



Ministers Council Newsletter

Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson, Executive Director

May 2014

From the Desk of the Executive Director

Barry Glasner and Morton Shapiro wrote an opinion article in the Wall Street Journal on April 28th entitled, "[Leadership Tips for College Presidents and CEOs.](#)" Their motivation for the article was simple: "At a time when the college presidency has become a high-risk occupation and CEO turnover is accelerating, with 131 leaving their jobs in January alone, maybe they could benefit from some words of wisdom."

Of course I couldn't read this without thinking about Leadership Tips for Pastors. So with a nod to Glasner and Shapiro, here is how I would edit their list for clergy.



1. Think first, talk later. Seek God first and allow your words to be motivated by the Holy Spirit. It is so easy to be caught up in a snap decision or offer those first response words that you simply cannot take back. If we would just pause and check in with the Lord before we speak, we would prosper far better in our ministries.
2. Talk less, listen more. Again, for me this is a recommendation that is rooted in reflection. Not only do we need to listen for the voice of God, but we also need to listen for God's voice in the voices of our members. I believe that God gives the vision for the church to the pastor, but I also believe that that vision is formulated in community. It is as we hear from God, our congregation, and even our community clarity can emerge and our direction can be made sure.
3. Show up. This is a recommendation for presence. I get it: as clergy we are pulled from pillar to post with so many competing priorities. In the midst of our busyness, it is too easy to simply go through the motions – an empty suit without being truly engaged. However, the greatest gift that we can give people is our presence – to actually be there.
4. Engage senior congregants and long time members. My grandfather used to say, "He who sits in the counsel of the old shall be wise." It is reminiscent of Proverbs 19:20 that says, "Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom for the future." Some of my most fruitful and blessed times as pastor came as I sat at the knee of the "old saints" who had given so much to the ministry and mission of the church. And learning from them provided the trajectory of the future mission of the church. Their memories of what the church had done in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s gave new shape to what we were doing in the 2000s.
5. Don't ignore the staff. I have a new appreciation for this now that I am a member of a ministerial staff after having served as pastor. Staff members observe so much, but often pastors do not consult them. What might we learn from our staff about what is happening in our churches and with our congregations if we only ask?

6. Congregants want to be consulted. I once had a pastor who always asserted that he was the resident theologian. It was as if he did not need to speak to anyone about anything because of course he knew best. As a pastor, I do understand those thoughts, but as a member of the church, I recognize that other people have ideas too. The adaptive challenges that confront us as the church mean that we have to bring more people to the table to determine which way to go. We need to make the time to ask our members and our visitors of their needs. We may not be able to respond to all of the inputs, but people appreciate being asked.
7. Answer nearly all messages. As a pastor, we are often inundated with emails and notes. I could always tell when people did not like something in the worship because my mailbox in the church office would be full of slips of paper with various notes. I knew that I needed to respond. We do not have to feel like we must write a dissertation, but if we respond and acknowledge that we have received the notes, people feel heard and that makes a difference.
8. Use your board or leadership. This can be a challenge because at times our boards are disconnected from the day to day realities that we are facing as the senior leaders in our ministry. However, the board can be an ally. I have learned the value of consulting with and pulling the board into key conversations and decisions. This keeps us as leaders from being unnecessarily embroiled in battles.
9. Community Relations Matter. This is a big deal in the church. So many churches do not reflect the community that is around them. Our churches tend to be older than the communities in which they reside. People who are within walking distance of the church are often not in the pews. We might make space available in our churches for AA meetings, Boy Scouts, or the like, but the people who attend those meetings are typically not a part of our church. We must continue our work in mission and outreach. We need to be about the business of reaching our neighbors and winning souls for Christ. This is why we exist.
10. Don't take things personally. My former president said to me, "If someone isn't mad at you about something, then you're not doing your job." Leadership is difficult and you will find that you are often blamed for the bad things that happen or things that people don't like because you are the leader. We have to extend ourselves the same grace that God has extended to us through Jesus Christ. Don't beat yourself up. Remember, each day we are given brand new mercies.
11. Don't believe the hype. On the flip side, we have to be careful in touting the successes. Humility is a great characteristic on which to hold. We might be doing good things and we might feel great about those good things. But it is by God's grace that we are not consumed. Hold success lightly.
12. DON'T NEGLECT YOUR HEALTH!!! The emphasis is mine, but absolutely necessary. Too many of us learn the need for self care after failing to care for self. How many of us are burned out, stressed out, overweight, and suffering from preventable diseases? The statistics are staggering. Make time to re-energize at the source through prayer and study. Take time to exercise. Eat healthy food. Remember Daniel flourished on vegetables rather than eating from the king's table. You must take care of yourself.

Update from the Transformed by the Spirit Pastoral Attrition Action Learning Team



The Pastoral Attrition Action Learning Team continues to meet to address the issue of pastoral attrition. The team endeavors 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 clarify their sense of call, and providing support to these young clergy. The team will also seek to find new ways of working with other ABC organizations to help congregations learn to work with and support young clergy.

The team recently met and found a general consensus and excitement around the idea of developing a collection of stories of Baptists who have considered leaving or have left professional ministry. A growing set of such stories would allow us to look for common factors and begin to consider how the pastors themselves, our churches and our regional and national structures might act to expand the supports and mitigate the liabilities uncovered. Our team members are well

placed to develop avenues to invite those stories and enthusiastic about the potential the narratives have to raise the level of concern for pastoral attrition within the ABC.

The Pastoral Attrition team, Alan Selig, team leader, Ross Peterson, Heather Entrekin, Joel Harter, Nancy Hall, Clem Winbush, Marie Carpenter and Melissa Fletcher, met again on April 30th to continue to forward this idea of compiling stories. If you have a story to share – and if we are honest with ourselves, many of us do – contact Alan Selig at alan.selig@gmail.com.

Get the IM Visa Card and get a \$50 Visa Gift Card



The Ministers Council seeks to serve you by providing resources and services that will equip you in ministry. Our partner, the Christian Community Credit Union (CCCU) is working with us to support that vision. CCCU has created this opportunity solely for the Ministers Council and our supporting friends. From April 1 to June 30, 2014, the CCCU will give a \$50 Visa Gift Card to those who get an IM credit card using promo code 9001. Upon application acceptance, International Ministries gets \$50; the Ministers Council gets \$50; and you get a \$50 Visa Gift Card. That is a win, win, win! Apply today. Go to the Ministers Council

website at www.ministerscouncil.com and click on the exclusive offer image. Or simply click the image and apply today!

Register Now for the Ministers Council Senate / Annual Meeting – August 11-14, 2014 at Green Lake Conference Center, Green Lake, WI

Registration is open for the Ministers Council Senate / Annual Meeting. The gathering will provide you with the time and space to learn of the work of the Ministers Council, while enjoying the fellowship, spiritual renewal, and opportunities for learning in the company of colleagues.

Our gathering will feature the Rev. Dr. Molly Marshall, President of and Professor of Theology and Spiritual Formation at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. We will also offer workshops led by Rev. Margaret Marcuson on Leadership, Rev. Betty Wright-Riggins on Spiritual Direction, Rev. Denise Henderson on Clergy Health, Rev. Dr. Perry Hopper on Planning for Retirement and Rev. Perkin Simpson on Financial Wellness.

Don't miss this opportunity to register and attend the Ministers Council Senate / Annual Meeting. To register for the Ministers Council Senate/Annual Meeting 2014, please use the following link: <http://www.abc-usa.org/coordinatedcalendar/event-registration/>. Click "Register Now" located next to the Ministers Council Senate/Annual Meeting.



The Benefits of Membership

2014 dues to the Ministers Council were due on April 30, 2014. Did you get your dues payment to your local council or pay via the website at <http://ministerscouncil.com/subscriptions/>? Sure you may get the newsletter on a monthly basis as a free service and source of information for your ministry, but you are missing out on a whole lot more.

First there is the collegiality that comes from being a part of the Ministers Council. As Kent Piil, who has been pastor in Molina, OR for over 30 years shared, "Why would I want to stand alone? It's a lonely place being a pastor." The Ministers Council combats that loneliness by providing opportunities for clergy to gather for collegiality, centeredness and competence. As the Bible says, "Iron sharpens iron." No one understands the challenges of ministry like other ministers. Join the fold and be a part of the Ministers Council.

Secondly, many value the fact that the Ministers Council is our professional society and our membership represents our credentialing and status as professional clergy. A pastor recently contacted me because she needed to obtain her membership card. She was scheduled to minister in a correctional facility but would not be granted admission without proof of her credentialing. Her Ministers Council card made it possible for her to perform her ministry. Join the Ministers Council and be recognized as a part of a professional society.

Thirdly, you can reap the benefits of membership. The Ministers Council exists to equip ministers to become more effective leaders so that you can in turn provide better service and support to your community. We provide that service and support by offering opportunities to gather. Local councils sponsor retreats and workshops. The national Ministers Council offers annual gathering that feature opportunities for renewal and refreshment. We provide resources such as this monthly newsletter and the semi-annual Minister Magazine. We co-sponsor the biennially offered Ministers Conference. You can engage in any of these offerings. Also don't forget that our website, www.ministerscouncil.com, is a rich resource for members. Log in to the website using your username or email address and password to gain access to "Members Only" resources to aid you in ministry.

But in addition, we have engaged in relationships with partners who support us in our mission to resource and equip our membership. Here is the list of our current partners who offer benefits that are available to Ministers Council members!

1. Judson Press – Ministers Council Members receive a special discount code which allows them to receive free shipping on purchases greater than \$15.00. Contact your council president or Joyce Moon at joyce.moon@abc-usa.org for the discount code. Then shop www.judsonpress.com to enjoy resources that are targeted for you and your ministry.
2. Bride of Christ Robes – Ministers Council Members receive a 5% discount on robes from www.brideofchristrobes.com. Our new Executive Minister of the Cleveland Baptist Association, Rev. Yvonne Carter, recently took advantage of this promotion. You too can feel the joy of owning a beautiful robe tailored just for you.
3. Coaching from Duncan Associates – Ministers Council Members receive discounted coaching services from Rev. Dr. Robert J. Duncan, Jr., a Ministers Council member and former President of Bacone College. Dr. Duncan founded www.clergyeffectiveness.com to help clergy be more effective in their ministry by exploring new areas and understanding in ministry to meet the needs of a changing culture and society. Go to www.clergyeffectiveness.com to learn more about clergy coaching, seminars and services available to Ministers Council Members.
4. The Pastors Roundtable – Ministers Council members can register to access a repository of modules that make it possible for a peer learning group or Together in



Ministry group to be self-facilitating. The annual cost of these services is \$995.00, but the Ministers Council members enjoy a discounted cost of \$895.00 and when your group registers, the Ministers Council will receive \$50.00.

5. Christian Community Credit Union (CCCU) – CCCU traces its origin back to 1957 when first founded as the American Baptist Ministers Credit Union in Southern California. CCCU is now one of the largest credit unions serving the Christian community. Through its special offer to Ministers Council members, friends and partners, you can apply for the International Ministries Visa Card. When you are approved, the Ministers Council gets \$50, International Ministries gets \$50, and you get a \$50 Visa gift card. Go to www.ministerscouncil.com and click on the exclusive offer image to apply.

The point is this: The Ministers Council is working to make membership meaningful to our members. We want to equip you and resource you for effectiveness in your ministry. Join the Ministers Council today and realize the advantage of a professional society that equips you for ministry. Go to <http://ministerscouncil.com/subscriptions/> today.

Together in Ministry – Current Status



Through 2014-2015, we continue to focus on the Together in Ministry Capital Campaign. You might recall that we embarked upon this campaign because we recognized the value of coming together as clergy to hear, learn, gain support, fellowship, laugh, cry, and be affirmed. This program made it possible for thousands of ministerial leaders to gain the support that they needed to empower them for ministry. We can't give up now. We can reach over \$500,000.00 in cash gifts and in-kind donations, but we need your help.

To date, our cash gifts and pledges total \$ 282,038.05. Our in-kind contributions total \$70,519.20. Our overall total is \$352,557.25. Have you added to that total? Can you make an additional gift to help us meet our goals? Hundreds have contributed because thousands have benefited. Were you one of the beneficiaries? Don't let it be said that you did not give to Together in Ministry after Together in Ministry gave to you. Make your tax-deductible donations securely and electronically by going to <http://ministerscouncil.com/together-in-ministry-capital-campaign/> and click on the Donate button. Keep the numbers rising and together let us make a difference for the future.

WIM ALT Mentoring Experiment

Statistics, observation and experience all tell us that many women entering the Ministry do so without the support of mentors. And yet many women who have been called to senior or solo positions cite the support of a mentor as being a critical part of their journey. Recognizing the barriers that continue to exist for women called to ministry and desiring to find a way through the ordination and call process, the Women in Ministry Action Learning Team (WIM ALT) in partnership with American Baptist Women in Ministry (ABWIM) is launching an experiment to invite "seasoned" women pastors (5-10 years or more) to become mentors to those women who are in their first five years of ministry and/or on the ordination track. Our ultimate goal is to develop a mentor network so that women called to ministry are able to fully utilize their gifts and fully live out their call. Rev. Dr. A. Paulette Birchett who received her Doctorate in Ministry after completing a project on mentoring and who is a member of the WIM ALT will be leading this experiment.

If you would like to participate either as a mentor or a "mentee" please complete the following survey: (click on the link below...)
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/wimaltmentorshpsurvey>

ABHMS Seeks Volunteers for June Blitz Build; Registration Deadline is May 15

American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) seeks volunteers to join in partnering with Great Rivers Region of American Baptist Churches USA and Habitat for Humanity of Champaign County for a "Bringing Good News to Gifford!" Habitat Blitz Build June 1-14, 2014, in Gifford, Ill.

Volunteers will help to construct a home for a deserving family impacted when an F-3 tornado wrought a 29-mile path of destruction in the small farming community in November 2013. Of the 313 homes in Gifford and surrounding area, more than 90 homes were completely destroyed, and more than 40 homes required repair.

The theme of the two-week effort is Romans 10:15: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Volunteers must be at least age 14. Construction skills are not required. Electricians, plumbers and carpenters are especially needed.

A \$175 weekly fee includes food and housing. Volunteers are responsible for transportation to and from Gifford. Registration deadline is May 15.

Donations can be handled through your church or region, made online at <https://secure-q.net/donations/ABChurches/410> or mailed to American Baptist Home Mission Societies, P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482. Make the check payable to American Baptist Home Mission Societies, and write "OGHS-GRR Gifford Rebuild" on the memo line.

For more information, visit ABHMS' Website or contact Victoria Goff, ABHMS national coordinator of Volunteer and Disaster Response Ministries, at vgoff@abhms.org or 1-800-222-3872, x2449.

Rhythms of the Spirit

Are you looking for a way to reconnect with God and continue your spiritual journey? The Rhythms of the Spirit conference, offered in a retreat style and in two locations for 2014, provides a unique opportunity to explore and practice the contemplative life together.

Locations:

Green Lake Conference Center, Green Lake, Wisconsin
July 28-August 1, 2014

Redwood Glen Conference Center, Loma Mar, California
November 3-7, 2014

Mission Summit 2015

Make your plans now to attend Mission Summit 2015, the American Baptist Churches biennial event, June 26-28, 2015, in Overland Park, Kansas. Mission Summit 2015 will once again offer a church registration plan making it easier for individuals to attend! Once a church has registered, an unlimited number of members from that church may register at a reduced rate of \$40 per person. Church Registration is now open. Visit www.americanbaptists2015.com.

Church registration for Mission Summit 2015 is based on average worship attendance for each church, as follows:

1. Churches of less than 100 – \$220
2. Churches of 101-200 – \$385

- 3. Churches of 201-500 – \$550
- 4. Churches of more than 500 – \$715

((HEAR *the* CALL))

On July 19-21, 2014, International Ministries and the Ministers Council will partner to sponsor Hear The Call Retreat. Attendees will participate in and register for only ONE of three tracks: Track 1 for those exploring a call to cross-cultural global mission service; Track 2 for those feeling a call to pastoral ministry in the US & Puerto Rico; and Track 3 for people wanting to be more involved in local mission in their church, community, state or region. Our weekend will also include worship, inspirational messages, Bible Study, workshops and personal reflection time. It will be a powerful discernment experience. Invite those who you know who are sensing God's call on their lives to register now at <http://www.internationalministries.org/read/50426-2014-program-fees>. More information can be found at <http://www.internationalministries.org/read/49675-2014-world-mission-conference>.

Do you have events coming up in your regions?

Share the word and expand the benefit of the good work that you are doing. Send email announcements to Debora Jackson at Debora.Jackson@abc-usa.org. We will do our best to include your events in upcoming announcements through the Ministers Council.



Upcoming Events

- American Baptist Seminary of the West Commencement - ABSW invites you to celebrate with us as we honor our 2014 graduates. This year's commencement speaker will be: The Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson, Executive Director of the Ministers Council of the American Baptist Churches USA
- Hampton University Ministers' Conference – 100th Anniversary Conference "Honoring Our Past, Anticipating our Future. June 1-6, 2014, Hampton, VA. ABCUSA will host a reception: 7th Annual Reception for American Baptist Attendees, "United in Mission: Our Vision of Unity," Wednesday, June 4, 2014 9:30 PM – 10:30 PM. Embassy Suites at Hampton Roads Conference Center, Conference Room "A". Please join us!
- The Ministers Council Senate / Annual Meeting – This year's Ministers Council gathering will be open to all ministerial leaders. August 11-14, 2014, at Green Lake, WI. Register at <http://www.abc-usa.org/coordinatedcalendar/event-registration/>.

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