

Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson, Executive Director

September 2015

From the Desk of the Executive Director

Unbelievably, it is September. Where did the summer go? More importantly, what happened to my vacation season? My calendar tells me that I took vacation time this summer. The increase in frequent flyer miles also indicates travel. However, as I sit composing this newsletter, I am not really feeling the positive effects of vacation. I'm not feeling that well-rested sense of euphoria that says, "Oh I could take on the world because I've had time away." No, instead I'm experiencing that worn-out sense of fatigue that says, "Did I go away?" Somehow, I do not think that I am alone. As I speak to colleagues, we all sing the same lament.



When I worked as a technology consultant, my firm used to stress this notion of Work Life Balance. We worked hard as consultants, but we were encouraged to play hard as well. The company knew that employees were happiest when we maintained an appropriate balance so that our lives were not consumed by work. We were required to take our vacation time. We had a game room so that we could have fun during break time. More than that, we were required to maintain balance in our daily work where we were encouraged to adhere to a 50-hour work week.

Talking to clergy, such a "light" schedule is almost laughable. Many of us work six or even seven days a week. We work during the day and then attend meetings during the evening hours. We try to find time for study or continuing education during "off hours." We balance family obligations given that many of us are sandwiched between aging parents and child rearing. Our vacation time accrues and if we do manage to take time away, our ubiquitous technological gadgets make it impossible for us to really feel like we're off.

The result of course is what I have already expressed. I took vacation time, but I do not feel as though I did. And when I did take time away, that time was so packed with activities that I returned more fatigued than when I left. So now with ramped up ministry demands as we come into September, I believe we can and should endeavor to do some things differently.

First, what if we could establish definitive start and end times for our work day? I recognize how difficult this is in ministry because each day brings different responsibilities. However, too many of us allow daily variability to be the excuse for completely permeable work schedules. Even if the hours need to change based on your schedule, try to establish a daily schedule that provides sufficient down time for relaxation.

Second, we need to try to get more sleep. National Public Radio featured a story whose research concluded that people who got fewer than seven hours of sleep were more susceptible to cold viruses: <http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2015/09/01/436385137/aim-for-at-least-7-hours-of-sleep-nightly-to-fend-off-a-cold>. So many of us burn the midnight oil in our work or awaken in the early hours to get a head start. However, that lack of sleep may be the reason why we suffer illness. Sleep-deprived people in the study were twice as likely to catch a cold as those who had more

sleep. Add to it that stress and lack of exercise, two factors that clergy suffer, can also increase our susceptibility to illness.

Third, we need to create more space in our day. What if you took 10 minutes each hour during the day for a break? What if you took one hour each work day just to step away? What if we took the time to get back to someone rather than immediately accepting an engagement? These small strategies create space, and when we create space in our day, we realize a healthy release for stress. Moreover, when we create space, we gain perspective, giving ourselves the opportunity to view what is important and not simply the seemingly urgent matter right in front of us.

The culminating point is this: if we could make our daily lives more balanced, then our vacation time could be more effective because we are not operating on empty. Given balance, our vacations can provide the kind of positive restoration that we need. Perhaps I am only preaching to myself, but I recognize the need for a healthier daily existence. Ministry is a marathon and we all need balance to finish well. I am hopeful that each of us will be strengthened on the journey as we achieve greater balance.

Clergy as Civil Rights Advocates

I had the opportunity to visit the Civil Rights Museum in Atlanta recently. The very intense picture was taken as I sat in the simulated Woolworth's Lunch Counter hearing the kind of abuse to which sit-in protestors were subjected. It was painful, yes; but it was a dramatization. These were not my first-hand experiences. However, my parents could relate. They spoke of segregated schools, being unable to try on clothing in stores, and seeing the "Whites only" signs. I could only imagine. I found myself thanking God that things were better for my generation. Moreover, I was thanking God that things are even better for my son.



And yet, as I walked through the exhibits, I was reminded of the role of clergy in the struggle. Oh sure, we recognize leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr., Fred Shuttlesworth, and Joseph Lowery. But there were others such as Abraham Joshua Heschel who marched with King, and Daniel Berrigan who was arrested for civil disobedience. And then who could forget James Reeb and seminarian Jonathan Myrick Daniels? Both of these men lost their lives for civil rights. Clergy were often on the front lines during the Civil Rights Era. Living out the mandates of faith, those who were engaged saw the plight of others as their own.

Honestly, I believe that this was the message at the Civil Rights Museum. We came through the 50s and 60s – the heart of the modern civil rights era. However the clear message was that we are not done. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, yet atrocities remain. In this world, we are still battling slavery as millions of people across the globe are victims of human trafficking. Europe is facing a refugee crisis as hundreds of thousands are fleeing war-ravaged countries and desperate poverty. And in our country, we struggle with immigration, LGBTQQI rights, health care expansion, and a widening equality gap, among other issues. We are not done. As long as people are striving for freedom and human rights, we are not done.

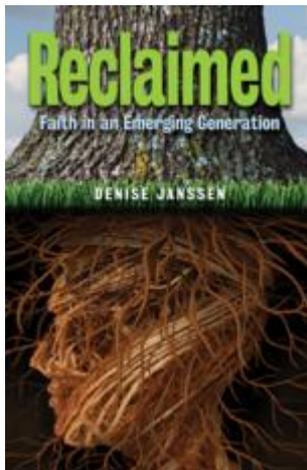
And that is the point. I believe that as clergy, we are called to speak out and serve as advocates for those in our midst. Our positions on the human rights issues of our day may be different, but we have to speak from our God-given conviction. No, perhaps no one needs us to sit at the lunch counter at Woolworths. But someone somewhere needs our voice and our conviction. We are called to be advocates for the rights of others.

Are you an Interim Pastor?

If so, you know that the challenges of interim ministry are unique. Would you be interested in connecting with other interim pastors for the opportunity to learn, share, and gain support? The Ministers Council will convene a webinar facilitated by Rev. Arlen Vernava, Professional Transition Specialist and Strategic Interim Minister. Click [here](#) to participate in a **Doodle scan poll** so that we may set a date. Then plan to join us for what promises to be a wonderful time of connection.



From Judson Press



Are young adults missing in your church? Many of our churches struggle with the challenge of the missing generation of young adults. Why is it that youth and teens who grew up in the church leave and why do many of them return? Pastor and Professor Denise Janssen probes these questions in her book *Reclaimed: Faith in an Emerging Generation*. She interviews young adults, tracing their departure and return to the church to analyze the patterns and commonalities and offer recommendations. This book serves as a wonderful resource for churches who want to help their youth and teens navigate the transition from adolescence to adulthood, offering insights on the types of experiences that keep young adults connected to the church.

Get your copy today by clicking http://www.judsonpress.com/product.cfm?product_id=18891#. And remember, Ministers Council members receive free shipping on orders over \$15.00.



The Louisville Institute Announces Upcoming Application Deadlines

Project Grants for Researchers - The Louisville Institute's Project Grant for Researchers Program supports research, reflection, and writing by academics and pastors concerning Christian faith and life, the practice of ministry, and/or religious institutions. Grants of up to \$25,000 support a diverse range of projects that may involve independent study, consultations, or collaborative projects involving pastors and academics. Particularly attractive to the Institute are projects that show potential to benefit the church in North America. The application can be accessed by clicking [here](#). Application Deadline – October 1, 2015.

Sabbatical Grants for Researchers - The Louisville Institute's Sabbatical Grant for Researchers Program enables ecclesially-engaged academics and scholarly religious leaders to conduct a major study that can contribute to the vitality of Christianity in North America. Grants of up to \$40,000 support year-long research projects that address Christian faith and life, the practice of ministry, and/or religious institutions. The online application can be accessed by clicking [here](#). Application Deadline – November 1, 2015.



Peer Power: Cultivating clergy communities of practice and training for peer group facilitators, October 2015

October 21, 2015 – October 22, 2015, 8:30 am – 5:00 pm,
Techny Towers Conference and Retreat Center
2001 Waukegan Road
Techny, IL

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 second day of the retreat will focus on facilitator training to build 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 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 (TiM) and Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) 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.

The [program schedule](#) for both days is available for review.

See the [workshop choices and leadership](#) for this event.

Overnight accommodations will be available on October 20 and October 21, 2015, if needed.

Cost: There are two packages available.

- Overnight Package (two days of training, two nights at the retreat center, all meals for the duration of the event, plus program materials): \$200
- Commuter Package (two days of training, meals for the duration of the event, plus program materials): \$100

Registration Deadline – October 6, 2015.

Register by clicking [here](#).

On Behalf of International Ministries:

Friends,

I hope summer has been progressing well for all of you. I'm writing to let you know that International Ministries has some scholarships available for people who may wish to attend the Hear the Call: Stretching Forward into Mission retreat October 9-12, 2015. The retreat being held at Canonicus Camp and Conference Center, Exeter, RI is for people who are seeking to discern whether God may be calling them into international cross-cultural service as American Baptist mission personnel. Thank you for the extent to which you may be able to share the information about this scholarship availability with folks in your region. They can get more information and request a scholarship at:

<http://www.internationalministries.org/read/58737-2015-hear-the-call>

Blessings!

Reid

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Reid S. Trulson
Executive Director
American Baptist International Ministries

Youth put Mission Summit earnings toward mission trip

When youth at First Baptist Church, Olathe, Kan., were contacted about earning an hourly rate to help Judson Press set up and tear down its bookstore at American Baptist Churches USA's Mission Summit 2015 in Kansas City in June, they jumped at the opportunity—not to fill their own pockets but to help finance a planned mission trip to Los Angeles.

Seven youth—Jack Donley, Ryan Donley, Nash Drake, Ryne Garvin, Eli Peach, Kole Perrin and Iseabail Simpson—unloaded, sorted and boxed books; lifted boxes; filled tables and display shelves; set up tables; and assisted Judson Press staff as otherwise needed in the space-turned-bookstore in front of what was transformed into the “Hall of Ministries” at Overland Park Convention Center.

“I felt like I was helping a good cause,” says Perrin. “And it was a new experience that showed me things don't always go by plan.”

The Judson Press helpers are part of a larger group—the church's mission team—that participated in an eight-day July experience in which they served at a variety of Los Angeles locales with the national Center for Student Missions.

“They served pastries to homeless individuals at parks, they did a prayer tour of the city, they played bingo at nursing homes and care facilities, served lunch two days at Long Beach Rescue Mission, served at the L.A. Mission on Skid Row, served dinner to 595 people at the Midnight Mission on Skid Row—in 45 minutes!—cleaned at a women's shelter, sorted bread at the Los Angeles County Food Bank, and a variety of other projects,” says Jennifer Kane, who has been serving as FBC's youth pastor, along with her husband, Brian, since 2006.

Lois Chiles, vice president of the American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) board of directors and local arrangements committee chair for the Mission Summit, arranged the volunteer partnership, as, in her words, “a great opportunity to work together in the name of Jesus Christ.”

Judson Press is the publishing ministry of ABHMS.



Local News Anyone?

As we share the news of what we are doing in our local Ministers Council chapters, others are inspired. We want the light of your good works to shine brightly so that others might be informed. Our readership increases every month. Share your news and spread the word.

Upcoming Events

- Lilly Endowment Department of Religion Program Review, Indianapolis, IN – September 9
- Massachusetts Baptist Multicultural Ministries Board Retreat, Dedham, MA – September 18-19
- 7Rs of Sanctuary Pilot Program, Arlington, MA – September 28-30
- Pastoral Excellence Network - Peer Power Retreat, Chicago, IL, October 20-21
- 10th Anniversary Celebration, New Creation Baptist Church, Worcester, MA – October 11
- Professional Ministries Team Meeting, Valley Forge, PA – October 26
- Providence Baptist Church Leadership Retreat, Baltimore, MD – October 30-31
- Space for Grace, Los Angeles, CA, November 4-7

Give to the Ministers Council

Support the work of the Ministers Council. Use our [Donor Information Form](#) to contribute to the Equipping Ministries Endowment Fund, Together in Ministry Endowment Fund, General Fund or to a designated ministry effort that you specify. As you support the Ministers Council, you make ministry happen.

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