



## Ministers Council Newsletter

*Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson, Executive Director*

*August 2013*



Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson and her husband, James Thomas, dance together at her birthday party.

### From the Desk of the Executive Director

When do you get to be you? When you are the ministerial leader for your community – pastor or on the ministerial staff, chaplain in an agency or hospital, a missionary on assignment – chances are you rarely get to be the real you. You put on the pious façade of the spiritual leader: always holy, always, righteous, always upright.

I get it. When I was serving my church, we celebrated our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a church. We decided to have a big banquet: black tie affair with a live jazz combo, dinner and dancing. It was wonderful – the atmosphere was electric, the music was terrific and I could not wait to hit the dance floor. Of course when my husband and I did take the dance floor, I could feel all eyes upon us.

We started out dancing in a fairly pedestrian way, moving to the music, but not too suggestively and not dancing too close. However, as we started to move, relaxing in the music and the familiarity of one another, I threw a bit of a shoulder shimmy. Immediately my husband chastised me saying, “Debora, stop it.” Even he knew. I was still Pastor in front of my congregation, and even though I was dancing with my husband, no one expected or may have thought it appropriate for me to “get jiggy with it.”

And while this is often reality for us in ministry, we need a place where we can be the man or woman who God made us to be, with all of the complexity that our making demands. And the way that we do that is to ensure that we have relationships outside of our ministry setting with friends who know us by our first names, people with whom we can let our hair down. We need to be able go out at times and be ourselves with folks who will not be shocked (or feign shock) when we are who we are.

I recognize that this is easier said than done. Many ministers complain that their “friends” are in their congregations or at their places of work, which we all know is not a recommended practice. Others complain that they are in remote areas. There are few folks that they know or with whom they can socialize. Others point out that the community in which they serve is the only nearby community, so getting away from town is an effort. Again, I get it. However, things will not change if we do not make the effort. So what can you do?

Connect with other clergy with whom you can socialize. I am member of the Ministers Club of Boston, a club for ordained Christian clergy and for professed members of religious orders who live within commuting distance of Boston. Our gatherings provide conversation, hospitality and edification, as we gather monthly for fellowship, dinner, and scholarly discussions on academic papers written by members of the group. It is a wonderful release each and every month.

Are there people that you know outside of the church? Given that ministry is a second career for me, I have always had the benefit of having a network of folks that I knew. My issue was getting beyond my own busyness and self-importance in order to make time for my friends. This is critical for us as well. Do not forget the friends that you had before ministry or outside of ministry. These are relationships that you will need to keep you grounded and real.

Finally, do what you need to do to be true to you. I love to dance. The people who came to my party said that I looked like someone who was born on the dance floor. Being a product of the funk era, I gave the DJ my play list and virtually every song was “the jam” from back in the day. Of course I was on the dance floor on every song. Dancing is part of who I am. What about you? What makes you you? Truly all work and no play makes Jack or Jacki a dull boy or girl. Have a place. Have a space. And then give yourself permission to “do” and “be” you.



## Together in Ministry – Current Status

Have you had an opportunity to contribute to the Together in Ministry capital campaign? If not, I hope you saw the recent email where Rev. Dr. Joyce Duerr shared why she supports the Together in Ministry capital campaign. Her TIM group provided needed support and sustenance while she went through treatments for Stage 4 Thyroid Cancer. For Joyce, it was a privilege and a blessing to be a part of an ecumenical group that met on a monthly basis.

Stories like these and countless others are why we want to continue Together in Ministry. Together in Ministry has made a difference for thousands of colleagues across the country. To date, we have made steady progress against our goal of \$1,100,000, where \$800,000 of that goal is in cash and \$300,000 is in in-kind donations. Even with that said, it is clear that our progress has stalled. Unfortunately, there was no change in our numbers from August. We still have \$274,583.05 in cash dollars and \$66,360.00 in in-kind. We'll chalk that up to the busyness of summer, but let us redouble our efforts for the fall.

Do you have expertise in meeting facilitation, group leadership, or technology? Maybe you can offer to lead a retreat or speak at a clergy engagement. Making an in-kind donation is as simple as telling us your expertise, and how many hours you are willing to donate. We can convert that offering into a monetary amount. You can also make a pledge to be paid over the duration of the capital campaign or a one-time gift. You can even pay your gift electronically by going to <https://secure-q.net/Donations/ABChurches/3796>, which is a new, secure service unique to the Ministers Council and available via ABCUSA. So let's move the numbers up. Many hands make light work. We can reach our capital campaign goals if we all pitch in.



## Discerning a Way Forward: Ministers Council Senate

Motivated by Isaiah 43:19, “I am about to do a new thing...” representatives from the constituent councils of the Ministers Council met at Green Lake, WI for the annual Ministers Council Senate meeting. We began our gathering with our president, Dee Dee Turlington, sharing

updates since the last Senate. She also set the context that this Senate meeting would discuss the current Senate structure.

However, before considering the Senate structure, we heard reports in our initial business session. We received a recommendation to approve as a constituent council the Chin Baptist Churches Ministers Council. Rollin Van Bik represented the council and shared remarks. The recommendation was heartily approved.

Debora Jackson shared information about the Together in Ministry program. We are in compliance with the program requirements according to the Lilly Endowment. Although our funding has come to an end, we are promoting the continuation of the program, including the development of a comprehensive clergy health initiative. Such a program would enable TIM groups to hold one another accountable to improve health outcomes and make a difference for our denomination and beyond.

The Membership report was given by Shakespeare Osorio. Our current membership is only 982 members. We recognize that we are comparing end of August numbers in 2013 with end of year numbers in previous years and as such we are hopeful that the number will increase. Brian Dixon shared the financial report, pointing out the sobering fact that the withdrawal from the endowment was nearly 12%, which is not sustainable. Miriam Mendez shared the nominating committee report. Rev. Doug Harris was nominated as President, Rev. Holly Bean was nominated as Vice President Professional Effectiveness; and Rev. Dr. Michael Sayler was confirmed by mid-term appointment as Secretary.

Debora Jackson then shared a presentation that served as context setting for many of the issues that confront the Ministers Council. Given these issues and challenges as shaped by our historical context we have the opportunity to determine where we want to be now. Specifically, the Senate was asked to consider how we might redesign the Ministers Council Senate in a way that achieves our mission and purpose; realizes financial sustainability; and better connects and relates the Ministers Council to local councils and ABC regions. After Dee Dee Turlington provided structure for our conversations, prayer teams and standing committee teams had the opportunity to prayerfully consider and discuss these questions over the course of our Senate gathering.

During our second business session, we heard reports from our national director, Rev. Patricia Hernandez on Women in Ministry, Rev. Holly Bean on the Biennial, and Rev. Gloria Chaney on member benefits. During the evening session, we heard a report from Debora Jackson, our Executive Director. The personnel committee also provided their report of the Executive Director's evaluation.

During the evening session we also heard from our guests who were attending the Senate meeting. Guests were Rev. Steve Bils, Executive Minister, Central Pacific Coast, Rev. Dwight Lundgren, ABPS Manager, Home Mission Society; Rev. Dr. Molly Marshall, President, Central Baptist Theological Seminary; Rev. F. Salvador Orellana, National Coordinator for Intercultural Ministries/Latino Ministries Strategist ABHMS; Dr. Ray Schooler, Director of Church Relations Board of International Ministries; and Rev. Dr. Perry Hopper, MMBB. Rev. Malcolm Hamblett, President of the ABCVTNH Ministers Council attended as well.

Committees were asked to report on the status of their work. The Communications committee share that it had published two issues of Minister magazine in 2013. They will ask Senate committees to take responsibility for separate issues in the future.

The Membership committee shared that there is a new brochure available that describes the benefits of membership. They raised the concern that there are constituent councils that pay three levels of dues, and as such the committee recommended that affinity groups receive membership in local regional councils. There will be a membership drive that targets to enroll 500 new members before the end of the year.

The Professional Effectiveness committee is working on best practices, hoping to provide resources, a transitions handbook (dealing with the Code of Ethics), and materials posted on the new website. They are also working on Internet Ethics and a skills bank to provide resources for retreats, etc.

The Spiritual and Personal Wholeness committee provided an update regarding a recent webinar. They will continue to issue weekly prayer requests, and once again offer prayer conference calls during Advent and Lent.

The Denominational Relationships committee is exploring next step questions such as what can they do to help strengthen local councils and how can they create a better system for the flow of funds.

Each of the committees also made their recommendations for restructuring during the Senate gathering. Triaging those recommendations, Debora Jackson presented a proposal of redesign. The proposal leveraged the most common themes cited in committee reports, which were to have annual gatherings, vary gatherings locations regionally, make gatherings open to all ministerial leaders and provide and educational/learning focus in our gatherings. Moreover, the proposal incorporated other themes such as a desire to gather at the Mission Summit, have increased/covenantal commitment of Senators, change Senate from a governance focus; and change the focus of the Executive Committee to a national one, eliminating the need for current committees.

From these themes, a proposal was offered as follows:

We Envision...

- An Annual Gathering
  - Convening at the Mission Summit and alternating regional locations
- Of Ministerial Leaders
  - Traveling at their own expense
  - With discounts for Ministers Council Members
- Where We
  - Offer Educational sessions that will strengthen local councils and clergy
  - Provide specific training – advocacy, dispute resolution, major issues of the church
  - Conduct focus groups and share ideas
- Committed Senators
  - Serving in covenantal agreement to influence others
  - Working at the local level to revitalize local councils
  - Maintaining regular connections through social/electronic media
- National Ministers Council
  - Provides structure and assistance to local councils
  - Implements a national network of Pastor to Pastors
  - Publishes an academic journal
- An Executive Committee
  - Comprised of elected persons from geographic areas
  - Functioning as Trustees, conference planners and providing organizational support with national only responsibilities
  - A staff of a servant Executive Director and administrative persons
- That dues will be used to
  - Pay for staff and overhead
  - National programming including conferences
  - Underwrite Trustee travel if needed
- That dues will not be used for
  - Sharing costs at conferences
- Eliminating differing dues structures and life membership categories

During our final session we discussed the proposal. There were a number of concerns expressed about the proposal including the elimination of Senate as we know it, the need for representatives to pay their own expenses, and the challenges of trying to meet during Mission Summit. And yet there was a recognized desire to share the wonderful experience of Senate with every member of the Ministers Council, which is the real objective. Therefore, we determined that while the proposal was supported in principle, there was a need for additional refinement. A motion was made to authorize the executive committee to propose an implementation plan that embodies the principle and spirit of the redesign proposal as well as a timeline for implementation. The motion carried.

As we closed, we recognized those Senators and leaders who are transitioning in their roles. Senators whose terms are ending include Jackson Oliveira, Richard Harris, Gloria Chaney, Valerie Andrews, Suellen Lugers, Roberta White, and Steve Wisthoff. Alice Greene is concluding her term as Immediate Past President. Dee Dee Turlington is completing her term as President. We also acknowledged award recipients of the Ralph Garfield Schnell Award who were Rev. Dr. Kenneth Williams and Rev. Curtis Price.

It was an incredibly productive and full Senate gathering. There remains much to discuss regarding a structure, but the serious consideration given by all involved was laudable. Congratulations to Rev. Doug Harris, president-elect. Thanks to Rev. Dr. Dee Dee Turlington for her tremendous leadership in this transitional year. We will continue to keep you abreast of the redesign efforts as they develop.

## **ABHMS, ABCNJ Co-Sponsor Hurricane Sandy Cleanup, Restoration in New Jersey**

On a recent sunny August day in [Wildwood, N.J.](#), American Baptist volunteers of all ages pulled weeds and trash from the sand, while, above their heads on the boardwalk, vacationers ate waffles-and-ice-cream, bought souvenir T-shirts, played the Monkey Water Race arcade game to win stuffed-toy prizes, and screamed as their rollercoaster cars barreled down the steepest drop.

Meanwhile, approximately 30 minutes away in Atlantic City, N.J., more American Baptist volunteers worked in homes, tackling everything from ripping out ruined carpeting to installing new countertops. Hailing from 11 American Baptist churches, the combined volunteers numbered 78.

Work in both venues marked the end of 2013's "Coming Together for New Jersey...Rebuild, Renew, and Restore"—a week each in May, June, July and August of volunteer cleanup and restoration in Garden State regions devastated by Hurricane Sandy in October 2012. The initiative was coordinated and sponsored by American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) and American Baptist Churches of New Jersey (ABCNJ).

After pulling badly damaged shoes, gloves and a jacket from the sand, [Kaylin Ku](#), 11, of NextGen Church, West Windsor, N.J., took a moment to share the reason for her involvement. "I felt like I was affected by Hurricane Sandy, but then I realized that they [in other New Jersey areas] were in a worse situation," she said. "I wanted to let them know that other people care about them."

In a house on Hamilton Street in Atlantic City, Rod Lucas, Mark Machusak and Chris Wolvin, all of First Baptist Church, Mount Holly, N.J., installed new kitchen cabinets and built steps. Lucas said he "felt led of the Lord" to lend a hand. "It's all about Him—not us," he added.

Stressing the importance of American Baptists committing to long-term Hurricane Sandy relief, [Denise Gratzel](#), disaster response coordinator for ABCNJ, urged volunteers to recruit additional hands to continue the work in 2014 and to spread the word about the need for ongoing One Great Hour of Sharing donations.

Reflecting on the initiative's highlights, Gratzel commended the volunteers. "The praise and worship has been amazing. The testimony has been incredible," she said. "The kids have been bonding in the evenings. It's pure joy. They really want to be the hands and feet of Christ."

*For information about future volunteer opportunities, contact Victoria Goff, ABHMS national coordinator, Volunteer Ministries, at [victoria.goff@abhms.org](mailto:victoria.goff@abhms.org) or 800-222-3872, x2449. Donations can be made [online](#). Please designate "One Great Hour of Sharing—Hurricane Sandy." One hundred percent of donations go to relief efforts; no dollars are retained for administrative costs.*

## Resources for Syria

Certainly we have watched the heart-breaking events in Syria. While the reports of the UN Inspectors are not yet complete, it is known and confirmed that chemical weapons were used against innocent people in Syria including children. How should we respond as a nation? How should we respond as people of faith? It is not our job to tell you how you should respond. However, the Ministers Council recognizes its role as one of equipping leaders, helping you to be more effective in your ministries so that you can in turn provide better service and support to your communities.



To that end, graduates of Andover Newton Theological School received two resources from which leaders might be informed and motivated as our nation contemplates military action. The first is a set of notes and resources compiled by M.T. Davila, Assistant Professor of Christian Ethics. The second is a petition to the White House organized by Boston-area religious leaders.

These resources can be found at <http://www.ants.edu/news/detail/bearing-witness-on-the-brink-of-war/>. Our hope is that they might be of help to you in your ministry setting.



## African American Women in the Urban Black Church: The Experience of Female Clergy

Are you a Black/African American women?  
Are you a Minister or Pastor?  
Is your church located in an urban setting or a large city?  
Are you at least 18 years or age or older?

If you answered "Yes" to the above questions, I would like to invite you to participate in a research study exploring the experience of Black female pastors. The purpose of this study is to better understand Black women and leadership.

Your participation in this research study will involve an interview and observation. The time involved will be approximately 1 ½ to 2 hours. The findings of this research study will help gain a better understanding of how Black female pastors experience and define leadership.

Your participation will remain private. Names and other identifiers will not be used. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study. There will be no compensation for your participation. Please understand that your participation is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time and for any reason.

This research study is being conducted by Briana Hervet in the School of Public Service Leadership at Capella University. If you are interested in participating in the study please contact me at [bhervet@capellauniversity.edu](mailto:bhervet@capellauniversity.edu). I will provide you with the complete consent document that will require your signature. **This research study has been reviewed according to Capella University approved procedures.**

Thank you in advance for your interest in this study!

*Sincerely,*

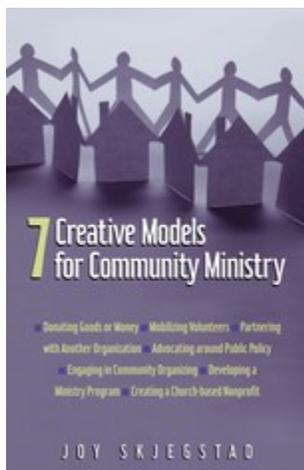
*Briana N. Hervet, MA  
Capella University, Ph.D. Candidate*

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

Clergy women, get that new clergy robe for Advent! Ministers Council members of the Ministers Council receive a 5% discount on your order from Bride of Christ Robes. 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**



Hot off the press a new Judson Book, *7 Creative Models for Community Ministry*, looks at seven different models through which churches can structure transformational community ministry. Those models are:

- Donate goods or money
- Mobilize volunteers
- Partner with another organization
- Advocate around Public Policy
- Engage in Community Organizing
- Develop a Ministry Program
- Create a Church-based Nonprofit

Each chapter profiles churches that have used the model for their ministry, providing pointers and pitfalls along the way. Spend \$15.00 as a Ministers Council member, and you get free shipping! Get the shipping code from your Council President.

## 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](http://www.ministerscouncil.org) under the WHO WE ARE link.**



JANUARY 6-9, 2014 | ORLANDO, FLORIDA



EMERGE, the 2014 National Ministers Conference meeting along side of the American Baptist Orientation to American Baptist Life for seminarians and new pastors to the denomination will help you to “emerge” to become the servant God has called you to be. Workshops, presentations and particularly,

an opportunity to fellowship and interact with colleagues in ministry over important challenges facing doing ministry today will stretch your thinking, equip you with ideas, and support you in your ministry by making new friends and being in prayer with one another. The conference will be held in Orlando, Florida, January 6-9, 2014, at the SeaWorld Doubletree Resort in Orlando. To register click on the link below.

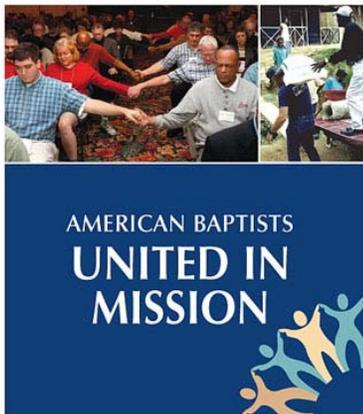
<http://www.abc-usa.org/coordinatedcalendar/event-registration/>

Registration fees will be \$75 for seminarians, \$100 for new-to-ABC ministers, and \$150 for Ministers Conference attendees. Room rates at the Doubletree will be \$99 per night. Seminarians are encouraged to enroll in the American Baptist seminarians' database in order to receive communications about the conference. They can do so at [http://abhms.org/education/seminarian\\_registration/register.cfm](http://abhms.org/education/seminarian_registration/register.cfm).

## Other Events

- Valley Forge Ministers Council Meeting – September 18
- Soul of Leadership Retreat, Arlington, MA – October 7-10

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](mailto:sue.sechrist@abc-usa.org).



## United IN Mission!

As American Baptists, we are a part of a strong, vital, missional denomination! Being an American Baptist church means supporting ABC. When you give to United Mission, we all become United *IN* Mission - our ministry is made possible by givers like YOU! We are beginning a two-year focus on strengthening giving to United Mission among our churches. You will be hearing more in the coming months about this focus. Please be on the alert for more about UM giving!

## Ministers Council Contact Information

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