



Ministers Council Newsletter

Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson, Executive Director

March 2014



From the Desk of the Executive Director

What are you doing for Lent? I have to admit that engaging in Lenten practices is still a fairly new phenomenon for me. I grew up in Northern Indiana and Southern Michigan. Family and friends were overwhelmingly Protestant – mostly Baptist with a few Lutherans sprinkled in for good measure. I had one friend in what was then Junior High who was Roman Catholic. It wasn't until I met this girl that I even had an appreciation for Lent, as she declined all chocolate and candy during the Lenten season. When I asked, "Why don't we observe Lent," I got what seemed like a basic "Baptist" answer, at least in my church: "Jesus Christ paid it all. We do not have to submit to such legalistic practices." That answer satisfied me for a long time.

However, I have come to a place of new appreciation for Lent. I came to see Lent as a time of intentionality where we could engage in ways that would strengthen and deepen our relationship with God through Jesus Christ. In that spirit, I used to tell my congregation that we should take on practices for Lent rather than think of just giving things up. I encouraged my members to be intentional about doing things that they may not regularly do during this period so that they would grow in their faith. And being one who never asked my congregation to do things that I did not do, I also took on practices. For example, one year, I joined the daily, early morning, prayer services of the Korean church plant that met in my church. We gathered each morning at 6:00 AM for hour long, verbal prayer. Another year, I introduced a week-long fasting plan in which we gave up coffee (so very painful), bread (also painful), and even technology (that just about killed me). The best part of that fast was that several of us in the church engaged in the fast and we built community as we talked about how we were managing without coffee or without our computers.

But lest this become one more empty ritual that is as meaningless as giving up chocolate for 40 days with no focus on the faith, I stressed to my congregation and for myself that there needed to be more – more of an effort to draw closer to God. I wanted us to spend more time in prayer. That was what I loved about the early morning Korean prayer services. We would hear a brief sermon, but the bulk of the time was spent in prayer. The pastor would turn on a CD of music, dim the lights, and then people just began talking aloud to the Lord. We didn't take turns; we didn't share our prayer concerns. We prayed and we prayed aloud. Some days, the chapel would be filled with cries and sobs, with uplifted hands and voices. It was powerful. Or during a fast, when we thought that we couldn't make it because we were hungry or having that awful caffeine-deprived headache, I encouraged folks to read their Bible. Many of us are guilty of rarely picking up our Bible. Even clergy are notorious for opening the Bible only as they

prepare for a sermon or a Bible study. We don't make time to simply read our Bible for pleasure – without thinking about whether the scripture will preach, but rather for just the enjoyment of God's word.

So what are you doing for Lent? I have decided that I will engage in several practices. First, I plan to do a Daniel Fast. In Daniel, chapter 1, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, having gathered the best and brightest of the Judean exiles, provided them with a daily portion of food and wine from the royal table. But Daniel, not wanting to defile himself, asked his handlers that he only be served vegetables to eat and water to drink. After a 10-day trial, it was observed that those who had only eaten vegetables appeared healthier than those who had eaten the royal rations, so the guards allowed Daniel to continue eating vegetables. I will do a fast of vegetables and fruit, giving up coffee, meat, and processed foods during Lent. This practice makes me more mindful of my dependence on God and God's sustaining blessings in my life.

I will be more intentional about my Bible reading. I have an annual Bible study plan with great intentions to follow it on a daily basis. But you know how it is – you get busy and before you know it, you're several days and maybe even weeks behind. I will get back on track, not thinking about that next preaching engagement, but just to enjoy the opportunity to revel in the word of God.

I will start my day with morning prayer. I used to get up 30 minutes early, go to my "private prayer closet," and pray. After a time of prayer, I would take a few moments to journal so that I would remember what was happening in that prayer time – what I felt, how God was moving, what the Spirit was saying to me. It is hard to do that when the temptation is to hit the snooze button continuously. But I found that when my day started intentionally with the Lord, everything went better. Lent is a perfect time to re-engage the life giving practices that will help us in our ministry.

And really that's the point. It is impossible to effectively minister when we are on empty. Leaders who take time apart from their leadership context in order to engage in spiritual practices are more effective in their leadership. Forbes confirmed what we already knew: to be a pastor or religious leader is one of the toughest leadership roles that there is (<http://www.forbes.com/sites/robasghar/2014/02/25/ranking-the-9-toughest-leadership-roles/>). Therefore, it is incumbent upon ministerial leaders to intentionally engage in spiritual practices so that we be sustained and strengthened. Lent is the perfect time to try out such new intentionality, and we cannot go wrong by doing so. As the Bible says, as we draw closer to God, God draws closer to us. Besides, that Lenten practice just might become a regular habit.

Join us for prayer every Wednesday in Lent

Beginning March 5. We'll be praying together for 20 minutes via phone each week at Wednesdays at **10 am Pacific/11 Mountain/noon Central/1 Eastern**. Call toll-free: 866-906-0123; Passcode: 2925027- Sponsored by the Spiritual and Personal Wholeness Committee. The first session will be led by Rev. Jabulani McCalister, Senior Pastor at Calvary Baptist Church of Providence, Rhode Island. Questions? E-mail Margaret Marcuson, Margaret@margaretmarcuson.com.



Do you have events coming up in your regions? Share the word and expand the benefit of the good work that you are doing. Send email announcements to Debora Jackson at Debora.Jackson@abc-usa.org. We will do our best to include your events in upcoming announcements through the Ministers Council.

The Ministers Council Announces Partnership with the Pastors Roundtable



We are excited to share a new partnership opportunity that is available to members of the Ministers Council. **Existing and new Together in Ministry groups: this opportunity is for you!**

Many of us participated in Together in Ministry, a successful peer learning group initiative funded through the Lilly Endowment. Over the course of this decade-long effort, thousands realized benefits that were absolutely consistent with research outcomes. Specifically, ministerial leaders who participate in peer learning groups like Together in Ministry are better at balancing personal and ministry responsibilities; are more engaged in their own self-care and development; and lead congregations where leadership is more widely shared, and the congregations are far more committed to clergy development and community involvement. These are just some of the benefits that came from peer group learning as we experienced through Together in Ministry.

However, while simply coming together was positive, research also showed that what heightened the peer group learning experience, in part, was the ability to retain a quality group facilitator.¹ But since the completion of the Together in Ministry program and without financial means, many groups have found that maintaining that quality facilitator was a challenge.

The Pastor's Roundtable was established in part to address this challenge. The program was modeled after some of the most prestigious CEO roundtable experiences in the country. Some CEOs and Senior Executives pay thousands of dollars for a monthly facilitated experience through which they can fellowship and share with other executives in order to gain ideas and insights for their leadership challenges. Clergy certainly do not have such monetary means, but we recognize the need to come together for the same kind of benefits. Thus the Pastors Roundtable provides resources, instruction and support for self-facilitated Peer Learning Groups. It is an organization that was established to challenge, train and equip pastors toward maximum effectiveness for the long term and for God's glory.

The Ministers Council and the Pastors Roundtable are announcing this new partnership, which will allow you to leverage the rich resources of the Pastors Roundtable at a discount. The annual subscription cost for a peer learning group is \$995.00. However, Ministers Council members may register a peer learning group at the cost of \$895.00. Moreover, when your group registers, the Ministers Council will receive \$50.00!

This is a tremendous value. The Pastors Roundtable has perfected this self-facilitation process, having accumulated more than five years of ministry-enriching content for your clergy group. It takes less than 20 minutes per month for a group leader to select the topic for the month. The materials for that topic can be downloaded and distributed to every group member. Your group will have access to videos, discussions questions, readings, and supplementary materials that will resource and strengthen your ministry. And, if you are not satisfied, your group can cancel within two months for a full refund.

The Ministers Council is working to help you be more effective in your ministries so that you can in turn provide better service and support to your communities. Our partnership with the Pastors Roundtable is just one more example of how we are working on your behalf as the ministerial leaders of ABCUSA. If you are interested in learning more about the Pastors Roundtable, go to www.thePastorsRoundtable.org. When you make contact, reference the Ministers Council in your inquiry to take advantage of this special offer.

¹ Penny Long Marler, D. Bruce Roberts, et al., *So Much Better: How Thousands of Pastors Help Each Other Thrive*, (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2013), 10.

Equipping, renewing and networking leaders
through a closer walk with God since 1944



It's Time for the Ministers Council Senate / Annual Meeting – August 11-14, 2014 at Green Lake Conference Center, Green Lake, WI

And guess what? You too can come! That's right, this year's Senate is an open meeting and gathering for ministerial leaders to come and enjoy the Green Lake / Senate experience. We are so excited to have this opportunity to share with you as we prepare for a new day in the Ministers Council.

While the details are still emerging, we are thrilled to confirm that our keynote and plenary session leader will be the Rev. Dr. Molly Marshall, President of and Professor of Theology and Spiritual Formation at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Dr. Marshall will share her story about Central Baptist Theological Seminary and its miraculous turnaround, and offer her deep learning of spiritual practice and formation. In addition, the meeting will feature components of Senate that we know and love including a gathering banquet, prayer teams, and a time of Sabbath Rest. Moreover, you will have the opportunity to hear the business of the Ministers Council, particularly as we craft a new vision for our sustainable future.

It is going to be exciting and definitely a gathering that you do not want to miss. You can register for the Ministers Council Senate / Annual Meeting at <http://www.abc-usa.org/coordinatedcalendar/event-registration/>. For more information, go to www.MinistersCouncil.com/events.

Online Registration Instructions:

To register for the **Ministers Council Senate/Annual Meeting 2014**, please use the following link: <http://www.abc-usa.org/coordinatedcalendar/event-registration/>. Click "Register Now" located next to the **Ministers Council Senate/Annual Meeting**. Once the new page loads, please click "Register Now" located next to **Min Council Senate/Annual Mtg**. If you have previously created an account on the ABCUSA website, please input your username and password and log into your account. If you forget your password, **DO NOT** create a new account, please contact Stephanie Heflin and she will reset your password. If you have not previously made an account on the ABCUSA website, please create an account by clicking on "Do not have a login? Click here to create an account". Once you have logged into your account, select the appropriate registration type and adjust arrival and departure dates, if needed, and proceed through registration as prompted (take note to the instructions at the top of each screen). If you have any questions regarding registration, please contact Stephanie Heflin at Stephanie.Heflin@abc-usa.org.



Together in Ministry – Current Status

It is so gratifying to see the outpouring of support for Together in Ministry. If you are in ministry, you know the struggle. The positions that were associated with the calling for which we prepared in seminary do not exist. If you went to seminary believing that you would be a full time, local church pastor, those jobs are disappearing. Churches and non-profit religious organizations are asking ministerial leaders to do more with less. The pressures are increasing and we as clergy are dying out. Some statistics say that 60% to 80% of those who enter ministry will not still be in it 10 years later, and only a fraction will stay in it as a lifetime career.

That is why Together in Ministry is so important. As we come together for collegiality, centeredness and competence, we are strengthened in ministry, and are able to be better pastors, counselors, chaplains, and leaders to the glory of God. Giving to the Together in Ministry Capital Campaign will help us support and sustain ministerial leaders for years to come.

Where are we right now in our giving? Our cash gifts and pledges now total \$283,748.05. With the in-kind donations of \$68,280.00, we have a grand total of \$352,028.05. Praise be to God!

But we don't want to stop. When we first embarked upon this effort, the desire was to add \$500,000.00 to our endowment for Together in Ministry. Together we can make this goal. But we need you to do your part too. Make your tax-deductible donations securely and electronically by going to <http://ministerscouncil.com/together-in-ministry-capital-campaign/> and click on the Donate button. Let's keep the momentum going. Contribute today and help us extend ministerial excellence.

Scholarship Offering Through Christian Community Credit Union

Partnerships have their privileges and the Ministers Council is proud of its partnership with Christian Community Credit Union. Christian Community Credit Union, through their "Scholarships for Success" Program is offering \$50,000 in scholarships for college. Do you or someone you know need money for college? Now is the time to act. An additional incentive is the fact that clergy, clergy spouses, and the children of clergy receive special consideration in the application process. Go to <https://www.mycccu.com/tmc?allmob=1> to apply or for more information.



Discount Ends March 21st

The early bird registration discount for this summer's World Mission Conference ends on Friday, March 21st. Don't miss out on substantial savings for yourself, your family or your church members.

Plan now to join the 1,500 attendees taking part in the 200th anniversary celebration of International Ministries at the Green Lake Conference Center, July 21 – 26.

To Register:

<http://www.internationalministries.org/read/50426-2014-program-fees>

Children in Poverty Grant Applications Due April 30

To help American Baptist organizations address the challenges of poverty and inspire hope in the lives of the more than 16 million children ages newborn to 18 in the United States and Puerto Rico who live in impoverished communities, American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) annually awards Children in Poverty (CiP) grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000. This year, applications for CiP grants must be postmarked to ABHMS by April 30.

One church making a difference with its CiP grant is Epic Church, Fullerton, Calif. Through its JOYA Scholars program, the church is working to break the cycle of poverty one student at a time in Garnet, a five-block Fullerton neighborhood, in which more than 1,200 low-income children reside.

Disturbing is the fact that Garnet is in the middle of one of the wealthiest counties in the United States. Equally disturbing is the fact that, for more than a decade, no one in the community has graduated from college.

While poverty may be the current reality for families in the community, Epic Church knows that it need not be the perpetual reality. Viewing Garnet's situation as a justice issue, the church has made a commitment to the community's families. Through JOYA, the church offers middle and high school students weekly one-on-one mentoring, tutoring, college-preparation workshops and tours, and cultural events.

In 2013, after a college tour, Allie—a JOYA scholar—shared that visits to college campuses motivated her to try harder in school. "I did not know that attending a college such as UCLA was even an option for me," she said.

At Epic Church, faith comes alive by aiding neighbors. "Like other spiritual disciplines that are good for us, our discipline of justice keeps us grounded in God's heart for the world, while not allowing our lives to wander far from the needs of our neighbors," said a JOYA leader. "Locally, our desire is to help each person get involved relationally among the poor or marginalized as a normal and regular part of faith practice."

For more information about or to apply for a CiP grant, visit ABHMS' [CiP page](#) or contact the Rev. Lisa Harris, national coordinator, ABHMS Justice for Children initiative, at lisa.harris@abhms.org or 1-800-222-3872, x2158.

AB Women's Ministries Invites Young Adult Women to a Leadership Training Webinar Series

"A.C.T.: Actively Changing for Today" is a series of Christian leadership training webinars for young adult women, ages 18-40, sponsored by American Baptist Women's Ministries.

This leadership training webinar series will help young adult women to discern, embrace, and grow their gifts for Christian leadership. A.C.T webinars are led by women of all ages who have experience in Christian leadership and contagious enthusiasm! Facilitators include Jennifer Leneus and Holly Mulvihill, members of the Young Adult Women's Ministries planning team of AB Women's Ministries; Dr. Ruth A. Jones, OD, a leader in ministry in her congregation, her region, and nationally; Mrs. LaKeeyna Cooper, national coordinator of Young Adult Women's Ministries, AB Women's Ministries; and Dr. Molly T. Marshall, president of Central Baptist Theological Seminary.

The series includes four webinars, each focusing on critical issues in Christian leadership. Young adult women will develop their spiritual gifts and explore how God has called them to lead. This opportunity allows them to learn and fellowship with other participants without needing to be away from family, school, or jobs. They will learn new skills for leadership, gain tools they can call upon in any situation, and gain confidence in themselves and in their calling by Christ to leadership.

Each session includes a presentation, time for discussion, and downloadable PDF materials to supplement the session content and provide excellent reference materials for the future.

For information about session dates, times, topics, and facilitators, as well as fees and online registration, visit www.abwministries.org/yawwebinars. Encourage young adult women in your congregations to register!

**“Break Every Yoke:
Homelessness” A
Virtual Mission
Encounter for Women
from AB Women’s
Ministries**

**2014 Virtual
Mission Encounters**

**A unique mission experience
for women**



“Break Every Yoke,” May 5-9, 2014, is a virtual mission encounter for women that offers the opportunity for participants to explore homelessness from a faith perspective. What are the causal factors? What are the risks? How can we support those who are homeless? How can our congregations, or we as individuals, engage in ministries of prevention, support, and advocacy? Each day’s focus will be explored as it has impact upon youth, adults and families, and seniors, with suggestions for advocacy around a range of issues throughout the week.

Virtual mission encounters are a way for women to explore mission topics more deeply while still being able to attend to their responsibilities at work, home, church, or in their communities. Suggested activities to explore each day’s focus are emailed to participants: each participant determines how many activities she may have time to do within her daily schedule. Activities may include such things as reading the newspaper, exploring websites, reading and responding to blog posts, taking prayer walks, researching a topic of interest further, listening to audio files or watching videos, and so forth. Every evening includes a conference call featuring a special guest with particular expertise or stories to share on the daily theme; participants may attend as many or as few conference calls as their schedule and interest allow.

Special guests for “Break Every Yoke,” include Rev. Francesca Crane, executive director of Bridge of Hope Lancaster and Chester Counties (PA); American Baptist missionary in Brazil Corenne Garrison Smith; American Baptist woman Luz Jurado, who serves with homeless youth in Los Angeles, CA; and Rev. Judy Fackenthal, pastor of the Garfield Park Baptist Church in Indianapolis, IN, and vice president of ABCUSA, whose congregation was led by God to involvement in ministry with homeless and inadequately housed persons.

For more information, speaker bios, and online registration, visit www.abwministries.org/vme. Spread the word in your congregation—this is an excellent mission opportunity for busy women!

(((HEAR *the* CALL)))

On July 19-21, 2014, International Ministries and the Ministers Council will partner to sponsor **Hear The Call** Retreat. Attendees will participate in and register for only ONE of three tracks: Track 1 for those exploring a call to cross-cultural global mission service; Track 2 for those feeling a call to pastoral ministry in the US & Puerto Rico; and Track 3 for people wanting to be more involved in local mission in their church, community, state or region. Our weekend will also include worship, inspirational messages, Bible Study, workshops and personal reflection time. It will be a powerful discernment experience. Invite those who you know who are sensing God’s call on their lives to register now at <http://www.internationalministries.org/read/50426-2014-program-fees>. More information can be found at <http://www.internationalministries.org/read/49675-2014-world-mission-conference>.

Ecumenical Theological Seminary

Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Workshop

Date: Saturday, March 22, 2014

Time: 9:00 am – Noon

Workshop Title - Self Care for the Minister

In this interactive workshop participants will explore a model of Holy Health which includes wellness as the integration of mind, body and spirit and the ongoing development of one's own purpose in life. We will examine the ministry leader's role in the area of wellness for others in their faith-based community. Participants will develop strategies to help them create a balance between self-care and the needs of their ministries.

Workshop Registration Cost: \$40.00

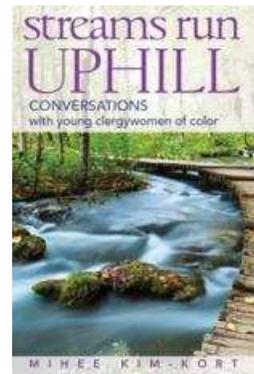
If you need further information, please email
Rev. Dr. Floyd Davis at fdavis@etseminary.edu
or call (248) 821-3698.

2930 Woodward Avenue, Detroit, Michigan 48201, Women's Lounge 2nd Floor

Judson Press Continues its Partnership with The Ministers Council

Judson Press is continuing its discount program for Ministers Council Members for 2014. As a member of the Ministers Council, you can receive free shipping on Judson Press titles when you spend more than \$15.00. Just contact your Regional or Constituent Council president for the 2014 Judson Press promotional code.

Use your discount to pick up the latest Judson release, *Streams Run Uphill: Conversations with Young Clergywomen of Color*. This book beautifully tells the story of women in pastoral ministry who, despite the disappointing, yet unsurprising obstacles placed before them, find their voices in pursuit of the call that God has placed on their lives. These are stories that are brilliantly shared, showing us the heartbreaking reality that women are still marginalized in pastoral ministry because of gender, age, race and ethnicity. But by the grace of God and the tenacious uncton that drives them forward, these young women of color demonstrate the plan of God's kingdom: that women are also called to rule. And in that, my hope and heart soar.



Join the Ministers Council



We are getting compliments from all over the country about our new Membership Card. Have you ever been asked to provide credentials when visiting a patient in the hospital? Just imagine how good it will feel to present your card during the visit. It says you belong to a winning circle of clergy colleagues who are committed to deepening our spiritual journey and increasing our effectiveness as persons who are accepting the call of God.

Get your card when you join the Ministers Council. <http://ministerscouncil.com/subscriptions/>, then click the map to find your local council.



Do You Like My Robe?

This was my gift when I earned my doctorate: a custom made robe from **Bride of Christ Robes**. Do you like it? I have received so many compliments. It is a stunning robe that I am proud to wear.

You can order from dozens of styles designed to flatter the Women of God as you do the work of God. And you can enjoy a discount!

Members of the Ministers Council receive a 5% discount on clergy robes. Just show your 2014 Membership Card. Go to www.BrideofChristRobes.com and order your robe today.

Upcoming Events

- The Ministers Council Spiritual and Personal Wholeness Committee presents the Lenten Series 2014 – an opportunity for prayer and spiritual centering during Lent. The series begins on Wednesday March 5th at 1:00 PM Eastern Time and will be held every Wednesday at 1:00 PM Eastern Time through Lent. The call in numbers is (866) 906-0123, pass code 2925027.
- Philadelphia Baptist Association Ministers Council Meeting – March 12 from 9:30 am – 12:00 pm. Presentation by the Rev. Dr. Marcus C. Pomeroy, “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.” Lunch will be provided immediately after the business meeting, so please confirm your attendance by contacting Mrs. Rosalyn L. Martin (phone: 215-482-8222 x10 or email rlmartin@philadelphiabaptist.org).
- American Baptist Churches of the South 44th Annual Session – April 22-25, 2014. Theme: Preparing Church Leaders for God’s Changing World. Scripture: James 2:14-24. Rev. Debora Jackson will be the featured speaker for the Evangelism & Mission Luncheon on Friday, April 25. For more information or to register, go to www.abcots.org.
- Prairie Pastors Conference (formerly known as the Tri-Region Event). Prodigal Christianity: Beyond Worn Paths. The conference will be held at the New Life Baptist Church, Bellevue, NE – April 28-30, 2014. The conference is sponsored by the following Regions and Ministers Councils: ABC of the Central Region, ABC of the Dakotas, ABC of Nebraska, Mid-American Baptist Churches. .6 CEU will be granted for this event. Register online at www.prairiepastors.org
- The Ministers Council Senate / Annual Meeting – This year’s **Ministers Council gathering will be open to all ministerial leaders**. August 11-14, 2014, at Green Lake, WI. Register at <http://www.abc-usa.org/coordinatedcalendar/event-registration/>.

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