

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

September 30, 2009

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ABCMC NEWS

October Is Pastor Appreciation Month

This information is from Joe Kutter, Executive Director of the Ministers Council of the ABCUSA.

It can be really awkward for pastors to advocate Pastor Appreciation Month. So this paragraph is directed to the rest of us. I want to encourage, even urge, national and regional staff persons to help congregations to do those things that indicate the appreciation that they have for their pastors. Several years ago, the Ministerial Leadership Commission published a brief but excellent paper that offered concrete suggestions for demonstrating appreciation for pastoral leaders. The paper can be found at <http://www.ministerscouncil.com/documents/appreciationmlc08.pdf>

Getting Grants from Small Foundations

This information is from Christian Foundation Grants (www.christianfoundationgrants.com)

When you subscribe to the [CFG Insider](http://www.christianfoundationgrants.com/Signup) (<http://www.christianfoundationgrants.com/Signup>), you'll find that the majority of foundations listed there are small foundations with assets of less than \$5 million or less. Many of these foundations were started by solid families that wanted to do something good in their community and the world.

These foundations tend to have few guidelines for applying or simply want a simple letter of inquiry. Here's a tip for approaching these foundations: write the one page grant request letter.

The one page grant request letter should have the following components:

- A compelling statistic highlighting the compelling need for your ministry (i.e., 86% of the families are single parent homes that XYZ Ministry serves)
- Your mission statement in 20 words or less
- Your vision statement in 10 words or less
- Your key values (3-5 values that drive what you do)
- How you accomplish your mission (explain specifically what you do -i.e., XYZ hosts a weekly mom's night out and simultaneously leads a children's bible adventure night...)
- An ROI (return on investment) statement-i.e., Historically, XYZ has shown for every \$75/mo invested that we'll have one student meeting every week for bible study and carrying on their faith into their high school years...
- A short appeal-this appeal may be a request to meet in person or a request for funds.

This kind of simple approach allows you to get your message out quickly. And remember, keep it to one page!

Vital Ministries: Leverage Points of Lay and Clergy Leadership

Who among us doesn't want our churches to become even more vibrant, vital, healthy? The question always is, "How?" ABCMC is sponsoring a seminar on Saturday, October 3 to help lay and clergy leaders in congregations gain answers to that "How" question.

Dr. Jeff Woods, Associate General Secretary for Regional Ministries, ABCUSA, an expert in this field, will lead us. We asked Dr. Woods to give us a glimpse of what will happen in the morning and afternoon sessions. Please take a careful look at what he has provided us below.

During the first session, participants will have an opportunity to explore findings related to church health and church growth. With so much written about church growth and church health, it can be difficult to sort out the hunches from reality in order to know what works and does not work in promoting church health and congregational renewal. In this workshop, Dr. Woods draws from his involvement on the "Pulpit and Pew" project as well as numerous research papers presented at the Religious Research Association over the last few decades in order to respond to questions such as:

- What are the marks of a healthy church?
- What is the number one concern of congregations?
- Where are the gaps in community ministry?
- Who is healthier—larger or smaller congregations?
- How does location influence a congregation's ability to grow?
- What type of member is more likely to invite their neighbor to church?
- Who is actually reaching the unchurched?

The second session will further explore the strategies from the first session in a "coaching style" workshop. Five "leverage points" of church vitality will be explored with lots of opportunity for group learning and interaction with the instructor. Participants will take away from this workshop the development of specific skills as well as products resulting from the application of those skills, including:

- Tools for discovering how to make worship more uplifting
- A framework for defining local identity, mission, and vision
- Pathways to creating ownership of a vision
- A procedure for following up with guests
- The wisdom of knowing how to use consensus and synergy in the congregation
- Ideas for engaging members in the most important aspects of God's call.

The seminar will take place at North Shore Baptist Church, 5244 N. Lakewood Avenue, Chicago from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Members of congregations should register for the seminar by 2 p.m. on Wednesday, September 30. Please complete the registration form that is attached with this issue of *eWind* and email it to office@abcmc.org or fax to 773-804-1656 or mail to American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago, 7035 W. Grand Avenue, Suite 102, Chicago, IL 60707. OR you may register at ABCMC's web site, http://www.abcmc.org/documents/Registration_Form_Congregational_Vitalization.pdf Registration is due by 2 p.m. on Wednesday, September 30.

To respond by email, please either

Copy and paste the blank form into a new email, fill in the blanks, and send the email to office@abcmc.org.

OR

Save the registration form as a Word document, fill in the blanks, save it again, and attach it to a new email. Send the email to office@abcmc.org.

With either approach, please use the word "registration" in the subject line of your email.

World Mission Offering



Autumn harvest means bountiful crops of fat, orange pumpkins, bushels of crisp, juicy apples and colorful pots of mums heavy with blossoms. Farm stands are overflowing with an abundance of hearty root vegetables and canned goods.

During this season of abundance, we are asked to give to the World Mission Offering. Our gifts make it possible for dozens of long term missionaries to stay on the field. Our gifts enable hundreds of short term volunteers to participate in construction projects, provide disaster relief, and offer hope to those who think nobody knows what it's like to be in their shoes.

Missionaries rely on us to give generously so that their ministries may give abundant blessings in countries around the world. 100% of your gift to the World Mission Offering goes to the missionaries. It provides support for projects that provide clean water, nourishing crops and medical supplies. The WMO makes it possible for pastors and lay leaders to get vital training for their ministries, and provides scholarships so they can afford to attend.

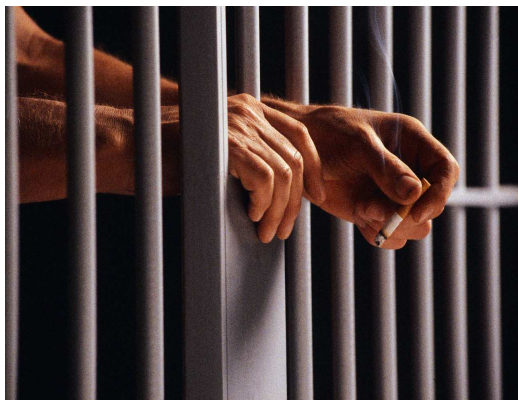
Your gift can bring healing to an abused child and hope to struggling refugees. Through the WMO branches of peace are extended between warring factions and people are rescued from slavery and despair.

Giving to the World Mission Offering says you care about the needs of other. Giving to the World Mission Offerings means you take serious Jesus' charge that we care for the hungry and thirsty, those who are sick or imprisoned. Giving to the World Mission Offering is how you walk in the shoes of others.

Thinking Theologically

ABCMC's Executive Minister Larry Greenfield has prepared his biweekly column, "Thinking Theologically for the Common Good," a bit early. It will run in the upcoming issue of *The Common Good Network* for Protestants for the Common Good. It appears at the end of this issue of *eWind*.

Fall Dinner



The Cook County Jail Ministry's annual fall dinner will take place on Saturday, November 7 at 6 p.m. The event will be at the First Baptist Church of Oak Park, 820 Ontario Street, Oak Park. Valet parking will be available.

All are invited to come and participate in this evening of fellowship, prayer and music, as well as a delicious meal. All tickets are to be purchased at the door. The cost is \$15 per adult or \$5 per child under 12. A table for 8 will cost \$100.

Be sure to attend this event and support this important ministry with inmates at the Cook County Jail.

GOING GREEN IN ABCMC

Opportunities for Green Infrastructure Grants

Thanks to Denise Janssen for sharing this article with us. Please note that the application deadline is October 2, so hurry!

By Sara Spoonheim, [Faith in Place](#)

Do you want to pilot state-of-the-art storm water management practices in your congregation? Are you thinking about repaving your parking lot? Are you tired of flooding at your church?

Faith in Place is looking for partners in Cook and Lake counties to pilot "green infrastructure" to transform rainwater into a valuable resource. Once we secure funding, two or three congregations will become demonstration sites with green technology like permeable pavers, low-maintenance rain gardens, parking lot bioswales, 300-gallon cisterns, vertical gardens, etc.



Eligible sites must have external downspouts with some unpaved area nearby or a parking lot with flooding problems, be willing to put some financial and volunteer resources into the effort, agree to use their site for educational events, and test a new Faith in Place curriculum on water with a group in their congregation.

Intrigued? Call Sara at 312-733-4640 (or email sara@faithinplace.org) right away! We'd like to include your interest in a grant proposal we're submitting on October 15.

NEWS FROM ABCMC CONGREGATIONS

ABC Missionary Lauran Bethell in Wilmette

This invitation is from the Community Church of Wilmette.



Join us for an evening of conversation with Lauran Bethell on Thursday, October 1, 7-9 p.m. at the Community Church of Wilmette. The church is at 1020 Forest Avenue in Wilmette.

Lauran Bethell, M.Div, D.D., has been working for more than two decades on behalf of and caring for women who have been exploited and abused. Most recently, she serves as a consultant with grassroots organizations, encouraging the development of new projects dealing with the issues of prostitution, trafficking in persons and other forms of abuse and exploitation. While based in The Netherlands, she travels extensively throughout Europe, Asia and the Americas, teaching, training and consulting.

All are welcome at the evening event. Refreshments will be served.

Pet Blessing



SECOND ANNUAL PET BLESSING

AT

**MORGAN PARK BAPTIST CHURCH
11024 SOUTH BELL AVENUE
CHICAGO, IL 60643
773-445-9443
WWW.MORGANPARKBAPTIST.ORG**

**OCTOBER 4, 2009
BLESSING OF THE PETS WILL TAKE PLACE
BETWEEN 9:30 & 10:15 AM ON THE SOUTH LAWN OF
THE CHURCH
(IN THE GYM IN CASE OF RAIN)**

**BLESSING GIVEN BY
PASTOR THOMAS ALDWORTH
(IN THE SPIRIT OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI)
COMPLEMENTARY VETERINARY EXAMINATION BY
DR. EDWIN SHORT**

Art Exhibit in Hyde Park

This information is from Lake Street Church.

A new exhibit, "Humanity and the Divine Imprint," displaying the work of six artists, opens on September 30 and runs through January 6, 2010. One of these artists is Jack Cain, a member of Lake Street Church in Evanston. Jack will be showing a number of portraits of homeless people whom he has photographed in various parts of the world.

There is an opening reception on September 30th from 5:30 - 7:30 in the 4th floor gallery. CTU is located at 5416 S. Cornell. Free parking is available in the attached garage.

Jazz Vespers at Woodside Church

All are invited to participate in Jazz Vespers, held the third Friday of every month—September through June—beginning at 6:00 p.m. This monthly event is designed to be spiritually uplifting with some of the area's best jazz musicians adding their musical interpretation to a selection of readings—classic to contemporary—creating a unique experience.

Jazz Vespers is presented in a coffee house setting at Woodside Church, located at 1509 East Court Street in Flint, right next to Mott Community College. A light dinner and refreshments will be served.

Mark Your Calendars for the Entire Season

In addition to the event on September 18, please mark your calendars for all of the Jazz Vespers services: Oct. 16, Nov. 20, Dec. 18, Jan. 15, Feb. 19, Mar. 19, Apr. 16, May 21 and Jun. 18.

Reservations are requested, to help Woodside prepare the supper; please call the church at 810-767-4911. Visit www.woodsidechurch.net for more information—which will be updated regularly.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Black Church and Community Health Symposium, October 17, 2009

Black Church and Community Health Symposium: "Community Health, Spirituality, and African American Pastoral Care" will be held on Saturday, October 17, 8 a.m. - 12 noon, at the Third Baptist Church, 1551 West 95th Street, Chicago. The symposium is co-sponsored by the Center for the Study of Black Faith and Life and the Institute for Advanced Study of Spirituality & Wellness.

The symposium will be led by Dr. Arthur L. Pressley, Associate Professor of Psychology and Religion, The Theological School, Drew University, Madison, New Jersey

Workshops are: Domestic Violence; Community Violence; Diabetes, Hypertension and HIV/AIDS.
Registration: \$10.00 (Students \$5.00)

3 hours of CEU credit will be available for licensees in professional counseling or clinical professional counseling.

For more information, contact: Joslyn DiPasalegne at 312.952.1766 (TAMALAR Consulting)

THE THIRD ANNUAL C. SHELBY ROOKS LECTURE

The Center for the Study of Black Faith and Life Presents The Third Annual C. Shelby Rooks Lecture on Thursday, October 15 at Chicago Theological Seminary, 5757 S. University Avenue in Chicago. This year's lecture topic, "Community Health, Spirituality, and African American Pastoral Care," will be presented by Dr. Arthur L. Pressley, Associate Professor of Psychology and Religion, The Theological School, Drew University, Madison, New Jersey. There will also be an art show and a reception.

Schedule of Events:

4:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. Art Show--Room 133

4:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. Reception-Cloisters

6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. Lecture-Graham Taylor Hall

The event will be free and open to the public. Valet parking will be available.

For information contact: Joslyn DiPasalegne at 312-952-1766.

Sermon Contest

This announcement is from the FaithTrust Institute, www.faithtrust.org, which is holding its fourth national sermon contest.

What are you preaching to your faith community?

The FaithTrust Institute wants your sermons addressing child abuse, rape, and domestic violence.

Please email your sermons as a Microsoft Word attachment and as a video or audio file to training@faithtrustinstitute.org. Include your name, faith tradition, and contact information (phone number and mailing address).

Sermons will be judged on the following criteria:

- Clarity and accuracy of information about the issues
- Well-grounded presentation of theological context
- Use of sacred texts from your faith tradition
- Creativity in presenting the nuances of victimization and our faith traditions

The video or audio version of the top three sermons will be published on FaithTrust Institute's website in February 2010. **Deadline for Submission: November 30, 2009**

Religion and Violence

2009 McCormick Days will take place at McCormick Theological Seminary, 5460 S. University Avenue, Chicago, on the grounds of the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago. The dates are October 29-30. McCormick Days are not only a reunion for Alumni, but also an excellent opportunity for continuing education for all of us. Featuring excellent speakers such as Rita Nakashima Brock, Thomas Mockaitis and Daniel Little, the conference will explore contemporary impact of Christianity on world-wide violence—as well as the impact of world-violence on contemporary Christianity. To register online with a credit card, and for more information, please go to www.mccormick.edu/mcdays.

Summer Collegium

This announcement is from Virginia Theological Seminary.

Applications are now available for the Summer Collegium, a project in support of small congregations at Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria, Virginia. Clergy (and their spouses or partners) from 25 small churches of all Christian denominations are invited to spend nine days at Virginia Seminary for encouragement, education, rest and renewal. **All expenses, including travel, books, meals, lodging, child care at home and pulpit supply, are paid by a grant from the Lilly Endowment.**

The theme of the Summer Collegium this year is Leadership in the Small Congregation. Our keynote speaker will be Alice Mann, a prolific writer on congregational ministry, and John Bell from the Iona Community in Scotland will join our worship team for the conference.

The dates for the Summer Collegium are June 23 - July 1, 2010. Application forms are on our website, www.vts.edu/education/collegium, or will be sent in the mail by emailing SummerCollegium@vts.edu or by calling 703-461-1760. Applications must be postmarked by December 15, 2009, to be considered.

ABCUSA NEWS

Other articles from the American Baptist News Service are available at <http://www.abc-usa.org/Resources/AmericanBaptistNewsService/tabid/79/Default.aspx>

2009 Black Church Conference

"Power Connection: A Call to Greater Works" will be the theme of this year's American Baptist Black Church Conference. The conference will take place at the Holiday Inn Chicago Matteson, 500 Holiday Plaza Drive, Chicago November 3-7. The Third Baptist Church of Chicago will be the host church, and ABCMC along with the American Baptist Churches of Wisconsin, will be the host regions.

A pre-conference event will be a Ministers Summit November 2-3. The Ministers Summit is designed to provide dialogue, networking and resource sharing for those ministering in the African-American Community.

Speakers for the Black Church Conference will include ABCMC's own Brenda Little, Alan Ragland, Marshall Hatch, Carol Jamieson Brown, Alice Greene and Francine Stark. ABCMC's own John Sundquist and Rick Barlow will represent the American Baptist Foundation to talk about estate planning.

The conference will end with a Super Saturday Extravaganza including a Hip Hop Intergenerational Summit. This will be a great event, and a good investment of a pastor's time.

For registration and more information, please visit www.ABCPowerConnection.org.

MINISTERS COUNCIL NEWS

Register Now For Together In the Lord

To all who register for TITL in the next two weeks, Judson Press and National Ministries will give a free copy of one of the following books. You will be able to pick your book up at the conference in Orlando.

Rest in the Storm by Kirk Byron Jones

Tempted to the Leave the Cross (English or Spanish) by Ernest Flores

12 Steps to Congregational Transformation by David Laubach

Those Preaching Women: A Multicultural Collection, edited by Ella P. Mitchell and Valerie B. Davis

Recent research also indicates that airfares are particularly good at this time. Southwest had some particularly good fares. Another careful researcher found that Disney prices are at their lowest at this time of year. The speakers and the workshops are world class. The location is ideal. The fellowship will be enriching. A change of pace following Advent and Christmas will be renewing. Register now for Together in the Lord. <http://www.ministerscouncil.org/Together%20in%20the%20Lord/TITLinfo.aspx>

Scholarship money will be available. For more information click on the link and follow instructions listed below - <http://www.nationalministries.org/>

On left side bar point to Education - Click on Scholarship and Grants - Scroll down to bottom of page and click on "Tell me more about aid for Ministerial Leaders" and click on "Cultivating New Life Grant Application" then follow instructions given there.

Are You Thinking of a Change In Ministry?

Interim ministry is a way to continue to exercise your gifts, follow your calling, and use your accumulated wisdom and experience. Interim Ministries-ABC can provide a day of introduction to interim ministry on January 8, following Together in the Lord in Orlando, January 4-7, 2010. The cost is \$60, which would include a box lunch and CEU credit. Your lodging costs would need to be extended by one day. If you would be interested in staying over one day to learn about interim ministry, please email Jamie Munro at James.Munro@abc-usa.org.

Women in Ministry Task Force

Rev. Holly Bean has agreed to serve as the Chairperson of the Ministers Council task force in support of Women in Ministry. Invitations are being sent to potential task force members and our intention is to have the first conference call by the end of November.

Somebody will, or should, ask, how does this task force relate to the task force being led by Dr. Mary Hulst? Our answer is we plan to relate very well. Our President, Alice Greene, and the chair of Ministers Council Task Force, Holly Bean, have been invited to serve on Mary's task force which should allow us to work collaboratively. Given the historical commitment of the Ministers Council to advocate for Women in Ministry, we want to stand ready to be supportive of Dr. Hulst's group in every way. At the same time, we want to offer our own distinctive voice to the cause.

The Ministers Council Task Force will serve a two-year term and focus on understanding the current landscape for American Baptist Women in Ministry, gathering together biblical and theological resources pertaining to Women in Ministry, and shaping strategies for advocacy.

Together in Ministry Application Deadline Approaching

All applications for 2010 covenant group grants are due in the national Ministers Council office by October 31, 2009. If you have not yet submitted your applications to your constituent Ministers Council officers please do so TODAY! Applications to the national office must come from constituent Councils and be postmarked by October 31, 2009. Application forms may be found on www.ministerscouncil.org under the Together in Ministry link. In order to be considered, please complete the form online and print it out. Applications must be received by mail and NOT by email or FAX. For applications click on the link below.
<http://www.ministerscouncil.com/TogetherInMinistry/TIMApplication.aspx>

HEALTH CARE NEWS

Health Care Justice Walk, Run, Roll

We are all invited to participate in or sponsor participants in the October 3 Health Care Justice Walk, Run, Roll. This event is part of the AIDS Foundation Walk. This fun-filled event will be held in Grant Park. You can sign up at <http://afc.aidschicago.org/netcommunity/cbhc>.

Health Care Sabbath

The Illinois Campaign for Better Health Care invites all ABCMC congregations to participate in this year's Health Care Sabbath on October 18. We can join congregations across the state in focusing on justice and health care disparity during the Health Care Sabbath. Resources for the event are available for free download from <http://www.cbhconline.org/issues/hcj/sabbath.html>

PEACE NEWS

Fellowship of Reconciliation

This Invitation is from the Chicago Area Chapter of the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

You are invited to join with us on Monday, October 5, 7-9 p.m., for the Chicago Metro Area Chapter monthly meeting of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Our monthly meetings are always on the first Monday of each month; if the first Monday falls on a holiday, the meeting will then be on the next day (Tuesday). The web site is www.myspace.com/FORchicago.

In October we will feature special guest Joshua Noehrenberg, a GI resister. 27 year-old Joshua brings us his story of GI resistance and success. Joshua, a native of DuPage County, joined the military for a combination of patriotism and necessity right after high school. Joshua hopes that his story will have an important role in ending the USA's illegal occupations.

The meeting will be at the First United Church of Oak Park, 848 Lake Street, Oak Park. The church is at the corner of Lake and Kenilworth. Come to the back entrance and follow the signs. We will be meeting in the Commons area.

Directions to the church: Take the Eisenhower Expressway to Harlem Avenue, go north to Lake, turn right, and continue to Kenilworth. Turn left on Kenilworth and enter through the parking lot. Or take the Green Line to Oak Park Avenue, walk north to Lake, and go west to Kenilworth.

The organization is on Facebook. Go to www.facebook.com/group.php, then search for Fellowship of Reconciliation Chicago Chapter.

Drugs and Death at Bagram

The film *Drugs and Death at Bagram* tells the story of a young American military man in Afghanistan. On July 12, 2004 Army Specialist John Torres was found dead in a latrine at Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan. He had a single gunshot wound in his head. His death was ruled a suicide, but members of his unit and family believed he was murdered. Initial information received by the family led them to believe that U.S. military personnel in Afghanistan may have killed John for talking openly about heroin use among his fellow soldiers. Shortly before his death he had called his father, Juan Torres, from Afghanistan, and he was overwhelmed with fear. He was distraught because of rampant drug abuse, drug dealing and trafficking inside the army base. Since the day in 2004 when the young man was found dead, his father has been fighting to uncover the truth. This documentary film presents part of the discovery.

John Torres was right to be concerned about the substance abuse he witnessed all around him, even though military officials deny that it is taking place. Soldiers who come home addicted are reluctant to talk about it, even after they have been discharged from their military duties. The effects of using opiates while at war are lasting effects for individuals and their loved ones, and ultimately for American society. For more information about use of heroin by U.S. military personnel serving (or formerly having served) in Afghanistan, you may wish to read some online articles such as http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2007/08/07/afghan_heroin/

John did not use opiates, however. His death was, in all likelihood, related to another matter that the military does not want us to know about. The film will be an eye-opener.

We are invited to attend a showing of the film hosted by the Northwest Suburban Peace and Education Project (www.nwsbpep.org). It will be shown on **Friday, December 18 at 7 p.m. at the Arlington Heights Memorial Library, 500 N. Dunton Avenue, Arlington Heights**. A discussion will follow the viewing of the film (<http://drugsanddeathatbagram.com/index.html>). Juan Torres, father of John Torres, will be at this event and participate in conversation with us. Juan suggests that we read an article from a recent issue of the *Chicago Reader*. The article, "Lost to Lariam," can be viewed at <http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/lost-to-lariam/Content?oid=1201006>

Northwest Suburban Meeting

The Northwest Suburban Peace and Education project will hold its monthly meeting on Tuesday, October 13 at 7 p.m. at the South Church, 501 S. Emerson Street, Mount Prospect. All who are interested in helping young people consider careers in peacemaking and social improvement are welcome. For more information, please see the group's web site, www.nwsupep.org.

PRAYER REQUESTS

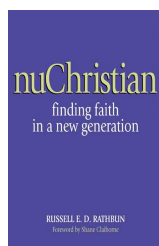
Please pray for world peace.

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

Please pray for ABC missionary Luran Bethell, and her many ministries. Please pray also for her time Thursday evening with the Community Church of Wilmette.

BOOK NOOK

Be Transformed from Unchristian to nuChristian



Judson Press has released *nuChristian: Finding Faith in a New Generation* by pastor Russell E. D. Rathbun. In this response to the popular Barna Research book *unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity... and Why It Matters*, Rathbun offers practical ideas for church leaders who seek to reach today's young adults with a Christlike community that is transparent, holistic, loving, engaged, just, and humble. He invites us to move beyond statistics and defensiveness to hear a new generation's critique and to be authentic about whom we are as flawed human beings saved by a gracious God. Shane Claiborne provided the book's foreword. Makes a great source for a sermon series or small group discussion. Order your copy today!

http://www.judsonpress.com/product.cfm?product_id=13514

CALENDAR

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

October 3—ABCMC seminar with Jeff Woods on vitalizing congregational ministries, North Shore Baptist Church, 5244 N. Lakewood Avenue, Chicago, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m..

October 4—ABCMC Sunday with Larry Greenfield preaching, Woodside Church, 1409 E. Court Street, Flint, Michigan.

October 4—Lynne Kelley preaching at Irving Park Baptist Church, 4401 W. Irving Park Road, Chicago, 11 a.m.

October 5—Monthly meeting of Chicago chapter of Fellowship of Reconciliation, First United Church of Oak Park, 848 Lake Street, Oak Park, 7-9 p.m. Please use the back entrance (from parking lot) and follow the signs. Guest speaker will be Joshua Noehrenberg, a GI resister from DuPage County.

October 7—Student Life Luncheon featuring Hadeer Abo El Nagah and Deborah Kohler, Prael College Center (PCC) at Mott Community College located at 1401 East Court St., Flint, Michigan, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.

October 11—Hadeer Abo El Nagah preaches at Woodside Church, 1409 E. Court Street, Flint, Michigan.

October 11— ABCMC Sunday with Larry Greenfield preaching, Irving Park Baptist Church, 4401 W. Irving Park Road, Chicago, 11 a.m.

October 15— Third Annual C. Shelby Rooks Lecture, Chicago Theological Seminary, 5757 S. University Avenue, Chicago. Art show and reception, 4:30 p.m.; lecture, 6:30 p.m.

October 17— Black Church and Community Health Symposium, Third Baptist Church, 1551 West 95th Street, Chicago, 8 a.m.-noon.

October 18—Health Care Sabbath.

October 18—ABCMC Sunday with Larry Greenfield preaching, Montrose Baptist Church, 4411 N. Melvina, Chicago.

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

November 8—Cook County Jail Ministry fall dinner, First Baptist Church, 820 Ontario Street, Oak Park, 6 p.m.

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

November 14—ABCMC Annual Meeting

December 12—ABCMC's 3rd annual Advent and Christmas Music Festival, Irving Park Baptist Church, 4401 W. Irving Park Road, Chicago, 3 p.m.

The Metro Chicago *eWind* is an electronic communication intended for the people of the American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago. The events publicized herein do not necessarily express the opinions of the American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago. We email the newsletter each Wednesday. We welcome your news, prayer requests and comments. Please email your communications to the editor, Lynne Kelley, at lynne@abcmc.org. If you spot a typographical error or other mistake in *eWind*, please let us know at the ABCMC office, 773-804-1655. The ABCMC office is at 7035 W. Grand Avenue, Suite 102, Chicago, Illinois 60707

THINKING THEOLOGICALLY ABOUT THE COMMON GOOD

September 30, 2009

“Guilty of Fraud?”

Let's get the confession out of the way right away: I'm involved in a dispute with a long time friend and former teacher about the interpretation of a passage in Mark.

It's the one about a person coming to Jesus with the question of what must be done to inherit eternal life (Mark 10: 17 – 22).

You'll recall that Jesus, after telling the person that he's not going to be conned by compliments – “*don't try to get on my good side by calling me 'good' when we all know that only God is good*” – proceeds to say that they both know what's required for life eternal: to follow all of the commandments. And then Jesus provides a quick summary of them:

*You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal;
You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.*

Clearly, Jesus hasn't covered all ten of the commandments given to Moses, but the reader gets the sense that he didn't have to, since Jesus was probably just being suggestive of all them, or the last half of them – as we sometimes just use “etc.” to signal that we can assume everybody knows the complete set.

What is in dispute between my colleague and me is the status of the phrase: “You shall not defraud” in this Markan passage.

My colleague argues that the inclusion of this particular commandment – which clearly isn’t a word-for-word quote from the Tablets – is simply an extension of Jesus summarizing what is generally covered in the last half of the Decalogue. And my colleague adds that when the text indicates that after this Jesus looked and loved the person it means that Jesus agreed that the person was correct in the self-assessment – that, indeed, the person had fulfilled all the commandments, even though Jesus adds still another one as a qualification for eternal life: to sell what the person owned, to give it to the poor, and to follow Jesus. As we know from the story, it was that *additional* commandment that the person couldn’t fulfill, and thus went away grieving.

The interpretation I want to defend, on the other hand, is that the insertion of “not defrauding” in the list of commandments wasn’t a summary – a kind of “etc.” – of a bunch of commandments but rather a deliberate editing of the Decalogue by Jesus to fit the circumstance or condition of the person standing before him asking about eternal life.

Matthew and Luke, in their version of the story, don’t include Mark’s account of Jesus adding the “defrauding” phrase. Matthew (19: 16-22) has Mark’s exact list except for the “defrauding” commandment (but adds, at the end, a command about loving one’s neighbor as oneself – i.e., Matthew’s own editorial work), which means that Matthew is correcting what he thinks Mark got wrong. Luke (18: 18-22) changes the order of the commandments Jesus recites, but Luke also eliminates the “defrauding” phrase from what he has received from Mark (and doesn’t follow Matthew’s tack of adding a commandment about loving the neighbor). My argument is that the inclusion of the “defrauding” phrase in Mark but its exclusion in Matthew and Luke is, in each case deliberate; and the best way to account for its inclusion in Mark is that it reflects what Jesus discerns is actually and particularly missing in the person’s attempt to fulfill all the commandments.

In some technical and pharisaic sense, yes, the person has met the terms of the Mosaic law. But Jesus sees that this person has accumulated wealth, and determines, I want to argue, that this wealth has been achieved by fraud – that is, by denying people what, in God’s eyes, they truly deserve and taking it for oneself. It isn’t strictly “stealing.” It isn’t strictly “bearing false witness.” But it is a different kind of taking-for-one’s-own something that someone else deserves or has a legitimate claim to. It’s *fraud* in Jesus’ eyes, according to Mark. And it is serious enough to keep the perpetuator from gaining eternal life.

The question that has to be raised about my interpretation of this Markan passage, of course, is: how then do I account for Jesus looking at and loving the person who he (Jesus) has just found guilty of fraud? The best answer I can come up with is that Jesus recognizes the seriousness of the person asking about eternal life, and wants to help the person find a way to achieve that eternal life. He might realize that the person may not even be aware of the fraud he is engaged in. So Jesus concludes that the only way to accomplish what is needed is for the person to give back all that has been accumulated by fraud, intentionally or not, to those who have been defrauded – the poor, those who have been denied what they were always entitled to.

If my colleague turns out to be correct in his more standard interpretation this passage from Mark, it still has relevance to our current situation: even if any one of us has met all the stipulations of the Ten Commandments, we will not achieve eternal worth until we have exceeded the Mosaic law and shed our excessive wealth and shared it with the poor and followed in the path of Jesus.

I assume that has direct and serious consequences for us in a domestic and global condition in which more and more people are falling into poverty, or in which more and more people are without adequate health insurance, or in which more and more people are being shut out of the human services they need, or in which more and more children are being denied a quality education that will be required if they are to flourish in the 21st century. Even if we have met all the stipulations of the Ten Commandments, Jesus lovingly tells us to do that one more thing: of giving up what we don’t need, and sharing it with those who

need it, and doing our best to keep up in following Jesus.

If there is any merit in my interpretation of this Markan passage, then something even more is expected of us: to recognize, whether intentionally or not, how much we have been and are a part of the fraud of denying people what, in God's eyes, they deserve. It is to recognize that fraud can be to deprive in an unjust manner what rightly belongs to others, whether that unjust deprivation is personally designed, willed, and carried out or if it is the result of being a part of an unjust structure or system that has the consequence of denying people what is rightfully theirs. And it is then to find ways, in response to the look and love of Jesus, to make things right, to make things just, to make things as God intends them to be.

But I acknowledge that the differing interpretations of the passage from Mark are not, in the end, so much at stake as is our eternal standing before and with God.