



Ministers Council Newsletter

Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson, Executive Director

August 2013

From the Desk of the Executive Director

August 28, 2013 marks the 50th Anniversary of the March on Washington for Freedom and Jobs. The march was initiated by A. Philip Randolph and sponsored by five of the largest Civil Rights organizations in the United States. By 11:00 AM on August 28th, more than 200,000 marchers gathered on the Washington Mall to peacefully promote civil rights and economic equality. A diverse crowd was moved and motivated by speakers and music, the culminating address being delivered by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. His soaring words encouraged us all to have a dream. It was a milestone event. It was powerful with a lasting impact, more orderly than anyone could have imagined, and considered now a high and galvanizing point in the Civil Rights Movement.



Fifty years later, I cannot help but wonder what would motivate us to march today? What would move us to take to the streets? Certainly the events of the past year could have encouraged us to lace up our sturdy walking shoes: Gun violence in Newtown, CT; the shooting death of Trayvon Martin and later acquittal of George Zimmerman; the overturning of key provisions in the Voting Rights Acts; the need for jobs that pay a living wage; the widening gap between the haves and the have nots; immigration and the need for a path for citizenship for millions of undocumented residents; LGBT equality; or environmental justice. I do not know your issue, but would any of these concerns that are hotly contested in some areas of our country motivate you to exercise your civic duty to speak up and speak out?

And what about us, the ministers of the gospel? As God declares through the prophet Isaiah, we are to seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan and plead for the widow. Thus our mandate to cry violence and to love justice is fundamental in the fabric of who we are as a people of faith and demanded even more so of us who are the leaders. But are we marching? Are we mobilizing others to do so?

I am reminded of a scene from the movie Spiderman 2. Peter Parker has decided that he no longer wants to be Spiderman. He wants to live a normal existence and pursue the life he wants. Having hung up his leotard, there is a scene where sirens blare on a busy city street, yet Peter Parker stands as a spectator, shoving a hot dog into his mouth. He is no longer moved to react in the face of danger or the call to arms. He is content to watch what is going on from the sidelines. Like Peter Parker, many of us have become

spectators. We watch the unfolding tragic events of our time; we see the drama before our eyes. But are we motivated to do more than say to those in earshot, "Isn't that a shame?"

It was Martin Niemöller, a Protestant Pastor, who said in a sermon, "First they came for the Jews and I did not speak out because I wasn't a Jew..." These may not be our issues, but as King said, "We are bound by an inescapable garment of mutuality, whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." And as the ministers of the gospel called of God, we must reclaim our prophetic voice, using it to speak up and speak out. Fifty years have passed since the March on Washington and sadly the issues of 1963 are just as prevalent in 2013. It is time for us to lace up our shoes, speak out in the public square, and cry out until justice rolls down like water and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

What Color is Your Paint Can?

By Nancy Leport



You are in the middle of a budget meeting with Ebenezer Scrooge and Jacob Marley when the phone rings. Mother Goose has been rushed to the hospital and it doesn't look like she is going to survive. You excuse yourself from the budget discussion which was going nowhere since mission and stewardship seemed to be a foreign concept to Eb and Jake.

At the hospital you discover that in fact her goose has been cooked and you spend time with the family, offer up prayer blessing Mother Goose on her way and set up a meeting to discuss the arrangements and services.

Just as you are leaving the hospital you run into Christopher Robin who has some theological and philosophical questions about your sermon on Sunday.

As you pull into the parking lot of the church you look at your watch and realize that your afternoon Bible Study began 10 minutes ago.

When you finally arrive home for dinner you feel like you are covered in layers of emotions, feelings and thoughts from your day but you cannot sort one from the others. Your body, heart, mind and spirit ache and you feel unable to shake off all the day's accumulated emotions and demands.

And the truth of the day is you cannot. You are figuratively covered in layers of tasks, people, grief, complaints and plans. Your mind and pulse are racing and even though your body would like to shut down and recover you know it is going to be a long night.

The other truth of this day is that this is a fairly typical day in the life of a pastor. We go from meeting to crisis to putting out fires to teaching to leading in rapid succession some days. By the end of the day we are spent with stress levels that are not healthy for us.

Let me share with you a tip that I learned to counteract the layering of thought, feelings and emotions that will leave you fully present in each new setting and with a much lower stress level.

Using the above tongue in cheek parishioners... Imagine that each event in your day is a different color paint can. The budget meeting is a red can of paint. The hospital crisis is a can of blue paint. The philosophical debate is a green can. The Bible study is a yellow one and your dinner at home is purple.

As you run from one event to the next imagine that you are dunking yourself in each can of paint. You jump out of the red paint only to immerse yourself in the blue one. From the blue one you sink into the green one. Now with all those colors dripping off you and coating your body you take a dip in the yellow and round it off with a dunk in the purple.

What color are you by the end of the day? I think the color is bleh...a sort of muddy gray with no vibrancy or trace of the individual colors left. You know what a paint brush would look like if you did this and what the resultant effect would be on a wall.

It is the same effect on you when you don't take time to wash off the 'paint' of each situation before you dive into the next one. You end up bleh...a sort of muddy gray in body, mind and spirit.

So here's the tip: Perform a transitional activity between each new event or meeting. It doesn't have to be a huge activity. It can be as simple as washing your hands and letting the water wash the residual away from that first encounter. Some people engage in 10 deep breaths to clear their minds and fill their bodies with juicy oxygen that increases your ability to think. Others listen to their ipods or CDs with music that allows them to de-stress. I am sure you have a short activity that you know will lower your stress and let you stay focused on the present moment. Do it!

Add to this a breath prayer as you make your way to the next activity or meeting and you are free of the previous color of paint that you were just immersed in. A breath prayer is simply a prayer that can be said in a breath. On the inhale say the name of God you are most comfortable with and on the exhale make your intention or desire known. For example, (inhale) Gracious God, (exhale) give me peace or let me focus or give me wisdom or calm me down or....whatever it is you feel you need for the next situation or person you will be addressing.

Being intentional about a transitional activity or ritual maintains our energy levels, lowers our stress levels, and brings us to a level of presence that like the peace of God passes all understanding. And your world will be awash in the colors of the rainbow reminding us that God's promises go with us every day.

"When the rainbow appears in the clouds, I'll see it and remember the eternal covenant between God and everything living, every last living creature on the earth." Genesis 9:16b (The Message)

Rev. Nancy Leport, is a graduate of Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School, an ordained American Baptist pastor, certified interim minister, and board certified life design coach who lives in Le Roy, NY and hopes to winter in Woodstock, GA. She also holds a Post Masters Certificate in the Practice of Spirituality from Boston College. She writes three blogs, one on Sabbath Taking (www.sabbathmoments.wordpress.com), one for church health and wellness (www.churchhealthandwellness.wordpress.com), and one for busy women (www.time4yourselfblog.wordpress.com). A former pastor, her passion is working with clergy who are feeling stressed by the demands of the pastorate.

Together in Ministry – An Update

Together in Ministry has been one of the successful implementations of a nationwide Sustaining Pastoral Excellence initiative funded by the Lilly Endowment. As the book *So Much Better: How Thousands of Pastors Help Each Other Thrive* asserts, participation in pastoral peer groups makes a tremendous difference for the health and well-being of pastors and their congregations. Ministerial leaders who participate in peer learning are more engaged in their own self-care and development. Ministerial leaders who participate in peer learning are significantly more likely to share leadership in their church. They are more likely to exhibit a healthy balance between personal life and work life, be more engaged in their communities, and more likely to commit to continuing education. In short, peer learning makes better pastors and ministers.

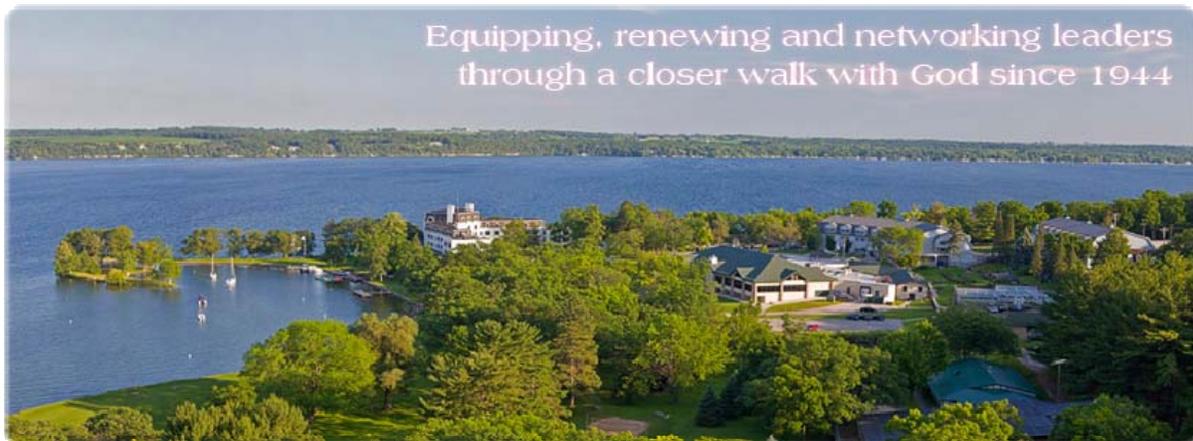


This is why we want to continue Together in Ministry. We have not only seen, but have also benefited from the successes and being committed to ministerial success, the Ministers Council is committed to Together in Ministry. Recently an email was sent to the 2012 roster of TIM group leaders asking leaders to respond if their TIM group was continuing to function. To date, I have heard from 21 groups. However, I

am certain that there are other groups from whom I have yet to hear. If you did not receive that email notice, and your group continues to function, please send email to Debora.Jackson@abc-usa.org. We are making the concerted effort to reestablish contact with all of our functioning TIM groups. Not only do we want to encourage our groups to continue to meet, but we also want to be able to contact you as plans for the next phase of this initiative are formed. We are in the early stages, but we intend to involve our still-functioning TIM groups in a comprehensive initiative focused on clergy health and wellness. This is an opportunity for your group to be a part of our continuing efforts to positively affect the wellness and health of our ministerial leaders.

We are also continuing the efforts of the Together in Ministry capital campaign. Nearing the end of the first year of the public phase of this campaign, we have made a good start but we have more to do and further to go. To date, we have raised \$341,000 in cash, pledges and in-kind donations. \$275,000 of the total is cash and pledges; \$66,000 of the total is in-kind donations. Our goal is \$1,100,000 with \$800,000 in cash and \$300,000 in in-kind donations. It does not take much to reach the goal. If the 7000 leaders who have been touched by Together in Ministry would contribute \$11.00 per year for our three year campaign, we would reach our cash goal. And then for those who are willing to contribute their expertise – workshop leadership, retreat leadership, facilitation experience, or the like – we can easily convert your time into a quantifiable gift to support the campaign.

Thousands of ministerial leaders are not wrong. Ministry is so much better when it is done with the support of colleagues who come together as peers to be in relationship with one another. It is so much better than going it alone. Contact me if you are interested in being a TIM group, if your group is still functioning or if you want to contribute. We stand poised to realize success. Let's reach the goal together by standing together in ministry.



Preparing for Ministers Council Senate

On August 12, representatives from the constituent councils of the Ministers Council will gather in Green Lake, WI for the annual Ministers Council Senate meeting. According to the history and dating back to the earliest days of the Ministers Council, each state or region within the Northern Baptist Convention was encouraged to establish a Council and select a delegate to attend the annual gathering of pastors. It was at these annual gatherings that the yearly business of the Council was conducted. We have continued this tradition since the late 1930s and our gathering next week will be in that same spirit.

This is also my first Ministers Council Senate as Executive Director. While I was in attendance at the Senate meeting last August, I was invited as the recommended candidate for the position of Executive Director. Now, I have the benefit and experience of this past year at the helm of our tremendous

organization. I bring the experiences of this year with me together with our representatives so that we might discern a new way forward for the Senate.

As I note in a presentation that I will make during Senate, I came to this position offering a specific strategic direction for the Ministers Council. For me, it was critical for us to:

- Show the value-add of being a part of the Ministers Council by demonstrating our distinctiveness;
- Identify and engage partners to help us fulfill our mission;
- “Productize” our offerings to help to equip and serve our members;
- And create a fund development capacity that results in a sustainable funding culture.

However, as I worked to execute this vision over the past year, I encountered challenges. We struggled with encouraging people to become members of the Ministers Council. There were those who saw joining the Ministers Council as the right thing to do, but others who saw no inherent value in it. There were challenges in establishing partnerships. Not only was that seen as a violation of our clergy code of ethics, but there were concerns about us moving too much toward being a business. Then there were difficulties in creating programming. Do we do webinars or seminars? Should these be offered by the national council or local council? Are they open to only members or to everyone? And then there was fund development. I found tolerance for or interest in giving money and the desire to ask others for money was even less.

And as I reflected on the challenges, I recognized that many of them were born from the long and at times tenuous history of even establishing a Ministers Council. Some argued that there was no need for such a clergy gathering because it was in opposition to our history and seen as being un-Baptist. There were issues from the beginning as to whether there would be educational standards as a requirement for membership. There were issues regarding funding and how the Ministers Council would be financially supported. There were tensions in the 1960s when the Ministers Council decided to become a professional society and when we adopted a more political identity. Truly the challenges that I confronted could be traced back to the, in some cases, decades-old arguments that formed the early history of the Ministers Council.

Nevertheless, we stand at the threshold of a new day. It would be naïve to say that some of the conversations about the direction of the Ministers Council and Senate are not motivated by financial challenges. It is true that the Ministers Council, like many of our denominational entities, relies too heavily on endowment funds to sustain current operations. However, focusing only on the limits causes us to be narrow minded and closes off our creativity. Who do we want to be? What do we want to achieve? More importantly, what is God calling us to? Those are the conversations in which we will engage during Senate. I, for one, am excited about it.

But there is also an opportunity during Senate to recognize the change of leadership. Because Jeff Savage needed to step aside to focus on his church and personal matters, Dee Dee Turlington has served this last year as President of the Ministers Council. We want to thank her for her service. In addition, Alice Greene has served on the Executive Committee for the last three years as the Immediate Past President of the Ministers Council. This Senate marks the end of her tenure and we thank her as well. We will also prepare to elect a new President, and this too will mark an exciting transition for the Ministers Council.

Next month, I will be able to share an update from our Senate meeting and the decisions that we made, but in the meantime, I solicit your prayers on behalf of our colleagues who will travel next week to Green Lake to represent you. I solicit your prayers for the Ministers Council as we continue living out the vision of Dr. R.G. Schell, the first President of the Ministers Council, and the organizing committee who came together to bring this organization to fruition. In 1935, it was Schell who highlighted the need to find new and positive ways to aid clergy in their tasks. The Ministers Council was established to be that entity and by the grace of God our work continues.



Mission Summit Conversations

The Mission Summit Conversations were a featured part of the Mission Summit/Biennial event, June 21-23, 2013, in Overland Park, Kansas. The Conversations allowed for an open opportunity for anyone attending the event to engage in meaningful dialogue about a topic of interest by self-selecting into a small group.

What is **NEW?** We now have a compiled list of summaries available from all the Mission Summit Conversations topic groups. These learnings will be used in November 2013 at the Mission Table, and beyond!

[CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD SUMMARIES](#)

More than 1000 people attended the Conversations sessions, and groups produced learnings which are available at the website: <http://www.missionsummitconversations.com/>

[Mission Summit Conversations Photos](#)

[Word Cloud Gallery](#)

[Read the Comments](#) – click on “More info” to see what learnings the groups shared on the website

Church Participates in Immigration Reform Effort

[Central Baptist Church](#) (CBC), Wayne, Pa., is among the churches advocating for humane immigration reform with “40 Days of Fasting, Prayer, and Action for Immigration Justice,” a program of the [New Sanctuary Movement](#) of Philadelphia, an ecumenical immigration advocacy organization. Congregation members participated according to their ability in various ways, including making telephone calls and writing letters to Congress.

They were bolstered in their efforts by a recent Sunday visit from the Rev. Aundreia Alexander, Esquire, American Baptist Home Mission Societies national coordinator of Refugee Resettlement and Immigration Services, who led a special litany.

Noting that most U.S. citizens descend from immigrants, CBC’s immigration ministry leader Katy Friggle-Norton compares the entrepreneurship, work ethic, and commitment to family and community of today’s immigrants to those of her ancestors. Her great-grandfather, a farm laborer, and great-grandmother, a dressmaker, moved to the United States from England.

“I’m fasting for a community that is safe for immigrants, which means that, in Philadelphia, the police and ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] should end their collaboration [that results in mass deportation and family separation],” she says in an [online video](#). “I’m fasting so that my members of Congress—Representative [Patrick] Meehan, Senator [Robert P.] Casey [Jr.] and Senator [Pat] Toomey—will consider their immigrant heritage and vote for humane and just immigration reform.”

For information about starting an immigration ministry in your church, contact Alexander at aundreia.alexander@abhms.org or 800-222-3872, x2430.



New Resources Available on Crucial Topics to Women

American Baptist Women's Ministries announces the release of two programmatic resources in a new series published by AB Women's Ministries entitled *In Their Shoes: Women Walking with Women Worldwide*. The resources are *In Their Shoes: Economic Empowerment* and *In Their Shoes: Immigrants and Refugees*.

Each *In Their Shoes* book includes fact sheets, Bible studies, program sessions, activities for children, Scriptures for reflection, resource listings, and suggestions for ways to engage in the issue locally. The articles are written by women with personal expertise, experience, and passionate commitment to the topic.

Executive Director Virginia Holmstrom said, "The focus on Immigrants and Refugees and on Economic Empowerment addresses issues that deeply touch many women and their families in our neighborhoods and globally. Each resource is perfectly suited for use as a program resource for local church women's ministries throughout the year, engaging persons in Bible study, education, and suggestions for mission outreach. The availability of the resources now is very timely as AB Women's Ministries answers God's call to empower women and girls to serve God. I'm hopeful that the resources will open hearts and minds and will help individuals and women's groups to be in mission together for the empowerment of women and girls everywhere."

In Their Shoes: Economic Empowerment (W4933) and *In Their Shoes: Immigrants and Refugees* (W4932) are available for sale on the AB Women's Ministries website store at www.abwministries.org/store and through Judson customer service; call 800-4-JUDSON.

The new *In Their Shoes: Women Walking with Women Worldwide* series of printed resources is part of a group of resources by AB Women's Ministries that includes a podcast series and blog of the same name. The podcast is available at www.intheirshoespodcast.org or subscribe through iTunes; the blog is available at <http://intheirshoesblog.wordpress.com>. These multi-media resources invite participants into deeper understanding and engagement in critical issues having impact upon the welfare of women and girls globally.

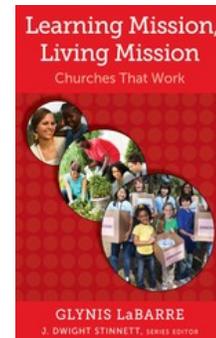
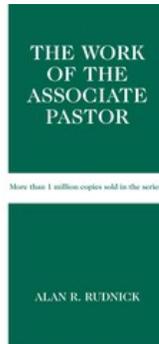
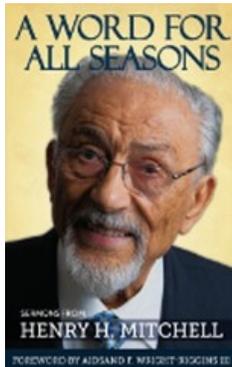
American Baptist Women's Ministries is a Christ-centered ministry with a commitment to encourage and empower women and girls to serve God.



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>.

Judson Press Offers Free Shipping for Ministers Council Members



Did you happen to see the Rev. Dr. Henry H. Mitchell at the Mission Summit Biennial? Because he is a giant of Baptist preachers, maybe you might be interested in obtaining his book, *A Word for All Seasons: Sermons from Henry Mitchell*. Alan Rudnick published the very useful book, *The Work of the Associate Pastor*. You should get a copy. Or you might consider *Learning Mission, Living Mission: Churches that Work* by Glynis LaBarre and J. Dwight Stinnett to help your church engage in the Missional Church Learning Experience.

Just think: you could buy these three books and get free shipping because you are a member of the Ministers Council. How cool is that? Please note that the discount cannot be used in combination with other offers and does not include order for curriculum materials or the *Secret Place*. Take advantage of this terrific offer and benefit for Ministers Council members. *Please contact your Regional Council President for the discount code.*

Remember Us!

When planning your estate, please remember The Ministers Council.

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



Remembering Rev. Greg Hamby

'While on vacation in Myrtle Beach, The Reverend Greg Hamby of Norwich, CT, was involved in a body surfing accident. Greg died from his injuries on Monday, July 29. He was the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Essex, CT.

Rev. Cal Lord, Pastor of the Central Baptist Church of Westerly, RI said of his friend, Greg:

"...My friend, Greg Hamby, died too young. Yet Greg lived a full life. How he lived and the way he touched people sent ripples across the span of time and space that he occupied. He loved his family. They always came first. He loved Jesus and was always looking for ways to make him relevant to a changing culture.

Greg was not cut from the mold of old stuffy preachers. He was just as apt to wear his Patriots jersey to church as he was to bring up the lyrics of an old rock & roll song in a sermon. He told us that he hated to

wear the uniform (a suit and tie) and stand behind the wooden box (pulpit.) He wanted to be among the people..."

We remember Greg and ask that you keep his family in your prayers: his wife, Nancy Travis Hamby; sons, Nicholas J. and Addison R. Hamby; and daughter, Hallie A. Hamby, all of Norwich; and a brother, Douglas Hamby of Greenville, S.C. In lieu of flowers, please make donations in his memory to the Hamby Children's Education Fund, 45 Town St., Norwichtown, CT 06360.

Other Events

- Ministers Council Executive Committee – Green Lake, WI – August 11
- Ministers Council Senate – Green Lake, WI – August 12-15

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.

Future Missionaries to Explore Spiritual Call at Embrace the Cause Conference.



Anyone considering a call to global missionary service or who are in the process of responding to such a call will be participating in the Embrace the Cause conference to be held on August 9-12, 2013 at the Green Lake Conference Center in Green Lake, WI. The conference is being sponsored by American Baptist International Ministries and will feature Rev. Dr. Lee Spitzer, Senior Regional Pastor of the American Baptist Churches of New Jersey.

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

We welcome your comments or questions on this newsletter. Send your thoughts to Debra.Jackson@abc-usa.org