

Metro Chicago
eWind

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

A 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

December 21-28, 2005

**The staff of the American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago
wishes you a blessed Christmas and new year.**

Larry Greenfield Douglas Galbraith James Jackson Lynne Kelley

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Upcoming Events

December 22—Meeting of the Ghana task force, 11 a.m., McCormick Theological Seminary.

December 26-30—ABCMC office closed. Staff will monitor voice mail and email.

December 30, 31—Youth Encounter, First Baptist Church, 935 E. 50th Street, Chicago. Noon to 5 p.m. Thursday; 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday.

January 1—Wedding of Rev. Denise Janssen and Rev.

January 3—Rehearsal for All-City Choir, in preparation for Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration, Second Baptist Church, 1520 Avery Avenue, Wheaton, 7-8:30 p.m.

January 6—Registration deadline for online class “Connecting Faith and Health in the Congregation” (February 6-May 19) from North Park Theological Seminary. For information, phone 773-244-6201.

January 6—Registration deadline for online class “Experiences of the Body in Pastoral Ministry” (February 6-May 19) from North Park Theological Seminary. For information, phone 773-244-6201.

January 6-7—“Understanding the Bible,” Rickman Center, Jefferson City, MO. For more information, please phone 800-626-5924.

January 11—9 a.m. to 4 p.m., “What Religious Organizations Need to Know about the Law,” North Park University, 3225 West Foster Avenue, Chicago. For more information, go to http://www.northpark.edu/axelson/religiousorg_law.cfm.

January 13—Rehearsal for All-City Choir, in preparation for Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration, Edman Chapel, 401 E. Franklin Street, Wheaton, 7-8:30 p.m.

January 16—Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration, 7 p.m., Edman Chapel of Wheaton College, 401 E. Franklin Street, Wheaton. Phone the Second Baptist Church of Wheaton, 630-260-0190 for more information.

January 17—Finance and Property Committee meeting, ABCMC office, 3 p.m.

January 18-25—Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Resources for the 2006 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity are available electronically at the World Council of Churches web site, <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/faith/wop2006contents.html>.

January 22—6th Annual Ecumenical Prayer Service, sponsored by the Ecumenical Millennium Committee (of which ABCMC is a part), Evangelical Lutheran Church of St. Luke, 1500 W. Belmont Avenue, Chicago; 4 p.m.

February 1—Ecumenical Millennium Committee meeting, 1:30 p.m., Archdiocese of Chicago Pastoral Center, 155 E. Superior Street, Chicago.

February 4—Family Council meeting, 9 a.m.

February 5—Baptist World Alliance Sunday. BWA General Secretary Denton Lotz, guest preacher, North Shore Baptist Church, 5244 N. Lakewood Avenue, Chicago, 11 a.m. Luncheon after worship \$7/\$3.50, reservations required by February 1. After lunch, Dr. Lotz will lead discussion, “The Church in the 21st Century and the Clash of Civilizations,” concluding at 2:30 p.m.

February 6-May 19—Online class “Connecting Faith and Health in the Congregation” from North Park Theological Seminary. For information, phone 773-244-6201. Register by January 6.

February 6-May 19—Online class “Experiences of the Body in Pastoral Ministry” from North Park Theological Seminary. For information, phone 773-244-6201. Register by January 6.

February 10—ABCMC Women in Ministry gather at the home of Alice Davis, 3942 N. Kostner, Chicago. RSVP to Irving Park Baptist Church office, 773-286-6800.

February 14-23—World Council of Churches 9th Assembly, "God, In Your Grace, Transform the World," Porto Alegre, Brazil. Visitors can register through the Mutirao Program. Information on the 9th Assembly is available at www.wcc-assembly.info.

February 21—Finance and Property Committee meeting, ABCMC office, 3 p.m.

March 21-24—SCUPE's biennial congress on urban ministry, Chicago. For more information and registration, visit www.scupe.com/Programs/Congress/cngrs_homepage.htm.

April 5—Ecumenical Millennium Committee meeting, 1:30 p.m., Archdiocese of Chicago Pastoral Center, 155 E. Superior Street, Chicago.

April 17-20—Ministers Council's "Wait on the Lord" conference.

March 28—Finance and Property Committee meeting, ABCMC office, 3 p.m.

April 18—Finance and Property Committee meeting, ABCMC office, 3 p.m.

May 10-24—ABCMC Mission Partnership Trip to Ghana.

May 13—Family Council meeting, 9 a.m.

May 15—Deadline for submitting a proposal for a Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal grant.

May 23—Finance and Property Committee meeting, ABCMC office, 3 p.m.

June 7—Ecumenical Millennium Committee meeting, 1:30 p.m., Archdiocese of Chicago Pastoral Center, 155 E. Superior Street, Chicago.

June 20—Finance and Property Committee meeting, ABCMC office, 3 p.m.

July 18—Finance and Property Committee meeting, ABCMC office, 3 p.m.

July 27-29—Missional Church Conference.

August 22—Finance and Property Committee meeting, ABCMC office, 3 p.m.

August 26—Family Council meeting, 9 a.m.

November 10-11—Annual Meeting.

November 21—Finance and Property Committee meeting, ABCMC office, 3 p.m.

December 19—Finance and Property Committee meeting, ABCMC office, 3 p.m.

Thinking Theologically

Our Executive Minister Larry Greenfield pens a regular column for Protestants for the Common Good. His latest column is attached to this issue of *eWind*.

Message of Hope

Attached to this issue of *eWind* is a letter from Ken Sehested, former executive director of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America. Ken's letter is directed to a friend who is a member

of the Christian Peacemaker Team delegation that is being held hostage in Iraq. You will need Adobe Reader, available for free download from the Internet, to open Ken's PDF file. Please read his letter with a prayerful heart.

Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering 2005



The Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering (RMMO) is promoted and received in American Baptist congregations during November and December each year. Prayerfully decide how you can support the vital ministries supported by this offering. Please give when your congregation receives the offering. Since 1935, American Baptists have contributed to special offerings received in their churches for retired ABC ministers and missionaries, or their widowed spouses. The Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering (RMMO) was established in 1977.

Through this annual offering, American Baptist congregations say **thank you** in a tangible way to the denomination's retired ministers and missionaries or their widowed spouses.

The offering provides them with:

- Emergency and other financial assistance, based on financial need.
- Thank You checks, based on 15 or more years of ABC service.

Receipts from the 2004 RMMO totaled \$1,764,749, a 1.1% increase over the 2003 receipts of \$1,744,801. Of this amount, \$774,564 was made available to meet immediate emergency and special financial needs. The balance of the receipts was distributed by The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board (MMBB) on behalf of American Baptists in the form of Thank You checks: 3,252 checks were distributed in 2004, ranging from \$53.50 to \$428. The average check was \$304.49.

Return to the Virtual World

Paul Ethington, Camp Director at Camp Grow Ministries, is continuing a slow but steady recovery from recent back surgery. He is now able to sit up a bit and use a laptop computer. He says it is great being able to feel connected again. If you would like to send him an email, his address is paul@campgrow.org.

ABCMC General Board Representative on PSW

The following communication is from Rev. Francine Stark. Francine serves on the staff of the Third Baptist Church of Chicago. She is ABCMC's representative on the General Board of the ABCUSA. In 2006 she will begin her term as President of National Ministries (ABCUSA). She

wrote this message in response to the decision of the board of the American Baptist Churches of the Pacific Southwest (ABCPSW) to recommend that the region withdraw from the ABCUSA. The AB News Service article mentioned in her communication appeared in the December 14 issue of *eWind*. We reprint it here for the sake of clarity.

Blessings, Saints:

Thought the best thing I could do to give all of you an update on the Pacific Southwest (PSW) Region's consideration of leaving ABC, USA was to forward this summary to you from the AB News Service. When Dale Salico, Exec. Min. for PSW stated that PSW was going to leave ABC, USA, it is not clear whether he had considered that not all of the churches of that region would want to leave ABC, USA. It appears that the board of PSW had not considered that there might be churches that have a great love for ABC, USA, its programs and ministries, and for the friendships that had grown out of that relationship. It appears, also, that that board had not considered that it is the individual church that must decide to leave membership with ABC, USA and that, should the church decide to leave, any outstanding loans would be recalled and the MMBB benefits for the pastors and staff would be altered. Loans through ABEC and MMBB pensions and other benefits are part of the PERKS of being an active member church of ABC, USA. The third paragraph of the following news release is important because it speaks to the specifics of what it means to be Baptist. Members of the General Board and the staffs of the ABC, USA program boards and Office of the General Secretary have worked sacrificially to bring about reconciliation, to be bridge-builders, and in my personal opinion, to go beyond what is considered reasonable to get the board of PSW to reconsider its position of leaving the denomination over the concerns of human sexuality and the interpretations of scripture. We really do have the right to disagree on concerns of human sexuality and yet remain a body of Christ for the work of ministry to a hurting world. It is my sincere hope that the individual churches of PSW will prayerfully consider what it means to be Baptist, their beliefs about the interpretation of scripture, the Great Commandment, and their Baptist rights when deciding whether to follow their board's directive to leave ABC, USA. And it is also time that the General Board get back to the business of informing and promoting the resources -- both in the persons and material resources -- found in ABC, USA, developing ordained and lay leaders in our churches and faith-based institutions, and supporting the development of relationships between the regions and local churches with the staff that is housed within the ABC, USA offices in Valley Forge, PA. Feel free to e-mail me or call me at 773-779-1800 with any questions.

Grace, Peace and Joy during this blessed Christmas season.

Rev. Francine Stark, GB Rep for ABCMC

ABC Leaders Express Regret, Concern Over PSW Recommendation

VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS)-American Baptist leaders have responded with profound regret and concern over the recommendation issued on Dec. 8 by the Board of Directors of the American Baptist Churches of the Pacific Southwest to withdraw that region from the denomination's Covenant of Relationships.

A regional meeting of its churches to advise the leadership is tentatively scheduled in May 2006. After that meeting, the Board will make its final decision. If approved, the recommended action would effectively remove the region from a formal relationship with the American Baptist Churches in the USA.

"American Baptists are deeply disappointed at the decision of the leadership of the American Baptist Churches of the Pacific Southwest to recommend a break-away from the denomination," General Secretary Dr. A. Roy Medley said today.

The conflict American Baptists find themselves in is sometimes described as a liberal/conservative division over the issue of homosexuality. In reality, American Baptist statements on human sexuality and marriage have consistently been conservative, evangelical and traditional. We all hold biblical authority as primary for Christian discipleship and church life-but we have always respected dissent in interpretation.

When the proposal was first made to break Covenant, one of the region's own Board members wrote, " I voted against withdrawing from the ABCUSA because I do not agree with the idea of requiring uniformity in the matter of interpretation of scripture, in this case, in the area of human sexuality. If there is one principle that drew me to become an American Baptist, it was the belief that each person can read the Bible and form his or her own conclusions without any imposition from others. As Baptists, we agree on a number of central Bible doctrines but still affirm the freedom of each individual to interpret scripture for himself or herself, under the leading of the Holy Spirit."

Even though Baptist churches have been organized in America from the 1600s until the present, it wasn't until 1907 that the Northern Baptist Convention, now American Baptist Churches in the USA, was formed. In structuring a national denomination, these Baptists were careful to safeguard the primacy of the local church so that the national body could not usurp the rights and privileges of the local congregation to exercise authority over them. These basic principles were derived from the Bible and represented early Baptist desire to properly reflect the New Testament teaching concerning the nature of the church. The principle of the primacy and autonomy of the local church is reflected in the name-the denomination is not the American Baptist Church-it is the American Baptist Churches.

"Because schism in the church is grievous to our Lord, we have done-and will continue to do-everything we can to maintain the unity of the Body of Christ, which is so clearly taught in scripture," Medley emphasized.

In order to clearly understand the concerns of the Pacific Southwest, and in the hope of maintaining the desired unity of Christ's Body, many national and regional officers and staff have devoted extensive energy, time, resources and prayer in continuing dialogue with the region. In addition to previous visits by the President, the General Secretary, and the National Executive Council, Dr. Dale V. Salico, Executive Minister of the Pacific Southwest, has had multiple opportunities to speak to the concerns of the region, including meetings with the Regional Executive Ministers Council, the General Board Executive Committee, and the full General Board-the denomination's governing body.

One result of these meetings was a decision by the General Executive Council to send a delegation to meet with the appropriate leadership groups of the region. Dr. Alfred Fletcher of the American Baptist Churches of Maine and Dr. Desmond Hoffmeister of the American Baptist Churches of the Rocky Mountains, were appointed and made themselves available for whatever meetings would be most helpful to the region leadership. They spent six hours of discussion with the five-member Executive Committee. There was a meeting of the full Board that followed, to which the two Executive Ministers were not invited.

Fletcher and Hoffmeister, in their meeting with the Executive Committee, expressed the deep care and concern of all mission partners in the denomination toward what, for over 100 years, has been one of the strongest regions in the denomination. They reported: "We made a pastoral and passionate appeal on behalf of the GEC for PSW to remain at the ABCUSA table. We challenged some of their assumptions, were surprised by some of their assertions, and they were surprised by some of the information that we shared. They were encouraged by the fact that we represented all the covenanting partners. Notwithstanding the positive tone of the meeting, we left feeling that it will take a monumental effort to reverse the advanced and propelling momentum of their intended process."

If the region withdraws, it will assume control of the disbursement of mission money historically given by the churches in support of American Baptist missions. In 2004, that amount was over \$2.9 million. At the same time, as the region is distancing itself from the denomination and expressing the intent to formally break covenant, the Pacific Southwest is negotiating ways to continue doing ministry with American Baptists-specifically the pension/benefit and mission boards of the denomination.

In the final analysis, each of the 300 churches in the Pacific Southwest will make its own decision regarding its continuing relationship with ABCUSA. Each church-in the Baptist way of decision making-will have the opportunity to choose for itself.

"Regardless of the region's decision, there will be a continuing American Baptist presence in southern California," Medley said. "Every effort will be made to enable and support churches wishing to remain in covenant with us."

In addition, Medley stated, "The Los Angeles Baptist City Mission Society, one of the most racially and ethnically diverse evangelical mission organizations in the nation, is a cooperating American Baptist region, and has given us assurances through its Executive Minister, Dr. Samuel Chetti, that it will stay at the table."

In reflecting upon his visit to southern California, Fletcher said, "Hope keeps bringing us back." Medley added, "And in that hope we press on."

Christmas ABCMC Office Schedule

The ABCMC office will be closed Monday-Friday, December 26-30. The staff will monitor email and voicemail. The ABCUSA Mission Center will be closed on the same day. This issue of eWind is for both December 21 and December 28.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

The 6th Annual Ecumenical Prayer service will take place at 4 p.m. on Sunday, January 22 at the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saint Luke, 1500 W. Belmont Avenue, Chicago. The preacher will be Robert Reynolds, who is Executive Presbyter of the Chicago Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church (USA). A reception will follow the service. For more information, please phone the Archdiocese of Chicago's Office for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs at 312-751-5325 or email eia@archchicago.org. A bulletin insert about the prayer service is attached to this issue of eWind.

2006 Family Council Meeting Dates

Family Council Meetings in 2006 will take place on Saturdays February 4, May 13 and August 26. The Annual Meeting will be on November 10-11.

Finance and Property Committee Meeting Dates

ABCMC's Finance and Property Committee will meet at the ABCMC office at 3 p.m. on the following Tuesdays in 2006: January 17, February 21, March 28, April 18, May 23, June 20, July 18, August 22, September 19, October 24, November 21 and December 19.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day January 16

A celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. will take place on Monday, January 16 at 7 p.m. in the Edman Chapel of Wheaton College, 401 E. Franklin Street, Wheaton. The main guest speaker will be Rev. Stephen J. Thurston, Pastor of New Covenant Missionary Baptist Church and President of the National Baptist Convention of America, Inc. Musicians will include an All-City Choir, and the Wheaton College Gospel Choir.

BWA Sunday February 6

Baptist World Alliance Sunday is February 6. On that day, North Shore Baptist Church, 5244 N. Lakewood Avenue, Chicago, will welcome as guest preacher in the 11 a.m. worship service Baptist World Alliance (BWA) General Secretary Dr. Denton Lotz. His sermon will be "Every

Baptist a Missionary." The celebration of the BWA will be a continuation of the congregation's celebration of its own centennial.

Following the worship service, the congregation will host a catered luncheon in honor of the guest preacher. Luncheon reservations must be made by Wednesday, February 1. Tickets will cost \$7 for adults or \$3.50 for children. Phone the church at 773-728-4200 to make reservations.

After lunch, Dr. Lotz will lead an informal time of discussion on the topic of "The Church in the 21st Century and the Clash of Civilizations." Those in attendance will have the opportunity to ask questions of Dr. Lotz, and to hear about the current state of the BWA.

The church is on Lakewood Avenue between Berwyn and Foster Avenues, 2 ½ blocks west of the Berwyn stop on the CTA Red Line. From Lake Shore Drive, exit west at Foster Avenue and proceed approximately ½ mile to Lakewood, and turn right. From the eastbound Kennedy Expressway (Interstate 90), exit at Austin, proceed a short distance south to Foster, and then travel east on Foster to Lakewood, and turn left.

Women in Ministry

ABCMC women in ministry, you deserve a break! Please join your sisters when they gather on the afternoon of Friday, February 10 at the home of Alice Davis, 3942 N. Kostner, Chicago. RSVP to Alice at the Irving Park Baptist Church office, 773-286-6800.

ABCMC Call to Action

All recipients of *eWind* were sent an email from ABCMC asking that we as citizens take a stand and make known our wishes regarding the upcoming federal budget. Please read those materials with prayer and care, and contact your congressional representatives.

Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty

Religion vs. Evolution: A false dichotomy

By J. Brent Walker
December 20, 2005

The debate over whether and how to teach evolution in the public schools continues 80 years after the Scopes "monkey trial" in Tennessee. Now the dispute itself has also evolved into a pitched battle in the larger culture wars.

President Bush has declared his support for the inclusion of "intelligent design" in the curriculum of public schools. Last month, eight members of the Dover County, Pa., School Board were voted out of office after adopting a policy that mandated the introduction of intelligent design in biology class. The policy provoked a federal lawsuit and led a Bush-appointed judge to find it "abundantly clear" that the teaching of intelligent design in science class is unconstitutional.



The Supreme Court has been clear about teaching religious theories of origin in public school science classes. Banning the teaching of "creationism," the Court said, "There is and can be no doubt that the First Amendment does not permit the State to require that teaching and learning must be tailored to the principles or prohibitions of any religious sect or dogma." *Epperson v.*

Arkansas, 393 U.S. 97, 106 (1968). The Court also ruled unconstitutional a "Balanced Treatment Act" which sought to require the teaching of creationism where evolution is taught. *Edwards v. Aguillard*, 482 U.S. 587 (1987).

In the aftermath of these rulings, opponents of evolution adopted other strategies. Some tried to spruce up creationism by positing the concept of intelligent design, arguing that nature is so complicated that one must infer a designer of some sort. Although its advocates do not name the designer, the concept is no more than creationism with a little lipstick. Conservative columnist, Charles Krauthammer, calls the anti-evolution movement a "national embarrassment" and palming off intelligent design as science a "fraud." As a Baptist minister, I believe in an intelligent designer whom I unabashedly call God. But this is a religious affirmation, not a scientific proposition suitable for inclusion in a science classroom.

Others have sought to attack evolution itself by claiming evolution is not a fact but only a theory. This ignores the overwhelming support for evolution in the scientific community. It also fails to appreciate that a *scientific* theory is not a mere hunch, but a model that has endured scrutiny under the scientific method, even if it fails to supply all the answers.

Finally, some have tried to use intelligent design to drive a wedge between religion and science. This is a false dichotomy. Evolution and religion are not mutually exclusive. As former President Jimmy Carter, both a scientist and devout Baptist, wrote in his recent book, *Our Endangered Values*, people of faith who take the Bible seriously and appreciate good science can comfortably embrace both. Both seek truth, but in different ways. One tries to answer the "who" and "why" questions through faith; the other addresses the "how" through scientific inquiry.

But, the idea of intelligent design need not be ignored in the public schools. It can be discussed and debated in the appropriate context — such as in a comparative religion course examining theories of origin or in a social studies class that teaches the controversy itself. Nor does it mean that evolution cannot be critiqued in science classes. But such challenges must be based on science and launched by scientists, not theologians.

Proponents of intelligent design should abandon their efforts to stoke the flames of the culture war by forcing these divisive and religious tenets into science classes. Instead, they should seek ways to promote their religious beliefs in their homes, churches, private schools and the public square, and, if they desire, seek appropriate inclusion in public schools' religion and social studies curricula.

A failure to appreciate this common sense understanding of the relationship between religion and science threatens to make monkeys of us all.

For more coverage on the intelligent design decision, visit the BJC Web site at www.BJConline.org/issues/id.htm and *Blog from the Capital* at www.BJConline.org/blog.

J. Brent Walker, an attorney and ordained Baptist minister, is executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty in Washington, D.C.

Urgent Need in Thailand

Sammuk Christian Academy, Bang Saen, Thailand, has an urgent need for a Curriculum Coordinator. The successful candidate must be available immediately for three months of language study, and two years of service at the academy. The school will provide a monthly stipend, round trip airfare, housing, food and laundry on campus. A complete description of the position and list of qualifications is attached to this issue of *eWind*.

Anton Boisen Professional Service Award

The Anton Boisen Professional Service Award is named in honor of a pioneer in chaplaincy and clinical pastoral education. Each year the Association of Professional Chaplains (APC) gives the award to a Board Certified Chaplain of the APC who demonstrates a commitment to excellence in professional chaplaincy and has offered a unique contribution to contemporary pastoral care. The 2004 recipient was Rev. Delois "Dee" Brown-Daniels, Vice President for Mission and Spiritual Care at the Illinois Masonic Medical Center (part of Advocate Health Care), Chicago. For almost 25 years Dee has offered outstanding leadership in various healthcare organizations and in her professional community.

In 2000 Dee accepted the challenge of forming the first pastoral care department in the 100-year history of Illinois Masonic Medical Center. Along with serving on the new management team, Dee recruited a strong team of full-time clinical chaplains.

The first African-American to receive this award, Dee has championed a strong commitment to diverse interfaith ministry in numerous healthcare settings. She has developed partnerships with local clergy associations and community service organizations such as The Night Ministry, Casa Central, and the Community Renewal Society.

Dee is an ordained minister in both the American Baptist Churches and the United Church of Christ. She was certified as a Fellow in the former College of Chaplains in 1985. She is also a Certified Supervisor through the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education. As an advocate for excellence in professional chaplaincy, Dee models a leadership philosophy that is shaping the practice of contemporary spiritual care. Like Anton Boisen, Dee has a pastoral heart that has touched those she serves, and influenced the profession of pastoral care.

Lilly Endowment National Clergy Renewal Program

Lilly Endowment Inc. has announced that its popular National Clergy Renewal Program will continue for a seventh year. The Indianapolis-based Endowment offers grants of up to \$45,000 to congregations across the country to allow their pastors to spend some time away from the daily demands of parish ministry. "Pastors and congregations both benefit from this period of renewal," said Craig Dykstra, Endowment senior vice president for religion. "The pastors are given a rare opportunity to dig deep into what 'makes their hearts sing.' The renewal and refreshment of a pastor's heart is key to the spiritual vitality of a congregation's life. That is why we suggest that, before they move too quickly to figure out the details of their renewal proposal, pastors reflect carefully about what kinds of experiences will touch them most deeply."

Most pastors who receive the grant end up spending three to four months away from their churches. Their experiences both open their minds to new possibilities and connect them more deeply with what really matters to them. They travel the world, study things they really care about, and reconnect with family and friends from years past.

"As they explore the roots of their religious traditions, write poetry, practice contemplative prayer, and spend weeks or months in significantly different cultural contexts," Dykstra said, "they come to see their ministries with fresh eyes. At the same time, the congregations often come to see their pastors and themselves in a new way as well. The planning process itself gives them a better understanding of what their pastors do, and their appreciation for them grows. Sometimes congregations decide to undertake a spiritual journey of their own alongside the pastor; they may read some of the same books the pastor is reading or form discussion groups around the sabbatical theme. Comments from former recipients prove to us that both pastors and congregations find the whole experience empowering and exciting."

As many as 120 congregations will be selected for the 2006 program. They will join the more than 600 that have received grants since 2000. While each grant proposal may request up to \$45,000, up to \$15,000 of that may be used for congregational activities during the pastor's absence.

The brochure/application is available on the Endowment's Web site, www.lillyendowment.org. Interested persons may call 317/916-7350, e-mail clergyrenewal@yahoo.com or write Lilly Endowment, 2801 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, Ind. 46208.

Completing the application requires a joint effort of the pastor and congregation; applicants are encouraged not to put off applying until the last minute. "The process takes some time," cautions Dykstra. "It involves intentional and purposeful discussion between the congregation and the pastor. It is not just a form that can be filled out overnight. We have found, however, that - even among congregations that did not receive grants - the application process itself helped them focus on issues such as effective leadership, the future directions of the congregation, and the like."

Also on the Endowment's Web site are two documents that applicants may find helpful: "What Makes a High-Quality Proposal?" and "Grace Notes." Both the brochure and the Web site also suggest possible reading materials for interested persons. To be eligible, ministers must have earned at least a master of divinity degree. The program is open to all Christian congregations in 49 states and the District of Columbia. The deadline for proposals is May 15, 2006.

Clergy Spiritual Growth

Check out the Ministers Council web site, and learn about the upcoming "Wait on the Lord" event, to take place in April 2006 in Orlando, Florida. For information, go to <http://www.ministerscouncil.com/WaitontheLordInformation.aspx>. For registration, see <http://www.ministerscouncil.com/Wait%20on%20the%20Lord/WOTLRegistrationInfo.aspx>

Prayer Requests

Please continue to pray for Paul Ethington, our Camp Director, as he recovers from back surgery. After your prayer time, send him an email at paul@campgrow.org.

Please pray for Sara Day, our MMBB representative. Sara is recovering from her own back surgery at her home in Michigan. Well wishes may go to her at 412 Orchard Street, East Lansing, MI 48823.

Please pray for Debbie and John Coats, ABCUSA missionaries to Cambodia. They are planning to attend Fuller Theological Seminary for the winter 2006 term, and return to Cambodia in April. Please pray for the two of them and their sons as they make these transitions.

Please lift up in prayer ABCUSA missionary Magda Aguirre. She is serving as interim director of the Baptist Seminary of Latin America in El Salvador.

Please hold in prayer the ABCUSA World Mission Offering (WMO). Our ministries overseas depend on that offering. The 2005 WMO so far is significantly less than last year's WMO.

Please keep praying for the four Christian Peacemaker Team members who are being held hostage in Iraq.

Please join ABCUSA missionaries John and Tomoko Armagost in prayers of thanksgiving for the current popularity of gospel choral music in Japan. This popularity gives Japanese chorus members opportunities to hear about the good news of Jesus.

Please hold in prayer the legislature of our nation, that they may vote with justice and compassion on the budget matters that are coming before them. And please give them a call with your advice.

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.