



Ministers Council Newsletter

Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson, Executive Director

February 2013

From the Desk of the Executive Director

In January, I had the privilege of traveling to Washington, DC to celebrate the centennial anniversary of the public service sorority to which I have been a member for over 30 years. The event was made all more special by the fact that I was with my mother who has been a member of our organization for over 50 years. During our closing dinner, I met women who “pledged” the same collegiate chapter that my mom and I pledged so many years ago. One woman gushed as we met, “Oh, I learned about you when I pledged!” It was a startling and shocking statement. I had no idea that new members of my collegiate chapter had to learn about me as part of their orientation to the sorority. How incredibly humbling.



But it's also sobering. You never know who is watching your life. As leaders, we are out front and making an impression. What kind of impression are you leaving? Will people know that you are a disciple of Jesus Christ from observing you? Will people know that you are a minister of the gospel? Are you leaving a legacy that is worth someone studying after you have gone?

To be honest, I never set out to make impressions such that people remember me after it's all said and done. In this regard, I feel a lot like Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who said, “I just want to do God's will.” But in doing God's will, it occurs to me that there are things that we can do to ensure that our impact is positive.

First, I think we need to live to make a difference. I was a first semester sophomore when I pledged my sorority. Attending Indiana University, it was impossible not to see Greek Life on full display. IU had one of the largely Greek systems in the country. However, I wasn't interested in joining a sorority for a social outlet. I joined a sorority because they did public service. Even then I was trying to help somebody. That's what the song says, “If I can somebody as I pass along... then my living shall not be in vain.”

Have you ever noticed that so many people just travel along without making a difference? It's like becoming comfortable with how the church looks. I once complained to my church leaders that our vestibule looked like grandma's parlor. There were old tables with lace doilies, decorated with old, dusty plastic flowers. There were old chairs situated around the old tables. There was even a broken ceramic

umbrella holder, but because people were no longer familiar with the concept of an umbrella holder, it had become a trash can that was never emptied. Members of the church never noticed it. However it was the first thing that a visitor saw and it screamed “OLD!!!!” We have to open our eyes to what is going on around us and try to prayerfully and discerningly engage our environment to make a difference. We cannot allow ourselves to passively become blind to what is around us.

Secondly, I think we need to operate with excellence. So many of us are engaged in what we would call “extra-curricular activities”. In addition to being ministers, we are husbands or wives, moms or dad, homeowners, etc. These things are full time jobs. But then, we add to our plate membership in various societies. Have you stopped lately to count the number of memberships you hold? Truly when I look back at the numbers of memberships that I hold, I think that I must be out of my mind. Who can do all these things? Yet, I have made a commitment to these organizations and based on that commitment, I am going to do my level best with whatever I am asked or charged to do. If I don’t have time to be my best, then I am learning the slow, painful reality of having to let go of things.

I think too many of us, not wanting to disappoint, not wanting to say no, end up overcommitted and overextended such that our efforts become mediocre. Look at where you are serving. Are you giving your best? Are you giving your all? Or are you just getting by? We need to bring our best to the table or move over to make room for someone else who can. This is about operating with excellence and some times, the excellent option might be realized through someone else.

Finally, I think we have to work together. If I have learned anything about leadership, it’s that the most effective leaders mobilize others in order to engage in the learning that is needed for an organization to realize its goals and objectives. Most of the challenges that confront our organizations are adaptive – that is, we don’t have the ready answers so no one person can step in and set the course that will win the day. As leaders, we bring people together, we encourage an open sharing of ideas, we collaboratively discern new directions, and then we gird ourselves with what we need to move forward. Leaders orchestrate the team effort. It’s nice to think that someone thought enough of me to learn about me, but I’m not important. It’s what we did together as an organization that makes us memorable, just as it’s what you do as a leader: assembling the team and bringing that team together with excellence to make a difference.

You never know who is watching your life. Lead a life worth watching. Make a difference. Be excellent. Be a leader that brings people together.



Could you use some prayer support for your ministry?

The Spiritual and Personal Wholeness Committee of the Ministers Council is sponsoring a time of prayer every Wednesday in Lent, beginning February 13. We'll be praying together for 20 minutes via phone each week on Wednesdays at 10 am Pacific/11 Mountain/noon Central/1 Eastern. Call toll-free: 866-906-0123, then enter 292502

Update: Executive Committee Meeting – January 30-31, 2013

Your Executive Committee of the Ministers Council met for its annual winter board meeting on January 30-31, 2013 in Oviedo, FL. Typically, our meeting focuses on planning the next Senate gathering and reviewing the work of the Ministers Council and our committees. We did that, yes, but we also looked closely at our organization and our future.

If you have read the history of the Ministers Council (and you should because it’s a good read!), you will know that our organization was established in 1935 by ministers for the purposes of “fostering fellowship

and the enrichment of ministry.” A generous grant of \$1000 was given to the Ministers Council by MMBB as working capital to establish this organization and over 1000 applications for membership in this new council were received before the opening convention in Colorado Springs that ultimately adopted the creation of this new entity. Within eight months of its birth, the membership of the council was over 1800 members.

That was then. But in the words of Phyllis Tickle, “How now shall we live?” This is really the burgeoning question for our day. What is our mission? What challenges are we addressing? Who do we serve? Who else is doing what we are endeavoring to do? What are the outcomes of our work?

We spent 24 hours wrestling with these questions. As we work together and answers emerge, more will be forth coming in subsequent newsletters and communiqués. Nevertheless what is important to share with you now is that we are sharpening our focus in order to strengthen our service. We are committed to you as ministerial leaders and we are committed to providing the support and resources necessary to edify you as a ministerial leader.

Our original mission has not changed. The Ministers Council developed out of a long felt and often expressed need to gather together. But more than that, the Ministers Council was needed “to find new and positive ways to aide the clergy in their tasks and to constructively deal with several problems confronting the denomination at that time: the placement of clergy, educational standards for ordination, standards for the recognition of clergy within our denomination, etc.” These words were penned in 1935, but the need remains today. Join us as we shape the Ministers Council for the future. It is an exciting time. I pray that you will stay connected.

SurveyMonkey® Need for Nonviolence Resources

Recently, you may have seen an email inviting your participation in a survey for nonviolence. Since that email, over 100 participants have taken the time to respond to a questionnaire regarding the need for nonviolence resources to support you in your ministries. If you have not had an opportunity to respond to the survey, you may access it at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MCSurvey2013> until February 15th. Here are some of the results thus far:

To the question “To what degree do you see the issue of violence related to your ministry?”
40.7% said it was very related,
48.7% said it was somewhat related,
And 10.6% said it was not very related.

When asked, “Do you have a need or desire for resources on non-violence?”
73.5% of you said yes,
While 26.5% said no.

The types of resources respondents wanted included:

Understanding violence - 59.4%	Media Violence -33.7%
History of Non-violence movements - 30.7%	Video Games - 31.7%
Oppression and Privilege - 31.7%	Cooperative engagement - 30.7%
Early Childhood Formation - 36.6%	Restorative Justice - 46.5%
Youth Violence - 46.5%	Theological perspectives on violence - 69.3%
Gang Violence - 27.7%	Conflict Resolution - 56.4%
Domestic Violence - 59.4%	Violence Prevention - 55.4%
Parental Violence - 38.6%	Workplace Violence -16.8%

Respondents have engaged the issue of violence through:

- Preaching – 76.6%
- Teaching 46.8%
- Writing – 28.8%
- Pastoral care and counseling – 58.6%
- Community involvement – 53.2%
- Partnering with other clergy – 39.6%
- Partnering with community leaders 32.4%
- Political advocacy 28.8%

Overwhelmingly, most respondents rate these efforts as only being “somewhat effective”.

When asked to rate various methods in terms of effectiveness in the future in reducing violence or promoting nonviolence, the majority of respondents indicated that

- Community involvement (61.2%),
- Pastoral care and counseling (59.4%),
- Partnering with community leaders (55%),
- Teaching (50.5%)

And political advocacy (37.5%) would be the most effective methods.

- Preaching (60.2%),
- Writing (64.2%)

And partnering with other clergy (51.5%) were seen as somewhat effective methods.

Respondents have used a variety of resources with most being deemed only somewhat effective. Those resources were:

- Biblical resources – 53.6%
- Theological resources – 54.7%
- Sociological resources – 51.3%
- Psychological resources – 56.8%
- Educational resources – 60.3%

What is clear from these results thus far is that many of us are seeking resources to help us and our congregations respond in the face of nonviolence. Many of you expressed interest in working on a Ministers Council project to engage the issue of violence. Thank you so much for your interest. We hope to begin forming our working groups in the March or April timeframe.

ABHMS Board Adopts Gun Violence Statement

In a unanimous Jan. 23 vote at its meeting in Atlanta, Ga., the Board of Directors of American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMs) adopted a Public Witness Statement on Gun Violence that included recommendation of 10 measures aimed at reducing the impact of firearms on individuals, families, communities and our nation.

These measures include: banning assault weapons; requiring criminal background checks for sales at gun shows; strengthening regulations of gun dealers; required reporting of lost or stolen guns to law enforcement; and restoring firearms research funding to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“We want to provide the tools for local churches to take action,” said Board President Dr. Clifford Johnson when he introduced the statement. “This will be a board of action,” he said. “If we are to be true to our history, we have to speak out on issues on like gun violence.”

[Read](#) ABHMS’ “Public Witness Statement on Gun Violence.”

[Watch](#) Board President Dr. Clifford Johnson present statement to ABHMS’ Board of Directors.

ABHMS Supports Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Remaining true to its long history of ministry to immigrants and refugees, American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) continues advocacy efforts through its Office of Immigration and Refugee Services, while supporting recent steps toward comprehensive immigration reform in the United States.

Encouraged by President Obama’s recent remarks in Las Vegas, Nev., calling for a [common-sense approach](#) to swiftly address an “outdated, broken immigration system,” ABHMS applauds the recently proposed [“Bipartisan Framework for Comprehensive Immigration Reform.”](#)

Authored by a group of eight senators, the framework emphasizes a legislative pathway to citizenship for the more than 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States, including undocumented youth, or “DREAMers.”

“This is good news,” says the Rev. Aundreia Alexander, Esq., ABHMS national coordinator for Immigration and Refugee Services, who advocates on the national level through such organizations as the [Interfaith Immigration Coalition](#), for which she serves on the steering committee. “We have had many ebbs and flows on this issue of immigration reform. I look forward to working within our networks to monitor the legislative details that come out of this framework.”

ABHMS supports the Interfaith Immigration Coalition’s [“Interfaith Statement on Immigration Reform.”](#) In addition, ABHMS signed the coalition’s “2013 Principles for Immigration Reform” letter to Congress and recently participated in and promoted the coalition’s “National Faith Call-In Day for Humane Immigration Reform,” which urged citizens to let their voices be heard in support of reform by phoning members of Congress.

“Since our inception, ABHMS has been at the forefront of welcoming immigrants into our country and into our churches,” says ABHMS Executive Director Dr. Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins III. “God has used this faithful response to ‘strangers’ to profoundly shape American Baptist Churches USA so that no one racial or ethnic group holds majority membership. God has woven us into a coat of many colors, and we are a reflection of the American family. We are pleased with the legislative framework that is in line with our Biblical call to welcome the stranger among us.”

ABHMS offers a number of resources to assist individuals and congregations with immigration advocacy. For more information, visit www.abhms.org > Ministries & Programs > Justice Ministries > [Immigration and Refugee Services](#).



Update on the Together in Ministry Capital Campaign

Good news: We continue to make progress toward our capital campaign goal for Together in Ministry. Thus far, we have raised \$273,078.05 in cash contributions and \$64,360.00 in in-kind donations. This is toward our goal of \$800,000.00 in cash contributions and \$300,000.00 in in-kind donations.

Here's the not so good news. These numbers have been accomplished by 44 individuals making pledges and 39 people making donations. Surely we can do better.

Together in Ministry is for us. Together in Ministry brings ministerial leaders together for collegiality. Together in Ministry enables us to support one another on our spiritual journey and realize greater competence and effectiveness as we respond to God's call on our lives. Is this not worthy of your support? Can you ask your church to contribute so that we might have this program for our health and vitality as leaders?

Please contribute today. Please ask your church to contribute on your behalf. Act now; go to <http://www.ministerscouncil.com/CapitalCampaign2012/documents/12TIMResponsePrintFINAL.pdf>.

New Judson Press Release

Out just in time for Black History Month, you'll want to take note of this new Judson Press release: "To Serve This Present Age: Social Justice Ministries in the Black Church," by Danielle L. Ayers and Reginald W. Williams Jr. (\$14.99). The authors include sample training materials as well as spotlighting real-life initiatives. For the month of February only, this new title is available at www.judsonpress.com at a 50% discount, along with many other Judson Press titles celebrating the ministries of African American churches.

ABWIM Announces Opportunity to Provide Resources for Women in Ministry Month, 2013

Rev. Pat Hernandez, National Director of American Baptist Women in Ministry has offered wonderful opportunity to prepare and submit materials for use during Women in Ministry Month, 2013 (March, 2013).



ABWIM is seeking resources that affirm and lift up women in ministry: a liturgy, a responsive reading, a poem, or a devotional piece. Alternatively, you may provide a description of something specific you have done to affirm, encourage, inspire and lift up women in ministry.

The basic guidelines are that:

- The piece should be original - your work
- It should be one page or less
- It should highlight and affirm the validity, blessing and important works of women in ministry.

Please include your name, title, specific ministry and preferred contact information and submit via email to joyce.lake@abc-usa.org. PDF files or Word documents are highly preferred.

The selection of works to be used is totally left up to the discretion of Rev. Hernandez and her ministry team. Selected submissions will be used by ABWIM as a resource for churches during Women in Ministry Month.

Announcements for Upcoming Events

Cleveland Men of Song Concert

The WONDERFUL Cleveland Men of Song, Director Carlton Fellows, will be in concert on **Friday, February 8th at 7:30 pm Plymouth Church in Shaker Heights!**



Prairie Pastors' Conference

For 15 years, pastors have gathered periodically to strengthen themselves and each other for ministry. The conference will be held April 8-10, 2013 at New Life Baptist Church, Bellevue, Nebraska. For registration and information, click on the link below.

<http://www.ministerscouncil.org/documents/2012Tri-RegionBrochure.pdf>



ABCOPAD-ABCNJ Announces Pastors Conference

Theme: Becoming Faith Soaring Churches

The Host Church is First Baptist Church of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The Cost is \$100.00. Scholarships to attend the conference are available

through ABHMS. The key note speaker is George Bullard, Strategic Leadership Coach and Author of FaithSoaring Churches. Get more information or register online at

<http://abcopad.org/2013-Fanning-the-Flame-Pastoral-Leadership-Conference.aspx>.

Other Events

- Presidents' Conference Call
 - **February 11, 2013 at 8:00 PM**
 - March 18, 2013 at 8:00 PM
 - April 15, 2013 at 8:00 PM
- 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
- New York Ministers Council annual Ministers Enrichment Day – May 6
- Baptists Lunching Together Retreat, Oakland, CA – May 11
- Ministers Council of Rhode Island Retreat – May 13-14

Do you have events coming up in your regions? Share the word so that others might know your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Send email announcements to Sue Sechrist at sue.sechrist@abc-usa.org.

Remember Us!

When planning your estate, please remember The Ministers Council.

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.