



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

Joe Kutter, Executive Director

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~2012 TOGETHER IN MINISTRY GRANTS - *Joe Kutter*

We have just allocated the last of the Lilly Endowment grant for Together in Ministry Groups. In the process, we were confronted with some really hard choices that involved too many worthy applications and too little money. The bad news is that we had to say “No” to deserving applicants. The good news is that the Together in Ministry culture has grown to the point where many of our colleagues see the value and want to participate. This too is good news, many of the unfunded groups will continue simply because they have experienced the value of the clergy covenantal colleague group. Through these relationships both their personal lives and their public ministries have been enriched. They are better pastors or better at other ministries and their churches are better served because of their participation in the TIM process. They will find a way to continue.

Our challenge is this, how do we continue to develop the TIM culture without the Lilly Endowment grants? Ministers Council leaders are working hard to find answers to that question and some key elements are becoming clear.

1. We do need to find some money. A modest capital campaign will happen with the formal –public part to happen next fall.
2. We probably need to focus our attention on men and women who are new to ministry. The first five years in ministry are for many of us the “Make it or Break it” time. The TIM model provides a demonstrably effective process for nurturing men and women who are new to ministry. If TIM habits can be formed early with financial support, we can hope that those habits will last a lifetime of ministry.
3. We will probably need to identify distinctive opportunities for ministry. Last year, with the help of Lilly Endowment money, we helped to put together a network of pastors who are hosting ministries with Burmese congregations. It’s a distinctive opportunity that has strong implications for ministry.
4. We need to find ways to more effectively equip constituent councils to nurture the TIM culture. TIM-like relationships frequently do not require funding. They require intentionality, skill, and persistence, none of which requires large sums of money.
5. We need to provide help and incentives for the formation of new TIM groups. Those who experience effective TIM groups are likely to continue. Those who have never had a positive experience frequently find it hard to believe that this simple process can have such profound results. Initial resourcing can go a long way.

The question is this, if fruitful churches require healthy and effective pastors, then how can we become the pastors that the churches need? I am convinced that TIM and Ministers Council are strategic partners in answering that question.

TBYS - TRANSFORMED BY THE SPIRIT - A PERSONAL OBSERVATION – *Joe Kutter*

The Transformed by the Spirit initiative continues to develop but, truth be known, it's a little hard to know how to describe where we are at this point in time. I find this stage to be a bit like preparing to paint. Work is happening. The process is underway. But there aren't any shiny new walls to see.

The only reason that I offer this brief note is to solicit your continuing prayers that the TbyS will be an instrument of God's grace and ministry through the American Baptist family.

So, what can we say? Twenty-eight American Baptist organizations, regional and national, have signed on as full participants in the TbyS process. Among the participating organizations, the Ministers Council has been a full partner. As the Executive Director, I have participated as has been appropriate and Dr. Jeff Savage, our President, has agreed to serve on the Journey Team, the group with primary coordinating responsibilities.

Each participating group has been invited to identify and submit key ministry challenges for the first round of conversation. To get a sense of the scope, imagine each of the 28 groups offering three ministry challenges for consideration. (You can do the math.)

The Ministers Council has identified three key "Ministry Challenges" which we believe are significant to effectiveness in the work of ministry. I ask that you see these in the midst of the other 50-90 that could ultimately be offered by the participating groups. Briefly, from the Ministers Council, the key ministry challenges that we offer are: 1. Congregations Transitioning their Ministries; How shall pastors lead congregations to make the changes that are essential within the context of changing neighborhoods and a changing culture? 2. Women in Ordained Ministry; Women are clearly under-represented in arenas of leadership. 3. Pastoral Attrition; Literature indicates that up to 50% of all who enter ministry will exit ministry within the first 5 years.

We would like to partner with other groups to address these challenges: 1. Technology; How do congregations keep up with, pay for, and use rapidly evolving technology? 2. Ministry and Funding; when the money isn't there, what to do?

Groups will be identified who can work on these Ministry Challenges with a "Coach" provided. That will probably happen in the early months of 2012. Stay tuned, we'll keep you informed.

Where is this going? Ultimately, "Action-Learning Teams" will be formed who will create experimental responses to the challenges that we finally name and describe and those conversations will be a part of our Biennial gathering in Kansas City in 2013.

The bottom line, as I understand it: It is our hope and prayer that we will find ways to talk together and work together to address the issues that we face together with the expectation that God's Spirit will be a part of our lives together and, in unexpected and unpredictable ways, we will be transformed.

Some have accused me of being cautious in my expectations. It's a fair observation. At this time in my life, I know that our fruitfulness is in many ways, perhaps every way, dependent on God's new initiative and I'm not willing to presume on that which God will do or won't. And I have been around long enough to know that human cussedness has an enormous staying power in spite of our best efforts. Even so, I am hopeful that this will be a process through which we rediscover a deep passion for ministry and mission. While I refuse to presume on God, I have confidence that God will find ways to sustain God's purpose until that purpose is finally fulfilled and I believe that the American Baptist family has a significant testimony to offer as we engage God's mission in the current era. The vision for mission and ministry that first called us into being is still powerfully alive even though the shape of our response has to change for a new time and place.

As I said, we seek your prayers. Clearly this is more than we can pull off by ourselves.

~PRAYERS FOR MINISTERS: - Joe Kutter

Here are two prayers that I have offered via the "American Baptist Ministers Council" Facebook page. I hope that you find it helpful to know that we pray for you regularly.

Holy Companion:

As we begin this Advent Season, be with all among your servants who are suffering deep loss and find themselves hurting and hoping, grieving and celebrating, weeping and worshiping, seeing tears of sorrow and lifting voices of praise in honor of the coming of the Anointed One who, in Your time, makes all things whole.

Amen.

Grant to each of your Ministers Lord,
The wisdom and vision to lead those in her or his care,
To a keen awareness of the blessings by which we are surrounded,
Gratitude to You, the Source of those blessings,
And a renewed determination to be faithful stewards
Who faithfully reflect Your immeasurable generosity.
We pray in the Name of Christ who is the Ultimate expression of your grace and mercy,
Amen

~BACONE COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Bacone College is pleased to announce the following scholarship opportunities to be offered beginning with the Spring term of 2012.

1. For the children of ABC Staff members (Pastors, youth ministers, children's directors, and any paid staff person) and ABC Caucus Church members:

The children of American Baptist staff persons and members of ABC caucus churches are offered a full 100% of tuition, room and board scholarship. Called the Christian Ministry Learning Work Community (CMLWC) this offers the ABC student the greatest scholarship value and opportunity. Out-of-state residence has no impact on the scholarship opportunity.

2. For Christian Ministry majors:

Any student who wishes to come to Bacone to study for ministry in our Associate or Bachelor of Arts in Christian Ministry may receive a 100% of tuition scholarship. Please note that the scholarship is for tuition only. The student will be responsible for room and board, fees, and books. This Scholarship is called the Christian Ministry Students of Promise as we believe these students have the promise of having a great impact on the Kingdom.

Non-residential students will receive 35% of Tuition only.

3. Christian Clubs for any Christian Student:

Any student of any Christian faith tradition may come to Bacone to participate in one of our Christian clubs. Students may be a part of the Gospel Choir, Praise Team/Band or Worship Arts Club and receive a scholarship of 35% of tuition, room, and board while studying in any academic program of their choosing. This is a great opportunity for students to prepare for their future, do ministry and receive a scholarship to make it financially possible.

Additional information regarding eligibility may be obtained by contacting Rev. Betty Wright-Riggins, Bacone Representative at email: revbety@gmail.com or Rev. Dr. Leroy W. Thompson, Asst VP of Church Relations at Bacone College by email at thompsol@bacone.edu or by phone at 918-360-9694.

These scholarships take effect with the Spring 2012 term. Students may apply for admission at www.bacone.edu/apply now.

~JUDSON PRESS PRESENTS 12 BOOKS FOR CHRISTMAS

Beginning December 1, Judson Press will feature a different book each day, each ideal for gift giving and each 50% off for that day only! The Book of the Day will be announced on the Judson Press Facebook page, via Twitter @judsonpress, and in News & Notes on the Judson Press website home page. If you would like to receive an email alert for the selected title of the day, send your email address to promotions@judsonpress.com with "12 Days" in the subject line.

Merry Christmas from your friends at Judson Press!

~AFC OFFERING 2012 MATERIALS TO ARRIVE SOON

Watch your mailboxes for America for Christ (AFC) Offering 2012 materials to arrive soon from American Baptist Home Mission Societies. New this year is a 10-minute video suitable for small-group viewing. A downloadable online study guide will also be available. The theme is "Engaging Discipleship: Open My Eyes, Open My Heart, Open My Hands" (Mark 10:46-52).

~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 AND 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. 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 under the WHO WE ARE link.