



American Baptist News Service

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ABWM Makes Mission Experiences Accessible in New Ways

VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 11/14/12)—Mission trips in the U.S. and abroad are inarguably an excellent opportunity to grow in faith and worldview. However, especially in light of current economic realities, not everyone is able to take the time from work and family responsibilities nor can they always afford the price of travel. American Baptist Women's Ministries has created the Virtual Mission Encounter as a ground-breaking mission opportunity that brings some of that mission trip experience to women within the context of their daily lives.

"In the early years of my marriage, my husband and I both had jobs with very limited vacation time, we had a toddler and a baby, and barely two nickels to rub together," remembers Rev. Sandra Hasenauer, associate executive director of AB Women's Ministries. "I had to pass up several opportunities to go on mission trips during those years because we just couldn't work it out. The Virtual Mission Encounter is AB Women's Ministries' answer to making elements of the mission trip experience more accessible to everyone."

At its most basic level, a virtual mission encounter only requires access to email and a phone. There are some activities that may require web access, or the ability to watch videos or listen to audio files, but these are optional. Every virtual mission encounter has an overall theme that is explored in more depth through the five days of the event. Each day, registrants receive an email with some suggested activities that they can do before they leave for work or school, on a lunch hour, or while their children are taking afternoon naps. Each evening of the virtual mission encounter features a conference call with a special guest, speaking on a facet of the weekly theme. Participants can engage as fully as they so choose and their schedules allow.

AB Women's Ministries is sponsoring four Virtual Mission Encounters in 2013:

- "Let Your Voice Be Heard: Advocacy and Faith," February 18-22
- "For I Was a Stranger and You Welcomed Me: Immigrants and Refugees," May 13-17
- "Garlands instead of Ashes: Domestic Violence," September 23-27
- "For I Was in Prison and You Visited Me: Prison and Aftercare Ministries," November 4-8

Executive Director Virginia Holmstrom noted that AB Women's Ministries had hosted two Virtual Mission Encounters in the last two years and participants had called for more events to follow. "The four topics for the 2013 Virtual Mission Encounters connect deeply with our

mission themes and emphases to empower women and girls that are oppressed. Being an advocate for those without voice, welcoming the stranger, healing those harmed from violence, and journeying with prisoners toward wholeness are reflective of Jesus' words in Matthew 25:35-36. These virtual mission encounters will encourage and empower women and girls to serve God."

For information about the virtual mission encounters, as it is available, and other events sponsored by American Baptist Women's Ministries, visit www.abwministries.org/events.

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.