



## MINISTERS COUNCIL NEWS YOU CAN USE – PLEASE SHARE WITH YOUR NETWORKS

Joe Kutter, Executive Director

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### **~DO CLERGY COLLEGIAL COVENANT GROUPS MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES AND MINISTRIES OF PARTICIPANTS?**

In 2002, with a significant grant from the Lilly Endowment, the American Baptist Ministers Council established the “Together in Ministry” program. “Together in Ministry” (TIM) is the name used for clergy collegial covenantal groups. By the end of 2009, about 2300 Ministerial Leaders participating in about 225 groups were funded.

What happens when Ministerial Leaders participate in TIM or TIM-like groups? A recent study from Austin Seminary, sponsored by Lilly Endowment, revealed the following.

Ministerial Leaders who participate in clergy collegial covenantal groups are more likely to:

- Create a culture of lay- involvement within their congregations that includes higher participation in New Member’s Classes, lay participation in worship, lay participation in communion, higher participation in service to the church, and the rotation of lay persons in leadership roles creating a broader base for gifts and abilities.
- Have an organized presence and involvement of youth that includes a youth minister on staff, comprehensive youth programs including conferences and camps, congregational events planned and led by youth, youth serving on congregational committees and boards.
- More intentional involvement in the community including a vision of the congregation as a change agent within the community, a strong emphasis on community service within the congregation, and an expectation that the pastor will represent the congregation in the community.
- Enjoy congregational support for continuing education including financial support for continuing education and congregational requirements for continuing education.
- Experience congregational growth when the ministerial leader has a sustained participation in a group of more than 2 years. Ministerial Leaders who participate in the groups for more than 4 years have even a greater chance of experiencing congregational growth. (For the full report, [www.austinseminary.edu/cpl](http://www.austinseminary.edu/cpl))

The first goal of the Ministers Council TIM groups was to overcome the sense of isolation and loneliness that Ministerial Leaders often experience. The evaluation initially focused on that goal with the following results.

- 84.4% reported an enriched perspective of self and congregation
- 83.4% reported enhanced opportunities for disciplined focus through focused study
- 74.4% reported a climate for mutual accountability among peers
- 89.1% gained a supportive network of colleagues who will pray for one another
- 74.6% gained a sense of other ministers being available for support in their work.

The group members were also asked to describe the value of participation in the TIM experience. They reported that they received encouragement and support to improve preaching and teaching and to enhance church leadership skills. Improvements in personal health, the reduction of stress, and connecting and networking with other pastors and congregations were common themes. TIM participants

frequently share about having their perspectives broadened and becoming open to new ideas. (For a complete report of the effect of the Ministers Council funded TIM groups, ask for a copy of the 2009 report to the Lilly Endowment.)

The obvious conclusion is this. Ministerial leaders who participated in TIM groups are more spiritually grounded and better leaders because of the Together in Ministry Grants.

#### *WHY DOES IT WORK?*

Dr. Craig Dykstra of the Lilly Endowment's Department of Religion argues persuasively that effective ministerial leaders share this practice; they intentionally nurture networks of significant clergy friendships. Clergy who are connected with other clergy are significantly more likely to be effective than those who are vocationally isolated. Unfortunately, clergy who are isolated are significantly more likely to get into trouble than those who are connected by the bonds of shared vocation and friendship.

Why? It is within these vocational friendships that the issues and practices of ministry are explored, examined, tested, and often resolved. Friends in ministry help one another to mature in the practice of ministry, become more effective practitioners of ministry, and to avoid those serious mistakes that sometimes destroy vocations.

It is within these covenantal groups that ideas can be explored within the local context of community and tested against the realities of the local church. Within these covenantal clergy communities, skills are enhanced, encouragement to try something new is experienced and, perhaps most importantly of all, spiritual lives are deepened as Ministerial Leaders study scripture, share their hearts and pray together. It is within these conversations that disembodied ideas become embodied in the concrete lives of Ministers and ultimately in the lives of the churches.

#### **~FROM THE EXECUTIVE MINISTER, ABCCR–** *John Williams, Executive Minister ABC of the Central Region*

During my 36 years of pastoral and regional ministry I have been an advocate for the Ministers Council. It has served as the custodian of our American Baptist Ministerial Code of Ethics and as a guardian of clergy health and effectiveness. Over the past few years I have had the opportunity to see how participation in TIM or TIM-like groups has had a positive impact on many of our pastoral leaders. In the Central Region new pastors have been connected with more seasoned leaders to help them adjust to their new calling; clergy approaching retirement have been able to discover healthy ways to embrace this time of transition; bi-vocational pastors have been able to come together to share around the unique aspects of their calling and find opportunities for training and growth; pastors have learned about specific ways to respond to crisis in ministry and provide more effective care; women in ministry have engaged in experiences that provide spiritual nurture and growth; and many other pastoral cluster groups have continued to engage in times of healthy dialogue, encouragement and fellowship.

I am convinced that the American Baptist Ministers Council plays a vital role in nurturing what is best in our clergy leaders. In recent years I have seen the Ministers Council operate with renewed passion and vision. I am eager to support their efforts and encourage others to give careful consideration to the impact the Ministers Council has in sustaining effective ministry among American Baptists' most valuable resource, our clergy.

#### **~MINISTERS COUNCIL SENATE CHARTS COURSE FOR STRONG FUTURE**

The 2010 American Baptist Ministers Council Senate met at the Green Lake Conference Center in Green Lake Wisconsin from Saturday, August 14 through Tuesday August 17. The meeting was convened by president Jeff Savage under the theme of "Creating a Community of Spiritual Leaders", based on Mark 2:1-12 and Psalm 121:1-8. The Senate was joined in a time of worshipful work by various ABC leaders from the national program boards and several local regions.

[\(Click to read more\)](#)

## **~CHECK OUT THIS NEWLY PUBLISHED BOOK BY ALICE DAVIS GREENE**

***Angels All Around*** is a novel about two angels who are sent to earth with a special plan to accomplish and the difficulties they face remembering what they are to do. The story provides a thoughtful and fun way of exploring the relationship between heavenly and earthly life. It opens readers to the possibility that we are all angels, born from above with gifts that are intended to be used in this world to serve God-- but the problem is that we just forget that when we are born! I hope the readers will enjoy it and respond on the blogsite: [angelsallaroundblogsite.blogspot.com](http://angelsallaroundblogsite.blogspot.com).

Check it out at [universe.com](http://universe.com) or [barnsandnoble.com](http://barnsandnoble.com). Just type "Angels All Around" in the book search engine on either of those sites and it should appear.

## **~AMERICAN BAPTIST HOME MISSION SOCIETY CALLS FOR 2011 NOMINATIONS**

The Board of National Ministries, now carrying out ministry as American Baptist Home Mission Societies, seeks nominations for ministry awards to be announced at the American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA) 2011 Biennial, June 24-26, in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

[\(Click to read more\)](#)

## **~HEALTH SYMPOSIUM SCHEDULED FOR SATURDAY OCTOBER 23<sup>RD</sup>**

This event is open to clergy and lay leaders of ANY DENOMINATION and is intended to be an INTERFAITH event. The project is underwritten by a grant from the Health Promotion Council of Philadelphia in partnership with the American Baptist Home Mission Societies. Palmer Seminary has agreed to serve as the host for this one-day event. For registration information contact Pastor Dolores McCabe at [pastormccabe@comcast.net](mailto:pastormccabe@comcast.net) or Dr. Laura Miraz at [lmiraz@abhms.org](mailto:lmiraz@abhms.org).

## **~JUDSON PRESS OFFERS NEW MONEY-SAVING BOOK COLLECTIONS**

In the past year, Judson Press has introduced a number of new money-saving book sets based on a theme or area of interest. Most recently, it created the [Inspirational Gift Set for Pastors](#). This \$24.99 set includes the Kirk Byron Jones classic *Rest in the Storm*, as well as *Spiritual Formation for Pastors* and *Exalting the Names of Jesus*. The collection makes an ideal gift for those in ministry and has a retail value of \$34.00.

Other sets include:

[Social Justice Series](#) featuring *Tending to Eden*, *Violence among Us*, *Hope for Children in Poverty*, and a free copy of J. Alfred Smith's *Speak until Justice Wakes*. It retails for \$35 (a \$61 value).

[Christian Education Library](#) includes 11 must-have titles for only \$99 (a \$125 value).

[Baptist Ministry Set](#) features eight titles for those in Baptist ministry. Retails for \$50, a \$30 savings.

Also still available, the [Baptist Celebration Collection](#) which Judson Press introduced last year for its 185th anniversary and the 400th year of our Baptist history. The 18 books in this collection sell for \$185.00

Judson Press resources can be ordered by calling 800-458-3766 or visiting [www.judsonpress.com](http://www.judsonpress.com).

## **~WOMEN IN MINISTRY**

Do you participate in a Women in Ministry group? Maybe it is, officially, a Together in Ministry (TIM) group. Maybe not. However your group is formed, we would like to know more. Perhaps you have a good story to tell, or an accomplishment you are proud of. Maybe you have a photo to share with us. Please tell us what you love about your women in ministry group! Send your stories, photos or other information to [holly.bean@abc-usa.org](mailto:holly.bean@abc-usa.org) or [joyce.lake@abc-usa.org](mailto:joyce.lake@abc-usa.org) so that we can share it with others. Thank you!

## **~JOB OPPORTUNITY – Soozie Whitten Ford**

In my role as Stewardship Facilitator, I am now serving on the Board of the Ecumenical Stewardship Center. They are beginning the search process for a new executive director and would appreciate our input. Please click on the link to view the job and if interested respond to David Bell at [david@umfmichigan.org](mailto:david@umfmichigan.org)

<http://www.ministerscouncil.com/documents/CEOEDSearchDocument.pdf>

## **~REMEMBER US!**

When planning your estate, please remember The Ministers Council.

## **~HELP US KEEP YOU INFORMED**

The hard reality about this newsletter is this: Our email mailing list is not as complete as we would wish. But you can help and your help we ask. Please forward this to your constituencies and friends. Most months, there is something helpful and when there is not, the delete button is only about an inch away and there will be little imposition impressed upon your friends. We appreciate your help. *Joe Kutter*

**THE MINISTERS COUNCIL OWNS THE DOMAINS [www.ministerscouncil.org](http://www.ministerscouncil.org) AND [www.ministerscouncil.com](http://www.ministerscouncil.com). IF YOUR BROWSER ENCOUNTERS DIFFICULTY IN OPENING ANY OF THE LINKS IN THIS NEWSLETTER, GO DIRECTLY TO THE WEBSITE AND/OR FEEL FREE TO CALL THE OFFICE FOR SPECIFIC NAVIGATION DIRECTIONS TO LOCATE THAT LANDING PAGE ON THE SITE.**

## **~SIGN UP FOR FUTURE ISSUES OF NEWS YOU CAN USE FROM THE MINISTERS COUNCIL**

Sign up for future issues of the monthly Ministers Council newsletter by replying to this message from the email address to which you wish issues to be sent. Add the newsletter email address to your address book so that future newsletters will not go into your spam filter.

If you have news, ideas, events or websites from your Ministers Council to share with colleagues, please email to [joe.kutter@abc-usa.org](mailto:joe.kutter@abc-usa.org). The more we share with one another what works, the stronger we will all be.

## **~MINISTERS COUNCIL CONTACT INFORMATION**

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Join the Ministers Council through your local constituent council. Contact information is posted on [www.ministerscouncil.org](http://www.ministerscouncil.org) under the WHO WE ARE link.