



Ministers Council Newsletter

Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson, Executive Director

June 2013

From the Desk of the Executive Director

Phew! It's June. As a pastor, there was always a sigh of relief that would occur as I reached June because I knew that church life would soon slow down. Admittedly, I feel the same way as an Executive Director. I have jokingly said to folks that from the moment Jesus got up on Resurrection Sunday, I've been on a plane, traveling every week from then until now. While I am a bit weary, in all honesty, it has been an honor. In my travels, I have had the opportunity to meet with so many of you, my clergy colleagues, all over the country - and that has been a real privilege.



But there has also been an affirmation of the Ministers Council and our reason for existence. As we gathered in so many retreat settings, I started to recognize a common look: it was the look of parched, exhausted travelers. There were times when I saw fatigue and weariness on your faces. At times I saw frustration and challenge. Sometimes there was a longing for connection and the opportunity to simply be with colleagues. But something else would also happen as we gathered and had time for the fellowship. I could literally see our colleagues exhale. Stress would start to fall away. Laughter would come more easily. Everything would loosen and you could almost sense the question, as audible sighs of relief were sounded, "Why did I wait so long?"

And truly that is the question: why do we wait so long? Why are we nearly dehydrated and dying before we take time for ourselves? I met pastors who served over 20 years before taking a Sabbatical. I met pastors who haven't been paid by their churches in months because of financial conditions. I met pastors who were bi-vocational not by choice, but by necessity. I met pastors with dwindling congregations who were struggling to keep their churches open. And because of these challenging situations, the idea of self-care had gone out the window. We were busily taking care of others, but neglecting the care and camaraderie needed for our own health and well-being so much so that by the time we got to June, we were dragging and on empty.

Traveling as much as I do now, I can almost deliver the pre-flight instructions that never really vary regardless of the airline. We are always reminded that should the cabin pressure drop and oxygen masks appear, we should put our own masks on before assisting others. The same is true for us. We need to put on our own mask - engage in our own spiritual care and nurture - before we can extend such care for others. Jesus is our source and supply, but we need to connect to him so that the rivers of water can flow

from our bellies. We also need to connect to and be in connection with our colleagues for our sustenance and well-being.

That need for connection was part of the reason for establishing the Ministers Council. Who understands the stresses of ministry better than those who are in ministry? Moreover, as we engage in peer group relationships where we can connect with and be in fellowship with others, we are healthier in ministry than those who are not in such relationships. These facts are compellingly highlighted in the new book *So Much Better: How Thousands of Pastors Help Each Other Thrive* by Penny Long Marler, et. al. The Ministers Council exists to foster these kinds of connections - clergy gatherings, access to information, opportunities for continuing education, prayer and spiritual deepening. I want to see you leverage these opportunities for your own well-being.

But don't get me wrong. At the end of the day, this is not a plug for membership in the Ministers Council. Sure, I want all of our colleagues to be connected to the Ministers Council. But by the same token, my earnest hope and prayer is that you to find that connection either through the Ministers Council or in your own sphere of influence so that you are sustained and not drained, saturated and not starved, thriving and not just surviving.

And for each of you who are now finally getting that breather, given that it's June, may God give you what you need to fulfill with excellence the call that God has placed on your life. In addition, may you find colleagues that will love you and lift you as God strengthens and sustains.



Membership Benefits for Ministers Council Members – Discount on Women’s Clergy Robes

Designer Tina Scott of Bride of Christ Robes is partnering with the Ministers Council so that members of the Ministers Council may order women’s clergy apparel and receive a 5% discount on your order. You must present a copy of your valid 2013 Ministers Council Membership Card to receive the discount. See the collection at <http://www.brideofchristrobes.com>.



Pastoral Excellence Network Partner Gathering

In May, I had the privilege of traveling to Indianapolis to participate in one of two gatherings for participants from the Lilly Endowment’s Sustaining Pastoral Excellence and Transition into Ministry programs sponsored by the Pastoral Excellence Network. More than 60 institutions were funded over the past decade, encouraging collegial gathering and support for new and seasoned ministers across the country. Now that funding is completed, a continuing effort has been established called the Pastoral Excellence Network whose goal is to sustain the momentum and amplify the impact of the Lilly Endowment Transition into Ministry (TiM) and Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) programs. Leaders from programs that have continued to operate were invited to participate in one of two gatherings in order to discuss our learnings and share ideas for continuing the SPE and TiM programs.

On our first full day together, we spent time hearing one another's stories from the two programs and the commonalities of our experiences. The goal was to identify the core values and key practices of our efforts in order to determine opportunities for the future. Given our desires for the future, we strategized on how the Pastoral Excellence Network could help. From my vantage, I could see the opportunity for the Ministers Council to have a facilitative function for our Together in Ministry groups as the Pastoral Excellence Network seeks to have with on-going SPE and TiM programs. I have been invited to have continuing conversations with the program director about such possibilities.

On our second day, we considered the challenges and opportunities that we had identified during the course of our gathering and how best to position ourselves to address them in order to maximize program continuation. As ideas emerged, we captured and shared them with program leaders so that next steps could be identified. One key next step was to have for our benefit the roster of participants, descriptions of programs and the resources that were identified through our implementation experiences. We have this information for the cohort of leaders with whom we gathered, but we will also receive the descriptions from the first team of leaders who met. We will also receive all of the notes that have come from the two gatherings that convened over the period of 2 ½ days each.

What was clear from the conversations is that many judicatories, seminaries, churches and faith-based organizations are experiencing similar challenges now that funding is coming to an end. The programs have been so significant and transformative that no one wants to see them end simply because funding has ceased, but some will struggle to continue without financial assistance. Nevertheless, there was an overwhelming desire to determine how best to continue the efforts and what we could do to expand the programs for the future.

Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program participants were buoyed the common belief that "successful ministers cultivate consistent collegial support relationships," which was an outcome of the Together in Ministry Re-visioning retreat that I sponsored in March. In fact, Lilly program leaders echoed my words saying that if this work was reduced to just another program, we will have failed. These initiatives have to be recognized as life giving and necessary for our own well-being in ministry. With this philosophy and mentality, our collective hope is that individual ministers will see the value of personal investment in such gatherings because coming together for support and collegiality is seen as being essential for our well-being.

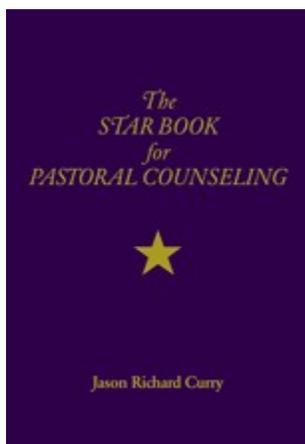
The Ministers Council did not participate in the Transition into Ministry program – where new seminary graduates are called and contracted to serve in a congregation for two to three years and given real ministerial responsibilities. Richer than what many of us may have experienced through Field Education, these pastors were able to serve as associate pastors with real duties and responsibilities, while having the benefit of a senior pastor and other mentors to undergird them in their experience. They also had the benefit of participating in peer groups for continued reflection and learning. These TiM-experiences were significant in helping to reduce the levels of pastoral attrition that we are seeing in the first three to five years of ministry because these new ministers felt supported rather than isolated and alone in ministry. I could see application for our regions, particularly where we may be struggling to find ministers to serve. What if we could build a network of mentors such that new pastors could come to open pulpits but realize the kind of intentional support that is so critical to success in those first years of a new pastorate? This idea might be worth piloting for exploration and consideration, using the implementation experiences from other program participants as an aid.

In a continuing and related programmatic effort, the Pastorate Excellence Network is sponsoring an introduction and facilitator training program for Clergy Communities of Practice. Clergy Communities of Practice are seen as a primary vehicle to strengthen and sustain pastoral excellence for both new and seasoned pastors. This session will explore how to facilitate and to launch peer support and learning groups. I will be participating in this training this week with the hope that I will be able to utilize the training to help the Ministers Council expand our Together in Ministry program as well as provide best practices, tips and techniques to continuing groups.

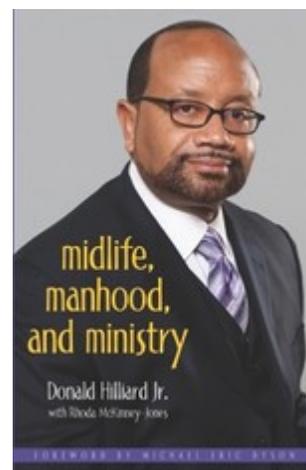
The Pastoral Excellence Network has been put in place as a support to our ministerial efforts. Please take the time to explore the rich resources available for yourself at <http://www.cpx.cts.edu/network>. I would also encourage you to note that the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Programs is now managed by Christian Theological Seminary. Information about Clergy Renewal programs can also be found at this same URL.

Debora Jackson

Judson Press Offers Free Shipping for Ministers Council Members



Keeping up on the latest Judson Press Books? Maybe you're interested in the new release from Jason Richard Curry, *The Star Book For Pastoral Counseling*. Perhaps you would like to get Rev. Christine Smith's new book *Beyond the Stained Glass Ceiling: Equipping and Encouraging Female Pastors*. And not to leave out our clergy men, maybe you are interested in getting a copy of *Midlife, Manhood, and Ministry* by Donald Hilliard Jr.



Well, good news! Through our partnership with Judson Press, Ministers Council members will be able to receive free shipping on all orders over \$15.00, excluding curriculum and *The Secret Place*, for 2013. Please note that the discount cannot be used in combination with other offers. Take advantage of this terrific offer and benefit for Ministers Council members. Please contact your Regional Council President for the discount code.

Other Events

- Presidents' Conference Call
 - Next call will be scheduled for September
- Pastoral Excellence Network Communities of Practice Training – Cleveland, OH – June 11 – 13
- ABCUSA Mission Summit – Overland Park, KS – June 19 – 23
- Ministers Council Senate – Green Lake, WI – August 11-15

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.

Ralph Garfield Schell President's Award

Everyday heroes are all around us. This is as true of ministerial service as it is of any other helping profession. You no doubt have noticed a ministerial colleague who faithfully discharges his/her duties with great effectiveness, or who has taken up a cause out of commitment to the Lord and the church, even if it has been costly.

That is the person I would like to know about. He/she is a worthy candidate for the [Ralph Garfield Schell](#) Presidential Award granted by the Ministers Council. Since 1996, this recognition of excellence in ministry has been awarded to a pastoral leader who has been faithful in carrying out the principles of the Ministers Council's Code of Ethics.

The [Ralph Garfield Schell Award](#) is named for the first President of the national Ministers Council, who served in the late 1930's, while also leading the Baptist Churches in Chicago and serving on various denominational and ecumenical Boards.

All nominations should be made using the simple nomination form and should be post marked by July 22, 2013.

We look forward to receiving the name of your nominee and supporting factual data in the near future. The selection is not gender, geographical or culturally biased.

Kindly return the nomination form to:

Ministers Council, ABCUSA
PO Box 851
Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851
Or email: sue.sechrist@abc-usa.org

[Nomination Form PDF](#)
[Nomination Form \(Word Document\)](#)
[Ministers Council Code of Ethics](#)
[Committee Objectives, which form the criteria of the Award](#)

ABHMS Seeks Volunteers for Various Rebuilding Efforts

American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) seeks volunteers to help rebuild homes, churches, communities and lives devastated by natural disaster.

New Jersey

While the first two weeks of the Hurricane Sandy response effort "Coming Together for New Jersey...Rebuild, Renew and Restore" took place May 4-11 and June 1-8, volunteers are needed July 13-20 and Aug. 10-17. This effort is co-sponsored by American Baptist Churches of New Jersey.

Louisiana

Continuing eight years after hurricanes Katrina and Rita ravaged the Gulf Coast, Ecumenical Work Week is slated for Aug. 4-10 in New Orleans. This year's effort will once again include painting, laying sheet

rock, cutting grass and running errands. Neither construction skills nor training is required. Unskilled volunteers will be supervised by skilled workers.

Oklahoma

American Baptist Men-USA is currently providing tornado cleanup in Moore, Okla., but ABHMS seeks additional volunteers to send via Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. From debris removal to donation resource center work, volunteer opportunities for all ages and skill levels are available. A \$10 charge per person per day provides sleeping space, showers and three meals. Please bring your own bedding and tools if possible.

For additional information and to register for volunteer mission opportunities, visit www.abhms.org and click "[Volunteer](#)," or contact Victoria Goff, ABHMS national coordinator, Volunteer Ministries, at victoria.goff@abhms.org, 800-222-3872, x2449, or 610-768-2449.



August 9 – 12
Green Lake Conference Center
Green Lake, Wisconsin

There's still time! There's still room!

If someone in your church thinks God is calling them to be a missionary, encourage them to attend this focused weekend retreat. They'll get practical knowledge of what it takes to be in global mission service, banish misconceptions and learn how to get started.

Attendees will talk and pray with missionaries like Mercy Gonzalez-Barnes (Mexico), Walt White (Bangladesh), Ketly and Vital Pierre (Nicaragua), Debbie & Flint Miller (formerly in the Philippines), Kristy Engel (Caribbean), and Becky & Larry Stanton who will be going to Liberia.

Registration is \$80. Limited scholarship help is available from International Ministries. Write to recruitment@internationalministries.org or call 800 222-3872 ext. 2245.

Housing, meals and airport shuttle is arranged through Green Lake.

<http://www.internationalministries.org/read/47661-embrace-the-cause-retreat>

Specialized Book Drive for Karen Refugees Overseas*

We ask your help in our effort to collect theological books to send to four Bible schools in refugee camps in Thailand. With the Lord's help, the goal is to collect donations of up to 20,000 quality books, enough to fill a 20 ft. shipping container, to be shipped to Thailand.

The four Bible schools to be helped include: **The Siloam Karen Baptist Bible School in Chiang Mai, Thailand; The Kawthoolei Karen Baptist Bible School and College; Mae Ra Mo Baptist Bible School; and Mae La Oon Bible School.** These schools serve Karen refugees from Burma living in the refugee camps along the Thai-Burma border or ethnic Karen living in Thailand with Thai citizenship. Each of these schools either has recently expanded their curriculum to include pastoral leadership training in English, or is beginning a new curriculum. The Kawthoolei Karen Baptist Bible School and College is a

long-standing, well-known pastoral leadership training program that recently suffered a catastrophic fire, destroying their school buildings entirely. The library has now been rebuilt and is better than ever, but their library collection was destroyed.

Books needed are those that would address the various subjects in the curriculum including college and seminary level references, commentaries, histories (mission, general Christian, Ancient Near and Middle East, Baptist), counseling (that isn't too heavily U.S.-centered), preaching, Christian education, principals of relationships, ministry ethics, etc. Many pastor's libraries would have these kind of books from seminary or while on the job. Often, when pastors retire, they look for places to donate these books. This book drive would be an excellent outlet!

What is not needed: books that are too culturally American-centered; devotionals are not very helpful; things written by sports figures or even some of the popular Christian writers (these give great U.S.-based illustrations and scriptural applications that are meaningful in the U.S. but wouldn't mean much in the refugee camp). The emphasis is here on educational college- or seminary-level texts.

Collected books need to be marked "**Karen refugees-Thailand**" and sent to:
International Book Project
1440 Delaware Ave.
Lexington, KY 40505
Phone: 859 254 6771
E-mail contact is Todd Johnson at: admin@intlbookproject.org

The International Book Project (IBP) will collect the books and arrange shipment once enough books have been collected. Unfortunately, there are no special funds available to help transport the books to IBP in Kentucky. The cost of shipping or transport to IBP is part of your contribution. Books will be collected until a container is filled or the end of September, whichever comes first.

In addition to books, **funds are needed for shipping**. A 20 ft. container costs approximately \$6,000 for shipment to Bangkok. Another \$6,000 will then be needed to get the shipment through customs, to Chiang Mai, and then out to the camps. A total of \$12,000 is needed.

Through the American Baptist Churches system, any financial contributions can be sent to International Ministries, PO Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851, as a "Specific gift" to Duane & Marcia Binkley. If a contribution is sent for this purpose, please let the Binkleys know directly by sending a note to duane@karenkonnection.org.

For any questions, further information or a copy of the curriculum, contact Duane Binkley at duane@karenkonnection.org.

**Excerpted from a longer article available through KarenKonnection.org. For complete article, contact Duane at duane@karenkonnection.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.