

*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

August 12, 2009



I will sing of the mercies of the LORD forever; with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations.  
(Psalm 89:1)

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## **ABCMC NEWS**

### ***Web Site Changes***

Have you visited the American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago web site lately? You may want to check it out to see some changes that have been made. The URL is [www.abcmc.org](http://www.abcmc.org)

You will note that on the left side of the home page is a listing of electronic publications that you can access through the ABCMC web site. You can now access not only *eWind* and back issues of *eWind*, but also Ethics Daily, the Common Good Network, ABCUSA's blog on Congregations and Economic Stress, lectionary studies (always for the next two weeks) from Protestants for the Common Good, and essays by our Executive Minister Larry Greenfield.

Check out the web site for links to some good reading.

## ***H1 N1 Emergency Preparedness***

Pastors and Other Church Leaders:

I received the following communication from my friend and colleague at Chicago Center for Cultural Connections (formerly the National Council of Christians and Jews) about a training session for emergency preparedness related to H1 N1 virus later this month. I've asked our own John Wilson to provide us more counsel on this. But I hope you will take advantage of this training and complete the form provided for registration.

Larry

Dear Larry:

The State of Illinois through the Illinois Department of Public Health has partnered with the Broadcast Ministers Alliance and Health Care Consortium of Illinois to develop the Illinois Faith-Based Emergency Preparedness Initiative. This Initiative's purpose is to design, develop and disseminate emergency preparedness training for faith-based and community-based organizations throughout Illinois. During times of crises, religious institutions have always played a critical role. This initiative provides guidance as to how best prepare before disasters strike using faith-based organizations as the vehicles to enhance outreach of training and education.

Chicago Center for Cultural Connections would like to invite you and others to a training session on Wednesday, August 19, 2009. This emergency preparedness training will also include information regarding the H1 N1 virus. The session will be from 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. and training begins at 9:00 a.m. A continental breakfast and lunch will be provided. The training will be held at Progressive Community Center - The People's Church, 56 E. 48th Street, Chicago. Parking will be available.

Please fill out the attached form and return it to me as soon as possible. Besides yourself, please recommend others in your faith community who would be appropriate to receive this training. If you have any questions, please contact me at the above email or 312/236-9272. Thank you for your assistance. We do hope you and others will attend on August 19th.

Sincerely,  
Barbara

Barbara Abrajano  
Executive Director  
Chicago Center for Cultural Connections  
27 E. Monroe Street, Suite 400  
Chicago, IL 60603  
Phone: 312/236-9272  
Fax: 312/236-0029  
Email: [babrajan@connections-chicago.org](mailto:babrajan@connections-chicago.org)

## ***Hold the Date: Vitalizing Congregational Ministries, October 3, 2009***

Earlier this year the Ministers Council and ABCMC sponsored a day with Dr. C. Jeff Woods (Associate General Secretary of the American Baptist Churches USA) to assess "trends in ministry."

Those who attended insisted that we invite Jeff back to Metro Chicago, but this time to involve both clergy and lay leaders, to draw on his expertise on vitalizing the ministries of congregations.

This will be a highly beneficial gathering for churches that want to move ahead with new direction and energy. Location will be announced later, but please mark it on your calendar now.

## ***Family Council Meeting***

The next Family Council meeting will take place on Saturday, August 22 at Garfield Park Baptist Church, 4100 W Jackson Boulevard, Chicago. A packet of meeting-related materials t will be mailed in advance to Family Council members. Please contact Tony Rake at the ABCMC office, 773-804-1655, or [tony@abcmc.org](mailto:tony@abcmc.org) no later than August 14 to let him know of your attendance plans, and whether you will stay for lunch. Check-in will open at 8:30 a.m. The meeting will begin with worship at 9 a.m., and be followed by lunch at noon. The suggested donation for lunch is \$5.

## ***Family Council Hearing***



**American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago**  
**7035 W. Grand Avenue, Suite 102**  
**Chicago, Illinois 60707**

**Email: [office@abcmc.org](mailto:office@abcmc.org)**

July 22, 2009

**TO:** Clergy and Representatives to the ABCMC Family Council

**FROM:** Denise Janssen, President, ABCMC  
Larry Greenfield, Executive Minister

**RE:** Special Hearing at August 22 Family Council Meeting  
Garfield Park Baptist Church

The Region is beginning to develop its programs and budget for 2010. Official action will be taken on these matters at the Annual Meeting, which will be held on Saturday, November 14.

But this year we want to go about this differently: we are going to devote time at the August Family Council meeting to hear and discuss what congregations suggest should be our program and budget priorities, within the resources we have available.

Remember: the Region exists: (1) to help churches do together what they can't do (as well) by themselves (so we are particularly interested in things churches could do in partnerships or as a region-as-a-whole), and (2) to do better what the church can only do by itself (for example, sharing creative ideas that could work effectively in numerous congregational settings).

Also, keep in mind that we have earlier identified the following five areas as priorities (but we are not limited to them):

Worship and Christian Experience  
Christian Education and Spiritual Development  
Congregational Development: Growth in Mutuality, Strength, and Size  
Stewardship  
Justice, Peace, and Compassion

Another request: that you also give thought to ways in which more funds could be secured in the coming year for our work together.

We urge you to attend this "hearing" so we can benefit from your counsel and suggestions.

## ***Thinking Theologically***

ABCMC's Executive Minister Larry Greenfield is a wonderful writer who presents meaningful contemporary interpretations of scripture. He writes a biweekly column for the electronic newsletter of Protestants for the Common Good (PCG). Thanks to the generosity of PCG and the author, Larry's latest column, "Job Responsibilities," appears at the end of this issue of *eWind*.

Not only do we in Metro Chicago appreciate Larry's writings. In the larger Baptist family [www.EthicsDaily.com](http://www.EthicsDaily.com) also posts his writings. Next week Ethics Daily will feature an article by Larry. Be sure to watch for it.

## **NEWS FROM ABCMC CONGREGATIONS**

### ***120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration***



Irving Park Baptist Church, 4401 W. Irving Park Road, Chicago, is celebrating their 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. The special day of celebration will be Sunday, September 13. The congregation and pastor Alice Greene invite the ABCMC family to celebrate with them on that special day.

The guest preacher in the 11 a.m. worship service will be former pastor Michael Harvey. The service will also include music and thanksgiving to God for the blessings of the church's many years of ministry.

Following the service there will be a 1 p.m. luncheon at LaVilla Banquets, 3638 N. Pulaski Road, Chicago. Luncheon tickets will be \$35 for adults and \$15 for children 12 and under. Please let the church know of your attendance plans no later than Friday, August 21.

### ***Sacred Dance***

**Tools and Fuels for Sacred Dance - A Choreography Workshop for your BodySpirit** will be presented by The Sacred Dance Guild at the South Church, 501 S. Emerson Street, Mount Prospect from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Saturday, August 22..

A workshop for those interested in exploring and developing material for sacred and liturgical dance. Sessions will generate ideas (FUELS) and vocabulary and structure (TOOLS) through various approaches. Choreographic possibilities will be realized through technique, improvisation, imagery, sacred text and ritual. Participants will be offered time to develop their ideas for solo and group possibilities. "Crafting" opportunities will allow feedback from the presenters in a non-threatening collaborative environment.

No dance experience is necessary to participate in this workshop. Registration is \$30.00. Checks should be made out to "The Sacred Dance Guild" and can be mailed to:  
The South Church, att: Angela Nicolosi, 501 South Emerson Street, Mount Prospect, IL 60056

For additional information or registration contact Rick Kesler at [rkesler@thesouthchurch.com](mailto:rkesler@thesouthchurch.com) or call 847-253-0501

### **About Indi Dieckgrafe**

Indi Dieckgrafe is Professor of Dance at Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana and she directs the Saint Mary's College Liturgical Dancers. She is a certified leader of the InterPlay improvisational technique and philosophy. As a sacred dancer and choreographer, she has worked with many congregations in the upper Midwest. The Basilica of Saint Mary in Minneapolis has commissioned several works and she has performed with Kast and Company Liturgical Dancers and Add Water -n- Stir. She serves on the board of the United Religious Community in South Bend. Indi received her MFA in Performance and Choreography from the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign. Her choreography workshop at the Lakeshore Mini-Festival at St. Mary's in 2004 received rave reviews.

### **About Angela Nicolosi**

After receiving her BFA in modern dance performance from The Ohio State University, Angela Nicolosi taught, choreographed and performed jazz and modern dance and began studying yoga. She returned to OSU to earn an MA in Movement Arts by developing a program for chronic pain based in dance movement. Though she worked in clinical settings to provide pain and stress management, and even became independently licensed as a clinical counselor, Angela decided that yoga better suited her holistic approach to wellness and has completed her advanced certificate in yoga therapy. In 1999 she "discovered" sacred dance and began to dance again. She is past president of the OH-Penn Chapter of the Sacred Dance Guild, a 2005 presenter at the National SDG festival and recently moved to Chicagoland.

### **About The Sacred Dance Guild**

Founded in 1958, the Sacred Dance Guild is an international, multicultural, interfaith, non-profit organization which, through a full spectrum of activities and information, enriches the lives of its members of all ages, backgrounds and abilities. The Sacred Dance Guild promotes sacred dance as prayer, and as a means of spiritual growth, connection to the Divine, and integration of mind, body, and spirit. The local chapter of the SDG is known as the Lakeshore Chapter, and comprised of dancers from Illinois, Wisconsin, and Indiana

## **COMMUNITY NEWS**

### ***Walter Wink to Give Public Lecture at Chicago Theological Seminary***



On Thursday, September 24, at 7 p.m., Chicago Theological Seminary, 5757 S. University Avenue, Chicago, will host Walter Wink, a noted author, theologian and Bible scholar for a lecture and book signing with the theme "Non Violence for the Violent." Wink will address the question, "Is there a way between absolute pacifism and just war theory, a position committed to non-violence that is able to address the thorny issues of armed aggression, terrorism and civil strife responsibly?" In this presentation we will attempt to find a nonviolent path for people who are opposed to war and the mindless addiction to violence in our society, yet who are unsure of their capacity to respond with love in every situation.

Tickets will be sold at the door only. The cost will be \$20 for adults and \$10 for students. Space is limited, and tickets will be available on a first come first served basis.

Some of the books the speaker has written will be available for purchase and signing. These three books are *Engaging the Powers*, *Jesus and Nonviolence* and *Powers that Be*. Don't miss this opportunity to hear an outstanding speaker who is a gifted interpreter of scripture.

## ***Academy for the Common Good***

This spring the Academy's program offerings at Third Baptist Church and the Chicago Temple came to successful completions at the end of May. Altogether twenty-four persons participated in these offerings and are now looking forward to implementing their training in a variety of settings including their local churches.

Download more complete information on program offerings, themes and instructors and register for the upcoming Fall program.

Douglas Sharp, Dean of the Academy, is blogging on issues of faith and public life at Conversations for the Common Good. Readers are welcome to respond with comments.

Read the article featuring the Academy's Downtown program that appeared in the February 5, 2009 issue of the Chicago Tribune.

## ***Theological Conversation with Jürgen Moltmann***

Emergent Village will host a conversation with prominent theologian Jürgen Moltmann September 9-11 at the First Presbyterian Church, 219 W. Maple Avenue, Libertyville. For more information and registration, please visit <http://moltmannconversation.com/>

## ***Grant Training***

*This information is from Christian Foundation Grants. This webinar could be helpful to ministries in need of funding.*

How can you get more money for your ministry, despite a poor economy, disappearing faith-based initiatives funding, and more than a million nonprofits likewise seeking support? One increasingly popular answer is to create it!

The Secrets to Building a Money-Making Ministry reveals how faith-based organizations across America are developing "social enterprises" - for-profit businesses that generate income for the nonprofit mission and jobs for community.

Now, you can learn about the economic growth more and more ministries are experiencing beneath the radar of common knowledge! In just 90 minutes, you'll discover what it takes to start and grow a successful faith-based social enterprise even in today's challenging economic climate, and assess whether your organization might be ready for entrepreneurship.

If you have a solid ministry that needs more money, you can't afford to miss The Secrets to Building a Money-Making Ministry!

The Secrets to Building a Money-Making Ministry webinar will be led by Bernice Smoot. She will help show you how faith-based organizations across America are developing "social enterprises" - for-profit businesses that generate income for the nonprofit mission and jobs for community.

Bernice will teach on:

- The types of faith-based social enterprises that are most profitable at merging mission and money, and creating jobs for community
- Bible-backed Best Practices for faith-based entrepreneurship
- The 10 common traits of a profitable social enterprise.
- How faith-based leaders overcome the most common business challenges

--Where to get FREE help with business development, start-up financing for social enterprise, and grant awards for entrepreneurship

For more information and registration, [click here](http://www.christianfoundationgrants.com/Home/Webinar/17)  
<http://www.christianfoundationgrants.com/Home/Webinar/17>

## ***Spiritual Wisdom***

**Hidden Treasures: Spiritual Wisdom Through the Voices of Women in Judaism, Christianity and Islam**

An Interreligious Conference in Chicago

SAVE THE DATE!

November 8-9, 2009 – CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL UNION

5416 S. Cornell, Chicago, IL 60615

MORE INFO: The Bernardin Center at Catholic Theological Union, 773.371.5432 [www.ctu.edu](http://www.ctu.edu)

## ***Register For The Fall Session Of PCG's Academy For The Common Good Before It's Too Late!***

If you haven't signed up yet, don't miss your opportunity to attend the Academy for the Common Good, and learn more about the [curriculum](#) and [instructors](#). This fall the program will be offered in Elgin at Epworth United Methodist Church. The first session takes place on September 11-12. [Registration is open now.](#)

## ***Call the Governor and Urge Him to Sign the TANF Bill***

*This request is from Protestants for the Common Good.*

After months of hard work, we are able to report that HB2383, a bill that increases access to Temporary Aid For Needy Families (TANF) cash grants, has passed the House and the Senate. To become official, the bill must be signed by the Governor - and it's currently sitting on his desk! In this challenging economic time, increasing eligibility to TANF is crucial, and since the Federal Government will provide 80% of the total costs, we have no time to lose! Call Gov. Quinn's office at **217-782-6830** and ask him to sign HB2383!

## **ABCUSA NEWS**

Other articles from the American Baptist News Service are available at

<http://www.abc-usa.org/Resources/AmericanBaptistNewsService/tabid/79/Default.aspx>

## ***IM Global Consultant Key Player in Bringing Peace to War-weary Naga***

**VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 8/5/09)**—In June, the top leaders of the Naga insurgent factions came together and made an important step toward peace, despite over 30 years of internecine warfare, by signing a Covenant of Reconciliation. For the first time in this struggle, all the major leaders have publicly committed to the reconciliation process.

American Baptist International Ministries (IM) global consultant Dan Buttry was instrumental in the process that led to this milestone, being deeply involved with the Naga people and their leaders for over 12 years.

Buttry acknowledges that there is still a long way to go, beginning with practical details of keeping various factions from engaging in military actions. The negotiations with India regarding a political solution need to be pursued, but the questions of who represents the Naga side and how consultation takes place between the negotiators and the Naga public is full of political complexities.

“Eventually there is a hope for demobilization of the armed groups, including the removal of the Indian Army,” Buttry said. “But that will come after many of these practical questions have been worked through successfully.”

While the United Nations accomplishes similar outcomes in different parts of the world, and are often covered by the world media, missionaries like Buttry do the same without the resources or muscle of the world’s nations behind them. And they do so quietly and humbly.

Buttry’s work in peace and justice issues have taken him around the world for the past 20 years, but the peace process for the Naga people in northeast India and northwest Burma have been a focus for him since November, 1996.

Though classless and casteless, Naga society has been wracked with divisions due to the ongoing Indo-Naga conflict.

“Despite the strong faith that these people possess, with 80% of Nagas describing themselves as Baptist,” Buttry said. “Their faith is tested daily as chronic conflict occasionally spills over into violent outbreaks.”

The Indo-Naga conflict stems from the incorporation of the Naga people into India by the British in the 1800s, and their reluctant inclusion in the country following India’s independence from British rule in 1947. Fiercely independent, the Naga people began an insurgent war against India military occupation in 1955, with temporary ceasefires and sporadic negotiations along the way.

The current internal divisions within the Nagas resulted from the 1975 Shillong Accord, a peace agreement with India that many Nagas felt did not fairly represent the will of their people. Fallout from this agreement led to factionalism among the Nagas, which in turn resulted in bloody internal conflict rivalling that with India. In effect, ethnic Nagas were not only fighting a common enemy, they also fought just as bitterly with one another, leaving deep divisions and thousands dead.

In 1997, Buttry along with Ken Sehested, then executive director of the Baptist Peace Fellowship, and John Sundquist, then executive director of IM, joined with Wati Aier, leader of the Naga mediation team, for talks aimed at finding reconciliation among the four largest factions. Though not all of the groups attended, an appeal was drafted that would set the stage for future efforts.

Over the years, the group continued to press for peace and saw periodic ceasefires that were punctuated by assassinations and firefights. During this time, Buttry and his colleagues trained the Naga societal leaders (church leaders, human rights activists, women’s leaders, student activists, and civic leaders) in conflict transformation: how to turn conflicts from destructive negative experiences into constructive positive experiences using nonviolent biblically-based means.

In time, these leaders began to affect the internal debate by representing an organized, vocal and focused civil society that had grown tired of the unending violence.

Then, in 2008, a series of meetings in Chiang Mai, Thailand, brought together the faction leaders, societal leaders, and traditional tribal leaders. After a decade of work starting from the ground up, the atmosphere was finally conducive to change.

The basis for reconciliation was established in what became known as a Covenant of Common Hope, complete with action steps and tangible commitments by all parties.

An innovative tool conceived by Wati Aier and used by the team was a simple soccer game which paired former rivals on the same teams. The practical application of teamwork was more easily achieved on the playing field by faction leaders than in any meeting room, and it opened their eyes and hearts to the possibilities of reconciliation.

Other soccer matches were organized by Zhabu Terhuja, of the Nagaland Baptist Church Council, to broaden the effect leading up to games held in major stadiums in Kohima and Diampur with thousands coming to watch.

The June signing of the Covenant of Reconciliation is the next step on the way to a full and lasting peace among the Naga people.

Contributions to support Buttry's ongoing work with the Nagas can be sent via check with a memo "for support of Dan Buttry" to International Ministries, P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482. Donations can also be made with a credit card on the IM website, at <http://www.internationalministries.org/give> (under the "Global Consultants" category).

## ***BWA Urges Dialogue between Baptists and Muslims***

**VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 8/12/09)**—Neville Callam, general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), spoke to their annual meeting, held in Ede, Netherlands, July 25- Aug 1, calling on the international fellowship to set up a commission that would deal primarily with Baptist conversation with Muslims.

Speaking to the General Council meeting on July 31, he noted that a commission would "provide space for shared reflection," and "receive contributions from ongoing dialogue taking place around the world." Since then, Baptists and Muslims have gathered in Amman, Jordan, as well as Andover Newton Theological School, to learn more about each other and to stand together on the common ground between them.

American Baptists have been instrumental in initiating dialogue between Baptist and Muslim scholars in the United States. The first such forum was held at Andover-Newton Theological School, outside of Boston, in January. Scholars from both faiths spoke on the implications of the command that was common to them both: "love of neighbor".

At the BWA meeting, A. Roy Medley, general secretary of the American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA) presented a paper to the BWA Commission on Doctrine and Interchurch Relations, summarizing the event.

"There were eye-opening moments for each of us," Medley recalled, "as Muslims asked to learn more about religious liberty and the separation of church and state in democratic, pluralist societies. Baptists were challenged to think more about submission to God, the regular practice of prayer, and the practice of charity as essential to love of neighbor."

"We're very clear that our goal isn't to create Maptists and Buslims—a syncretism of our faiths," he stressed. "We recognize that while we share a 'common word' we do not share common theologies on many points." Rather, he said, the talks are an effort to find common ground, ways to understand each other.

In addition to ongoing talks, Medley was able to report that January's dialogue will be the subject of a special documentary produced by Ethics Daily and aired by the ABC broadcasting network this coming January.

On July 31, the General Council of the BWA passed a resolution affirming efforts to bridge the gap between faith groups, expressing the belief that "we can humbly but confidently make our witness to the uniqueness of Christ as the way of salvation and to the self-giving of the Triune God, in ways that are not demeaning of other people's beliefs."

In addition to dialogue," the resolution encouraged, "Baptist conventions and unions to engage in...joint activities for human welfare with Muslims," and asks Baptist theologians to "study the response made by the BWA to *A Common Word* and to use it in their teaching."

*A Common Word* is a letter sent to the Christian world in October, 2007, by Muslim scholars, clerics and intellectuals who came together for the first time to “declare the common ground between Christianity and Islam.” (More information can be found on their website: [www.acommonword.com](http://www.acommonword.com).)

After its annual meeting last summer, the BWA responded with a letter which thanked the Muslim leaders for their “generous initiative” and “irenic and constructive spirit,” and proposed that future discussions take place. ([www.bwanet.org](http://www.bwanet.org))

## **Summer Collegium – A Lilly Endowment Program**

Summer Collegium, a Lilly endowed program in support of smaller congregations and their clergy, and coordinated by the Virginia Theological Seminary of Alexandria, VA, is offering a final year’s event in 2010. For information on how to apply, click on this link:

<http://www.vts.edu/podium/default.aspx?t=119377>. The program director is Dr. Marilyn Johns ([mjohns@vts.edu](mailto:mjohns@vts.edu)).

This year’s event focused on self-care and wholeness in small church clergy life. A written report was provided to the congregation in the form of a Sunday morning sermon. You can read about the Summer Collegium experience via:

<http://www.fbcbennington.org/sermons/jhh/2009/7/13/to-live-for-gods-glory-ephesians-13-14.html>

## **MINISTERS COUNCIL NEWS**

### **Collegial Covenant Groups**

The Minister’s Council of American Baptist Churches continues to have funds from the Lily Grant to support Collegial Covenant Groups in 2010. Please go to their website at [www.ministerscouncil.com](http://www.ministerscouncil.com) to find more detailed information about how to apply for these grants listed under the Together In Ministry section.

All applications for new or continuing groups must be sent to Rev. Douglas Harris, President of ABC/MC Minister’s Council, 5244 N. Lakewood Ave., Chicago, IL 60640 no later than September 1, 2009. The local Minister’s Council officers will meet to approve all applications and send them on to the National Minister’s Council, who make the final decisions on who receives the grants for 2010. You must get your applications in on time to have a chance for them to be approved. May we continue to have ongoing ways to strengthen our life together as those called into professional ministries.

### **Together in the Lord Conference**

Come to Orlando January 4-7, 2010 for the *Ministry Renewal Conference*! The conference will be held at the Wyndham Resort and Conference Center, 8001 International Drive, Orlando, FL 32819. It will be presented by American Baptist Churches, USA -

Preachers will include:

*Miroslav Volf (Yale Divinity School)*  
*Shane Claibourne (The Simple Way)*  
*Trinette McCray*  
*Marvin McMickle*

Workshop Leaders will include:

Alan Bearman  
Sara Day  
Florence Li

Don Ng  
Lee Spitzer  
Shane Clairbourne  
Lisa Harris  
Trinette McCray  
Carol Schreck  
Reid Trulson  
Mayra Castañeda  
Glynis LaBarre  
Marvin McMickle  
Peter Schreck  
Aidsand Wright Riggins III

Music will be led by Rev. José Sierra of Monterrey, Mexico.

For registration and conference schedule visit this link -  
<http://www.ministerscouncil.org/Together%20in%20the%20Lord/TITLinfopage.aspx>

## HEALTH CARE NEWS

### ***Aspirin***

*Thank you to cardiac care nurse Mary Steffen for confirming this information. Mary is a member of the Federated Church of Wauconda.*

This is informative and you probably already know about this.

Bayer is making crystal aspirin to dissolve under the tongue. They work much faster than the tablets.

All adults need to keep aspirin near at hand, probably on night stands or in medicine cabinets, in a container that children cannot reach or cannot open.

Why keep aspirin by your bedside?

### **About Heart Attacks**

There are other symptoms of an heart attack besides the pain on the left arm. One must also be aware of an intense pain on the chin, as well as nausea and lots of sweating. However, these symptoms may also occur less frequently.

Note: There may be no pain in the chest during a heart attack. The majority of people (about 60%) who had a heart attack during their sleep, did not wake up. However, if it occurs, the chest pain may wake you up from your deep sleep.

If that happens, immediately dissolve two aspirins in your mouth and swallow them with a bit of water. Afterwards:

- phone 911 or a neighbor or a family member who lives very close by
- say, "Heart attack!"
- say that you have taken 2 aspirins.
- take a seat on a chair or sofa near the front door, and wait for their arrival and...
- ~ do NOT lie down ~

## ***The Truth about the Health Care Bill***

There is a **nasty and misleading** chain email going around. Some of you may have gotten it forwarded to you by family and friends.

The email pretends to go through the "itemized contents of the Health Care Reform Bill," pulling out *outrageous* claims like, "Page 29: Admission: your health care will be rationed!"

The insurance industry is funding these emails through hired skills and, of course, **these claims are universally false**. So we want to arm you with the tools to fight back against these smears.

**Below is an email you can copy and paste in response to anyone who forwards you these lies. Just reply to the smear email and make sure everyone knows the truth.**

**Here are the facts. Anyone can verify them by reading the bill at <http://www.opencongress.org/bill/111-h3200/text>**

*Actual itemized contents of the Health Care Reform Bill:*

**"Page 22: Mandates audits of all employers that self-insure!"**

**TRUTH:** This is not an "audit," it's a study. Moreover, the bill states (pp. 22-23) that the report will "include any recommendations the Commissioner deems appropriate to ensure that the law does not provide incentives for small and mid-size employers to self-insure or create adverse selection in the risk pools of large group insurers and self-insured employers." This is almost directly the opposite of the email's claim.

**"Page 29: Admission: your health care will be rationed!"**

**TRUTH:** Page 29 continues to define the "essential benefits package" and discusses limits on what Americans will have to spend on health care under this minimum standard. In no way does this section stipulate the rationing of care.

**"Page 30: A government committee will decide what treatments and benefits you get (and, unlike an insurer, there will be no appeals process)"**

**TRUTH:** Page 30 begins to describe the Health Benefits Advisory Committee which establishes certain minimum standards for health insurance plans. In no way does this committee deny treatments and benefits to Americans with health insurance.

**"Page 42: The 'Health Choices Commissioner' will decide health benefits for you. You will have no choice. None."**

**TRUTH:** Page 42 begins to describe the Health Choices Commissioner's duties. The idea that this person will decide what benefits Americans receive is patently false, given that most Americans will keep their current plans under reform, and Americans within the exchange will have the choice of purchasing many different kinds of health plans. Rather, the Commissioner will establish minimum standards to protect Americans.

**"Page 50: All non-US citizens, illegal or not, will be provided with free healthcare services."**

**TRUTH:** Pages 50-51 contain a provision stating that discrimination will not be allowed in the provision of health care services. Nowhere does the bill state that non-US citizens will be provided free health care services. The bill prohibits federal dollars from being used for undocumented immigrants.

**"Page 58: Every person will be issued a National ID Healthcard."**

**TRUTH:** Page 58, in the context of a discussion of administrative standards, mentions that "determination of an individual's financial responsibility at the point of service and, to the extent possible, prior to service, including whether the individual is eligible for a specific service with a specific physician at a specific facility...may include utilization of a machine-readable health plan beneficiary identification card." In no

way does the bill state that such a card would be national, or that it would be issued to every person, or that it would, in fact, be used at all.

**"Page 59: The federal government will have direct, real-time access to all individual bank accounts for electronic funds transfer."**

**TRUTH:** Page 59 continues the discussion of administrative standards, and authorizes electronic transfers of money within the government. In no way does this provision grant the government access to individual bank accounts.

**"Page 65: Taxpayers will subsidize all union retiree and community organizer health plans (read: SEIU, UAW and ACORN)"**

**TRUTH:** Here's what page 65 says: "Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall establish a temporary reinsurance program to provide reimbursement to assist participating employment-based plans with the cost of providing health benefits to retirees and to eligible spouses, surviving spouses and dependents of such retirees." No mention is made of unions or community organizations.

**"Page 72: All private healthcare plans must conform to government rules to participate in a Healthcare Exchange."**

**TRUTH:** That's true! Plans have to have a minimum standard of benefits, but can offer other plans as well. But that's fair, isn't it? Private insurers can continue to operate outside the exchange if they wish - should the government establish no standards for the exchange? In that case, how could reform end insurance industry abuses and help to control costs?

**"Page 84: All private healthcare plans must participate in the Healthcare Exchange (i.e., total government control of private plans)"**

**TRUTH:** This section says is that if private health care plans want to operate in the Exchange, they must provide a basic benefit package.

**"Page 91: Government mandates linguistic infrastructure for services; translation: illegal aliens"**

**TRUTH:** Some American citizens are more comfortable speaking a language other than English, especially in a sensitive situation like a consultation with their doctor. This provision in no way opens the door for coverage of undocumented workers.

**"Page 95: The Government will pay ACORN and Americorps to sign up individuals for Government-run Health Care plan."**

**TRUTH:** Page 95 makes no mention of ACORN and Americorps; all it says is that the Commissioner can conduct outreach to vulnerable populations, making them aware of their options.

**"Page 102: Those eligible for Medicaid will be automatically enrolled: you have no choice in the matter."**

**TRUTH:** People who are eligible for Medicaid will not have to face the burdens of paperwork and other bureaucratic struggles. Far from depriving people of choice, this measure will ensure coverage.

**"Page 124: No company can sue the government for price-fixing. No 'judicial review' is permitted against the government monopoly. Put simply, private insurers will be crushed."**

**TRUTH:** This section describes rate-setting under the public health insurance plan option, which will compete with private insurers, who can set their own rates. Because of inherent advantages like their established administrative and provider frameworks, private insurance companies will not be "crushed" by government competition.

**"Page 127: The AMA sold doctors out: the government will set wages."**

**TRUTH:** The government will negotiate rates with providers under the public health insurance plan option. However, private insurers will continue to pay their own rates.

**"Page 145: An employer MUST auto-enroll employees into the government-run public plan. No alternatives."**

**TRUTH:** This is simply not true. Employers with more than 20 employees aren't even eligible to participate in the exchange, let alone the public plan, until several years after the exchange launches in 2013. Moreover, no employer will be forced to participate in the public plan.

**"Page 146: Employers MUST pay healthcare bills for part-time employees AND their families."**

**TRUTH:** Employers are required to pay some benefits for part-time employees on a basis proportional to what they pay for full-time employees. No language on this page or the next stipulates coverage for the families of part-time employees.

**"Page 149: Any employer with a payroll of \$400K or more, who does not offer the public option, pays an 8% tax on payroll"**

**TRUTH:** The payroll penalty applies to employers with payroll over \$500,000 who do not provide insurance to their employees. The percentage for employers with payroll from \$500,000 - \$750,000 is 6%. Employers do not have to offer the public option to avoid this penalty, they can offer private insurance if they wish.

**"Page 150: Any employer with a payroll of \$250K-400K or more, who does not offer the public option, pays a 2 to 6% tax on payroll"**

**TRUTH:** This is false, see above.

**"Page 167: Any individual who doesn't have acceptable healthcare (according to the government) will be taxed 2.5% of income."**

**TRUTH:** Pages 167-173 detail what "acceptable health care" means (basically, insurance coverage) and also allow for many different kinds of exceptions to this rule.

**"Page 170: Any NON-RESIDENT alien is exempt from individual taxes (Americans will pay for them)."**

**TRUTH:** Non-resident aliens do not have to pay the penalty for not having health insurance, nor will they receive federal assistance, because they are not required to purchase health insurance. They are not exempted from individual taxes generally.

**"Page 195: Officers and employees of Government Healthcare Bureaucracy will have access to ALL American financial and personal records."**

**TRUTH:** This is a gross overstatement. For the purposes of determining affordability credits for Americans who need financial assistance in purchasing health insurance, employees of the Health Choices Administration will have access to tax information that the federal government already keeps. As is clearly stated on page 196, "Return information... may be used by officers and employees of the Health Choices Administration or such State-based health insurance exchange, as the case may be, only for the purposes of, and to the extent necessary in, establishing and verifying the appropriate amount of any affordability credit described in subtitle C of title II of the America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009 and providing for the repayment of any such credit which was in excess of such appropriate amount."

**"Page 203: "The tax imposed under this section shall not be treated as tax." Yes, it really says that."**

**TRUTH:** This quote is taken out of context, and is in fact referring to a calculation used in the bill. Full context of quote: "(4) NOT TREATED AS TAX IMPOSED BY THIS CHAPTER FOR CERTAIN PURPOSES.-The tax imposed under this section shall not be treated as tax imposed by this chapter for purposes of determining the amount of any credit under this chapter or for purposes of section 55."

**"Page 239: Bill will reduce physician services for Medicaid. Seniors and the poor most affected."**

**TRUTH:** This section has nothing whatsoever to do with reducing services. It makes much needed changes to the way in which physician reimbursement is recalculated every year. The bill will, in fact, create much more opportunity for seniors and the poor to receive necessary care.

**"Page 241: Doctors: no matter what specialty you have, you'll all be paid the same (thanks, AMA!)"**

**TRUTH:** Page 241 does not say this. Nowhere does it say this. It does say that physicians will be grouped into certain categories regardless of specialty. These categories merely determine if the physician is engaged in primarily therapeutic or preventative care.

**"Page 253: Government sets value of doctors' time, their professional judgment, etc."**

**TRUTH:** There is no good response to this assertion as it appears to have been made up completely. The section deals with 'misvalued codes' meaning that the government is potentially not paying an acceptable rate for a specific service. This will allow the government to, for example, pay more for services that require more payment, such as high-overhead procedures. The author of these criticisms separately attacks the bill for paying the same rate to all doctors, then attacks again for paying different rates.

**"Page 265: Government mandates and controls productivity for private healthcare industries."**

**TRUTH:** This section amends the Social Security Act to include productivity measures. There is no mandate or control of anything. This merely updates the way in which doctors and hospitals are paid through Medicare.

**"Page 268: Government regulates rental and purchase of power-driven wheelchairs."**

**TRUTH:** This is simply not true. This slightly amends existing guidelines for payments for medical equipment, in this case power-driven wheelchairs. This section introduces no 'regulations' that are not in the Social Security Act.

**"Page 272: Cancer patients: welcome to the wonderful world of rationing!"**

**TRUTH:** Overusage of the hot-button word "rationing" is a way to deflect attention away from the actual language of the bill and incite unjustified fear. This section only compares costs incurred by cancer hospitals to costs incurred by similar hospitals, and adjusts payments to reduce the possibility of fraud and abuse.

**"Page 280: Hospitals will be penalized for what the government deems preventable re-admissions."**

**TRUTH:** This is almost correct. The section is one of the first efforts at targeting excessive readmissions. Excessive readmissions are physically and emotionally damaging to patients, while simultaneously putting them, and the health care system, in far more financial risk than is necessary. The American Hospital Association recommended reduced payments for avoidable readmission in testimony to Congress.

**"Page 298: Doctors: if you treat a patient during an initial admission that results in a readmission, you will be penalized by the government."**

**TRUTH:** This is patently false. The section is about possible methods that the Secretary of Health and Human services might consider in order to address the growing problem of patient readmission. This section does not, in any way, create a penalty, nor does it even mandate policy. It merely provides examples of recourses that might be considered.

**"Page 317: Doctors: you are now prohibited from owning and investing in healthcare companies!"**

**TRUTH:** This provision only limits Doctor's investments in health care facilities that they refer patients to. The effort to limit self-referral has been ongoing for many years as an effort to reduce fraud and abuse. This is, essentially, the medical community equivalent of insider trading. Limiting this incentive works to put the patient's health above all other considerations. Doctors remain free to engage in investment opportunities in areas that don't create a significant conflict of interest.

**"Page 318: Prohibition on hospital expansion. Hospitals cannot expand without government approval."**

**TRUTH:** This section regulates physicians' investment in hospitals to make sure that physicians are not unfairly benefiting from their power to refer patients to hospitals they have a stake in. The section does not prohibit hospital expansion.

**"Page 321: Hospital expansion hinges on 'community' input: in other words, yet another payoff for ACORN."**

**TRUTH:** In the ongoing effort to demonize community-based groups such as ACORN, every instance of the word "community" has become associated with that group's efforts. In reality, this provision allows for anyone to provide input. This includes homeowners, religious leaders, neighborhood groups, and others. There are no payoffs. There is no money exchanged in any way.

**"Page 335: Government mandates establishment of outcome-based measures: i.e., rationing."**

**TRUTH:** This provision is included in order to allow the government to base payments on practices that work. Nowhere does it say health care will be rationed. The attempt to isolate what works and what does not work in Medicare Advantage plans only benefits the health care system in general.

**"Page 341: Government has authority to disqualify Medicare Advantage Plans, HMOs, etc."**

**TRUTH:** The government can disqualify some Medicare Advantage Plans from receiving some additional payments, but only if those plans are not meeting necessary requirements.

**"Page 354: Government will restrict enrollment of SPECIAL NEEDS individuals."**

**TRUTH:** This section only deals with how to handle special needs individuals who need to enroll outside of the open enrollment period. Almost every type of plan operates with open enrollment periods. This section does not create more restrictions.

**"Page 379: More bureaucracy: Telehealth Advisory Committee (healthcare by phone)."**

**TRUTH:** This section merely expands existing Telehealth programs, which supplement but do not replace other health coverage, and provide a vital resource to Americans in rural and remote areas.

**"Page 425-430: More bureaucracy: Advance Care Planning Consult: Senior Citizens, assisted suicide, euthanasia?; Government will instruct and consult regarding living wills, durable powers of attorney, etc. Mandatory. Appears to lock in estate taxes ahead of time; Government provides approved list of end-of-life resources, guiding you in death; Government mandates program that orders end-of-life treatment; government dictates how your life ends; Advance Care Planning Consult will be used to dictate treatment as patient's health deteriorates. This can include an ORDER for end-of-life plans. An ORDER from the GOVERNMENT; Government will decide what level of treatments you may have at end-of-life."**

**TRUTH:** All of these hysterical claims have been debunked elsewhere. HR3200 provides for the reimbursement of a *voluntary* session of end-of-life counseling with your physician once every five years. This in no way means the government will make decisions for patients or encourage doctor-assisted suicide. Counseling simply makes patients and their families aware of their options.

**"Page 469: Community-based Home Medical Services: more payoffs for ACORN."**

**TRUTH:** ACORN is not a Community-Based Medical Home.

**"Page 472: Payments to Community-based organizations: more payoffs for ACORN."**

**TRUTH:** This is clearly still referring to community health groups, not ACORN.

**"Page 489: Government will cover marriage and family therapy. Government intervenes in your marriage."**

**TRUTH:** Covering marriage and family therapy, as many private insurance plans do, does not mean that the government "intervenes in your marriage." The types of individuals who are recognized as therapists are clearly defined on page 491; in brief, professionals only, not bureaucrats.

**"Page 494: Government will cover mental health services: defining, creating and rationing those services."**

**TRUTH:** This section expands government coverage for mental health services under various government programs, and ensures that all mental health services will be offered by qualified professionals.

## ***Illinois Raising Women's Voices, a Health Care Speak-Out***

*Thank you to Protestants for the Common Good for sharing this information.*

Attend the August 13 health care speak-out hosted by Black Women for Reproductive Justice, and share your personal story. The event will take place at the Better Boys Foundation, located at 1512 Pulaski Rd. in Chicago. All are welcome to attend and no RSVP is necessary. Please call 773-955-2709 for more information or to sign-up for story sharing. The event will be at the Better Boys Foundation, 1512 S. Pulaski Road, Chicago, from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. See the event [flier](http://thecommongood.org/CGN/8_16/speakOut.pdf) ([http://thecommongood.org/CGN/8\\_16/speakOut.pdf](http://thecommongood.org/CGN/8_16/speakOut.pdf)) for details.

## ***Trinity United Church of Christ Health Care Reform Forum***

Trinity United Church of Christ is sponsoring a health care reform forum on Friday, August 14, 2009, between 6:30-8:30 PM. Please join us as we listen, learn and act to create a more just health care system that includes everybody. Confirmed speakers include Rev. Otis Moss III, Honorable Roland Burris and Danny Davis, Drs. Terry Mason, Javette Orgain, Claudia Fegan and Niva Lubin-Johnson. The time for change is now!

## **PEACE NEWS**

### ***Prayer for Peace***

*This is from the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America.*

This year, 2009, as we approach fall, we would like to welcome every one of our Partner Congregations to another season of peacemaking. We call peacebuilders, peacemakers, and those with peace in their heart to renew their commitment to actionable peace across the globe. As peacemaking Baptists and Christians we know that God calls us to be the movers and shakers of our society, just as Jesus dared to craft ripples of change in his own community. But he was not alone in his action; hundreds, then thousands of believers took up the call and began to try to shape a new world. And the call has not ended, there is always work to be done, and as Christian peacemakers we must be a voice for the new generation. "Christian" and "progressive" are not and never have been antonyms. BPFNA Partner Congregations are urged to take part in these actions in unity and fellowship with other groups across the world in order to show solidarity on issues of peace and environmental justice.

The observance of the **International Day of Prayer for Peace**, an interfaith response to the UN established International Day of Peace on September 21 and the celebration of the International Day of Climate Action on October 24 will both serve as reminders of our commitment to peace and justice and provide an opportunity to take direct action. The International Day of Prayer for Peace offers an opportunity for BPFNA Partner Congregations to engage in 24 hour peace vigils, Sunday service prayers, and personal offerings of peace, among others. It will also serve as a day for our Partner Congregations to encourage personal mindfulness of peace action in our every day lives. The **International Day of Climate Action** is intended to be an occasion aimed at increasing awareness of our Partner Congregations' impact on the environment and the importance of reducing carbon dioxide emissions so as to slow or prevent climate change. Partner Congregations are encouraged to gather on this day to screen relevant videos, discuss options for decreasing our carbon footprints, and make new church-wide energy commitments.

**Click on the topic for a number of ideas for these observances:**

[International Day of Prayer for Peace](#)

[International Day of Climate Action](#)

Thank you for your continued willingness to be a leader in peace work in your community and in the world. Together we will continue to serve as reminders to our society that being peaceful is not passive, and in fellowship we can make a difference!

## 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 pray and take action for real reform of the health care system in the United States.

Please pray for God's comfort for individuals and families whose beloved pets have passed away.

Please pray for ABC's volunteers in mission all around the world.

Please pray for those traveling during the vacation season.

Please pray for God's guidance for the leaders of our state and nation.

Please ask for God's guidance and wisdom for pastoral search committees, and hold them in prayer.

Please pray for ABC missionaries Ed and Miriam Noyes in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Ed supports and advises Congolese Baptist church programs promoting more productive, profitable, and sustainable farming techniques. Miriam promotes church-based literacy programs and trains literacy teachers.

Please support in prayer ABC missionary Madeline Flores-Lopez, coordinator of mission volunteers and groups throughout the Caribbean.

Please pray for ABC missionary Lea Lindero in Thailand. She is the head nurse at The Kwai River Christian Hospital (KRCH) located in rural Thailand near the Burma (Myanmar) border.

## CALENDAR

**NOW**—Please take action—phone calls, emails, letters to the editor—for health care reform.

**August 13**—Women's Health Care Speak-Out, Better Boys Foundation, 1512 S. Pulaski Road, Chicago, 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. See the event [flier](http://thecommongood.org/CGN/8_16/speakOut.pdf) ([http://thecommongood.org/CGN/8\\_16/speakOut.pdf](http://thecommongood.org/CGN/8_16/speakOut.pdf)) for details.

**August 19**—Emergency Preparedness Training for H1 N1 flu outbreak. The session will be from 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. and training begins at 9:00 a.m. A continental breakfast and lunch will be provided. The training will be held at Progressive Community Center - The People's Church, 56 E. 48th Street in Chicago

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

**August 19**—Workshop on emergency preparedness for H1 N1 flu outbreak, The People's Church, 56 E. 48th Street, Chicago, 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m.

**August 20**— The Secrets to Building a Money-Making Ministry webinar, 2 p.m. For information and registration, please go to <http://www.christianfoundationgrants.com/Home/Webinar/17>

**August 22**—Family Council meeting Garfield Park Baptist Church, 4100 W Jackson Boulevard, Chicago. Check-in opens at 8:30 a.m.; meeting begins at 9 a.m. Please register in advance, no later than August 18.

**August 22**—Sacred Dance Workshop, South Church, 501 S. Emerson Street, Mount Prospect, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

**September 6**—ABCMC Sunday with Larry Greenfield preaching, Emmanuel Baptist Church, 8301 S. Damen Avenue, Chicago, 11 a.m.

**September 9-11**—Theological Conversation with Jurgen Moltmann, First Presbyterian Church, 219 Maple Avenue, Libertyville. Please visit <http://moltmannconversation.com> for information and registration.

**September 12**—ABCMC Stewardship Seminar, 10 a.m.

**September 12**—Memorial service for Eugene Nyman, 407 South Grove Avenue in Barrington, 4 p.m.

**September 13**—Celebration of 120 years of ministry, Irving Park Baptist Church, 4401 W. Irving Park Road, Chicago, with Mike Harvey preaching, 11 a.m. Luncheon follows at La Villa Banquets, 3638 N. Pulaski Road, Chicago, 1 p.m.

**September 15**—Kids Hope United 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Golf Outing, Bonnie Brook Golf Course, Waukegan.

**September 21**—International Day of Prayer for Peace.

**September 24**—Lecture and book signing by Walter Wink, Grand Taylor Chapel, Chicago Theological Seminary, 5757 S. University Avenue, Chicago, 7 p.m.

**October 3**—ABCMC gathering with Jeff Woods on vitalizing congregational ministries. Save the date! More information to come.

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

**November 8-9**—Hidden Treasures: Spiritual Wisdom Through the Voices of Women in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, Catholic Theological Union, 5416 S. Cornell, Chicago. For more information and registration, please call the Bernardin Center at Catholic Theological Union, 773-371-5432, or visit [www.ctu.edu](http://www.ctu.edu)

**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](mailto: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.*

### ***Job Responsibilities***

I don't think I made a conscious decision to accept the job, and certainly it wasn't offered or assigned to me. But increasingly I find myself employed as an unsalaried groundskeeper around my neighborhood.

This is not a full-time position, I need to assure you.

I only put my time in when Deal (my dog) and I take our three-mile run in the morning, and then again during the day and early evening when we go on walks to take care of (his — the dog's) business.

My self-appointed responsibilities are to pick up and dispose of the litter that my fellow humans leave behind, although there is an abundance of trash receptacles — in each instance one for general waste and the other recyclables — about every fifty to seventy-five yards.

If you sensed that I'm just a little irritated with my fellow human beings for leaving this litter when they could so easily take a quite reasonable number of steps to dispose of their leftovers, you'd be sensing rightly. Sometimes, I confess, I curse them under my breath and once in a while out loud.

But I keep doing the work, I realize, for a number of reasons — or are they rationalizations?

For example: I do it because it makes me feel righteous, even superior

and self-righteous in the worst sort of way, which nonetheless brings its own kind of pleasure. I do it because I love my beautiful neighborhood and want to keep it beautiful for my enjoyment and for people passing through on their way to see the Obamas' old apartment (a couple of blocks away) and their more recent house (a half mile away). I do it because once in a while some passerby says "thank you" (but doesn't join me in the effort!). I do it — and this is literally and figuratively a stretch — because it makes me repeatedly bend to the ground and, thus, improve my health with an exercise that isn't in my usual routine. I do it, yes, because it's now become ingrained and habitual — I'd feel unsatisfied and irresponsible if I left an empty plastic water bottle, or a sack from a picnic, or a candy wrapper, or a dirty diaper just lying there.

But the other morning I got really angry, and really judgmental. Someone had intentionally turned over both the general waste and the recyclable receptacles all along the way, leaving the rubbish scattered far and wide. As I up-righted each of the bins and painstakingly put all the stinking trash back into them, I was doing a seething burn. "What kind of irresponsible jerk, what kind of angry nitwit, what kind of anti-social fool had done this," I kept asking myself.

But somewhere along the way it occurred to me that the perpetrator might not have been a jerk, or a nitwit, or a fool. Maybe she or he just wanted something to eat, or drink, or reclaim.

Was I to stand in judgment of that person, if those were the reasons? Or if the person acted out of anger for being homeless, or left out, or put down, or a little "out-of-touch," was I to stand in judgment? Had I misunderstood? Had I been too quick to judge? Had I jumped to a conclusion because of my pre-judgment and prejudice?

Maybe, I thought to myself as I paused to catch my breath, I ought to allow for some understanding and forgiveness on my part toward this offender of my sensibilities. Maybe, even, it was a part of my job as neighborhood groundskeeper to cover for this sister or brother and the mess she or he left for the rest of us.

When Deal and I got back to the apartment, I forgot about the incident that had at first so provoked me and then had caused me to recalculate what might have been the operative causes.

Until I read the Nine Commandments that are at the end of the fourth chapter of Ephesians, and that wind up with the first verse of the fifth chapter.

I. Put away falsehood; let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members one of another.

II. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil.

III. Have thieves give up stealing; rather give them jobs and let them work honestly with their own hands, so they too can share with the needy.

IV. Do not let evil come out of your mouth, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace and mercy to those who hear.

V. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption.

VI. Put away all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice.

VII. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

VIII. Be imitators of God, as beloved children.

IX. Live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

It was only then that I realized who stands in judgment and in need of forgiveness, who needs to hear the words of grace and empowerment. As the old camp song from my youth has it: It's-a me, It's-a me, It's-a me O Lord, standing in the need of prayer.

And maybe it's an American society — or an American Christianity — that is standing in need of prayer and forgiveness: for misunderstanding and for being too quick to prejudge; for letting people go homeless and hungry, left out and out-of-touch, jobless and joyless, without health care and health care insurance, in jail for low-level crimes (more often because of their racial and ethnic identity than for the severity of their offenses), without a sense of any security because they've crossed a border without the proper papers so they could support their families.

I concluded that we've got a job to do, with some pretty demanding and unusual responsibilities clearly enumerated in Ephesians, and a God of grace to help us along the way.

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