

Report to the Senate
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Acting Executive Director
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It's been a good month, a little tough personally, but good things are happening through the Ministers Council

We began the year in Orlando with the "Together in the Lord Conference." The reports indicate that all who attended had very positive experiences in spite of the record breaking cold temperatures. Unfortunately, attendance did not meet our hopes. Our best analysis is that there were 3 significant roadblocks: (1) A very rough and unpredictable economy that has hurt the ability of ministerial leaders to participate in events like this. (2) The dates, the first week following the holidays, made it difficult for potential participants to get away from their responsibilities. (3) There may be some sense of "been there – done that" and that it is time to create something new. Even so, for those who were there, it was a very enriching experience. It is our hope and intention to have another conference in 2012.

The Executive Committee met the day following the conference to reflect on our work together and to plan for the Senate meeting in August. In reflecting on our national experience, it is clear that we have taken some serious hits in terms of our membership and dues. At the same time, there are some early indications that relationships are being reestablished and that our decline may be at the end of the process. We are very hopeful that our workshops using Community of Practice insights will strengthen the work of our constituent councils with the result that Ministerial Leaders will be better served, regional councils will be more effective and the National Council will be strengthened.

We also agreed that it is time to revisit our strategic plan with a full awareness of the financial challenges that will arrive when the Lilly Grant comes to its conclusion. That process is beginning now.

Finally, a plan for electing the next Executive Director will be announced at the Senate in August. (I'll still be working for a while.)

Our next Minister Magazine will be e-published in March. Our editor Michael Sayler is working with Holly Bean to shape an issue that focuses on Women in Ministry. Excellent writers have agreed to work with us and we are looking forward to an excellent issue. Minister is published three times annually.

I spent a day with leaders in Michigan making final preparations for the workshop that we will have in February.

January 28 and 29, Mary Hulst and her steering committee hosted a "Roundtable" conversation at the Mission Center in Valley Forge that focused on issues pertaining to Women in Ministry. Representatives of a variety of groups participated and giant steps

were taken to engage the issues. Holly Bean has agreed to “double duty” in accepting the invitation of Roy Medley to serve as a 2 day per week consultant who will work to create an effective staffing plan for the Women in Ministry office given the budgetary realities.

Let me say a word about Holly Bean. We were most fortunate that she agreed to lead the Ministers Council Task Force and to serve on the OGS task force. Now that she has been invited to serve a limited part time role as a “consultant”, I consider the denomination to be very fortunate indeed. She and I have given considerable thought to her position with the Ministers Council Task Force. We have agreed that since her role as OGS consultant is part-time and will be completed by the end of this year and since we see the Ministers Council process being supportive and in partnership with the OGS process, we have decided that the opportunities for creative collaboration are simply too good to pass up and she has agreed to continue her work with the Ministers Council task force.

Our Immediate Past President, Alice Greene, also serves on the OGS task force as well as on the Ministers Council task force. Ministers Council advocacy is being well exercised for our colleagues.

A word that may be a bit more personal, January 31 I was pleased to participate in the installation of Rev. Dr. Cheryl Henson as the Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church, Topeka. You may remember that I served that great congregation for 11 years and I am now very pleased that the congregation has discerned God’s Spirit in leading Dr. Henson to Topeka.

For Facebook users and non-users who are open to the possibility; please check out our Facebook group page, “American Baptist Ministers Council”. We now have more than 450 members of that group and it’s a place where I frequently post updates on our work together.

I have learned this one thing about all others as I have stepped out of congregational ministry and into this role. The pastoral life is a distinctive life, not quite like any other. For that reason, there is nobody who can understand and walk along side quite like another pastor. With one another, there is a lot less explaining to do. Sisters and Brothers, take care of one another.