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**AMBS news contact**

Annette Brill Bergstresser, [abbergstresser@ambs.edu](mailto:abbergstresser@ambs.edu), 574.343.6709

## Church leaders' conference to focus on 'Reimagining Ministry'

By Annette Brill Bergstresser

ELKHART, Indiana (Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary) — How do church leaders think about their ministry in this time of collective trauma stemming from the coronavirus pandemic, racial injustice, economic uncertainty and rising polarization in society? The world has changed in the last three years, and so has the church.

Planners of the upcoming [Pastors & Leaders](#) conference at [Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary](#) (AMBS) in Elkhart, Indiana, considered this question as they chose the event's theme, "Reimagining Ministry." This year's conference is designed to give pastors and church leaders ideas and practices to help nurture resilience, compassion and hope in themselves and in their congregations by learning from Jesus' ministry.

"We know the last few years have been tough for many leaders, and we want participants to leave the conference with new ideas, as well as feeling refreshed as they engage in spiritual practices with other leaders," said [Julia Schmidt](#), MDiv, of the AMBS [Church Leadership Center](#), which hosts the annual conference for Christian leaders.

Pastors & Leaders 2023 will begin at 7 p.m. EST on **Monday, Feb. 13**, and conclude at 12:30 p.m. EST on **Thursday, Feb. 16**. Participants can attend in person on the AMBS campus or from a distance via livestream and Zoom.

### Speakers

The event — which will include worship, prayer, teaching sessions and numerous workshops — will feature the following keynote speakers:

- [Joni Sancken](#), PhD, is Professor of Homiletics at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, where she also oversees the Preaching Seminar. A former pastor, she is the author of several books reflecting a theological and interdisciplinary approach to preaching. Her work also includes *Words that Heal: Preaching Hope to Wounded Souls* (Abingdon, 2019) and *All Our Grievs to Bear: Responding With Resilience After Collective Trauma* (Herald, 2022). Sancken will present in person on the AMBS campus.
- [April Yamasaki](#), MA, is Resident Author with Valley CrossWay Church in Abbotsford, British Columbia, and Editor of MennoMedia's *Rejoice!* devotional magazine. Also a former pastor, Yamasaki writes and presents on spiritual growth and Christian living. Her work includes *Four Gifts: Seeking Self-Care for Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength* (Herald, 2018) and *On the Way With Jesus: Sermons for Lent and Easter Based on the Gospel Texts* (CSS, 2019). Yamasaki will present her sessions online.

[Katie Graber](#), PhD, and [Anneli Loepp Thiessen](#), MMus, Co-Directors of the [Anabaptist Worship Network](#), will serve as worship leaders throughout the conference.

Schmidt also noted a few new features at this year's event: optional daily process groups for participants to share resources and practices with each other or to share about challenges they are facing; an art room; and workshops focused on artistic expression as part of ministry.

### Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

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"Understanding our grief and being formed in spiritual practices are both at the core of resilience," said [Jewel Gingerich Longenecker](#), PhD, AMBS Dean of Lifelong Learning. "So I believe pastors and leaders will really benefit from the wisdom and experience our two keynote speakers have to offer. I'm also excited about the new elements we are adding to the event, especially those that give attendees opportunities to experience personal support for the ministry challenges they face."

### Workshops

Conference participants will be able to choose from both in-person and online workshops; sample titles include:

- Called to be Countercultural Communities: Fostering the Prophetic Voice of the Church
- Challenging White Christian Nationalism in our Congregations through Christian Spiritual Formation
- Coming Back to the Body: Somatic Spiritual Practices
- Healthy Conflict Management Through the Trauma of Polarization
- Marking Adulthood Transitions Through Ritual and Reflection
- Wisdom Within: Coaching for Ministry Leaders
- Worship Beyond Words: The Visual Arts Creating Place

### Registration

[Registration fees](#) for the event vary for individuals, married couples, and students. Discounts are available for first-time participants, those who bring a friend who has never attended Pastors & Leaders, and those needing financial assistance. Register before **Jan. 7, 2023**, to receive the best rate. The final registration deadline is **Jan. 30, 2023**.

Participants who attend all plenary, worship and workshop sessions may earn 1.3 Continuing Education Units (CEUs).

Learn more about the schedule, meals, lodging, transportation and registration: [ambs.edu/pastors-and-leaders-conference](https://ambs.edu/pastors-and-leaders-conference)

### Leadership Clinics

Also, three daylong Leadership Clinics will be held on **Monday, Feb. 13**, before the start of the conference:

**Worship: What We Want, What We Need** (in person and online); and **Healthy Boundaries 101** and **201** (both in person). See: [ambs.edu/leadership-clinics](https://ambs.edu/leadership-clinics)

*Located in Elkhart, Indiana, on ancestral land of the Potawatomi and Miami peoples, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary is a learning community with an Anabaptist vision, offering theological education for learners both on campus and at a distance as well as a wide array of lifelong learning programs — all with the goal of educating followers of Jesus Christ to be leaders for God's reconciling mission in the world. [ambs.edu](https://ambs.edu)*

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### Image available:

AMBS PL2023 speakers Joni Sancken April Yamasaki combined hi-res.jpg

Pastors & Leaders 2023 keynote speakers Joni Sancken, PhD, and April Yamasaki, MA. (Photos provided)