



Ministers Council Newsletter

Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson, Executive Director

April 2013

From the Desk of the Executive Director

Dessert

While writing a poem
from this morning's meditation,
reflecting on the abundance of this place
to which we retreat
to the forty hours into the wisdom of the
desert,
I write "dessert" instead,
the sweetness fresh on my tongue
that I have silenced
just long enough
to let the words blow in like a sandstorm,
the grains of silica blinding me,
the salt dry on my lips
the wind standing me up.
Leaning against it
I taste the richness.

12 Mar 05 - E. Granger-Happ



In the midst of preparing for the Soul of Leadership retreat that I am leading starting April 8, I wanted to find a poem regarding retreat. For this, the second residency of four for my cohort, we are practicing my process called *The 7R's of Sanctuary*. The first step of the process is retreat. I saw this poem and was immediately delighted. Retreating to the desert for contemplation and repose was likened to dessert. I love dessert. What is pictured above is my favorite – Blue Moon ice cream. Thanks to both A. Roy Medley and Aidsand Wright-Riggins III, I had the opportunity to be indulged in my favorite treat as we traveled to Green Lake, WI for the National Leadership Council meeting. Blue Moon ice cream originated in Wisconsin and can scarcely be found anywhere else. So it is a particular treat that I savored and delighted in with each luscious spoonful.

I know you are asking yourselves, "What brought this to mind?" Holy Week is a sprint for ministers. I don't need to remind you of all the ways you are pulled from Palm Sunday to Easter. By the time we get to Easter, we are understandably worn and empty. But I am inviting you to retreat. Jesus said to his disciples in Mark 6:31, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourself and rest a while," because so many were coming and going and they had no time to rest. You need time now to rest.

Please take some time to “come away to a deserted place all by yourself and rest a while.” And while you are in that deserted place, think of that desert as dessert. Taste it on your tongue and savor the flavor. It is in the savoring that you are restored.

Update: Together in Ministry Re-visioning Retreat

On March 19-20, a group of twelve ministerial leaders convened at a retreat center at Villanova to re-envision the Together in Ministry program. I reached out to individuals by expressing the current state of the program. Over the last decade we have been blessed to have had Together in Ministry, which was funded by the Lilly Endowment. Through this program hundreds of TIM groups have convened for fellowship, spiritual deepening and professional development with funding paying for facilitators, retreat space and food. The monies have been well spent, but they are now gone. But knowing that Together in Ministry has been tremendously successful and has served as a vital program for our denomination, I wanted to bring together a team of leaders who would come together with me to discern and help shape the future of Together in Ministry.



I believe that the retreat was a great success. Our outcomes from our gathering were as follows:

A Duke University study found that eighty-five percent of seminary graduates entering the ministry leave within five years and ninety percent of all pastors will not stay to retirement.¹ Studies by the Alban Institute and Fuller Seminary found that fifty percent of ministers drop out of ministry within the first five years and many never to go back to church again.²

These statistics demonstrate there is a crisis in ministry. That crisis is not limited to those who are leaving ministry, but also affects churches left without leaders. Why are ministers leaving? Many factors exist, but notably ministers complain they were ill prepared, were not well connected, and did not see to matters of self-care and self-discipline.

Yet there is hope. The Ministers Council, ABCUSA, through a grant provided by the Lilly Endowment Sustaining Pastoral Excellence initiative, led the Together in Ministry program from 2002-2012. Through this 10-year study, we have learned and conclude that:

Successful ministers cultivate consistent collegial support relationships.

Specifically, such relationships eliminate isolation, transforming “Lone Rangers” by providing a safe, confidential place and framework in which to make friends and realize healthy collegiality. The Together in Ministry program provides a flexible support system that encourages collaboration and spurs creativity, leading to greater success in sustaining ministers.

Despite the relative success of the Together in Ministry program, such endorsements have not led to overwhelming adoption, as a number of issues impact participation. The culture of individualization in ministry is clearly a factor, because the need for support is often seen as a weakness. Insufficient funding and lack of time are recognized as obstacles as ministers struggle with the potential costs and priority of gathering. Related is the issue of distance because some live in geographically dispersed areas, making face-to-face gatherings difficult. Diversity becomes an issue as language, cultural, generational, and gender differences impact the ability to come together. In general, these issues may more accurately

¹ Stewart, K, “Keeping Your Pastor: An Emerging Challenge,” *Journal for the Liberal Arts and Sciences*, 13, no. 3 (2009): 112.

² Meek, K. McMinn, M., Brower, C., Burnett, T., McRay, B., Ramey, M., et al., “Maintaining Personal Resiliency: Lessons Learned from Evangelical Protestant Clergy,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 31.4(9), 339-47.

speak of a broken denominational system where there is a lack of articulation about the value of Together in Ministry and a lack of awareness of what is available or possible.

Nevertheless, as we let go of the constraints that limit our thinking and relegate Together in Ministry to the status of a program, we believe we can transform Together in Ministry to a philosophy: an unapologetically bold, expectation-filled, value-added way of life for successful ministry. Specifically we will “let go” of the mentality of Ministers Council ownership, where the pastor is the beneficiary and funding and geography serve as limiting factors. Instead, we will “let come” the idea of stakeholder ownership with broad-based beneficiaries where participants are able to realize fulfillment, empowerment, cultivation, surprise and imagination. We will “let come” an environment that is willing to experiment, is not afraid of failure, and fosters meaningful measures. We will do this by encouraging ministers to come together to exercise covenant care and accountability, where gatherings are characterized by spirituality and learning. We will encourage ministers to come together to partner, inspire, and support one another.

The catalytic spark that shifts our thinking will be motivated as we demonstrate what is needed for, and what is happening in, successful ministry. Therefore, in our communications and outreach we will develop strategic partnerships with regional associations and councils. We will engage in targeted marketing with a range of constituencies. And we will draw upon our relational connections that include new TIM potentials, current TIM participants, congregations, seminaries, the National Executive Committee of the ABCUSA, foundations, donors, retired pastors, estates, national boards, and the personal support systems of the ministers' family and friends.

In the immediate term, with God's help we will do the following:

- Clearly define the characteristics of a “successful, healthy minister”.
- Identify and engage past and current TIM participants;
- Collect TIM exemplars and vivid vignettes to communicate in both targeted and broad settings, media and events;
- Partner with seminaries to connect all (ABC) graduates with TIM;
- Begin with “low-hanging fruit” and prioritize early-impact partners
- Identify for-profit/not-for-profit partnerships to generate short-term and long-term sources of revenue;
- Create a visible and “cool” award to increase awareness of Together in Ministry;
- Develop a TIM phone app to increase awareness, connect potential participants, and generate excitement about Together in Ministry.

It is my desire that we continue to move this effort forward, expanding Together in Ministry from simply a program to a philosophy that is a way of life. It is a core competency of the Ministers Council to foster collegial relationships and this will be a continuing priority for us. Help us to continue the momentum of Together in Ministry. If your TIM group continues to meet, please send an email to me at Debra.Jackson@abc-usa.org. Tell me about your group, what you do together as a group, and what has sustained you as you have continued to meet. I invite you to work with me in the effort to compile our stories and best practices, so that we can share our stories, excite others to the possibilities and extend Together in Ministry for greater success in ministry.

Debra Jackson



Update on the TIM Capital Campaign

I feel like Jerry Lewis during the MDA Labor Day Telethons asking Ed McMahon for a timpani drum roll. It's good news. This month, we stand at \$340,763.05. Of that, \$274,403.05 is cash and \$66,360 is in-kind donations. We are more than one third of the way toward our campaign goal. Thank you to all of you who have contributed.

But we are not done yet and our work continues. Training for Capital Campaign callers will occur on April 12 at 4:00 PM Eastern. We want to ensure that our efforts to canvass prospective donors are as strong as possible. If you are interested in being trained as part of this call campaign, please send an email message to Debra.Jackson@abc-usa.org. Your help is needed.

Moreover, as you can see from the TIM Re-visioning Retreat report, we have a real opportunity to dramatically expand Together in Ministry. This expansion will not be as a result of someone doling out mini grants to would-be groups. No, the expansion will happen because we recognize the tremendous benefit that is the result of collegial gatherings, where coming together is the real goal.

This mindset frees us to consider anew how to best leverage our campaign contributions to help equip our groups: gathering their stories and experiences; connecting groups together for sharing and learning; identifying and promoting best practices so that our groups are more effective in their gatherings; and mentoring new groups so that they have the opportunity to flourish as those who have been meeting for many years. I am inspired by the idea that our capital campaign could bring these kinds of facilitated services to our groups for the future of TIM. Such a vision provides the continuing impetus for the success of our capital campaign.

So I encourage you to support the Together in Ministry Capital Campaign. Each month we are going up, but we still need you. Go to go to <http://www.ministerscouncil.com/CapitalCampaign2012/documents/12TIMResponsePrintFINAL.pdf> to make your tax deductible contribution.



The National Leadership Council Meeting Update

I had the opportunity to attend my first NLC meeting held in Green Lake, WI on April 2-5. The NLC, as I understand, is part of the new Mission Table restructuring effort of the denomination. The NLC is comprised of the President of ABCUSA, the General Secretary and up to three staff members from his office, representatives of the National Boards, Regional Executive Ministers, and the Executive Directors of American Baptist Women's Ministers, The Ministers Council, American Baptist Assembly, American Baptist Extension Corporation, American Baptist Historical Society, and American Baptist Foundation.

Our purpose in meeting, according to ABCUSA bylaws, is to build and foster authentic relationships within the NLC, participate in continuing education related to respective executive roles; facilitate implementation of Denominational priorities; demonstrate progress on those priorities in their respective boards; conduct trend analysis; suggest means of improving the functioning of the Denomination; and participate in theological reflection.

This being my first meeting, I had no grounds upon which to compare this gathering with what had been in the past. However, borrowing (without permission, I might add) from Larry Greenfield, Executive Minister of Metro Chicago, "What a difference a couple of years makes!" Per his recollection, and that of

others, previous meetings were highly contentious such that no one looked forward to them. But with God's grace, our meetings have changed and it was an exciting experience.

Tuesday evening featured a wonderful tribute dinner to Sumner Grant, former Executive Director of MMBB and Riley Walker, Retiring Executive Minister of ABC of the Dakotas. It was a wonderful night of tributes, reflection and sharing for two well-loved colleagues.

Having read the book *Journey into the Wilderness* by Gil Rendle, we were treated to a presentation on Wednesday by consultant Richard Burnham, entitled "The Wilderness Required Wandering." The presentation and panel discussion about the book allowed us to consider ways that we can work together in the NLC as we face the changing nature of denominational life. The book was a fascinating comparison of how the past 40 years in denominational life has been like the Children of Israel wandering in the wilderness. The ways of being and doing that served us well as churches and denominations through the 1950s and 1960s no longer work today. We find that we are in the wilderness. The wilderness learning has implication for our future and yet provides an encouragement to learn new ways of being and doing.

Thursday featured a session called Open Spaces Dialogue, where we had the opportunity to engage in dialogue on important questions to our life together as the NLC and the denomination. Through our gathering, we discussed topics such as diversity, bi-vocational pastors, and increasing collaboration.

Friday provided the opportunity for us to hear from the Historical Society, Ministers Council and MMBB before engaging in a document issued by the World Council of Churches entitled "The Church – Towards a Common Vision". It was an important opportunity to share how we as American Baptists may or may not be able to form closer ecumenical relationships with other faith traditions based on how we hold and implement important tenets of the faith.

Each day we engaged in a meaningful time of worship and sitting with the word. The opportunity to engage in washing one another's hands prior to serving communion to one another was particularly meaningful.

The entire time together was a wonderful time of sharing and collaborating. Our new structure requires that we meet twice per year. Our next meeting will be in November where we will have the opportunity to share the learning from the Mission Table Summit in June.

Mission Summit Breakfast for Ministerial Leaders



The Ministers Council is pleased to announce a partnership with the office of American Baptist Women in Ministry (ABWIM) to co-sponsor a special breakfast for ABC ministerial leaders at the upcoming Mission Summit. We are gathering "For Such a Time as This," to celebrate our Ministerial Leaders and our ABC partnerships, but also in recognition of the new leadership and direction of the Ministers Council. We are called for such a time as this and we want to celebrate who we are now, while looking with expectation toward the future.

The breakfast will be held on Friday, June 21, 2013 from 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. at the Overland Park Convention Center. Ministerial leaders are invited to be the guests of the Ministers Council and ABWIM and will be admitted without a cost.



The Ministers Council office will send invitations to those ministerial leaders who have registered for the Mission Summit. If you are an ABC ministerial leader (pastor, chaplain, pastoral counselor, commissioned missionary, region or national staff person, seminary staff person or seminarian), have registered for the Mission Summit and would like to request a ticket to this breakfast, you need not wait

for your invitation letter. Simply contact Sue Sechrist in the Ministers Council office with an email, sue.sechrist@abc-usa.org or call her at 1-800-222-3872 extension 2334.

ABWIM “After Party”

In addition to ABWIM co-sponsoring with the Ministers Council the breakfast for Ministerial Leaders on Friday morning, June 21 at the Mission Summit, we would like to invite everyone to ABWIM’s “After Party” Event on Friday night for an evening of delicious food, celebration, and connecting with other Women in Ministry and their supporters. Sign up when you register for the Mission Summit. Hope to see you at both the Ministerial Leaders Breakfast and the ABWIM After Party!



Will You be There?

Mission Summit 2013: An American Baptist Biennial Gathering is June 21-23, 2013, in Overland Park, Kansas, and YOU ARE INVITED! Thanks to a new registration process, it is easier than ever for individuals to attend. New in 2013, **churches** can register, allowing individuals from registered churches to register at a discounted rate. When a church registers for the event, an individual from that church may register for the *low fee of only \$35*.



Mission Summit 2013 features [powerful speakers](#), exciting worship opportunities, and above all a chance to connect through the new Mission Summit Conversations.

The Mission Summit Conversations are an open opportunity for anyone attending the Mission Summit/Biennial to engage in meaningful dialogue about a topic of interest by self-selecting into a small group. The Mission Summit Conversations will allow for: an understanding that they and their local congregations are not alone in the challenges that they face in mission and ministry; contact information and helpful insights from others who are facing similar challenges; and an experience to inspire discernment and excitement about possible experiments for their local church setting.

To learn more, visit the event website at: www.americanbaptists2013.com.



The 7R's of Sanctuary: A Spiritual Process for Leadership Effectiveness

Realizing Leadership Efficacy will explore leadership efficacy, what it takes for a leader to be his/her most-effective best, in order to provide a profile of the behavioral qualities that most positively impact leadership efficacy. This session will help leaders understand those behaviors that resonate strongly with those they lead, while helping the leader to avoid the pitfalls that thwart leadership. [Read more>>>](#)

Is there someone in your church who thinks God is calling them to be a missionary? Are they wondering what's involved and how to prepare for cross-cultural global mission service?



AMERICAN BAPTIST
INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES
COME. GROW. CHANGE.
www.internationalministries.org

Tell them about **Embrace the Cause: Stepping Into Global Mission** August 9 – 12, 2013 at the Green Lake Conference Center, Wisconsin.

During this high intensity, focused weekend exploration they will meet with IM staff and missionaries to evaluate their call, pray with them, answer questions and banish misconceptions of what it means to be a missionary in today's world. There will be opportunities for worship, Bible study and personal reflection time that combine to make the weekend a powerful discernment experience. Your church members will leave with a clear understanding of next steps in the process.

Registration is \$80, meals and housing are additional. Scholarship help is available. Visit the IM website for details.

Upcoming Events for Women

May 13-17, 2013, "For I Was a Stranger and You Welcomed Me: Immigrants and Refugees", a virtual mission encounter, invites participants to explore issues of immigration and the experience of refugees in the U.S. Special guests include Rev. Carol McVetty (pastor of Northshore Baptist Church in Chicago, a multi-cultural congregation); Jim Morris (director of Refugee, Immigration & Language Services at the Catholic Family Center in Rochester, NY); Rev. Aundrea Alexander (national coordinator for Refugee Resettlement and Immigration Services at ABHMS); Rev. Duane Binkley (missionary to the Karen in Thailand and the U.S., with International Ministries ABCUSA and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship); and Dr. Elizabeth Conde-Frazier (dean of Esperanza College of Eastern University and author of *Listen to the Children: Conversations with Immigrant Families*). \$30 to register.

Let the women in your congregations know about **Women's Day, "A Time to Serve," is Friday, June 21st, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., at the Overland Park Convention Center in Overland Park, Kansas.** Registration begins at 8:00 a.m.; program begins at 9:00 a.m. The Bible study leader is Rev. Karen Selig, the music leader is Holly Balch, and missionary Marcia Binkley and Htoo May, president of the Karen Baptist Women's Association in the U.S., will help us celebrate the 200th anniversary of Anne and Adoniram Judson's mission in Burma. A Karen Choir from Grace Baptist Church in Kansas City, Missouri, will enhance our celebrations with music. The AB GIRLS of Central Region will bring leadership during part of our afternoon session, filling us with energy! Come for Women's Day and stay for the Mission Summit, the Biennial Gathering of American Baptists. Ticket price for Women's Day: \$50 includes full program and hot, plated luncheon. (Women's Day tickets are available through AB Women's Ministries, see below.)

Choose one of three concurrent events for women and girls this summer at the Pointe Hilton Squaw Peak Resort in Phoenix, Arizona. The **National Women's Conference** and the **National Gathering for Girls** will occur Saturday, July 27, through Thursday, August 1. The **National Young Adult Women's Conference** will be Saturday, July 27, through Monday, July 29th. In addition to the individual conference schedules and speakers, there are plenty of intergenerational activities across these three events to give women and girls the opportunity to both connect with their peers as well as learn from one another.

Downloadable flyers and bulletin inserts are available on the website for you to use to promote these events in your congregation; you may also call the AB Women's Ministries office to request brochures at (610) 768-2288.

For more information about any of these events sponsored by American Baptist Women's Ministries, and online registration, visit www.abwministries.org, and click on the link in the right-hand menu under "Events."



ABHMS Encourages Connection via Missional Networking Website

American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) encourages mission volunteers and those offering mission opportunities throughout the United States and Puerto Rico to connect via the ecumenical website MissionalNetworking.org.

The purpose of the website, according to its home page, is "to connect missional faith communities with volunteers, resources, and one another in service that transforms the lives of individuals and communities, making visible the Kingdom of God."

Features include the following:

- a Google Maps-powered interactive map that allows users to indicate their entity's location and categorize it via color coding as a "Mission Field," "Volunteer Team," "Resource Site," "Missional Community" or "Disaster Relief";
- resources, including mission-related terms and definitions;
- "Missional 1-2-1" blog about the missional church as a model and its theological/biblical basis; and
- "Stories from the Front Lines" blog, offering personal narratives about mission experiences.

The site was founded by a handful of Wisconsin pastors who were using the missional model in their own communities. Seeking to expand, they contacted the Rev. Dr. Ronald Carlson, ABHMS missional church strategist, regarding ABHMS sponsorship.

"These pastors said, 'We don't know who else is doing this, and we want to start connecting with each other,'" says Carlson. "The first concept was to develop a map to see who is located where. Then they asked, 'What if we would like to have others come work with us?' so the Mission Field piece was added, and the map began to evolve."

Eventually resources and blogs were added. A National Campus Ministry Association page is expected soon.

Individuals of all faith traditions are invited to post on the map and to submit blog posts for consideration. Submissions will be edited, and Carlson ensures contributors that an academic writing style is not required.

For additional information regarding www.missionalnetworking.org, contact Carlson at ronald.carlson@abhms.org or 1-800-222-3872, x2416.

Spring 2013 Latest Releases from Judson Press

Judson's most recent release, *The Star Book for Pastoral Counseling* by Jason Richard Curry, provides a comprehensive overview of pastoral counseling as a critical aspect of pastoral care. *Beyond the Stained Glass Ceiling* is based on a national survey of female clergy and offers insight, empowerment, and inspiration for women in the pastorate familiar with the reality of the stained glass ceiling. And author Donald Hilliard Jr. describes his journey through midlife and those of other clergy, offering wisdom and practical counsel for ministering after age 40. Hilliard's work *Midlife, Manhood & Ministry* has been endorsed by Bishop T.D. Jakes.

The Star Book for Pastoral Counseling retails for \$15.99, *Beyond the Stained Glass Ceiling* \$16.99, and *Midlife, Manhood & Ministry* sells for \$14.99. Order these titles by calling 800-458-3766 or visiting www.judsonpress.com. As always, save 20% when you order online!

Check out the New Blog by Alice Greene, Past President of the Ministers Council

I've started a blog about something that is close to my heart-- the need for people of faith to become involved in social action. I hope you'll take the time to read and comment on my weekly postings. I truly believe that with faith, we can move mountains! I hope you do, too. Let me know what you think by posting on the website: aliceburnettegreene.com



Other Events

- Presidents' Conference Call
 - To be announced
- TIM Capital Campaign Canvasser's Training – April 12
- ABCOTS Annual Gathering – April 17-19
- Ministers Council of Michigan Clergy Retreat – April 22
- Ministers Council Greater Indianapolis & Ministers Council Indiana/Kentucky Retreat – April 29-30
- New York Ministers Council Annual Ministers Enrichment Day – May 6
- Ministers Council of Maine Clergy Retreat – May 6-7
- Pacific Coast Baptist Association Retreat, Oakland, CA – May 11
- Ministers Council of Rhode Island Retreat – May 13-14
- First Baptist Church of Greater Cleveland Retreat – May 18
- Ministers Council of New Hampshire and Vermont Retreat – May 31 – June 1
- Pastoral Excellence Network Training – Cleveland, OH – June 11 – 12
- ABCUSA Mission Summit – Overland Park, KS – June 19 – 23

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

Web: www.ministerscouncil.org
Mail: The Ministers Council
PO Box 851
Valley Forge PA 19482-0851
Phone: 1-800-222-3872, extension 2333, 2334
FAX: 610/768-2066

Join the Ministers Council through your local constituent council. Contact information is posted on www.ministerscouncil.org under the WHO WE ARE link.