

Metro Chicago

eWind

*Suddenly there was...a strong wind blowing, and...
they were all filled with the Holy Spirit... (Acts 2:2-3, TEV)*

Weekly Electronic Newsletter of the American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago
A patchwork of varied news and announcements
from our churches, communities, denomination and other organizations,
covering a wide variety of interests reflecting the diversity of our region

June 22, 2005

We pray for all who will be traveling to General Board and Biennial next week.
May God bless them with safe journeys, and grant them wisdom for the meetings at hand.

In this Issue

Upcoming Events
Pulpit Supply
Words from a Missionary
Thinking Theologically
Reflections on Liberty
ABCUSA Singles Conference
Ministers: Please Respond Immediately
ABCUSA Biennial Meeting
At Biennial--ABCMC Reception
Fifth Sunday Unity Service
World Mission Conference--Mission U-Mission You!
LMPC Events in Illinois
Prayer Requests
Book Nook

Upcoming Events

June 26--Ordination of Taku Longkumer to the Christian Ministry by Christ Community Church, 602 E. Geneva Road, Wheaton, 10 a.m. For more information, phone the church at 630-665-2259.

June 27-30--ABCUSA General Board Meeting, Denver, CO.

June 28-29--ABCUSA REMC Meeting, Denver, CO.

July 1-3--ABCUSA Biennial Meeting, Denver, CO.

July 3--ABCMC Communication Coordinator Rev. Lynne Kelley preaches at Irving Park Baptist Church, 4401 W. Irving Park Road, Chicago, 11 a.m.

July 3--ABCMC Communication Coordinator Rev. Lynne Kelley preaches at Grace Baptist Church, 5253 N. Kenmore Avenue, Chicago, 6 p.m.

July 6-August 12--Xtreme Team Mission Adventure. Please see article.

July 25--A conversation with Imam W. Deen Mohammed and Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I.: Faith and the Common Good, Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Center Auditorium, adjacent to Holy Name Cathedral, State and Superior Streets, Chicago, 7p.m. RSVP by July 18 to 773-456-5637.

July 31--5th Sunday Unity Service, Irving Park Baptist Church, 4401 W. Irving Park Road, Chicago, 6:30 p.m.

July 28-30--Missional Church Conference, Cenacle Retreat Center, Chicago. Register at www.missionalchurch.org/seminars/convo05/main.html. Costs are listed on the web site.

July 29--NCC's Green Ministries conference, 8:30 - 11:30 a.m., ELCA building, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago. More information is available from Cassandra Carmichael at 202-544-2350 or www.nccecojustice.org.

August 1--Deadline for receiving applications for Accessible Faith Grants. See www.rff.org for complete information.

August 1-5--Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders, sponsored by Lombard Mennonite Peace Center. Will be at Trinity Lutheran Church, 675 E. Algonquin Road, Des Plaines. Brochures with registration form available from ABCMC. For more information, contact LMPC, 630-627-0507, or visit www.lmpeacecenter.org. Register before July 5 for best tuition rate, \$595.

August 1-6--30th Annual Gathering of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, Linfield College, McMinnville, OR.

August 6-11--World Mission Conference, Green Lake, WI. More information and registration materials available at www.internationalministries.org.

September 2-5--National ABC Singles Conference, Marshall, Indiana. Visit NSFellowshipABC@aol.com for more information.

Pulpit Supply

The ABCMC office maintains a list of persons who are available for pulpit supply in local churches. If you would like a copy of this list, or if you would like to be added to the list, please contact the office at 773-695-9791 or abcmchi@aol.com.

Words from a Missionary

Mark and Sandy Jo Thompson, ABC Missionaries in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, write: "When we came to Vanga in 1997 the village only had a population of almost 2,000, but now there are over 4,000 inhabitants. Because of this growth Vanga is experiencing growing pains. Some of these pains are deeply troubling us and people like our friend Didier. The limits of the Mission station and the village are no longer clear. Rules that use to apply are no longer being enforced. You can now find 10 year olds smoking cigarettes and 15 year olds smoking Marijuana. I have even confiscated a powder substance that is snuffed by teenagers before entering a schoolyard. With this comes a break down in respect towards adults. In the past there had been a healthy respect towards those in authority.

"Recently, our friend Didier, and a volunteer named Rebecca, have begun to attack the problem by first educating the parents, because the parents have no idea what is going on or how big this problem actually

is. Secondly we want to educate the younger kids this summer via day camps to help the younger kids understand the dangers and negative side of taking drugs, and teach them to *just say no*.

“Didier has already had a positive influence in the lives of some of the boys by offering them something more constructive to do; such as being apart of a male choir. But with this has come threats on his life from the sellers of the drugs. There are some folks in the village that began growing and selling drugs with the aim of getting rich. Families here are poor to begin with, yet the kids steal money and things from their families or neighbors, which even produces more poverty for these families. The job ahead of Didier and others who are trying to make a difference is huge.”

Thinking Theologically

To read the attached documents, you will need to have Adobe Reader. If you do not have this software, you may download it free of charge from <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readermain.html>.

ABCMC's Interim Executive Minister, Larry Greenfield, preached at The Community Church of Wilmette on June 12. His sermon, "Harvesting," is attached in a zip file. Please take the time to read this sermon, which shares some of Larry's vision for the region.

Also, Larry writes a biweekly column of reflections on theology, scripture and public life for *The Common Good Network*, an electronic newsletter of Protestants for the Common Good (PCG). His most recent column is attached in the same zip file.

We make a practice of attaching his column to eWind. You can see back issues of *The Common Good Network* at the PCG web site, www.thecommongood.org. You may also subscribe to the newsletter there. There is no charge. You will probably enjoy PGC's "fortnightly magazine of information, opinion, and resources relating faith to public life."

Reflections on Liberty

I was in court last week as part of a jury pool here in Chicago. I raised my right hand and took the oath to be a good juror. I was not asked to do so in God's name. I was not offended.

The "Christian" church that I grew up in did not even believe in taking oaths. So these good people even take themselves out of being participants in the trial by jury system that could send them to prison. Our government has, because of the separation of church and state rights, allowed the Amish and many Mennonite and Brethren groups to opt out of jury service because of their religious beliefs. Nor do they vote because that requires signing a written oath of allegiance to this country. They pay taxes and benefit from their usage, but opt not to participate in the decision making process because they believe it is against their religion. Our government does not force participation due to religious preferences due to our 1st Amendment rights.

Being required to say, "so help me God" by the state or county or country government does not create honesty. Our criminal and civil court system is awash with folks who lie and bend the truth in unbelievable directions. It is the job of good and honest jurors and judges and lawyers to seek the truth. (Yes, I recognize that there is an oxymoron there regarding lawyers being good and honest.)

God was present fully in the courtroom that I was in last week. And, in fact, it was very interesting to hear the number of names that were used by 52 jurors to reference either their belief or unbelief in God. We were, as is to be expected here in Cook County, a very diverse people. What was wonderful is that no one was forced to use one name of God over another. No one was told they could not use their religion to weigh the merits of the case in front of us. We were free and so was God.

My daughter, Kali, age 13, and her brother, Aaron, 22, have been in public school in our country for over twenty years between the two of them. They have received a great education and can pray in school when ever they want. Here is the great thing for a religious freedom nut like myself and my children: NO ONE CAN TELL THEM THEY HAVE TO PRAY OR TO WHOM THEY SHOULD PRAY. They have both admitted to some awfully serious praying right before exams.

My children can if they want take their Bibles to school with them. They can even arrange to have religious Bible studies during their free time and have prayer meetings during their free time. GOD is in school each day, fully and completely. What is wonderful about this country is that no one can tell my children who or what god they should be praying to and learning about. Isn't that wonderful. It is a rarity still in this world, such freedom.

No one is trying to take God out of anything in our land. Many are trying to ensure that our absolute freedoms to and from religion are honored completely. What good is anyone's religion that is not freely and fairly accepted, anyway? Saying, "Yes," to God and God's ways does not count for much unless we have the very same right to say, "No!"

My experience is that God was right there in the jury box the whole time. So was the law. So were twelve very competent individuals. The plaintiff in this case was already dead. My faith informed me that he was okay with God and that his family was greedy and that his doctor had not been perhaps as careful as I would hope he would be with me.

Let us not be so quick to want the State of Illinois, (or whatever government body,) to require an oath to God from us. Right now we can take any of our deities in with us. I've yet to meet anyone who did not believe that their God and beliefs about God were not the right ones. I don't want the Government to make the decisions on who is right and who is wrong on matters of faith. I've enjoyed the freedom to seek the truth in my own life surround by others who want to remain on an honest journey, a quest of spirituality.

Let's not require religious oaths in the public square. There are more than ample faith institutions doing that. If what we believe is so good---- won't it catch on fire naturally and spread without forcing a public statement of it? I think so and so does our 1st Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. I give thanks for our founding ancestors daily for their wisdom and am not quick to want to change what has enhanced religion so well in the last 225 years.

The Rev. Dr. Jack E. Skiles
Pastor, The South Church, Mount Prospect

ABCUSA Singles Conference

The National Singles Fellowship in ABC-USA will hold its yearly conference for all Christian adult singles on Labor Weekend, September 2-5, 2005. It shall be held at the conference center of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Marshall, IN. Contact for information:

Rev. Shirley Albert
7911 N 28 Ave
Omaha, NE 68112
402-344-2408
NSFellowshipABC@aol.com

Ministers: Please Respond Immediately

The deadline is fast approaching for your written comments on homosexuality to the Ministers Council. **July 3 is absolutely IT!**

Every American Baptist engaged in professional ministerial leadership is invited to respond in writing (500 words or less) on the matter. This information will be reviewed by the facilitation team, and a full range of responses will be summarized at Senate 2005.

The following guidelines are offered as a framework for response:

1. Reflect on this issue of homosexuality in light of Christ's greatest commandments to love God and neighbor.
2. Under what circumstances do you believe you can be faithful to God and remain in fellowship with others who hold strong convictions opposite your own, regarding homosexuality?

Forms are available from www.ministerscouncil.org. The ABCMC office also has forms. Please mail your completed response form to the address on the form. Responses *must be received by July 3, 2005*.

ABCUSA Biennial Meeting

The American Baptist Churches in the USA will gather for their Biennial Convention in Denver, Colorado July 1-3, 2005. The theme will be "Lift Up Your Eyes (Ps. 121)." Much information appears in the Winter 2005 and Spring 2005 issues of *American Baptist in Mission*. You can also find information about the event and registration on the denominational web site, www.abc-usa.org.

Are you planning to attend Biennial, and interested in sharing a room, transportation, etc.? Give the ABCMC office a call at 773-695-9791. We may be able to help you find someone from ABCMC with whom to share expenses.

At Biennial-

ABCMC Reception

Please let the ABCMC office know at 773-695-9791 or abcmchi@aol.com if you are going to Biennial. ABCMC will host a reception at Biennial on the evening of Saturday, July 2 following the worship service. If you are going to Biennial, please let us know also whether you will attend the reception.

Fifth Sunday Unity Service

Everyone is invited to the 5th Sunday service on July 31 at Irving Park Baptist Church, 4401 W. Irving Park Road, at 6:30 p.m. This is the third of the series of Multicultural Worship services. In July, the celebration will be in African American style, with Rev. Dr. Alan Ragland, pastor of 3rd Baptist Church of Chicago as preacher. The choir from 3rd Baptist will also be featured. After the service everyone will celebrate with traditional African American foods. All are welcome!

Mission U- -Mission You!

International Ministries invites you to attend Mission University, a 6-day program of drama and mission stories, worship and music, missiology, daily electives, Xtra credit with Xtreme teams and much more! God calls us into mission both to reach the world and to change our own lives. This year's World Mission Conference will be all about the life-changing learning that happens as we follow Christ by going global. The conference will be August 6-11 at Green Lake. It will include

activities for adults, youth and children. Call 800-558-8898 today to reserve your room. For more information, visit www.internationalministries.org.

LMPC Events in Illinois

The Lombard Mennonite Peace Center trains people each year in mediation and conflict transformation. Please remind your churches and pastors about the following events:

Mediation Skills Training Institute at Trinity Lutheran Church in Des Plaines, IL, August 1-5, 2005.

Here I Stand: Leading Change Through Self-Differentiation at First Church of Lombard, UCC, in Lombard, IL, August 23-25, 2005.

Healthy Congregations at St. Gregory's Episcopal Church in Deerfield, IL, September 23-24, 2005.

Healthy Congregations Facilitator Training Institute at First Church of Lombard, UCC, in Lombard, IL, September 26-28, 2005.

Facilitating Healthy Pastor-Congregation Relations at Church of Peace, UCC, in Rock Island, IL, October 14-15, 2005.

Mediation Skills is designed to equip church leaders with the skills necessary to deal effectively with interpersonal, congregational, and other forms of group conflict. It also includes a component on congregational intervention and consultation, placed within the context of family systems theory.

Here I Stand equips pastors to lead the "Here I Stand" process in their church. The "Here I Stand" process invites people to think clearly through their beliefs so they function in a more healthy way in regards to conflict.

The **Healthy Congregations** workshop will help participants: Learn how to **keep anxiety from being infectious**; Learn how to put limits on invasive behavior, **manage reactivity**, and overcome sabotage; Discover how leaders can function as the **congregation's immune system**; Learn to **focus on strengths**, resources, options and the future.

After attending **Healthy Congregations Facilitator Training Institute**, participants will be able to lead the "Healthy Congregations" workshop to churches and other groups in their area.

Facilitating Healthy Pastor-Congregation Relations helps participants understand the basic concepts of family systems theory as it applies to congregational life. It will help improve support systems for pastors and institutionalize healthy conflict procedures.

Registration brochures (and a congregational group discount form for "Healthy Congregations") is available on our website - www.LMPeaceCenter.org. Click on the "schedule of events" page and then click on "register" for each event. I hope that your pastors and staff are able to attend one of these valuable training events.

Baptist Peace Camp

MARCUS BORG, CORRIE FAMILY HEADLINE BPFNA PEACE CAMP

The Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America announces that it will hold its 20th annual summer conference August 1-6th at First Baptist Church and Linfield College in McMinnville, Oregon. The conference -- also billed as "Peace Camp" -- draws hundreds of attendees from throughout North America who are interested in peace rooted in justice. This year's conference theme will be "For the Healing of the Nations." This was chosen to reflect a Biblical vision of a world remade in the

image of a peace-loving, justice-seeking God. Attendees join together in music, worship, Bible study, workshops, and plenary sessions. There are also special programs for children, youth and young adults.

Doris Garcia-Mayol will be the featured preacher. Garcia-Mayol has served as an active missionary with the American Baptist and Puerto Rican Baptist Churches for the past 18 years. She and her family are now in Chiapas, Mexico working with the Baptist Seminary of Mexico. A native of Puerto Rico, Garcia-Mayol's interests include microbiology, ancient cultures of the Near East, biblical narrative and discourse, and social movements.

Bible studies will be led by Cam Watts, a pastor in Aylmer, Ontario, Canada and moderator of the Gathering of Baptists, a group of progressive Baptists in Ontario and Quebec. In his studies entitled, "By the Waters of Babylon: How the People of God Come to Terms with Their Oppressors," Watts will address from a pastoral perspective how Christians might learn to see themselves and the people who harm them.

Music and worship leader Michael Stern is a folksinger/songwriter who has traveled the world over singing and working for peace and justice -- he has taken his music to Malawi, Zimbabwe, El Salvador, and Nicaragua as well as throughout North America. Stern studied theology at the University of Edinburgh Scotland, received degrees in Nursing at the University of Washington and is a Certified Laughter Leader. Currently serving as a Family Nurse Practitioner, Stern incorporates a wealth of perspective and practical experiences from parenting, teaching and the healing arts into each of his presentations. His original music and programs address issues of peace, justice, hope and healing. Stern is a long-time member of University Baptist Church in Seattle where he serves as the current Artist in Residence for the Rauschenbach Center for Social Justice.

Plenary speaker Paul Dekar, a Canadian who teaches at Memphis Theological Seminary in Tennessee, will relate stories of social movements large and small which have served to create a more just world. He is the author of *Healing of the Nations* (1993) *Holy Boldness* (2004) and *Creating the Beloved Community* (2005).

Craig and Cindy Corrie, the parents of Rachel Corrie, will make a special presentation and lead workshops. On March 16, 2003, Rachel was killed by an Israeli bulldozer in Rafah in the Gaza Strip while she was trying to nonviolently prevent the demolition of a Palestinian home. The Corries have since made an extended visit to Israel and Occupied Palestine and have traveled extensively responding to interest in their daughter's story. They believe that in sharing Rachel's story they continue her work < drawing attention to the plight of the Palestinian people and supporting those Israelis, Palestinians and internationals who are working determinedly to end the occupation and to bring freedom, justice, and a secure peace to these two peoples. They are developing the Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace and Justice, promoting U.S. and Palestinian sister city relationships, and supporting other organizations that work on the Israeli-Palestinian issue. They reside in Olympia, Washington, where they are active in the peace and justice community.

Marcus Borg, internationally known lecturer and writer, will serve as keynote speaker. Borg holds the Hundere Chair in Religion and Culture in the Philosophy Department at Oregon State University. Known throughout the world in both academic and church circles as a biblical and Jesus scholar, he is the author of twelve books, including *Jesus: A New Vision* (1987) and the best-seller *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* (1994). Recent books include *The God We Never Knew* (1997), *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* (1999), *God at 2000* (2000), *Reading the Bible Again for the First Time* (2001), and *The Heart of Christianity* (2003).

Planned workshops include "Signs of Peace: The Interfaith Letters of Thomas Merton," "Parenting Peacemakers," "The Hands Are Not for Hurting Project," "Community Based Organizing," "Justice Work with Indigenous Communities" and many more.

The Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America gathers, equips, and mobilizes Baptists to build a culture of peace rooted in justice. We labour with a wonderful array of peacemakers to change the world.

For more information, contact Summer Conference Coordinator, the Rev. LeDayne McLeese Polaski, by e-mail at ledayne@bpfna.org or by phone at (704)521-6051 or visit www.bpfna.org/summerconference.

Prayer Requests

Please pray for those Mark and Sandy Jo Thompson, missionaries in Vanga, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and for all who are trying to help the youth of Vanga make wise and healthy choices.

Please remember in prayer Sandy Jo Thompson's dad, Raymon Brown, who is 87 is having some serious health problems.

Please pray for Curtis Kelley, brother of Lynne Kelley, as he recovers from surgery in Virginia. Please lift up in prayer our denomination as we prepare for our biennial convention next week. May that gathering be full of God's spirit of love, grace and welcome.

Book Nook

GOD AND EVOLUTION: A FAITH-BASED UNDERSTANDING

by David L. Wilcox

A biology professor at a Christian university, Wilcox is committed to a strong biblical faith and to faithful, responsible service. He maintains that there can be no conflict between Scripture and the natural world because God is the author of both. The contentious debate over evolution is a result of a failure to recognize and respect the boundaries of science and also the boundaries of theology. The author addresses such topics as the age of the earth and the origins of life, including human life, exploring from a scientist's perspective what we know and how we know it. His objective is to help readers reach a point in their faith where they don't have to choose between God and science, but where they can embrace science as a part of the divine plan. The book is on sale for \$11.20, and is available from www.judsonpress.com.

The Metro Chicago *eWind* is an electronic communication intended for the people of the American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago. The events publicized herein do not necessary express the opinions of the American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago. We welcome your news, prayer requests and comments. Please email your communications to abcmchi@aol.com. We will email the newsletter each Wednesday.
If you spot a typographical error in *eWind*, please let us know at the ABCMC office, 773-695-9791 or abcmchi@aol.com.