



Ministers Council Newsletter

Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson, Executive Director

August 2014

From the Desk of the Executive Director

When I was in seventh grade, I got into a fight. A bully was picking on a friend of mine and I decided to intercede. I boldly walked up to the boy and slapped him across the face. He was momentarily stunned by my brazen attack, but when he recovered, he grabbed me and beat the <expletive delete> out of me. I hardly knew what happened. Within seconds, I found myself on ground, bruised and hurt, while a crowd of onlookers watched.

Was the fight my fault? Yes, it was. Was I not the initiator? Yes, I was. I started it. But even after all these years, when I reflect on this incident, I can't help but think that the boy who beat me had a responsibility to be restrained in his response. Sure, I embarrassed him. I made him look bad in front of his friends. But he was so much bigger and stronger than I was. Didn't he have a responsibility to hold back, even a little?

This memory came rushing back for me while in Jerusalem from July 13-27. I am a part of a selective cohort of 18 Christian Leaders and Scholars participating in the Christian Leadership Initiative (CLI), a program co-sponsored by the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and Shalom Hartman Institute. "CLI provides open space for Christian leaders and scholars to experience and study Judaism and Israel from a Jewish perspective," said Rabbi Noam Marans, AJC's director of Interreligious and Intergroup Relations. "Interreligious understanding is deepened when Christian influentials engage in Jewish learning in ways that enable them to better understand Jewish texts and traditions."

This experience, while intense on its own merit, was heightened by the conflict between Israel and Hamas. Our program was almost postponed because rocket fire was being exchanged. And while in Jerusalem, we heard the news and saw the mobilization of troops, 50,000 in total, being sent for a ground attack in Gaza.

It was seventh grade all over again. Yes, Hamas has started it. They have been the provocateur. They have taken plowshares and beaten them into swords. But Israel is now a military might and in response to upstart extremists, Israel's response has been without restraint. It has been swift and sure. In the three to four weeks in which this conflict has raged, more than 1,200 Palestinians have died and the UN estimates that 70% of the casualties were civilians. Does Israel have the right to defend itself? Yes.



But as the more powerful entity do they have other responsibilities as well? I think so; and my beliefs, to that extent, are grounded in my faith.

In our studies, we heard from rabbinic scholars who shared the writings of early-century sages. An example of our studies focused on the narrative of Moses' justified disobedience of God. In Deuteronomy 2:24-28, God told Moses to start war as he passed through the land. Moses instead sent a peace delegation. According to Numbers Rabbah 19, a midrash comprised of exegetical commentary on the book of Numbers, Rabbis noted that it was God who said to Moses in response to Moses actions, "You have taught me something and I shall therefore cancel my words and adopt yours." It is therefore written in Deuteronomy 20:10, "When you draw near a town to fight against it, offer it terms of peace."

The point that the lecturer wanted to stress for us was this tradition of challenging God when God acted unjustly. To further emphasize his point, he showed how God was challenged by Job, Abraham, Moses and Dinah. And with that tradition, I expected to hear scholars challenge the response to what they were even calling an "asymmetrical reality." But there was no acknowledgement. All blame was apportioned to the other with widespread belief that Israel was righteous in its response to provocation.

Clearly, I am still processing the challenges that confronted me on this trip and will probably do so for years to come. Yet I continue to come back to the idea that people with power have to restrain themselves. I understand the feelings of justification when provoked, but our faith stresses seeking the pursuit of a different way. I do not claim to know what that way is, but I do know that people with power have to concede power for progress to occur.



Calling All Clergy Peer Groups: Participate in the Clergy Health Initiative

Last month, the Ministers Council announced that we had been awarded a Catalyst Grant from the Pastoral Excellence Network, a program of the Lilly Endowment Inc. at Christian Theological Seminary. This month, at the Ministers Council Senate / Annual Meeting, we are launching this initiative and we are calling all groups to participate.

When was the last time that you invested in you? At its core, that is what this program is about. We want to create an intentional structure through which you can focus on your health care needs, be they physical, emotional, or financial.

Are you in an existing Together in Ministry Group? Is your region participating in peer group processes? Are there others in your area with whom you would like to get together and engage in this study? We want to hear from you. You need only click the attached link http://ministerscouncil.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/CLI_Application.pdf to submit your information.

There is a cost associated with this study. We are asking participants to pay \$200 per person to be a part of this year long effort. What is the \$200 for? This money serves as remuneration for your group's facilitator. Those who participated in Together in Ministry may remember that grant monies paid facilitator costs, but the Pastoral Excellence Network's funding for this initiative was predicated on the idea that we would encourage a model where clergy invest in themselves. This is about personal self care. Remember the classes in seminary that talked about self care? We heard the words and were encouraged to care for self, but do we do it? Do we expect others to care more for us than we do for ourselves? Do we expect others to bear the cost of our care when we won't?

Our unwillingness to invest in self results in real direct consequences. Clergy are more overweight than the general population and we suffer from more preventable diseases because of the stresses of ministry. That is why MMBB, American Baptist Foundation, and ABHMS are partnering with us in this initiative. Participants will receive the support that they need to improve health outcomes.

Groups will receive the Clergy Health Care Initiative booklet through which individuals can assess health care needs. Where there are deficiencies, we have engaged resources and experts to work with groups and individuals to set and achieve their goals. On a monthly basis, members of the Clergy Health

Action Learning Team will follow up with groups to see how the process is going – whether it is helpful to use the peer group model to make progress against health goals. Group members will also receive a Fit Bit to track movement, and information on health monitoring apps that can be used to manage health care goals.

The point is that we are resourcing and equipping individuals to take control of health care issues and leverage support through the peer group learning model. It is an investment in self and we hope that you will want to take advantage of this opportunity.

The Ministers Council, MMBB, ABF, and ABHMS are excited to offer this initiative that has been generously supported by the Pastoral Excellence Network. We have an opportunity to help clergy realize greater health, which will enable clergy to be more effective in the call that God has placed on their lives. To register your group for participation in this initiative, click http://ministerscouncil.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/CLI_Application.pdf. For more information call (800) ABC-3USA ext. 2334.

Together in Ministry – Current Status



How has your summer been? You can always tell that it's summer in the church. Attendance is down, especially on a sunny day; and people who come hope for a shorter service so that they can get out and enjoy the weather. But what is most indicative of summer is giving. It goes down significantly. Gone are days when people mail their "send by" money to the church. For the uninitiated, this practice happened often in rural African American churches. Someone would place their offering in an envelope and send it with someone who was going to the church – thus the term "send by." Did you take a vacation and send your tithes and offerings to the church? Probably not. This is one of those things that we simply do not consider as we are busily making our summer plans.

The same is true in regards to fund raising and contributing to capital campaigns. It's summer; we're busy; and we're not thinking about a capital campaign effort. But maybe you can take a few moments right now to contribute to the Together in Ministry Capital Campaign. It couldn't be easier. Unlike Geico, which requires 15 minutes to save on your insurance; or E-surance, which requires 7 minutes for the same insurance process, it will take you less than a minute to go to <http://ministerscouncil.com/together-in-ministry-capital-campaign/> and click on the Donate button.

Remember, we are working to reach a \$500,000 target. We have raised, in cash gifts and pledges, a total of \$289,143.05 and our in-kind contributions total \$70,519.20, making our overall total \$359,662.25. It's summer, yes, but take a minute or two to help us to meet our goal of extending ministerial excellence through the continuation of clergy peer groups for decades to come. Your tax-deductible donations can be made securely and electronically and then you can get back to summer.

Peer Power: Cultivating Clergy Communities of Practice

Retreat and Conference Center at Bon Secours
1525 Marriottsville Road
Marriottsville, MD, USA

Why are pastors who are members of peer learning groups more effective leaders? What are the foundational practices and distinctive approaches for designing and sustaining clergy groups as communities of practice? **Peer Power** will offer presentations and workshops drawing on a broad mix of perspectives, foundational practices, and direct experiences of clergy peer learning approaches as we explore these questions.

The Pastoral Excellence Network is building a network of organizations committed to excellence in pastoral ministry. We



endeavor to sustain and amplify the impact that Lilly Endowment Inc. initiated through the Transition into Ministry and Sustaining Pastoral Excellence programs. We seek to help churches and church-related organizations provide opportunities for pastors to find support and learning throughout their professional lives. We work with congregations and organizations to help new pastors get the best possible start in ministry and equip experienced pastors with practices that will sustain their vital ministry, particularly through peer learning groups.

Tuesday, October 28, 2014

8:30 am Coffee and registration
9:00 am Worship
9:30 am Introduction to clergy communities of practice and the foundational practices
Chris Braudaway-Bauman and Lawrence Peers, Pastoral Excellence Network
10:15 am Break
11:00 am A community of practice experience and reflection
Noon Lunch
1:00 pm Workshop series one <http://cpx.cts.edu/docs/default-source/peer-power-workshop-descriptions.pdf?sfvrsn=2> (PDF, 220 KB)
2:30 pm Break
2:45 pm Workshop series two <http://cpx.cts.edu/docs/default-source/peer-power-workshop-descriptions.pdf?sfvrsn=2> (PDF, 220 KB)
4:15 pm Next steps, questions, etc.
5:00 pm End

Wednesday, October 29, 2014 (optional)

An optional second day of **Facilitator Training** is offered on Wednesday, October 29, from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm for those who want to learn and practice skills used in facilitating clergy peer learning groups. This is designed for potential facilitators, group members who rotate facilitative roles, and those who train and provide support to facilitators.

The Retreat Center at Bon Secours is situated on a breathtaking 300-acre property less than 30 minutes from the BWI airport. Amenities include walking paths, a labyrinth, a peace garden and a chapel, as well as 70 beautiful guest suites with private baths and Wi-Fi. The Pastoral Excellence Network is underwriting much of the costs of this event to make it affordable.

Space for this event is limited, so please register early. *We encourage you to come in teams of two or more.*

Cost:

Peer Power, October 28: breakfast, lunch, and dinner, plus overnight accommodations on Oct. 27, if desired (if you arrive by 6 pm, Oct. 27, dinner is also provided)

- Peer Power, Oct. 28 only, no overnight accommodations: \$50
- Peer Power, Oct. 28 with overnight accommodations Oct. 27: \$100

Facilitator Training, October 29: breakfast, lunch, plus overnight accommodations on Oct. 28, if desired (if you arrive by 6 pm, Oct. 28, dinner is also provided)

- Facilitator Training, Oct. 29 only, no overnight accommodations: \$50
- Facilitator Training, Oct. 29 with overnight accommodations Oct. 28: \$100

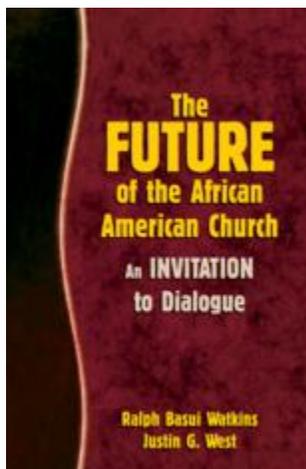
To register, click <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/peer-power-cultivating-clergy-communities-of-practice-tickets-11980651451>

Registration deadline: October 7

Contact: Willie Sordillo

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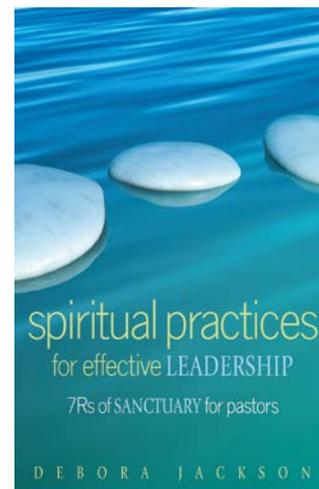
New Judson Press Releases

Hot off the Press is a new release from Judson Press called *The Future of the African American Church: An Invitation to Dialogue*, by Ralph Basil Watkins and Justin G. West. Get your copy today and leverage the 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.

The Future of the African American Church invites elders and young leaders alike to the table to discuss, "How does the church serve the present age?" How can "prophetic" churches and "praise" churches come together to re-imagine ministry? What can each tradition learn from the other -- and what gifts do we together have to offer the people of God in the world?

These are questions aimed at the African American Church, but are clearly applicable in all of our churches. So many of our pastors are retiring leaving a leadership vacuum, a dwindling congregation of older members, physical plants with thousands of dollars of deferred maintenance, and an unclear direction. We need to be in dialogue. Get this book and start to conversation while taking advantage of the Ministers Council membership benefit through our partnership with Judson Press.

Coming in the spring 2015, look for the new Judson Press book *Spiritual Practices for Effective Leadership: The 7Rs of Sanctuary for Pastors*, by Debora Jackson.



ABHMS Participates in Meeting of Psychiatry, Faith Leaders

As a member of the [Interfaith Disability Advocacy Coalition](#) (IDAC), American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) participated July 11 in a meeting of more than 40 prominent, diverse faith, psychiatric and other mental health leaders in Arlington, Va., to inaugurate the Mental Health and Faith Community Partnership, a collaboration among psychiatrists and clergy aimed at fostering a dialogue between two fields, reducing stigma, and accounting for medical and spiritual dimensions as people seek care.

Along with IDAC—a program of the [American Association of People with Disabilities](#) (AAPD)—convening organizations were the [American Psychiatric Association](#) (APA) and the [American Psychiatric Foundation](#) (APF). The partnership announced that it will create new resources to train religious leaders about mental health and substance use disorder issues and for psychiatrists about faith and faith communities in mental health recovery.

"We look forward to the good God will do through this partnership to reduce stigma and improve the quality and accessibility of care for individuals and families living with mental illness," says Curtis Ramsey-Lucas, who attended the meeting on behalf of ABHMS and represents ABHMS on IDAC's steering committee.

In addition to Ramsey-Lucas, the meeting included former U.S. Rep. Patrick Kennedy; APA president Paul Summergrad, M.D.; AAPD president and CEO Mark Perriello; director of AAPD's Interfaith Initiative Ginny Thornburgh; APF executive director Paul Burke; Sister Nancy Kehoe, RSCJ, Ph.D., author of "Wrestling with Our Inner Angels: Faith, Mental Illness, and the Journey to Wholeness"; Bishop William Young of the Healing Center Ministries, Memphis, Tenn.; Rabbi Edythe Held Mencher, LSCW; and Dr. Sayyid Syeed, national director of the Islamic Society of North America.

"The agenda for this partnership is ambitious but reflects the scope of the challenges we face. There is much to be done to reduce stigma, enhance education about, and address the prevalence of mental illness in our society, so working together is imperative," Summergrad said.

For information about ABHMS' Disabilities Ministries, visit <http://www.abhms.org/> > Ministries & Programs > Justice Ministries > [Disabilities Ministries](#).

Upcoming Events

- The Ministers Council Senate / Annual Meeting – August 11-14, 2014, at Green Lake, WI.
- AB Women's Caribbean Cruise – September 19-21, 2014, Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines.
- Pastoral Excellence Network Peer Power Workshop – October 28, 2014, Bon Secours Retreat Center, Baltimore, MD

Ministers Council Contact Information

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