

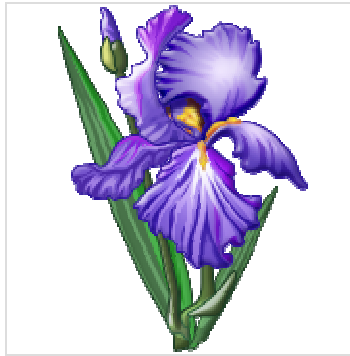
Metro Chicago

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 20, 2009



In this Issue

ABCMC NEWS.....	2
Be There!	2
4 th Annual ABCMC Disciples' (Picnic) Dinner	3
Camp Grow Ministries Board Meeting.....	3
Thinking Theologically.....	3
Kids and Violence.....	4
Please Contact State Legislators	4
Free Items.....	5
NEWS FROM ABCMC CONGREGATIONS	5
Twentieth Anniversary Celebration.....	5
The South Church of Mount Prospect Presents June 6 Music Recital	5
Going Green in ABCMC	6
Stewardship of Creation.....	6
Green Gram from Rudy Gartner	6
COMMUNITY NEWS	6

On School Funding	6
Faith in Action	7
Pay Day Loan Reform	8
End of Life Planning.....	9
Globalization for the Common Good	9
Clergy and Lay Leadership Summit V for HIV/AIDS Community Outreach	9
Sing to Live Concert	11
June Is Torture Awareness Month	11
ABCUSA NEWS	12
Ken Blazier, Longtime American Baptist Leader, Dies	12
Women in Ministry at Biennial 2009.....	13
BJC's Walker Meets With Saudi Education Officials	13
PEACE NEWS.....	13
Life in the Spirit	13
Longing for Peace in the Middle East.....	14
HEALTH CARE NEWS.....	15
Community Summit on Health Care Reform	15
Health Care Pulpit Supply	15
Pearls of Wisdom.....	15
Summer Celebration	16
PRAYER REQUESTS.....	17
BOOK NOOK.....	17
So Beautiful: Divine Design for Life and the Church	17
CALENDAR.....	17
Thinking Theologically.....	20
"Staying in Love"	20

ABCMC NEWS

Be There!



ABCMC's Executive Minister Larry Greenfield is working on his jump shot, and is ready to take on all comers at the Disciples' Event on May 30. He's looking forward to seeing you there. It will be a good time!

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 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.

Pastors and moderators, please phone the ABCMC office at 773-804-1655 to let us know about how many folks are coming from your church.

Camp Grow Ministries Board Meeting

Thank you to Larry Greenfield for this report.

The board of directors of Camp Grow Ministries met for its semi-annual meeting on Thursday, May 14, at the American Baptist Assembly/Green Lake Conference Center, with four of ABCMC's representatives present (Denise Janssen, David Scoble, T. J. Litwiler, and Larry Greenfield). Three major items of business received extended attention. First, the board adopted a budget for the 2009 fiscal year that reflected both the economic stress so many institutions are facing and the board's concern to provide additional staff backup for the Camp Director, Paul Ethington during this period in which he is undergoing medical treatment. Second, in light of the budget adopted it was agreed that more fundraising activities would be need to be developed, including those in the Chicago area. Finally, in the continuing discussions about board governance issues, it was agreed that attention needed to be given not only to the role of officers and staff but also board members and the constituencies they represent. The Camp Director updated the board on physical plant developments, which include taking down the old barn and replacing it with a First Baptist Church of Maywood Welcome Center and work on the tee-pee village shower house. Paul Ethington also reported that camp registrations are steady for most programs this summer and that, compared with other camps in the area, the future of Camp Grow is relatively strong. The board of directors will meet again on Friday, September 25.

Thinking Theologically

ABCMC's Executive Minister Larry Greenfield writes a weekly column, "Thinking Theologically about the Common Good," for the biweekly electronic newsletter of Protestants for the Common Good. Larry's latest column, "Staying in Love," is at the end of this issue of *eWind*. Be sure to take the time to read it. It's thought-provoking as always.

Kids and Violence

TO: ABCMC Church Leaders

FROM: Larry Greenfield

RE: KIDS AND VIOLENCE THIS SUMMER

We all share a deep sadness for the children who have been killed in violent incidents over the past months in our Chicago metropolitan area. AND THERE IS GROWING CONCERN THAT THIS VIOLENCE WILL EVEN INTENSIFY OVER THIS COMING SUMMER.

We are being asked to give special attention to this most serious matter in our congregations on Sunday, June 14. Please make plans now to use worship, educational programs, and discussions to do three things:

1) To pray together for children and youth who have lost their lives, their families, and for an end to violence in our communities.

2) To find concrete ways, individually and as a congregation, to be involved in efforts to combat violence in schools and neighborhoods.

3) To consider and undertake steps to build a safety net for children this summer and into the fall in the community where your church is located.

Again, please do your part to address this issue in your congregation on Sunday, June 14.

Please Contact State Legislators

TO: ABCMCers

FROM: Larry Greenfield

As has been noted regularly in the newspapers and news programs, our Illinois General Assembly will be voting on significant political reforms for our State in the last few weeks of this spring session. There is a lot at stake in terms of how our democracy will work or continue not to work in our State. We will either continue to be one of the most politically corrupt states in the nation, or we will engage in a political reformation that change the way of doing business politically in Illinois.

There are all sorts of pressures on our legislators to do as little as possible. The only way of countering that pressure is for each of us to let our senators and representatives know that we want thoroughgoing change that the Illinois Reform Commission has recommended.

A letter that I helped draft for the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago is attached with this issue of *eWind*.

I ask you as a Christian citizen to take the few minutes it would take to call your legislators and share your views with them.

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 coffee table – glass top and metal legs
- 3 computer monitors
- 1 computer printer
- 1 keyboard for a computer
- 1 central processing unit (CPU)
- 1 Adventure in Sharing Wheel for World Mission

NEWS FROM ABCMC CONGREGATIONS

Twentieth Anniversary Celebration

On Sunday, May 31, the First Baptist Church of Waukegan will celebrate the twentieth anniversary of Keith Cerk as their pastor. The celebration service will be at 11 a.m. Larry Greenfield, Executive Minister of the American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago, will be the guest preacher. A celebration luncheon will be held at 12:30 p.m., following the worship service. We extend our congratulations to Keith and the congregation as they celebrate this milestone in their ministry together.

The South Church of Mount Prospect Presents June 6 Music Recital

The South Church is proud to present the second in its 2009 series of music recitals, as it warmly welcomes The Chicago Pan-American Ensemble on Saturday, June 6, 2009, at 7 p.m.

Formed by husband and wife American cellist Andrew Snow and Mexican pianist Beatriz Helguera, the Pan-American Ensemble performs a standard cello and piano repertoire, but also engages top artists to perform chamber music including trios, quartets and quintets. In addition to Snow and Helguera, the June 6 recital will feature guest violinists Gregory Maytan and Mathias Tacke. The afternoon program will include the Mozart quartets in G Minor and E flat Major, as well as the Frescobaldi–Cassado Toccata for cello and piano.

According to its founders, a major objective of the Ensemble is to reach new audiences (especially young listeners) and make them aware of the richness and quality of composers of North and South America who have influenced not only the Americas but the rest of the world, as well as to introduce audiences to new works from contemporary composers.

The South Church is located at 501 South Emerson Street in Mount Prospect, Ill., and is wheelchair-accessible for those with physical limitations. A suggested donation is \$10.00 per adult, and \$5.00 for students.

Going Green in ABCMC

Stewardship of Creation

Baptists may hold a variety of perspectives about the care of the earth. The American Baptist Policy Statement on Ecology, adopted in 1989, states:

The best understanding of the Biblical attitude of humanity's relationship with the Creation can be gained by a study of the Greek words which are the foundation of the New Testament. The word "stewardship" comes from the Greek words for house and management. The Greek word which is commonly translated "stewardship" is the root word for economics and ecology. The literal translation of steward is manager of the household. As such, we are all called to be managers of God's household, the earth and all that is in it.

Our responsibility as stewards is one of the most basic relationships we have with God. It implies a great degree of caring for God's creation and all God's creatures. The right relationship embodied in the everlasting covenant to which Isaiah refers. There can be no justice without right relationships of creatures with one another and with all of creation. Eco-justice is the vision of the garden in Genesis -- the realm and the reality of right relationship.

Last week some Southern Baptists held a Bible conference on the environment. Please take a look at the Ethics Daily article by Robert Parham, executive editor of EthicsDaily.com and executive director of its parent organization, the Baptist Center for Ethics. Parham, a Southern Baptist, writes about Southern Baptists on the issue in his article "Disclaiming Gore Is Weak-Kneed Start to Baptist Creation Care Conference" at <http://www.ethicsdaily.com/news.php?viewStory=14209>

Green Gram from Rudy Gartner

Rudy Gartner and Art Myren, members of Morgan Park Baptist Church, provide a "green gram" for the church's weekly newsletter. Thank you to the church for sharing the articles with ABCMC.org.

Green Gram: It pays to save on utility expenditures and it also helps to reduce the proliferation of greenhouse gases. The Environmental Concerns Working Group of the Lutheran Metro Chicago Synod offers interest-free loans to churches for upgrades to their lighting over a period of 3-5 years. An energy audit is first needed to establish a baseline which serves to quantify the projected usage reductions. The seed money pays for the upgrade and the loans are paid off through the savings. More info at: www.webofcreation.org/LENS/metrochgo.html

COMMUNITY NEWS

On School Funding

This article is from Alice Burnette Greene, pastor of Irving Park Baptist Church.

If the leaders in Illinois were to come up with a plan that would discourage business development and homeownership in the poorer neighborhoods, I expect there would be a general outcry of "Unfair!." Yet, that's just what's happening in our state. Because Illinois schools are primarily funded through property taxes, the poorer districts must impose higher property tax rates in order to provide minimal funding for their schools. Who would move into a neighborhood with a high property tax rate when there are other choices?

If the leaders in our state were to plan a public school system that gave more money to schools in wealthy neighborhoods than to schools in poorer neighborhoods, I expect there would be a great cry of "Unfair!" But that's what we do. The districts with high property values are able to impose lower property tax rates to provide much more money to fund their *public* schools. With tax rates that are sometimes twice as high, the poorer districts can barely fund basic necessities. The wide disparity in the quality of *public* school education throughout our state is atrocious.

If our leaders told us that we shouldn't spend available resources to remedy this inequity, I hope someone would think that's not right. Illinois is the 5th-richest state in our nation, yet it ranks 49th among the states in the amount of state-provided funding for schools. And among the states that impose income taxes, the 3% imposed in Illinois ranks it the lowest of them all. An increase of the income tax rate from 3% to 5% would still leave Illinois with the 5th lowest income tax rate.

Educators know that it costs twice as much to adequately provide educational support for children from broken and impoverished homes. It is not difficult to speculate that by providing so much less, Illinois continues to fuel the devastating cycle of poverty in the lives of these children and their communities. It also stands to reason that it would be more cost efficient in the long run to work with them when they are young and in school most of the day, rather than to wait until they are older and then to send them to unemployment and welfare, at best, or juvenile homes, jails and prisons at worst. And for those who will shout that money will be siphoned off to the south side of Chicago, studies have clearly shown that this problem is not just about Chicago's south side children. Most of the poorer districts are in downstate Illinois. It has been proven that money does make a difference; the fear that funds will be misspent is not an answer to the problem.

It is sad to know that our legislative leaders have been claiming to want to fix this problem for years, but they haven't been able to figure out how to do it, even with a Democratic majority. A proposal now pending is to increase income taxes with appropriate exemptions, broaden the sales tax (as most states have already done), provide property tax relief where it's most needed, and then to fund the schools at the minimum level deemed appropriate by the Illinois Education Funding Advisory Board. But many of our leaders shake in their shoes because they fear the people will scream if their taxes are raised. If our leaders are so afraid of raising taxes, why can't they use their own creative intelligence to come up with an alternative plan to fix what they know is a serious problem?

And why is everybody who knows what's going on so silent about this? Where are our faith leaders? Where are our civic leaders? Where are the newspaper editorials? Where are our morals? My worst fear is that the deafening silence in leadership is caused by the fact that these precious children who are being lost and hurt by this ridiculous system are not theirs.

Faith in Action

This request is from Protestants for the Common Good.

**Faith In Action for Education Funding
May 21 Call-In Day
Act Now for Education Funding Reform**

Only 12 days left in the 2009 Legislative Session - and still no budget in sight!

In response to the financial crisis in Illinois, Protestants for the Common Good and our Faith in Action partner, the Community Renewal Society, have designated Thursday, **May 21st as a Call-In Day** to add our voices to others across the state who are calling for the Governor and the General Assembly to work together to generate more revenue for education and other critical human services.

We need your help! Please act now!

We ask that you **make two phone calls**, one to Governor Quinn and the other to Senator Cullerton, on Thursday, May 21st:

Governor Pat Quinn (217) 782-0244
Senate President John Cullerton (217) 782-2728

First: **Call the number(s) above and say:**

"Hi, my name is _____ and I would like to speak to Governor Quinn (or President Cullerton)."

If told that he is not available, ask to whom you should speak regarding the budget. When connected or allowed to leave a message, say:

"My name is _____ and I live in _____. I am calling on Governor Quinn (or Senator Cullerton) to support an income tax increase from 3% to 5% and an expansion of the sales tax base in the budget to fully fund the Education Funding Advisory Board level for all our schools in the budget this year, as called for in SB 750. It is vital that we respond to the budget crisis by reforming our state's revenue system and creating adequate and sustainable funding mechanisms especially for our public schools.

My phone number is _____. I look forward to hearing from Governor Quinn (or Senator Cullerton) regarding this vital issue. Thank you for your consideration."

Second: **Recruit five more persons to make calls** to Governor Quinn and President Cullerton. We need to flood their offices with phone calls. It will take all of us working together to make a difference!

Protestants for the Common Good believes that we must have a tax increase in order to generate the new revenue needed to reduce the disparity in education funding across Illinois and pay for human services that contribute to the success of students, e.g., after school programs, health care, adequate nutrition. Elected officials in Springfield say that the people of Illinois do not want a tax increase. We must let them know that we support a tax increase as the best way to generate revenue to fill the current \$11 billion deficit and pay for essential services to children, youth, low income families, the elderly, and those who live with disabilities, mental illness, or addiction problems.

Please make those calls!

Thank you for your advocacy for justice in education funding reform for children in Illinois.

Pay Day Loan Reform

This request is from Citizen Action Illinois, working with religious leaders to help place legal limits on the payday loan industry, which takes advantage of some of our most economically vulnerable fellow citizens.

Now is the time to get in ACTION! After over a year of negotiations with the Consumer Installment Loan industry of Illinois we FINALLY have a bill.

While we have the neutrality of the CILA lenders and the support of the Community Financial Service Association which represents half of the payday lenders of Illinois, we still expect FIERCE opposition from the rest of the payday lenders.

We are expecting **SB 1435 to be heard in the House Financial Institutions as early as this Thursday at 2:30 pm.** This is a very difficult committee to move reform out of. We need all hands on deck. **CALL THE MEMBERS, EMAIL THE MEMBERS, FAX THE MEMBERS.** If you can come to Springfield for the hearing PLEASE COME!!! We will keep you posted if the hearing day or time changes (which it may).

We have attached a fact sheet for you to use for letters, calls etc.

Thank you all for your great work this year. We have a lot of work to do and a very short amount of time to do it in. Please pitch in!!!

As Monsignor Egan always used to say, "What have YOU done for us lately?" Today you can do a lot for reform. CALL, WRITE, FAX, EMAIL.

Together we win!!

End of Life Planning

Living with Intention: Using *Five Wishes* for End-of-Life Planning will be presented on Saturday, June 20 at 6554 N. Rockwell Street, Chicago at 1:30-4:00 p.m. Pre-registration by June 18 is required. The cost will be \$10.

The workshop will introduce *Five Wishes* form, a uniquely accessible and legal tool for proactive planning about the kind of care you want to receive in expected or unexpected end-of-life circumstances, as well as to whom you wish to give the legal rights for overseeing such care. The program will be co-sponsored by Living Well Ministries and Rainbow Hospice and Palliative Care. The guest Presenter will be Sandra J. Rowe, M.A., Community Relations Coordinator for Rainbow Hospice and Palliative Care.

To register, please contact Jacki Belile at 773.655.4357 or jacki@livingwellministries.net.

Globalization for the Common Good

Common Ground invites us all to participate in a conference that will take place in Chicago, Sunday, May 31 to Thursday, June 4, 2009. It's the Eighth Annual Conference on Globalization for the Common Good. The theme of the gathering is "Globalization: the Challenge to America". Participants from the Chicago area and from all over the world will gather at Loyola University's Lake Shore Campus for 5 days of powerful presentations, dialogue, entertainment, and fun.

The price is \$150 US for 5-day registration - with bargain rates (\$75 US) for Seniors (65+) and Students w/ ID. Register online at <http://www.eventbrite.com/event/239635757>

Clergy and Lay Leadership Summit V for HIV/AIDS Community Outreach



Continuing the Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., an event "The Church at Ground Zero: A Call to Respond" will be held on Saturday, May 23, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at McCormick Theological Seminary, in the Augustana Chapel at Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, 1100 East 55th Street, Chicago. This event is FREE and open to the public. Breakfast and lunch are provided. Registration is required. For more information and registration, please contact Ms. Priscilla Rodriguez at 773-947-6310 or prodriqu@mccormick.edu.

OVERVIEW:

Historically, the African-American church has been the central, and in some instances, the most influential, institution in advancing social, political, and economic justice agendas for black communities. In recent years, with the launch of the Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives, we've witnessed a renewed commitment on the part of African-American clergy leaders to play an integral role in helping to ameliorate social and health disparities plaguing black communities. And while the black church has had some success in this role, some clergy and community leaders believe the black church must bolster its participation in the movement to prevent HIV AIDS in black communities.

For the past 4 years, a collaboration of Chicago area faith-based institutions and community based organizations has convened a one-day Summit at McCormick Theological Seminary to engage clergy and lay leaders in a dialogue around the role of the black church and its response HIV AIDS. This year the Summit will move beyond dialogue and identify feasible and sustainable strategies for strengthening the role of the black church in combating the epidemic.

Summit participants will be able to select from a total of 4 interactive workshops offered twice during the entire day. Each participant is able to experience 2 workshops. See description of Clergy & Lay Leadership Summit V Workshops for additional details. Registered Summit participants who are present for the entire day and participate in 2 workshop sessions will be eligible to receive Continuing Education Units (CEUs) from McCormick Theological Seminary free of charge.

Summit Objectives:

- . Identify the tools, resources, and support faith-based organizations need to provide sustained leadership in HIV/AIDS prevention, education, and awareness in black communities.
- . Survey African-American clergy leadership attitudes and perceptions about HIV AIDS and de-construct some of the myths and misperceptions leadership may have about the epidemic.
- . Create a safe space for clergy and lay leaders to candidly share their opinion about the challenges the black church faces in combating HIV AIDS.
- . Educate clergy and lay leadership about options for referring congregants and others to HIV/AIDS treatment networks.

PROGRAM

Keynote Speaker will be Phill Wilson, CEO, Black AIDS Institute

Guest Speaker will be Dr. Damon Arnold, Director, Illinois Department of Public Health

The Village Indaba

An Indaba is a South African tradition in which community members convene a meeting to debate and reason over matters of law and politics. During the Summit's lunch, we will convene a Village Indaba, a conversational process that challenges participants to discover new insights into questions and issues important to HIV/AIDS ministry in African-American communities. At registration, each participant will receive a survey with five questions related to the Summit's learning objectives. Each lunch table will appoint a person to facilitate a conversation in response to one of the survey questions.

Lead Facilitator: Dr. Deborah Mullen, McCormick Theological Seminary

Workshop I: Establishing an HIV/AIDS Ministry

While some clergy and lay leaders embrace the role of the black church in the movement to prevent and treat HIV AIDS, many have expressed that they don't know how to start an HIV AIDS ministry. Accordingly, this workshop will highlight three (3) Chicago area HIV/AIDS ministries that have received public recognition for their work in this area. Ministry officials will discuss the tools, resources, and support faith-based leaders need to provide sustained leadership in HIV AIDS prevention, education, and advocacy in black communities. They will also discuss some of the challenges and barriers they face in sustaining effective programs.

Panelists: Bishop James Dukes, Liberation Christian Center; Rev. Frederick Schells, Coordinator, HIV Ministry, Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church; Rodney Johnson, Chair, HIV AIDS Support Ministry, United Church of Christ

Facilitator: Rev. Alberta Ware, E.A.G.L.E.S.

Workshop II: Models for Black Churches: Sexuality Education

HIV/AIDS, teen pregnancy, domestic and sexual violence, are impacting the spiritual, social, and economic life of the African-American community. The movement to strengthen and expand the role of religious groups in social services, through the White House Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives, has had a significant effect on sex education in this country. As a place of education and preparation for life, the Black church is called to "break the silence" about sexuality yet the church often

doesn't have the tools to conduct these crucial conversations. This workshop will provide an overview of National Black Church Initiative's faith-based sexuality curricula Keeping It Real!, Breaking the Silence, and Hear Me Now, which were designed specifically for use in African-American congregations." Presenters: Rev. Penny Willis, M. Div., Director Multicultural Programs, The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

Workshop III: Crucial Conversation

Initiated at the 4th Annual Clergy Leadership Summit, this workshop provides a "safe space" for clergy and lay leaders to candidly discuss some of the leading factors that have allowed HIV infection to reach the state of emergency that it has in the African-American community. Participants will be asked to let the spirit of God lead them as we discuss issues of sex, sexuality, and homophobia that are driving the disease in Black America and share information about the challenges the black church faces in combating HIV AIDS.

Facilitators: Rev. Dennis Oglesby, Senior Pastor, Park Ave. United Methodist Church;
Rev. Partrick Shaffer, Pastor, City of Faith Christian Church

Workshop IV: HIV/AIDS, Destroying The Myth & Restoring Faith

Faith based organizations are increasingly being recognized as important gatewaysto healthcare services and care-giving for African-communities in need. However, when it comes to the issue of HIV AIDS, the negative stigma and misperception about the disease keep clergy leaders on the side line. This is a 90 minute group discussion that begins with a theological exploration of the Church's engagement on health and wellness with a particular focus on HIV AIDS.

Presenter(s): Alicia Ozier, Illinois Faith Based Association.

Sing to Live Concert

The Sing to Live Community Chorus will present identical concerts on Saturdays June 6 and June 13. The theme for each concert will be "Emeralds: Music from Eastern Europe." The June 6 concert will be at 7:30 p.m. at the Performing Arts Center of Dominican University, 7900 West Division Street, River Forest. The June 13 concert will be at 7:30 p.m. at the Nichols Concert Hall of the Music Institute of Chicago, 1490 Chicago Avenue, Evanston (near Lake Street Church).

Tickets will be available at the door. General admission is \$20. Seniors (65+) and students with school ID pay \$15.

The Sing to Live Community Chorus provides complimentary tickets to breast cancer survivors, as part of its ministry to provide the gift of music to the breast cancer community. For more information, please email info@singtolive.org or call 773-250-SING.

June Is Torture Awareness Month

The recent release of the "torture memos" has fueled an intensified public debate, and the impending release of additional graphic photos in May will ensure the visibility of this issue into the month of June. Last week's release of the [Pew poll](http://www.cnn.com/2009/US/04/30/religion.torture/) (<http://www.cnn.com/2009/US/04/30/religion.torture/>) showing support for torture among many religious people makes it even clearer that the time is ripe both for a more vigorous religious witness and for engaging our own faith communities in worship and study on this issue.

Please make plans NOW to join NRCAT in marking [Torture Awareness Month](http://www.nrcat.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=298&Itemid=219) (http://www.nrcat.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=298&Itemid=219) by taking at least one of these actions in June.

1. **Now Available!** Organize an educational event for your congregation, using NRCAT's new DVD and discussion guide: "[Ending U.S.-sponsored Torture Forever](http://www.nrcat.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=312&Itemid=236)" (http://www.nrcat.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=312&Itemid=236). You can view the trailer [here](http://www.nrcat.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=313&Itemid=235) (http://www.nrcat.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=313&Itemid=235). You can

order a copy for your congregation [here](#)

(http://www.nrcat.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=271#dvd).

2. Incorporate a prayer or sermon about torture in a worship service during June. You can access a variety of worship resources, including an interfaith prayer and sample sermons [here](#) (http://www.nrcat.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=20&Itemid=49).
3. Make your opposition to torture visible with NRCAT's new banners and bumper stickers. Order today from NRCAT's [Online Store](#) (http://www.nrcat.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=271#new%20banners). If your congregation already has an anti-torture banner, please display it during June.
4. Organize a delegation to visit the local district office of your Member(s) of Congress to advocate for a [Commission of Inquiry](#) (http://www.nrcat.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=277&Itemid=198) and legislation making elements of the President's executive order permanent in law. Members of Congress will most likely be in their home districts during the July 4th recess (June 29 to July 3).

Continue to check NRCAT's [Torture Awareness Month](#) webpage

(http://www.nrcat.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=298&Itemid=219) for further updates and additional resources in the coming weeks.

Please let ABCMC (lynne@abcmc.org) know how you and/or your congregation choose to participate in Torture Awareness Month so we can share it in a future issue of *eWind*.

ABCUSA NEWS

Other articles from the American Baptist News Service are available at

<http://www.abc-usa.org/whoware/newsservice/newsservice.aspx>

Ken Blazier, Longtime American Baptist Leader, Dies

VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 5/12/09)—Dr. Kenneth Blazier, a longtime American Baptist leader, passed away on May 4, at the age of 76. Among other roles, Blazier served as national director of the Ministers-at-Large Program (now Interim Ministries) of the American Baptist Churches USA.

Born in Topeka, KS, on March 17, 1933, he was a graduate of Ottawa University (KS) and the American Baptist Seminary of the West (CA) as well as holding a D.Min. from the New York Theological Seminary. Before retiring in 1995, Blazier served for nine years as national director of the Ministers-at-Large Program, the agency that partners with ABC regions and churches to provide interim leadership for churches during times of transition in pastoral leadership.

Blazier came to that position after serving for almost 20 years on the staff of the Division of Church Education for American Baptist Educational Ministries. His portfolio during those years focused on curriculum interpretation, educational planning, church school administration, and ministry with adults. During that time, Blazier wrote and edited a number of books on planning and administration of Christian education.

Prior to his work on the national denominational staff, Blazier was pastor of the First Baptist Church, Hudson, NY, and the Cazenovia Village Baptist Church, Cazenovia, NY.

After retiring, Blazier led a clergy group, a Bible study, and a Family History Writing Group for Shannondell Retirement Community, where he and his wife have lived. Blazier was also passionate about sharing his love of music, singing in church choirs and local choral groups, including Elmwood Terrace Choir, Norristown Chorale, Wayne Oratorio Society, and Shannondell Singers.

Blazier is survived by his wife, Elaine, a daughter, Lynnette Thayer; two sons, Greg and Kyle; and seven grandchildren.

Women in Ministry at Biennial 2009

This year's Biennial meeting of the American Baptist Churches will feature a number of events for clergywomen:

A detailed invitation is attached with this issue of *eWind*. Please register online for all Biennial events at www.abc-usa.org.

BJC's Walker Meets With Saudi Education Officials

This article by Jeff Huett is from the Baptist Joint Committee for Religions Liberty.



Baptist Joint Committee Executive Director J. Brent Walker met Monday with nine officials from the Saudi Ministry of Education as part of a U.S. State Department project to explore the nature of religious and public secondary education in the United States.

As part of its program, the delegation is examining religious and ethnic diversity in the United States, as well as the relationship between government authority and religious practices, including the nature of involvement by government in operations of religious educational institutions.

During its visit to the BJC's office on Capitol Hill, Walker presented background on the First Amendment's religion clauses that guarantee the free exercise of religion while prohibiting the government's establishment of religion. Walker also provided background on the diversity of religious views in the United States, including a discussion of the Baptist denomination and its historical belief in religious liberty and church-state separation.

While in Washington, D.C., the delegation is scheduled to visit government agencies and other private-sector organizations to gain a better understanding of American education and values behind it. The delegation will also visit Kansas City, Chicago and Raleigh, N.C.

PEACE NEWS

Life in the Spirit

Provide your congregation the opportunity to explore themes of Pentecost with renowned theologian and teacher, James Alison, in his lecture "Life in the Spirit and Imagining the Good" on Tuesday, June 2 at 7:30 p.m. at St. Nicholas Church's Oldershaw Hall, 1108 Washington Street in Evanston. With a uniquely accessible and humorous speaking style, James gently guides listeners to a deeper understanding of their faith and practice. All are welcome.

A Roman Catholic theologian and author, James is noted for his work on the application of René Girard's anthropological theory in theology. His writings include *Knowing Jesus*, *The Joy of Being Wrong: Original Sin through Easter Eyes* and *On Being Liked*.

This event is sponsored by the St. Nicholas Adult Faith Enrichment Committee and the Raven Foundation. St. Nicholas Catholic Church is a diverse and welcoming Roman Catholic parish in Evanston (<http://www.nickchurch.org>). The Raven Foundation is a 501 (c)(3) educational foundation in Glenview, working to make religion reasonable, violence unthinkable and peace a possibility (www.ravenfoundation.org).

Longing for Peace in the Middle East

This invitation is from Miryam Rashid of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC).



On May 15, 1948, the State of Israel was officially established. This month, many Israelis are celebrating the 61st anniversary of that event. Palestinians observe May 15 as Nakba Day. Nakba is the Arabic word for “catastrophe,” which refers to the Palestinian people’s displacement and dispossession that began during the creation of Israel and continues to this day.

To mark this important anniversary, I hope you’ll **watch our recently produced two-minute video** dealing with the effects of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank since 1967 and the continuing Palestinian dispossession there. View it at: www.afsc.org/mideast (After you’ve seen it, please take the time to tell your friends about it.)

We believe that addressing what is happening today in the occupied territories – as well as acknowledging, understanding and addressing what happened in 1948 – are key to building a lasting and just peace in Israel and Palestine.

We hope that our new video will illuminate some of the realities of occupation in the West Bank. We also hope that the resources and reflections collected on our “**Remembering 1948**” **web page** will deepen your understanding of the events and issues of 1948. View it at: tinyurl.com/remember1948

With a new administration in Washington and a fresh diplomatic approach in the Middle East, it’s an important time to raise these issues and make our voices heard.

We ask you to:

- Watch the video on our website at www.afsc.org/mideast
- Use the link there to send a letter to your representatives. Urge them to stop using our tax dollars to create barriers to peace in the Middle East
- Forward this message to your personal and professional networks

Thank you for your help. By working together, we can help bring about a just and lasting peaceful solution in the Middle East that will indeed be cause for celebration.

HEALTH CARE NEWS

Community Summit on Health Care Reform

The Illinois Health Care Justice Campaign and Campaign for Better Health Care invite you to join with friends and neighbors to take action for quality, affordable health care for all. Find out what you can do to be a part of the movement. Now is the time!

The Community Summit on Health Care will take place on Thursday, May 28, 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the American Legion post # 1941, 900 S. La Grange Road, La Grange. Please register on line and submit your question for the discussion at www.cbhconline.org. Refreshments will be served at the event.

If you have questions about the event, please phone Susan Hurley at Campaign for Better Health Care, 312-913-9449 or email her at shurley@cbhconline.org.

Health Care Pulpit Supply

This invitation is from Protestants for the Common Good and Health Care for America Now.

The summer of 2009 will be a critical period for national health care reform as our representatives and senators in Washington debate legislation that will be voted on by September, 2009. Faith communities can have an important voice during this critical time. Protestants for the Common Good has joined Health Care for America Now in offering guest preachers who can speak from faith perspectives on the need for health care reform. Clergy who are engaged in health care reform issues are available to serve as a guest preacher or vacation pulpit supply. In addition, a volunteer is available to accompany the speaker to collect signatures of support or answer questions from members after the service.

Please welcome a guest preacher or consider preaching on this topic this summer. A brief meeting for sharing information and an orientation is scheduled for June 11 from 10:00am to Noon. We urge you to use this opportunity to facilitate and moderate a health care discussion in your congregation during this most important period of debate. If you have an interest in serving as a guest preacher on health care, we urge you to make that known to us. If you would like to take advantage of these opportunities, either to invite a speaker or to serve as a speaker, please contact Jessica Palys at 312-427-2114 x206.

Pearls of Wisdom



“The Pearls of Wisdom: Putting Ladies First” will be the theme of an Empowerment and Educational Dinner hosted by Dr. Pernessa C. Seele, Founder/CEO of The Balm In Gilead. Come share in an intimate session of empowerment and education on women’s health issues with Rev. Dr. Renita J. Weems on Thursday, May 28, 2009 at 6:00 p.m. at the Apostolic Faith Church, 3823 S. Indiana Avenue, Chicago. For more information and to register, please contact The Balm In Gilead at 804-644-2256. This event is hosted in partnership with Qiagen and the Apostolic Faith Church.

Summer Celebration

This invitation is from the Illinois Campaign for Better Health Care.



Monday, June 8, 2009

5:30 - 7:30 PM

La Decima Musa Restaurant

1901 S. Loomis St., Chicago

As we stand on the verge of passing health care for all,
join your friends in the fight for health care justice at
the Campaign for Better Health Care's 2009 Summer Celebration!

EVENT TICKETS: \$50

Help CBHC continue the fight for comprehensive health
care reform in Illinois and health care justice for all!

SPONSORSHIPS: \$500

All sponsors receive listings in event materials, tickets to
the event, special recognition at the event, and recognition
for a year on the CBHC website as a friend to the health
care justice movement.

Tickets include appetizers, soft drinks, and wine.

A cash bar will also be available.

Space is limited - please register early!

[REGISTER ONLINE TODAY!](#)

For more information, contact Kathleen Duffy
kduffy@cbhconline.org or 312.913.9449.

PRAYER REQUESTS

Please pray for world peace.

Please pray for God's guidance to those who are seeking to reform our health care system.

May we all join in prayers of thanksgiving and blessing for Keith Cerk and the First Baptist Church of Waukegan. They will celebrate the 20th anniversary of Keith as pastor on May 31.

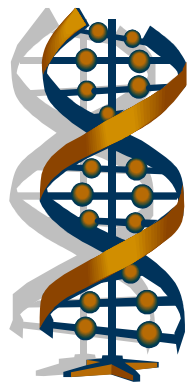
Please hold in prayer Phil Yetter, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Berwyn. Phil is being treated for cancer.

Please pray for ABC missionaries Gary and Mylinda Baits. They are pastors and seminary professors in Costa Rica, but have been spending time back home in the United States. They plan to return to Costa Rica July 1.

Please lift up in prayer Kim Kushner, who was ordained and commissioned as a missionary to El Salvador with International Ministries on May 9. She will serve in both regional and local ministry projects in Latin America and the Caribbean.

BOOK NOOK

So Beautiful: Divine Design for Life and the Church



In this large but highly readable book, Leonard Sweet posits that, not unlike the double helix strands of DNA, the church brings together three strands: missional, relational and incarnational (MRI). God's intent, writes Sweet, is that those strands be united as a beautiful design for the church.

In the chapters of this book, the author addresses each of the three qualities separately, and explores how they come together to make a church that inspires folks not to be just members but disciples and world changers. The closing chapter presents practical guidance for carrying out the blending and braiding of these qualities in the church.

Leonard Sweet is the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of the Theological School at Drew University. He also serves as a consultant to many of America's denominational leaders and agencies. In 2006 and 2007, he was voted "One of the 50 Most Influential Christians in America." Dr. Sweet is the author of more than one hundred articles, over six hundred published sermons, and a wide array of books. He will be the guest speaker for the Ministers Council at the ABC Biennial this year. To learn more about the author, visit www.leonardsweet.com.

CALENDAR

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

May 21—Call-in Day for Illinois Educational Funding Reform.

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 23—Clergy and Lay Leadership Summit V for HIV/Aids Community Outreach, McCormick Theological Seminary, in the Augustana Chapel at Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, 1100 East 55th Street, Chicago, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

May 28—Community Summit on Health Care Reform, American Legion post # 1941, 900 S. La Grange Road, La Grange 5:30-7:30 p.m.

May 28—Pearls of Wisdom, Apostolic Faith Church, 3823 S. Indiana Avenue, Chicago, 6 p.m.

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

May 31—Celebration of Keith Cerk's 20th anniversary as pastor of the First Baptist Church of Waukegan, 401 N. Genesee Street, Waukegan. Larry Greenfield will be the guest preacher at the 11 a.m. service. A celebration luncheon will take place at 12:30 p.m.

May 31-June 4—Eighth Annual Conference on Globalization for the Common Good. Loyola University's Lake Shore Campus,

June 2—James Alison lecture, "Life in the Spirit and Imagining the Good," St. Nicholas Church's Oldershaw Hall, 1108 Washington Street, Evanston, 7:30 p.m.

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 6—Sing to Live Community Choir concert, "Emeralds: Music from Eastern Europe." Performing Arts Center, Dominican University, 7900 West Division Street, River Forest, 7:30 p.m..

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

June 8—Campaign for Better Health Care Summer Celebration, La Decima Musa Restaurant, 1901 S. Loomis Street, Chicago, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

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 11—Information and Orientation meeting on preaching about Health Care Reform, 27 E. Monroe, Suite 1100, Chicago, 10 a.m.-noon.

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 16—Finance and Property Committee meeting, 3 p.m.

June 20—End of Life planning, 6554 N. Rockwell Street, Chicago, 1:30-4:00 p.m.

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 21—Finance and Property Committee meeting, 3 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.

August 18—Property and Finance Committee meeting, 3 p.m.

August 22—Family Council meeting. Registration opens at 8:30 a.m.; meeting begins at 9 a.m.

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 About the Common Good

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

"Staying in Love"

Given the divorce rate in this country, it's pretty clear that quite a few folks have trouble staying in love.

And, granted, there are probably a host of contextual and cultural reasons, even justifications, for the phenomenon, despite the "death do us part" vows that most couples include in their wedding ceremony and the hard line the Bible takes on the matter.

In fact, I think there's a strong case to be made in favor of divorce in many instances, not just on the biblical grounds of "unchastity" but also on the basis of violence or, say, "incompatibility."

If marriage is, in some sense, a sacrament of love, how can it be sacred when one partner inflicts harm and suffering on the other (or when they inflict that harm and suffering on each other)? Or how can marriage be an interpersonal, and societal, and religious symbol of true love when the partners simply aren't compatible? That would be a violation of what the symbol is supposed to represent or point to.

Still, "staying in love" remains the ideal, even if the partners find the definition of "love" changing and evolving over time. And it is in this broader and more mature and, I'd venture to suggest, *religious* meaning of love that marriage itself can be used as a rich and potent symbol for other non-marital kinds of relationships, maybe even all types of relationships.

That is to say, a loving marriage has a whole lot of qualities beyond

sexual intimacy and mutual feelings of attraction that signal what should be the character of every kind of relationship, which the Bible says are covered by the term “love.” The Apostle Paul got it right when writing to the Corinthians: love means patience and kindness, not envy and boastfulness and arrogance and rudeness. It is greater, according to Paul, than hope and faith. We might summarize the supremacy of love in this broader, more mature, and religious sense as genuine caring and working for the well-being of the other person and other persons, caring for *all* persons – even, Jesus says, the enemy!

Now it is in this broader, more mature, and religious meaning of love that we ought to be concerned about divorce.

Sure, we need to keep working on loving marriages between partners and the love they have for their children and wider family. We ought, that is, to try to foster marital and family relationships that don’t lead to divorce. That goes without saying.

But what about the divorce we’ve been experiencing between ourselves and those outside our immediate circle of love and care – those who need love and care in that broader, more mature, and religious meaning of love?

Divorce of this kind was easier to overlook when we were increasingly accustomed to an ascending economy here and around the globe. Yes, of course, there was still poverty to overcome but it would be just a matter of time until the promise of prosperity reached the poor as well. Yes, of course, there was a growing disparity between the very rich and everybody else, but why worry if more and more people were getting by? Yes, of course, families of color were still being denied quality housing, education, health care, and employment, but just look at that expanding middle class of minority families that would sometime in the future surely include those currently living in poverty!

It’s harder, however, to be glib or blind when the unemployment rate has risen to 8.9 percent and is expected to grow to double digits, when even the well educated aren’t finding jobs, when rising rates of poverty and homelessness are being projected well into the future.

New York Times columnist Bob Herbert recently called attention to the findings of the Economic Policy Institute (5/9/09):

The institute estimates that the poverty rate for children is in danger of increasing from 18 percent, which is where it was in 2007, the last year for which complete statistics are available, to a scary 27.3 percent in 2010.

For black children, you don’t want to know. But I’ll tell

you anyway. The poverty rate for black kids was 34.5 percent in 2007. If the national unemployment rate rises, as expected, to the vicinity of 10 percent next year, the poverty rate for black children would rise to 50 percent or higher, analysts at the institute believe.

Will the tragic divorce between ourselves and others continue to grow as well? Will it, too, expand at just the time when all of us need each other more and more?

Or can we find ways of *staying in love*?

I'm dubious. Seriously dubious.

Why?

In part, because we're so tied to the notion of love being affectional, emotional, and – I need to be careful here – interpersonal.

And I'm dubious in part because we tend to understand love, not just in marriages that last but also in the broader societal and religious sense, as volitional and, thus, as ethical. Staying in marriage here is following a moral imperative, just as loving the neighbor is an act of moral agency. Even loving God completely, as in the Great Commandment, appears to be primarily a matter only of ethics.

Don't get me wrong: the ethics of love and the moral commandments to love spouse, children, and wider family and to love God and the neighbor are all of absolutely crucial importance. But if seen only within a strictly *ethical* framework or only based on an *ethical* foundation, then the practical consequences that follow from love rest only on acts of the will – on the capacity of moral agents to love.

That's a pretty precarious framework and foundation for accomplishing what needs to be done in marriage and in the wider society. And even more so in situations of marital, societal, and economic stress.

And that's why I'm dubious about our ability to stay in love, in marriage and in society, as is clearly required.

The writer of the Gospel of John has lots to say about the *commandment* to love in the teachings of Jesus. That's the case in the three Johannine letters as well. The "love ethic" is extremely well covered in these writings.

But, if I'm reading these Johannine texts correctly, love is not

restricted only to the realm of ethics. Rather the ethics of love is grounded in a metaphysic of love: the ethical commandment to love one another, that is, follows from the claim that God – the ultimate reality of the universe – is love, that God’s continual ethical acts of love toward us and the whole world are not derived only from the divine will but also are a consequence of who God is.

That should make a whole lot of difference in terms of the problems we now face in marriage and in society at large.

If we can understand and live out of the truth that the ultimate reality in the universe is love, and that this divine love is active toward us and toward the world, then “staying in love” has a meaning that includes but also transcends the ethical. It means that just as God is love metaphysically, and thereby has the capacity ethically to love us and the whole world, so too we can be and become love in our essential character and thereby capable ethically of loving and caring for others. This is what Jesus understood, proclaimed, and lived out, according to the Christian witness.

The Gospel of John has Jesus put it this way (15: 9 – 10): *“As the Divine Parent has loved me, so have I loved you. Stay (or “remain” or “abide”) in my love. And you will stay (or “remain” or “abide”) in my love if you keep my commandments, just as I have kept my Parent’s commandments and stay (or “remain” or “abide”) in the Parent’s love.”*

For me at least, that makes what is required of us now in marriage and society a lot less dubious. Difficult and demanding? Yes, of course. But not dubious, if we can entertain the truth that God is love.

Then it’s all a matter of staying in love.

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