

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Erin Davis, Director of Marketing
Email: erin.davis@abwomensministries.org
Phone: (610) 768-2288
Website: www.abwomensministries.org

American Baptist Women's Ministries Announces New Leadership Appointments

(Valley Forge, PA – [06/04/2025]) — American Baptist Women's Ministries (ABWM) is pleased to announce two dynamic leadership appointments that reflect the organization's commitment to faith-rooted empowerment, justice, and innovation for women and girls across the nation.

Rev. Dr. Christine A. Smith has been promoted to **Associate Executive Director** of ABWM, bringing with her decades of pastoral leadership, theological scholarship, and national service. In addition, Karla Rivera Avilés, a devoted Puerto Rican attorney and advocate, now serves as **Director of Programs**, leading the design and implementation of transformative initiatives for women and girls.

Rev. Dr. Christine A. Smith has served in ministry for over three decades and was most recently Director of the ABWM Rudd Empowerment Center. She is the former National President of ABWM and only the third African American woman to hold this role in the organization's 70+ year history. As senior pastor of Restoration Ministries of Greater Cleveland, Inc., Dr. Smith has demonstrated a lifelong passion for justice, holistic wellness, and women's leadership development. She is the founder of "Women Together in Ministry of Greater Cleveland," author of *Beyond the Stained Glass Ceiling*, and has served in a range of academic and pastoral roles, including as adjunct faculty at Ashland Theological Seminary.

"Dr. Smith's deep history with ABWM and visionary leadership will continue to shape the future of our ministry," said **Rev. LaThelma Armstrong**, Executive Director of ABWM. "She leads with conviction, compassion, and courage."

Reflecting on her new role, Dr. Smith shared:

"It is an honor to be called to serve ABWM as the Associate Executive Director. ABWM has a rich history of empowering women and girls to reach their highest and best potential through Christ. I am excited to walk in this new role, alongside our visionary executive director, Rev. LaThelma Armstrong, and our amazing staff, as we address critical issues facing women and their families in this era."

Joining her in leadership is **Karla Rivera Avilés**, who brings 18 years of legal experience and a fierce commitment to advocacy. Known for her work defending survivors of domestic violence

and sexual aggression, Karla also brings valuable ecumenical experience from Puerto Rico and Peru. Her passion for justice is grounded in her faith and a deep love for community. As Director of Programs, she is charged with creating and nurturing ministries that inspire faith, resilience, and growth in women and girls of all ages.

Reflecting on her appointment, Rivera Avilés stated:

"I am profoundly thankful for the trust placed in me as the new Director of Programs. I look forward to working collaboratively to spearhead projects that are not only relevant but also transformative, directly addressing the critical needs and aspirations of women and girls."

"Karla's leadership is marked by integrity, cultural wisdom, and an unwavering commitment to the dignity and flourishing of women and girls," said Rev. Armstrong. "Her vision for programmatic innovation will lead us into a bold and courageous future."

As ABWM continues to adapt to the evolving needs of women and girls in faith and society, these two leaders embody the strength, grace, and spiritual depth needed to advance the mission. With God's guidance, they will help shape a new chapter in the life of the organization.

About American Baptist Women's Ministries

American Baptist Women's Ministries is a Christ-centered ministry committed to encouraging and empowering women and girls to serve God. ABWM has a legacy of over 70 years in leadership development, mission support, spiritual growth, and advocacy on behalf of women and girls throughout the world.