

Important information you need for ministries with women and girls.

Spring 2023

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with women and girls!

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We wish you a blessed easter.

Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life.
Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet
shall he live, and everyone who lives and
believes in me shall never die.

-- John 11: 25-26



Greetings!

By [Rev. Dr. Gina Jacobs-Strain](#), executive director

Dear Friends:

Thanks so much for your faithful and enthusiastic support for the [Winter Webinar Series](#), *Let The Walls Fall Down*. We were blessed by your presence, participation, and persistence. We are grateful for your feedback and the notes of affirmation and testimonies you shared with us. We could not do it without you, so THANK YOU!!! We ended the Winter Webinar series with prayer. It was truly a blessing to lift our voices together for prayer and praise. [Click here to watch the recording.](#)

I am looking forward to seeing you in person or online at the Domestic Violence Training and Certification in Detroit, Michigan (April 29), Women and Girls Day and Community Service in Caguas, Puerto Rico (June 23), AB GIRLS Hi-eSTEAM camp in Caguas, Puerto Rico (June 28-30) and the Shalom Retreat in Cleveland, Ohio (October 6-8). Learn more at www.abwomensministries.org/events.

I pray that Holy Week will be a blessing for each of us as we draw closer to our Savior.

Happy Resurrection Sunday, Gina

2023 "Shine the Light" Award Recipient

Annually, American Baptist Women's Ministries (ABWM) honors one American Baptist exemplary woman from a local American Baptist church, shining the light of Christ in the world. "The Shine the Light Award celebrates those women who develop new partnerships (collaboration), find new and different ways to be Christ's hands and feet (creativity), develop new means of outreach and spreading God's word (communication), and serve God's people (commission)."

This year's honoree is Ms. Laura Austin of Mansfield Center, CT, a First Baptist Church of Mansfield member. Ms. Austin serves as the ABWM President of Connecticut since the early 2000s. Ms. Austin has traveled the world doing 'hands-on' ministry—she has embroidered messages of hope and Christian love on them as signs of devotion to God for doctors and patients, built travel kits for newly graduated



health builders, constructed and repaired decks and roofs, did home repairs and bathroom upgrades, cooked curry for pastors and missionaries, built "rubble houses," nurtured earthquake victims, participated in disaster relief efforts, and has donated many supplies to support ministries.

Locally, Ms. Austin volunteers weekly with FoodShare, is a retail rescue driver, serves on the Advisory Board of Willimantic Salvation Army, cooks lunch for Vacation Bible School, became a Red Kettle ringer, handed out Thanksgiving turkeys, knitted 32 hats for the Warm Hearts Warm Souls campaign and more! Monthly, Ms. Austin coordinates the team of cooks who prepare meals for 50 homeless and low-income people in Willimantic. Ms. Austin has facilitated the building, installation, and ongoing restocking of a Little Free Pantry at her church.

Join ABWM in celebrating this amazing Woman of God for winning the American Baptist Women's Ministries 2023 Shine the Light Award! Ms. Austin will be recognized at the [Women](#) and Girls' Day on Friday, June 23, 2023, in Caguas, Puerto Rico. All AB women are invited to attend!

Articles from Officers



Thank you for Letting the Walls Fall Down

By [Rev. Dr. Christine Smith](#), national president

Greetings ABWM Sisters! I have been inspired and encouraged by the ways in which so many of you have led your regions to embrace our **2021-2023 Ministry Focus, Let the Walls Fall Down**. As we continue this focus throughout 2023, I would like to reiterate the foundational rationale for our mission focus, found on our ABWM website:

Our 2021-23 Ministry Focus, Let the Walls Fall Down, calls for us to be introspective and reflective and is a call to action for a better future. The statement initiates a personal introspective inquiry causing us to examine the boundaries that we build individually and also collectively and corporately. It begs our hearts to reflect on missed and new opportunities to stand up for the voiceless, isolated, and marginalized. It invites us to take inventory of the missing voices, intentionally be inclusive, and take a risk with God. It moves us forward with joy, love, and kindness as we trust in our faith. It encourages us to tear down and climb over walls that keep the body of Christ divided, numbs our fellowship,

and narrows our understanding of neighbor, friend, and family.

As we thought about the Ministry Focus for 2021-23, these are some of the questions we raised.

- What can we learn from Jesus' earthly ministry?
- How does or can our own life experiences and/or cultural filters and/or biases impact how we value other people and their equal access to participation in the fullness of our society?
- How do we understand loving God, Self, and Neighbor?
- How does this reflection impact our vision of ministry to self (self-care) and others?

As you continue to use this theme within your ministry context, refer back to the above statements often. Encourage and challenge one another with the questions offered. Prayerfully identify ways to "tear down walls" that hinder you from seeing, treating, and loving others as Christ sees, treats, and loves us.

As national president, I am also praying for each R/S president as you diligently, prayerfully, and lovingly strive to engage in ways to lead your regions and states to fully embrace the mission, vision, and purpose of ABWM. Let us

unite in Christian love, making ourselves a “committee of one” to support our national board goals through our financial resources, prayers, and ministry endeavors.

Our new Ministry Focus/Theme will be announced at the 2023 Women and Girls’ Day on Friday, June 23, 2023, in Caguas, Puerto Rico. Read more about this exciting opportunity to gather, fellowship, and serve by [clicking here](#).

Thank you, Sisters, for all that you continue to do to support ABWM, lifting, encouraging, empowering, and supporting women and girls across the U.S., including Puerto Rico!



Young Adult Women’s Ministries Recap and Tips

By [Olivia Banks](#), coordinator of young adult women's ministries

The Young Adult Women’s Ministry Advisory Team (YAWMAT) has had a busy beginning to 2023, sharing our gifts and hosting events. The [Everyday ABC Conversation: Passing the Peace](#) on February 7, 2023, featured team member Driana Arceneaux and Executive Director Rev. Dr. Gina Jacobs-Strain. Driana boldly shared what it means to pass the peace at a time when many young people are leaving or not engaged in the church. She challenged us to assess whether we are truly doing all we can to reach out to those who have left the church.

Our first [Seasons of Transition](#) webinar took place on Thursday, February 23rd. Our entire YAWMAT (Driana Arceneaux, Sadiqa Delaney, and Dana Seville) worked hard to plan and lead our first-ever Young Adult Women’s Ministry-focused webinar. Our guest speaker, Rachel Legg, a mental health therapist who started her own practice, shared her journey to make this job transition and provided education and tips we could use to better our own circumstances.

The second [Seasons of Transition](#) webinar will be on April 20, 2023, at 8:00 PM EDT, featuring Jasmine Perry with Faith and Yoga.

Here are some strategies for how you can encourage young adults to attend ABWM events:

- Start by inviting your friends and family
- If the event is virtual, have a watch party
- If in person, have food, arrange for childcare, and have giveaways
- Send reminders, including the day of the event
- Ask your church to sponsor a young adult or provide scholarships



How to Take Action Against Injustice and Racism

By [Carol Wright](#), coordinator of the western section

First, true change begins with prayer. Repentance always proceeds with repair.

Next, listen, learn, lament, and lead. This is the four-fold filter for personal interaction with people from other cultures, colors, and classes, so apply these when you engage with people who have a different view or experience. Listen with empathy, grieve with those who grieve, and take responsibility for any part you may have played in their pain as this creates connection and trust.

Presence is your ministry, so we need to stand with and speak for those who’ve been treated unfairly. Then walk together into expanded conversations and actions that strengthen your relationship and influence others.

Further, plan for personal growth. The Bible in Ephesians 3-4 teaches us how to operate in our diverse world. Read books and blogs on topics like racial reconciliation and increasing cultural intelligence, watch sermons and listen to podcasts from other cultures, take trips to places like the National Museum of American History and Cultures in Washington, D.C., or the Legacy Museum and National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, AL.

Take a self-assessment and a cultural awareness assessment. Participate where communities have been devastated by riots. For example: sweep streets, pray with hurting people, visit homeless shelters, and speak the truth. If you’re too far away, send money, prayers, and supplies.

And finally, embrace the beauty of God’s diversity and recognize that these gifts bring the hope of Christ to what seems to be hopeless.

Visit the ABWM website to learn more about racial justice and our 2023 Mission Focus.
www.abwomensministries.org





Devotional: You Can Be The Light

By [Lovena Van Haaften](#),
coordinator of the midwestern
section

What do you think of when you hear the term “racial justice?”

Think about it.

We are humans. We are of various ethnicities, have various education, job skills, and family dynamics, and can love or hate.

The world is broken and fallen. First, Peter 5:1-2 tells us we need to be *grounded in faith* to be able to survive what is coming. Stand Firm! Romans 5: 3-5 tells us when we run into problems and trials, they are good for us. They help us learn to be patient, which develops strengths of character and helps us trust God more each time until finally, our hope and faith are strong and steady.

By faith, He will restore us and mend our hearts. Second Corinthians 12: 8-9 tells us, “Grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.” His grace. His kindness. He will strengthen you and place you on a firm foundation.

You are *chosen, cleansed, and made whole*. When the world mistreats us, we often build tall and thick walls. What if, instead, we allow God’s kindness and His grace to comfort and heal us?

You can help others who feel broken by being *caring*, by being *helpful*, and by *reaching out*. Be courageous! You can be an act of love. You can show others God’s Kindness.

Let’s make a difference today in someone’s life. Help tear down a wall! Let’s be a light in the world.

Visit the ABWM website to learn more about racial justice and our 2023 Mission Focus.
www.abwomensministries.org

What’s Happening in your ABWM Region?

WESTERN SECTION

By [Carol Wright](#)

- **ABWM/of the West** - CA met on March 18th, where Rev. Katie Choy-Wong used “Building Lasting Bridges: An Updated Handbook For Intercultural Ministries” (her Judson Press book and workbook).
- **PNW/ABWM** had a “Love Tea” in February and Quilters/Crafters meet in October.
- **Bellingham’s Esther Circle** met in January then Emma de la Cruz hosted a dinner in

February. We experienced “Unapologetically Black” at WWU, then PLU’s “Innovating Diversity and Inclusion,” where equity begins with community.

- **Olympia/ABWM** raised money for Camp Bethel’s playground equipment and had a “Let’s Try Something Different (But We’ve Never Done it this Way Before) Ladies’ Day Out.”
- **Seattle’s Mount Zion ABWM** published “The Circle Leader’s Role.”

MIDWESTERN SECTION

By [Lovena Van Haaften](#)

- **Iowa East’s** Spring Event is on April 15, 2023, 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM, at Forest Lake Camp in Bloomfield, Iowa. The theme for the day: “Building Lasting Bridges.”
- **Mid-America Region** Ladies Retreat Weekend is on April 28-29, 2023, at Forest Lake Camp in Bloomfield, Iowa. The theme is “Bearing Fruit, Honoring God.”
MID’s Quilt Retreat will be on May 11-13, 2023, in Oelwein, Iowa.
MID’s Annual Event is on June 10, 2023, at First Baptist Church in Ames, Iowa. Theme is Human Trafficking.
- **Central Region’s** Annual Event is on June 2-3, 2023, at First Baptist Church in Parsons, KS. Speaker is Sunne Ryse Smith. Theme is “Let the Walls Fall Down.”
- **Ohio’s** Annual Event will be on June 10th at First Baptist Church in Newark, OH. Bible Study Leader is Rev. Dr. Gina Jacob-Strain. The theme is “Let the Walls Fall Down.”
- **Great Rivers Region’s** Area I, Spring Rally will be on April 29th at First Baptist Church in Sterling, IL. The speaker is Carol Garver on “Creation” with quilts.
- **Michigan** is co-hosting the ABWM Domestic Violence Workshop and Certification on Saturday, April 29, 2023, at First Baptist Church of Detroit and held virtually.

MI’s Annual Retreat and Conference is on June 2-4, 2023, at St. Francis Retreat Center, DeWitt, MI.

- **Nebraska’s** Summer Event is on June 2-4, 2023, at Camp Moses-Merrell. The theme is “Healing from Domestic Violence.”
- **South Dakota’s** Spring Event: is on April 22, 2023, at First Baptist Church in Sioux Falls, SD.
SD’s Girls’ Get Away is on June 2-4 at Camp Judson in Black Hills, SD.

News and Information for AB GIRLS

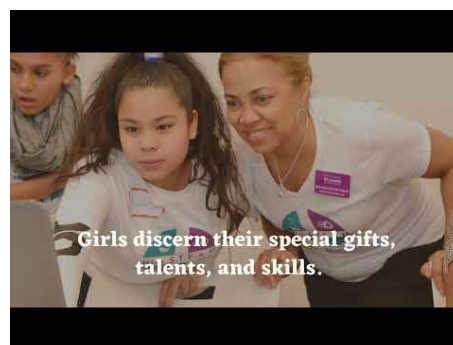
Events in Puerto Rico this Summer

Girls in middle school and high school are invited to join us in Caguas, Puerto Rico for two events! Scholarships are available for both events.

- **Women and Girls' Day** on Friday, June 23, 2023, at Caguas, Puerto Rico. Join girls for worship, fellowship, Bible study, and community service project. Our AB GIRLS Bible Study will be Rev. Dr. Jessica Lugo-Meléndez, an Ordained Minister of the Iglesias Bautistas de Puerto Rico. Register now at www.abwomensministries.org/womensday.
- **Building Bridges and Gateways to Girls' Future (BBGGF), Hi-eS.T.E.A.M** on June 28-30, 2023, at Caguas, Puerto Rico. For girls entering grades 6-12. BBGGF combines STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) and Bible study for AB GIRLS to learn that they are God's masterpieces while creating masterpieces. Register now at www.abwomensministries.org/events.

The National Leadership Team of AB GIRLS is Seeking Applications

The National Leadership Team of AB GIRLS (NLT) comprises four high school-age girls and one adult from across the country. The NLT works together to plan events, programs, and resources for ministry with girls. The NLT is seeking applications for youth members to serve a two-year term. For more information and to apply, visit www.abwomensministries.org/NLT.





BUILDING BRIDGES AND GATEWAYS TO GIRL'S FUTURE

Hi-eS.T.E.A.M.

June 28-30, 2023

First Baptist Church of Caguas
Calle Gautier Benítez y Baldorioty,
Esq. Forastieri
Caguas, Puerto Rico

For girls entering grades 7-12

www.abwomensministries.org/STEAMevents



Events for Women and Girls

National ABWM 2023 Events

Apr. 20 — Faith and Yoga Webinar
Apr. 29 — Domestic Violence Workshop and Certification
June 2 — Western Section: What's Up ABWM?
June 23 — Annual Meeting
June 23 — Women and Girls' Day
Oct 3 — Eastern Section: What's Up ABWM
Oct 6-8 — Shalom Retreat

2024

July 18-21 — Women and Girls' Conference at Roanoke College in Roanoke, Virginia

For more event information, visit www.abwomensministries.org/events.



Seasons of Transitions Webinar: Faith and Yoga

Thursday, April 20, 2023, at 8:00 PM EDT

Unwind and open your mind to a webinar dedicated to yoga. Our guest leader, Jasmine Turner, will guide us in conversation about times of transition and how yoga has served to strengthen her faith. We will learn yoga techniques that we can take home and make part of our own daily practice. [Click here to learn more and to register.](#)



Presenter: **Jasmine Turner**, Yoga Instructor and former Convenor of the National Leadership Team of AB GIRLS (NLT)



Domestic Violence Workshop & Certification

Saturday, April 29, 2023, 9:00 AM-5:30 PM EDT

Held virtually and at the First Baptist Church of Detroit (21200 Southfield Rd, Southfield, MI 48075)

American Baptist Women's Ministries is partnering with Safe Haven Ministries for Bible study and a Domestic Violence certification. This workshop will enable clergy, church leaders, community groups, and domestic violence educators to come together safely and intentionally to learn ways to support and aid those in their communities suffering from domestic violence.

The Bible study will take familiar scripture text and look at it through the lens of domestic violence. Together we will reflect and see how our actions and inactions may impact a survivor in our families, churches, and communities. [Click here to register!](#)



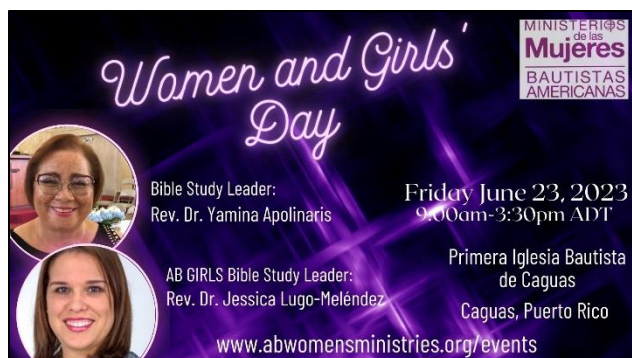
Bible Study Leader: **Rev. Dr. Gina Jacobs-Strain**, Executive Director, American Baptist Women's Ministries



Certification Trainer: **Tara Aday**, Director of Prevention and Education, Safe Haven Ministries



Certification Trainer: **Mykal Ward**, Training and Education Manager, Safe Haven Ministries



Women and Girls' Day

Friday, June 23, 2023, 9:00 AM-4:00 PM EDT

Held virtually and at Primera Iglesia Bautista de Caguas, Calle Gautier Benítez y Baldorioty, Esq. Forastieri, Caguas, Puerto Rico 00725

Join women and girls from across the country and Puerto Rico for worship, fellowship, Bible study, and community service project. Our theme is "Be Strong, Be Courageous." Register now at

www.abwomensministries.org/womensday.

There is **programming available for middle and high school girls!** Girls will engage in activities with peers, worship, and participate in a community service project. Scholarships are available for girls!



Bible Study leader is **Rev. Yamina Apolinaris-Concepcion**, a preacher, professor, and workshop leader.



AB GIRLS Bible Study Leader: **Rev. Dr. Jessica Lugo-Meléndez**, a teacher, pastor, and innovation strategist



Building Bridges and Gateways to Girls' Future (BBGCF), Hi-eS.T.E.A.M

June 28-30, 2023

Held at Primera Iglesia Bautista de Caguas, Calle

Gautier Benítez y Baldorioty, Esq. Forastieri, Caguas, Puerto Rico 00725

For girls entering grades 6-12. BBGCF combines STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) and Bible study for AB GIRLS to learn that they are God's masterpieces while creating masterpieces. Register now at www.abwomensministries.org/events.



Shalom Retreat

Friday, October 6-8, 2023, 9:00 AM-4:00 PM EDT

Held at Restoration Ministries of Greater Cleveland, Inc (140 Richmond Road; Euclid, Ohio 44143), where our National President, Rev. Dr. Christine Smith, is the senior pastor.

Enacting God's calling on our lives involves attending to our wellness: spiritually, physically, emotionally, and mentally. This weekend spent in the company of your American Baptist sisters will help you find refreshment and renewal, as well as learn new techniques for attending to your health. Learn more at www.abwomensministries.org/events.



Bible Study Leader on Friday and Evening Plenary Preacher on Saturday: **Rev. Dr. Martina S. Moore**, President and CEO of Moore Counseling & Mediation Services, Inc.



Workshop Leader and Sunday Morning Preacher: **Rev. Dr. Gina Jacobs-Strain**, Executive Director of American Baptist Women's Ministries

Support ABWM

Make a gift to American Baptist Women's Ministries today! Gifts allow ABWM to continue providing free webinars, scholarships for events, programs, resources, and leadership training for ministries with women and girls in your church, area, and region.

- Give by Venmo: @abwomensministries
- Give by text: Text ABWM to 44321
- Give online by credit card: Give online at <http://www.abwomensministries.org/give>
- Give by check: Mail a check payable to "ABWM" to American Baptist Women's, 1075 First Ave STE C-210, King of Prussia, PA 19406



Become a Vital Partner to support the vision for the future of American Baptist Women's Ministries. Vital Partners regularly give \$228 or more a year to support our work with women, young adult women, and girls. Vital Partners give monthly, quarterly, or annually, and they may also set up automated giving by direct withdrawal from their bank account or credit card. Become a Vital Partner today at www.abwomensministries.org/VitalPartners.

Find Us On Social Media

Do you ever feel like you find out about American Baptist Women's Ministries (ABWM) events after they've taken place? Do you need more info about ABWM? Do you want to feel part of a community of like-minded women who enjoy helping others and rejoicing in God's Word? Then, follow American Baptist Women's Ministries on social media: Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter. Be a part of this dynamic Christ-centered organization and stay informed.

- www.facebook.com/abwomensministries
- www.instagram.com/abwomen/
- www.twitter.com/abwomen



Be Part of the Leader's Reader Conversation!

Send us "ideas that worked for me" in women's and girls' ministries, women or girls you'd like to thank or honor, theme-related devotionals, or other materials you think would be helpful to women and girls in our congregations! Please send contributions to info@abwomensministries.org.

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