

# CAMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES USA SERVING AS THE HANDS & FEET OF CHRISTONNECTIONSABC USA

ABCUSA CONNECTIONS is a ministry of ABCUSA. Email the editor at: [bridget.holmstrom@abc-usa.org](mailto:bridget.holmstrom@abc-usa.org) Summer 2014



## Palmer Seminary Interviews ABCUSA General Secretary A. Roy Medley

Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley was the guest speaker at Palmer Seminary's graduation this May. During the ceremony, the Seminary awarded Dr. Medley with an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree in recognition of his ministry as General Secretary of American Baptist Churches USA. We met with him during Lent for a conversation about ministry and the church.

**Palmer:** How did parish ministry prepare you for your ministry as General Secretary?

**Dr. Medley:** I began my parish ministry in south Trenton, NJ, in the inner city. At that time, it was a very poor, drug-infested community.

Ministry there taught me three things. First, I learned that the call of the church to exercise life for the sake of the poor is essential. When the church forsakes her concern for the poor, she risks her faithfulness to the Gospel.

Second, a pastoral approach that places people in the forefront is important no matter where you serve.

Third, I love preaching and presiding at the ordinances. I try to incorporate these aspects of pastoral ministry in my ministry as General Secretary. I spend a great deal of time visiting congregations and preaching across the country and all over the world. If I don't understand the things with which pastors and local congregations are grappling, I become ineffective. I get to see the global church and learn from that. I see faithful Christians trying to live out *continued on page 2*



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their faith. People in some of the poorest countries on earth have some of the most vibrant expressions of faith because they cultivate relationships with people, not with material things.

**Palmer:** Please say some more about that.

**Dr. Medley:** Our culture focuses on things, not people. A Russian theologian speaking at Princeton back in the 1970s said, "In Russia, the government preaches materialism. Here in the US, you LIVE it."

Materialism is an empty way of life that doesn't speak to the deeper needs of the heart. Our society's emphasis on individuality and measuring success through materialism is in contradistinction to the call to community. It shortchanges the Gospel and the healing power of community.

**Palmer:** How do you address the issue of materialism to congregations who are struggling financially?

**Dr. Medley:** A vital ministry should not depend on money. It is dangerous to think that success in ministry equals a big bank balance. For us to assume that money is a primary function of the church's ministry is a kind of heresy. Whether or not a local congregation thrives will depend on whether people sense within it the quality of life they yearn for. People will thrive in a community that is marked by the fruits of the Spirit. They want to know that the message of God's love is revealed in the quality of life we live outside the church.

**Palmer:** What changes have you seen in

the church since you began your public ministry?

**Dr. Medley:** There has been a shift away from the perception of the church as a trusted model and pillar of life in the community to suspicion and charges that the church is hypocritical and uncaring.

Church no longer occupies the center of the community or people's lives. We've failed to make connection with a lot of the people living in our communities, and we have to address that.

**Palmer:** What can the church in general and congregational leaders in particular do to counteract this trend?

**Dr. Medley:** Pastors have feelings of failure and guilt because the churches are not the way they used to be. We can't look at the '50s as the church's success model. Our success model has to be the early church's life as a community of believers in a society that doesn't share our values and faith.

There is no silver bullet to congregational renewal.

We are encouraging American Baptist churches to move beyond their walls and doors. The church is not a gated community! Churches can and are repurposing their buildings. This is commensurate with our concerns for the health of the community. Our role is to serve the whole community for the whole week. By doing this, we're showing the community we understand where they live and that we are not disconnected.

But the church is not just the landlord. The ministries must be an integral part of

the church's outreach to the community. The church has to identify with the program and offer the gifts of their people to enhance them. This is holistic ministry—concern for spirituality, the dynamics of the community, employment, and family life.

**Palmer:** Where do you see the church going in the next ten years?

**Dr. Medley:** We are in a period of great experimentation. It's time for the church to innovate and it will not be easy sailing, but it will be exciting. We need to relearn what it means for us to minister from the periphery rather than the privilege of the center of society.

From the beginning, the Protestant movement was a huge experiment. Protestantism developed at a time when the church was considered irrelevant and distant from its mission. We're perceived that way now. This is an opportunity to relive our DNA and move from a more settled to a more experimental ministry model.

The church may not be popular right now, but Jesus still is. We have to address the perception that people have that thinks the church has lost the core of how Jesus teaches us to live.

**Palmer:** What advice would you give to seminarians preparing for public ministry?

**Dr. Medley:** Live and go forward with a message of God's love and grace. Allow the Spirit to do its work reshaping lives, ours included. Be a messenger of God's love. Speak to the fact that we are loved and called to live in a community that follows Jesus. ■

*This article by Deborah McConomy-Wallace originally appeared in the Palmer Theological Seminary's In Ministry Magazine*



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# Did You Know: General Secretary Nomination & Application Process Now Open

On July 2, American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA) announced the opening of the nomination and application process for the next General Secretary of American Baptist Churches.

American Baptist leaders and friends are welcomed to encourage and nominate persons whom you believe would make good candidates for the position. Applications will be closed on October 31, 2014.

The position profile is available at <http://www.abc-usa.org/positionprofile>

## Process Update

So far, the Search Committee has met three times, identifying the priorities for the General Secretary's responsibilities and the necessary competencies to effectively deliver. Comments were requested from Regional Executive Ministers, along with a review of recent scholarship on the qualities of today's effective leaders. The final draft of the Position Profile was presented to the Board of General Ministries at the June meeting in Green Lake and was adopted unanimously with necessary editing to proceed.


## Nomination and Application Procedure

The position is now officially open for nominations and applications and will be closed on October 31, 2014.

To nominate a person for this position, please submit name and complete contact information to ABC President Don Ng at: [don.ng@abc-usa.org](mailto:don.ng@abc-usa.org), or Rev. Dr. Don Ng, PO Box 993, Sausalito, CA 94966.

After the initial application submissions, applicants whom the committee selects to become better familiar with will be invited to submit additional materials. Interviews are projected for early 2015, with a goal of having a candidate for approval by the end of 2015.

At the ABCUSA Board of General Ministries meeting in June 2013, Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley was re-elected to serve a two-year term as General Secretary for the denomination. This current term will end on December 31, 2015. Prior to the two-year term, Medley served in the position for three four-year terms, originally taking office on January 1, 2002. ■



"If there is any critical time in the history of American Baptists, it is today. Ministering in such changing times challenges American Baptists to be faithful to Christ when people in our society are seeking answers to life in other places," said ABCUSA President Don Ng.

In a letter to the National Leadership Council of ABC, Ng called on NLC members saying, "We need you to help us identify the person who God is preparing to lead and partner with us to continue to be transformed by the Holy Spirit in a fractured world that needs healing and peace."

Church Registration is open! Sign up now at [www.americanbaptists2015.com](http://www.americanbaptists2015.com)

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[http://www.abc-usa.org/  
transformed-by-the-spirit/](http://www.abc-usa.org/transformed-by-the-spirit/)

This webpage will be updated regularly in the coming months with new video interviews, resources and stories, telling what is going on throughout the denomination! Churches are taking hold and getting excited about how they can be *Transformed by the Spirit*. Are you ready to join them?

Groups related to *Transformed by the Spirit* are meeting across the country and are working on a number of challenges related to mission and ministry in today's world. Through meeting together in teams, pastors, staff members and lay people are having tough conversations about important issues. View an Adaptive Challenge Team Workbook online or contact your region for start-up or coaching assistance and consultation.



**Meet our Newest Associated  
Ministry Organizations:  
Chin Baptist Churches USA &  
Karen Baptist Churches USA**

On Friday afternoon, June 13, 2014, the Board of General Ministries voted to recognize the Chin Baptist Churches USA and Karen Baptist Churches USA as Associated Ministry Organizations of ABCUSA.

“One cannot overlook the fact that we are revitalizing and becoming a more vibrant and missional focused denomination, when out of the Burmese that have come to the United States, more than 50% of them consider themselves American Baptists,” said Rev. Dr. Donald Ng, president of ABCUSA.

“I am very excited to be President of ABCUSA at this time and to be able to welcome our sisters and brothers from Burma to become a part of our family,” said Ng.

After the vote to recognize Chin Baptist Churches USA and Karen Baptist Churches USA as Associated Ministry Organizations of ABCUSA, the board also voted on Friday, June 13, to approve two critical actions regarding Burma. One action is with regard to U.S. financial support for the Burmese military, and the other concerns a proposed law on religious conversion. Each of these issues has the potential for great harm to Baptist Christians and others in Burma.

Following these actions, the board members prayed for Burma, gathering around Rev. Dr. Saw Ler Htoo, general secretary of the Karen Baptist Churches USA, and Rev. Dr. C. Duh Kam, executive minister of Chin Baptist Churches USA.

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to your church.  
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# Inspired, Transformed... American Baptist Churches



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*...serving as the hands and feet of Christ while they  
celebrate ABC and inspire us to transform for the future*

