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Pastors Group Backs Ray Trial

The steering committee of the Memphis Ministers' Association this week joined the Priests' Council of the Catholic Diocese of Memphis in demanding a jury trial for James Earl Ray, the convicted assassin of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The effort to get a trial for Ray, who pleaded guilty in 1968 to the slaying of the civil rights leader, is part of a national effort led by Rev. James Lawson, former pastor of Centenary United Methodist Church here and current pastor of Holman United Methodist Church in Los Angeles.

The Priests' Council voted several weeks ago to ask Gov. Ray Blanton and the state legislature to do everything possible to obtain a jury trial for Ray "to relieve the doubts in the minds of many people" about the circumstances of the assassination.

The Ministers' Association, which will not hold another regular meeting until Oct. 4, has already lined up its meeting places and some of the programs for 1978-79.

Rev. Nicholas Vieron, association president and pastor of Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, said the group will initiate a "big brother" program when meetings resume to get more ministers to attend. About 50 ministers have attended most of the rejuvenated group's recent meetings, but Father Vieron said the association will try to draw more.

Past association presidents will be honored at the meeting at Father Vieron's church Oct. 4.