

### ***More on Leadership Learning Communities...***

There has never been a more important time for ministers to strengthen their ties with one-another. It is our hope that these clergy communities will knit the ministers of ABCNW together in mutual concern and prayer. We hope they will become safe places for learning together – safe communities where we can share our ministry joys and disappointments. As pastors receive strength from one another through friendship, prayer, learning and accountability a new level of leadership skill will emerge. This will lead to stronger, healthier churches; churches that lift their eyes to the opportunities for serving the surrounding community in the name of Jesus. When churches start giving themselves away in ministry, then renewal and joy and health will predominate, all to the glory of God.

There are numerous voices urging pastors to sign on to life-long learning through peer-to-peer learning groups like our LLCs. One of these is Reggie McNeal, who has written an entire book advocating for this model (*Revolution in Leadership*). In his outstanding book, *A Work of Heart*, he explains why learning communities are so essential for the ongoing development of the minister today:

“A critical intellectual capacity for twenty-first-century leadership success will be the ability to build knowledge together with other colleagues. The rate of information growth, coupled with the collapse of the Christendom paradigm, makes it no longer possible to prepare for ministry challenges through traditional preparation processes. Academic, conferential, and self-guided learning must be supplemented through a peer-mentoring process for debriefing life and ministry experience. This process of an intentional learning community is exactly what Jesus established with the first apostles. The leaders of the movement were trained to share and discuss what they had encountered together. Jesus performed the role of learning coach during the early days. The Spirit took up this role in the book of Acts...

...a new model of spiritual leader...is emerging for a new apostolic era. A different training methodology is also emerging for this new tribe of apostolic leaders. Various called a mentoring group or a learning cluster, it captures the dynamic of an intentional learning community. Learning communities are developing in all kinds of settings, from cities to countryside, from colleges to mission posts.

Todd serves as a facilitator of a learning cluster in his denomination. He has recruited three other pastors for their meeting, which usually involves lunch and dinner. The four of them enjoy fellowship and prayer time together. However, the driving force of their cluster is learning. At each meeting, they have a learning agenda that they have agreed on beforehand. Sometimes they read a book and study it together. At other times, they bring case studies out of their own ministries. Occasionally, they use a learning guide

produced by their denomination. Todd is covenanted together with these other learners. Together they are coaching one another to greater ministry effectiveness.

The leader prepared for the challenge of the new century will be a learner. However, this learning will develop differently than in traditional methods that are linear, didactic, privatized, and parochial. Learning in a community is nonlinear, layered and experiential. It is also just in time.”