



Ministers Council Newsletter

Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson, Executive Director

January 2013

From the Desk of the Executive Director

I was heartbroken to read the news about Rev. Steve Shoemaker, pastor of Myers Park Baptist Church in Charlotte, NC. (<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/2013/01/07/3768966/myers-park-baptist-pastor-takes.html>) I was heartbroken on so many levels.

First there was the visceral reaction. Have you ever so related with a situation that you empathetically ached? I don't know about you, but I have felt "physically, psychologically and spiritually depleted" as a pastor, and because I have felt that way, I hurt when I hear of others similarly suffering.

Secondly, I was heartbroken over the realization that it doesn't have to be this way, but so often it is. What is it about the pastorate that makes us go it alone and sacrifice ourselves nearly unto death? We do not start out that way, and it is certainly not our intention to be the Lone Ranger. But there is something about the pastorate that makes us believe that we are indispensable. If you read the article in the Charlotte Observer that sentiment was raised time and time again. "If you're a good pastor, you're never off," one respondent quoted. Why do we drink that Kool-Aid? If that is how we feel, it's no wonder that we drive ourselves into the ground.

And then I thought about this pastor's life. How do you overcome collapse? I'm sure the fear of failure had to have played into the outcome. As pastors we are placed on a pedestal. Our spiritual lives are supposed to be exemplary. Our families are supposed to be perfect. We are thought to be the image of faithful abundance. But what if that is a façade? What if your prayer life is reduced to "Lord have mercy," as you run hither and yon? What if your spouse is complaining that he or she never sees you? What if your PK is acting out in ways that are not in keeping with the model of a preacher's kid? These things are so often going on in our lives, but we smile as though we are Pagliacci. How are we restored after a fall?

This is where the Ministers Council should come in. I am not writing this to extol the virtues of the Ministers Council, but this is what we are chartered to do. Joe Kutter used to say it this way, “We covenant together to deepen our spirituality and to enhance our capacity as leaders in Christ’s church.” Who else knows what we go through? Who better to be there for us through the trials and tribulations of ministry than the ones who know? The Ministers Council ministers among the leaders who minister to us.

When I was called to my pastorate, my son was an infant and still nursing. There were Sundays where I would be in the pulpit preaching, but could hear the cry of my child from the nursery. Any mother can tell you the agony of such a situation, but what do you do when you are in the middle of a sermon? Had it not been for the “Mommy Ministers” with who I was in relationship, I am not sure I would have gotten through those months.

The point is this: we cannot go it alone. We need to be in collegial community. We need to be in prayer together. We need to share and learn together. And should we stumble and fall, we need to pick one another up, dust one another off and encourage one another to keep going. Donnie McClurkin said it well, “We fall down, but we get up.”

Consider your own ministry. Are you in relationship with other ministers? If not, reach out to other ministers in your area. Better yet, contact your regional or national Ministers Council. We are here for you; we are here for one another. Our challenges are real and our brother pastor in Charlotte is just one more example of that reality. So let us be in relationship with one another. Let us connect with one another. No one need go it alone.

Update on Transformed by the Spirit

As is noted on the ABC-USA website, “Transformed by the Spirit” is an ambitious initiative of the National Executive Council (NEC) of American Baptist Churches USA that engages local congregations across the denomination in a journey of identifying the significant challenges that face our churches, our regions, and our national bodies in today’s culture. The question we are asking in this initiative is: “What challenges are we facing, for which we do not presently have an answer, but which must be addressed if we are to live into the future God has for us?” The issues that we identify as we ask this question represent the adaptive challenges that we must address.



The Ministers Council, along with the National Executive Council, and our regions are addressing a number of such challenges as participating partners. To that end, we are responsible for two adaptive challenges: Women in Ministry and Pastoral Attrition. Specific to Women in Ministry, we ask what can be done to help churches examine their attitudes toward women as pastors and move toward becoming more equal opportunity employers. How do we influence and change the decisions of hundreds of autonomous search committees in widely varied settings across our denomination?

For Pastoral Attrition, the issue is that there appears to be a growing level of people leaving the ministry, especially in the first five years of ministry, and this is a significant challenge to the ABC. Unfortunately, some new clergy leave ministry not because of a clarification of God's purposes for their life, but because of their experiences in ministry. What are the challenges facing local congregations and young clergy? Are there new ways of helping new clergy clarify their sense of call, and provide support to them?

Now that these adaptive challenges have been identified, we are in the process of assembling Action Learning Teams to act on these challenges. Each Action Learning Team will define and initiate experiments to address their adaptive challenge. As the experiments are conducted, the teams will reflectively assess what is being learned and determine whether the learning might inform the ministry of ABC and our on-going journey.

The Executive Committee of the Ministers Council is currently working to identify Action Learning Team members for our two adaptive challenges. If you are interested in learning more about the work of the Action Learning Team or are interested in serving as a member of an Action Learning Team, contact Sue Sechrist at sue.sechrist@abc-usa.org or call (610) 768-2334.



Update on the Together in Ministry Capital Campaign

The Together in Ministry Capital Campaign is in full swing. In our efforts thus far, we have raised \$272,768.05 in cash contributions and \$64,360 in in-kind donations. This is great news. Moreover, as a thank you for anyone promising a gift of \$100.00 or more, we will send a complimentary copy of Joe Kutter's new book *Praying for Ministers*. And for those who donate \$500 or more, your copy of *Praying for Ministers* will be personally signed by Joe! Have you made your pledge to the capital campaign? Don't miss out. Not only

will you help to ensure the continuation of the Together in Ministry program, but you can also be blessed by the heartfelt prayers of our former Executive Director. Go to <http://www.ministerscouncil.com/CapitalCampaign2012/documents/12TiMResponsePrintFINAL.pdf/> and contribute today.

Leadership Changes

Your Executive Committee of the Ministers Council is fully staffed and operational, which is great news! We are excited to announce that Rev. Roberta White has accepted the position of Vice President of Professional Effectiveness, serving out Dee Dee Turlington's remaining term. Roberta is an ecclesiastically endorsed institutional chaplain and has served as pastor to congregations in ABC/Greater Indianapolis. Since 2001, she has been providing spiritual and bereavement support with St. Francis Hospice, Greenwood, IN. She is also certified with the Association of Professional Chaplains. Roberta has served the Ministers Council as a Senator and is



regionally active in both the Ministers Council of Greater Indianapolis as well as the Ministers Council for Chaplains and Pastoral Counselors.

Rev. Dan Taylor is filling a new role on the Executive Committee as Vice President of Resource and Development. This committee is charged with the responsibility of developing and implementing a fund development capacity within the Ministers Council enabling us to execute a focused strategy for fund raising, annual giving, planned giving and other such fund development vehicles. Dan was a member of the Resource Development team that launched the Together in Ministry capital campaign.

Dan is currently serving as the interim pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dover, DE. For thirteen years Dan was on the region staff of the American Baptist Churches of Ohio, first as Minister of Mission Support and then as Minister of Congregational Development. Teaching stewardship and encouraging ABC mission promotion and support were primary tasks. Dan and his wife, Rebecca, are parents of two college age children.



Upcoming Events

- The Ministers Council Executive Committee Meeting – January 30-31
- Presidents' Conference Call
 - February 11, 2013 at 8:00 PM
 - March 18, 2013 at 8:00 PM
 - April 15, 2013 at 8:00 PM
- Ministers Council of Greater Chicago Retreat – February 18
- African American Leadership Conference – February 19-21
- Transformed by the Spirit Partners Meeting – March 12-13
- Together in Ministry Re-Visioning Retreat – March 19-20
- Ministers Council of Michigan Clergy Retreat – April 22
- Baptists Lunching Together Retreat, Oakland, CA – May 11
- Ministers Council of Rhode Island Retreat – May 13-14

"Let Your Voice Be Heard: Advocacy and Faith," February 18-22, 2013

American Baptist Women's Ministries is hosting a virtual mission encounter from Monday, February 18 through Friday, February 22, exploring how God calls us to advocate for justice on behalf of the voiceless. In addition to daily activities that participants can do on their own schedule, each evening of the event features conference calls with special guests to explore facets of the topic. Rev. Yana Pagan, adjunct professor at Eastern University's Esperanza College, will explore what the Bible has to say about advocacy and faith; Rev. Dr. A. Roy

Medley, General Secretary of ABCUSA, will lift up the history of advocacy in ABCUSA life and current endeavors; and Ms. Margaret Rose will share about her experiences serving as an advocate around issues of human trafficking in Michigan and beyond.

Virtual mission encounters are a way for people to explore mission themes while still attending to their responsibilities at home. Every virtual mission encounter has an overall theme that is explored in more depth through the five days of the event. At its most basic level, a virtual mission encounter only requires access to email and a phone. There are some activities that may require web access, or the ability to watch videos or listen to audio files, but these are optional. Each day, registrants receive an email with some suggested activities that they can do before they leave for work or school, on a lunch hour, or while their children are taking afternoon naps. Each evening of the virtual mission encounter features a conference call with a special guest. Participants can engage as fully as they so choose and their schedules allow.

As of this writing, plans are still underway for “Let Your Voice Be Heard,” so be sure to visit www.abwministries.org for more information and registration. Please spread the word in your congregations as well. Consider inviting several members of your congregation to participate with you and discuss your experiences together!

Judson Press News

We are pleased to announce newly-released Judson Press titles (see www.judsonpress.com) by American Baptist professors and practitioners!

- ***“I’ve Been Called: Now What?”*** by Adam Bond, \$14.99, anticipates the discernment process that comes after the call to ministry.
- ***“The Unofficial Baptist Handbook,”*** by Lora Ellen McKinney, \$15.99, is a light-hearted guide – complete with cartoons - for the uninformed, the newly converted, and the forgetful!
- In the most recent addition to ***The Living Church*** series, ***“Learning Mission, Living Mission: Churches That Work,”*** \$15.99, Glynnis LaBarre introduces the Missional Church Learning Experience (MCLE). Series editor is J. Dwight Stinnett.

Join in celebrating the 200th anniversary of the original mission in Burma, by participating in ABC Reads. This year’s book: ***“Bless God and Take Courage: The Judson History and Legacy,”*** by Rosalie Hall Hunt, \$21.00 Online study guide provided by the American Baptist Historical Society.

The Forgotten Pearl Harbor Story:

ABHMS Video Lifts up American Baptist Ministry in World War II Internment Camps

In recognition of the 70th anniversary of Executive Order 9066, American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) has debuted a new video, “A Church Stands With Its People.”

The video documents the struggles of those of Japanese descent living on the U.S. West Coast following Japan's 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor and the courageous ministry of American Baptist missionaries who served among them.

When President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on Feb.19, 1942, thousands of Japanese Americans were forced from their homes to unjust imprisonment in U.S. internment camps.

Japanese Americans were subjected to harsh living conditions in the camps, where they were relocated because of wartime hysteria that they would serve as spies for the country of their heritage. Two-thirds of those interned, born on American soil, were U.S. citizens. The imprisoned included parents of American-born young men fighting in U.S. military units. During this bleak period in U.S. history, American Baptist home missionaries swam against the tide of popular opinion, affirming Japanese Americans as their brothers and sisters, and serving among them as the hands and feet of Christ.

Posted on ABHMS' website, "[A Church Stands With Its People](#)" features firsthand accounts of those who lived the internment experience.

To view the video, visit www.abhms.org or click the link above.

Remember Us!

When planning your estate, please remember The Ministers Council.

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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.*