

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

July 26, 2006

"As [Jesus] came near and saw [Jerusalem], he wept over it, saying, 'If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.'"
Luke 19:41-42

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ABC Missionaries in Lebanon



Dan and Sarah Chetti, ABCUSA missionaries in Lebanon, report that Beirut experienced almost 2 days of quiet. Then the city woke up to 3 massive explosions at around 1 AM Sunday morning. Dan says, "I am sure they were bunker bombs targeted against Hassan Nasrallah, head of

Hezbollah. Israelis believe he is still hiding in a bunker in the Shia neighborhoods of Beirut."

Jennifer Wallace, a short-term, volunteer missionary for International Ministries (IM) has safely returned to the U.S. from Lebanon. She arrived in Baltimore on Saturday, July 22, and later flew to Ohio, where she lives with her family.

SUNDAY!!! *Fifth Sunday Unity Service*

On July 30, at 6:30 p.m., Irving Park Baptist Church will welcome Rev. Dr. Joseph Atta-Fynn to their pulpit for the next 5th Sunday Unity Service—Celebrating Diversity. Joseph is the pastor of ABCMC's new Sub-Saharan African church plant. Joseph will be the speaker, and the congregation will celebrate with African music. After the service, they will experience a taste of Africa, with a variety of traditional African foods.

This will be a special service, a fundraiser to help the new church plant get off to a strong start. All ABCMC congregations are invited to attend. The church is at 4401 W. Irving Park Road in Chicago. A flyer about the service is attached to this issue of *eWind*.

Diverse Reflections on the Conflict in Israel and Lebanon

What are your thoughts on the recent eruptions of violent conflict involving Hezbollah, Israel, and Lebanon? Members of the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago (CRLMC) have engaged in a discussion of the news and issues. You definitely want to read this. You may find their insights helpful, even fascinating.

All members of CRLMC received an email communication from the Chicago Board of Rabbis presenting their perspective. A Muslim leader, Kareem M. Irfan, also sent a message to the CRLMC, and included important statements from the National Council of Churches, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, and others. Our own Executive Minister Larry Greenfield contributed to the discussion in response to the communication from Jewish colleagues. Thomas A. Baima, a priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago and provost of the University of St. Mary of the Lake / Mundelein Seminary, also wrote comments. A substantial portion of the CRLMC correspondence appears below.

CHICAGO BOARD OF RABBIS

July 20, 2006

To: Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago

Dear Colleagues and Friends:

Once again, the Israeli- Palestinian conflict has erupted into large-scale violence. All of us agonize over media images of the dead and wounded, too many of them civilians. Because the Palestinian and Lebanese casualty figures are inevitably greater than those suffered by Israel, there is a tendency among some observers to conceptualize the conflict as the Arab David vs. Jewish Goliath, placing an unfair burden of blame on Israel. This has caused inter-communal tensions between Christians and Jews in recent years.

It is the sacred responsibility of religious leaders to speak out in the face of violence. We are writing colleague-to-colleague in the hope that you will keep in mind some basic facts about how this round of hostilities began, who started it, who is sponsoring Hamas and Hezbollah, and for what purpose? No evaluation of the situation can be fair unless it is grounded in these realities.

We are especially sensitive to concerns regarding proportionality or collective punishment. After all, it was Abraham, the first Jew, who challenged God's justice in "sweeping the innocent away with the guilty." Does the search for three kidnapped soldiers justify Israel's aerial operations and its use of heavy armor and artillery? Why not negotiate a prisoner exchange? Because these questions [are] the focus of debate among Jews in Israel and throughout the world, we understand how non-Jews who support Israel's right to defend itself (*jus ad bellem*) might oppose the way in which the operation is being conducted (*jus in bello*). In this regard, we ask that you remember that proportionality is calculated not by the event, but by the threat. In the present instance, the menace facing Israel is larger than the specter of three captured soldiers. Israel is confronting a regional threat, which begins with Iran, Syria and their proxy, Hezbollah, and stretches to the radical Islamic Palestinian group Hamas. We endeavor to demonstrate this in the attached material.

The four of us writing this letter cannot be characterized as "hawks." One was primary drafter of the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago's letter urging President Bush not to invade Iraq. We are unanimous in advocating mutual concessions through diplomatic negotiations as the pathway to peace. But we also appreciate that the exigencies of real-life situations must be considered when applying theoretical constructs. This letter, with its attachment, is intended to initiate a conversation, not end it. We are eager to receive your response, in any way you choose to send it. At day's end, all of us are committed to peace. Let us not allow our differing visions of how peace can be achieved impede our mutual efforts in pursuit of a goal mandated by the God of all humankind.

L'Shalom,

Rabbi Victor Mirelman Rabbi Vernon Kurtz
President, Chicago Board of Rabbis
Past President, Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago

Rabbi Herman Schaalman
Rabbi Ira Youdovin
Past President, Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago

P.S. We would appreciate your disseminating this communication to your denominational colleagues.

Attachment

THE CURRENT ISRAEL-PALESTINIAN-LEBANESE CONFLICT: THE VIEWS OF FOUR CHICAGO RABBIS

1. Who Started It?

On June 25, Hamas operatives tunneled from Gaza into Israel, where they killed two Israeli soldiers and kidnapped a third, demanding that Israel free more than nine hundred Palestinian prisoners, many of them being held for violent crimes. Two weeks later, Hezbollah forces crossed the international border from southern Lebanon to support Hamas' demand. They killed eight Israeli soldiers, and took two others hostage. Neither attack was provoked.

In the past, some Christian leaders have tempered their criticism of Palestinian violence by casting it as the understandable response of an otherwise helpless people living under occupation. The current situation reveals serious flaws in this analysis. Israel withdrew from southern Lebanon in 2000, and from Gaza in 2005. There is no Israeli presence in either locale. Moreover, the Israeli government has announced plans to disengage from most of the West Bank, either through negotiations or unilaterally should the Hamas government persist in refusing to recognize Israel.

Rather than being a consequence of Israeli occupation, the present situation is a direct result of Israel having withdrawn from Arab lands, leaving Palestinian terrorist groups free to train operatives, manufacture weapons, and launch actions inside Israel.

2. Background

From the late 1970's until 2000, Israel maintained a 3-5 mile wide security zone inside Lebanon, to prevent Palestinian terrorists from shelling Israeli towns and crossing the border to attack civilians, many of them women and children. Periodic attempts at replacing Israeli troops with an international force failed. A contingent of U.S. marines positioned there in 1982 was withdrawn after 241 of them were killed in their barracks by a Palestinian suicide bomber. The United Nations force (UNFIL) is chronically undermanned and ineffective. When Israel withdrew six years ago, Hezbollah moved swiftly to establish a state-within-a-state in southern Lebanon backed by Iran and Syria. The Lebanese government has done nothing to implement a 2004 U.N. Security Council resolution (#1559) calling upon it to disarm Hezbollah and take control of southern Lebanon.

Israel's disengagement from Gaza last summer was intended to give the Palestinians an opportunity to prove their ability to build a self-governing Palestinian society prepared to live in peaceful co-existence with its Jewish neighbor. A Palestinian success would strengthen Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's case for placing most of the West Bank under Palestinian sovereignty, thus opening the door for full Palestinian statehood.

What actually ensued was catastrophic. Shortly after Israel departed, a virtual civil war erupted between Fatah (Yassir Arafat's party which controlled the Palestinian Authority) and Hamas. Lawlessness prevailed in the streets. An already fragile economy crumbled. The PA was unwilling and/or unable to prevent terrorists from firing missiles at towns inside Israel. Then, the Palestinians overwhelmingly elected a Hamas government, which is committed to annihilating the Jewish state, and which openly praises suicide bombings.

3. Conduct of the Operation

Negotiating with terrorists is rarely productive. If Hamas and Hezbollah can win the release of hardened criminals by kidnapping three soldiers, why not kidnap three more and demand further concessions? Nevertheless, the Israeli government has sent semi-veiled signals of its willingness to consider concessions *after* the three soldiers are returned. This is diplomatic code for agreeing to release some of the prisoners at a time when it can be done away from the glare of publicity. Thus far, the terrorists have refused.

Moreover, it is critical to understand that rescuing three soldiers, while Israel's primary objective, is not its only one. From the time Israel entered the Oslo negotiations more than a decade ago, its territorial policy has been rooted in the principle that peace with the Palestinians is impossible without a near-total Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza. Formal and informal proposals by four successive governments make it clear that Israel intends to keep less than 10 percent of the West Bank and none of Gaza. Additionally, Israel has offered to cede to the new Palestinian state an equal amount of land either in heavily Palestinian areas of the Galilee, or in the Negev. Success of this policy, or any policy that presumes a two-state solution, rests on Palestinian willingness to establish peaceful relations with Israel.

Hamas and Hezbollah make no secret of their disdain for a two-state solution. When they talk of "ending the occupation," they mean the West Bank, Gaza and *all* of Israel, which they regard as Islamic land occupied by Jews. Opinion polls indicate that a substantial majority of the Palestinians are willing to accept a two-state solution. But this sentiment is irrelevant so long as actual policy is dictated by rejectionists for whom terror is their primary tool of "statecraft." So long as an intransigent Hamas rules in Gaza, and Hezbollah is free to operate in southern Lebanon, there can be no progress toward a negotiated peace. Without substantial changes in

the Palestinian political landscape, could any responsible government withdraw from the West Bank---from which even primitive rockets can reach Jerusalem and Tel Aviv?

Israel has legitimate reasons for seeking to break, or at least seriously weaken, the terrorists' stranglehold on what remains of the peace process. Unlike in the past, its strategy for pursuing this goal does not entail occupation in any form. As Israeli Council General Baruch Binah told a noontime rally in The Loop earlier this week: "They say they want us out of Gaza and Lebanon. We were out, but they sucked us back in. If they want us to leave again, return the captives, stop hurling rockets and they won't see us anymore."

Amal Saad Ghorayeb, a professor of political science at Lebanese American University, characterizes Hezbollah and its operatives as "being driven by a jihadi ideology and a sacrificial theology, and they don't give a damn about the consequences." The only approach to defeating this blood-thirsty fanaticism, other than another extended military presence, are short-term, but large-scale, military operations, some of them targeting infrastructure. Israel has been careful to drop leaflets warning civilians in southern Beirut and southern Lebanon where it knows that Hezbollah keeps stores of rockets and launchers in apartment houses, garages and homes. Nevertheless, innocents are killed and wounded, their peril intensified by the terrorists' strategy of positioning themselves in densely populated areas, using women and children as shields, or as fodder for their public relations campaign. This cynical policy violates international law and the canons of human decency.

4. What's at Stake for Humankind?

It is no longer accurate to describe the conflict as pitting Israelis against Palestinians. As columnist David Brooks wrote in the New York Times, "Iran has conducted a semi-hostile takeover of what used to be known as the Arab-Israeli dispute." Hezbollah, which receives \$200-\$300 million annually from Teheran, is Iran's proxy in its pursuit of regional hegemony, and Syria's in its drive to remain a major player in Lebanon after its forced withdrawal last year in the wake of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri's assassination. "It has become the essential instrument of Syrian maneuvers to prevent the Lebanese state from adapting to its newfound independence," according to Waddah Sharara, a sociology professor at the Lebanese University. Nor is the conflict east vs. west, or Judeo/Christianity vs. Islam. Criticism of Israel from most of the Arab/Islamic world has been muted. Saudi Arabia went so far as to condemn Hezbollah's actions as "uncalculated adventures."

5. Conclusion

Like you, the authors of this communication abhor the carnage, and pray that it ends as quickly as possible. Talk of establishing a new multi-national force is encouraging, but only if its mandate has teeth. Otherwise, the terrorists will regroup, re-arm and prepare to ignite another round of violence. Arab and Muslim pressure on Iran and Syria could be exceedingly helpful, as they are the patrons of terrorism.

For the moment, however, as unsettling as the thought may be to all of us, short-term violence may be the most effective way of pursuing peace. Israel is not attempting to beat the Palestinians and Lebanese into submission. The violence is aimed at defeating the terrorist organizations in order to create a window of opportunity for other Palestinian, Arab and Muslim voices to be heard.

Message to the Council of Religious Leaders of Metro Chicago from Kareem Irfan Concerning Destructive Violence in Lebanon

Respected friends and honored leaders on the Council:

These troubled times call upon the Council's religious leaders and representatives of faith communities to seriously reflect upon the incredible violence and humanitarian devastation in Lebanon. Our faiths will undoubtedly drive us to serious introspection and, God-willing, some

action commensurate with the CRLMC's credibility and moral responsibility. I am sure you are well informed on this sensitive issue; however, as a guide for our deliberations, I am including the following material pertaining to this conflict: Statements from two respected religious bodies (the National Council of Churches & , and the US Conference of Catholic Bishops); an inspiring call for saving lives from Rabbi Waskow; a recent statement from the Islamic Society of North America;; and a report in today's Chicago Tribune.

I have confidence that the collective wisdom and faith on the CRLMC will guide us to necessary action. May the Lord inspire us to the Truth and embolden us to act Justly upon what is Right (Amen).

With greetings of peace - Your friend in faith
Kareem M. Irfan.

**A Statement of the National Council of Churches USA and Church World Service
on the Current Violence in the Middle East**

July 14, 2006

“As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, ‘If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace!’” (Luke 19: 41-42a, NRSV)

Jesus' lament echoes over the landscape of the Middle East, and in the hearts of men and women everywhere, as we witness the senseless violence engulfing the region. Is there ever to be an end to violence in the land we call holy? What has violence solved these last 60 years? What has violence solved these past weeks?

Any hope for peace, itself a miracle in the midst of occupation, was stifled with Israel's missile strike on Gaza and the death of innocent Palestinians. Any chance of reconciliation was hindered by the retributive attacks and kidnapping of an Israeli soldier by Hamas. Any call for restraint was ignored with disproportionate retaliations by Israel. Any plea for reason was cast aside with the capture of two more Israeli soldiers by Hezbollah. Any prayer for an end to this escalation of hostilities was silenced with the Israeli incursions into Lebanon, the subsequent shelling of Haifa and Beirut, and the death of more and more civilians.

We hear Jesus' lament in the cries of the Israelis, Palestinians, and Lebanese, the Christians, Jews, Muslims, and others whose lives are threatened by this unending violence. Where can this cycle of vengeance, retribution and violence lead?

When will all Israeli leaders see that aggression only breeds more aggression, and that security cannot be achieved through the oppression and humiliation of others? When will all Palestinian leaders understand that calls for justice demand the doing of justice, and that suffering injustice does not confer moral license to respond with violence? When will the United States see that being an honest, effective broker for peace requires fairness in our dealings with both the Israelis and the Palestinians, and now the Lebanese, and that doing nothing to end the violence costs us dearly in spirit, blood, treasure, and moral integrity?

The National Council of Churches USA and Church World Service

Call upon our own government and all governments, recognizing the success of former peace initiatives, to encourage aggrieved parties to engage in earnest negotiation, and through the United Nations to work with all concerned parties to address immediate humanitarian needs and to resolve the long-term issues underlying the continued violence;

Call upon all parties in the Middle East to end the current hostilities, to develop non-violent strategies for engagement, and to work toward a just and sustainable settlement of the issues that plague the region;

Call upon the religious communities of the region to pray, teach and lead their people in the ways of peace, and upon religious communities throughout the world to walk with them in solidarity until peace is achieved; and,

Call upon its member communions to pray for all those who have suffered and died as a result of this violence, and their families and communities, and to engage in humanitarian and advocacy actions for peace.

We issue this statement remembering the words of Jesus Christ: "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Matthew 26:52, NRSV). > NCC News contacts: Rev. Dan Webster, 212.870.2252;

Rev. Leslie Tune, 202.544.2350, ltune@nccusa.org

U.S. Bishops Call For Ceasefire and an End to the Cycle of Violence in the Middle East; Urge Greater Leadership from United States to Secure Peace

WASHINGTON (July 18, 2006) The chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' international policy committee said in a statement today that provocative acts of violence by extreme factions of Hamas and Hezbollah, along with disproportionate military responses from Israel, undermine efforts to create a just two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and endanger the vulnerable democracy in Lebanon.

"Once again the land that is holy to Jewish, Christian and Muslim believers is wracked by violence and fear," said Bishops Thomas G. Wenski of Orlando, (FL) "The tragic and terrifying cycle of provocation and response, of occupation and resistance, has erupted in another spasm of deadly violence. This cycle must be broken, especially before it continues to expand into a broader and deadlier conflict. The violence must stop and a ceasefire must be secured."

"The conflicts in the Holy Land and Lebanon are distinct, but they bear some fearful similarities. In both cases there were violent and provocative cross-border attacks on Israeli military personnel. The extreme armed factions of Hamas and Hezbollah, and their supporters, including Syria and Iran, bear grave responsibilities. It seems clear that these acts were intended to damage prospects for negotiation and to provoke strong responses that further weaken the chances for dialogue, agreement and progress."

While the U.S. bishops recognize the Palestinians' "harsh realities of occupation and the yearning for a viable state of their own," Bishop Wenski said, he stressed that attacks against innocent civilians "violate the principle of civilian immunity and undermine the possibility of a negotiated resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As strong friends of the people of Israel, we share their frustration and anger at the provocative attacks. It is long past time for all Palestinian leaders, including Hamas, to reject violence and terror and to act in ways that will lead to the establishment of a viable state for the Palestinian people living side-by-side in peace with a secure Israel." He also called for Hezbollah to "renounce violence, recognize Israel and respect its security."

Israel has a right to defend itself, Bishops [sic] Wenski said, but support cannot be given to "sweeping counterattacks on civilian areas, civilian infrastructure, blockades and other acts of war in Gaza and Lebanon. Punishment of an entire population for the indefensible acts of extreme armed factions is wrong and causes unjustified harm to noncombatants. Such actions are also counterproductive because they deepen hostilities and widen the circle of violence. Israel must act with restraint. Otherwise we fear that Israel could isolate itself, undermine its long-term

security interests and play into the hands of extremists who seek a wider confrontation and an unending battle with Israel.”

Bishop Wenski also said a secure and democratic Lebanon is in the best interest of everyone in the region. “As steadfast friends of the Lebanese people, we believe that Lebanon, as the late Pope John Paul II said, should be ‘a model’ for people of different faiths living together in peace. The current conflict puts at risk the progress that has been made to free Lebanon from outside domination and from being used as a pawn in a larger struggle. Our Conference is deeply disturbed by the provocative acts of Hezbollah against Israel that precipitated the current crisis and provoked the disproportionate Israeli military responses. Both the initial act and the resulting reactions endanger the Lebanese people and their vulnerable democracy.”

Bishop Wenski further urged for more participation from the United States to help end the conflicts. “Our Conference calls upon the United States to exert greater leadership with all parties to the conflicts and to work more intensively and multilaterally to end the provocations and violence, to secure a ceasefire, to restrain Israel, to move toward negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians to bring about security for Israel and a viable state for the Palestinians, and to ensure the independence of Lebanon.”

The complete statement from Bishop Wenski follows.

**Break the Cycle of Violence in the Holy Land
A Statement of Bishop Thomas G. Wenski
Bishop of Orlando
Chairman, USCCB Committee on International Policy**

Once again the land that is holy to Jewish, Christian and Muslim believers is wracked by violence and fear. The tragic and terrifying cycle of provocation and response, of occupation and resistance, has erupted in another spasm of deadly violence. The cycle must be broken, especially before it continues to expand into a broader and deadlier conflict. The violence must stop and a ceasefire must be secured.

The conflicts in the Holy Land and Lebanon are distinct, but they bear some fearful similarities. In both cases there were violent and provocative cross-border attacks on Israeli military personnel. The extreme armed factions of Hamas and Hezbollah, and their supporters, including Syria and Iran, bear grave responsibilities. It seems clear that these acts were intended to damage prospects for negotiation and to provoke strong responses that further weaken the chances for dialogue, agreement and progress. These attacks provoked Israeli military responses that are understandable in terms of the right to defense, but are disproportionate and indiscriminate in some instances.

As committed friends of the Palestinian people, we understand the harsh realities of occupation and the yearning for a viable state of their own but we cannot support rocket barrages and suicide bombings against innocent Israeli civilians and cross-border attacks and abductions. Such actions violate the principle of civilian immunity and undermine the possibility of a negotiated resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

As strong friends of the people of Israel, we share their frustration and anger at the provocative attacks. It is long past time for all Palestinian leaders, including Hamas, to reject violence and terror and to act in ways that will lead to the establishment of a viable state for the Palestinian people living side-by-side in peace with a secure Israel. It is also long past time for all state and non-state actors in the region, including Hezbollah, to renounce violence, recognize Israel and respect its security.

Israel has a right to defend itself, but we cannot support its sweeping counterattacks on civilian areas, civilian infrastructure, blockades and other acts of war in Gaza and Lebanon. Punishment

of an entire population for the indefensible acts of extreme armed factions is wrong and causes unjustified harm to noncombatants. Such actions are also counterproductive because they deepen hostilities and widen the circle of violence. Israel must act with restraint. Otherwise we fear that Israel could isolate itself, undermine its long-term security interests and play into the hands of extremists who seek a wider confrontation and an unending battle with Israel.

As steadfast friends of the Lebanese people, we believe that Lebanon, as the late Pope John Paul II said, should be "œa model" for people of different faiths living together in peace. The current conflict puts at risk the progress that has been made to free Lebanon from outside domination and from being used as a pawn in a larger struggle. Our Conference is deeply disturbed by the provocative acts of Hezbollah against Israel that precipitated the current crisis and provoked the disproportionate Israeli military responses. Both the initial act and the resulting reactions endanger the Lebanese people and their vulnerable democracy. As our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, recently said: "Neither terrorist acts nor reprisals, especially when they entail tragic consequences for the civilian population, can be justified."

Our Conference calls upon the United States to exert greater leadership with all parties to the conflicts and to work more intensively and multilaterally to end the provocations and violence, to secure a ceasefire, to restrain Israel, to move toward negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians to bring about security for Israel and a viable state for the Palestinians, and to ensure the independence of Lebanon.

The recurrent cycles of deadly violence endanger the stability of Lebanon and undermine those brave people on both sides who seek a just two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The sadly recurring and predictable cycles of violent provocation by extremist elements and some disproportionate responses not only take human lives, but they damage the hopes of Israelis for security, of Palestinians for a viable and free state, and of Lebanese for a future of peace, true independence and prosperity.

Our Conference appeals to all leaders in the region and to the leaders of our nation to make it clear that violence, from whatever side, for whatever purpose, cannot bring a lasting or just peace in the Land we call Holy. We join our prayers with those of our Holy Father who said about the current crisis: "Let us pray to Mary, Queen of Peace, to implore from God the fundamental gift of concord, bringing political leaders back to the path of reason, and opening new possibilities of dialogue and agreement."

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SAVING LIVES IS OUR HIGHEST DUTY
(A statement from Rabbi Arthur Waskow of the Shalom Center)

Dear Friends,

We are taught: saving lives (in Hebrew, "*pekuakh nefesh*") is the highest duty. This war is killing people now. And the rage it creates will kill more people later. This war marks not only a crisis in the future of Israel, Lebanon, and Palestine, but also a crisis in the moral universe of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

There is a teaching in the Talmud: "If someone comes to kill you, kill him first." Then the Talmud continues: "But if you can prevent his killing you by wounding him rather than killing him, and nevertheless you kill him, you become a murderer."

Violence in self-defense, the rabbis are teaching, is legitimate—perhaps even required. But only self-defense that uses the smallest degree of force that would stop an attack.

This is wisdom for Jews and for the Jewish state, but not only for Jews. Something like it arises in all religious traditions that do not prohibit the use of violence altogether, even in self-defense. So we all face today the question whether the present government of Israel and the present leadership of Hezbollah are following this precept.

I think not. I think the attacks on Lebanese infrastructure far from the Israeli-Lebanese border, like those on the civilian infrastructure of Gaza just a few weeks ago, are going far over the line of legitimate self-defense.

And I think the rocket attacks by Hezbollah against Haifa and many other Israeli towns, as well as the original attack across the international frontier, also go far over the line of any conceivable "self-defense."

These attacks are killing scores and hundreds of civilians, including children.

What can we do?

The warring governments and nations are too full of fear and rage to stop on their own. Only UN intervention with a strong peacekeeping force on the border can end these deadly attacks and prevent future ones. Can protect BOTH Israelis and Lebanese. Only US support can get the UN to act. So far, the US is holding back—while scores of Israelis and hundreds of Lebanese die.

I urge you to speak out in private and in public to urge the US government to act NOW, not weeks from now, to insert a UN force on the border and insist on a cease-fire by both sides. Many lives are at stake.

That should be followed by an Emergency International Conference for Peace in the Middle East, aimed at universal agreement by all warring parties in the Middle East on peace treaties that protect Israel and a viable new Palestinian state.

Lives are at stake. In God's Name and for God's sake, please act now!

With blessings of shalom, salaam, paix, peace

Arthur

Islamic Society of North America Statement Regarding the Crisis in Lebanon

(Plainfield, IN - 7/16/06) - The Islamic Society of North America is deeply concerned about the escalation of violence in the Middle East, and urges the US administration to act as a neutral broker in the conflict. The United States cannot continue to extend unconditional support for Israel, especially when they are committing illegal and immoral violent acts of collective punishment upon the people of Gaza and the sovereign nation of Lebanon. The American nation needs to take the lead in upholding international law in times of conflict. In the context of international terrorism, the United States has been especially concerned to convince nations and groups that targeting civilians to achieve political or strategic goals is a violation of morality and law. The United States must consider its own security to be paramount, and expressed support for Israeli attacks on civilian targets in this conflict destroys American credibility in the defense against terrorism.

We call upon President Bush to denounce Israel's excessive and disproportionate use of force against the people of Lebanon that has left scores of civilians dead or wounded, and has targeted the most vital infrastructure, including the airport, roads, ports, and bridges, rendering the

Lebanese people virtual prisoners in their own country. ISNA joins other Muslims and faith groups in calling for immediate, balanced, and decisive leadership from our administration in helping to resolve this current crisis between the Palestinians, Israel and Lebanon, and to work for a comprehensive cease fire.

On a moral and even legal level, it is unconscionable and unethical, as well as a violation of the Geneva Convention that an entire population be punished through actions such as cutting off electricity or food, while holding them prisoner by cutting off access to borders or travel. This immoral policy which began in Gaza has now been extended to a sovereign nation, in an attack that began by targeting the very symbol of that sovereignty, the airport. Israel has openly and brazenly stated its intent to turn Lebanon - an ally whom we were recently defending against Syrian intervention - back twenty years. Innocent civilians have been the main victims of this *blitzkrieg*, and an entire population of the people Lebanon now join the people of Gaza in being subjected to collective punishment for the actions of a few.

The Palestinian struggle for dignity and independence and the Israeli struggle for security is long-standing and will never be resolved by force. Over the last few decades, thousands of people, Arab Christians and Muslims in Lebanon and Palestine and Israeli Jews have been harmed or killed in violent conflict. The death of more people will not further the cause of peace and security.

If there is any hope for resolving this crisis and working to achieve an effective cease fire, and preventing the spread of this conflict which could lead to an all out regional war, it must be done quickly, and with fairness to all parties. All troops must be brought back into their own territories and halt all attacks upon their neighbors. All captives of this recent conflict should be returned unharmed. Every effort should be made to restore normal living conditions to affected civilian populations. The world cannot afford an all-out war in the Middle East and so we must join together for an all-out effort for peace.

Chicago Muslims, Members of the Lebanese Community, Speak Out

By Margaret Ramirez

Tribune religion reporter

Published July 20, 2006, 3:40 PM

With a mix of emotions ranging from worry to rage, Chicago's Muslim leaders joined members of the Lebanese community to speak about the violence in their homeland and called on the United States to halt the violence.

Christina Abraham, a De Paul University law student, described frantic phone conversations with her family in Lebanon. She said Israeli forces bombed the predominately Christian neighborhood of Ashrafiya, where her aunt and cousins live. She said her cousins were trapped for days in an underground bomb shelter, unsure if they would survive the battle raging between Israel and Hezbollah.

"To kill hundreds of civilians for the sake of two captured Israeli soldiers--who are still alive--is to desecrate the sanctity of human life," said Abraham, 25, who is also civil rights coordinator for the Council on American-Islamic Relations in Chicago. "Israel justifies this attack by saying they are targeting Hezbollah. But the Beirut airport is not Hezbollah. The medical supply trucks are not Hezbollah. The children that are dying are not Hezbollah."

Abraham spoke at a press conference at Chicago's Downtown Islamic Center organized by CAIR. As the conflict in Lebanon continues, Muslim community leaders in Chicago said many Lebanese Americans are feeling disappointed and betrayed by the U.S. failure to call a cease-fire.

Ahmed Rehab, executive director of the CAIR chapter in Chicago, said U.S. actions give the impression the administration uses a double standard for Arab-Americans.

"The unwillingness to call for a cease-fire gives the impression that the administration places less value on the lives of American citizens of Arab descent and are therefore not worthy of protection from Israeli state terrorism. The administration should have one standard regarding the value of life and one definition of terrorism," Rehab said.

According to the Association of Religion Data Archives, about 60 percent of Lebanon's religious population is Muslim and 37 percent is Christian. The remaining communities belong to the Jewish and Bahai faiths. There are approximately 25,000 U.S. citizens in Lebanon, most of them of Arab or Muslim descent.

Chicago's Muslim and Arab communities plan to rally in support of Lebanon and Palestine Saturday at noon in front of the Tribune Tower at 435 N. Michigan Ave.

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**Response from Rev. Dr. Larry L. Greenfield
Executive Minister, American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago**

July 22, '06

TO: Jewish Colleagues
FROM: Larry Greenfield, American Baptist Church of Metro Chicago
RE: Your Communication on the War in Lebanon, Israel, and Gaza

Thank you for sharing your collective and, I am given to assume, uniform views on the violence occurring in Lebanon, Israel, and Gaza. Furthermore, I am grateful for your invitation for others of us to respond and to use this as an occasion for the most serious kind of conversation.

The statement of "views" provides me, at least, some contextual understanding of why I find myself in such thorough disagreement with you about how to interpret the current conflict. If I am reading you correctly, you contend that over a long history, but especially in recent years, Israel has been essentially faultless, which means, in turn, that responsibility for the continuing discord and violence rests completely with the Palestinians, in whole or in part.

I, in turn, while certainly not finding those involved in the Palestinian cause to be faultless, believe Israel and, I believe it is crucial to add, the United States to bear a major share of responsibility for the conditions we have faced and now face even more severely. I am especially critical of my own government, particularly under this administration, for what it has allowed to develop in the wider Middle East, including the implications this has for what is occurring in Lebanon, Israel, and Gaza. I think it is abundantly clear that our war of choice in Iraq and our disastrous approach toward Iran and Syria are connected to what we are experiencing on the western border of the Mediterranean. Similarly, our uniformly uncritical support for Israel has made us even more a powerless agent for peace in the region.

I won't here detail here how greatly I sense we differ on this broader contextual history of Middle East. I simply want to note that I think the wide differences on those matters contribute to our disagreement on the current situation.

But even limiting ourselves to what has occurred in the recent days there are differences. If we ask the question, "who started it?" don't we at least have to acknowledge whom Hamas was seeking to free from Israeli prisons--that is, that they were seeking the release of some of the 900 women and children (some of whom, I readily acknowledge, might have engaged in "terrorist" activities) out of approximately 9,000 Palestinians being held in, for all practical purposes, the only way available to them? And are we to believe that Israel has not engaged in the kidnapping of Palestinians to achieve its ends, both before and subsequent to the current conflict? I have

very little sympathy and much criticism for what Hezbollah does militarily (although I find their humanitarian work to be highly commendable), and I am certainly not uncritical of Hamas, but can we honestly say of their recent actions were unprovoked?

I think the growing international response to Israel's bombardment of an essentially powerless Lebanon in such a disproportionate way speaks for itself. And that surely goes for the suffering and death of innocent civilians as well. Are we to believe that there were absolutely no alternatives to immobilizing Hezbollah by massive bombing, resulting in massive physical destruction and massive loss of civilian life, in an essentially defenseless Lebanon? How far does the argument for self-defense, if that is truly what it is, extend when it requires the extinction of innocents--hundreds of them--and the suffering of still more innocents--thousands of them? Are the traditional arguments for just war now to be put aside because, as the Bush administration has argued on other fronts related to terrorism, the conditions have changed?

I am willing to engage in that argument and ready to be persuaded if the case can be made, but I will not accept it without argument.

What I find equally disturbing in the presentation of your "views" is the absence of anything approaching self-criticism or criticism directed at the State of Israel or the United States. But maybe the four writers of the statement were in complete accord that no such criticism, however slight, was either necessary or appropriate.

For myself, as you can tell from the above, I am highly critical of my own United States government in matters related to the Middle East. These criticism are not limited to the current administration; I was highly disappointed with the Clinton administration as well, although not nearly as is the case with the current leadership. And I hope I remain sufficiently self-critical of my own positions and "views" so that I can benefit from those with whom I seem to differ. On that front, again, I appreciate your sharing the "views" that you have presented and what they have contributed to my understanding. I hope there will be occasions for us to engage in efforts to achieve mutual understanding that, in turn, leads to a more peaceful world.

Larry Greenfield

**Communication from Rev. Thomas A. Baima
to the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago**

THE REVEREND THOMAS A. BAIMA

July 22, 2006

TO THE COUNCIL OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO

Dear Colleagues:

In recent days we have all received communications from a number of our past-presidents and other current members regarding the troubling situation in the Middle East. I am not writing to you to comment on or endorse any of the statements by other members of the Council. Each of us is capable of evaluating the arguments presented. Rather, I simply wish to add my own reflections to the developing conversation.

Each of us has a different relationship to the Middle East. For me, it is inseparable from my being a Christian, a priest, and a member of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. As a Christian, the Middle East is "the Holy Land." It is the place of the events which my religion understands as the actions of God in human history. Believing as I do that God became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, Christianity is inseparable from the place and time of that event, as well as the history of God's providence before and after it. As a priest, my very identity is linked to an upper room in

ancient Jerusalem, where Christ instituted the Eucharist, which not only daily joins me to Him and to my coreligionists throughout the world, but in a real way to the Cenacle, to Calvary and to the Sepulchre from which Christianity was born.

My membership in the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, also affects my experience of the current situation, though certainly to a lesser degree than my Christian or priestly identity. The Order of the Holy Sepulchre understands its present mission to be one > of praying and working to bring peace and tranquility, love and justice to the Holy Land. In a > particular way, the order is charged to support the local Christian community, not the shrines but the "living stones" which make up the Church in the Latin Patriarchate, (an archdiocese which includes Israel, Jordan, Cyprus and the Palestinian Territories). As a chaplain to this order, I have been privileged to see how its members include in their personal spirituality a sense of solidarity with their fellow Christians in the Holy Land.

I believe each of us could describe in a similar way our personal identification with the Middle East. But this personal identification becomes a danger for us in the present moment if we will allow it to limit our response. It would be all too easy for me to say to myself, "I am in solidarity with the Christian community in the Middle East. I am, but my solidarity with Christians cannot be to the exclusion of solidarity with Jews and Muslims and indeed all people of good will. Peace, tranquility, love and justice are the goals of all the religions. In their best moments, the religions are the agents which bring about these goals.

I know that I can presume that all of you desire peace, tranquility, love and justice as outcomes for the Middle East. What I would suggest is that as religious leaders, our actions must correspond to the nature of these outcomes. At root these are not political or policy outcomes; they are religious outcomes. Consequently, I believe our involvement must be distinctly religious.

To that end, His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI has issued a communication from the Vatican calling on all of the Catholic dioceses to engage in prayer and penance this coming Sunday, July 23, 2006 for the precious gift of peace. Yesterday, the Archdiocese of Chicago faxed the Pope's call for prayer and penance to its 366 parishes with the added recommendation that these prayers continue into the coming week. The Order of the Holy Sepulchre sent a similar communication to its members. Both communications restated the words of the Pope that "the Lebanese have the right to see the integrity and sovereignty of their country respected, the Israelis the right to live in peace in their State, and the Palestinians have the right to have their own free and sovereign homeland."

Whatever else the Council may decide to do, our first response must be religious, and the most fundamental religious response is prayer. The Council does not need to gather, deliberate and reach consensus in order for the religious leaders who are its members to call their own communities to prayer. My recommendation is that each of us, to the full extent possible in our circumstances, call our fellow believers to prayer and penance, that God may bring peace, tranquility, love and justice to the Middle East.

Beyond this immediate response, however, I would also pose a question. What can we do together so that our solidarity, which is born of our own identification with our co-religionists in the Middle East, is not limited to solidarity with them alone? What can we do to witness together that the fellowship we have achieved as Christians, Jews and Muslims in Chicago is possible and desirable even and especially in the Middle East? While posed rhetorically here, I would welcome an actual conversation on these questions.

Sincerely yours,

The Rev. Thomas A. Baima
Past President
Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago

Afghani Religious and Political Leaders

Talk Church-State Separation with BJC's Walker

The Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty sent this article.

WASHINGTON—Traveling on a U.S. State Department-sponsored program, a member of parliament and three religious leaders from Afghanistan met with Baptist Joint Committee Executive Director J. Brent Walker for a conversation about religious liberty at the BJC's offices July 20.

The guests are participants in the U.S. State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program.

The visitors from Afghanistan, accompanied by two translators, will spend three weeks in the United States learning about the social, political and civic roles and responsibilities of religious leaders in a democratic society. Among the visitors were three Islamic religious leaders and a Member of the Wolasi Jarga (the House of the People of the bicameral National Assembly of Afghanistan).

The Afghani religious leaders were eager to learn about the separation of church and state in the U.S., and specifically the BJC's role in defending religious liberties for all. Walker shared a brief overview of Baptist beliefs as well as the mission and work of the BJC. During the meeting, the guests also shared some of their own experiences living as citizens in a country where 99 percent of the population is Muslim.

Culto Unido de las Iglesias Bautistas Hispanas de Metro Chicago

Culto unido de Las Iglesias Bautistas Hispanas de Metro Chicago

Fecha: sabado 9 de septiembre, 06

Lugar: Iglesia Bautista Misionera

Direccion: 6715 S Hamlin Ave Chicago, Il 60629 tel. 708/288-1351

Nota especial: en este culto unido estaremos celebrando el acto de instalacion del pastor de la Iglesia Misionera, José Nunez. La adoracion y la predicación estarán a cargo de la iglesia local y al final tendremos una cena.

Tanto la iglesia local como su nuevo pastor, el hno. Nunez esperan el apoyo de todos los pastores/as e iglesias hispanas para este importante culto de instalacion. Los esperamos.

Para mas información llame al pastor Almonte: 773/784-2479

Joint Worship Service of ABCMC's Hispanic Congregations

ABCMC's Hispanic congregations will gather for a joint worship service on Saturday, September 9 at Iglesia Bautista Misionera, 6715 S. Hamlin Avenue in Chicago. In this service we will celebrate the installation of José Nunez as pastor of Iglesia Bautista Misionera. The local church will be in charge of the worship and preaching. A dinner will follow. For more information, please phone ABCMC's Hispanic Coordinator, Omar Almonte, 773-784-2479.

Healthcare Sabbath

TO: ABCMC LEADERS
FROM: Larry Greenfield
RE: Healthcare Sabbath (September 17)

I write to encourage you to make plans now to observe **Healthcare Sabbath on, Sunday, September 17.**

American Baptists have a long history in health care ministries, with hospitals, clinics, chaplaincies, and policy advocacy.

And certainly there is an urgent need now for American Baptists, joining with other people of faith, to be involved in efforts to make quality and affordable health care available to everyone. (See the enclosed ABCUSA Policy Statement on Health Care.)

We are part of the Health Care Justice Faith Caucus, which is organizing the Healthcare Sabbath this September. A packet with excellent resources for worship, preaching, education, and advocacy is available.

If you would like to look through the materials available, I'll be happy to send them to you. Simply write, e-mail, or call the office and we'll get them to you.

I very much hope you will be willing to do this.

ABCUSA Resolution on Health Care for All

8193:11/91

AMERICAN BAPTIST RESOLUTION ON HEALTH CARE FOR ALL

Healing is a significant sign and metaphor of biblical faith. The prophets of the Old Testament and Jesus himself were healers. Physical well-being was valued for its own sake as well as a sign of hope for the day when everyone would share equally in the blessings of shalom.

Many of Jesus' miracles were miracles of healing. He touched and healed lepers, restored sight, caused the lame to walk and renewed the life of the woman who had suffered for years with a flow of blood. Christ's example (Mark 6:53-56) has inspired countless Christian health care workers including those serving as missionaries. Clearly, we have understood Jesus' concern for physical well-being as a commission to carry on that work of healing.

Today in the United States we have a health care system that is in crisis. Health care providers, health office workers, health support staff, insurers, and payers form a patchwork system without any coordination based on policy.

Health statistics tell an ugly story. At any given time about 35 million people in the U.S., one-seventh of the population, have no health care coverage. They are not covered by private insurance, employer-based insurance or government programs. Another 60 million people, including a large proportion of the elderly, do not have adequate coverage.

In the U.S. we pay more for health care than other industrialized nations and get less for our money. The Department of Health and Human Services estimates the total cost of health care in the U.S. in 1992 to exceed \$800 billion, 13% of the gross national product. These dollars and percentages are rising daily.

Many people do not have health insurance and therefore go without basic health care. They see physicians less often and die younger than those with insurance. Even people with apparently good health insurance coverage have hidden vulnerabilities when faced with paying for expensive medical conditions. Catastrophic accidents or chronic long-term needs can bankrupt a family.

Efforts at shifting costs among government agencies, private insurers, and individual payers drain enormous amounts of energy and attention, and create enormous additional bureaucratic and regulatory costs beyond the costs for the health care itself.

Powerful forces seek to preserve the status quo, but we as American Baptists, like many other citizens and public officials, believe that the time has come for significant change.

Three general approaches dominate the national debate on universal access to health care. One would merely seek to reform current health insurance programs. The second is an aggregate of proposals under the umbrella term, "managed competition." The third, the "single-payer" approach, is a publicly financed system based on taxes with benefits paid by the government and with services delivered by the government and with services provided by a mix of private and public providers, as Canada does. All have negatives as well as benefits.

In accordance with our 1975 Policy Statement on Health Care, we believe that health care should be viewed as a right, not a privilege, and that the basic goal for health care reform should be universal access to comprehensive benefits.

Therefore, as American Baptists, we urge the President and Congress to work together expeditiously to enact a major program of health care reform which will extend health care coverage to every person in the United States.

We seek a national health care system that:

- serves everyone in the United States
- provides comprehensive access, care, and services

- is sensitive to the needs and rights of health workers, patients, and their cultures
- promotes health awareness, disease prevention, nutrition, fitness, and safety
- slows the upward spiral of costs
- draws financial support from the broad base of the entire nation
- reduces unnecessary administrative costs
- reduces inappropriate medical procedures

Adopted by the General Board of the American Baptist Churches - June 1992

167 For, 0 Against, 4 Abstentions

Modified by the Executive Committee of the General Board - June 1993

Modified by the Executive Committee of the General Board - September 1994

Modified by the Executive Committee of the General Board - September 1998

(General Board Reference # - 8193:11/91)

Policy Base

Policy Statement on Health, Healing and Wholeness

- advocate for the availability of, access to, and funding for quality health care for all persons; and
- advocate for availability of, access to, and funding for quality health care for all persons; and
- advocate for legislative health care measures.

American Baptist Policy Statement on Health Care

As American Baptists we affirm and support programs, legislation, research and other formulations which help develop a new comprehensive health care delivery system which provides quality services for all people.

1. Make health care resources, private and public, available in keeping with the total needs of people, rather than on the basis of economic, geographic or racial factors;
3. Provide equitable health care for all residents of the U.S.A. by eliminating financial barriers

ABCUSA Policy Statement on Health Care

7018:11/75

AMERICAN BAPTIST POLICY STATEMENT ON HEALTH CARE

As American Baptists we affirm and support programs, legislation, research and other formulations which help develop a new comprehensive health care delivery system which provides quality services for all people.

Health is the harmonious integration of body, mind and spirit illustrated in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Health is experienced in holistic ways including individual and communal dimensions. It is seen in a perspective of totality and comprehensiveness which provides each person with the opportunity and the strength for self-expression and fulfillment.

Therefore, we support programs which:

1. Make health care resources, private and public, available in keeping with the total needs of people, rather than on the basis of economic, geographic or racial factors;
2. Direct health care resources toward the prevention of disease and the maintenance of health as well as toward the treatment of illness;
3. Provide equitable health care for all residents of the U.S.A. by eliminating financial barriers;
4. Provide professional education and training for medical, paraprofessional and ancillary specialties without regard to economic resources, race, gender, social class or marital status, provided that the students qualify in accordance with public standards and in numbers that meet the needs of the people of the United States;
5. Secure consumer control over medical health services through appropriate representation on boards, committees and agencies.

Adopted by the General Board of the American Baptist Churches -
November 1975
(General Board Reference # - 7018:11/75)

Healthcare Sabbath Speakers

Betsy Ritzman, Director of AIDS Pastoral Care Network, has let us know that she personally and her staff as well are available to do pulpit supply or guest preaching in observance of the Healthcare Sabbath. You can reach Betsy at 773.257.6770 or betsyritz@comcast.net.

Chuck Armstrong

A staff member at National Ministries, American Baptist Churches USA, Chuck Armstrong, had brain surgery today for an aggressive tumor. He had a similar surgery 15 months ago, and has had other serious medical difficulties over the years, including one which cost him a high percentage of his eyesight. The good news is that the surgery went well. Chuck is in recovery and is expected to be in the hospital through the weekend.

Chuck and his wife Cathy need our continued prayers. You may send your notes and cards of well-wishes and care to their home address:

640 American Avenue
Apt. E-514
King of Prussia PA 19406

News Summary for General Board 6/25/06

VALLEY FORGE, PA.—The General Board of American Baptist Churches USA ended its five-day June meeting here on Sunday after hearing reports on national and international ministries, affirming plans to improve the national body's short-term financial situation, and making provision for churches in the former Pacific Southwest region to remain American Baptist if they so desire.

Board members also were told that aid through the One Great Hour of Sharing for victims of the Asian tsunami and Hurricane Katrina has now topped \$6.3 million, an increase of nearly \$1 million since the board's last meeting in November. In addition, the denomination's World Relief Committee approved \$150,000 from its reserves to aid an international campaign for the relief of suffering in the war-torn Darfur region of Sudan.

World Relief Officer Lisa Rothenberger told the board the success of the disaster relief efforts opens the possibility of mobilizing aid for the underlying chronic needs revealed by the disasters. "The resources are there to help—if people choose to address these needs," she said. At a worship service Sunday, board members contributed more than \$3,270 to Baptist Children's Services of Philadelphia.

During their sessions, the board members heard reports on plans for the denomination's next Biennial Meeting, June 29-July 2, 2007, in Washington, D.C. At the same time, the ABCUSA will be celebrating the centennial of its founding, which took place at Calvary Baptist Church in Washington in 1907.

Biennial plans also include a joint worship service with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Lauren Bethell, ABCUSA missionary and internationally respected leader in the fight to save young women at risk in many countries, will be the speaker on the closing evening of the Biennial.

Speakers during the plenary sessions of the General Board focused on two of the denomination's seven "Key Ministry Areas," radical discipleship and youth. A contemporary reading of the Sermon on the Mount was presented by Dr. Glen H. Stassen, a professor of Christian ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif. A message on youth ministry was brought by Olivia Hill Goodwin, a new board member and former student president at Marshall University. Throughout the session, board members took part in "table discussions" on what they care most about in the denomination. The resulting lists will be forwarded to the denomination's General Executive Council, which is considering what "adaptive changes" will strengthen the church and its ministry in a time of rapid change and a continuing decline in mission contributions that support the national structure.

In affirming a 24-month plan to address short-term needs, the board endorsed a proposal to reduce board meetings from two to one each year, although an abbreviated General Board session will still be held this November in Orlando, Fla. By the same motion it also affirmed the General Board Executive Committee's request to explore ways to cut expenses and to obtain additional funds.

General Secretary A. Roy Medley led off the board meeting with a call for American Baptists, in a time of challenge, to safeguard “the stewardship of our common life.” He reiterated the seven Key Ministry Areas, which besides youth and radical discipleship include healthy missional churches, leadership, church planting, stewardship, and mutual faithfulness.

Dr. Medley reported on relations with the former Pacific Southwest region, which has voted to leave the denomination on Nov. 1, and has renamed itself Transformation Ministries. He noted that discussions have continued with the region about the logistics of separation, and that these have been conducted “in a spirit of not wanting to do each other any harm, in seeking to bless one another even in separation.”

The General Board passed an addition to the Standing Rules that allows former PSW churches that so desire to maintain individual “covenanting relationships” with ABCUSA for up to 24 months while they decide on whether to join another region or form a new American Baptist region. Associate General Secretary C. Jeff Woods said a new Association of American Baptists in the Pacific Southwest (ABPSW) is contemplated, with plans for an informational meeting this fall and an organizational meeting next spring.

In other business, the board approved a reduction in the sizes of its committees, and gave first reading to bylaws changes that would modify the method of delegate selection for the biennial and give chaplains and pastoral counselors “voice and vote” representation on the board. These changes will be due for a vote on final passage no later than June 2007. The board also approved setting the 2009 Biennial Meeting for June 25-29, 2009, in Pasadena, Calif.

A number of actions were taken in the sessions of the Board of National Ministries, which reported the commitment of more than \$2 million for Katrina relief, about half of that for housing and subsidized-mortgage programs sponsored by the ABC of Greater Indianapolis in Pass Christian, Miss., and by Habitat for Humanity in Jackson County, Miss. National Ministries also reported that six regions and a coalition of regions have enlisted in Future Search, a plan to advance the Children in Poverty Initiative of the ABC-USA. Other National Ministries actions included a call for divestiture in holdings of companies with direct business interests in Sudan, and the honoring of six churches for especially significant donations to America for Christ. The Board of International Ministries announced the appointment of two new missionaries, Scott and Tan Coats, to the Mekong River area of Southeast Asia. IM board members also discussed the board’s “Go Global” commitment to “work with and for children, youth, and women.” They viewed IM’s new video, “Living Hope for People in Prostitution.”

International Ministries Web Site Web Cast and News

International Ministries has now added its first webcast video to the IM website. If you go to www.internationalministries.org and click on the “Living Hope” logo in the center of the page (or the text just above it), you will see a small version of the ***Living Hope for People in Prostitution*** video. Or, just click here: <http://www.internationalministries.org/updates/LivingHopeVideo.htm>

In the very near future, we hope to be adding a series of 2-minute videos to the IM website, both in a webcast/low-resolution format and in a higher-resolution format that can be downloaded and projected in a church sanctuary. The series, ***God at Work***, currently includes 16 such videos, each of which focuses on God’s work through a particular missionary or missionary couple. All of these short videos will be included on the DVD that is mailed with the 2006 WMO packets (which we hope to be shipping at the very beginning of August). Twelve of the ***God at Work*** videos (those that feature Congo missionaries) will also be included on the Mbote! (Congo Study Guide) DVD that will become available in about 2 weeks.

Speaking of the IM website, if you hadn’t heard this already, the pages containing 2006 World Mission Offering materials are now up, also. All but one of the English pieces of the WMO packet

are already posted (www.internationalministries.org/wmo/2006/index.htm), and most of the Spanish materials are posted on the Spanish version of the pages (<http://www.internationalministries.org/wmo/2006/espanol.htm>).

Continuing Pastoral Education

At Virginia Theological Seminary (VTS) in Alexandria, Virginia, the Lifetime Theological Education department has just completed the first Summer Collegium residency, and they are preparing for the 2007 event. The theme of the 2007 Summer Collegium is Christian Education in the small church.

The Summer Collegium is an intensive, nine-day residential program for clergy and their spouses or partners in small churches of all Christian denominations. Experts in the area of small church ministry lead workshops on relevant topics, such as change and conflict, technology, finances, and spiritual resources, and participants enjoy some time in the nation's capital.

Included in the Summer Collegium is a one-day Small Church Religious Arts Festival on the grounds of the seminary, to hold up and celebrate the arts and crafts of small congregations.

The Summer Collegium is fully funded by a generous grant from the Lilly Endowment Inc., which allows VTS to offer the opportunity to 25 clergy each summer *at no cost to them*. This includes transportation, meals and lodging, books, pulpit supply and child care.

In 2006 VTS welcomed 25 pastors (including four who were locally ordained) and 21 spouses/partners – four of the participants were single – from nine denominations in the United States and Canada. The Summer Collegium had a faculty of 25, including two artists-in-residence and two chaplains, who helped participants focus on the uniqueness of small congregations and gave them new tools to do effective ministry. Participants and faculty were encouraged and enriched by their time.

At the end of August further information about the 2007 Summer Collegium, including some brochures to pass on to pastors who might be interested in applying will become available. VTS can only accept 25 clergy each summer, so be sure apply promptly.

For more information on the Summer Collegium, please visit www.vts.edu/education/collegium. You may email your questions to SummerCollegium@vts.edu, or call 703-461-1752. The Project Manager of the Summer Collegium is Marilyn Johns, D.Min.

Healthy Congregations Workshop

The Lombard Mennonite Peace Center (LMPC) will offer a "Healthy Congregations" workshop on September 22-23, 2006 in Glen Ellyn, IL.

With churches of all denominations experiencing **rising levels of anxiety**, the content of the workshop is highly relevant for all serving in leadership roles. LMPC wants to make all clergy and lay leaders aware of this valuable learning opportunity.

The Friday night and Saturday 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.

The workshop focuses on helping to foster healthy congregations. **Clergy cannot take on that task alone**; they need the support of wise and committed lay leaders. Pastors who work in isolation trying to implement ideas gleaned from the workshop will inevitably run into resistance. Pastors who have attended the workshop in the past with a group of lay leaders have found that they can depend on others to back them up in challenging the church to grow in health and wholeness. In order **to encourage teams of clergy and lay leaders to attend the workshop together**, you will find enclosed a discount coupon to be used when four or more people are attending from the same congregation.

Here are some comments from past attendees:

"I've attended a lot of workshops that were not the best use of time. This one was very, very valuable"

"It was a highly well-presented program with an incredible amount of useable information that can help both our church and ourselves towards a more effective ministry to each other and to our community."

"It was a great workshop to take a look at how to deal with anxiety within the congregation."

"It was very helpful to learn this systems approach."

"It was a great help to me. I would encourage church members and pastors to attend."

The pre-registration deadline is September 8. The registration brochure and group discount coupon are both available on the LMPC website (www.LMPeaceCenter.org).

Pre-Biennial Ministry Event

The Ministers Council, the Campus Ministers Association and International Ministries of American Baptist Churches invite you to "MINISTRY IN SUCH A TIME AS THIS," a Pre-Biennial event in DC on Friday, June 29, 2007, from 9 am until noon. The event is being designed to lead clergy in reflection on what it takes to be faithful and effective Church in such a time as this.

Speakers are Diana Butler Bass, who has just completed her work as Senior Research Fellow and Director of the Project on Congregations of Intentional Practice, a Lilly Endowment funded study of mainline Protestant vitality. She holds a Ph.D. in American religious history from Duke University and is the author of four critically acclaimed books. *The Practicing Congregation: Imagining a New Old Church* (Alban, 2004) has been featured in *The Christian Century* and *Sojourners Magazine*. *Broken We Kneel: Reflections on Faith and Citizenship* (Jossey-Bass, 2004) received enthusiastic praise and was excerpted in several publications. She will speak on learnings about practices that build communal vitality. You may access further information about her online at <http://www.practicingcongregations.org> and <http://www.trinitywallstreet.org/resources/?hce>.

Parush Parushav from Prague will also speak that day, bringing wisdom from other parts of the world on how to be Church in postmodernity. He will speak from learnings in a European context that inform our context, because in postmodernity everywhere the Church faces similar dynamics. More information on his background will be available soon.

We believe that their expertise as well as their hopeful, positive spirit will offer great insight and modeling for pastoral leaders of the American Baptist Churches and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

This event is groundbreaking in the bringing together of ABC and Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) pastoral leaders for a national event, as well as in the sponsorship by the professional society and ABC clergy, the body of campus ministers, and the international missions organization. We anticipate an attendance of perhaps 1,000 pastoral leaders, since the event will occur at the time of ABC and CBF national meetings.

Ministers Council News

Summer Gatherings

The Ministers Council of ABCMC will host gatherings of Professional Church Leaders (PCLs) and families in clusters by location of PCL residences. Phone President Doug Harris at North Shore Baptist Church, 773-728-4200, for more information.

Practicing Our Faith Grant

For the second time, the Ministers Council of Valley Forge has been awarded a \$10,000 Valparaiso Project Practicing Our Faith grant. The grant will fund a year-long program for national leaders on the faith practice of testimony. The series will be shaped around monthly luncheons for prayer, reading and conversation about experiences of God in daily life and how God strengthens for mission.

The Valley Forge Ministers Council convenes pastoral leaders called to positions of national denominational leadership and based in the Mission Center. The previous Valparaiso Project grant in the 2002 and 2003 program year funded monthly luncheon gatherings for leaders who manage numerous responsibilities and heavy travel schedules, on the faith practice of honoring the body.

The philosophy of practices opens the possibility of new ways of being through communal conversation and sharing of stories and struggles, alongside the wisdom of our faith. Further information is available at <http://www.practicingourfaith.org/>.

Ministers Council Dues

Ministers Council dues may be paid by sending a check to the treasurer, Rev. Dr. Sara Day, 3013 Wolf Road, #324, Westchester, IL 60154.

Dues are:

- \$45 for individuals
- \$60 for clergy couples
- \$22.50 for seminarians

Retired clergy membership is free for retirees who were dues-paying members of the Ministers Council for 3 out of the last 5 years prior to retirement.

Prayer Requests

See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you (1 Thessalonians 5:15-18, NRSV).

Please hold the ABCUSA and ABCMC families in prayer.

Pray for safety and strength in ministry for Dan and Sarah Chetti and their colleagues at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary and Beirut Baptist School.

Pray for the many victims of the bombing on both sides of the Lebanon-Israel border.

Pray that the nations of the world to act to bring an ending to the violence between Israel and Hezbollah.

Please hold in prayer the people of Lebanon and of Israel.

Please pray for Chuck Armstrong as he recovers from brain surgery, and for his wife Cathy, as well as for the medical and health care professionals caring for him.

Calendar

July 27-29—The Center for Parish Development's Missional Church Conference, at the Cenacle in Chicago. Visit www.missionalchurch.org/pages/seminars for more information and registration.

July 29—Family Cabinet meeting, 9 a.m., ABCMC office.

July 29-August 2—American Baptist Campus Ministers Association gathering at Green Lake Conference Center. For more information, visit www.nationalministries.org.

July 30—5th Sunday Unity Service—Celebrating Diversity, 6:30 p.m., Irving Park Baptist Church, 4401 W. Irving Park Road, Chicago. Joseph Atta-Fynn, pastor of ABCMC's new Sub-Saharan African congregation, will be speaker. "Taste of Africa" will take place following the service.

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

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

September 9—Culto unido de Las Iglesias Bautistas Hispanas de Metro Chicago, el sábado 9 de septiembre, 06, Iglesia Bautista Misionera, 6715 S Hamlin Ave Chicago, IL 60629 tel. 708/288-1351. Para mas información llame al pastor Almonte: 773/784-2479

September 17—Healthcare Sabbath

September 22-23—"Healthy Congregations" workshop, Lombard Mennonite Peace Center (LMPC), Glen Ellyn. Register by September 8.

November 10-11—ABCMC Annual Meeting.

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

December 7-9—"The Call to an Ancient Evangelical Future" conference, Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, Lombard, at the Lindner Conference Center. For cost and registration information go to www.growcenter.org.

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

June 29-July 2—ABCUSA Biennial Meeting and Centennial Celebration in Washington, D.C. The biennial's theme will be "Arise and Shine."

April 14-17, 2008—National Workshop on Christian Unity.

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 necessarily 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 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.