

# Ralph Garfield Schell

The President's Award was instituted in 1996, and called *The Ralph Garfield Schell Prize*. It is the recognition of a member of a local Ministers Council who seems to be extraordinarily faithful in carrying out the principles of the Ministers Council Code of Ethics, as well as unusually effective in fulfilling the objectives of the five committees of our structure..." The award is announced annually, and usually at the closing banquet of the American Baptist Ministers Council Senate.

The process used to obtain candidates for this recognition included requesting nominations from the President of every regional Ministers Council. Then from that roster the national President makes a careful selection based on what seems outstanding to him or her. Where did the name, *Ralph Garfield Schell*, come from anyway? On June 22, 1935, in Colorado Springs, a man by that name addressed the Northern Baptist Convention, speaking on the theme, *A Revitalized Ministry*. He presented reports from the Committee on the Ministry and The Committee on the Organization of a Ministers Council. He then moved the adoption of the reports, which included the establishment of the Ministers Council, of which he became the first President.

Schell was Canadian-born in 1890, educated and privately tutored theologically in Ontario. He served Disciples Churches in both Sherwood and Toronto, Ontario; and for a period was bivocational, working as a Railway Engineer for the Toronto Harbor Commission. He continued serving a Disciples Church in Portland, Maine and in 1925 was called to the Jefferson Street Baptist Church in Biddeford, Maine. Later, for one year, he was on the staff of Boston's Tremont Temple Baptist Church. Then, from 1928-1939, was Pastor of Second Baptist Church, Chicago. Schell also served as Executive Secretary of the Illinois Baptist Convention for five years; and then 10 years as Pastor of Morgan Park Baptist Church, Chicago, from which he retired. In his retirement, R. G. Schell served on The World Council Assembly Committee; The Chicago Baptist Association; The Church Federation of Greater Chicago; and The Board of Directors of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society.

In his report to the 1935 Northern Baptist Convention, he noted the following as part of the Preamble of the Constitution of the Ministers Council, which current Ministers Councils might read again, with sober reflection and resolve (noting the unedited, exclusive language...)

While recognizing the injunction of the apostle that the man of God should be thoroughly furnished into all good work, no distinction or grade on account of educational attainments or for any other reason shall ever be made among those accepted for membership.