

Metro Chicago

eWind

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

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

October 1, 2008

O taste and see that the LORD is good;
happy are those who take refuge in God.
Psalm 34:8, NRSV

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ABCMC NEWS

Holy Spirit Renewal Weekend



SCHEDULE

HOLY SPIRIT RENEWAL WEEKEND

*All are welcome to attend all of the events at
North Shore Baptist Church, 5244 N. Lakewood, Chicago, at no cost.*

Friday, October 3

9:00 a.m.	Registration and Refreshments
9:15	Welcome and Introduction to the Day
9:30	“The Holy Spirit in the History of Christian Spirituality” The Rev. Dr. John Piippo
10:30	Break
10:45	“The Study of the Spirit Today” The Rev. Rony Reyes
11:15	“Leadership Keys for Opening the Doors of the Spirit in Your Congregation” The Rev. Clay Ford
12:30 p.m.	Lunch
1:00	“Tending the Spirit-Filled Life: The Personal Dimension” The Rev. Dr. John Piippo
2:00	“Tending the Spirit-Filled Life: The Ecclesial Dimension”
3:00	Break
3:15	Meditation and Mutual Ministry
4:00	Adjournment

Saturday

1:30 p.m.	Registration, Welcome, and Introduction to the Program
2:00	“Called to High Adventure: Living the Spirit-Filled Life” The Rev. Clay Ford
3:00	Break
3:15	“How the Holy Spirit Can Impact Your Church” The Rev. Dr. John Piippo
4:15	“How the Holy Spirit Can Impact our Region” The Rev. Keith Cerk and the Rev. Rony Reyes
5:00	Meditation and Mutual Ministry
5:30	Dinner
6:30	Worship in Music and Word: “Thy Kingdom Come”

ABCMC Annual Meeting

2008 Annual Meeting of the American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago
Disparity and Difference
New Testament Perspectives and Imperatives
November 8
Morgan Park Baptist Church
11024 S. Bell Avenue, Chicago
Email office@abcmc.org or phone 7730804-1655 with your attendance plans.

30th Year Anniversary Celebration of Cook County Jail Ministry

We are all invited to celebrate the 30th year of Cook County Jail Ministry in Fellowship Hall, First Baptist Church of Oak Park, 820 Ontario Street, Oak Park on Saturday, November 8 at 6 p.m.

The featured speaker will be Dr. William Goddard, who was instrumental in helping Rev. Andy Gonzalez begin the jail ministry. One of the fruits of this ministry, "Rocky" Vasquez, will share his testimony. The evening's program will also include the premier showing of the DVD telling the story of the Cook County Jail Ministry.

Tickets will be available at the door, an will cost \$15 for adults, \$5 for children under 12, and \$100 for a table of 8.

Plan now for a super evening that will substantially feed your soul.

Children's Sabbath

Children's Sabbath this year will be observed on the weekend of October 17-19. ABCMC congregations are encouraged to observe Children's Sabbath in their worship services on Sunday, October 19.

Excellent resources are available for use in observing Children's Sabbath. "When Will We Hear Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's Call to End Poverty in America?" is the title of the manual with educational and worship sources for this year. It can be obtained by calling 865-457-6466 or by visiting childrensdefensefund.org >Programs >Religious Action Program.

Thinking Theologically

ABCMC's Executive Minister, Larry Greenfield, writes a biweekly column for the electronic newsletter of Protestants for the Common Good. His latest column, "Think," is at the end of this issue of *eWind*.

2008 Judson Press Ministry Award Goes to Wendy Morris



Wendy Morris has been named as the 2008 recipient of the Judson Press Ministry Award. This award recognizes individuals “who share Judson’s publishing ministry in a significant way with a ready and Christian spirit for the joy of service and contribution.” Her name is being inscribed on a permanent plaque that hangs in the Mission Center at Valley Forge.

Wendy has long been a co-worker with Judson Press. She has done much volunteer work in the past with the Judson Press bookshop at Green Lake. It is for her faithful partnership in ministry that Judson Press has given Wendy this award.

An active member of Community Baptist Church in Warrenville, Wendy is a Christian educator, author, poet and scholar. She is also a long-time advocate for social justice and interracial harmony.

ABCMC Executive Minister Larry Greenfield said, "Wendy Morris is an incredible instrument for Jesus' Gospel about God's Beloved Community and we are so proud that her home base is here in Metro Chicago. I am sure I speak for all her sisters and brothers in our region in extending her congratulations on receiving the 2008 Judson Press Ministry Award, knowing that this honor points largely to her major contribution as an author and editor, but also knowing that the same quality (and quantity!) of ministry is found in her profound and active commitment to the causes of compassion, of peace, and of justice. Wendy, put simply, is a continuing inspiration for all of us in our attempt to live out the Christian life with spirited faithfulness and integrity."

We congratulate Wendy on this well-deserved recognition. We are thankful to have her as part of the ABCMC family. She blesses us in many ways.

CROP Hunger Walk

October 19 will be the day for Chicago’s CROP Hunger Walk. A number of ABCMC congregations and individuals are planning to participate in CROP Hunger Walks this fall. The First Baptist Church of Waukegan will be a part of the walk in Waukegan. Not only will members participate, the church will be an official rest stop for walkers. Would you like to take part in a CROP Hunger Walk? It’s a great thing to do. Please visit <http://cwscrop.org/greatrivers/> to find out how.

NEWS FROM ABCMC CONGREGATIONS

Please Help

The roof of the First Latin American Baptist Church - the Hispanic Church with the longest association with ABCMC and a faithful contributor to our ministries together - has suffered some significant damage that needs immediate attention.

The lowest estimate for repair is just over \$10,000. But work can only start with a down payment of \$3,500.

Would you and/or your church be willing to contribute funds to help with this project?

Checks should be made payable to ABCMC and should specify "First Latin ABC Roof."

Send gifts collected to the ABCMC office at 7035 W. Grand Avenue Suite 102, Chicago, IL 60707 and ABCMC will get the money to the church. (Your church will receive credit for the giving with ABCUSA.)

Yuki Scroggins Is Japanese Language Pastor at North Shore



North Shore Baptist Church (5244 N. Lakewood Avenue, Chicago) has welcomed Yuki Scroggins as part of the church's pastoral team. Yuki has been a member of the Japanese congregation at North Shore for three years. She is thrilled to be called as pastor of that congregation. She is excited about building upon the legacy of the Japanese congregation, and the North Shore congregation. The Japanese congregation worships at noon each Sunday.

Baptismal Celebration and More

This past Sunday, September 28, Millie Myren baptized Thomas and Beth Aldworth by immersion and Morgan Park Baptist Church. Millie, a member of the congregation, is a former Executive Minister of ABCMC, and also served as interim pastor at Morgan Park Baptist Church. Thomas is the church's new pastor.

Millie wrote in the church's newsletter, "**What a joy and a privilege** it was to baptize **Pastor Thomas** and his wife, **Beth**, as they re-affirmed their faith in Jesus Christ and gave witness to their embrace of our Baptist tradition of faith and practice. This was not asked of them; it was their own choice to enter fully into a new path of life."

Sunday was a special day for Millie for an additional reason. Millie and her husband Art Myren celebrated their 51st wedding anniversary. Congratulations to Millie and Art!

Four Concerts for a Cause

In the coming months, Woodside Church, ABCMC's congregation in Flint, Michigan, will present concerts on four specific Fridays, at 7 p.m. at the church, 1509 E. Court Street, Flint. Each concert will benefit a particular cause.



October 24, 2008 is Breast Cancer Awareness featuring Dr. Alyssa Smith, percussionist from Flint Institute of Music.



Alyssa G. Smith holds a Doctorate of Musical Arts from The Ohio State University, Master of Music from Northwestern University, and a Bachelor of Music from DePaul University. She has studied percussion with members of the Chicago Symphony and international performing artists including Michael Burritt, Susan Powell, Ted Atkatz, Jim Ross and Michael Green. Dr. Smith is currently on faculty at the Flint School of Performing Arts in Flint, Michigan where she teaches private lessons to all ages, group beginning classes and the adult World Percussion class. In addition, she coaches the Flint Youth Symphony and Youth Wind Ensemble percussion sections and accompanies the Advanced Modern Dance class. Dr. Smith is a member of the French-American Chamber Orchestra, rotating yearly performances between Michigan and Lyon, France. Smith has also performed in several states in the Mid-West as well as in Ireland.



Dr. Smith's breast cancer activism began in May of 2007, when she signed up and began training for The Breast Cancer 3-Day. The 60-mile walk raises funds to benefit Susan G. Komen for the Cure and the National Philanthropic Trust Breast Cancer Fund. Smith was inspired to walk after previous research had helped her mother become a survivor in 2005 and she wanted to give something back. She trained over a hundred miles that summer and completed The 3-Day in Chicago in 2007 and again in 2008. In addition to raising a combined total of over \$6900, Smith has worked to raise awareness through personal contact and by presenting two annual recitals at the Flint School of Performing Arts. More information is available at www.smithmarimba.com.

Donations are welcome for all concerts, and are at 7 p.m. at Woodside Church, 1509 E. Court St. For reservations contact Dr. Quincy Dobbs at 810-767-4911.

Other Concert Dates for the Season:

January 16, 2009 benefits **Organ Donation Awareness**; March 13, 2009 benefits Awareness of the **Americans with Disabilities Act**; May 1, 2009 benefits **Heart Health Awareness**, including Blood Pressure and Cholesterol, which also benefits Stroke Awareness.

Morgan Park to Install New Pastor

On Sunday, October 26th, at 3 p.m., the Rev. Dr. Thomas Aldworth will be installed as Pastor of Morgan Park Baptist Church. The speaker for the afternoon will be Dr. Larry Greenfield. All are invited. A reception will follow the service.

175th Anniversary Year Celebrations

This invitation is from the First Baptist Church of Chicago.

The First Baptist Church of Chicago will be celebrating its 175th Anniversary during 2008. Please join as we celebrate.



Our Anniversary Sunday, October 12 at 11 a.m. Dr. Michael Thomas, the Director of the Doctor of Ministry Program at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary will be our guest speaker. On that Sunday afternoon at 4 p.m. our guest speaker will be Rev. Reginald Bachus, Pastor of the historic Friendship Baptist Church of Chicago.

Dr. Roy Medley, the General Secretary of ABCUSA, will be our guest speaker on December 14 at 11 a.m.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Easum, Bandy & Tenny-Brittian and *Net Results* magazine will be offering a regional event in Chicago this month. Convergence Chicago will take place at Faith Community Church, 10547 Faiths Way, Huntley, IL 60142 October 24-25.



The Chicago experience is an exciting look at church leadership that works in today's changing world. Explore how to make an impact in your church and your community. Topics include:

- Paul's Pattern for Great Leadership
- The Making of a Great Leader
- Discipleship that Really Changes Lives ... and more.

For more information and registration, please visit

http://easumbandy.com/resources/chicago_convergence_oct_24_25/

ABCUSA NEWS

For additional articles from the American Baptist News Service, please visit <http://www.abc-usa.org/whoweare/newsservice.aspx>.

Year-End Issues for Church-Related Employers

The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board (MMBB) is offering lunchtime learning events regarding clergy tax law. These events will be easy to reach: they will be by telephone. Pastors and other pastoral staff members, as well as church treasurers and business administrators, can benefit by attending.

Registration requires nothing more than dialing in on a touch-tone phone. To register for any of the sessions, phone 800-289-0579, and use the seven-digit confirmation number listed next to the session you wish to attend. Once registered, you will be given a toll-free number to dial for the session you have selected. Simply dial in at the appropriate time to join the teleconference. MMBB will provide you with any written materials to accompany the session.

Two different very important topics will be presented. Each topic will be repeated twice. You may dial in from any touch-tone phone to listen to a presentation by MMBB staff and participate in a question-and-answer session to follow. There is no charge. You may participate in any or all of the sessions.

The schedule, topics and registration codes are below:

New 403(b) Regulations and Your Church

Wednesday, October 8, 11 a.m. Central Time. Confirmation #9488654

Thursday, October 9, 2 p.m. Central Time. Confirmation #9840829

Tax Reporting for Church Employers

Wednesday, November 12, 11 a.m. Central Time. Confirmation #6204846

Thursday, November 13, 2 p.m. Central Time. Confirmation #8735147

Indian Christians Still under Fear and Persecution



From Ben Chan, ABC International Ministries Area Director for Southeast Asia:

There is another outbreak of attacks of Christian homes and churches in the Indian Provinces of Bengal, Orissa and Bihar.

IM missionaries David Perkins and Debbie Mulnexi, and David Sagar (Special Assistant) and I planned to visit the Bengal-Orissa-Bihar Baptist Churches' Association (BOBBCA) in November. Rev. Samaresh Nayak, the Acting General Secretary of BOBBCA, now advises us to postpone the visit due to wide spreading violence against Christian churches. Moreover we will need to find a safe location to meet for BOBBCA is also facing internal leadership issues. Imo Aier, former IM missionary and consult of

India mission, will visit BOBBCA in October, and then join us in the November meeting.

- Please pray for Debbie Mulnexi for she is visiting partners in South India.
- Please pray for Imo Aier and his meeting with BOBBCA leaders in October.
- Please pray for the visit of IM team in November.
- Please pray for the churches in India asking God's protection and intervention.

HEALTH CARE NEWS

Illinois Campaign for Better Health Care Annual Meeting

Prospects for national reform of our health care system could be within our grasp beginning in 2009. What will this mean for states? What will states still need to do? What could the state-national joint venture look like?

We can come together with folks who share our concerns about these issues. We are all invited to the annual meeting of the Illinois Campaign for Better Health Care. The meeting will take place on Tuesday, November 25, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. It will be at the Holiday Inn Mart Plaza, 350 West Mart Center Drive, Chicago. For more information, please contact Kathleen Duffy at 312-913-9449 or kduffy@cbhconline.org.

Reducing Health Care Disparities

"Improving the Healthcare of Chicago: An Interactive Approach to Reducing Healthcare Disparities" will be presented on Tuesday, October 7, 2008, 8:00 TO 11:30 a.m. Registration and breakfast will be 7:30 to 8:00 a.m. It will take place at the Illinois Institute of Technology, Hermann Union Building 3241 S. Federal Street, Chicago. This program will be a presentation of the Chicago Asthma Consortium and a long list of partner organizations.

This meeting will focus on reducing healthcare disparities by improving communication. Poor communication is an enormous barrier to quality medical care. Among other things, communication barriers impact our ability to recognize chronic health problems, obtain proper care, and follow a healthcare practitioner's instructions. This program, led by top healthcare communications experts in Chicago, will provide you with a series of skills to help you better communicate with community residents about chronic disease. Additionally, we will begin development of a plan of action to reduce healthcare disparities that impact chronic disease.

The cost of the program will be as follows:

CAC Members: \$20 in advance (registration postmarked by September 30th) or \$25 at the door.

Non-Members*: \$30 in advance (registration postmarked by September 30th) or \$35 at the door.

*Non-members may join for 2009 with their registration and attend the meeting at the Member rate! To register, go to www.chicagoasthma.org or call 773.769.6060 by Tuesday, September 30, 2008.

For more information about this meeting or the Chicago Asthma Consortium, call 773.769.6060 or visit www.chicagoasthma.org.

Faith and Health Summit

We are all invited to take part in a Faith and Health Summit on Thursday, October 16 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the DePaul Center, 333 S. State Street, Chicago (Lower Level). This Summit will build on a similar event in 2007 where participants looked at the root causes of health inequities and learned about faith-based initiatives that are addressing these issues.

The 2008 Summit will provide an opportunity to talk with others who are working at the intersection of faith and health about how we move even further to support healthy, whole and hopeful communities where everyone can live out their God-given potential and calling.

Dr. Sharon Welch, Provost and Professor of Religion and Society at Meadville Lombard Theological School in Chicago, will frame the day by talking about how risk, jazz and improvisation can inform how we create responses to the critical social issues we face. Participants will apply her ideas as they engage

the lauded PBS series, "Unnatural Causes," which examines how racism, economics, immigration, housing and other realities impact people's health. In the afternoon attendees will talk with each other, exploring how we can continue to build a faith and health movement that can truly improve the quality of people's lives in metropolitan Chicago.

Because this is an event built on dialogue, space is limited to 100 people. RSVP as soon as possible to reserve your place. The registration deadline is Wednesday, October 1. The preferred method to register is online at www.advocatehealth.com/seminars. Look under October events for the Summit. If you do not have internet access, you may also call 1-800-3-ADVOCATE (1-800-323-8622) to register by phone. Cost for this event is \$25.00, which can be paid by credit card when you register or by check at the door.

Health Care Sabbath Is Coming

It is impossible to quantify the amount of suffering, frustration, and disparities in communities across the state of Illinois when it comes to health care. With so many other burning issues demanding our utmost attention these days, access to affordable and quality health care seems to be relegated a lesser priority. The reality of the situation, though, is that communities and families across the state are struggling with the rising costs of health care.

The tough question that we need to ask ourselves is: "Can we, in good conscience, continue down this broken path that leaves families and individuals without adequate coverage?" It is time to acknowledge that our health care system is broken. We cannot afford to do nothing. The rising cost of health care in this state is causing economic hardships for hard-working families all over the state. The rising cost of health care is having an adverse effect not only on families and communities, but on the state budget as well. Something must be done. Illinois can do so much better. Wouldn't it be great to see Illinois take strong leadership on health care reform?

You and your congregation are encouraged to participate in this year's Health Care Sabbath. You can determine to what extent you wish to get involved. Each congregation will approach the Sabbath differently, and according to their own values. This is an opportunity for the faith community to raise awareness on health care justice, and a way for congregations to get involved to help make a difference.

To find out more about how to get involved, please download the free online faith-based advocacy tool kit now at www.cbhconline.org

PRAYER REQUESTS

Please pray for World peace.

Please pray for professional church leaders seeking employment.

Please support with prayer those who are seeking spiritual renewal and refreshment.

Please hold in prayer the people in India, who are in the midst of a season of sectarian danger and violence. Please pray also for those from International Ministries giving them support at this time.

Please praise for all who are dealing with the aftermath of violent weather in the hurricane season.

Please pray for those who have concerns about their retirement savings and income in these difficult economic times.

Please remember in prayer ABC missionary Wendy Bernhard, who teaches at the Bible Institute of Kimpese, Democratic Republic of Congo.

Please join Thomas and Beth Aldworth in prayers of thanksgiving and joy at their baptism by immersion this past Sunday at Morgan Park Baptist Church. Thomas, formerly a Roman Catholic priest, is pastor at Morgan Park.

Let's join Millie and Art Myren in prayers of joy and thanksgiving celebrating their 51st wedding anniversary this past Sunday.

Please remember in prayer North Shore Baptist Church and Yuki Scroggins, who is the new Japanese-speaking pastor at the church. May God bless their ministry together.

Please lift up in prayer North Shore Baptist Church pastors Doug Harris and Carol McVetty, who are on sabbatical until November 25.

POSITION OPENING

Financial Secretary

North Shore Baptist Church, 5244 N. Lakewood Avenue, Chicago, is seeking a new financial secretary to work part time (20 hours per week). For a position description, please visit <http://www.northshorebaptist.org/fin%20sec%20position%20description.pdf>. If you are interested in applying, please contact [Ron Barlow](mailto:Ron.Barlow@northshorebaptist.org) at 773-728-4200, extension 22 or rbarlow@northshorebaptist.org.

CALENDAR

October 1—Noah Merrill speaks about Iraqi refugees at noon at Northwestern Medical School, McGaw Pavilion, Room 1-401, 240 E Huron Street, Chicago, and at 7 p.m. at Friends Meeting House, 1010 Greenleaf Street, Evanston. For more information and to RSVP contact Lynn Pollack at lpollack@afsc.org or 312-427-2533 ext. 26.

October 2—Northern Baptist Theological Seminary Founders Day 2008, 660 E. Butterfield Road, Lombard, 6:30 p.m.

October 3-5—ABC MC Renewal Conference with focus on the Holy Spirit.

October 5—Faith Summit for Criminal Justice Reform: Resource Fair – 1:30-2:45 p.m.; Summit Event – 3-4:30 p.m.; The Forum, University of Illinois at Chicago, 725 W. Roosevelt Road, Chicago.

October 7—Reducing Health Care Disparities, Illinois Institute of Technology, Hermann Union Building 3241 S. Federal Street, Chicago. Registration opens at 7:30 a.m.

October 8—Northwest Suburban Peace and Education Project meeting, South Church, 501 S. Emerson Street, 7 p.m.

October 11—Peace Vigil, Arlington Heights Road and Northwest Highway, 3-4 p.m.

October 12—Memorial service for Andrew Kmetko, First Baptist Church of Park Ridge, 1266 N. Northwest Highway, Park Ridge, 3 p.m.

October 12—ABC MC Sunday at the First Baptist Church of Berwyn, 6916 W. 34th Street, Berwyn; Larry Greenfield preaches.

October 16—Faith and Health Summit, DePaul Center, 333 S. State Street, Chicago, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Register at www.advocatehealth.com/seminars or 1-800-3ADVOCATE.

October 17-19—Children's Sabbath. Please observe Children's Sabbath in your congregation on Sunday, October 19. For resources and additional information, please visit childrensdefensefund.org >Programs >Religious Action Program.

October 17-19--Health Care Sabbath. Please observe Health Care Sabbath in your congregation on Sunday, October 19. Please contact Eric Quamme (equamme@ilmaternal.org) or Jonathan VanderBrug (jvanderbrug@cbhconline.org) for more information. For a toolkit, please go to <http://www.cbhconline.org/index.html>.

October 18—Peace Vigil, Northwest Highway and Hicks Road, Palatine, 3-4 p.m.

October 21--Finance and Property Committee meeting, Wunderlich Securities office, 200 W. Madison, Suite 2950, Chicago, 3 p.m.

October 21-22—Conference of Baptist Leaders from Burma, October 21-22, at the Chin Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas.

October 26—Installation of Thomas Aldworth as pastor of Morgan Park Baptist Church, 11025 S. Bell Avenue, Chicago, 3 p.m.

November 1—Workshop with Ken Medema, Rockford. For more information, please contact Mark Vincent by e-mail: marklv@DesignForMinistry.com or marklv@DesignForBusinessIntl.com or phone: 877-771-3330 or 888-463-9995.

November 8—ABCMC Annual Meeting, Morgan Park Baptist Church, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. (registration begins at 8:30 a.m.). This year's theme will be "Disparity and Difference: New Testament Perspectives and Imperatives."

November 8—Cook County Jail Ministry 30th Anniversary Celebration, First Baptist Church of Oak Park, 820 Ontario Street, Oak Park, 6 p.m.

November 12—Kids Hope United Annual Dinner, law firm of Drinker Biddle, 191 North Wacker Drive, Suite 3700, Chicago (in the Loop), 6 p.m.

November 18--Finance and Property Committee meeting, Wunderlich Securities office, 200 W. Madison, Suite 2950, Chicago, 3 p.m.

November 25—Annual Meeting, Illinois Campaign for Better Health Care, Holiday Inn Mart Plaza, 350 West Mart Center Drive, Chicago, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Please contact Kathleen Duffy at 312-913-9449 or kduffy@cbhconline.org for more information.

December 20--Finance and Property Committee meeting, Wunderlich Securities office, 200 W. Madison, Suite 2950, Chicago, 3 p.m.

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 email the newsletter each Wednesday. We welcome your news, prayer requests and comments. Please email your communications to the editor, Lynne Kelley, at lynne@abcmc.org. If you spot a typographical error or other mistake in *eWind*, please let us know at the ABCMC office, 773-804-1655. The ABCMC office is at 7035 W. Grand Avenue, Suite 102, Chicago, Illinois 60707

Thinking Theologically

Think



Reflections

Vol VII no. 7, September 26, 2008

Thinking Theologically About the Common Good

*Reflections on theology, scripture, and public life
from the Rev. Larry Greenfield.*

"Think"

When the chief priests and the elders challenged Jesus in the temple, Jesus, in turn, challenged them to *think*.

As recorded in Matthew 21: 23 — 32 (and in a similar form in the other Gospels), these highly educated leaders of the Jewish community want to know by what authority Jesus is teaching and healing. They want to know who gave him this authority.

Like any really good rabbi, Jesus responds to the leaders' challenge by returning the challenge: I'll respond to your challenge if you respond to mine.

And then Jesus asks them if John the Baptist was heaven sent or was just a human phenomenon. The chief rabbis and the elders have to *think* — they have to argue it out with each other. If they respond to the Jesus challenge by acknowledging that the Baptizer was a Godsend, they know Jesus will come back and ask them why they didn't follow John. But if they say that the guy who performed baptism over in the Jordan River was just human, it is going to infuriate the crowd around them because most of them believe John was some sort of prophet of God.

The chief priests and the elders can't make up their minds. So they tell Jesus that they simply don't know the answer to his question.

Well then, Jesus says, if you can't meet my challenge, I don't feel under any obligation to meet yours.

Jesus could have just left it there, in a kind of standoff. But that wouldn't really have solved anything. So Jesus invites the chief priests and elders, in front of everybody there in the temple, to *think*.

He presents them a story: Suppose a parent tells a daughter to go do some work; the sassy daughter refuses, but then after thinking about it she changes her mind and does the assigned work. Suppose the same parent also tells a son to go do some work; the well-mannered son respectfully agrees, but then decides not to do it.

Which one, Jesus asks, was obedient to the parent?

This time the chief priest and elders don't take time out to think through what trap Jesus is setting for them. They just blurt out the obvious: The daughter, obviously! Jesus tells the chief priests and the elders that they should have thought about the question longer and more deliberately.

They had just said that they didn't know whether John was an agent of God or just another human scam artist. But, Jesus said, even the prostitutes and the tax

collectors — people at the lowest rung of society, as opposed to the chief priests and elders — could recognize that John came "in the way of righteousness," thought it through, and decided to follow John. But you, Jesus continued, you who are at the highest rung of society saw the same thing, but didn't take the time to think it through, and rejected John.

"...and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him." (Matthew 21: 32)
For God's sake, *think!*

* * * * *

The evidence is pretty clear.

Pretty much however you look at it, if you consistently spend more money on educating a student, the quality of education improves.

Sure, there are some occasional exceptions.

And, yes, a good number of other components have to be in place for quality education to occur. But almost all of those crucial components are related to having the funds to put them in place. You can't, that is, just throw money at the problem of unequal educational quality and walk away. But you have to have the money in order to do the necessary things to assure quality education for all students.

It isn't just poor kids who suffer when we refuse to look at the evidence. It's most kids who turn out to be the losers — and certainly not by their choice.

When we deny equal educational funding for students across the state or the country, we assure that a small percentage of kids get the kind of education that will prepare them well for the global challenges of the 21st century. And we guarantee that the vast majority of the other kids — not just poor children but also those from middle and upper middle class communities as well — will be far less prepared.

To borrow the phrase from the story of Jesus and the chief priests and elders: "the way of righteousness" is abundantly evident.

But the governor of the state of Illinois, and members of the General Assembly, the president of the country and the members of Congress — something like the chief priests and elders of our land — refuse to think it through and then decide to follow in the way of righteousness. They refuse to think through what equality and equality of opportunity really mean in our democracy, and then to act on that thinking.

The followers of Jesus today, along with all other people of conscience at every rung of our society, need to be telling our chief priests and elders: For God's sake, *think!*

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