

THE MINISTERS COUNCIL: COMING OF AGE A HISTORICAL REVIEW

PREFACE

"Three years ago at Colorado Springs there was brought to birth, after some severe labor pains, this latest child of the Northern Baptist Convention. The Ministers Council. Some of us had dreamed about this child for many days before it was born. In those days we pictured a certain form and beauty. I suppose parents are permitted to indulge in such dreams. Why shouldn't they? Every parent wants the ideal child.

The parents of this child wanted it to be useful as well as good looking. They had discovered certain fundamental weaknesses in the family structure of our Baptist life, and felt that the only way this weakness could be overcome was for this child to be born and take its place within the other members of our group.

To increase a family during the hard days of depression was certainly a risky thing to do. In fact, some members of the family said, in very emphatic words, that we did not need this new child. They not only felt that the child would entail expenses but that it might be a ludicrous addition to our Baptist family, if not outrightly vicious.

The child was born. To some extent it was like most children when they are born, homely and frail. It needed much attention. It needed money to make it grow and function as a member with the others in our Northern Baptist group. Because some objected to the expenses of this child, we told you that we would try to care for it without the aid of extra help. Some of us have acted as nurse maid, cook, dietician, teacher, and even doctor to this child.

But it has been very worthwhile. We have brought it through the stages of development until it is almost half-grown. What if it had the measles, chicken-pox, scarlet fever and a few other children's diseases? It is alive and vigorous. Somewhere I read that at two and a half or three years of age the child should be half its height. Our child is normal. There are about 4,800 active pastors in our convention. We issued membership card number 2374 last March, and if we had not lost 69 members by death and otherwise, the half-way stage of growth would have been reached."

Dr. R.G. Schell, President of the Ministers Council, Address delivered on May 27, 1938 at the Northern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting in Milwaukee, Wisconsin

THE DREAMING OF A CHILD: 1934

At 3:30 p.m. on May 23, 1934, the Committee on the Ministry of the Northern Baptist Convention met, at the time of the annual convention of the Northern Baptists in Rochester, NY. In joint session with representatives of the Board of Education and The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board, they presented recommendations for the formation of a "Ministers and Missionaries Council" for the purpose of fostering fellowship and the enrichment of ministry. Thus began the sixty year history of the American Baptist Ministers Council. It is a history rich with struggle and significant growth within our denominational and congregational life.

The recommendation to form a Council developed out of a long felt and often expressed need to gather together for more than the listening of sermons preached by one's colleagues, as had been the practice prior to annual conventions. A special "Committee of Nine" was created to prepare a "Statement of Objectives" to be presented at a special called meeting of Baptist pastors in attendance at that 1934 convention.

Later that same day in 1934, a recommendation was presented to the 250 pastors gathered outlining the goal of establishing a "Ministers and Missionaries Council." This recommendation was passed by an overwhelming majority, as well as the appointing of an official "Committee of Nine" as an organizing committee. This

"Committee for Organization," as it was formally known, consisted of the following: R.G. Schell, Chicago, IL - Chairman; Albert Gage, Wakefield, MA - Secretary; H.H. Stratton, Muncie, IN - Treasurer; R.C. Walker, Cleveland, OH; W.S.K. Yeaple, Rochester, NY; Charles Durden, Omaha, NE; Harold Camp, Oakland, CA; Clarence W. Kemper, Denver, CO; and Frank M. Swaffield, Brockton, MA. On May 25th this "Committee for Organization" met in Rochester to begin formulating its strategy for the creation of a council at the next annual convention to be held in 1935 at Colorado Springs.

In June 1934 The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board voted to provide up to \$1,000 in "working capital" for the "Committee of Nine" as they began their work in earnest. This voluntary contribution by The Ministers and Missionaries Board Board was the first of many supportive gestures which eventually led to a strong bond of support and enablement between the two organizations. This bond continues to this day in new and varied forms.

THE DREAM BECOMES REALITY: 1935

Prior to the 1935 annual convention in Colorado Springs, the "Committee of Nine" conducted an extensive publicity campaign to inform the constituency and create a heightened sense of awareness for pastors regarding the nature and purpose of the proposed Council. Primarily through the utilization of the Northern Baptist Convention publication, Watchman-Examiner, the "Committee of Nine" published several articles, written by R.G. Schell, highlighting the need to find new and positive ways to aide the clergy in their tasks and to constructively deal with several problems confronting the denomination at that time: the placement of clergy, educational standards for ordination, standards for the recognition of clergy within our denomination, etc. These articles produced a series of dissenting opinions expressed through subsequent articles in the Watchman-Examiner.

The most vehement words of opposition came from W.B. Riley, D.D. in the March 21, 1935 Watchman-Examiner in which he declared the proposed Council to be "Unbiblical, Unbaptistic, Unbelieving and Bolsheviki." Mr. Riley contended that "our Baptist principles oppose it; our Baptist history disapproves it; and our Baptist polity forbids it." Mr Riley stressed the autonomy of the local church and declared, in regard to the membership standards of the proposed Council, that "our Baptist policy forbids such procedure." Other views similar to Mr. Riley's were periodically published in the Watchman-Examiner in the months leading up to the Colorado Springs Convention. One other article opposing the formation of a Council was written by Earle V. Pierce and was entitled "Are Northern Baptists Set on Denominational Suicide?".

At about the same time, the Rev. Arthur M. Harris, President of the Northern Baptist Convention at Colorado Springs, suggested to R.G. Schell that the proposed name, the Ministers and Missionaries Council, be changed to avoid confusion with The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board. Mr. Schell then proposed in the February 28, 1935 Watchman-Examiner that the name of the council be the "Ministers Council of the Northern Baptist Convention." Hence, our name carries on to this day with the only change being in the name of our denomination.

With the full support of Dr. P.C. Wright (Executive Director of The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board) and M. Forest Ashbrook (Assistant to the Executive Director of The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board) and with the hard work of the "Committee of Nine," over 1,000 applications for membership in the Ministers Council had been received prior to the opening of the convention in Colorado Springs. On June 19, 1935, the Ministers Council was officially born with the adoption of the proposed constitution. It should be noted that membership requirements in the original draft regarding educational standards were modified to avoid a floor fight at the convention. These changes must have gotten to the heart of the opposition for three months later Dr. Earle W. Pierce (author of the previously mentioned article entitled, "Are Northern Baptist Set on Denominational Suicide?") wrote in the Watchman-Examiner an article entitled, "Join the Ministers Council," extolling the virtues of this new element in the life of the Northern Baptists. In this article he states: "a constitution for the Ministers Council was adopted that offers a real basis of fellowship for the pastors...features of the proposed constitution which many felt would make it impossible for them to give their membership to the Council were eliminated, and there was laid the foundation for a most helpful united effort

in all that makes for an effective ministry. It would seem now as if every pastor of a cooperating church in the Northern Convention would want to be enrolled both in his state fellowship and the denominational Council. I was glad to get my membership card number 1364 recently and shall prize this fellowship."

So came together the ingredients for the development of this new life and entity within our denominational life and ministry. Within eight months of its "birth," the membership of the Council had almost doubled to over 1800 members.

THE ON-GOING DEVELOPMENT: 1935-54

The original officers of the Ministers Council in 1935 were: President R.G. Schell; Vice Presidents A.H. Gage (Eastern Area), Charles Durden (Central Area), C.W. Kemper (Western Area); Secretary H.H. Stratton; Treasurer Charles Carman; and H.W. Virgin as Auditor. Six standing committees reflected quite clearly the felt needs of the member pastors as well as reiterating the needs which led to the creation of the Council. Those committees were: 1.) Counsel and Training of Ministers; 2.) Ordination to the Gospel Ministry; 3.) Vocational Studies, Ethics and Denominational Programs; 4.) Pastoral Relations; 5. Ministerial Salaries, Pensions and Grants-Sick and Accident Benefits, and Non-Employment and Group Insurance; 6.) Moral and Social Issues.

These and similar issues have continued to be the major focus and thrust of the Council over its sixty year history. At the 1936 convention in S. Louis, the Council made its first report in each of the areas of concern and has continued since that time to raise issues of concern for the welfare of the denomination, member churches and individuals.

In the year 1937 a major step was taken bringing all Northern Baptists clergy together through the adoption of a "Code of Ministerial Ethics" at the annual convention on May 20th in Philadelphia. This document, presented by the Committee on Vocational Studies, Ethics and Denominational Programs (under the leadership of the Rev. W.A. Elliott of Ottawa, Kansas), has since undergone several revisions, but we are still deeply indebted to the work of these visionary church leaders for providing us with a significant document upon which to build and grow for the future.

Between the years 1935 and 1954, the Council continued to express its concern over issues affecting ministry as best it could within the limitations of time and financial constraints. All of the work of the Council was performed by volunteers except for the position of part-time typist. The only income the Council received came from dues and some support from The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board. The financial resources were severely limiting and restrictive to the work of the Council.

In 1937, Dr. Albert Gage, the Council secretary, presented a petition to the General Council of the N.B.C. stating: "because it is the earnest desire of the Executive Committee of the Ministers Council for the Ministers Council to be officially related to the N.B.C...we hereby petition the General Council to define our relationship to the N.B.C. We do this the more earnestly because we believe, with all our hearts, that a church can rise no higher than its ministry. Anything that will strengthen a minister intellectually, physically, socially or spiritually will be reflected in his church." In February 1938, the Northern Baptist Convention General Council decided to act unfavorably on this petition due to financial considerations. In June, 1939, however, the General Council of the Northern Baptist Convention recommended to the delegates of the annual convention meeting in Los Angeles that the Ministers Council be invited to become an Associated Organization of the Northern Baptist Convention. The Ministers Council readily accepted the invitation.

In the same year, the Ministers Council served, for the first time, as a Mediation Board in the case of a Rev. W.W. Thweat who had been "debarred from routine practicing of ministry at San Pedro Prison." The Council has since been a positive agent in the mediating of many situations involving conflict within the life of the church. This has become an important aspect of the Council's ministry to this day.

As early as 1937 the Executive Committee began to seek ways to provide for a part-time Executive Secretary for the Council. In December 1937, the Executive Committee voted to appoint a committee of two. Dr. Elliott of Ottawa, Kansas and Maurice Levy of Williamsport, PA. to seek an "outstanding man who had reached his

pension age or was near it" to serve as Executive Secretary. In reality, however, it was to be nearly 20 years before this dream became reality.

During the early years the network of the Ministers Council grew through the expansion of the state councils. Each state or region within the Northern Baptist Convention was encouraged to establish a Council and select a delegate to attend the annual gathering of pastors. It was at these annual gatherings that the yearly business of the Council was conducted.

It was also during these years that the Council sponsored national conferences for clergy. The themes of these conferences covered a broad spectrum of topics including preaching, evangelism, educational ministry and the pastor as person and professional. These conferences brought a rich exposure of ideas, knowledge and resources to the clergy. It was at this time that the Council also sponsored book clubs.

A NEW ERA EMERGES: 1954 - 1985

From its birth in 1935 until 1954, the Ministers Council had no salaried officer. As the activities and involvements of the Council increased, it became obvious that a more definite and consistent style of operation was called for if the council was to maintain a high level of responding to the needs of American Baptist clergy. Through a mutual effort with The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board, the Council secured its first salaried Executive Director. The Rev. Dr. Charles A. Carman, who was on staff with The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board as Pastor's Counselor, was appointed to this half-time position. This addition brought new life and determination to the Council and led to significant growth during Dr. Carman's five year tenure.

When Dr. Carman presented his resignation to take effect on December 31, 1958, the Ministers Council requested the Committee on Churches and the Ministry of the General Council to give consideration to the future status of the Ministers Council. At a meeting of the General Council's Committee on the Ministry on September 27, 1958, it was mutually agreed between the Ministers Council and the Committee on the Ministry that the Council might be more appropriately related to The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board than any other agency within the Convention.

At the General Council's meeting that fall at Green Lake approval was given for the relating of the Ministers Council to The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board. The minutes of this meeting at Green Lake record an affirmative vote on the following resolution: "There is a close relationship between the services of The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board and the Ministers Council. The Council will continue to be an autonomous organization; The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board is to provide staff. The Council will continue to develop and finance its own program. Be it resolved, that The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board welcomes the proposal of the Ministers Council and agrees to provide the Council, effective January 1, 1959, an office, Executive Secretary and secretary, who will serve them approximately one-half time."

Thus the "child" born in 1935 had reached maturity and established itself as a credible entity within the life of the American Baptist Churches at age twenty-four. It was now administratively related to one of the major denominational boards and at the same time had preserved its independence for programmatic purposes. A new era had begun.

In January 1959, Fred Erion, who was currently serving as Director of Field Services of The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board, was chosen to be the first full-time Executive Director of the Ministers Council. During his term, the Council continued to grow in its responsiveness to the needs of clergy and pastoral issues within the life of the ABC.

Mr. Erion served in that capacity until 1965. In January of 1966, the Rev. Charles Forsberg assumed the position of Executive Director. Under the leadership of Dr. Forsberg, the Council has continued to mature and develop a style unique unto itself. Through the process of goal-setting and functioning through the task force

model, the Council has effectively involved itself for twenty years in many areas that are of concern to those serving in ministry.

During the 1960's, a major area of concerted effort for the Ministers Council was the issue of the placement of pastors. It was this concern for a fair and equitable system of placement within the denomination that led to the development of the predecessor to the American Baptist Personnel Services: The Church Manpower System. At this time, the Centers on the Ministry were also given birth as a means of serving the clergy through various supportive programs.

Some of the other areas of concern the Council addressed during the last twenty years under the leadership of Dr. Forsberg are: Women in Ministry, Clergy Stress, Doctrine of Ministry Study, Clergy Family Support, Non-ABC Clergy and Their Entry into the Denomination, Spiritual Growth, Collegiality and Accountability, Placement and Clergy Alienation. Through the task force approach, these issues have been addressed with integrity and professionalism.

It was also during this time, in 1968 to be precise, that the Council voted to move from being a "fellowship organization" to becoming a "professional society." In recent years the council has also begun to identify its "political nature" within the life of the denomination. These two developments have not been without some pain. In some ways it is very similar to the pain experienced as it was brought into being in 1935. So, it would seem that once again the cycle of history is evident.

THE ERA OF A NEW HUMANITY: 1985 - 1995

The mid-80's had been a period of increased denominational influence on the part of the Ministers Council. It was also a period where greater attention was given to attracting more women and more people of color into membership and leadership of the Ministers Council. These efforts were intensified in the late 80's and into the 90's.

In 1985, the year the Ministers Council celebrated its 50th anniversary, the Senate elected the first woman President of the council, Dr. Edwina Hunter. Four years later, The Reverend Wendell A. Johnson became the first African American to be elected President of the Council. In 1995, Dr. Kate (Penfield) Harvey became the first woman to serve the Ministers Council as Executive Director.

The New Humanity Task Force, appointed in 1989, made a significant contribution to increasing the multi-cultural awareness of the Senate. The Executive Committee also committed to a series of dialogues with racial-ethnic constituency which began in 1989 and concluded in 1993. During this period, there was significant growth in racial ethnic membership in the Ministers Council and in representation on the Senate, as well as increased numbers of women.

A great deal of the work of the Council in that decade was accomplished through task forces appointed to address a wide range of concerns. Task Forces established during this period included: Commonality, Retirement, Pastor-to-Pastor, Clergy Over 50, Confidentiality, Together in Ministry, Clergy Divorce, Healthy Clergy Marriage, Involuntary Termination, Compensation, and Futures (the restructuring of the Senate).

The first half of the 90's has been a decade of transition in a variety of areas, including structure of the Senate, lodgment and staffing. The Futures Task Force changed the manner in which the Senate conducts its business by assigning all Senators to five ongoing committees to conduct the majority of the Senate's business. In 1993, by mutual agreement of the Board of Educational Ministries, The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board and the Ministers Council Senate, the Council changed its administrative relationship from The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board to Educational Ministries. Ongoing funding support for the council was provided by a transfer of money from the Permanent Fund of The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board to Educational Ministries.

Throughout this period of transition, the Ministers Council continued to emphasize growth of the organization, both by membership drives in already existing councils, as well as by the addition of new chapters. In the period between 1989 and 1995, six new councils, most from metropolitan areas, were added to the national Ministers Council: Los Angeles, Washington DC, Philadelphia, Metropolitan New York, and Pittsburgh. The sixth council was created to address the unique needs of Chaplains and Pastoral Counselors.

In March 1993, The Reverend Harley Hunt resigned as Executive Director. Dr. Eugene Wright served as Interim Director from June 1993 until May 1995. In July of that year, the Senate elected Dr. Kate (Penfield) Harvey to become the fourth Executive Director of the Ministers Council.

JUBILEE AND COVENANT: 1996-2002

Much of the work of the Ministers Council through the last half of the last decade of the millennium focused outward to work for healing within the entire denomination, during a time fraught with struggles over homosexuality that threatened the wholeness of the body. Emphasis was on Jubilee, Sabbath and Covenant, as well as other practices that nurture and sustain relationships to endure over time. The Ministers Council promoted the concept of Jubilee as a way of preparing the body to enter a new day by letting go of the debts we hold against one another. Jubilee was explored during Senate sessions, was lifted up in compiling 1997 and 1999 Biennial issues of the *American Baptist Quarterly*, was enacted through sponsoring a Common Ground dialogue between executive committee member of American Baptist Evangelicals and the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists, and was extended to ABCUSA as the theme of the 1999 Biennial in Des Moines. At Des Moines, the Ministers Council presented a Prebiennial on Common Ground dialogue process to enable a faith community to discuss difficult issues. Another practice promoted during this time was spiritual discernment through the Worshipful Work model. Both discernment and dialogue were encouraged as replacements for parliamentary procedure as our default decision-making model, in the conviction that the basis of decision must be listening to God and to one another. Significant input and leadership were also given to the regional and national staff gatherings of 1996 and 2000.

Also during those years the Ministers Council continued to focus on the well-being of ministerial leaders through the development of resources, such as a training video for pastoral relations committees, a book on bivocational ministry, a website with downloadable resources, a covenant model for ministerial leaders and congregations, various brochures, issues of our journal *Minister*, and newsletters to regional Ministers Council officers and Executive Ministers. During thirty-one gatherings in 1998 and 1999 opportunity was presented to ministerial leaders around the country to express desires and concerns in conversations on enhancing the well-being of ministerial leaders with ABCUSA President James Johnson. A task force report on the Care of the Ministry was written for the General Board Executive Committee in 2001, urging that structure and funding be reshaped for attention to ministerial leaders as key to the well-being of congregations.

After the 1999 Biennial, emphasis of the Council shifted to Covenant as holding together human beings with God and with one another in moral communities of trusting relationships through which God's purposes for the world are worked out. Within the Senate and the denomination, the work lifted up renewal of covenant relationships with God, with families, with congregations and other contexts of ministry, and with colleagues, through faith practices that strengthen those relationships. The Ministers Council Covenant and Code of Ethics was translated into various languages and became the intentional basis of meetings and strategies. Development began to attain grant funds to resource collegial covenant groups for bringing ministerial leaders into close relationship for prayer, study and accountability.

Eyes began to turn toward our seventieth birthday in 2005. The Ministers Council was born in 1935 at an annual convention in Colorado Springs, and will celebrate its next big birthday in 2005 at a Biennial in Denver. God willing, the founders of the body would find that we continue to honor the calling that brought us into being.

TOGETHER IN MINISTRY - "Fan into flame the gift of God"

In September 2002 the Lilly Endowment Inc. in a national competitive grants opportunity on "Sustaining Excellence in the Pastoral Ministry" awarded \$1,959,600 to the Ministers Council for Together in Ministry (TIM). Of the 731 proposals submitted to Lilly 47 were funded. The project seeks to further the stated mission of the Ministers Council in fulfillment of the call of II Timothy 1:6 "to fan into flame the gift of God." The Council through the regional Ministers Councils began to develop collegial covenant groups among American Baptist ministerial leaders for the deepening of spiritual formation, the strengthening of pastoral effectiveness, and the enhancing of collegial relationships. The TIM grant funds were allocated primarily to fund peer group facilitators and to participants to cover the cost of monthly meetings over four years. In addition, the Ministers Council funded constituent Council retreats and participated in the funding of a 2004 national conference for ministerial leaders, Strong in the Lord.

In 2003 the Ministers Council initiated major transition through incorporation and 501 (a) (3) tax-exempt status to facilitate future fund-raising. As the Board of Educational Ministries ceased operation, the Ministers Council in 2004 contracted to purchase from the Office of the General Secretary services such as accounting and human resources, based on an annual written agreement. Ministers Council focused on the strengthening of ministerial leaders through the funding of collegial covenant groups with over 1,000.

In 2005 the Ministers Council celebrated its 70th year as the professional society of ABC clergy at a Pre-Biennial party on July 1 at the Denver Biennial. In addition to birthday cake and conversation, the program presented testimonials from Together in Ministry groups as colleagues shared stories of how covenant groups have strengthened their ministries. The Ministers Council presented preachers David Chapman, Alice Davis, Manuel de la Fuente, Mar Imsong, Joe Kutter and Jane Moschenrose at the Biennial Preaching Pavilions and also sponsored a clergy couple breakfast.

JERUSALEM COUNCILS: SCRIPTURE, SPIRIT, TESTIMONY

Shortly before Senate 2004 the Ministers Council faced the issue of homosexuality through the challenge of a region executive minister to the seating of a Senator after the action of that duly elected Senator in legalizing her relationship with her lesbian partner. When the Executive Committee decided that the Bylaws require seating of Senators elected by constituent Councils, the Pacific Southwest Council proposed a Bylaws amendment that precipitated a year-long process of preparation for the vote on that proposed amendment that would require the Executive Committee to limit seating of elected Senators based on sexual criteria. Senate 2004 decided to present a series of gatherings in preparation for that vote at Senate 2005. The post-Senate 2004 report stated: "Many ABC regions are somewhat homogeneous in their biblical interpretation as it relates to homosexuality, but many are not and none are uniformly of one opinion. The Jerusalem Council process proposed will offer the opportunity for conversation within constituent councils informed by Scripture, Spirit and testimony. Such discernment will equip the 2005 Senators as they prepare to vote, as will the collection and analysis of written responses. The way forward to implement the proposal will be to seek about 15 ABC senior statespersons who, out of love for the family, would be willing to be trained to lead constituent council events and each take on about two gatherings. There is great value in having our saints take charge of helping us talk with one another in the hope that we will go on together in the work of Jesus Christ. Implementation will also require funding from any persons and agencies that envision such a process as furthering the possibility of God's mission through the denomination." Twenty-one such gatherings were scheduled between December 1, 2004 and June 21, 2005. The agenda for Senate 2005 was designed for further dialogue as well as debate and the vote on the proposed amendment. A wealth of information on the process may be accessed at www.ministerscouncil.com under the Jerusalem Council link.

In 2006 the Ministers Council continued its focus on its long-term strategy, with particular emphasis on strengthening constituent Councils.

Three-part Ministers Council strategy (scope and frequency variables)
Face-to-face groups that meet monthly

Strong constituent Councils with exciting programs
Pattern of national conferences

COVENANTING TOGETHER

In 2007 the Ministers Council received a second Lilly Endowment Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Grant for \$979,800 to underwrite the Together in Ministry project from 2008 to 2012. The grant will cover continued partial funding on a competitive basis to groups funded in 2007 that continue into 2008 and beyond; a new model for covenant group continuation or formation to include both pastoral and lay leaders, focused specifically on Christian Practices; gatherings of constituent Ministers Council-Together in Ministry local leadership to strengthen those local professional associations as bearers of the covenant group ethos and as servers of colleagues in ministry.

In 2007 the Ministers Council celebrates the seventieth anniversary of the adoption of the original Covenant and Code of Ethics for Ministerial Leaders in 1937. The Professional Effectiveness Committee of the Senate has developed a Learning Guide for the Covenant and Code of Ethics for Ministerial Leaders (<http://www.ministerscouncil.com/WhoWeAre/CodeofEthicsLearningGuide.aspx>).

The morning of June 29, 2007, The Ministers Council celebrated the Centennial and Biennial of American Baptist Churches with a pre-Biennial Event, "Ministry in Such a Time as This: Adaptive Change for Faithful and Effective Leadership," at the Washington DC Convention Center. Speakers were Diana Butler Bass of Practicing Congregations Research and Parush Parushev from Prague. Co-sponsors of the event were the Campus Ministers Association and International Ministries. American Baptist pastoral leaders gave their testimonies to adaptive change in their ministerial leadership.

An eighty-page issue of Minister magazine on the theme of Together in Ministry collegial covenant groups was published to showcase the success of the TIM project in strengthening pastoral leaders and to invite future participants. A Together in Ministry DVD was produced to tell the story of collegial covenant groups.

Since 2002 Together in Ministry has emphasized the generation of holy friendships among pastoral leaders as professionals, primarily through the formation of collegial covenant groups. Evaluation results for 2006 revealed that ninety-seven percent of current covenant group participants plan to continue the practice but three key requirements for sustainability remain: further embedding the covenant group practice for solid and enduring systemic change and future participation; enhancing relationships among pastoral and lay leaders of congregations for mutuality in ministry and support for all aspects of the well-lived pastoral life, including congregational funding for covenant group participation; and capacity building of constituent councils for bearing the ethos of covenant group practice and other dynamics of covenant essential to profession and call.

TRANSITIONS SHAPED 2008

The Ministers Council celebrated the first ethnic Ministers Council, el Concilio de Ministros Latinos de New Jersey, in a special service on May 17. The retirement of Kate Harvey, Executive Director since 1995, and the selection of Joe Kutter as Acting Executive Director began a season of change for the organization as the new director began to implement the phase of Together in Ministry designed to resource and strengthen constituent councils. An issue of *Minister* magazine focused on these and other aspects of transition for pastoral leader.

2009

The first-ever joint pre-Biennial event for pastoral leaders at the June 2009 Pasadena Biennial was held with Leonard Sweet serving as speaker on the subject of evangelism in post-modernity. The two sessions with Dr. Sweet were one of the highlights of the convention. Co-sponsors for the event included Interim Ministries, Area Ministers, and Women in Ministry. The Ministers Council also sponsored a dinner gathering for young clergy.

Plans are nearly completed and expectations are high for a truly remarkable conference, "Together in the Lord," scheduled for January 2010 in Orlando, FL. The Together in the Lord and the Orientation to American Baptist Life conferences will run parallel with conferees in both conferences participating in the plenary sessions with Miroslav Volf, Shane Claiborne, Marvin McMickel, and Trinette McCray.

Our focus continues to be on strengthening our constituent councils. Workshops designed to enhance both the ministries of local leaders and the effectiveness of constituent councils, are being scheduled for the next two years.

2011-2012

Initiated the Together in Ministry capital campaign drive. The goal is to continue the "Together in Ministry" culture that has been established through the utilization of the Lilly Endowment grants.

7/12/2012