

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

June 10, 2009



In this Issue

ABCMC NEWS.....	2
Ghana Mission Partnership	2
Thinking Theologically.....	2
Health Care Pulpit Supply	2
Free Items Updated	3
Inviting.....	3
NEWS FROM ABCMC CONGREGATIONS	3
Special Services at North Shore Baptist Church.....	3
Journey through the Land of Israel	3
Queen for a Day	4
Ecumenical Picnic.....	4
Mission Trips	4
ABCUSA NEWS	5
American Baptists Urged to Support Tornado-Ravaged Oklahoma Church.....	5

Brent Walker on Law and Marriage	5
Christian Leaders Call for “Concrete Progress” in Middle East Peace	6
PEACE NEWS.....	10
Northwest Suburban Meeting	10
2009 Peace Breakfast.....	10
HEALTH CARE NEWS.....	11
Health Care Town Hall	11
PRAYER REQUESTS.....	11
BOOK NOOK.....	12
The Audacity of Faith	12
CALENDAR.....	12
POSITION OPENINGS.....	13
Moody Bible Institute	13
THINKING THEOLOGICALLY ABOUT THE COMMON GOOD	14
Aiming to Please	14

ABCMC NEWS

Ghana Mission Partnership

Due to unforeseen circumstances, the Prayer and Commissioning Service previously scheduled for Wednesday, June 24, 2009 will be rescheduled. Additional information will be forthcoming. We are sorry for the inconvenience. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact The Rev. David W. Watkins, MPC Chairperson at 773.412.9656 or pastordavid@gbmbc-chicago.org.

Thinking Theologically

ABCMC’s Executive Minister Larry Greenfield writes a biweekly column, “Thinking Theologically about the Common Good” for Protestants for the Common Good. Larry’s latest column, “Aiming to Please,” is at the end of this issue of *eWind*.

Health Care Pulpit Supply

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 (and be sure to share your sermon with us!) If you would like to join as one of the speaker’s bureau for other congregations, a brief orientation is scheduled for June 11 from 10:00am to Noon. We urge you to use this summer to facilitate and moderate a health care discussion in your congregation during this most important period of debate. 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.

Free Items Updated

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
- 1 coffee table – glass top and metal legs
- 3 computer monitors
- 1 Adventure in Sharing Wheel for World Mission

Inviting

John Grisham, on the staff of the American Baptist Churches of the Great Rivers Region, shared a story from one of the churches in his region. The Greenfield Church, where George Rosales is pastor, had 7 graduating high school seniors this year. They also had a number of young people graduating from junior high. The church invited the seniors to have their graduation open house at the same time, on the same Sunday afternoon at the church. They invited the eighth graders to do the same thing the night before. Food and refreshments were prepared.

George says 300 persons attended the open house for seniors. Many of the attendees had never been inside the church before. The plan for next year is to do it again except to encourage the graduating seniors from the church to invite a friend who does not have a church to have their open house at the church, too.

A friend who does not go to church probably has a family that does not go to church and friends that probably do not go to church. With this event, these folks can experience the hospitality of the church in a non-threatening situation.

The key is that the *church* does not invite guests to the open house. A graduating senior or eighth grader is the one extending the invitation. There are some things to be worked out -but what a remarkable idea!

NEWS FROM ABCMC CONGREGATIONS

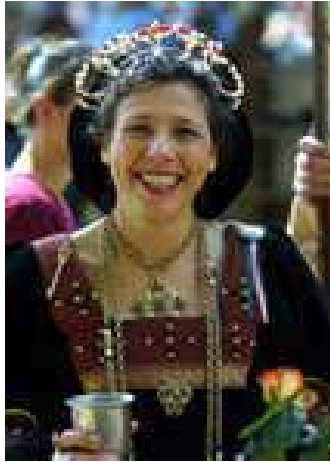
Special Services at North Shore Baptist Church

July 12 will be Creation Sunday at North Shore Baptist Church, 5244 N. Lakewood Avenue, Chicago. The 10 a.m. worship service will be outside in the Centennial Garden. It will be led completely by the church's praise team, Ruach, and it will feature "camp style" songs. Justin Thornburgh, who will begin seminary studies this fall, will bring the message.

Journey through the Land of Israel

Alice Greene, pastor of Irving Park Baptist Church, invites us all to join her church family in a trip to the Holy Land as part of the celebration of the church's 120th anniversary. The projected dates for the tour are November 3-12, 2010. The expected cost is \$3,500. A \$300 fee will secure your place. For more information, please contact tour coordinator Harvette Grey at 773-517-3651, or call the church office at 773-286-6800.

Queen for a Day



We are all invited to attend a special dinner theater event “Queen for a Day” at Woodside Church on Sunday, June 14. This original mystery--written by Dr. Quincy O. Dobbs, Woodside’s Minister of Music and Fine Arts--is set in the Renaissance period. So, why wait till the Fair returns to the area? Here’s the perfect opportunity to pull out your favorite Renaissance clothing and join in the fun.

During the event, we will enjoy a wonderful meal interspersed with the mystery. The four-course meal, coinciding with the four suspects, will consist of renaissance faire, including smoked turkey legs, pickle barrel, ‘fairy’ drops, and rose water glace.“ Together, we will search for clues about the murder of the heir apparent to the throne,” Dr. Dobbs explained. “I cannot tell you more . . . except to remind you: what happens in the 1560s stays in the 1560s!”

Suggested Donation is \$30.00. Proceeds from the dinner benefit Woodside’s *4 Concerts for a Cause* series.

The “Queen for a Day” dinner theater fundraiser will be held at Woodside Church, located at 1509 East Court Street, next to Mott Community College. The event begins immediately after the church’s annual Music Appreciation service. Service begins at 10:00 a.m. and ends at approximately 11:15 a.m. So, please plan for “Queen for a Day” to begin at 11:30 a.m. (Or come at 10:00 a.m. for even more music and fellowship!)

Reservations are requested and may be made by calling the church: 810-767-4911. Please contact Dr. Quincy Dobbs at 810-767-4911 or visit www.woodsidechurch.net for more information.

Ecumenical Picnic

The Federated Church of Wauconda and most of the other churches in the Wauconda area will gather on Sunday, July 19 at Holy Apostles Episcopal Church for an ecumenical picnic from noon to 5 p.m. There will be a bouncy house and games for kids, and entertainment for adults. All food and drink can be bought on site for minimal prices.

Mission Trips

A group from North Shore Baptist Church has left for a mission trip to New Orleans, where they will minister with their sister church in the lower 9th ward. This congregation is still recovering from the devastation of hurricane Katrina. Over the last year the two churches have developed loving bonds that make the mission trip not only a work project but a kind of family reunion.

On July 25 through August 1, 15 people from the Federated Church of Wauconda are joining with some folks from Antioch United Methodist Church for a mission trip to Beverly, Kentucky to work at the Red Bird Mission. They will be repairing houses and carrying out many other projects.

ABCUSA NEWS

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

American Baptists Urged to Support Tornado-Ravaged Oklahoma Church

VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 6/9/09)—On the evening of May 13, an EF-2 tornado destroyed Wichita Community Church and the Oklahoma Indian American Baptist Association (OIABA) tabernacle and bathroom between Anadarko and Gracemont in Caddo County, OK.

A Native American church, Wichita Community Church stood adjoining the campgrounds of the OIABA. The church is related to American Baptist Churches of the Central Region through National Ministries, American Baptist Churches USA.

The historic 19th century church is pastored by Rev. Damon Smith.

The church, its dining hall, OIABA's open-air tabernacle/arbor and at least one bathroom building were destroyed. Power lines are down throughout the area, and many trees are damaged.

No injuries have been reported. American Baptist Men of the Central Region have dispatched two disaster teams to aid in clean-up.

A representative of the Caddo Nation has surveyed the damage and plans to request assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. In addition, the office of Oklahoma Governor Brad Henry will be asked to declare the campground a disaster area.

“The images of the devastation inflicted by this tornado were made even more heartbreaking because the OIABA was gearing up for its camp meeting, which would have taken place on that sacred site during the first week of June,” says National Ministries’ Associate Executive Director for Program Ministries the Rev. Marilyn Turner. “National Ministries has been working in cooperation with the OIABA and the Central Region to coordinate volunteer and OGHS responses on behalf of American Baptists across the country. We know that, while the ministries of this church, the OIABA and the community will continue, this is another opportunity for American Baptists to serve as the hands and feet of God.”

Because Wichita Community Church and the OIABA campgrounds as well as the contents were uninsured, both are financially limited. American Baptists are encouraged to show their support not only with prayer but also financial assistance. Mail contributions—designated “Wichita Community Church/OIABA Campgrounds, Anadarko”—to “One Great Hour of Sharing,” P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482.

Brent Walker on Law and Marriage

Brent Walker is the Executive Director of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty.

Exemptions Can be Good, but Devil in the Details

New Hampshire became the sixth state to let gay couples wed. The new law was approved after revisions exempted members of the clergy from having to perform same-sex weddings and religious groups and their employees from having to participate in such ceremonies. Polls say regular churchgoers are more likely to support gay marriage with these 'religious liberty reassurances.' Is this a good solution to the divisive issue of gay marriage?

Religious exemptions can be a good, if not always fully satisfying, solution to the controversy over same sex marriage. As is often the case, the devil is in the details.

Exemptions from generally applicable laws that burden the exercise of religion are a time-honored way of accommodating religious liberty under American law. Some exemptions -- usually granted by the courts -- are required by the First Amendment's (and some states') free exercise provisions and church autonomy doctrine that prevents government from interfering with internal workings of houses of worship. Other exemptions -- usually given out by legislatures -- are permitted under the First Amendment's Establishment Clause when they remove governmentally imposed burdens on the exercise of religion and do not substantially prejudice the rights of third parties.

Thus, much protection for religious liberty is already provided by these federal and state constitutional protections for houses of worship. These include matters such as calling and ordaining ministers, hiring staff, orchestrating worship and performing other sacerdotal functions. Acknowledging this protection -- and indeed buttressing it as the New Hampshire legislation recently did with a robust religious exemption -- is altogether proper.

The difficult policy, and to some degree constitutional, concerns arise when expanded exemptions are sought beyond the context of houses of worship to include *religiously affiliated* organizations, such as social service providers and colleges and universities. Even more controversial and debated are demands that such protection be extended to those participating in the stream of commercial enterprise, such as wedding consultants, photographers and caterers who, as a matter personal religious conviction, object to participating in the solemnization of a same sex union.

New Hampshire's exemptions for religious organizations, associations and societies provide some comfort to those who worry that extending marriage rights to same sex couples will necessarily harm their religious liberty. While adding language to specifically protect religious groups was necessary to pass the marriage bill in the Granite State, other states may require different exemptions as their lawmakers search for ways to navigate the competing claims inherent in these discussions. We are likely to see many variations on these themes as the debate continues.

In conclusion, it is important that we remember that many who advocate for same sex marriage believe deeply in religious liberty, and many who embrace the traditional understanding of marriage are open to fair treatment for all as we seek something of a win-win solution.

Christian Leaders Call for “Concrete Progress” in Middle East Peace

VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 6/7/09)—Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley, General Secretary of American Baptist Churches USA, joined a broad and diverse group of national American Christian leaders in sending a letter to President Barack Obama on the heels of his historic speech in Cairo.

The message of support expressed gratitude for President Obama's efforts at reaching out to the Muslim world and for making Israeli-Palestinian peace a top priority of his Administration. But it also expressed grave concern over the “deteriorating situation in the Holy Land” and urged the Obama Administration to make real and concrete progress in achieving a just peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

Medley praised the initiative of the President's visit to Muslim-majority countries in the Middle East. “To reverse the hostility between the U.S. and China, it took a dramatic break with the past for President Nixon to visit China. That visit was the important first step in creating a new peaceful relationship between our two countries. We pray for God's mercy that, in like manner, this bold effort by President Obama might initiate a process that bridges the misunderstandings and hostilities between our country and the Muslim world, and that provides solid building blocks for peace in the Middle East and elsewhere.”

Bishop Howard Hubbard, Chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, said, "I am deeply inspired by the President's effort to bridge divides of culture and faith and to reach out directly to the people of the Middle East. Confrontation only breeds radicalism. For this effort at rapprochement to succeed, however, we need to see real progress on the ground towards peace with justice in the Holy Land."

Dr. Joel C. Hunter, Senior Pastor of Northland Church, said, "For too long the Holy Land has been viewed as a clash of religions and cultures, but religion must be part of any durable solution. We're saying today that we're prepared to put our faith and resources behind that most important goal of bringing a just peace to Israelis and Palestinians--Jew, Christians and Muslim alike."

Rev. Mark S. Hanson, Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, said, "I welcome President Obama's strong commitment to pursuing Israeli-Palestinian peace. His belief that peace in the Holy Land is possible and his firm statements holding both Israel and the Palestinians to their obligations are heartening. Indeed, urgent efforts are now needed to preserve the two-state solution. We are ready to help support bold action by his Administration to finally achieve the peace of Jerusalem."

The letter emphasizes the urgency of the current moment—that this may be the last chance for a viable two-state solution to the Holy Land's conflict, which the signatories view as critical to stabilizing the region and bringing justice to both Israelis and Palestinians.

Signatories are national leaders stretching from religious liberals to conservatives, including national leaders who have never made public statements on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and some who are confidants of the President. Catholic Bishops and Cardinals, Evangelicals, Protestants, Eastern Orthodox, and historic African-American leaders representing millions of Americans joined this ad-hoc initiative.

Following is the full text of the letter, signed by Roy Medley and many other Christian leaders.

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC 20500
June 4, 2009

Dear Mr. President,

As American Christian leaders with a shared commitment to a just and lasting Israeli-Palestinian peace, we have come together at a time of great opportunity and urgency. After decades of tragic conflict, many Israelis and Palestinians despair of the possibility of peace, yet with your determined leadership we believe the promise of two viable, secure and independent states can be realized.

We commend your message to the people of the Middle East and your challenge to all of us to work for Holy Land peace as we seek to build a more positive future for the people of the region and the world. We are grateful that you have identified resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a top priority and made clear your Administration's commitment to sustained, hands-on diplomacy. As you embark on peace efforts, we ask you to provide a clear framework for an end to the conflict, help Israelis and Palestinians make the difficult decisions necessary to achieve lasting peace, and hold both parties to account when they fail to honor their commitments.

Mr. President, you have assumed office at one of the most critical moments in the long history of this conflict. While the international community and majorities of the Israeli and Palestinian people are all committed to a two state solution as the best option for achieving peace and security, the window of opportunity is rapidly closing. Continued settlement growth and expansion are rapidly diminishing any possibility for the creation of a viable Palestinian state. The targeting of Israeli civilians through ongoing rocket fire and the insistent rejection by some of Israel's right to exist reinforces the destructive status

quo. These actions, along with the route of the separation barrier, movement restrictions, and continued home demolitions, serve to undermine Palestinians and Israelis alike who seek peace. As hope dims, the threat of violence grows and hardliners are strengthened.

We share a common commitment to all the people of the Holy Land—Jews, Christians and Muslims—and are particularly concerned with the plight of the Palestinian Christian community. In the birthplace of our faith, one of the world’s oldest Christian communities is dwindling rapidly, and with them the possibility of a day when three thriving faith communities live in shared peace in Jerusalem. Mr. President, it is apparent that unless there is an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement Christians in the Holy Land may cease to exist as a viable community.

Now is indeed the time for immediate and bold American leadership. Fruitful diplomacy will require U.S. engagement with a Palestinian unity government committed to peace with the state of Israel. We commend your important statements pressing both Israel and the Palestinians to live up to their obligations, and we urge your Administration to continue to bolster Palestinian capacity to halt violence and continue to demonstrate firm dedication to a viable Palestinian state by exhibiting no tolerance for Israeli settlement activity. While working to end rocket attacks against the people of southern Israel, the U.S. should also seek immediate relief for the population of Gaza—living in rubble and without basic necessities—by ending restrictions on humanitarian goods and opening the borders to reconstruction material, commerce and transit in a secure manner.

We welcome your call for people on both sides to recognize the pain and aspirations of the other.

Because of this conflict many have lost the ability to see the other as human beings worthy of dignity and respect. An entire generation of Israelis and Palestinians has grown up amidst violence and hatred. We pledge to join with you to work with and support those in both societies who seek peace, justice, and security, standing beside those who hope for a better future for themselves and for the generations that follow.

The current political stalemate and declining situation on the ground demonstrate that Israelis and Palestinians cannot reach a negotiated agreement without a strong, helping hand. We urge your Administration to present proposals that go beyond the mere principle of two states and lay out a just and equitable solution that provides dignity, security and sovereignty for both peoples. Moreover, we appreciate your strong support for a comprehensive peace and we look forward to diplomatic efforts to build upon the historic Arab Peace Initiative, with its offer of recognition and normalization of relations with Israel in exchange for an end to the occupation.

There is no greater work than the Psalmist’s call to “seek peace and pursue it” and no more critical time than now to finally end the conflict in the Holy Land (Ps. 34:14). We stand ready to support your bold action and are rallying Christians nationwide around robust U.S. peacemaking efforts to achieve Israeli-Palestinian peace. Our prayers and mutual commitment are with you in this difficult and most important task.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Dr. Jimmy R. Allen
Coordinator
New Baptist Covenant

The Most Rev. Archbishop Khajag Barsamian
Primate
Diocese of the Armenian Church of America
(Eastern)

David Black
President
Eastern University

Bishop Wayne Burkette
Moravian Church in America, Southern
Province

Tony Campolo
Speaker
Eastern University, St. Davids, PA

Sr. J. Lora Dambroski, OSF
President, Leadership Conference of Women
Religious

His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of
America
Primate
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

Marie Dennis

Director
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Dr. Joy Fenner
Former President
Baptist General Convention of Texas

Leighton Ford
President
Leighton Ford Ministries

Israel L. Gaither
Commissioner
National Commander
The Salvation Army

Rev. Dr. David Emmanuel Goatley
Executive Secretary-Treasurer
Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention

Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson
General Secretary
Reformed Church in America

The Rev. Mark S. Hanson
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
President, Lutheran World Federation

Dennis Hollinger
President
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

Most Rev. Howard J. Hubbard
Bishop of Albany
Chairman
Committee on International Justice and Peace
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Dr. Joel C. Hunter
Senior Pastor, Northland Church
Member, Executive Committee of the
National Association of Evangelicals

Bill Hybels
Senior Pastor
Willow Creek Community Church

Lynne Hybels
Advocate for Global Engagement
Willow Creek Community Church

The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori
Presiding Bishop
The Episcopal Church

Reverend A. Wayne Johnson
General Secretary
National Missionary Baptist Convention of
America

Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim
Archbishop
Archdiocese of the Syrian Orthodox Church of
Antioch for the Eastern USA

Margaret Mary Kimmins, OSF
President
Franciscan Action Network

Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon
General Secretary
National Council of Churches

Rev. Michael E. Livingston
Executive Director
International Council of Community Churches
Immediate Past President, National Council of
Churches

Reverend Willie Maynard
Treasurer, National Baptist Convention, Inc.
Pastor, St. Paul Baptist Church, LA

His Eminence Theodore Cardinal McCarrick
Catholic Archbishop Emeritus of Washington

Rev. John L. McCullough
Executive Director and CEO
Church World Service

Mary Ellen McNish
General Secretary
American Friends Service Committee

Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley
General Secretary
American Baptist Churches

Richard J. Mouw
President
Fuller Theological Seminary

David Neff
Editor in Chief
Christianity Today

Stanley J. Noffsinger
General Secretary
Church of the Brethren

Bishop Gregory Vaughn Palmer, President
The Council of Bishops
The United Methodist Church

Rev. Gradye Parsons
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church, (USA)

Very Rev. Thomas Picton, CSsR
President
Conference of Major Superiors of Men

Reverend Tyrone Pitts
General Secretary
Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.

Most Rev. John H. Ricard, SSJ
Catholic Bishop of Pensacola-Tallahassee

Bob Roberts, Jr.
Pastor
NorthWood Church, Keller, TX

Metropolitan PHILIP (Saliba)
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of
North America

Rolando Santiago
Executive Director
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.

Dr. Chris Seiple
President
Institute for Global Engagement

Robert Seiple
Former Ambassador-at-large for
International Religious Freedom

Reverend William J. Shaw
President, National Baptist Convention, Inc
Pastor, White Rock Baptist Church, PA

Ron Sider
President
Evangelicals for Social Action

Reverend T. DeWitt Smith
President
Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.

Richard Stearns
President
World Vision

Rev. John H. Thomas
General Minister and President
United Church of Christ

Jim Wallis
President
Sojourners

Rev. Dr. Sharon E. Watkins
General Minister and President
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Most Rev. Thomas G. Wenski
Catholic Bishop of Orlando

The Right Rev. John F. White
Ecumenical and Urban Affairs Officer
African Methodist Episcopal Church

Joe Volk
Executive Secretary
Friends Committee on National Legislation

Bishop Gabino Zavala
Bishop President
Pax Christi USA: National Catholic Peace
Movement

PEACE NEWS

Northwest Suburban Meeting



The Northwest Suburban Peace and Education Project will hold a monthly meeting on Wednesday, June 10 at 7 p.m. The meeting will take place at the South Church, 501 S. Emerson Street, Mount Prospect. All who are interested in helping young people consider careers in peace making and social change are welcome to attend.

2009 Peace Breakfast



The Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America will host a breakfast on Sunday, June 28 at 7 a.m. at the Biennial in Pasadena. Speakers will include the 2009 Dahlberg Peace Award recipient, Tom Adams, and Andover Newton Theological School president Nick Carter. Mike Stern will lead everyone in singing. You may sign up for this event in the "Meals & Events" section of your Biennial registration form, or add it to your existing registration by emailing biennial.registration@abc-usa.org. The cost will be \$22.

HEALTH CARE NEWS

Health Care Town Hall

This invitation is from Citizen Action Illinois.

Please Join
Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky

For a Town Hall Meeting on
Health Care Reform

Sunday, June 14, 2009
2:00 - 3:30pm

Niles Senior Center, Room 127
999 Civic Center Drive
Niles, IL

*(In the Niles Civic Center complex on the southeast corner of
Oakton St. and Waukegan Rd.)*

Congress is working with President Obama to develop comprehensive health care reform, and Representative Schakowsky wants to hear your thoughts and stories as Congress moves through this process. Congresswoman Schakowsky's goal is to make sure that every man, woman and child has access to quality, affordable health care.

Please join her at this health care town hall to
find solutions to the health crisis affecting our communities!

Contact Rep. Schakowsky's Chicago District office with any questions:
773-506-7100

PRAYER REQUESTS

Please pray for world peace.

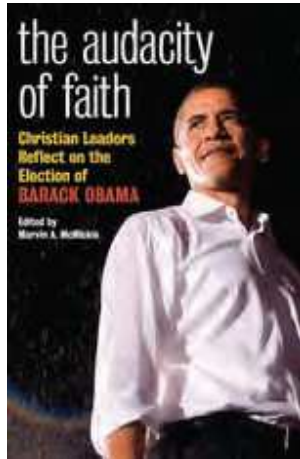
Please pray for God's guidance to those who are seeking to reform our health care system.

Please hold in prayer Phil Yetter, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Berwyn. Phil is being treated for cancer. Please pray also for his daughter, who recently suffered a broken leg.

Let's continue to pray for Carol McVetty, pastor of North Shore Baptist Church, while she recovers from surgery.

BOOK NOOK

The Audacity of Faith



Take some time to thoroughly consider the election of Barack Obama as the 44th President of the United States of America with the new Judson Press book, *The Audacity of Faith*. This compilation of sermons and essays includes words and wisdom penned by Gardner C. Taylor, Tony Campolo, Leslie Callahan, Marvin McMickle, Philip Yancey, Gina Steward, Leonard Sweet and more. The racial, political and theological diversity represented in this book is bound to stretch your perspective.

CALENDAR

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 12—Provision Theater open house and performance, 1001 W Roosevelt Road, Chicago, 6 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 14—Creation Sunday, North Shore Baptist Church, 5244 N. Lakewood Avenue, Chicago, 10 a.m.

June 14—Queen for a Day mystery dinner theater, Woodside Church, 1509 East Court Street, Flint, Michigan, 11:30 a.m.

June 14—Health Care Town Hall meeting, Niles Senior Center, Room 127, 999 Civic Center Drive, Niles, 2-3:30 p.m.

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 24—Ghana Mission Partnership Prayer and Commissioning Service, New Mount Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Church, 4301 W. Washington Boulevard, Chicago, 7:30 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

November 3-12, 2010—Journey through the Land of Israel with Irving Park Baptist Church.

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

POSITION OPENINGS

Moody Bible Institute

MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE

Human Resources - 820 N. LaSalle Drive - Chicago, IL 60610

Phone: (312) 329-4237 Fax: (312) 329-2155

website: moodyministries.net/jobs e-mail: HRResources@moody.edu

ADMINISTRATIVE

Administrative Asst. to Program Dir. - Missionary Aviation (Spokane, WA)

Assistant Dean for Student Services - MBI Spokane (Spokane, WA)

Application Coordinator - Admissions

Web Content Administrator - Web Communications

FACULTY

Vice President & Dean - Undergraduate School

MANAGERIAL

Chief of Public Safety - Facilities Management

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Manager - Educational Services
Vice President - Stewardship

TECHNICAL / PROFESSIONAL

Assistant General Counsel - Legal
Graphic Designer - Marketing & Communications
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Reflections

THINKING THEOLOGICALLY ABOUT THE COMMON GOOD

June 10, 2009

Aiming to Please

Given a polity of democracy, one would think that American politicians would always be aiming to please the constituencies they represent. After all, those voters are the ones who determine whether a politician stays in or is removed from office.

That's the way it's supposed to work.

But it turns out that it isn't working that way at all. At least not in some states of the Union.

I don't know enough about what's happening in every state, so I'm not prepared to make a comprehensive claim. But in the states I follow regularly, it's pretty clear that politicians are not aiming to please those who elect them.

And if that's the case, then we've got a fundamental problem with our democracy itself.

My own state (Illinois) is a prime example, although I could also readily point to New York, California, and other commonwealths and states as well.

Illinois, even though proudly proclaiming itself as the “Land of Lincoln” and more recently as the “Home of Obama,” has had a problem with living up to the minimal standards of democracy for a long time now. Three of our governors over the last 35 years have done prison time (although one of them, Dan Walker, not for offenses while in office) and our most recent ex-governor (Rod Blagojevich) is facing charges that, if proven, will send him to jail too.

But that’s just the tip of the iceberg. Undemocratic practices here have been rife at all levels and functions of government for a long time, with the absence of significant regulations making influence-peddling and “pay to play” politics the de facto rules of the Illinois political game for decades. The cynic in me recognizes that the Blagojevich scandals were only typical state politics on steroids.

Nonetheless, those scandals – making Illinois the political laughingstock of the nation – provided the state an exceptional opportunity to re-form government according to democratic principles.

The Lt. Governor who replaced Mr. Blagojevich appointed a blue ribbon commission to recommend the political reforms that were needed. And a gaping eleven billion dollar deficit made it possible for both parties in the legislature to engage in a major reformation of the state’s tax structure – a reformation that would begin to address a vastly under-funded pension system, a reformation that would begin to address the huge inequalities in public education funding, a reformation that would begin to address the large lag in reimbursements to social and human service agencies, to say nothing of a reformation of the tax system itself that favors the rich over the poor and that builds in and intensifies continuing structural deficits.

Public opinion polls showed there was overwhelming support for the politicians to act in some responsible way on these crucial fronts.

But when it came to crunch time – that is, when the votes in the General Assembly were to be tallied – a lot of legislators took a pass on instituting political and economic reformations.

Yes, some half-measures were adopted on campaign finance limits, transparency of records, and oversight in state purchasing. But a closer look reveals that our legislators were far more interested in window-dressing than a genuine, deep, and thoroughgoing restructuring of Illinois political systems and practices.

The results were far worse on the budgetary and tax reform front. Unwilling to consider any income tax increase that would address the looming deficit and correct the staggering inequities of funding for public education and human services, the House of Representatives of the General Assembly chose to adopt a “Doomsday Budget” that will only exaggerate those inequities and greatly reduce or even eliminate the funding of programs that protect the state’s most vulnerable citizens – young, old, poor, disabled.

Why? Why would the politicians take these destructive actions?

The answer is to be found in identifying those whom the state senators and representatives were aiming to please. Certainly not the residents of the state. Clearly not the voters in their districts.

They were aiming to please, instead, their party leaders, from whom they receive benefits, rewards, and campaign funds – the party leaders who have everything to gain by keeping things just as they are.

So much for democracy in Illinois, and in other states where the same thing is happening.

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“Aiming to please” is a phrase the Apostle Paul uses in one of his many letters to the Christian community in Corinth.

Paul’s problem appears to be significantly different than the one facing Illinois legislators, at least on the surface. In the fifth chapter of II Corinthians, we find Paul trying to work out the relationship between our physical, earthly bodies (which are finite and fragile) and that part of ourselves that has the promise of being eternal and enduring.

The reader gets the sense that Paul would prefer to state that there is a way of simply forgetting about the physical self and concentrating on what, through God’s action in Jesus Christ, is the promise of our eternal life. But he knows he can’t make that claim. He knows that it is through what we do with and in our earthly life that we give witness to ourselves and to others that there is, as he puts it, “a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” for us.

For all of Paul’s talk in other letters about our not being justified by works but only by God’s grace, in this Corinthian correspondence he makes it plain that our eternal life depends on how we make use of the physical and earthly life that God also gives us:

For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil. (II Corinthians 5: 10)

And what will be the criteria, according to Paul, for that judgment by Christ about whether what we do in our earthly life contributes to and justifies an eternal spiritual life?

Paul writes that in both the physical and spiritual dimensions of our lives, the criterion is always the same: “we make it our aim to please Christ.” (5: 9)

That, in itself, is a pretty vague answer (aiming to please Christ). But Paul doesn’t leave it general or obscure. He proceeds to tell the Corinthians that Christ’s own mission from God was to achieve a reconciliation between God and humanity through his own earthly and physical self-giving, and that this ministry of reconciliation has now been entrusted to Christ’s followers, which requires them as well to no longer live for themselves but for the reconciling cause of

Christ.

We don't really know to what degree Paul had access to the oral and written narratives about Jesus, but assuming he had some, those Jesus narratives would be largely consistent with Paul's own understanding of what was at stake in living the Christian life: giving up living only for oneself physically and spiritually, in response to a self-giving God revealed to us in a self-giving Christ, so that others too might experience the fullness of God's gifts of both our finite physical life and our infinite spiritual life.

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State governors and legislators shouldn't, obviously, get into the business of reconciling humans with the divine. That, in a democratic society, is outside their mandate and assigned to others.

But within a democratic polity, those governors and legislators do have an obligation of aiming to please not themselves or their political benefactors but those they represent through the adoption and implementation of policies that justly serve the needs of all.

The Christian citizen has a mandate too. It is not, according to Paul, to restrict one's attention only to the spiritual and eternal well-being of others, as important as that is. Instead, the obligation – grounded in God's eternal purpose for our lives – is to do everything within our God-given power to be sure the earthly needs of our sisters and brothers are met, as we know God intends.

Unavoidably then, our Christian faith leads us to generous acts of earthly charity toward those in need, as well as to political action that will also serve whomever is vulnerable among us and that will promote the earthly good for all, which has its source in God.

It's what's at stake, according to Paul, in aiming to please Christ.