

# ABCOTS



# Newsletter

## FROM THE DESK OF ABCOTS EXECUTIVE MINISTER



**Advent is a call to be ready and to be prepared. It is a season of devotion.**

When I am called to reflect upon the season of advent, I immediately think about the prayer language of the slave church of the antebellum south, "Lawd Ise wont ta be reddy." They lived in a context of readiness on two levels, first to experience life in freedom here, and then to answer the call of almighty God to an eternal freedom beyond this mortal life. **Advent is a call to be ready and to be prepared. It is a season of devotion.**

Mark opens his gospel quoting the prophet Isaiah. God brings comfort to his people but his people must be prepared to receive it. The believer must be ready and prepared to receive it, but the trappings are not as we would expect. A voice crying in wilderness, but there is nothing in the wilderness. It is dry and barren in the wilderness. The wilderness is unproductive and lifeless, and no one can see this great thing, that God does in the wilderness. So why does God come into the wilderness? **Advent is about making ready and being prepared for the coming of our Lord.** God always comes in unexpected ways and in unexpected places. In the first Advent, He comes to us as a child to offer salvation to the world. This coming is with a sign but not really understood by the world. **The how and when of His coming is not our concern but we only need to be ready.**

The believer should be ready in mind, in body, and in the world about them. Every thought and decision must be guided by and influenced by the fact that we are in the world but not of the world. Our pattern of thinking is shaped by the fact of Advent. God is coming again. Our bodies must be fit, ready to respond to the requirements of a coming Savior. We must dress our bodies in preparation for what God will require of us. Consider then, are we overdressed? This situation will cause us to be sluggish and slow to respond to God's call. We need to unload all of the excess articles of worldly clothing that calls our attention away from being ready and prepared. Are we under-dressed? This condition invites the unwanted attention and invites of the world subjecting us to needless temptations. Finally, the believer must make ready his/her world around him/herself. God comes to the wilderness in our lives, those unproductive and barren places. These are the places that need attention. These are the back doors of our lives.

I prefer that guests come to the front door of my home. My front door is painted and well decorated. There are planters full of flowers which shout the message of welcome to known visitors and strangers alike. My back door is not so inviting. It sees the regular busy traffic of those carrying groceries, suitcases, junk, and such. The paint is peeling on the back door. Our Jack Russell Terrier, "Reese," has broken the screen in the back door. I continue to say, I will fix the screen and door, but have not yet. God comes to the back door of our lives while we are looking to the front door where we have made ready. It is the back door, out-of-sight, that really needs our attention to be prepared and ready for God when He comes again.

**Merry Christmas and Happy New Year**



## ABCOTS EXECUTIVE BOARD

<b>President</b>	<b>Dr. Lacey Speight Alford</b> , <i>Wheat Street Baptist Church, Atlanta</i>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Vice President:</b>	<b>Dr. Douglas E. Summers</b> , <i>Providence Baptist Church, Baltimore, MD</i>
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<b>Executive Minister</b>	<b>Dr. James M. Harrison</b> , <i>Main Street Baptist Church, Smithfield, VA</i>

## ARTICLES AND FEATURES

### NATIONAL OFFICER FOR AMERICAN BAPTIST WOMEN'S MINISTRIES (ABWM) ELECTED FROM ABCOTS AREA III



During the 65th anniversary celebration of American Baptist Women's Ministries this summer in Virginia, Frances Bryant-Lowery was elected to serve a three-year term as the National Coordinator of Mission with Women and Girls. Her term began September 1. Additionally, her duties include assignments to: the Nominating Committee, Board representative to the World Relief Committee, facilitator for the working group on pornography and co-leader of the proposed mission trip to Haiti. She is also scheduled to attend the conference on sex-trafficking to be held in Green Lake, Wisconsin.

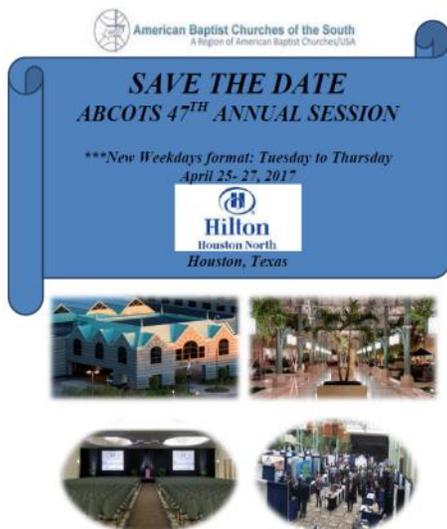
Rev. Dr. Frances Bryant-Lowery serves as associate Minister at Friendship Baptist Church in downtown Atlanta, where her pastor is the Rev. Dr. Richard Wills. Her serving there has found her teaching mid-week Bible Study, Adult Sunday School (class #6), chairing the Women's Month Bible Study for the past two years - focusing on and lifting up the lesser known women in the Scriptures, leading worship, delivering Services of The Word and Sacraments, in addition to serving as the Pastoral Care and Counseling designee.

In Area III of the American Baptist Churches of the South, she has been elected President of the Ministers' Council twice and is currently serving the second year of her second consecutive term. Additionally, she is a certified member of the National/International John C. Maxwell Team as a Coach, Teacher, Trainer and Speaker. Her focus is individual, group and organizational coaching, leadership development and empowering persons to experience personal and professional transformation.

Rev. Bryant-Lowery is the "peacock-proud" mother of Rev. Sherry Bryant-Clingman, H/R Executive, Mr. Obie Bryant, Jr., Entrepreneur and Consultant and Mr. Mickell Lowery, Sales Executive. To their children: Kameron, Bryana, Briun, Kamaria, Joshua, Myla and Mylan, she is their fun-loving and adventurous Nana.

To you, the ABCOTS and ABC-USA family, she poses the question: "How may I serve you?" She can be reached at: 404 668 7166 and [fbryantlowery@gmail.com](mailto:fbryantlowery@gmail.com).

## ABCOTS 47th Annual Session Updates



Hilton Houston North 12400 Greenspoint Drive, Houston, Texas, 77060

**April 25—27, 2017**

**Hilton Houston North, Houston TX**

**Theme:** COMING TOGETHER, SHARING TOGETHER, WORKING TOGETHER WITH GOD

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 3:9 (KJV)

### Speakers:

Dr. Jeffrey Haggray, Executive Director, American Baptist Home Mission Society, ABC-USA

Dr. Clifford A. Jones, Sr., Friendship Missionary Baptist Church, Charlotte, NC

Dr. Larry L. Bethune, University Baptist Church, Austin, TX

Rev. Sharon T. Koh, Executive Director, International Ministries, ABC-USA

Dr. Jeffrey L. Reaves, Sr., Good Shepherd Baptist Church, Petersburg, VA

**\*\*\*Installation of new ABCOTS President Dr. Douglas E. Summers**

**Hotel Info:** \$145/night for rooms with 1 King or 2 Queen beds. **Rate Code:** ABCO

**Register Online:** [http://www.hilton.com/en/hi/groups/personalized/H/HOUGPHF-ABCO-20170423/index.jhtml?WT.mc\\_id=POG](http://www.hilton.com/en/hi/groups/personalized/H/HOUGPHF-ABCO-20170423/index.jhtml?WT.mc_id=POG)

**Tel:** 281-875-2222

## ABC-USA Updates



Planning to attend the Biennial Mission Summit in Portland next summer?

American Baptist Churches are invited to register as Church Sponsors for the 2017 Biennial Mission Summit! Once an ABC church has registered as a Sponsor, an unlimited number of members from that church may register as individuals at a reduced individual registration rate, with up to \$100 in savings for each individual. **Registration for Church Sponsorship is OPEN!**

[Click here to register as a Church Sponsor.](#)

Leading up to the 2017 Biennial Mission Summit, we want to hear from YOU! Do you have a story of transformation in your local church or community? Tell us about it! Transformation Stories are invited for submission beginning now through June 1, 2017. By sharing Transformation Stories, local churches can learn from one another as they watch/read about stories that may generate ministry ideas for outreach in their local church communities. Stories will be accepted in two formats:

Submit a video between 2-3 minutes in length, also including a one paragraph description of the "Transformation Story." Stories told through PowerPoint presentation may be converted to become video stories.

Submit a written "Transformation Story" of no more than two pages in length, also including one to three picture attachments in .jpg format. Stories in either format should be sent to: [americanbaptist@gmail.com](mailto:americanbaptist@gmail.com) by June 1, 2017.

Your video or written story should touch on one of the following themes in some way (Only *one* of the below 11 ideas must be included, but intersecting themes are also encouraged):

1. Highlight one of the four dimensions of Transformed by the Spirit:

Congregational Transformation (Joining God in the Neighborhood); Cross-Organizational Transformation (Adaptive Challenge Teams Personal Transformation (Rhythms of the Spirit); Relational Transformation (Experiments in Difference)

2. Highlight a ministry related to one of the seven denominational priorities identified at the 2015 Mission Table (a gathering of ABC leaders and representatives):

Next Generation of Leaders; Violence; Discipleship; Poverty; Gospel in a Rapidly Changing Society; Women in Ministry

Innovative Models for Pastoral Ministry

<http://www.abc-usa.org/2016/11/17/transformation-stories-invited-from-local-american-baptist-churches/>

### ABCUSA Announces Awards for Matthew 25 Grant

Thirty-four Matthew 25 Grants ranging from \$500 to \$3,000 were awarded in October to applicants who demonstrated a wide variety of service to people in need across the United States. The Matthew 25 Grant, sponsored by American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA) and the Board of General Ministries, is funded by a generous anonymous donor whose goal is to help meet the needs of "housing, feeding, education and health with regard to the less fortunate."

Please check our website for an updated application which will be available July 1, 2017, with a September 1, 2017, deadline, at [www.abc-usa.org/matthew25](http://www.abc-usa.org/matthew25).

## UPDATES FROM HEADQUARTERS

**Please send us your church's email address so we can keep you updated on the happenings and updates in the region. Also send us your church mission accomplishments and other information on what your congregation is doing to be included in our ABCOTS quarterly newsletter.**

### **A Note From The Accountant's Corner**

Greetings from the Accountant's Corner. Believe or not we are rapidly moving towards the close of another year. As you begin thinking about your year-end processes, please consider the following tips:

#### **Tax Planning:**

Whether you have \$100, \$1,000 or \$10,000 to give to charity, a newly permanent charitable giving tax break can help you save taxes while also supporting your favorite charity. It's called the IRA charitable rollover, and it lets you, once you reach age 70 1/2, to direct gifts of up to \$100,000 a year from your Individual Retirement Account directly to a public operating charity.

#### **New Overtime Rules Go Into Effect December 2016**

As most of you know, "the Fair Labor Standards Act ensures minimum wage and overtime pay protections for most employees covered by the Act. Some workers, including bona fide executive, administrative, and professional employees, are exempt from those protections. But even if an employee meets the tests to be exempt they also must meet a minimum salary threshold. Currently that amount is \$455 per week (\$23,660 annually). [However, effective December 1, 2016], the "standard" salary level will increase to \$913 per week (equivalent to \$47,476 annually for a full-year worker).

Employers should plan to have the proper record-keeping of time for employees who fall under the new rule. [Exempt employees should examine their salary agreements to determine if they benefit from these new, minimum salary thresholds.]

As with most rules this can be more complicated than it looks so here are two links with more information."

<https://www.dol.gov/whd/overtime/final2016/overtim...> <https://www.dol.gov/whd/overtime/final2016/faq.htm...>

#### **Estimated Taxes:**

Estimated tax payments are a method used to remit federal and state taxes for those self-employed individuals who are not subject to income tax withholdings and others who may receive investment income or other forms of compensation outside of their employment. January 15, 2017 is your final opportunity to remit estimated tax payments for 2016. Our tax payment system requires us to make tax payments on a pay-as-earn basis, which means that you can ill-afford to wait until you file your income tax returns to pay your tax liabilities. Please plan now to make an installment payment and avoid being penalized for not doing so.

#### **IRS Warns of Refund Delays:**

Our economy has suffered great burdens by relentless scammers and thieves who work hard to attempt to rob us of our identities, credit, and bank accounts. And they're even trying to steal your hard-earned tax refunds. As a result, the IRS will be taking additional measures during this upcoming tax season to ensure that tax refund requests are legitimate. Therefore, there will be a delay to the start of tax season and there will be delays in the processing of refunds (particularly early in the season). For those of you who are anxious about receiving refunds early in February, please plan early, and be patient as we anticipate major delays. Please refer to the link below for more information on these delayed processing and refund timelines.

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/ashleaebeling/2016/08/31/irs-warns-of-2017-tax-refund-delays/#1d69c57a7d93>

For more information concerning these and other important fiscal matters for pastors, churches, and non-profit organizations, please visit our website at [www.whiteaccounting.com](http://www.whiteaccounting.com) or email me at [pwhite@abcots.org](mailto:pwhite@abcots.org).



ABCOTS is a Maryland non-profit corporation associated as a covenanting Regional organization with the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. (ABC-USA), and with other covenanting American Baptist Regions and the covenanting ABC-USA National Bodies