministry.
- Develop the ABWIM priorities for 2016-2020.

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Report of Work (cont.)

PROPOSED STRUCTURE

1. A part time National Director of American Baptist Women in Ministry, reporting to the General Secretary, with responsibility for the communications strategy

- Developing and carrying out a strong communications strategy for promotion, education, fund development and advocacy.
- Developing partnerships with other ABC entities, such as American Baptist Historical Society, Ministers Council, American Baptist Women's Ministries, Interim Ministries, American Baptist Personnel Services, seminaries, national board and regions, to encourage and lead advocacy, education and support with them.
- Managing volunteer coordinators for outreach to regional, cultural and affinity groups of women in ministry.

2. Part time office assistance in the OGS offices (currently one-third time).

3. A team of specialized volunteer coordinators charged to:

- Facilitate gatherings of women in ministry in different regional settings.
- Facilitate gatherings of women in ministry in different affinity groups, such as seminarians.
- Assist in implementing strategies specifically for women clergy and churches of African descent, Latina, Asian and Native American.
- Serve 1-year terms with the potential for renewal.
- Work on a volunteer basis, with expenses paid through the ABWIM budget.

4. Advisory group

- A working group of 11 volunteers representing different age groups, different vocations, different cultural backgrounds and both

women and men. Members serve 2 – 3 year terms, attend 2 expense-paid meetings a year.

- Responsible for consulting with the national director on setting strategic priorities, addressing racial and ethnic issues, and fundraising.
- Formed initially from the search committee with additions; membership rotates off and on in yearly classes with new members recruited by existing members and the national director.
- The advisory group's convener rotates each year.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The ABWIM program is a program of the Office of the General Secretary and its financial support will continue to be administered through that office. Revenue will come from two sources initially—a 5% annual draw from the Women in Ministry endowment and Phoebe's Purse, the annual appeal. The ABWIM national director will plan and manage the budget for the ABWIM office in collaboration with the Treasurer of ABCUSA. The national director will be encouraged to develop new sources of revenue from grants.

Following the presentation of the plan, the search for the new national director began. The position was posted in December and a search committee convened in January, 2011. In May, 2011, Rev. Pat Hernandez was called to become the new national director. She began work at the end of May, 2011.

No Hay Mal Que Por Bien No Venga

Rda. Carmen Z. Díaz Dávila

Bendiciones disfrazadas, fue el tema del women pastors' colloquium en Austin Texas. Excelente experiencia que nos motivo a meditar y reflexionar una y otra vez como situaciones difíciles o crisis son bendiciones disfrazadas. Pues la intervención de Dios hace que al pasar el tiempo la situación de sufrimiento puede resultar de algo negativo en una bendición para nuestra vida.

Existe una anécdota, que nos parece que lo ilustra de forma magistral. En resumen nos habla de un rey que no creía en la bondad de Dios. Un súbdito siempre le recordaba la frase: "¡Rey mío, no se desanime, porque todo lo que Dios hace es perfecto; El nunca se equivoca!" Un día salieron a cazar y una fiera de la jungla le atacó, y el rey perdió un dedo. El rey furioso le reclamo, si Dios fuera bueno no hubiera perdido el dedo. El siervo respondió: "Rey mío, Dios es bueno y quizás, perder un dedo, sea para su bien". El rey, indignado mandó a su siervo al calabozo mas oscuro. Al mes el rey fue de caza y fue atacado por una tribu de indios, los cuales hacían sacrificios humanos. Se pecataron que le faltaba un dedo y el rey fue liberado. El rey al volver al palacio, mando a buscar a su siervo y dijo: "Dios fue realmente bueno conmigo, logre escapar con vida justamente porque no tenía un dedo. ¿Pero si Dios es tan bueno, por que permitió que estuvieses preso, tú que tanto lo defiendes?" El siervo sonrió y dijo... "Rey mío, si yo hubiera estado con usted, seguramente habría sido sacrificado en su lugar, pues no me falta ningún dedo y le recordó la frase."

De hoy en adelante cuando enfrentemos una crisis miremos al cielo y reconozcamos que nuestro Dios es más grande y poderoso que cualquier crisis. Que toda circunstancia es pasajera y que son oportunidades de crecimiento y experimentar el poder de Dios. No nos hacen más débiles sino más fuertes. Confíemos en Dios, esperemos con expectativa, sabiendo que "todo obra para bien para quienes aman al Señor" (ROM 8:28).

Tal vez te preguntas: ¿de que manera puede ayudar a bien el tener que enfrentar una crisis? No todas las cosas que nos suceden son buenas en si mismas, pero Dios es bueno, y puede tomarlas para que trabajen a nuestro bien, si tenemos confianza en El. Dios te ama y es fiel, recuérdalo siempre.

There Is No Bad From Which No Good Comes

Rev. Carmen Z. Díaz Dávila

"Disguised Blessings" was the subject of a clergywomen's gathering I attended recently in Austin, Texas. It was an excellent experience which led us to meditate and reflect again and again how difficult situations or crises can be blessings in disguise. As the intervention of God comes in the passage of time, a situation of suffering can turn something negative into a blessing.

There is an anecdote that, I think, illustrates this in a masterful way. It is about a King who did not believe in the goodness of God. A servant always reminded him of the phrase: "My King does not get discouraged, because all of what God does is perfect; He will never be wrong". One day they went hunting and a beast in the jungle attacked him, and the King lost a finger. The furious King claimed that if God were good, he would not have lost his finger. The servant replied, "My King, God is good and perhaps losing a finger is for your own good". The outraged King ordered his servant to go to the dark dungeon. A month later, the King was hunting and was attacked by a tribe that made human sacrifices. They noticed that he was missing a finger, and the King was released. Upon his return to the palace, the King asked to see his servant. He said, "God was very good to me; I escaped alive precisely because I was missing a finger. But if God is so good, why did He allow you to be imprisoned, you who defended Him so much?" The servant smiled and said, "My King, if I had been with you, certainly I would have been sacrificed in your place, because I'm not missing any fingers." The servant again reminded him of the phrase.

From today onwards when we face a crisis let us look at the heavens and recognize that our God is bigger and more powerful than any crisis. All circumstances are passing and they are growth opportunities that allow us to experience the power of God. They do not make us weaker but stronger. Let us trust in God, and wait with expectation, knowing that "all things work together for good to them that love God" (Romans 8:28).

Perhaps you wonder what can help when you have to face a crisis? Not all things that happen are good, but God is good, and can take the circumstances to work for our good, if we have confidence in Him. God loves you and is faithful. Always remember this.

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Rev.. Carmen Z.
Díaz Dávila

God Became Small

Luke 2:22-40
March 30, 2011 General Board Orientation
The Rev. Heather Entrekin, Ph.d.
Associate Professor of Congregational Health
Central Baptist Theological Seminary
General Board Chaplain

Monday night, as new members of the General Board were getting acquainted, Leo mentioned that his mother had kept and treasured a handkerchief in which he was held as a tiny, premature baby. Leo began life small. We all do, though some smaller than others.

We love reaching out to a baby. Some of you are doing it as often as possible for grandchildren, opening hearts and arms to the small ones, the vulnerable ones, the beloved ones of your families.

Not unlike Simeon and Anna at the temple on the day Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to present him to the Lord. The parents understand that their son's birth is a holy gift so they want to fulfill religious responsibilities. The Levitical code (12:6) required an offering of a lamb for a first born son. Thank goodness the law had a "poverty clause" for people like Mary and Joseph who could not afford a lamb. They brought turtledoves or pigeons, the religious equivalent of food stamps.

They must have been weary. They'd done some traveling those first few weeks of Jesus' life, by donkey or dusty roads, and it couldn't have been easy delivering their first baby far from home in a stable. Who knows if they'd gotten any sleep since.

But it was important to fulfill the requirements of the temple and so they make this trip to the big city, Jerusalem, to dedicate their sweet baby boy as holy to God.

And when old man Simeon and old woman Anna see them coming, they open their arms wide. These two prophets believe that God is going to send a Messiah and they happen to believe that God will do it in their lifetimes which they have spent trusting and waiting, fasting and praying. And now, with prompting from the Holy Spirit (mentioned three times before Simeon even gets to the temple), they recognize God when they see God carried in the door.



Rev. Heather Entrekin, Ph.d.

This is the one God promised who will shake the earth to its foundations. He is the one who will, in Flannery O'Connor's words, "[throw] everything off balance." He is the one who will bring abundant life, which is eternal life, not just to Israel but to all peoples. He is the one.

Did they know salvation would look so small, so poor, so vulnerable? Yet scripture tells us that this is often how God comes—a still small voice, a seed, a coin, a bit of yeast, a cup of water, a child, a wayward son, 12 confused disciples.

But we, who live in a day when bigger is better and the prefix "mega-" means success, find it hard to see what is small, weak and vulnerable as a holy gift of God, especially when it's the church. But what if emergent church leader Brian McLaren is right when he says that maybe God is about to do something really...small?

What if we considered the weakness of the church, the small church, a small denomination, as God's way of offering salvation to the world in the way God often does, through what seems insignificant to the principalities and powers of the world?

What if a church decreasing in numbers were God's holy invitation to let go of the old attractional model that measured success by the number of people in the pews and live God's good news with courage and imagination in community

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God Became Small (cont.)

as we never have before? Could this be a time for the church to stop examining itself and give itself away to a world groaning with God's beloved and broken sons and daughters in hunger, blindness, prison, poverty, war, despair in our own neighborhoods?

Could church, small and discounted as it increasingly seems to be in our pluralistic, post-modern, post-christendom world, lead the world to think globally but to act neighborly as Bill McKibben argues on behalf of the environment?

Could we find the eagerness of Simeon and Anna to take the vulnerable one and hold her, to open arms wide to the poor one and love him, to treasure what is weak and little and not worth much in the world's measures because this may be the hope of the world?

But sometimes it works a different way. A story that didn't make headlines is told of a group of middle school boys in Brooklyn. The story was told by the father of a learning-disabled boy named Shaya. The two of them were walking past a park where some boys Shaya knew were playing baseball. The son asked, "Do you think they will let me play?" His father knew that his son was not at all athletic and it was not likely, but he decided to ask. He approached one of the kids in the field who looked around at his teammates to see what they would say but nobody was paying attention so he shrugged and said, "We're losing by six runs and it's almost the ninth inning. I guess he can play and we'll try to put him up to bat in the ninth."

Shaya's dad was thrilled and so was the boy. They told him to put on a glove and sent him out to center field.

In the bottom of the eighth inning, Shaya's team scored three but was still behind by three. But in the bottom of the ninth, they scored again and had two on base with two outs when Shaya's turn came up. The team could actually win, so his dad was amazed when they gave Shaya the bat and threw away their chances.

He didn't even know how to hold the bat properly much less hit a ball, but the pitcher moved in a few steps and lobbed the ball softly. Shaya swung clumsily and missed. One of his teammates came up and held the bat with him. The pitcher came a few steps closer and made a soft pitch and this time Shaya and his teammate together hit a slow grounder straight to the pitcher. It would have been easy to

throw him out at first base, but the pitcher threw it long and high over the first baseman's head.

Everyone started yelling, "Shaya, run to first." Never in his life had he run to first base but he took off running for all he was worth. The right fielder who caught the ball easily could have thrown to second for the baseman to tag him out there but he threw way over his head and everybody yelled, "Run to second, run to second," and Shaya did.

When he got there, the opposing short stop ran to him, turned him in the direction of third base and shouted, "Run to third," and he did. The runners ahead of him were racing toward home. As Shaya rounded third toward home, the boys from both teams ran behind him screaming, "Shaya, run home." And he ran to home and stepped on the plate as all 18 boys lifted him on their shoulders and paraded him off the field like a hero.

Now that's a kind of Rocky story, where the weakling Sylvester Stallone, overcomes all, always appropriate here in the Philadelphia area where the limo driver points out the steps of the museum Rocky ran up and down in the movie. But there's another story here. It's the story of how the weak, the small, the vulnerable one transforms the world around him and causes God's good news to break through.

It's not a church program, not a strategic plan, but God's beloved sons and daughters in loving relationship with one another who become God's good news, the gospel.

When God became small, Simeon and Anna understood that the last shall be first and the weak shall be strong and none shall be afraid. They did all they could do as old people – they praised God, spoke the truth about him, opened their arms. And it was enough.

Like them, let us trust in God who becomes small.

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Events

The Young Clergy Women Project Conference 2011

August 8-11, 2011 at Duke Divinity School, Durham, North Carolina.

Rest and renewal, refreshment and re-connecting with God: our souls are made for times like these! Registration is open until June 30th, 2011. Visit <https://events.divinity.duke.edu>.

Empowering and Encouraging Women in Ministry

August 26-27, 2011 at Hilton Hotel, Cleveland East/Beachwood 3663 Park East Drive, Beachwood, OH 44122.

Women Together in Ministry of Greater Cleveland present this conference of learning and worship.

To learn more, please contact WTIM Facilitator, Pastor Chris Smith at (440) 585-7350 or email Pastor Smith at Shepastor1@hotmail.com.

ABWIM AT THE BIENNIAL IN PUERTO RICO

Pre-Biennial Event

The New Normal, a two-session event on Thursday afternoon, June 23 and Friday morning, June 24. ABWIM shares the sponsorship of this event with Ministers Council, Regional Ministries and Ministry Resource Development. Dr. Peggy Kendall and Dr. Gary Nelson will be the speakers for this opportunity to explore ministry in the midst of our rapidly changing culture. For more information, visit www.celebrate2011.com.

ABWIM breakfast on June 24 at the Puerto Rico Convention Center

Theme: I Have Called You by Name
Live in Hope! Rejoice in the Call!

Come and meet the new ABWIM National Director, The Reverend Patricia P. Hernandez.

Gather with friends, old and new, for worship and celebration.

Tickets are still available. Visit www.celebrate2011.com.

Celebrate Ministry booth

This time, ABWIM shares a booth with some other ministry partners including the Ministers Council, the Center for Clergy Development and Ministry and Interim Ministries.

Look for the banner saying, ¡Celebrad el Ministerio!
Celebrate Ministry!

Be sure to stop by!

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The ABCUSA Office of Women in Ministry seeks to educate, advocate, support and celebrate, on behalf of the women serving in American Baptist professional church leadership. Education furthers a better understanding of theological and biblical material supporting women in leadership roles in the church, as well as the many ways women have given leadership to the church throughout history. Advocacy seeks equal access for women to positions of church leadership in the search and call process. Support for women ministering in—and seeking—leadership positions encourages and empowers them. Celebrating the gifts of women in ministry encourages greater appreciation of those gifts within church life which, in turn, strengthens the witness of the church as a whole.

WOMENWORD

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