

REPORT TO THE SENATE
NOVEMBER, 2009

Our focus continues to be on the minister and ministry, on community, spirituality and leadership. We continue to focus on the constituent council as a primary instrument for supporting the minister and ministry within our ABC family.

Early in the month, I led a Community of Practice workshop in New England. It was a remarkably fruitful time. Dr. Mar Imsong and his delightful family hosted me during my time in Bedford, MA. Mar is the coordinator for multi-cultural ministries in MA and we met with a group of Hispanic pastors as they worked to build relationships with one another.

Sunday I preached in FBC Bedford and after that, we met with the coordinating team of the Multicultural ministries where we discussed ways that TIM grants and Christian Practice grants might be used to strengthen the congregations and pastors of the various cultural groups as well as the work of the coordinating team itself.

Monday and Tuesday, we conducted our first workshop with leaders from CT, RI, and MA. Evaluations returned, conversation and my own feeling is that it was a very productive time together. In the spirit of a Community of Practice, I asked about improving the workshop and received helpful suggestions. It's too bad that those making the suggestions will probably never experience the improved product! My belief that we have a very helpful instrument in COP has been significantly reinforced.

I now have workshops scheduled in the following regions: Michigan, Indiana/Kentucky, Chicago, Rocky Mountains, and Los Angeles and am in conversation with several other regions as well.

The General Board and General Executive Council meetings, November 20-22 in Valley Forge, were fruitful for the Ministers Council. The Region Executive Ministers Council graciously invited me to spend a few minutes with them and to share the focus of our ministry. I am grateful for the support and encouragement that is coming from many of our regional executives. (I hope to have a manuscript of my remarks to them available soon.)

You will note from News and Views, our Ministers Council newsletter, that the task force on Women in Ministry is up and running under the leadership of Holly Bean. The Ministers Council task force is working in harmony with the OGS task force led by Mary Hulst and together I believe that we will reinforce our traditional commitment to advocacy and support for our colleagues in ministry. I have been invited to attend a "Round Table" conversation sponsored by the OGS task force in January and look forward to participating.

I am looking forward to our “Together in the Lord” conference, beginning January 4, in Orlando. The (revised) deadline for registration is December 16, scholarships are available (see the newsletter for information), and I hope to see you there.

If I may assume that my experience is in some way shared by others, let me acknowledge that the season of Advent is one of both promise and peril for those of us in ministry. The promise is that the full grace of God will be experienced in fresh ways as we celebrate the coming the Christ. The peril is that all of the emotional, spiritual, relational, and financial pressures of the season can, and frequently do, assault us just as they impose themselves in the lives of those whom we serve. I pray that God will take really good care of you in the days to come and that the perils of the season will become opportunities within which the grace of Christ becomes ever more apparent.

Grace and Peace,

Joe Kutter