



Ministers Council Newsletter

Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson, Executive Director

July 2015



From the Desk of the Executive Director

One of the classes available at Andover Newton Theological School when I was completing my MDiv was “Preaching for Special Occasions,” taught by Rev. Dr. Richard Haley, who is currently the President of the Conference of Baptist Ministers in Massachusetts. While I have great respect for Dr. Haley, I opted to fulfil my preaching credits with another course. Nevertheless, it was Dr. Haley’s class that came to mind as I thought about what our colleagues might deliver over the Fourth of July

weekend from pulpits, or what they might say to counselees when asked to express thoughts on our 239th Independence Day.

What is appropriate to say? Should we say that the framers of the Declaration of Independence penned prophetically profound words in their quest for freedom? Yes; but then would it be well received to also say that their words rang hollow even on that first Independence Day because equality was not inclusive of people of color or women? Should we speak of freedom even when others are not free? Do we talk about life and liberty when others are denied these things? Or do we limit our remarks, speaking of the ideals of freedom and liberty as the hopes for which we strive?

I could not imagine preaching over these last few weeks without speaking to the church shootings at Mother Emanuel AME Church. It was such an outrageous and heinous crime that our sensitivities and proclivities could not help but be drawn to that fateful Wednesday evening Bible Study. And even if we struggled to find a word for the deaths of Pastor Clementa Pinckney and other church members, surely we could speak to the genuinely amazing grace and forgiveness extended by the families of the victims in the aftermath. Perhaps it is because of that grace that it seems particularly urgent to link the church shootings to Independence Day. It seems, given recent events, that it is past due the time that we get this right.

In his poem “I, Too,” Langston Hughes penned the words “I, too, sing America.” He said, “I am the darker brother. They send me to eat in the kitchen when company comes.” There are many of us who understand the sentiment. We may be people of color; we may be women; we may be gay, lesbian, or transgender, and too many of us have been sent to the proverbial kitchen when company comes – silenced, marginalized, and ostracized. And in response, too many of us have remained silent as we watched these acts occur, withdrawing to the shadows and convincing ourselves that these matters really have nothing to do with us. We could do that even now. After all, we are not African Methodist Episcopal.

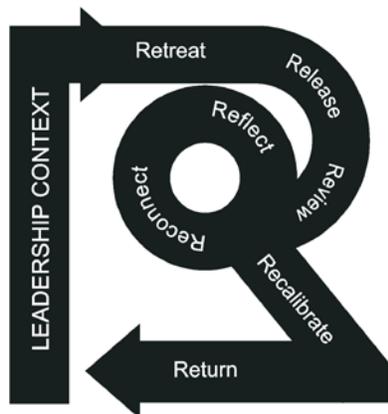
You may not be an African American; you may not live in the south; you may not even experience the diversity of an integrated worship. Based on such facts, you could say, "This isn't my issue."

But I dare say that it is. Most of you who are reading this are Americans and as Americans, "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all [people] are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." When Thomas Jefferson penned these words, he did not add an asterisk footnote indicating that these platitudes were just for some. We would assert that **all** are created equal and as such, **all** should have equal access and opportunity to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

And this leads us to the crux of the argument: we are Baptists and the cornerstone of our belief is that of freedom. I do not have to believe as you do, but I am compelled to defend your right to believe. We believe in justice. I don't have to be AME to speak out against injustices toward AMEs any more than I have to be gay or lesbian to declare that discrimination against anyone is wrong. This is, in my mind, bedrock Baptist belief, and it sets the stage for a radical hospitality where I can welcome all without condition just as our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ welcomed.

Therefore, as American Baptists let us resolve together that we are going to get this right so that all of God's children are welcomed and free to realize liberty. Let us resolve together that the words written by Rev. Dr. Samuel Francis Smith, Andover Theological School graduate and former pastor of the First Baptist Church in Needham, MA, where I too served, will ring true in our lives: My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing; Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrims' pride, from ev'ry mountainside, let freedom ring!

Note: American Baptist Home Mission Societies, in partnership with the New Baptist Covenant, National African American Clergy Network, and the African Episcopal Methodist Church, encouraged churches to participate in Freedom from Racism Sunday on July 5. The New Baptist Covenant provided resources and templates to help churches. Those resources can be found at: www.newbaptistcovenant.org/freedom-from-racism.



Register now for the 7R's of Sanctuary Program

Registration for the *7Rs of Sanctuary* program is now open and applications are being received for a year-long cohort to begin in Massachusetts in September 2015. Apply now by clicking [here](#).

The *7Rs of Sanctuary* is a program designed to help leaders realize greater personal and professional efficacy in leadership by integrating contemplative, spiritually-grounded practices, both personal and communal, into their daily lives. Through this 12-month program, participants will engage in a variety of contemplative practices, alone and together, while learning strategies that will help them address some of the most pressing leadership challenges. The

results will be transformative as leaders attain increased well-being and wholeness for themselves in community, while mastering skills that will strengthen their organizations. The program features one three-day residency to be held **September 28-30, 2015 in Arlington, MA**; four one-day follow-up sessions to be scheduled quarterly, supplemented by reading, reflection and peer group learning.

As the research clearly articulates in the book [Spiritual Practices for Effective Leadership: 7R's of Sanctuary for Pastors](#), leaders who take time apart to engage in spiritual practices are more effective in their leadership. Leaders must become competent in taking an action and simultaneously reflecting on the action to learn from it. The challenge is in making space for that time of reflection so that leaders can restore their sense of purpose, put issues in perspective, and regain courage and heart. This is the goal of the 7Rs of Sanctuary program. In this time apart, participants are revitalized, and decision making is enriched in a spirit of peace and certainty.

The cost of the year-long program is \$1000. However, as a result of a generous grant from the Imago Dei fund, scholarships covering up to 75% of the program expense are available.

Click [here](#) to register. Space is limited for the pilot program and registration closes on August 15, 2015. Program acceptance and financial aid decisions will be communicated by August 28, 2015.

The Ministers Council Holds its Annual Meeting and Retreat during Mission Summit



The Ministers Council held its Annual Meeting on June 24-25, 2015 in Overland Park, KS, prior to the Mission Summit biennial gathering. Twenty-three of the 32 Ministers Council chapters were represented along with members of the Board of Governors, and guests as the meeting was open to anyone who wished to attend.

2015 marks the first year of our new Ministers Council organizational structure. Thus the beginnings of our time together were formational in nature as we constructed the Ministries Team. The Ministries Team, comprised of the representatives of each chapter, organizes to carry out the program plan of the Ministers Council. With a pulse on the needs of clergy in the local context, chapter representatives are charged with the responsibility of soliciting and articulating the needs of ministers in their area so that together the team can define and implement programs and initiatives that respond to the needs. Led by our Ministries Team Coordinator, Rev. Holly Bean, and Ministers Council President, Rev. Doug Harris, we had the opportunity to participate in a process to help us surface the most pressing issues. Two specific themes spoke to identity and the need for connectivity. Participants expressed the desire to easily communicate who the Ministers Council is and why it is of value so that colleagues can readily understand why they need to be a part of the Ministers Council. Then, recognizing the value and power of our gathering and the relationships found and formed, participants expressed the desire for initiatives that would encourage and facilitate connectivity. The many ideas generated were captured and categorized in the areas of recruitment, training, promotions, and connection. Over the ensuing months, the Ministries Team will meet monthly to develop the plan for moving these ideas forward.

During the Business Meeting, we heard the reports of the Ministers Council officers. This included the financial report, report of the Development Council, the Together in Ministry Capital Campaign report, and the Executive Directors Report. As Executive Director, I noted that partnerships continued to play an important role in the work of the Ministers Council, but financial challenges continued to hamper efforts. Positive financial events during this reporting period were a successful annual campaign and fund development efforts that secured grant funding.

New officers were elected during this Annual Meeting. Rev. Dr. Shane Kinnison of Oregon was elected as Recording Secretary to complete the term of Rev. Dale Thomas. Rev. Joy Amick of Indiana was elected as Budget Review Officer as Rev. Brian Dixon had completed his term. Congratulations to our newly elected officers and God's speed to our retiring officers.

We were blessed to have several members of the ABCUSA family contribute to our meeting. Bringing greetings to our assembly was Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley, General Secretary; Rev. Ray Schooler, Director of Development, International Ministries; Rev. Perkin Simpson, Executive Director, American Baptist Foundation, Rev. Dr. Perry Hopper, Associate Executive Director, MMBB Financial Services, and Rev. Steve Bills, Ministers Council Representative from the REMC and Executive Minister, American Baptist Churches of the Central Pacific Coast. We also received gifts from American Baptist Home Mission Societies, American Baptist Extension Corporation, MMBB Financial Services, and International Ministries.

Once our meeting concluded, the Ministers Council was active during the Mission Summit. Proudly wearing our Ministers Council ribbons, members staffed the Ministers Council booth and actively recruited clergy to join the Ministers Council. We also had the opportunity to share updates from the Transformed by the Spirit Action Learning Teams during one of the afternoon sessions. Rev. Dr. Alan Selig reported on the findings from the Pastoral Attrition Action Learning Team, and Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson provided an update from the Women in Ministry and Clergy Health Action Learning Teams. Truly, in the words of one of our partners, we “did a great job of making the Ministers Council known.” If nothing else, the free popcorn was a real incentive!

After a very busy Mission Summit, 33 participants headed to Unity Village for the Let Go, Behold, Sing Retreat. Rev. Dr. Heather Entrekin led us through a spacious time of retreat that helped us to realize Sabbath as we identified those things of which we needed to let go, and those things that we needed to behold or see with fresh eyes. Then given this new found clarity and awareness, we had the opportunity to identify that which would make our hearts sing. This was the essence of our Sabbath keeping: process of shedding, seeing and singing in life giving, revelatory ways, not only for ourselves but also for those we serve. The retreat participants are pictured above.

We have already begun discussions for 2016 and 2017. As the next Mission Summit will be held in Portland, OR, we hope to identify an east coast location for our next Ministers Council Annual Meeting and retreat in 2016. We will also begin planning our 2017 events to be held during Mission Summit. If you are interested in participating in the planning of either 2016 or 2017 events, please contact the Ministers Council office at (800) 222-3872 x2334.

The Pastoral Attrition ACT Submits Final Report

The Pastoral Attrition Action Learning Team (PAALT) was tasked by the Ministers Council to enter an intentional process for learning about the current challenges facing local congregations and young clergy, and to experiment with new ways of helping new



clergy. Factors which related to this challenge include the following: 1) the perception that new clergy may be experiencing an inordinately high attrition rate in the first five years of pastoral ministry; 2) the data indicating that fewer seminarians have full-time pastoral ministry as their vocational goals; 3) the perception that there may be a lack of effective supportive resources for first call pastors; and 4) the

perception that new clergy are stressed by multiple factors which may cause them to question their call and leave pastoral ministry.

For more than two years, the PAALT has been diligently considering these issues. The team members included:

- Alan Selig (Rev. Dr.), convener -- ABC-USA pastor, Palmer Theological Seminary adjunct instructor, International Ministries volunteer missionary;
- Marie Carpenter (Rev.) – Director of Eldercare Ministries, American Baptist Churches of Rhode Island;
- Heather Entrekin, (Rev. Dr.) – Des Peres Associate Professor in Congregational Health, Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Shawnee, Kansas;
- Nancy Hall, (Rev. Dr.) – Associate Professor of Ministry and Congregational Music, Director of Contextual Education: American Baptist Seminary of the West; Pastor, First Baptist Church of Berkeley;
- Ross Peterson, (Rev. Dr.) – Executive Director of Midwest Ministry Development Service and Southwest Ministry Development Service;
- E. Clem Winbush -- Executive Associate/Minister of Mission, Evergreen Association of American Baptist Churches

Over the course of the PAALT's work, a number of important issues and questions were identified which the team lacked the resources to explore fully:

- What is the actual rate of attrition in the first 5 years of pastoral ministry in the American Baptist Churches?
- How does this rate of attrition vary across gender, ethnicity, and other factors?
- How does the rate of attrition compare to that experienced in other denominations or other helping professions?
- How much pastoral attrition can be characterized as "healthy and appropriate," and how much can be characterized as "damaging and unfortunate?"
- What supportive resources are available for new clergy, and how effective are they?

Concluding that a quantitative research project on this topic was beyond the range of its capacity, the team identified three primary foci for its efforts: 1) identifying various supportive resources that are already available to assist new clergy; 2) identifying some simple steps that could better prepare and assist new clergy; and 3) developing an internet-based method to conduct qualitative research on the issue pastoral attrition. The third focus became the primary one for the group.

Currently Available Resources for New Clergy

The PAALT identified the following as resources which currently exist for new clergy:

- Structured cohort groups with supportive and educational components
- Mentoring and coaching
- The Ministry Development Centers
- Informal collegial support
- Support from Regional staff

Possible Steps for Better Supporting New Clergy

- Developing a list of current resources and distributing it through the Ministers Council and the Regions.
- More intentionality in exposing seminarians to the realities of pastoral ministry and church life.
- Linking with other groups in the ABC who are doing related work, such as American Baptist Women in Ministry and the Professional Ministries Team.
- Identifying and publicizing what types of initiative the Regions are already undertaking to support new clergy.
- Developing and publicizing a bibliographic resource on coping with stress in ministry, dealing with conflict, etc.

Internet-based Qualitative Research

The PAALT came to the conclusion that gaining a rich stream of narrative data about people's experiences related to leaving, or considering leaving, pastoral ministry was an important next step. The team designed a series of questions that included open-ended components, as well as more closed/specific components. These were made available through an online process. The logistical aspects of setting up this survey process were graciously facilitated by Jeff Woods and his office. The link to the survey website was publicized through a variety of means, relying heavily on the channels known to the members of PAALT. A total of 330 people responded to the survey; the top 10 findings are described below. The team provided a detailed list of responses as an appendix to the report submitted to the Ministers Council.

- 1) The most common reasons cited for leaving pastoral ministry were conflict and loss of trust between pastor and members; moving to another field of ministry; and retirement.
- 2) The most common negative adjective use to describe pastoral ministry was, by a large margin, "frustrating." The second most common negative adjective was "exhausting."
- 3) The most common positive adjective used to describe pastoral ministry was, by a large margin, "challenging." The second and third most common positive adjectives were "fulfilling" and "rewarding." (see image above)
- 4) 86% of respondents reported that the decision to leave ministry was primarily their own decision, rather than decided by others.
- 5) 72% of respondents reported that the process of leaving pastoral ministry was "gracious", rather than "wounding."
- 6) 84% of respondents reported that the decision to leave ministry was more of a "confirmation of God's call," rather than a "blocking of God's call."
- 7) Regarding resources that respondents had turned to for support, 46% had turned to personal resources such as colleagues, family, and friends; 35% had turned to Regional or church staff; 11% had turned book, articles, or internet sources; 11% had turned to clergy groups or clergy retreats/conferences; 6% had turned to placement services through the ABC; 21% had not turned to potentially supportive resources for a variety of reasons.
- 8) Nearly 56% of respondents reported that they considered the level of resources from the ABC for pastors considering leaving ministry to be "insufficient." 39% viewed the resources as "adequate." 5% viewed the resources as more than adequate.
- 9) Regarding the impact of ministry on their families, 43% reported a clearly negative impact; 21% reported a mixed impact; 21% reported a positive impact and 4% reported minimal impact.
- 10) When asked what advice they would give new seminary graduates, the most common responses were:
 - a. Make sure you calling is from God
 - b. Choose your church carefully and wisely
 - c. Know that you will be both blessed and hurt
 - d. Have a second career option for which you are prepared
 - e. Establish good boundaries
 - f. Make your family a very high priority
 - g. Don't think you can do it alone
 - h. Have a life and interests outside of ministry
 - i. Find a community of trustworthy colleagues for support
 - j. Find a mentor or ministry coach

The full detailed results are being distributed to partners now to determine next steps. Special thanks to the PAALT for their dedicated and committed efforts over these past two years. Clearly the results will make a difference in the lives of ministers for years to come.

How Many Pastors Does it Take to Turn off Air Conditioning?

Ok, this sounds like the beginning of a joke, but honestly it is not. Sadly though, the answer seems to be more than six. Why? Well, six pastors were on a shuttle returning from Unity Village to the Kansas City International Airport and all of us were freezing because the air conditioning was on high. In effect what we were actually doing was suffering in silence. No one was willing to say anything for fear that others were comfortably satisfied with temperatures that were plunging to meat locker levels. It was only as one pastor started losing feeling in her feet did she say something. And even then her question was accommodating; "Is anyone else cold?"

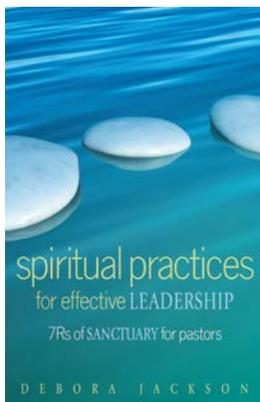


THE TEMPERATURE INSIDE

There is something about clergy. We are long suffering. We are accommodating beyond our own needs. We make ourselves last while we make others first. I get it. We all seem to do it. What is more, I would not necessarily suggest that we change. After all, it is because we are sensitive to the needs and desires of others that we can serve and minister.

But there are times when we need to take care of self. We need to recognize what we need and be willing to speak up for ourselves. It is in the speaking up for what we need that we are filled and we need to be filled for the ministry. Even the Bible says that we have not because we ask not. It is hard to minister on empty and we know it because we have all done it.

However, Jesus came that we too would have abundant life. And maybe a more comfortable temperature may not seem like it, in the moment, when you are clenched in a near fetal position due to cold, warmth is abundance. And so in these summer months, this is just a reminder that we need to care for ourselves while we are caring for others, lest we be left out in the cold.



From Judson Press

Were you at the Mission Summit? If so, one book that you may have had the opportunity to pick up for your library was *Spiritual Practices for Effective Leadership: 7Rs of Sanctuary for Pastors*, by Debora Jackson. Through book signings during the Mission Summit, the book was on sale at a reduced price. Did you get yours?

If not, fear not. You can go to http://www.judsonpress.com/product.cfm?product_id=18676 and enjoy the same discounted price that was offered during the Mission Summit. If you want to incorporate spiritual practices in your leadership in order to realize greater effectiveness in leadership, this book is for you.

Through the 7Rs of Sanctuary you will learn how to:

- **Retreat** from your ministry – your leadership context;
- **Release** from confronting challenges so that you can disconnect;
- **Review** your current leadership context in a mindful way;
- **Reconnect** with God's call on your life;
- **Reflect** on the disconnections between your current context and your call;
- **Recalibrate** by determining strategies that will help you realign;
- **Return** to you ministry context grounded and prepared to lead.

Realize this transforming method for your effectiveness and wholeness. Order *Spiritual Practices for Effective Leadership: 7Rs of Sanctuary for Pastors* today and enjoy free shipping with your Ministers Council Membership.

An Essay Contest for Young Adult Women

Judson Press and AB Women's Ministries is hosting an essay contest based on [Sisters of Scripture: Mentors of Womanhood](#) by Billie Montgomery/Cook. Young adult American Baptist women, ages 17-35, are invited to submit an essay of 200 words of a mentor in their lives by **September 15, 2015**. For more information and an online essay submission form, please visit <https://sistersofscripturemnw.wordpress.com/>. You may also download the informational flyer from www.abwministries.org/resourceDetails.aspx?resourceDetailId=277.

Local News Anyone?

What is going on in your local chapter? Share the word so that others might join in. Did you know that more than 2000 people view this newsletter every month? Share your news so that others might be informed and inspired.



Upcoming Events

- Christian Leadership Institute, Jerusalem, July 14-24,

Give to the Ministers Council

Support the work and ministry of the Ministers Council through the Ministers Council Endowment. Visit <http://ministerscouncil.com/the-ministers-council-endowment> for more information.

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