

# THE Christian Citizen

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Dr. Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins III

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**AMERICAN BAPTIST HOME MISSION SOCIETIES**



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## Investing in a Better Future

*Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime; therefore, we must be saved by hope. Nothing which is true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore, we must be saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore, we are saved by love. No virtuous act is quite as virtuous from the standpoint of our friend or foe as it is from our standpoint. Therefore, we must be saved by the final form of love, which is forgiveness.*

— Reinhold Niebuhr, “The Irony of American History” (1952)

**N**ow the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation’” (Genesis 12:1-2a). The faithfulness of Abram is remarkable. He leaves his country, his people, the home he has known all his life. For what? God does not tell him where he will go or how long he must travel. God simply tells Abram to go to the land God will show him. And Abram goes. Furthermore, God promises to make of Abram a great nation. Similarly, God later promises Isaac that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars of heaven. Knowing he will not live to see God’s promises fulfilled, Abram is faithful to the call of God, who is faithful.

While Abram’s faithfulness is remarkable, his condition is not. Our lives are bounded by the same limited horizon as Abram’s. Like Abram, we will not live to see God’s promises fulfilled. Like Abram, we’re offered only a glimpse of all that is to come, perhaps in the birth of a child or grandchild, perhaps in starting a new church or ministry. Like Abram, we will not taste the full fruit of the many ways in which God blesses our lives. And isn’t this the condition of the church as well? Through the worship and service of the church, we’re offered but a glimpse, a foretaste, an in-breaking of the kingdom of God in those times and places in which God’s will is done, “on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).

American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) traces its roots to 1824. Our discipleship, community and justice ministries are shaped and informed by our earliest efforts to preach the gospel, establish churches and minister to persons in special need. Although the people and programs have changed, we’ve remained faithful to the mission of those who have come before us—faithful to the call of the God we serve.

You have remained faithful, too. Faithful to give financially. Faithful to support prayerfully. Faithful to challenge and encourage us onward with your calls, letters and conversations as our paths cross throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. You stand in a long line of those who invested in a better future through their service and support, without which we could not do what we do today.

We’ve dedicated this issue of *The Christian Citizen* to telling the stories of those engaged in creative ministry that is impacting individuals and communities with the love of Christ. Each of these ministries has benefited in some way from the support of ABHMS, support that is made possible through your direct giving and through



your church’s participation in the annual America for Christ Offering.

In his poem “Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front,” Wendell Berry wrote, “Invest in the millennium. Plant sequoias. Say that your main crop is the forest that you did not plant, that you will not live to harvest” (“The Country of Marriage,” 1971). Take the long view. Invest in a better future for those who will come after you. Give to American Baptist Home Mission Societies that it may be so.

*Curtis Ramsey-Lucas serves ABHMS as managing director, Resource Development.*

## Planting Vegetables Yields Harvest of New Attitudes

**W**hether or not it's fair, sometimes churches get labeled by folks living in the community. Such was the case for First Baptist Church (FBC) of Stilwell, Kan. Once that tag has been hung on a church, it's hard to replace it with a better one. That's exactly what happened at FBC.

It started in winter 2010. A high school student, Brooke Harshaw, asked permission to take a small portion of the church's back yard and turn it into a vegetable garden as part of her senior project. Church leaders heartily agreed, but her school vetoed the idea. I loved the idea so much that I went ahead with it anyway. Since FBC sits on 6 acres of grass that require weekly mowing in summer, it seemed to make sense to take a few thousand square feet and convert it into a garden to help feed the hungry who come to the food pantry.

These efforts got a tremendous boost when FBC became a recipient of American Baptist Home Mission Societies' (ABHMS) cycle of the Virginia and Gordon Palmer Jr. Trust Grant Program of American Baptist Foundation

(ABF). The garden seemed to fit what the grant sought to aid: a project focused on discipleship and incarnational practice.

Instead of putting the garden far *behind* the property, church leaders put it in the *front* yard—as close to the main road as possible. People noticed. And attitudes began to change. Something about using the front yard to help less fortunate folks changed the hearts and perception of the community. Folks who didn't attend the church began to offer time and other donations to help with the garden. It also made FBC "famous," or at the very least, "memorable."

At a gas station approximately 135 miles from my home, an attendant asked from where I had come. When I mentioned Stilwell, he said, "I have a cousin who lives in Stilwell. What church do you serve?" When I said, "the one behind Stilwell Gas Station," he replied, "Isn't that the one with the vegetable garden in the front yard?" When I was in Wichita later that summer, another stranger struck up a conversation. When I mentioned Stilwell, he said, "I travel through there all the time on my sales route. Isn't that the church with the vegetable garden out front?"

The First Epistle of John admonishes:

*How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. (1 John 3:17-18).*

Sometimes that means a vegetable garden on the front lawn.

*The Rev. Dr. Dave Richardson serves as senior pastor of FBC of Stilwell, Kan. In four seasons, Harvest for the Hungry, a 2012 recipient of ABHMS' cycle of the Virginia and Gordon Palmer Jr. Trust Grant Program of ABF, has provided approximately 27,000 pounds of fresh produce to people in need.*



Photo: Dave Richardson

## Blessing or Curse?

# A Church's Response to a Community in Crisis

**T**he local police department in Oelwein, Iowa, feels the love radiating from Oelwein's First Baptist Church (FBC). For the past six years, FBC has offered the "Cookin' Up Cash for Cops" community event, which grew out of the church's participation in American Baptist Home Mission Societies' (ABHMS) Missional Church Learning Experience (MCLE).

While some police officers greet attendees and serve grilled burgers with accoutrements, others weave their way between tables, offering conversation and refilling coffee cups and lemonade glasses. Display tables feature photos and biographies of officers and department staff, along with law enforcement artifacts and history. Much-needed money is raised to purchase safety equipment because officers are asked to risk their lives daily in the line of duty. Equally important is that the community's



perception of the police force has moved from disparaging to appreciative. A bonus is camaraderie among officers themselves.

Since the publication of "Methland: The Death and Life of an American Small Town" (Nick Reding, Bloomsbury USA, 2009), which exposed Oelwein's methamphetamine epidemic, community embarrassment found a scapegoat in the police department, driving a wedge between members of both the community and the force.

Was the publication of "Methland" a blessing or curse? It was much more blessing than curse. Although it initially resulted in furor, bad public relations and much finger-pointing, the book also served as a wake-up call to the populace, opening eyes to the realities of drug manufacturing and use in Oelwein. It also sounded an

alert for other towns and cities. And, the book spurred missional-at-heart FBC to step out of its comfortable building into the beating heart of the community,

**Oelwein is a better place because of Christ and his missional church.**

discerning the community's greatest need and actively doing something to address it in partnership with folks from the broader community.

"That's where the preparatory training offered through American Baptist Home Mission Societies' MCLE became invaluable," says FBC's pastor, the Rev. Tim Schoepf. "The Rev. Glynis LaBarre, ABHMS' MCLE leader and passionate proponent, easily walked us through the step-by-step process of learning and discernment. Her heart for missional involvement was goodly-contagious, as her love for Christ spilled over into our own little Christian community of believers!"

How nice that FBC members did not restrict the excellent teaching to remain within the church's four walls. Oelwein is a better place because of Christ and his missional church. This positive impact is befitting of the town's mantra, "Positively Oelwein."

This year, FBC was presented with the first-ever Citizens Award of Service from Oelwein Police Department. In full uniform, the police chief presented a medal to the congregation at a Sunday service.

The missional effort was well worth it, as proven by the joy in officers' eyes as well as the friendly rapport between Oelwein police and citizenry.

*FBC Oelwein received a Clark Grant for Small Churches in Small Towns in 2011. Lani Gehlsen Schoepf, a retired micro-bio/sensory lab technician, currently serves as church secretary and ministry partner alongside her husband, the Rev. Tim Schoepf. Architect and coordinator of "Cookin' Up Cash for Cops" she serves as liaison between the police department and church.*

## Friends Calling: Resort-area Church Seeks to Meet Aging Residents' Needs

**T**hree years ago, Sugarloaf Area Christian Ministry, in partnership with local residents, established a Missional Church Learning Experience (MCLE) team. Our initial task was to engage in a community listening exercise to discover addressable needs within our community. What we heard surprised us!

The town of Carrabassett Valley in Western Maine is a Sugarloaf Mountain resort community, home to skiers, hikers, mountain bikers and outdoors enthusiasts who rarely think about growing old. Our listening exercise enlightened us to the community's aging population, which is experiencing loneliness and isolation, while missing out on free or public transportation outside the valley and access to nearby elder care services. Aging in place and living independently in our rural setting often requires outside services. The following questions arose: What services are available? Where are services located? Who should be called when seeking services?



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To help answer those questions, the MCLE team established a website, [cvalleynetwork.org](http://cvalleynetwork.org), to provide Web-based information of interest to seniors, caregivers and family members whose aging relatives live in our mountain community. The team also initiated a community outreach service known as "Good Morning Calls," through which daily telephone contact is made with homebound seniors to check on well-being and offer companionship.

Establishing an informational website for seniors was only one side of the coin. The flip side required both access to and instruction regarding Internet services. The Carrabassett Valley Public Library and Community Center set Wednesday mornings as time for valley seniors to meet. A library volunteer provides ongoing hands-on computer training for seniors, free of charge. Through the library, seniors surf the World Wide Web and maintain their own email accounts.

Since 2011, two volunteers have been making daily telephone calls to eight seniors living in the valley. The regular contacts have provided opportunities for other volunteers to become involved with assisting those seniors with seasonal chores, housekeeping, meal preparation, when needed, and transportation to medical appointments and shopping for necessities. Annually, the calls and interactions account for more than 400 hours of direct service and companionship. In the spring 2013 testimonial "One Couple's Journey," 85-year-old Louise, caregiver for her husband, reflects:

*"Volunteers came together with spiritual support, physical assistance of home maintenance and caring for our dog and cat when I stayed over with Bill during crisis occasions. [One of the Good Morning Callers] was the main person feeding and caring for my animals, picking up our medication, food and household needs, and is still the first human conversation of my every day."*

In 2013, the team started accepting used medical equipment in good condition to use again wherever needed, free of charge. What began as a small local exercise has progressed into the thriving "Carrabassett Valley Seniors Network," a volunteer partnership of the congregation, library and local residents with financial support from Carrabassett Valley. We love our neighbors, who are aging in place.

*Recipient of a Clark Grant for Small Churches in Small Towns, Sugarloaf Area Christian Ministry participated in American Baptist Home Mission Societies' 2011 MCLE. Gerry Baril, committee chair of Carrabassett Valley Seniors Network ([www.cvalleynetwork.org](http://www.cvalleynetwork.org)), is a retired law enforcement officer. He also serves as a volunteer for "Good Morning Calls."*

## Reaching the World for Christ: One Diaper at a Time

**N**eeds come in all sizes and shapes. The members of First Baptist Church (FBC) of Scottsbluff, Neb., discovered this fact when challenged to find a new way to reach out to the community in the love of Christ.

When the Rev. Glynis LaBarre, American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) transformation strategist, led the Missional Church Learning Experience (MCLE) in our region, she asked us to find an unmet need in our community and discern a way to meet that need in a loving way. Armed with statistical knowledge that our community led the state in unmarried young mothers per capita, and knowing that most assistance programs do not cover diapers, our leadership team decided that diapers would provide the open door to reaching not only unmarried moms, but also single fathers, grandparents and foster parents. Aware of the line between helping those in need and enabling a lifestyle, we prayerfully decided to supply packs of disposable diapers on a monthly basis.



**We selected the fourth Saturday of the month to make the diapers available because that day often finds parents with more month left than paycheck to purchase diapers.**

We selected the fourth Saturday monthly to make diapers available because that day often finds parents with more month left than paycheck to purchase diapers. The Wednesday before that is packing day, when we repackage the diapers into bags. On Saturday morning, the church's foyer is set up for distribution. We intentionally chose this location because we want folks who might never enter a church to know that ours is a place of welcome. Every Saturday, 50 to 100 individuals and families stop by for diapers. We also offer free baby and children's clothing as well as milk products when available from local grocery stores.

The community has responded better than expected. We have formed numerous partnerships with service organizations to connect those in need with other forms of assistance. We receive donations of both diapers and financial gifts from individuals and organizations. We have acquired a number of grants from such nonprofit organizations as ABHMS and United Way. We purchase a sizeable number of diapers monthly from Wal-Mart.

Most importantly, everything provided is without strings attached. We are free to share the gospel of Christ without restriction. To that end, we accept neither gift nor assistance from governmental programs. God has blessed this program with financial stability so that we can minister without interruption.

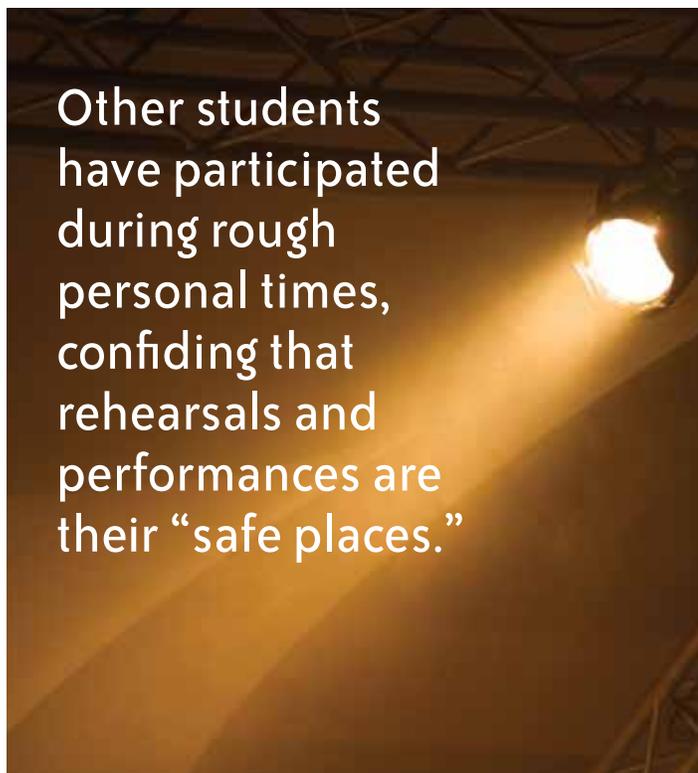
We respond to anyone who walks through our doors. Other than parent and child names, no identification is required. We are willing to risk being taken advantage of to ensure that those who need help receive it. We also respond to emergency need when an individual is referred from one of our many partnerships.

God has opened many doors of ministry to us. We respond in faith, trusting God to provide what we need. And God is faithful!

*The Rev. Gary Cole has served as pastor of FBC, Scottsbluff, Neb., since 2010. He is married with two wonderful daughters, three amazing grandchildren and one scruffy dog. The church received a Clark Grant for Small Churches in Small Towns as part of its MCLE experience in 2011.*

## Take 2 Theater Offers Hope to Small-Town Youth

**I**t began as a simple question: “How can we, the congregation of First Baptist Church [FBC], Fort Dodge, Iowa, impact the community in a way that is not ‘typical’ church?” When FBC’s Missional Church Learning Experience (MCLE) team talked to its neighbors and administered surveys in an attempt to ascertain unmet community needs, it learned that the town was dismayed by the recent suicides of several youth who had suffered from hopelessness and low self-esteem. The Rev. Jim Laupp, FBC’s senior pastor,



Other students have participated during rough personal times, confiding that rehearsals and performances are their “safe places.”

suggested that the fellowship hall’s stage and my experience in youth performing arts could be combined to create a theater program to help local youth gain confidence and relationship skills.

Although we scrambled to pull it together—going as far as recruiting more than half the actors—Take 2 Summer Youth Theater was born in summer 2011. Seven eighth- and ninth-grade students gave two performances of “You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown,” and 10 high

schoolers and early 20-somethings gave three performances of “Godspell.” It was something fun to do for one summer. Or so we thought.

Halfway through the rehearsal process, the middle school students asked, “What are we doing next year?” We knew then that we had stumbled onto something worthwhile. Thinking for the first time beyond that first summer, we discussed options, sought grants and carefully arrived at the decision to do it all again the following year!

In 2012, we opened the program to students in fifth and sixth grades, which expanded the number of performers significantly. Every child—theater experience or not—is welcome. In four years, novice performers have blossomed and found new passion, while experienced performers have stretched themselves to try new characters. Internship opportunities are available to students interested in learning the production aspect of the musical theater world, and students have stayed with the program long enough to become directors and music directors of the middle school show. Other students have participated during rough personal times, confiding that rehearsals and performances are their “safe places.” Friendships have grown.

Despite extending the stage and recruiting volunteers, it became clear that the program needed outside help to continue to grow. In 2013, Stage Door Productions was formed in Fort Dodge to specialize in small cast musicals for older performers. Stage Door has become the parent organization for Take 2, assuming financial management and production tasks. FBC remains actively involved in Take 2, providing rehearsal space, promotions and, of course, enthusiastic audience members. Since that first season in 2011, 100 students have taken stage. The possibilities for Take 2’s future are exciting!

*Mary Jo Laupp, a mother of four, is married to the Rev. Jim Laupp, pastor of FBC, Fort Dodge, Iowa, which participated in MCLE in 2012 and received a Clark Grant for Small Churches in Small Towns. She is also artistic director for Stage Door Productions, Fort Dodge.*

## Putting Men in Motion to Conquer Life's Challenges

**T**wenty-seven-year-old Kevin Wilson of Washington, D.C., is just one of many individuals touched by American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS). Two years in a row, ABHMS provided a Justice for Children Initiative Children in Poverty (CiP) grant to the National Center for Children and Families' Men-in-Motion (MIM) program, which has turned Wilson's life around.

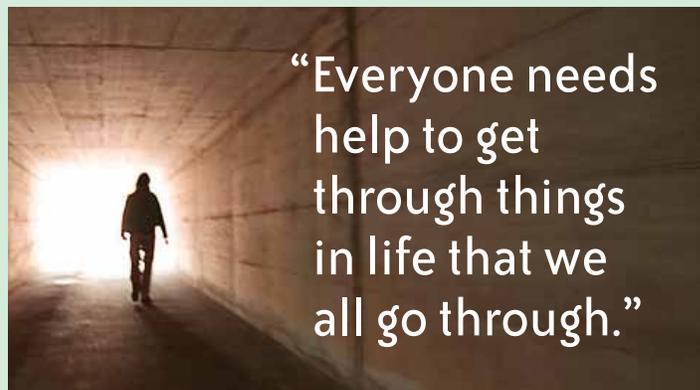
Approximately 75 men participate yearly in MIM, which opened in 2009 and grew out of a 1999 court-ordered counseling program for males 18 years and older who were returning to the community after incarceration. Most of the program's participants reside in D.C.'s wards 7 and 8, where they are exposed to high rates of poverty, crime, drug abuse, domestic violence, inadequate housing, substandard medical services, unemployment and hunger.

"The program has helped better me as a person, and it's an opportunity for me to give back to try to help other guys who feel like they're going through things—hardships, hard times," Wilson says. "Everyone needs help to get through things in life that we all go through."

Program coordinator Karl Andrews concurs. "The program gives men an opportunity to meet and air their grievances in a nonjudgmental setting. More significant is the peer-to-peer feedback that is given and received," Andrews says. "We reinforce each other when needed."

Unemployment can often be the most challenging issue. In fact, Wilson began attending MIM when he was laid off. The program "uplifted me at a point in time when I felt like I was at my lowest," Wilson says. "I just had lost a job. I called Karl, and he said, 'Just get here. Come do this with us. Don't sit around and mope and make things worse than they are.' He was always calling or sending me emails. He always said, 'Here's an opportunity for you to get out and do something positive.'"

The program's activities include resume writing, job search assistance, job interview techniques, educational/vocational training and referrals, financial literacy instruction, parent and family rights legal advice, fatherhood training, peer mentoring and a newly added Young Professionals offering that allows high school males to



engage in community-service opportunities and obtain volunteer experience. In addition, MIM participates with local churches in picnics, furniture giveaways and Martin Luther King Jr. Day activities.

Wilson was captivated by the opportunity to mentor, and often offers rides to meetings for those without transportation. "I was a mentor for certain kids, and it became a thing I wanted to do. I couldn't wait until days when we had meetings and seminars," he says. "Whenever I'm around younger people, I'm always there to give encouraging words or stop what I'm doing after work and play football or basketball with them."

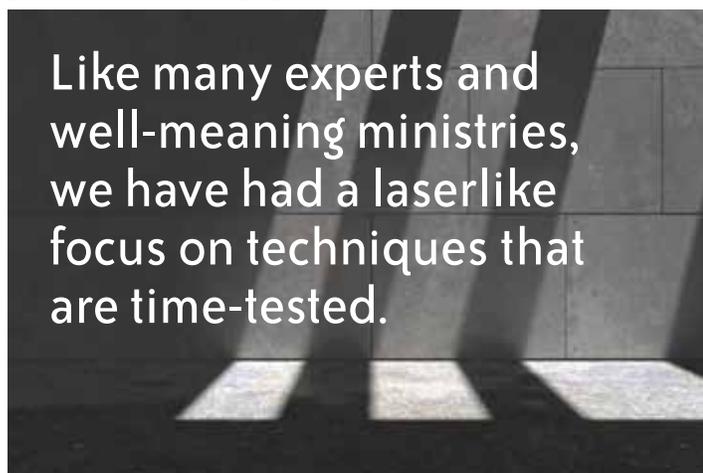
When Wilson isn't involved in a MIM-related activity, he is participating in a sheet metal apprenticeship program through the HVAC Union Local 100. When the five-year apprenticeship concludes, Wilson will emerge as a journeyman, certified to perform contracting work and free to start his own business.

In addition, he spends much time as the single father of 5-year-old Kevin Jr., sharing custody with the boy's mother. Wilson was named "Father of the Year" by MIM partners 100 Fathers Inc., an advocacy organization in D.C., and Concerned Black Men, a national advocacy organization headquartered in D.C. Reflecting on the award, which he calls "an honor and a privilege," Wilson says, "I think the world of my son. I just want to help him the best I can."

*Nadine Hasenecz is communications associate at ABHMS. MIM received CiP grants in 2013 and 2014.*

## Casting On the Other Side for Children of Incarcerated Parents

**R**etiring Attorney General Eric Holder has done a yeoman's job of illuminating the need for reforming the criminal justice system and addressing the critical issue of reincorporating ex-offenders. However, an intense spotlight must be focused upon helping incarcerated parents' children, who are both figuratively and literally at risk of following in their parents' footsteps. According to federal data from a major study released in 2008, slightly more than 1.7 million children under the age of 18 had a parent in state or federal prison. This number represents 2.3 percent of the U.S. population. The number of children



Like many experts and well-meaning ministries, we have had a laserlike focus on techniques that are time-tested.

with fathers in prison increased 77 percent from 1991. The number of children with mothers in prison increased 131 percent in the same period.

After years of active involvement in prison ministry, New Commandment Baptist Church, Bowie, Md., is modifying its efforts to address the needs of these young people. This change in tactics brings to mind the encounters of Jesus with his disciples after unproductive nights of fishing, as told in Luke 5 and John 21. The inference is that we don't always know where to fish. Our church's efforts for the past two decades have been primarily on reintegration. It seems we went after the low-hanging fruit. I believe our calling must be redirected and deepened.

John 21:6 notes that Jesus simply tells Peter, who is experienced on water, to cast his net on the other side.

Like many experts and well-meaning ministries, we have had a laserlike focus on techniques that are time-tested. But we neglected the greater need—the monumental task of retrieving, reclaiming and restoring children caught in adverse currents. Our church recently initiated a ministry specifically for these youth. It incorporates some of the features of Jobs Partnership Greater Washington, which serves the re-entry population of the District of Columbia and its Virginia and Maryland suburbs. Its curriculum emphasizes faith and life skills. In addition to instruction, participants are encouraged to take part in therapeutic dialogue and enjoy recreational activities.

The classwork deals with real issues, such as attitudes and conflict communication. Participants are led through an understanding of the nature of God and themselves.

In a painful confirmation of the need for such a program, a 16-year-old who registered for the class on Saturday and attended worship service the following day was hours later charged as an adult with armed robbery. He said he was “just with the guy who did it” and didn't know what was going to happen. He had no previous encounter with the law but bears the scars of missing his incarcerated father. With divorced parents, the anchoring influence in his life was his grandmother, who had recently died. She was a powerful, 94-year-old evangelist and a rock in his life.

We believe our church is being called to make a profound commitment on this critical issue of serving such children. We are being called to launch into the deep and recast our approach to this growing crisis. Pray for our program that we might pull in as many as the Lord sends our way.

*The Rev. Stephen E. Tucker, pastor of New Commandment Baptist Church, Bowie, Md., is active in urban, church and nonprofit ministries in and around our nation's capital. New Commandment received a 2014 American Baptist Home Mission Societies Justice for Children Initiative Children in Poverty grant for its work with children of incarcerated parents.*

## A Second Chance for Young First-time Offenders

**G**etting caught may be the best thing that could have happened to 15-year-old Lee\*, a client of the First-Time Juvenile Offender Program at Milwaukee (Wis.) Christian Center. In partnership with the court system, the program has been helping youth get back on track since 1995. Most, like Lee, face minor offenses, such as truancy or shoplifting, and the program allows them to clean their record in exchange for six months of community service, participation in a series of life-skills workshops and close monitoring by an adult “tracker.” Additional services—including tutoring, anger-management counseling, and alcohol and other drug abuse education—are provided on an as-needed basis.

Four months into the six-month program, Lee breezed through a home visit with his tracker, Alicia, highlighting his improved grades and involvement in basketball pre-training. Speaking to the point, he meets her eye with quiet confidence and trust. Alicia confirms his progress with a quick nod to his dad, packs her bag and says to Lee, “Talk next week?” He nods shyly and turns back to me—the center’s Resource Development director—ready to answer more difficult questions.

A high school sophomore, Lee speaks plainly about how his attitude last year led to destructive behavior.

“I was more immature and disrespectful toward everybody. Why? I had no motivation to do well in school or to do the right thing,” he says, laying no blame on others—neither peers nor parents—for his decision to break the law. “I wasn’t thinking clearly. I was just being stupid.”

Lee’s story rings true for many youth managing the difficult transition into high school. Many adults can relate.

“I was that stupid kid, too,” confesses Chris Davis, a tracker for the program. “The difference is I never got caught.

“Working with these youth is my way of giving back,” he adds. “I like helping people solve their problems.”

The trackers’ weekly check-in meetings leave a mark. Afforded time to reflect, grow and hone his decision-making skills, Lee realizes that careening out of control

is simply not an option. He will be held accountable, not only by the legal system, but also by the caring adults at home and in the program.

Pushed to take responsibility for their actions, to explore the roots of their behavior and to talk

frankly about their choices, 95 percent of youth do not reoffend while they are in the First-Time Juvenile Offender Program.

Notably, Lee spends less time tempted to reoffend and more time focused on his future.

“I want to be the first person in my family to attend a four-year college,” he says. “My favorite subject is World History. It’s fascinating comparing the past to the present to see how we’ve gotten where we are.

“I never miss a work-out or a day of training for basketball,” he says, beaming as he reflects on his progress. “And I’m starting to see this consistency and determination transfer to other parts of daily life.”

This fact is confirmed by his behavior in class. “My friends say they can’t believe I’ve gone from a 1.0 to a 3.0 GPA,” he says.

“So would you consider yourself a leader?” I ask. He pauses, considering how he might fit that bill for the first time. “I guess so,” he smiles. “My friends now compete against me.”

*Angie Mason is Resource Development director at Milwaukee (Wis.) Christian Center, a multi-faceted social service and neighborhood development agency that received American Baptist Home Mission Societies Justice for Children Initiative Children in Poverty grants in 2013 and 2014.*

*\* Name was changed.*

Ninety-five percent of youth do not reoffend while they are in the First-Time Juvenile Offender Program.

## Family Promise Aids Those Experiencing Homelessness

**F**amily Promise of Greater Rockingham County (FPGRC) in New Hampshire is an affiliate of the nationwide nonprofit Family Promise, which has served more than 600,000 people in 185 communities since 1988. The mission of Family Promise is to provide a safe environment in which families experiencing homelessness can regroup and stabilize.

At any given time, FPGRC serves up to four families who are experiencing a variety of life situations, such as loss of income, divorce, foreclosures, evictions or illness. Sixteen catchment areas refer clients to the program, which provides for the family's basic needs, including safety, shelter, self-esteem and self-actualization. A homelike atmosphere filled with comfort and support is offered each week by a different host church that provides the evening meal and sleeping accommodations, an effort coordinated solely by volunteers.

The use of volunteers ensures that money received by FPGRC is used where families need it most. For example, a 2014 grant from American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) allows FPGRC to stand in the gap for homeless families with children with disabilities who are not yet receiving financial support for medical expenses. When families eventually receive Social Security support, they reimburse the fund for others to use.

Ongoing education covers such subjects as proper nutrition for adults and children. Parents are taught coping and stress management skills to aid them for interaction with children. In addition to connecting families to medical, dental and mental health services within the community, FPGRC provides monetary assistance for over-the-counter and prescription medication, copays and office visits that insurance doesn't cover or that families cannot pay while waiting for health care insurance benefits to begin.

Self-esteem building exercises are conducted through structured activities, modeling and everyday occurrences that become teachable moments. Also provided is assistance with employment skills, such as resume writing and job searching. Computers are available for access to multiple employment sites. Transportation or gas cards are provided for traveling to and from work, interviews, ben-

efit meetings and other appointments. Proper office attire is offered for free through a network affiliate church.

FPGRC recently received a new financial literacy tool that focuses on establishing individualized goals, building a savings account, recognizing needs versus wants, and budgeting and prioritizing disposable income. The Day Center provides weekly case management to monitor families' progress, evaluate goals and assist with road-



**A homelike atmosphere filled with comfort and support is offered each week by a different host church.**

blocks. Check-ins occur daily. Graduate families receive after-care support: six months of weekly phone calls, monthly visits to homes and ongoing assistance with challenges. The recidivism rate is nearly nonexistent.

*Maggie Doughty, interim director of Family Promise of Greater Rockingham County, holds an associate's degree in education. Her professional concentration is in social work with adults and children identified with high-risk and forensic behaviors who are involved in the Department of Health and Human Services system. Family Promise of Greater Rockingham County received an ABHMS 2014 Justice for Children Initiative Children in Poverty grant.*

# Intergenerational Covenant Circles: Seeking to Bolster Intergenerational Ministry

**CIRCLE:** a formation with an unidentifiable start or end, top or bottom.

**COVENANT:** an agreement among those who commit to be in relationship with each other for a defined purpose.

**INTERGENERATIONAL:** in an Asian-American context, the interaction of people of different age cohorts and of different immigration waves to the United States.

**T**he combination of these three concepts—circle, covenant and intergenerational—was the foundation of a project that the Alliance of Asian American Baptist Churches began in 2013 upon receiving a grant from the American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) cycle of the Virginia and Gordon Palmer Jr. Trust Grant Program of American Baptist Foundation (ABF). The announcement from ABHMS that the grant cycle's theme was "Discipleship: Engaging the 18- to 29-year Old Community" arrived as the alliance was experiencing a high level of energy around preparing the next generation of leaders, while discussing common challenges in local churches among first-, second- and third-generation immigrants. The grant process provided an opportunity to design Intergenerational Covenant Circles, a project pairing basic intercultural communication tools with the Ministers Council Together-in-Ministry covenant-groups model and the principles of exploration and out-of-the-box thinking of American Baptist Churches USA's "Transformed by the Spirit" emphasis.

We hoped to do the following:

- overcome first-, second- and third-generation sense of cultural and theological isolation;
- provide a safe climate and supportive network of peers from different generations;
- create opportunities for creative thinking about the richness and ministry potential of generational diversity;
- encourage and equip young adults to be active in both lay and vocational ministry leadership; and
- develop and refine inclusive ministry models and resources.

At the alliance's August 2014 convocation in Glendale, Calif., three teams that completed the first phase of the project reported on what they learned. Located in Chicago, Seattle and Richmond, Calif., the three teams totaled 18 participants who represented nine churches.

The learning included:

- It takes intentionality to connect with others, including those from your own church. When people do get together, communication guidelines are necessary for all to be heard.
- Appreciation across generations does not happen without authentic interaction across generations—a real effort to get to know each other.
- Caring about people (in this case, youth) does not always translate to caring about ministry for them. Ministry must be relevant to the generation that you hope will remain in church.

Each team also presented a ministry model or suggestion for other churches interested in addressing intergenerational concerns. With remaining grant funds, the alliance offered modest grants to any church to try one of the models presented by the teams or another approach to intergenerational concerns and/or young adult discipleship. The Chicago and Richmond teams continue the work they have begun and are continuing efforts to transform their churches.

The Intergenerational Covenant Circles project is only the beginning of an intentional effort to reverse the trend of younger generations leaving the immigrant church. While its emphasis has been on Asian-American churches, we hope that, as conversations continue, ministry models are tested and churches begin to see an impact on their intergenerational relationships and ministries, other churches will be able to glean from this project edification for their own local church and regional context.

*The Rev. Marie Onwubuariri, administrator of the Intergenerational Covenant Circles project and immediate past president of the alliance, currently serves as executive minister of American Baptist Churches of Wisconsin. The alliance was a 2013 recipient of ABHMS' cycle of the Virginia and Gordon Palmer Jr. Trust Grant Program of ABF.*

## Program Proves Transformative for Teen with Asperger's

**J**enny\* wanted a house full of children. When Tim,\*—her only child—was born, she was delighted. She was brave when he was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, an autism spectrum disorder that made it difficult for Tim to be around other people and to understand what they wanted from him. She is a good mom, but serving as his social worker, therapist, teacher, friend and advocate is tiring.

School was torture for Tim. After a grueling day at school, Tim was often combative or tearful when he returned home. On particularly difficult days, he struck out wildly, hitting Jenny or anyone else within reach. When he was in eighth grade, Jenny gave Tim an electronic game played with hand-held "controllers." While playing games by himself, he was less frustrated but soon lost touch with all other human contact. When Jenny tried to get him to behave, he lashed out so violently that Jenny was afraid for her own safety.

Jenny consulted every resource imaginable, from social workers to a volunteer from Big Brother/Big Sisters. Tim's "big brother"—a remarkably patient man named Leo\*—tried to wean Tim away from the controllers. Then Leo took Tim to The Game Loft, an after-school program serving youth aged 6-18. Its mission is to promote positive youth development through non-electronic games and community involvement.

Tim's time at The Game Loft produced both success and failure. After one particularly difficult incident, Jenny decided that Tim needed to be hospitalized. Her worst fear was that he would never return home. The Game

Loft helped by creating a program called Circle of Care, in which a group of adults and one teen helped Tim to make decisions. The meetings were quiet and gentle with a plate of food to share and plenty of listening to "President Tim." Gradually, the frightened, isolated, violent Tim melted into a caring, funny, cheerful young man.

Tim became a spokesman for Circles of Care, making speeches about what the program had done for him. After almost two years, Tim is now the teen mentor for another youth in the Circle of Care program. Asperger's Syndrome has no cure. Although sometimes frustrated, Tim is never violent and is learning how to advocate for his own needs. He recently said to Jenny, "I just threw the controllers away."

Thanks be to God! Now Tim is free.

*Patricia and Ray Estabrook are founding co-directors of The Game Loft. Since 1998, The Game Loft has been a place where all people are valued regardless of age and where youth become resources with meaningful roles and responsibility for community change. Juvenile offenders as well as youth who are disabled, bullied, ostracized or feel voiceless are heard and respected. Circles of Care, a program of The Game Loft, was a 2013 and 2014 recipient of American Baptist Home Mission Societies Justice for Children Initiative Children in Poverty grants. For more information, go to [www.thegameloft.org](http://www.thegameloft.org) and read the blog "Stories from the Game Preserve" or write to The Game Loft, 78A Main St., Belfast, ME 04915.*

*\* Names were changed.*



## ‘Kindling Faith’ Connects Young Adults to Local Churches

**T**ime flies rocket-fast! It seems like only yesterday, I was leaving the comforts and confines of my small Kansas hometown to attend college. My new world brimmed with both freedom and self-responsibility: new friends, classes, homework, multiple jobs and church (sometimes).

In my weekly conversations with home, I assured my folks that my faith remained strong, even as I found myself sleeping through an increasing number of Sunday mornings. I felt deeply connected with God and hungry to move into the adult world of faith. I simply couldn’t seem to connect with a church. After a flood, I joined with church volunteers to fill sandbags. We bonded quickly working side by side, and soon I found myself sharing a pew with some of them on Sundays. Bible practice with strangers had led me to Bible study with friends and a new church home.

A much older me now sees similar church connection challenges in the lives of students attending Ottawa University, a 149-year-old institution in Northeast Kansas that was founded through the efforts of Baptist missionaries and the Ottawa Tribe. Rather than count on a natural disaster to bring people together, we applied for a grant from the Virginia and Gordon Palmer Jr. Trust to fund an initiative to foster faith-in-action teaming.

The program, “Kindling Faith through a Culture of Servant Leadership,” extended beyond students enrolled at our installations and into partner communities-at-large. It connected 18- to 29-year-olds in servant leadership and group participation in actions of faith. The goal was to broker opportunities to convert strangers into new friends and connect them with local church families. Assessment and individualized life-plans helped increase participant awareness of faith preferences and determine their best church fit.

Opportunities included:

- Multigenerational and virtual teaming: Peer mentors and adult coaches collaborated with participants on event planning and execution as well as project design and delivery that targeted children, the frail, the

elderly, those providing home support to loved ones, emergencies and local service agencies.

- Weekly volunteer trainings, activities and incidental-service opportunities: Trainings were offered in servant leadership, American Sign Language, basic first aid, women’s self-defense, tai chi, automobile triage, herbs of the Bible and a variety of arts and crafts.
- Convocations and seminars featuring dynamic speakers: Video-streamed and at no cost to the public, these events focused on making a difference and the power of active, tangible faith.

Online connections and social justice-themed programming was brokered through Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, as well as a monitored chat room on the university’s website.

Of the 167 participants, 81 percent had established a regular connection (at least three consecutive months) with a home church by program end, despite the im-



pacts of holidays, weather and school-term expectations for those enrolled in college. Just as I had discovered filling sandbags, tangible engagement with people of faith outside church walls is one of the most effective connections. Active faith builds a bridge whereby young adults become a committed part of a new church family.

*Chaplain John Holz Hüter, ClinPsy.D., D.Div., is an educator and long-time advocate for the needs of disadvantaged youth and proponent of restorative-justice sentencing approaches to juvenile perpetrators of crime. He currently serves as Ottawa University’s chaplain. “Kindling Faith through a Culture of Servant Leadership” was a 2012 recipient of American Baptist Home Mission Societies’ cycle of the Virginia and Gordon Palmer Jr. Trust Grant Program of American Baptist Foundation.*

## Church's MCLE Project Helps Students Balance College Life



**T**he American College Health Association annually publishes “The National College Health Assessment,”<sup>1</sup> which reports results of survey research regarding students’ health habits, behaviors and perceptions. University Baptist Church (UBC) used this data to learn more about serving students at nearby Michigan State University. According to the assessment, more than 55 percent of the university’s undergraduates felt hopeless and/or depressed within two weeks of completing the survey. In light of this information and in response to the Holy Spirit’s use of American Baptist Home Mission Societies’ Missional Church Learning Experience (MCLE), UBC developed “Balancing Your College Life” (BYCL) an outreach program for students.

BYCL uses the gospel as a strategy to combat the experience of hopelessness and depression revealed in the survey. It is a regular monthly gathering of students

“Balancing Your College Life” is a regular gathering of students in the Greater Lansing area that offers food, encouragement and, most importantly, worship.

in the Greater Lansing area that offers food, encouragement and, most importantly, worship. During each session, students gather to enjoy fellowship in smaller groups, followed by prayer and good food. Conversations commence and often move from light topics, such as weather and sports, to deeper discussions around challenges and triumphs.

Two students initially provided worship music for the gatherings. That number has grown to six. After songs and Scripture readings, students listen to speakers who share testimonies and insights.

Responses to BYCL have been encouraging.

“Wow, this was right on time,” says one student. “I’ve been dealing with difficulties back home.”

Notes one of the musicians: “At this time of year, the semester gets tough. I was really encouraged by the speaker. Thank you.”

Kellen E. Brandon<sup>2</sup>, author of “Reflections of Drew” (Brandon Publishing, 2009) and “One” (Brandon Publishing, 2013), offered the following reflection after serving as a BYCL guest speaker:

*This is an amazing initiative for young people. God’s kingdom is about the future and building a kingdom that will serve my children’s children. Groups such as BYCL are a great start. Investing in our young people to restore hope in what seems to be much hopelessness is ultimate service. The experience of students taking control of their faith and sharing with others is amazing. I learned a ton and was inspired by my visit.*

A basic principle of MCLE is that faith communities must first listen in their context before deciding what ministries to pursue. Exploring the truths identified by “The National College Health Assessment” about the college students in our area provided that listening opportunity. The testimonials we’ve received, including the few shared in this article, reinforce the wisdom of that listening step and confirm that BYCL is providing effective Christ-centered interventions to the students at Michigan State University.

*Alex Pickens III is the Christ-following husband of Naudia and father of Catherine and Christian. As pastor of UBC, he tends a vision to see that all peoples of the world know, worship and grow as disciples of Jesus Christ. UBC, East Lansing, Mich., received an MCLE Small Urban Church grant in 2012.*

<sup>1</sup> [www.acha-ncha.org/reports\\_ACHA-NCHAIL.html](http://www.acha-ncha.org/reports_ACHA-NCHAIL.html)

<sup>2</sup> [www.MoreGodLessMe.org](http://www.MoreGodLessMe.org)

## JOYA Scholars: Engaging the Neighborhood through Education

**T**he Garnet neighborhood in the city of Fullerton, Calif., is comprised of five small blocks, where more than 1,200 low-income children from working-class, immigrant families make their home. This community—in the middle of one of the wealthiest counties in the country—is marked by one startling statistic: No college graduate has emerged from Garnet in more than a decade.

Until now.

JOYA Scholars is a nonprofit organization birthed out of Epic Church, Fullerton, to inspire and prepare students from Garnet toward higher education. Last spring, Valeria Sosa, a JOYA scholar, became Garnet's first college graduate, completing a bachelor's degree in political science from Chapman University, Orange, Calif., in only three years. She is now applying to law school.

For the first time in U.S. history, Latinos now make up the largest group of children living in poverty while 77 percent of low-income youth do not attend college and only 13 percent complete a four-year degree. Alternatives for working-class children can be limiting and even bleak. Experience tells us that, without a plan for higher education, kids from Garnet are more susceptible to dropping out of high school, affiliating with gang life, experiencing teen pregnancy and qualifying for only low-paying work.

A popular misconception is that working-class students who succeed in college do so as a result of sheer individual determination and hard work. According to Dr. Roberta Espinoza, a professor of sociology at Pitzer College, Claremont, Calif., and author of "Pivotal Moments: How Educators Can Put All Students on the Path to College" (Harvard Education Press, 2011), nothing can be further from the truth:

*Low-income minority students who overcome obstacles to achieve academic success usually encounter at least one college-educated adult in their schooling who takes the initiative to reach out to them and provide concrete academic guidance. When a relationship between an*

*educator and a student becomes genuinely supportive, it can be pivotal in transforming the student's educational trajectory.*

By supporting students through one-on-one mentoring, academic tutoring, educational workshops, college visits, SAT prep and cultural experiences, JOYA Scholars comes alongside high school students to fill a relational and knowledge gap for students and families for whom the school system can be a confusing and intimidating process to navigate. When JOYA Scholars began only five years ago, not a single high school student from Garnet—aside from Valeria—was eligible for a four-year university. Today, JOYA Scholars students are enrolled at the University of California (UC) Riverside, UC Irvine and California State University Fullerton, majoring in biology, electrical engineering and mechanical engineering, respectively. Additional students from the program attend local colleges and plan to transfer to four-year universities.

According to the gospels, Jesus inaugurates his mission by proclaiming "good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18). JOYA Scholars embodies a kingdom perspective as we work with students from Garnet by coming alongside and encouraging their capacity to dream, learn and contribute. By empowering students and their families to invest in a brighter future through education, breaking the cycle of poverty for a community becomes possible.

*Kevin Doi, co-founder of JOYA Scholars, is lead pastor at Epic Church, Fullerton, and an adjunct professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, Calif. JOYA Scholars was a 2013 and 2014 recipient of American Baptist Home Mission Societies Justice for Children Initiative Children in Poverty grants.*

### Sources:

"Hispanic kids are the largest group of children living in poverty," Carol Morello and Tom Mellnik, (*The Washington Post*, September 28, 2011)

New UCLA, UC research highlights experiences of youth in poverty," *Pathways to Postsecondary Success of Gender Studies*, Press release April 30, 2010.

## Proyecto Esperanza

# esperanza

¡Voy a hacer algo nuevo!  
Ya está sucediendo, ¿no se dan cuenta?  
Estoy abriendo un camino en el desierto,  
y ríos en lugares desolados.  
ISAÍAS 43:19 (NVI)

*“¿Y si intentamos algo nuevo? ¿Y si hacemos algo diferente sobre discipulado, desarrollo de liderazgo y educación misional? ¿Y si creamos un equipo bicultural para que estudien estos temas y trabajen juntos? ¿Y si esto es un error?”*

**É**stas fueron algunas de las preguntas que nos hicimos cuando se decidió llevar la colaboración entre ambas regiones al siguiente nivel. Dios estaba llamando a compañeros de misión a moverse a un territorio nuevo e inexplorado. Por lo tanto, se solicitó a cinco jóvenes adultos de cada región que se comprometieran a participar durante un año de esta jornada. El plan era involucrar a jóvenes adultos en discipulado, desarrollo de liderazgo y educación misional utilizando tecnología, el internet y experiencias presenciales. Cada miembro del equipo se comprometió a participar durante un año en cada reunión (presencial o “en línea”), completar las tareas para crecimiento personal, ser participantes activos en todas las reuniones y ayudar a desarrollar un proyecto final. La Beca Palmer hizo este sueño realidad y así nació el “Proyecto Esperanza”.

Al recibir la Beca Palmer, el grupo llevó a cabo su primera reunión en Virginia Occidental. Heriberto Del Valle-Cásarez, miembro del equipo de Puerto Rico indica: “En nuestra primera reunión presencial nos divertimos interactuando y compartiendo. Pudimos derribar barreras culturales y de idiomas, lo que pudo haber creado momentos tensos”. Kim Lupton, miembro del equipo de Virginia Occidental dice: “En nuestra primera reunión me pregunté, ¿cómo 10 personas tan diferentes pueden unirse y sobrepasar las culturas, los idiomas y la distancia? Sin

embargo, en nuestra segunda reunión presencial, estuvo claro que Dios tenía en mente algo especial”.

No fue fácil para el grupo, pero se comprometieron con esta nueva idea y estuvieron dispuestos a viajar por este camino desconocido. Retos personales surgieron para cada uno de los miembros del equipo, pero ellos sobrepasaron nuestras expectativas. También tuvimos apoyo de muchas personas, incluyendo el Rvdo. Salvador Orellana, Estratega de Ministerios Hispanos para la Sociedades Misioneras Nacionales Bautistas Americanas, Dr. Stan Slade, Consultor Global en Educación Teológica de la Sociedad de Misión Foránea Bautista Americana, Rvda. Miriam Rodríguez de Gutierrez, profesora de historia y principios bautistas en el Seminario Evangélico de Puerto Rico y Juan Aragón, Estratega Hispano para la Convención Bautista de Virginia Occidental (WVBC).

El producto final fue un recurso de discipulado para alcanzar a jóvenes adultos, enfocándose en el llamado de Dios para la misión y el servicio, localmente y más allá. El recurso se desarrolló y escribió en pares, una persona de cada región. El proyecto de redacción fue un reto. Sin embargo, ¡el resultado fue sorprendente! Todos los miembros del equipo están de acuerdo en que el Proyecto Esperanza ha sido una bendición en sus vidas. En nuestra última reunión en Puerto Rico, trabajamos y compartimos con mucho entusiasmo. Como dijo Lupton: “Somos una familia dispersa a través de muchas millas de tierra y mar”.

*La Rvda. Laura Ayala, fue Ministra Ejecutiva Asociada de las Iglesias Bautistas de Puerto Rico y actualmente es Pastora General de la Primera Iglesia Bautista de Río Piedras. Lisa Simmons, sirve como Asociada en el área de apoyo misionero con la WVBC. El Proyecto Esperanza recibió la beca del fondo especial, legado de Virginia y Gordon Palmer, administrado por la Fundación Bautista Americana, en el ciclo 2012 de ABHMS. El equipo espera tener este recurso listo para ser usado por otras regiones y grupos en la Cumbre de Misión en Kansas. Estará disponible en inglés y español. Para más información contacte a Lisa Simmons (lsimmons@wvbc.org) o a Laura Ayala (pastora@pibrp.org).*

# Project Hope hope

*“What if we try something new? What if we go about discipleship, leadership development and mission education in a whole new way? What if we create a bicultural team to study and work together? What if this is a big mistake?”*

**T**hese were among the thoughts when it was decided that regional collaboration would be taken to the next level. God was calling the partners to move into new, uncharted territory. Five young adults from each region were selected for a one-year covenant involving discipleship, leadership development and mission education, using Internet technology and face-to-face experiences. Each young adult



committed to attend every meeting (in person or online), complete personal growth assignments, be an active participant at all meet-

ings and help develop a final project. A grant from the Virginia and Gordon Palmer Jr. Trust made this dream a reality, and Project Hope was born.

After receiving the grant, the group held its first meeting in West Virginia.

“In our first face-to-face meeting, we had a fun time interacting and sharing,” says Heriberto Del Valle-Casarez, a team member from Puerto Rico. “We were able to break down cultural and language barriers which could have made for a tense time.”

Team member Kim Lupton of West Virginia concurs. “Upon our first meeting, I wondered how 10 so different

I am about to do a new thing;  
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness  
and rivers in the desert.

ISAIAH 43:19

people could come together and overcome languages, cultures and distance,” she says. “However, after our second in-person meeting, it was clear that God had something special in mind.”

It was not easy for the group. They committed to this new idea and were willing to travel an unknown path. Personal challenges emerged for all, but team members exceeded expectations. Support was provided by many people, including the Rev. Salvador Orellana, American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) Latino Ministries strategist; Dr. Stan Slade, global consultant in Theological Education for American Baptist International Ministries; the Rev. Miriam Rodríguez-Gutierrez, professor of Baptist History and Principles at Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico; and Juan Aragón, Hispanic strategist for West Virginia Baptist Convention.

The final product was a discipleship resource targeting a young adult audience and focusing on God’s call to mission and service at home and beyond. The resource was developed and written in pairs comprised of one person from each region. The writing project was challenging. However, the outcome has been amazing! And all team members agree that Project Hope has been a blessing in their lives. At our last meeting in Puerto Rico, we avidly talked and worked.

As Lupton put it: “We are a family that is spread across many miles of land and ocean.”

*The Rev. Laura Ayala, former associate executive minister, Baptist Churches of Puerto Rico, serves as senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Rio Piedras. Lisa Simmons serves as associate in Mission Support for West Virginia Baptist Convention. Project Hope was a 2012 recipient of ABHMS’ cycle of the Virginia and Gordon Palmer Jr. Trust Grant Program of American Baptist Foundation. The team plans to have the resource ready for other regions and groups to use by the 2015 Mission Summit in Kansas City. It will be available in English and Spanish. For more information, contact Lisa Simmons at [lsimmons@wvbc.org](mailto:lsimmons@wvbc.org) or Laura Ayala at [pastora@pibrp.org](mailto:pastora@pibrp.org).*

## Church Program Provides Model for Ministry to Young Men

**I**t's not easy convincing men under the age of 30 to relinquish several hours on a Saturday morning for learning. Yet, the Rev. Dr. Jesse M. Brown, pastor of First Baptist Church (FBC) of Chicago, had at least 20 young men in mind the Sunday he announced the "Boys 2 Men" program.

"What we started was a model for ministry to young men 18- to 29-years-old," says Brown, pastor of the 181-year-old faith community that has pioneered Chicago Baptist missionary and educational work. "It gave them different ways of looking at themselves and others, and showed they could work together in productive ways without the habits and attitudes that keep them apart."

Incentives for participation included bus passes and spending money for those who completed assignments and attended Sunday school, worship and Saturday



morning sessions. Participants were called on to motivate each other to attend. Credit was given to those who registered for the program but had to work Saturday mornings—as long as they completed assignments. In addition to Brown, instructors included a retired science teacher, a working journalist, a tax consultant and a retired environmental chemist.

Five young men showed up for the first Saturday two-hour session. Linda Carter, a retired teacher, introduced warm-up exercises to help everyone get to know each other better. Participants wrote their goals for the future, and instructors built on their responses. Violence, unemployment and failures at school and home

plagued these young men and affected their behavior. Participants—eventually including at least five persons with college backgrounds and one part-time worker who was hoping to advance—have grown up navigating gang and drug activities near their homes and schools.

Instructor Sammiesteen Haynes-Green became involved because she grew up in surroundings similar to those of the young men. She understands that significant community support is necessary to help individuals overcome struggles.

"I was able to succeed in spite of my environment, and thought I could share my experiences," Haynes-Green says.

During sessions, participants took turns reading Scripture, praying and introducing occasional speakers. Reading, writing, mathematics and science were taught to address weaknesses in high school studies and to ready participants for college and job interviews. All read Romal J. Tune's "God's Graffiti: Inspiring Stories for Teens" (Judson Press, 2013).

Boys 2 Men saw various levels of participation and inconsistencies in attendance. Joshua Saunders, a third-year college student, suggested offering more meetings around subjects that are important to his generation as well as additional male instructors.

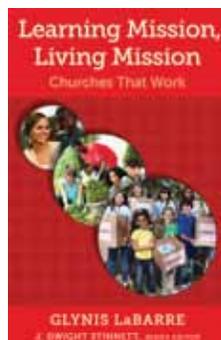
While Brown says that he found Boys 2 Men an "uplifting experience," he has expressed the wish that he had involved more men of the church to create a different dynamic. As Brown says, Boys 2 Men showed what worked well and what didn't work well in a ministry to young men.

*Sheila Solomon, a Boys 2 Men instructor, is an award-winning journalist and currently works as an editor/producer/reporter and internship coordinator at Rivet News Radio in Chicago. She helps to mentor ministerial interns and has served as Ghana mission partnership coordinator at FBC of Chicago. The Boys 2 Men program of FBC of Chicago was a 2012-2013 recipient of American Baptist Home Mission Societies' cycle of the Virginia and Gordon Palmer Jr. Trust Grant Program of American Baptist Foundation.*

**W**hile on a plane trip recently, I found myself reading the very familiar Lord’s Prayer when something new caught my attention. For the first time I noticed the connection between the line “Hallowed be your name” and the next line, “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” I found myself asking, is there a connection between these two ideas? Will God’s peaceable reign come upon the earth when God’s name is held in high esteem? And what would it take to cause God to be revered?

Suddenly, I had a thought and began flipping through my Bible to confirm it. I found that every time Jesus did something good—cured a leper, restored sight, fed the people—the very next statement in the Bible is, “And the people praised God!” I had never noticed that before. It implies that seeing acts of remarkable good-

ness caused the people to honor God. Then a thought occurred to me: is that what the missional movement is all about—allowing people to see Christians doing good and so begin to praise God? And if the people begin to praise God, will it increase God’s reign of peace upon the earth? I’ll let you decide.



*Excerpted from The Rev. Glynis LaBarre’s “Learning Mission, Living Mission: Churches That Work” (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2012), 82. From the “Living Church” series. To order, call 800-4-JUDSON or visit [judsonpress.com](http://judsonpress.com).*

## The Partnership Principle

Trinette V. McCray

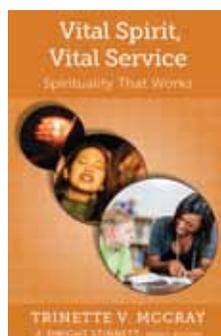
**A**merican Baptists have lived with the historic conviction that we can do more together than we can do apart. I recently heard the impressive saying: “I can’t. You can’t. But we can.”

This partner principle was at play when Jesus told his disciples to get back into their fishing boats, push out into the deep and cast their nets. “It was no sooner said than done—a huge haul of fish, straining the nets past capacity. They waded to their partners in the other boat to come help them. They filled both boats, nearly swamping them with the catch” (Luke 5:6-7, MSG). Partnership is a biblical principle. When our own capacity is tested and we find that we need help, getting help from other like-purposed people, organizations, churches or institutions is wisdom.

So, what makes for true partnership? I recognize a true partner in this way: a person or group that unites with another in a shared exploration, development and advancement of a goal and who will commit to support or share the work in the endeavor or initiative.

With such partners, we are able to share our mission and work with others in ways that meet the interest,

resources, purposes and calling of those involved. Partners make it possible for us to do more together than we are able to do apart. This makes for greater inclusion as well. The disciples were able to increase their capacity by being inclusive. They waded for partners in the other boat. Those partners brought their resource, their boat. Not only is this good partnership, but it is also good stewardship.



*Adapted from The Rev. Dr. Trinette V. McCray’s “Vital Spirit, Vital Service: Spirituality That Works” (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2014), 140-41. From the “Living Church” series. To order, call 800-4-JUDSON or visit [judsonpress.com](http://judsonpress.com).*

# ABHMS Offers Grants, Financial Aid

*Justice for Children Initiative Children in Poverty Grants:* In response to unanimous approval of the 2006 Resolution on Children in Poverty (4701.48:11/06), American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) awards grants to qualified recipients who answer the call to care for children and families struggling to overcome poverty. Grant applications are due each April. For more information, visit [www.abhms.org](http://www.abhms.org) > Ministries & Programs > Children in Poverty, or contact the Rev. Lisa Harris-Lee at 1-800-ABC-3USA, x2158.

*Missional Church Learning Experience (MCLE) Grants:* One-time seed money grants of \$1,000 support community involvement of churches participating in MCLE for: 1) *Small Churches in Small Towns* with membership of less than 150 in towns of less than 50,000 with an annual budget under \$250,000; or 2) *Small Urban Churches* with membership of less than 150 in cities of more than 50,000 with an annual budget under \$250,000. For more information, contact the Rev. Glynis LaBarre at [glynis.labarre@abhms.org](mailto:glynis.labarre@abhms.org) or 1-800-ABC-3USA, x2412.)

*The Virginia and Gordon Palmer Jr. Trust* was created in 1999 as a permanent endowment to the American Baptist Foundation (ABF), with grant cycles managed by American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA) entities ABHMS, International Ministries and Multi-Region Corporation, comprised of a majority of American Baptist regions. For more information, contact ABF at 1-800-ABC-3USA, x2035, or [abfadmin@abc-usa.org](mailto:abfadmin@abc-usa.org), or visit [www.abcofgiving.org](http://www.abcofgiving.org) > Resources.

The Office of Financial Aid of ABHMS administers financial programs for students and ministerial leaders. For information or applications (unless otherwise noted), contact the office at P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851 or 1-800-ABC-3USA, x2067, or visit [www.abhms.org](http://www.abhms.org) > Scholarships.

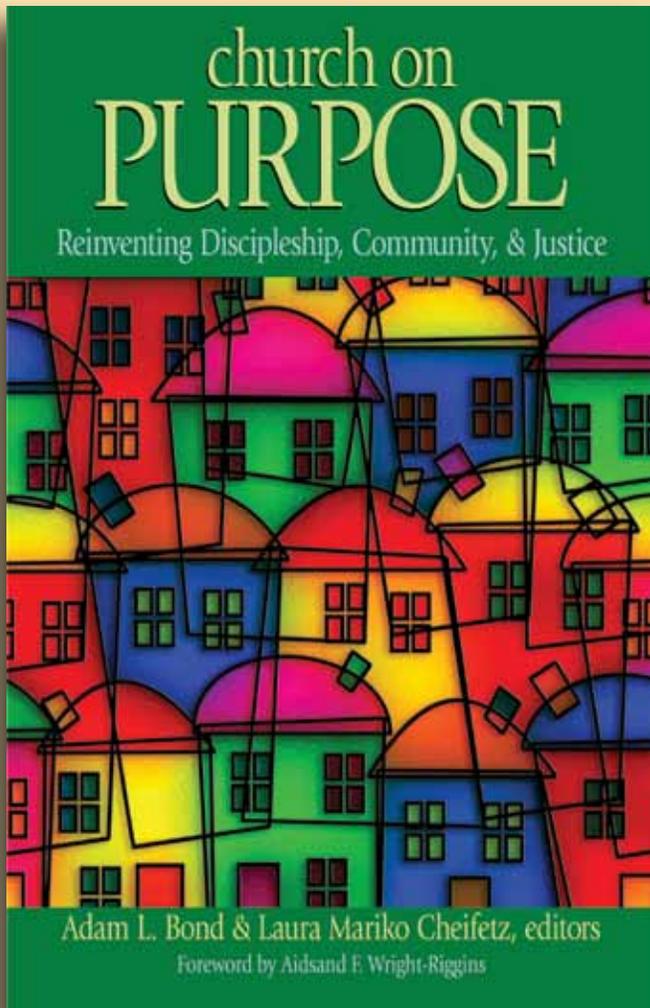
- *Undergraduate Scholarships* provide varying amounts paid toward tuition. To be considered for an undergraduate scholarship, a student must:
  - be an active member of an American Baptist church for at least one year before applying for aid;
  - be entering an accredited institution in the United States or Puerto Rico as a full-time freshman in the fall;
  - be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident;
  - maintain a minimum grade point average of 2.75; and
  - submit an application by May 31 for the following fall.
- *Doctoral Grants:* Up to \$3,000 toward academic doctorates (Ph.D., Ed.D. and Th.D.) for students who have completed at least one year of studies and plan to teach at the college or seminary level. Application deadline: May 31.
- *Ellen Cushing Scholarship:* For female graduate students preparing for a human service career in the secular

world. M.Div. and D.Min. students are ineligible. Applications deadline: May 31.

- *Individual Seminarian Grants:* Up to \$750 for students enrolled at least two-thirds time in their first professional degree program (M.Div., M.C.E., M.A.C.E. or M.R.E.) in a seminary or theological school not related to ABCUSA. Application deadline: May 31.
- *Seminarian Support Program:* Matching up to \$1,000 of support from local churches or ABCUSA organizations for American Baptist resident students at ABCUSA-related seminaries or theological schools enrolled at least two-thirds time. Applications are available from the seminaries. All pledges should be sent directly to the seminaries by Aug. 1.
- *Seminarian Continuing Education Grants:* A one-time grant of up to \$100 to attend a non-degree ABCUSA-related event. Application deadline: prior to participation.
- *Daniel E. Weiss Fund for Excellence:* Up to \$3,000 for the first year of seminary for gifted college juniors or seniors, who otherwise were not considering seminary, nominated by pastors, campus ministers and college faculty. Deadline for nominations: Nov. 1 for the following academic year.
- *Asian American Grant:* \$500 to be matched by the employing church for seminarians gaining ministerial experience in churches during the summer. Students contact the pastor; pastors may contact the Office of Financial Aid for Studies for additional information.
- *Cultivating NEW LIFE:* Up to \$300 for ministerial leaders listed in the ABCUSA Professional Registry to attend conferences, workshops and seminars focused on personal and congregation renewal. Application deadline: prior to attending the event/program.
- *Continuing Education Grants:* \$250 for ministerial leaders listed in the ABCUSA Professional Registry to visit an ABCUSA-related center for ministry or participate in an ABC-related mission trip. D. Min students are eligible for each of their first two years of study. Application deadline: 30 days in advance of participation.
- *Sabbatical/Study Leave Grants:* A limited number of grants for ministerial leaders are available once every five years.

*Gifts to the principal of the American Baptist Scholarship Fund, which provides the major source of income for the American Baptist Financial Aid Program, may be mailed to the Office of Financial Aid.*

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