

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

May 6, 2009



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ABCMC NEWS

Our Christian Responsibility

This invitation is from our Executive Minister, Larry Greenfield.

My sisters and brothers in ABCMC,

Do you believe, as a follower of Jesus, that we Christians have a responsibility for the care and nurturing of all children, who are all equal in the sight of God?

Do you believe, as an American, that we have a similar obligation to the children of this nation?

And do you believe, as a Christian American, that quality education is the best means to give every child a chance to become a responsible and contributing citizen.

Be careful how you answer those questions, even though an affirmative answer seems obvious to most of us.

And yet...and yet...in our State of Illinois, some children receive an absolutely premium education, some children receive a fair to decent education, and some children receive a terrible education.

Why? Because we fund public education largely on property taxes, and that, in the end, means that a child's zip code will determine not only the quality of her or his education but his or her chance to become a responsible and contributing citizen. It is fundamental inequality and a scandal to what we stand for as Christians and Americans.

This is what Pastor Alice Greene wrote to her Irving Park congregation about this:

*“There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat;
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures.”*
Shakespeare, Julius Caesar, 1599.

Brutus in this famous speech was trying to get Cassius to recognize that the time was ripe to go into battle against Octavius. It eloquently expresses what we might say, “Strike while the iron is hot.” Ecclesiastes 3 puts it this way “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.” I guess you get my drift.

I believe that we have an opportunity to make an important change in the lives of children in our state--an opportunity that might not come again any time soon. I've already voiced my concern about how we fund our public schools in Illinois, but I'll say it again. Property taxes provide the majority of funding for public schools here. Because property values differ drastically, this system puts a much heavier burden on the poorer districts to provide adequate funding for their children. The poorer districts must impose high property tax rates just to meet the basic funding level for schools, while the richer districts can impose much lower property tax rates to attain a great deal more funding. This further burdens the poorer districts because businesses don't want to move into the high-tax areas. Funds provided by the state would help, but Illinois ranks 49th among the states in providing state-generated funds to support public schools.

The result of all of this is a wide variance in the quality of public education, not just in Chicago, but all around the state. This has gone on for as long as I can remember. That we have lived with such drastically unequal public schools for such a long time is a sin. We now have a ripe opportunity to change this: Legislation is presently pending that will insure that those children who need the most support to make it in life are no longer given the least amount of funding; the new governor is looking to make some much-needed changes to the Illinois budget; and many of our Senators and Representatives are already on board to fix the problem. But there are still legislators who are afraid that an increase in taxes will hurt them in the next election, even though Illinois, which is the 5th richest state, presently has one of the lowest income tax rates.

We need to show our representatives that we support this effort. Won't you join me and Bill, others in our congregation, and other Christians around the state in an effort spearheaded by the Community Renewal Society and Protestants for the Common Good, to visit **Springfield on Tuesday, May 12** to lobby for this important legislation. Please contact me at the church office if you have any questions, and especially if you'd like to attend.

Now is the time. *“Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and persistent work of men (and women!) willing to be co-workers with God, and without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation.”* Martin Luther King, Jr., (1963)

As Dr. Greene has indicated, we have a chance right now to do something about this disgrace to Christian faith and American democracy in our State. It will involve, to be sure, an increase along with an offsetting readjustment in our taxes. But overcoming inequality has its costs. The question is whether we stand for the principles of our faith and our democracy or if self-interest is truly our god.

There are three things we can do:

1. Join Alice and Bill Greene in lobbying your state senators and representatives in Springfield on Tuesday, May 12. Call Pastor Greene at 708-337-0524 to get the information.
2. If you can't make it to Springfield, take the time to write or call or e-mail your state senators and representatives to indicate that you support the legislation.
3. Or, at the very minimum, sign on to the *Principles of Education Funding Reform*, which is attached to this edition of e-Wind. It is also at http://salsa.democracynaction.org/o/515/petition.jsp?petition_KEY=1848

Do your Christian and American beliefs matter? Here's a chance to prove it.

In the cause of the Evangel,

Larry

SATURDAY!! Official Notice of Meeting and Proposed Amendments to Family Document



ABCMC's Family Council will meet on **Saturday, May 9 at North Shore Baptist Church**, 5244 N. Lakewood Avenue, Chicago.

Important business to be discussed at this meeting will include a proposed bylaws change that appears at the end of this article. Please come prepared to deal with this recommendation from the Family Cabinet.

Please call or email Tony Rake at the ABCMC office, 773-804-1655, to let him know whether you plan to attend, and whether you will stay for lunch. If you prefer, you may email Tony at tony@abcmc.org, or fax information to him at 773-804-1656.

Registration at the meeting opens at 8:30 a.m. The meeting will begin with worship at 9 a.m., and conclude with lunch at noon. The suggested donation for lunch is \$5.

Hard copy of the text of the proposed amendments to the Family Document was sent by mail last month to Family Council representatives. The material also appears below.

Proposed Amendments to the Family Document of American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago, as adopted September 14, 1991

The Family Cabinet recommends the following changes:

Article Seven ("Without limiting this authority the [Family] Cabinet shall:

Add:

7.8 Meet with representatives of congregations making application for membership as an Associated Church in ABCMC, review the applications, and make recommendations to the Family Council for or against membership.

Add:

7.9 Shall serve the functions of program oversight and evaluating structure as a committee of the whole, creating task forces to develop and coordinate program as needed; at-large members of the Cabinet will be expected to serve as chairs for these task forces, according to their gifts, at the request of the President or the Cabinet.

Article Eight (Standing Committees)

Delete: "There shall be five Standing Committees:"

8.1 Delete in its entirety

Renumber the committees as follows:

8.1 **Finance and Property**

8.2 **Ministry**

8.3 **Nominating**

8.4 **Fund Development Committee**

8.2 After the first sentence "This committee shall recommend ... ministers in Metro Chicago." add the sentence, "This committee shall oversee the process of complaint against ordained persons with nationally validated ordinations." Edit the final sentence as follows: "This committee shall carry out ~~such~~ **other** functions in that regard as delegated by the Cabinet."

4th Annual ABCMC Disciples' (Picnic) Dinner



ABCMC's 4th Annual Disciples' (Picnic) Dinner will take place on the afternoon and evening of Saturday, May 30 on the campus of Judson University in Elgin. This will be a fun event with games and activities for all ages. The university will serve a cook-out style meal. ABCMC congregations are invited to bring desserts reflecting their community's specialties

This will also be the occasion for recognizing 2009 Daily Disciples from each congregation, as well as the recipients of region-wide discipleship awards. The awards ceremony will take place in the university's chapel. (The nominating form for awards is available at http://www.abcmc.org/documents/2009_DISCIPLESHIP_AWARDS.pdf .)

The cost of this event will be \$5 per adult, and \$2 per child. Children under 3 will eat free. A free-will offering for ABCMC will be taken.

Thinking Theologically

ABCMC's Executive Minister Larry Greenfield authors a column, "Thinking Theologically for the Common Good" for *The Common Good Network*, which is the biweekly electronic newsletter of Protestants for the Common Good. Information about subscribing to the newsletter appears on the web site www.thecommongood.org. Larry's most recent column, "Fleeing," appears at the end of this issue of *eWind*.

Welcome to the Family

This announcement from the Green Lake Conference Center might be of interest to you and your congregation.

[Welcome to the Family Seminar](#) will take place at Green Lake Conference Center on May 16, 2009. This practical, idea-filled church assimilation seminar is for pastors and church leaders who want to see more first time visitors return, more new members become active members and more "outsiders" become "insiders" as active church participants. Program fee and lunch is only \$35/person for this one-day conference.

More information is available at

<http://glcc.org/glcc/files/conferences/Welcome%20to%20the%20Family%202009.pdf>

Green Gram

TO: ABCMC Colleagues

FROM: Larry Greenfield



I suspect many more of us are become increasingly "green conscious" for a combination of reasons, ranging all the way from deep ethical and religious commitments to very practical matters of reducing costs. And this applies not just to our homes and work but also to our churches.

At Morgan Park Baptist Church, Art Myren and Rudy Gartner are writing a brief paragraph each week for the church newsletter called "Green Gram" devoted to suggestions on ways of becoming greener. Find the one for this week below.

We invite other churches doing this or something similar to share their initiatives with us so we can in turn, share them with the rest of the family. Our intention is to create a spot on our website (www.abcmc.org) where these ideas can be collected and include provisions for on-going discussions of "green" matters.

GREEN GRAM: Our planet's rainforests are being bulldozed and burned down at an alarming rate. The rainforests are "the lungs" of the planet. One way to help out is to purchase Tropicana orange juice, look at the "Save the Rainforest" info on the packaging and type in the 11-digit code when you visit their website. They promise to save 100 sq. ft. of rainforest for each code. Please consider joining the effort.



Free Items

The following items are available for use by a church. They are currently in storage. We encourage any church that can use any of them to contact the ABCMC office at 773-804-1655 or office@abcmc.org to arrange to examine the items.

- 1 credenza
- 1 desk
- 1 side extension for a desk
- 1 conference table
- 13 chairs for conference table

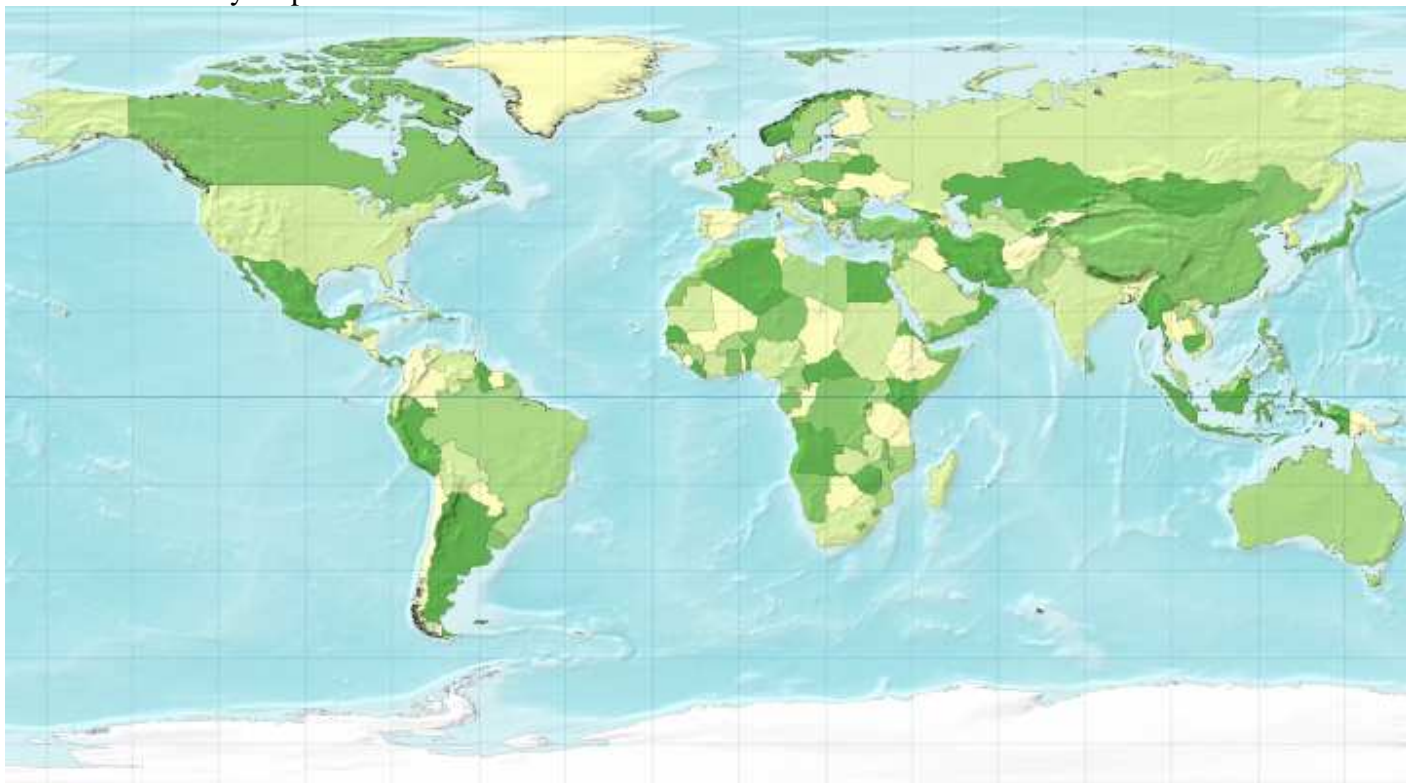
- 2 arm chairs – one black and one green
- 3 swivel chairs with cloth upholstery
- 1 bookcase simulated wood with shelving and brackets and screws
- 1 smaller white bookcase with shelving
- 1 coffee table – glass top and metal legs
- 3 computer monitors
- 1 computer printer
- 1 keyboard for a computer
- 1 central processing unit (CPU)
- 1 movie screen
- 1 peg board
- 144 votive candles
- 36 dozen spoon, knives and forks (This is an estimate. We did not count them.)
- 1 Adventure in Sharing Wheel for World Mission

Images of the Social and Economic World

Please take the time to look at and read the maps and related materials below. Please consider them from your perspective as a Christian. Thank you to Wendy Morris for sharing these materials with us.

Images of the social and economic world

Here is an ordinary map of the world:



Roughly speaking, on a map like this, the sizes of the countries of the world are in proportion to their actual sizes on the surface of the planet and their shapes are the same as their actual shapes. (This is only approximate though, since some distortion is inevitable when you go from a

spherical planet to a flat map.)

It's possible, however, and sometimes very useful, to redraw the map with the sizes of countries made bigger or smaller in order to represent something of interest. Such maps are called *cartograms* and can be an effective and natural way of portraying geographic or social data. Here, for example, is a cartogram that shows the human population of the countries of the world:

Population



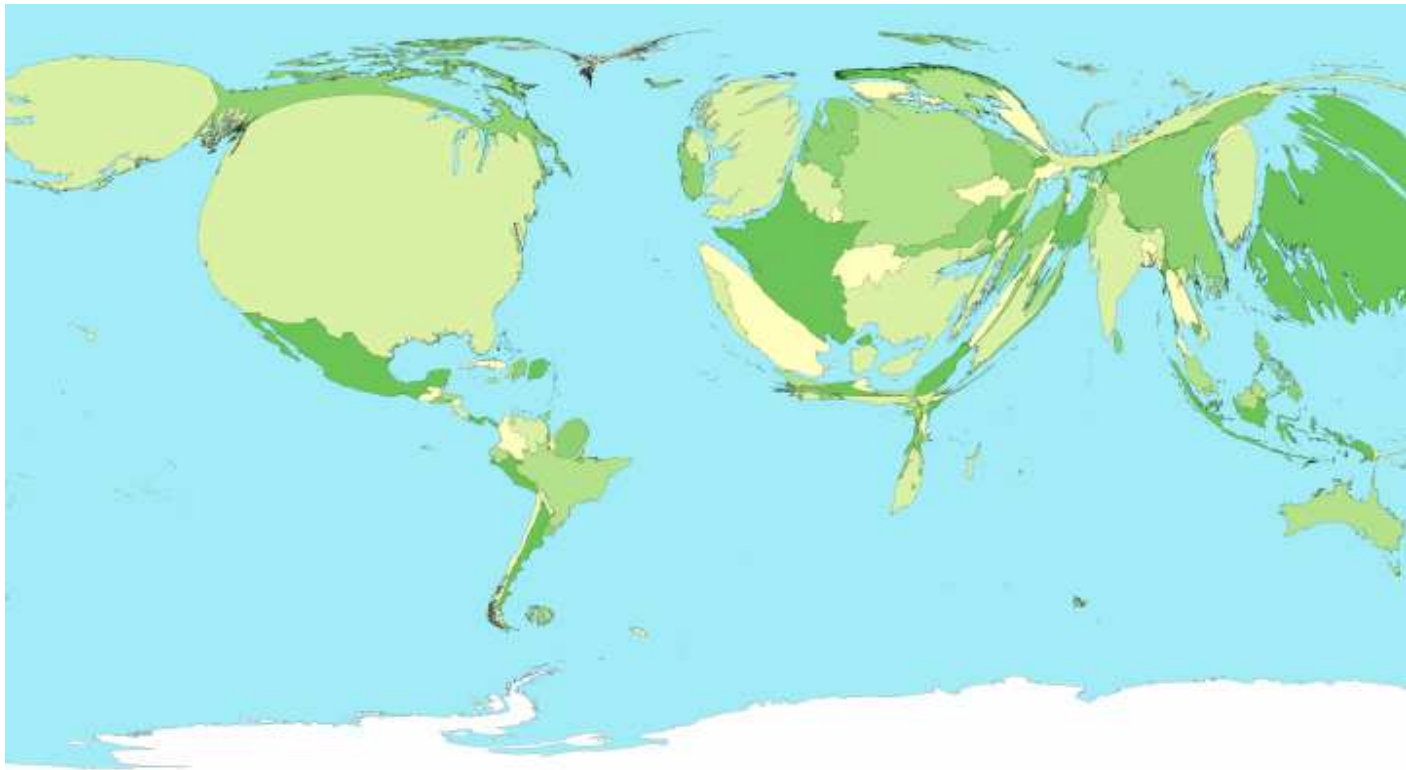
In this map the sizes of countries are proportional not to their actual landmass but instead to the number of people living there; a country with 20 million people, for instance, appears twice as large as a country with 10 million.

Although the figures for populations of countries are well established and familiar to many, the cartogram provides a new way of looking at them and in particular makes clear the enormous disparity in the population of different regions. Note how large India and China have become: between them these two countries account for more than a third of the population of the world. On the other hand, notice the near-disappearance of Canada and Russia, the world's two largest countries by land area, which have relatively few people in them.

Notice also how the lines of latitude and longitude have become distorted by the growing and shrinking countries. This is an unavoidable consequence of the cartogram transformation: in order to give the countries the right sizes and still have them fit together you need to warp things

a bit. The method used here, however, does a pretty good job of keeping the map recognizable. Cartograms are most often used to show population data, but there is no reason why they need be limited to population. They can in principle be used to show almost any quantity. Here is a cartogram of the world in which the sizes of countries are proportional to Gross Domestic Product, which is a measure of how much wealth a country's economy generates, and hence, to an extent, of the wealth of the country's inhabitants:

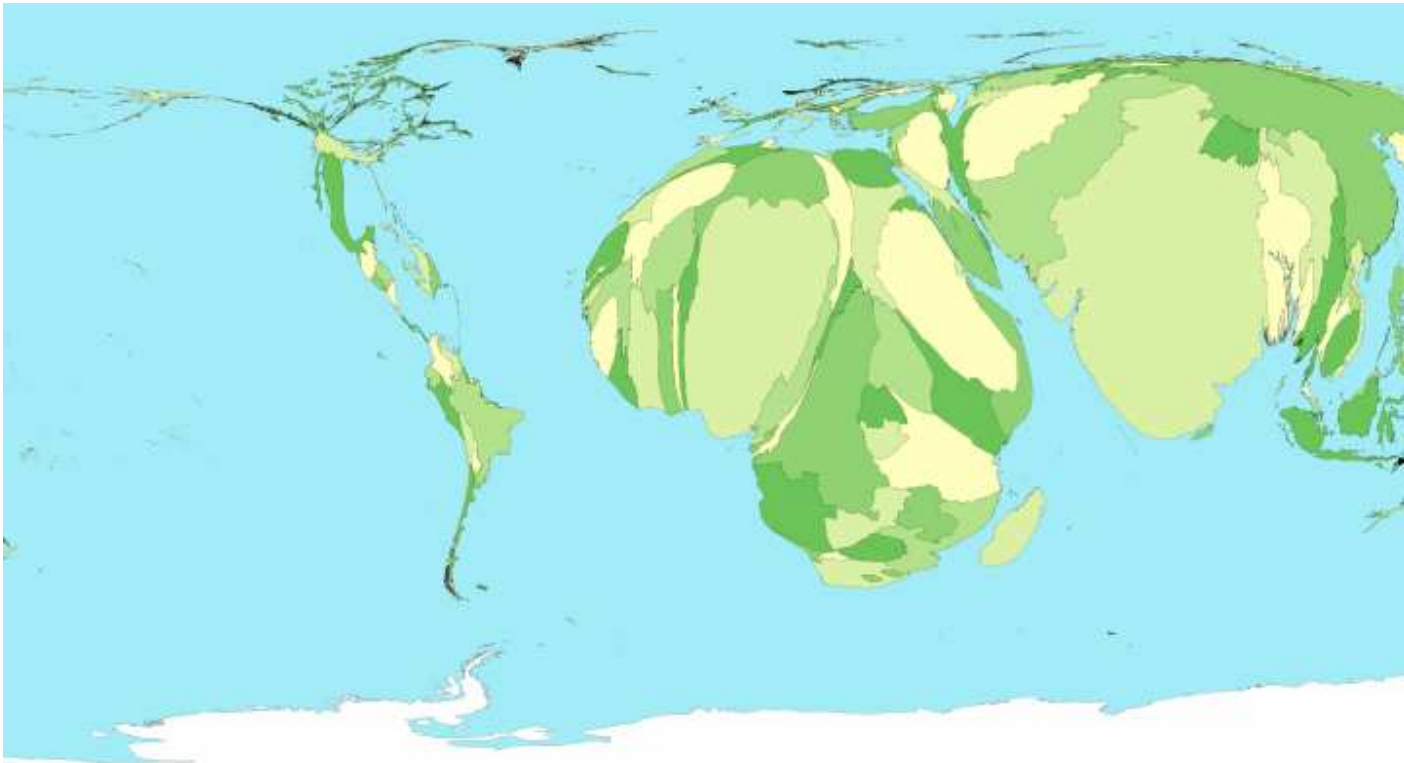
Gross domestic product



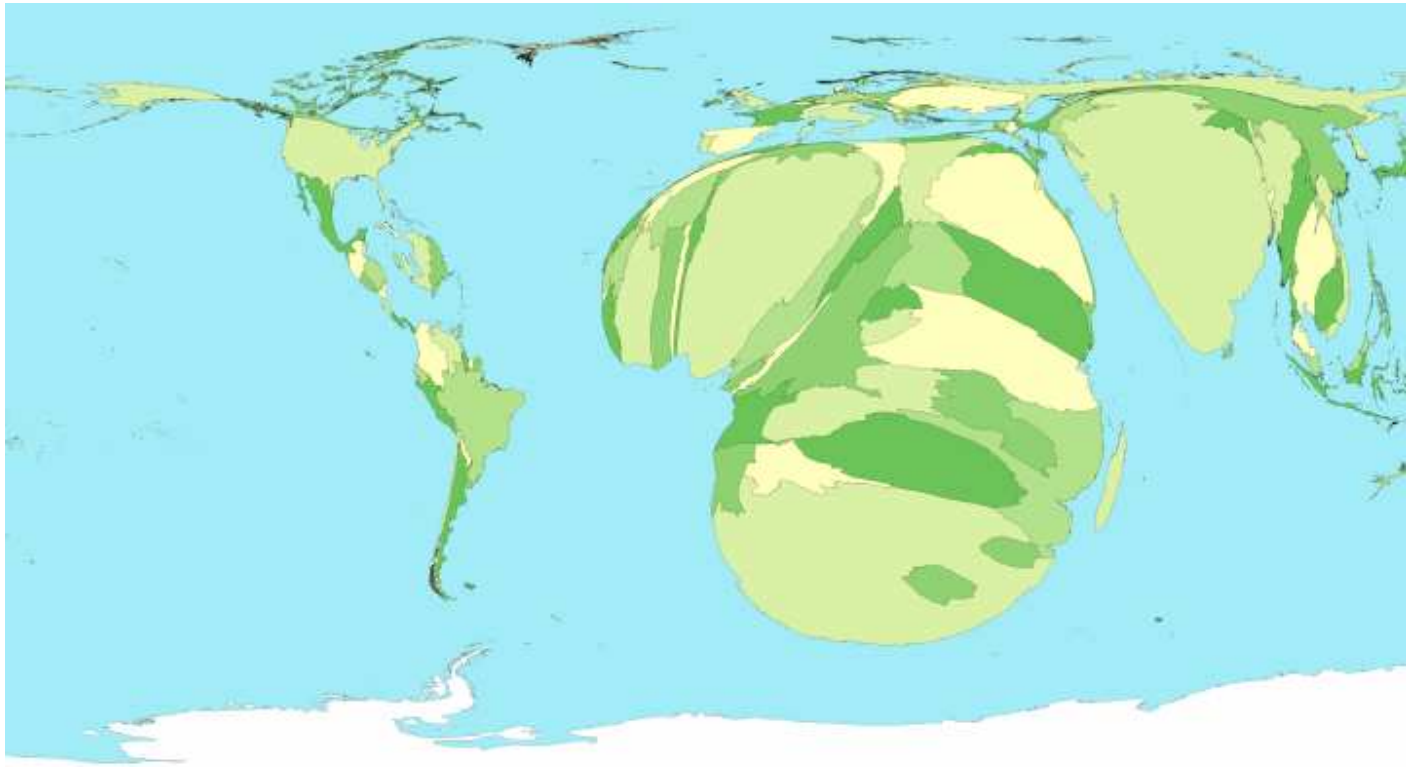
Notice how America and Europe dominate this map, along with Japan (yes – that huge dark-green island on the right really is Japan), while Africa dwindles almost to invisibility.

Now here are a few more cartograms. In all of the maps on this page the countries have the same colors, which helps to identify countries in the cases where shapes have changed a lot.

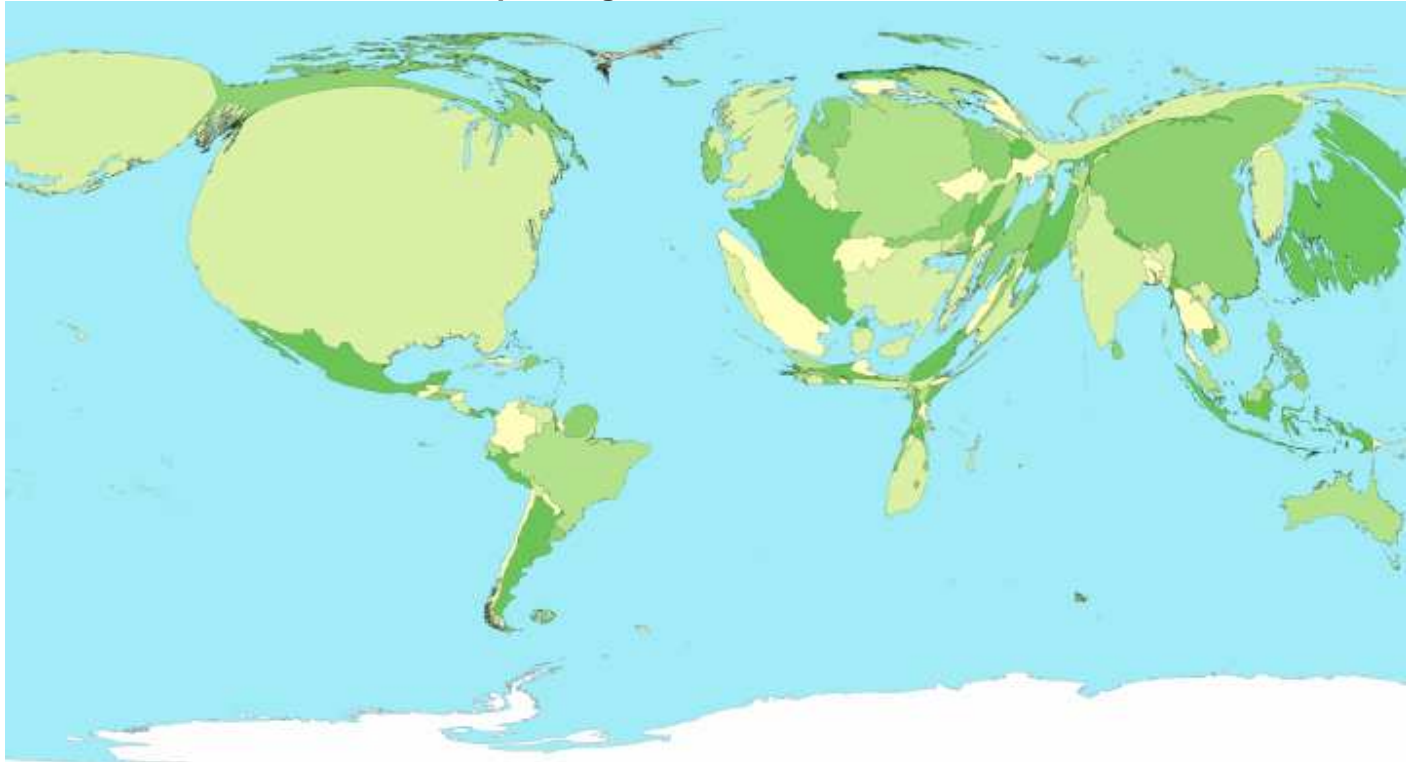
Child mortality



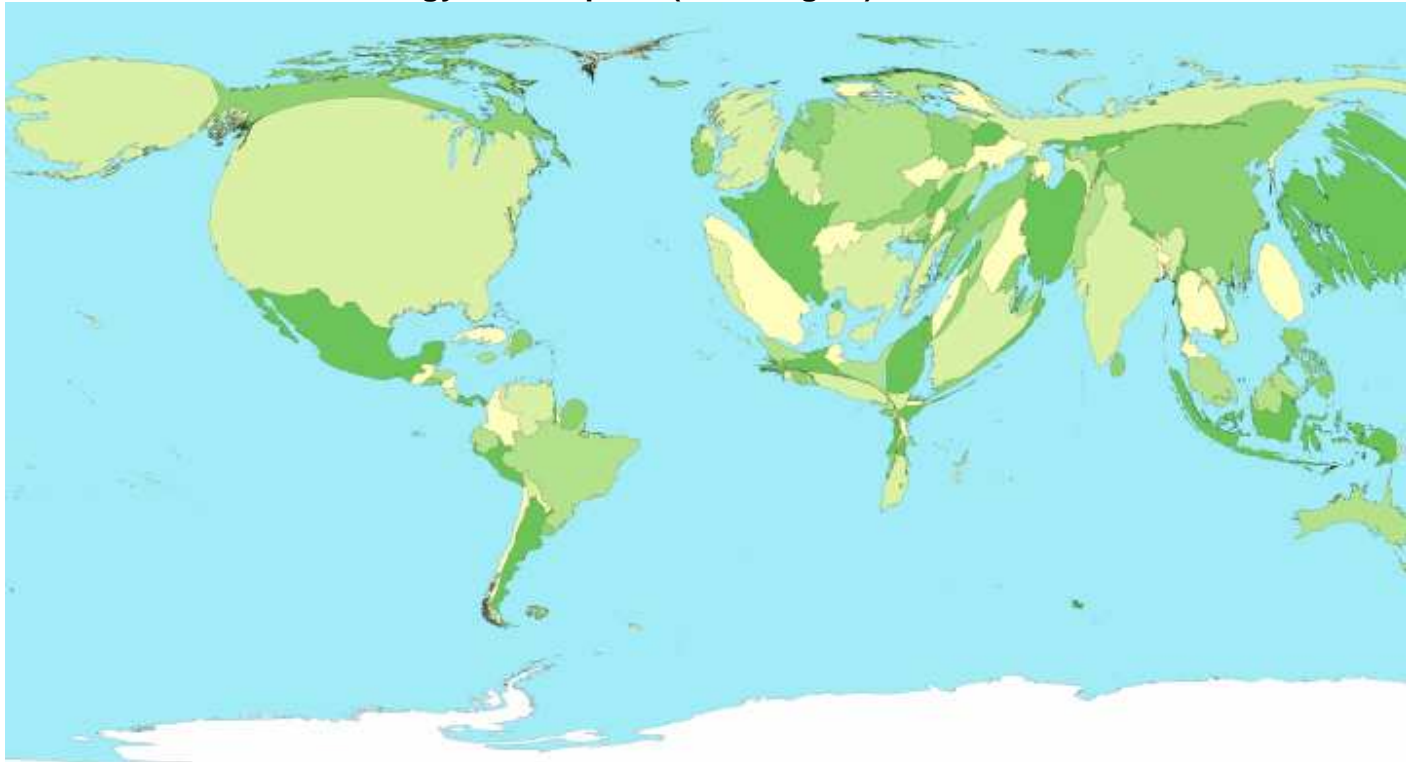
People living with HIV/AIDS



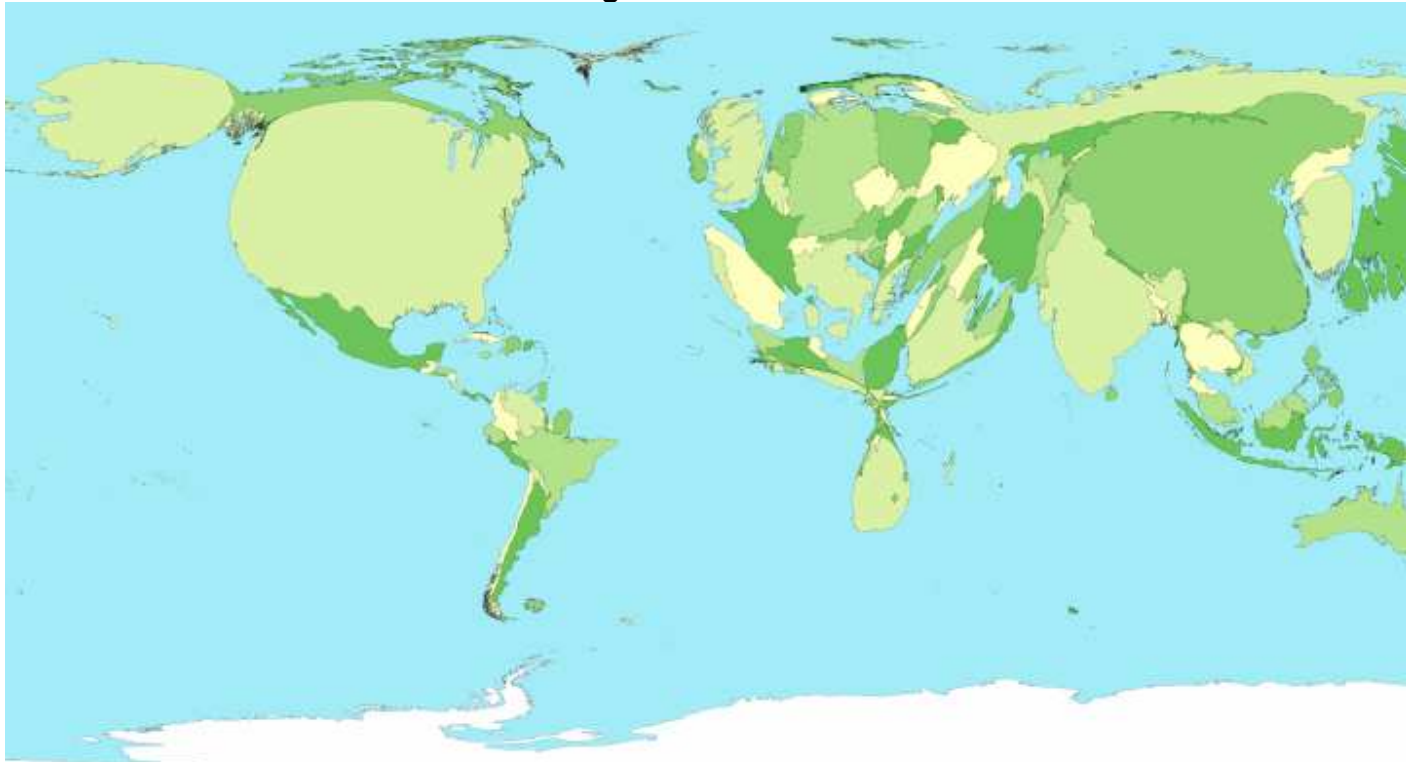
Total spending on healthcare



Energy consumption (including oil)



Greenhouse gas emissions



If you are interested to see more cartograms, you might like to visit the website of the [Worldmapper Project](#), where a group of colleagues and I are gathering together an ever-growing collection of cartograms showing all sorts of aspects of the social, economic, and geographic world. The web site contains, among other things, downloadable posters of cartograms that you can print out, along with data sets, descriptions of the statistical analyses, and information about the methods used to produce the maps. (The maps shown here were made specially for this page and are not part of the Worldmapper Project, but there are similar maps on the project web site.)

Technical details: These cartograms were created using a variant of the [diffusion algorithm of Gastner and Newman](#). Data for the population cartogram were taken from the [Gridded Population of the World](#) compiled by the International Center for Earth Science at Columbia University; elevation and bathymetric data were taken from the NOAA [2-minute Gridded Global Relief](#) data set. Data for the other cartograms came from the [United Nations Statistics Division](#) and from the databases of the [World Health Organization](#). In all of the cartograms on this page, Antarctica has been treated the same as the sea, meaning its area is unchanged although its shape may be distorted slightly to make room for changes in the sizes of other parts of the world.

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Permission is hereby granted for the use and distribution by others of the text and figures on this page for noncommercial purposes. Go ahead and send them to your friends, post them on your blog, use them in school. Whatever. My only request is that you either give a link to this page or just mention that the maps were made by me. (Or both, if you're feeling particularly enthusiastic.) If you would like to use any of these materials for commercial purposes, please drop me a line. Contact details are [here](#).

If you spot any errors in the text or figures, the author would very much appreciate hearing about it. Again, contact details are [here](#).

High-resolution versions of the figures are available on request from the author.

My computer software for producing cartograms is freely available [here](#). A number of other programs implementing the cartogram algorithm of Gastner and Newman are also available. See [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

The views expressed on this web page are personal and are not necessarily shared by the University of Michigan.

[Mark Newman](#), Department of Physics and Center for the Study of Complex Systems, University of Michigan

Email: mejn@umich.edu

Updated: April 22, 2009

NEWS FROM ABCMC CONGREGATIONS

Nurturing Spirituality in the Family

This invitation is from the Community Church of Wilmette, 1028 Forest Avenue, Wilmette.

Community Church of Wilmette is offering a workshop for parents and caregivers centered on nurturing spirituality in the family. The workshop does not seek to provide answers to specific questions children might ask, but seeks to inform adults how they may respond to their children in age appropriate ways, based on a child's developmental stage. These sessions were developed based on the works of Piaget, developmental theorist, Fowler, spiritual formation theorist, and Kohlberg, moral developmental theorist.

The format of the class will include lecture with small and large group discussion. Materials will be provided for each session.

Please join us for direction, inspiration, and lively conversation.

Community Church of Wilmette

1020 Forest Avenue

Wilmette, IL 60091

Sunday, May 3, 10, and 17 at noon

Suggested donation \$10 per session

Registration: 847.251.4370 or www.communitychurchofwilmette.org

Childcare provided upon request.

North Shore Baptist Church Mission Trip Fund Raisers

This invitation is from North Shore Baptist Church, 5244 N. Lakewood Avenue, Chicago.

There will be three fundraising opportunities for you to enjoy at:

North Shore Baptist Church, 5244 North Lakewood at Berwyn, 773-728-4200

Proceeds benefit the Mission Trip in June to assist North Shore's sister church, Greater New Home Missionary Baptist Church in the 9th Ward of New Orleans. Any inquiries regarding our trip can be addressed to Rev. Rony Reyes at reyes@northshorebaptist.org or Dawn Noldan at dnoldan@northshorebaptist.org.

Saturday, May 9th



5:30 pm Mardi Gras Dinner & Party:

Cajun & Creole-inspired foods, Mask & Costume Contest, Family Fun!

\$10 donation/12-adult; \$6 donation/3-12

7:00 pm Jazz Festival featuring the **Clark Street Jazz Band** and other artists.

\$5 donation, tickets available by phone (773)728-4200 and at the door

Saturday, June 6th

Car Wash 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. at Thybony Paint & Wallcovering, 5440 N. Clark, Chicago, \$5 Donation

COMMUNITY NEWS

Faith in Action

This request is from Protestants for the Common Good.

This week is the Illinois Senate and House deadline for passing bills out of their assigned committees. If the bills don't pass, they're done for this session. PCG, in cooperation with a number of other organizations, has been working on three important bills and we need your help to move them forward in the Illinois General Assembly!

Please take a few moments this week to call your legislator (check the [legislator look-up](#) for your state representative's and senator's contact information) and ask them to VOTE YES on these three bills:

HB2383: Increased Access to TANF (Temporary Aid for Needy Families) - [FACT SHEET](#)

- **Call your state senator and urge him/her to vote YES on HB 2383**
- This bill has passed out of the House and out of its Senate Committee but we need to ensure that it gets called for a vote in the Senate
- In these hard economic times, it ensures that families living in deep poverty (a family of three making \$9000 or less annually) have access to TANF

SB 1435: Payday Loan Reform -

- **Please call your state representative and ask them to vote YES for SB1435 and [please sign the Payday Loan Faith Letter](#) below**
- For the past year, PCG and the Egan Coalition for Payday Loan Reform have been working with lenders and have finally come to a compromise on legislation that would prevent usurious lending.
- This legislation prevents balloon payments, sets the repayment cycle based on a consumer's ability to pay, charges reasonable fees, prevents an endless cycle of debt, and removes the payday loan loophole from the 2005 legislation.

HB3923: Common Sense Health Care Reform - [FACT SHEET](#)

- **Call your state senator and urge them to vote YES on HB3923**
- This bill would ensure that at least 75% of consumer premiums are used to pay for medical services as opposed to profit and administrative costs, simplify the application process for small businesses, and give providers the power to determine the necessity for mental health treatment, not the insurance company.
- This bill has passed out of the House and is now in the Senate Executive Committee. It will be voted on Wednesday, May 6th!

Your calls and emails will make a difference this week. Please take the time to contact your Illinois legislators and let them know how important these issues are. If you have any questions, please contact Courtney O'Brien at courtney@thecommongood.org or 312-223-9544 x221.

Let us all continue to strive for the Common Good here in Illinois!

Payday Loan Faith Sign-On Letter

If you would like to sign-on, please email courtney@thecommongood.org or you may [sign electronically!](#)

at <http://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?formkey=cm94dlprNVF6eGs5Q20wdk5VbFpoeXc6MA..>
April 30, 2009

Dear Financial Institutions Committee Member:

On behalf of faith communities across Chicago and Illinois, we call on you to pass the Consumer Installment Loan Reform Act, SB 1435, without delay. Our church members have waited too long for regulations that will protect

them from falling prey to unscrupulous lenders in their hour of desperation.

The late Monsignor John Egan in 1999 after hearing the story of one of his parishioners who was victimized by a payday loan convened the Campaign for Payday Loan Reform. Msgr. Egan was outraged at the story and took on predatory lending reform as one of his last fights for social justice. He convened a group of religious leaders, consumer advocates, public interest organizations, and social service organizations to form the Campaign for Payday Loan Reform.

Since his death in 2001, we have worked closely with lenders and consumer advocates to craft legislation that creates a stable business environment for lenders filling appropriate, short-term borrowing needs of consumers. In 2005, after several years of hard work, the Illinois General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to pass the Payday Loan Reform Act (PLRA) to regulate predatory lending and protect consumers from the worst abuses of the industry. The payday loan industry moved to evade important protections included in the PLRA, issuing loans under the Consumer Installment Loan Act (CILA), leaving unsuspecting customers vulnerable to the very abuses the General Assembly worked to prevent.

The Consumer Installment Loan Reform Act accomplishes closing the glaring loophole in the Payday Loan Reform Act, which has allowed lenders to evade guaranteed consumer protections. Additionally, the Act defines within CILA a small, longer-term installment loan – giving consumers access to a menu of good credit products. Key consumer protections in SB 1435 include:

- **Full Amortization** – Requires loans to be amortized and paid off in substantially equal, periodic monthly installments, with no balloon or interest-only payments
- **Ends Rule of 78ths** – Ends the use of the Rule of 78ths, a method of computing interest that is highly disadvantageous to the borrower.
- **Sets Reasonable Fees** – Sets caps on monthly handling charges for small consumer installment loans; limits acquisition charges to \$100.
- **Protects Consumers from Predatory Debt Cycle** – Limits the debt cycle by prohibiting lenders from issuing more than one small consumer installment loans at a time.
- **Considers the Borrower's Ability to Repay** – Sets a borrower's monthly payment to no more than 10% of his/her gross monthly income.
- **Full enforcement through a consumer reporting service** – Like the Payday Loan Reform Act, small consumer installment loans will be reported into a consumer reporting service in order to assist the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation in enforcing the Act; also requires that the sales of credit insurance products and other related products or services to be captured by the consumer reporting service, if the product or service is sold in connection with the loan.

We are joining the statewide call for predatory lending reform now. Please vote in favor of SB 1435, the Consumer Installment Loan Reform Act.

Sincerely,

Rev. Roosevelt Watkins, President – Pastors United for Changes (PUC is a network of more than 100 pastors throughout Chicago)

Bishop Edward Peecher, Chicago Embassy Church (Chicago)

Rev. Michael Hoy, First Lutheran Church (Decatur)

Rev. Robert Bushey, Central Christian Church (Decatur)

Dr. Gale Frazier, Daughters of Sarah (Chicago)

Bishop Michael Carter, Mighty God Tabernacle (Chicago)

Pastor Donald Smith, Holy Jerusalem M.B. Church (Chicago)

Pastor Derrell Gray, Anointed Whole Gospel Ministry (Chicago)

Stephen Thurston, New Covenant Baptist Church (Chicago)

Program on Employee Free Choice Act

This invitation is from the Northeastern Illinois Chapter of Americans for Democratic Action.

Should workers have to fight for the right to join a union? Join the national debate! What do you think?

President Barack Obama and other supporters of the EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE ACT say "NO!"

The Northeastern Illinois Chapter of Americans for Democratic Action (NEILADA) invites you to attend an informative panel discussion on the topic of the EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE ACT (EFCA) and what it means for American workers in today's time of economic crisis.

7 p.m., Thursday, May 21, 2009
Elk Grove Township Hall
2400 S. Arlington Heights Road Arlington Heights

Moderator: CHRISTINE CEGELIS, NEILADA Chapter Board Member

Panelists will include:

- DONNA CONROY, Bright Future Jobs
- ELENA MARCHESCHI, Director of Strategic Affairs, Chicago & Midwest Regional Joint Board Workers United/an SEIU Affiliate; and
- JIM WALL, Political Activist

A printable flyer is available online (<http://tinyurl.com/dnxsfg>).

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL 312-348-6074, EXT. 705

Stop Racial Profiling in Illinois

In 2003, then-State Senator Barack Obama led the effort to require that all law enforcement agencies record and report information about the ethnicity of drivers whom they stop and search in the course of their duties. This information became a part of the Traffic Stop Statistical Study. This study is scheduled to end in 2010. Over the past four years, those reports have indicated that that law enforcement officers appear to single out motorists of color for a higher number of "consent searches" as part of routine traffic stops.

For example, in 2007, the Illinois State Police asked for consent to search the cars of Hispanic drivers four times as often as white drivers, and asked for permission to search the autos of African American drivers three times as often as whites. Even more alarming, when police conducted a consent search, they were nearly two times as likely to find contraband in the cars driven by white motorists as those with African American drivers. They were more than eight times more likely to find contraband in the autos of white drivers than those of their Hispanic counterparts subject to such searches. In the wake of these revelations, no one in law enforcement offered an innocent explanation for the disparity.

It is not clear that the indicated racial profiling has improved. This year the Illinois House of Representatives passed House Bill 648, which would extend the monitoring for the Traffic Stop Statistical Study in hopes that the situation will improve. The bill will soon be under consideration by the State Senate.

Some law enforcement officers oppose the bill, and want the monitoring to end. Other observers think it is necessary to keep the study going to try to make the practices of law enforcement in our state more just. Contact your state senator today, and urge her or him to support House Bill 648 as a step towards ending racial profiling.

ABCUSA NEWS

Other articles from the American Baptist News Service are available at <http://www.abc-usa.org/whoware/newsservice/newsservice.aspx>

National Ministries Invites American Baptists to Two Biennial Luncheons

VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 5/5/09)—Among the events that National Ministries will present June 26-28 at the American Baptist Churches USA 2009 Biennial in Pasadena, CA, are two luncheon programs: “Beneath the Skin: Baptists and Racism” and “Role Models for Walking the Talk in the 21st Century.” “Beneath the Skin: Baptists and Racism,” the program at Saturday’s served luncheon (June 27, 12:30 – 2:30 p.m.), will feature a panel discussion about race and religion, based on a DVD produced by the Baptist Center for Ethics with National Ministries’ support. Dr. Robert Parham, founder and executive director of the center and its www.ethicsdaily.com, will moderate the discussion.

Reared in Nigeria as the child of missionaries, Parham holds a doctorate from Baylor University, a master of divinity from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and a bachelor’s degree in foreign service from Georgetown University. His columns have appeared in a number of daily newspapers, and he has been featured on CNN’s Talk Back Live, MSNBC’s Chat, ABC World News Tonight, Fox News, and National Public Radio’s Morning Edition.

Panelists include:

- Dr. Juan Martinez, assistant dean, Hispanic Church Studies department, and associate professor, Hispanic Studies and Pastoral Leadership, School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA
- Rev. Katie Choy-Wong, pastor, New Life Christian Fellowship, Castro Valley, CA
- Dr. Warren H. Stewart Sr., pastor, First Institutional Baptist Church, Phoenix, AZ
- Rev. Rudy Carrasco, executive director, Harambee Christian Family Center, Pasadena, AZ

“Role Models for Walking the Talk in the 21st Century,” the program at Sunday’s served luncheon (June 28, 12:30 – 2:30 p.m.), will feature Baptist minister Al Staggs re-enacting the lives of major theologians and social justice activists Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Clarence Jordan.

Staggs holds a doctorate from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary; a Master of Theology from Harvard Divinity School, where he was named Charles E. Merrill Fellow in 1983; a master of religious education from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; and a bachelor’s degree from Hardin-Simmons University. He also interned in Clinical Pastoral Education at Baylor University Medical Center. After 20 years in parish and chaplaincy ministry, Staggs realized his passion in working for peace and justice by bringing notable figures to life through dramatization and sharing their relevant messages with audiences throughout the world.

Unsubsidized tickets for each luncheon cost \$35 per person; subsidized tickets cost \$30 per person. Visit www.abc-usa.org to register for ABCUSA’s 2009 Biennial and these inspirational luncheons.

Robert and Margene Phares to Receive Sparrowk Award

VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 5/5/09)—Robert and Margene Phares, active members of their community and their church—First Baptist Church of North Platte, NE—are the recipients of the prestigious Cora and John Sparrowk President’s Award of the American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA).

The award, which will be presented at the Biennial Meeting of the ABCUSA June 26-28 in Pasadena, CA, honors American Baptists who have made outstanding contributions to the life of the American Baptist Churches USA, to their own church, and to their own lives and those in their community.

The Phares are leading lives that make a difference.

Until her retirement, Margene was a counselor and co-owner of Professional Christian Counseling Services, which had a sliding fee scale that made counseling available for those who could not afford it otherwise.

She has also been instrumental in helping to raise funds for two major projects: The Connection, a homeless shelter now under construction in the community; and a functional, child-friendly facility for the North Platte Community Day Care Center, which she helped found.

Margene has served on numerous boards, including those of the Rape and Domestic Abuse Program, the Community Domestic Violence Intervention center, the Salvation Army, and the Scholarship Committee for the Mid-Nebraska Community Foundation.

She has served as the President of the American Baptist Churches of Nebraska, and on the boards of Central Baptist Seminary, KS, and the University of Sioux Falls, SD.

In their church, Margene has chaired the Mission Committee and the Board of Christian Education, as well as serving as a deaconess, Sunday school teacher, and small group leader.

Together, the Phares lead Marriage Enrichment seminars and lay ministry training weekends, as well as annual mission work with Child Evangelism Fellowship

When he was 28 years old, Robert Phares was elected mayor of North Platte, the youngest mayor of a first-class city in the state at that time. Thus began a lifetime of service to his community.

During his tenure as mayor, Robert engineered the merger of a protestant and Catholic hospital into a single hospital owned and operated by a nonprofit corporation. He then served on its board for 24 years, and led a 7.1 million dollar expansion during his time as the board's chair.

In addition to running Phares Financial Services, an independent financial services and planning firm, he has been active in North Platte's Rotary Club and Chamber of Commerce, the North Platte Development Corporation, and the League of Nebraska Municipalities.

He has served on numerous boards, including the Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska and the board of American Baptist Homes of the Midwest, which operates continuous care communities for the elderly, group homes for teens, and low income housing projects in several states.

With all of his activities, Robert has always had time for their church, serving as a Sunday school teacher, youth sponsor, deacon, lay speaker, and congregational president.

The Phares have three children and five grandchildren.

Mercado, Long-Time American Baptist Pastor and Leader, Dies

VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 4/30/09)—Rev. Víctor Mercado, long-time American Baptist pastor and leader, passed away on Monday, April 27, 2009.

Mercado earned a Bachelor of Business Administration degree at the University of Puerto Rico and worked for the General Electric Instrument Corporation before pursuing his seminary training at the Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico.

After seminary, Mercado served pastorates of churches in Caguas, Trujillo Alto, and Santurce. He also served as the president and treasurer of the Baptist Convention of Puerto Rico, served on the ABC Nominating Committee for several years, and held various positions on the Evangelical Council of Puerto Rico.

In 1975, Mercado joined the board of American Baptist International Ministries as area director for Latin America. He later served as the area director for the Caribbean. His ministry focused on training leaders, strengthening congregations, encouraging inclusivity, and pursuing interdenominational cooperation. He was passionate about a holistic approach to evangelism and church growth, including prophetic and justice concerns. In 1984, Mercado was named the associate director of the Overseas Division of International Ministries.

In 1992, to honor his distinguished work in Latin America, Mercado received the Arturo Parajon Order award—the highest distinction granted by the Baptist Convention of Nicaragua. He received an honorary doctoral degree, “Honoris Causa”, in Latin American Theology, from the Baptist Seminary of Mexico. He also received numerous other honors and commendations from various American Baptist organizations, including the Hispanic Caucus and the Baptist Churches of Puerto Rico.

When Mercado joined International Ministries, he commenting on how he viewed his ministry in the ABC, saying, “I see my work as being an interpreter to American Baptists, and of finding ways to help Hispanic people. Not all Hispanic people are alike; each country and group has its differences, and we must learn about them.”

Mercado knew how to defend and give a privileged place to ABC mission partners in Latin America and the Caribbean, where he was considered a champion of their cause. He interpreted the missionary cause as key to liberation, integrity and dignity.

Reid Trulson, executive director of International Ministries, said, “Victor was a wonderful inspiration. His strong voice for justice was both powerful and prophetic. He leaves a rich legacy of faith and leadership in the American Baptist Churches, and his work will continue to bless International Ministries and our partners for years to come. He will be missed.”

Said American Baptist General Secretary A. Roy Medley, “Rev. Mercado was a tireless voice for economic and political justice. While his words were not always easy to hear, they were always offered out of concern for the well-being of the poor and oppressed, the health of the nations, and the integrity of the Church of Jesus Christ. It was my personal privilege to have worked with Rev. Mercado when he served with International Ministries and I with National Ministries. Through our conversations and our work together, he stretched my thinking, deepened my concepts of justice, and broadened my perspective. For this, I am forever grateful. We in the American Baptist Churches were made a better denomination and better disciples of Jesus because of Victor.”

A viewing was held at Primera Iglesia Bautista de Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico, on Wednesday, April 29, followed by a memorial service celebrating Mercado’s life and ministry, and a funeral service was held April 30 at the Funeraria Ehret in Rio Piedras.

Hampton University Ministers’ Conference—ABCUSA Reception

The 95th Annual Hampton University Ministers’ Conference will take place June 7-12, 2009. American Baptist attendees will be welcomed to the ABCUSA reception at 9:30 p.m. on Wednesday, June 10 in Conference Room A of the Embassy Suites at Hampton Roads Conference Center. This reception, which is being sponsored by ABCUSA’s Board of National Ministries, Board of International Ministries and the Office of the General Secretary, will provide ample opportunity for networking, fellowship and conversation around American Baptist life. It will also provide the opportunity to meet and greet current and former presidents of the conference, as well as Rev. Debra Haggins O’Bryant, the new and first female Chaplain and Executive Secretary of the Hampton Conference. Everyone attending the Conference from ABCMC is encouraged to attend the ABCUSA reception.



PEACE NEWS

Mother's Day for Peace May 10

A joyful, family-oriented celebration of Mother's Day will take place on Sunday, May 10 from 1 to 3 p.m. in Harmony Park, at the corner of Vail and Campbell Avenues in Arlington Heights. Inspired by the life, words and actions of Julia Ward Howe, who wrote the Mother's Day Proclamation in 1870, Mother's day for Peace is a celebration to reclaim the original meaning of Mother's Day. Mrs. Howe called for a day when all mothers would unite in a commitment to protect our global family.

The afternoon events will include music and family-oriented entertainment. Speakers will include Sarah Jerome, superintendent of Arlington Heights School District 25, and Karen Johnson, Illinois State Coordinator of the Peace Alliance Campaign to establish a U.S. Department of Peace. A number of organizations focusing on peace-making and families will have displays at the event.

In case of rain, the program will take place at Homefirst Health Services, 2000 Golf Rd (near the intersection of Golf and Wilke), Rolling Meadows. A flier promoting this event is attached with this issue of *eWind*. For more information and/or clarification, please contact Johanna Navari Welch at 847-567-1228 or nwscholasticmoms@gmail.com.

Suburban Peace Rally May 9

Families for Peace will hold its monthly silent vigil at the northeast corner of Northwest Highway and Arlington Heights Rd. from **3:00 to 4:00 pm, Saturday, 5/9/09**. Bring your own signs or hold one of ours. Everyone is welcome.

Families for Peace members are: Congregational United Church of Christ, Sisters of the Living Word, Viatorian Community, Social Action Committee of Palatine Countryside Universalist Church and the Women's Resource Center.

Northwest Suburban Meeting May 13

The Northwest Suburban Peace and Education Project will have its monthly meeting on Wednesday, May 13 at the South Church, 501 S. Emerson Street, Mount Prospect, at 7 p.m. For more information about the work of this group, please visit www.nwsubpep.org. All who want to help suburban youth consider career opportunities in peace-making and social change are welcome to come to the meeting.

Close-Up Afghanistan May 20; AFSC Benefit June 4

This information is from the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC).

The next in AFSC's War in Focus series, "Close-Up Afghanistan," will be taking place at Grace Place, 637 S. Dearborn, Chicago on May 20, 7-9 p.m.. Peter Lems, who was recently in Afghanistan, will be reporting on and providing images from a recent fact-finding mission he participated in there. He will provide some perspective on new ways of thinking about the war in Afghanistan.

Also, AFSC's annual benefit will be taking place on June 4th. This year's benefit is a private preview of our "Recruitment Posters for Peace" exhibition at Roosevelt University's Gage Gallery, 18 S Michigan Avenue, Chicago, a much-appreciated co-sponsor of the event. The exhibition features the talent of local high school and regional college students who were asked to think of positive ways that they can contribute to the peace movement and convince their peers to join them through the creation of posters.

It will be a very dynamic collection of work that we are excited to present on June 4. The program will be 6-9 p.m. Tickets are \$35, or \$20 for students/persons with low income.

Space is limited, so if you haven't yet done so, RSVP to Karen Light at klight@afsc.org. See <http://www.afsc.org/chicago/ht/d/sp/i/77815/pid/77815> for more information.

PRAYER REQUESTS

Please pray for world peace.

Please lift up in prayer ABCMC's own Ausberto Guerra. For two semesters he is serving as a volunteer missionary arranged through American Baptist Churches, USA. International ministries, at the University Baptist Foundation in Colombia South America as a professor of pastoral care.

Please pray for God's guidance to those who are seeking to make the Illinois process for funding public education more just.

Please pray for healing and courage for those facing surgery.

Please pray for ABC missionaries Chuck and Ruth Fox, who work with the approximately 75,000 Akha hill tribe people living in Northern Thailand. The Foxes' ministry focuses on evangelism, pastoral care, leadership development and women's ministries.

Please pray for ABC missionaries Wayne and Katherine Niles in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Wayne has been helping Congolese people through a development project to grow more food. Katherine is working with a group of Congolese Christian professionals in training community leaders, urban and rural, to be promoters of health in their communities.

CALENDAR

May 9—Family Council meeting, North Shore Baptist Church, 5244 N. Lakewood Avenue, Chicago. Registration opens at 8:30 a.m. The meeting begins with worship at 9 a.m., and concludes with lunch at noon. Suggested donation for lunch: \$5. Please let Tony Rake at the ABCMC office know of your attendance and lunch plans by noon on Wednesday, May 6. Contact Tony at tony@abcmc.org or 773-804-1655, or send him a fax at 773-804-1656.

May 9—Peace Rally, Arlington Heights Road and Northwest Highway, 3-4 p.m.

May 9—Mardi Gras dinner and party, Cajun and Creole foods, mask and costume contest, North Shore Baptist Church, 5244 N. Lakewood Avenue, Chicago; adult donation \$10; child (3-12) donation \$6; 5:30 p.m.

May 10—Mother's Day for Peace, Harmony Park (Vail and Campbell), Arlington Heights, 1-3 p.m.

May 12—Lobbying Day for Educational Funding Reform, Springfield. Call Alice Greene at 708-337-0524 or 773-286-6800 to get the information.

May 13—Northwest Suburban Peace and Education Project monthly meeting, South Church, 501 S. Emerson Street, Mount Prospect, 7 p.m.

May 17—Eighth Annual Walk for a Just Peace in Israel and Palestine, Oak Park. For more information, please contact www.cjip.org

May 20—"Close-Up Afghanistan," Grace Place, 637 S. Dearborn, Chicago, 7-9 p.m.

May 21—Program on Employee Free Choice Act, Elk Grove Township Hall, 2400 S. Arlington Heights Road, Arlington Heights, 7 p.m.

May 22-23—Metro Chicago Youth Spring Overnight Camping event.

May 30—ABCMC's Fourth Annual Disciples' (Picnic) Dinner, 2 p.m.-6 p.m., Judson University, Elgin.

June 4—American Friends Service Committee's annual benefit, Gage Gallery, Roosevelt University, 18 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, 6-9 p.m. For more information, please see <http://www.afsc.org/chicago/ht/d/sp/i/77815/pid/77815>

June 4-6—Baptist History and Heritage Society's annual conference, Huntsville, Alabama, "Celebrating 400 Years of Being Baptist," <http://www.baptisthistory.org/annualmeeting2009.pdf>

June 6—Car Wash to raise funds for North Shore Baptist Church's mission trip to New Orleans, Thybony Paint and Wallpaper, 5440 N. Clark, Chicago, 9a.m.-5 p.m. Donation: \$5.

June 7-12—95th Annual Hampton University Ministers; Conference, Hampton, Virginia.

June 10—Northwest Suburban Peace and Education Project monthly meeting, South Church, 501 S. Emerson Street, Mount Prospect, 7 p.m.

June 10—ABCUSA reception at Hampton University Ministers' Conference, Conference Room "A," Embassy Suites at Hampton Roads Conference Center, 9:30 p.m.

June 13—Sing to Live Community Chorus concert, Music Institute of Chicago Nichols Concert Hall, 1490 Chicago Avenue, Evanston, 7:30 p.m.

June 13-20—North Shore Baptist Church mission trip to New Orleans.

June 25-26—Pre-Biennial Event with Leonard Sweet, Pasadena, California.

June 26-28—ABCUSA Biennial Meeting, Pasadena, California.

June 28-July 3—Holy Spirit Renewal Ministries conference, Green Lake Conference Center, Wisconsin.

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

July 20-25—Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America conference, Weber State University, Ogden, Utah. See www.bpfna.org for more information.

July 25-31—National AB Women's Conference, Lake Williamson Christian Center, Carlinville, Illinois.

July 27—Tony Rake preaches at Federated Church of Wauconda, 200 S. Barrington Road, Wauconda, 9:45 a.m.

August 3-7—Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders, presented by Lombard Mennonite Peace Center at St. Barnabas Episcopal Church, 22W 415 Butterfield Road, Glen Ellyn. For information, please visit www.LMPeaceCenter.org.

November 3-7—2009 Black Church Conference, Holiday Inn Hotel and Conference Center, 500 Holiday Plaza Drive, Matteson, Illinois.

November 14—ABCMC Annual Meeting

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



Reflections

Vol VIII no. 9, May 1, 2009

Thinking Theologically About the Common Good

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

"Fleeing"

It pains me to say it, but it appears that Jesus is anti-laborer.

Not "anti-labor," mind you, since, as far as I can tell, the New Testament is silent on the rights of workers to organize.

But, according to the Gospel of John (10th chapter, verses 11 – 13), Jesus despises and condemns the hired help.

This comes in a section of that Gospel having to do with shepherding. According to the gospel-writer, Jesus says he is the "good" or "noble" or "model" shepherd. And what makes him a good or noble or a model shepherd? Because, Jesus says, "I'm willing to die for the sheep."

That's in contrast to the "hired hands" who don't own the sheep and, when they see a wolf or a wolf pack coming, don't stick around to protect the lives of the sheep but flee. The laborers, who don't have any interest and investment in the sheep but only in themselves, run away. So the wolves come and the untended sheep scatter and some are snatched and maimed for life, and some are killed.

The good or noble or model shepherd wouldn't let that happen, according to Jesus. In fact, the exemplary shepherd will put her or his life on the line so the sheep aren't scattered or hurt and don't lose their lives.

(It's probably important to note here that Jesus is, at least implicitly,

critical of some shepherds who, while invested in the sheep, aren't willing to risk their own lives for the well-being of the flock they tend. That, after all, is what distinguishes the good or noble or model shepherd from the others: the willingness to sacrifice oneself for the good and safety of the sheep.)

A little later in this passage (verses 16 – 17) Jesus also makes it clear that he has more than one fold of sheep and that he is invested in all of the sheep that are his. Evidently, no one fold of sheep is favored over the others. He leads them all. He knows them all. He is willing to die for them all.

All of this is in contrast to the hired hands who flee whenever they see danger approaching.

* * * * *

The wolves are coming. The wolves are already here. And more wolves are likely on the way. The worldwide economic crisis threatens the sheep everywhere.

The question, then, is whether we have hired hands or shepherds – especially shepherds who follow the model of the good shepherd – looking after the flocks. Yes, the plural applies: our *flocks*. In my own state of Illinois the response to that question is not encouraging.

Like most states, there's a big hole in the budget here – an \$11 billion hole. After years of deliberate neglect – of governors and legislators refusing to face up to the fact that the state has a structural deficit that is putting the state in more peril each year – we finally have a governor who has actually proposed an increase in the income tax.

The truth is that even the new governor's proposal isn't enough to take care of the sheep, *all* of the sheep in the *many* sheepfolds. That is, his proposal closes the \$11 billion deficit but does next to nothing to provide the funding necessary to meet neither the growing number of people who are suffering nor the stark inequalities that have been allowed to widen over the past decades.

But as inadequate as the governor's proposal is, his potential rivals for the governorship are shamelessly suggesting that no tax increase is necessary, that no tax reforms are necessary, that no fundamental reordering of priorities in order to protect all the sheep in all of the sheepfolds is necessary. With only a few exceptions, that's the position of most of the state's legislators and most of the editorial boards of the state's media.

They are fleeing. They are fleeing for their political life.

In Jesus' terms, they are *hired hands*, these political leaders and opinion shapers.

Our state has the opportunity, for example, to help protect the *lambs* – to create a tax structure that would provide equal educational funding for all the *children* in Illinois and thereby give them an equal shot at making good on their God-given talents.

That's what good shepherds would do for those lambs in the face of the wolves that have been circling around some sheepfolds for a good long time and are now ready to attack.

But we're stuck with hired hands – hired hands, just as expected, who are fleeing the sheep and the lambs.

Other states have their share of hired hands, too.

Or maybe it isn't just the politicians and opinion makers.

In a democracy, where supposedly "the people" rule, it would be "we the people" who should be the shepherds.

And for those of us who are followers of the good, the noble, the model shepherd, are we, just like the hired hands, fleeing?

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