

REPORT TO THE SENATE
MARCH, 2009

A dying laptop and a very heavy travel schedule interrupted my well-intentioned plan to send a monthly report. While it is impossible to chronicle the full extent of the work over the past two months, I think that I can offer a glimpse of what I have been about.

The calendar for February looked like this:

1-5	San Diego, CA with about 25 American Baptist Pastors
9-11	Dewitt, MI with the retreat of the Michigan Ministers Council
16-18	Pasadena, CA with the Executive Committee of the Ministers Council
19	Meeting with the Ministers Council of Los Angeles
23-25	Seaside, OR with the retreat of the Oregon Ministers Council

You will see the work of the Executive Committee as it bears fruit in the August Senate meeting. Suffice to say, we had a great and productive time.

The calendar for March includes the following:

1-3	Board meetings at CRCDS where I serve as a trustee
4	Meeting with the Executive Committee of the Rochester Ministers Council
9-12	Valley Forge to write the Together in Ministry report for the Lily Endowment; it's been delivered!
18-20	Portland, OR for the first "Community of Practice" workshop with leaders from Evergreen, Oregon and the Greater Bay Area.
30 – April 3	Green Lake, WI for a meeting of the General Executive Council (GEC) of the ABC.
4	Milwaukee, WI to meet with the Ministers Council of Wisconsin.

Allow me two observations.

1. I am more convinced than ever that we must measure our success by the success of the constituent councils. Most of us experience Ministers Council in our own region. It is in the regional and local gathering that Ministers Council is experienced as something good or bad or bland. Therefore, we must give our attention to strengthening our constituent councils. My travel schedule reflects that priority.
2. The first “Community of Practice” (COP) workshop was a magnificent experience. I believe that the application of COP insights can strengthen our constituent councils in significant ways. While our grant offers to pay for 5 more with leaders of several constituent councils represented in each workshop, I think that we need to find ways to offer the workshops even more widely. It’s really good stuff.

If you haven’t heard, we’ve opened a Facebook page called “American Baptist Ministers Council. Almost daily, we post something that we hope will be helpful. It’s probably not possible to be profound every day but we can come close to being helpful. Join us there.

Go to the MC website for a link to Our Church Videos. We have there a wonderful offer can upload up to 5 videos and make them available to your personal constituency.

Together in the Lord, our Ministers Conference in Orlando, January 4, is coming together nicely. Where else can you hear Miraslav Volf, Shane Clayborne, Trinette McCray and Marvin McMickel all together? And a great workshop lineup is nearly completed.

I am learning that many of us share a concern about the next generation of ministerial leaders. We have no doubt that God will call men and women to ministry. Our question is, how will they hear? Will the noises of church and culture drown out the quiet promptings of the Spirit? With the encouragement of our Executive Committee, we are initiating conversations that focus on creating a “Culture of Call”. Dr. Trinette McCray has written a proposal and the first round of conversations will happen in April. I solicit your prayers.

I hope that you are having as much fun as I. Some days I experience a little travel fatigue but the truth is that every time I go to be with colleagues in ministry, my heart is stirred and my soul revived. We can always find a misfit in the ministry but the truth is that the overwhelming majority of our colleagues are really good people who are seeking only to be fruitful and faithful in ministry.

Joe Kutter