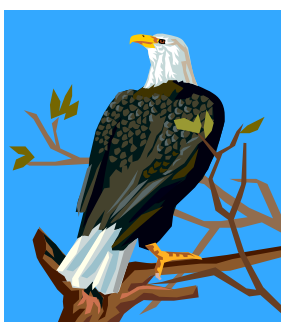


Metro Chicago
eWind

*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

December 3, 2009



“You whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners,
saying to you, ‘You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off’;
do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.”

Isaiah 41:9-10

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ADVENT NOTES FROM THE EXECUTIVE MINISTER

Happy New Year!

As is always the case, we evangelists of the Evangel start our new year a month or so ahead of everybody else using the Western or Gregorian calendar with our observance of Advent – a period of preparation for the forthcoming celebration of the Evangel’s birth.

May it be a time for all of us to re-order and re-form our lives so that we can receive Christ into our hearts anew and again be bearers of Christ’s Good News to the world.

* * * * *

Apologies for the brief hiatus in the publication of e-Wind during the period of our rearrangement of ABCMC’s administrative life.

The move of our files and administrative center to Greater Bethesda Baptist Church (109 E. 53rd Street in Chicago) is now complete. Look for the revised contact information below.

This shift in location has also meant, as earlier noted, a change in our staff configuration. I’m sure you join me in expressing our deep gratitude for the work/ministry of Tony Rake as Office Assistant and Lynne Kelley as Communication Coordinator over the past years and welcoming Veronica Johnson as our new Administrative Coordinator, which includes her succeeding Lynne as the Editor of this electronic publication. Jesse Smith continues as our Bookkeeper and Shakespeare Osorio as the Region’s Hispanic Coordinator. Lowell Young will be completing his three-year assignment as Mission Support Advocate at the end of the Gregorian/Western calendar year. Please help us as we “live into” this new relocation and rearrangement.

* * * * *

Many, many thanks to all who were involved in our Annual Meeting at North Shore Baptist Church on November 14. Our gratitude to the host congregation for their typical but always appreciated generosity: to the pastoral and administrative staff, to the membership, and especially to Poe Clee (Coordinator of Refugee Ministries), Pastor Roger Poenyust, and the Karen youth of the congregation who prepared our luncheon meal.

On our theme, “a Historic Mission Renewed: The Immigration and Refugee Challenge,” we were profoundly inspired and, yes, starkly challenged by Dr. Miguel De La Torre, Dr. Alvaro Nieves, and our ABCMC sister and brothers in Christ who gave personal testimonies.

But we also rightly challenged each other by sharing our thoughts, concerns, and recommendations as we responded to those who led us. Thank you for that rich gift of yourselves, which we will now attempt to digest and formulate into a “plan of action” for our Region.

* * * * *

Finally, at the end of this year in the Western/Gregorian calendar, all of us are being inundated with requests for charitable contributions – based on the unusual needs that important organizations share in this economic climate.

I believe that, as followers of Jesus, we have a special imperative to be especially generous in these times, given what the Evangel taught and demonstrated and lived, whatever our own financial condition might be.

I ask that you do as much as you can to help your own congregation in these days and weeks, along with as much as you can to help those organizations that help our sisters and brothers in the greatest need.

If is possible to make a personal gift – even a small one – to ABCMC, it would help us at a time when many congregations have had to reduce their support of our shared ministries. If that’s not possible, we’ll certainly understand and thank you for being generous with other organizations and causes. If you can manage to help us, please forward gifts to ABCMC at our new post office box.

May God’s grace and peace be with you and yours in this season of our new year.

In the cause of the Evangel,

Larry Greenfield
Executive Minister, ABCMC

Updated ABCMC Contact Information

Mailing Address

ABCMC
P.O. Box 15127
Chicago, Illinois 60615

Shipping Address (for packages)

ABCMC
109 E. 53rd St.
Chicago, IL 60615-3303

Telephone: 773-634-1495

Fax: 773-634-1496

- Press 1 for Larry Greenfield, Executive Minister
- Press 2 for Veronica Johnson, Administrative Coordinator
- Press 3 for Jesse Smith, Bookkeeper

ABCMC NEWS

Music Festival

ALL METRO CHICAGO AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES
ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE 3rd ANNUAL ABCMC
CHRISTMAS/ADVENT SEASON MUSIC FESTIVAL

DATE: Saturday, December 12, 2009

TIME: 3:00 p.m.

PLACE: Irving Park Baptist Church
4401 W. Irving Park Road
Chicago



This program is designed to celebrate the beginning of the Christmas/ Advent season through music and song. Each participating church will send a musical component (ranging from a full choir to a smaller number of singers, including quartets, trios, duets or soloists, as well as musicians and praise dancers) to participate in this glorious afternoon of musical praise for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the Christmas/Advent season. As happened at the previous two events, this year's musical festival will begin with a mass sing-a-long (involving all in attendance) of timeless Christmas carols and will conclude with a mass (unrehearsed) singing of the "Hallelujah Chorus," involving all the participants in the program, as well as willing volunteers from the audience.

Whether or not your church chooses to participate, members and friends of Chicago Metro ABC churches are invited to attend. Admission is **FREE**. There will be two Free-Will Offerings—a "Penny" (loose change) Offering to support ABC Children's Programs and an Offering to support ABCMC.

So mark the date and time (Saturday, December 12 @ 3:00PM) on your calendar, encourage your church to participate, plan to attend, and warm up your voice for the singing of the "Hallelujah Chorus"!

For further information about including your church in this program, please call Lowell Young, ABCMC Mission Support Associate, at 773-370-2003, or contact him via e-mail at younglowell@aol.com.

Festival de Navidad

TODAS LAS IGLESIAS AMERICANAS BAUTISTA
DE METRO CHICAGO ABCMC
ESTÁN INVITADAS A PARTICIPAR EN EL 3^{ro} FESTIVAL DE NAVIDAD

Fecha: Sábado 12 de diciembre
Hora: 3:00 p.m.
Lugar: Irving Park Baptist Church
4401 W. Irving Park Road
Chicago



El propósito de este programa es celebrar Navidad y la estación de Advenimiento con música y cánticos. A cada Iglesia participante se le pide que traiga un componente musical, puede ser desde un coro, un cantante, dueto o un solo para participar en esta gloriosa tarde de alabanza a nuestro Dios y Salvador en esta Navidad época de Advenimiento. Así como hicimos el año pasado, empezaremos cantando los

coros navideños favoritos, para concluir con un coro masivo del “Aleluya,” en donde incluiremos a todos los participantes, voluntarios y la audiencia.

Ya sea que su Iglesia participe musicalmente o no, todas las Iglesias y amigos de ABCMC, están invitados. La admisión es GRATIS. Habrá una ofrenda voluntaria para ayudar a los programas y misiones de ABCMC.

¡Marque en su calendario el 12 de diciembre a las 3:00 p.m., participe, asista y entone su voz para cantar el “Coro Aleluya”!

La Iglesia que desee participar comuníquese con Lowell Young, ABCMC, al 773-370 2003, por Internet younglowell@aol.com.

Thinking Theologically

Remember to read and reflect on ABCMC’s Executive Minister Larry Greenfield’s latest column, “An Advent of Listening,” on p. 11 of this issue of *eWind*.

Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering

This is the time of year when American Baptists bring an offering that says we remember with love and give with gratitude. Since the Great Depression of the 1930’s American Baptist congregations have contributed to special offerings to provide financial support to retired ministers and missionaries and their widowed spouses. The Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering (RMMO) was established in 1977 to continue this tradition.

The RMMO provides you with a tangible way by which to honor, say “thank you” and provide financial assistance to retired American Baptist ministers, missionaries and their widowed spouses who supported you in times of need, guided you on your spiritual journey and provided inspiration.

Recipients of Thank You checks and emergency and other financial assistance express gratitude not only for the gift but for less tangible benefits, such as evidence of God’s providential care, encouragement, hope and assurance that they have not been forgotten by their ABC family.

NEWS FROM ABCMC CONGREGATIONS

Special Christmas Events at Woodside Church: Friday, December 18 @ 7:00 p.m.



All are invited to come to Woodside Church on Friday, December 18 for two special events: Jazz Vespers followed immediately by a special Christmas concert featuring the Song of the Lakes Chorus. The event begins at 7:00 p.m. (one hour later than usual for Jazz Vespers). Parking is free and refreshments will be served.

Mark your calendars for all of the Jazz Vespers services, all beginning at 6:00 p.m.: January 15, February 19, March 19, April 16, May 21 and June 18. No admission is charged. Please call the church at 810-767-4911 or visit www.woodsidechurch.net for more information.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Sing to Live Concerts

The Sing to Live Community Chorus had successful concerts in October, and will have 4 more concerts this season. Upcoming concerts will be:

Sunday, March 7, 2010, 4 p.m., Anne and Howard Gotlieb Hall, 38 S. Peoria, Chicago
Saturday, March 13, 2010, 7:30 p.m. Nichols Concert Hall, 1490 Chicago Avenue, Evanston
Saturday, May 15, 2010, 7:30 p.m. Nichols Concert Hall, 1490 Chicago Avenue, Evanston
Sunday, May 16, 2010, 4 p.m., Pilgrim Congregational Church, 460 Lake Street, Oak Park

Founded in January 2005, **Sing to Live** was created to provide a musical outlet that celebrates hope and survival for singers whose lives have been touched by breast cancer. In addition, we provide the gift of music to the breast cancer community by, in part, offering complimentary concert tickets and performance CDs to breast cancer survivors.

NEWS FROM JUDSON UNIVERSITY



At Judson University we encourage our students to excel not only in academics, but to also serve Christ in their community and around the world. This year there are six different mission trips available to students: The Chicago Urban Experience; Mississippi Ministries through the John Perkins Foundation; Adventure Learning Center in the Bahamas; the Peru Lima Missions trip; Apparent Project in Haiti; and the Organization of Christian Ministries in Kenya. We covet the prayers of our local churches as we follow the legacy of our namesake, Adoniram Judson, into the uttermost parts of the world.

ABCUSA NEWS

The articles below may be excerpts of the original article. These and other articles from the American Baptist News Service are available at

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

National Ministries Builds Foundation for Future Ministry

VALLEY FORGE, PA (11/24/09)—At a meeting of the Board of National Ministries last week, where discussions about proposed bylaws changes took center stage, Executive Director Dr. Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins III asked in his report to members, “Can you see what I see?”

Wright-Riggins’ question pointed to his vision of National Ministries’ future: “This is the heart of what I want to talk to you about,” he said. The upcoming year, which will launch the second decade of the 21st century, will be a “bridge year” in which the organization celebrates its past while “looking forward to ask where God is taking us” He added, “It’s not so much the mission that we do as it is the mission we help others to do.”

Wright-Riggins’ remarks set the stage for lengthy discussion of proposed bylaws changes designed to increase the board’s efficiency and, therefore, empower more effective mission. These changes include:

- A decrease in the board’s size to 15-19 members, which will result in reduced meeting costs, and the development of new committees, including a governance committee.

- The ABCUSA president will have the opportunity to choose a director for the Board of National Ministries; this provision cannot be changed without the approval of ABCUSA. In addition, all directors of National Ministries, The American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS), must be members of American Baptist churches.

ABHMS directors voted unanimously to approve the proposed amended bylaws and recommend their adoption by the organization's corporate members at a meeting scheduled for December 21. Bylaws changes will go into effect January 1, 2012.

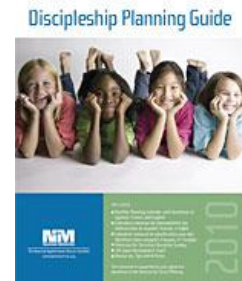
The meeting closed with lunch and featured speaker Rev. J. Brent Walker, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee (BJC). Walker reminded National Ministries' directors and staff that religious liberty is the first freedom protected by the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights. BJC, he said, works every day "to extend and defend religious liberty and the separation of church and state." American Baptists can help to promote this important ministry by:

- Inviting BJC to speak at churches and other organizations;
- Promoting BJC's annual essay contest (see nationalministries.org);
- Applying for internships at BJC's Washington, D.C., offices; and
- Advocating for religious liberty in their churches, schools and places of employment.

Look No Further for Discipleship Support!

This announcement is from the e-newsletter, News and Note from American Baptist Home Mission.

National Ministries' 2010 Discipleship Planning Guide is the resource you need to help mission, worship and Christian education committees plan in the coming year. The guide includes a life span development chart, Christian Education Sunday materials and devotions in English, Spanish and French. Developed by National Ministries' staff--thanks to support from the America for Christ Offering--the guide has been sent in hard copy format to all ABCUSA churches and regions. E-mail karen.drummond@abc-usa.org if you haven't received your copy.



American Baptist Chaplain Featured in Upcoming ABC Documentary

This announcement is from the e-newsletter, News and Note from American Baptist Home Mission.

An interfaith documentary, A Place for All: Faith and Community for Persons with Disabilities--which explores courageous stories of persons with disabilities--includes an interview with American Baptist chaplain the Rev. Bill Gaventa, director of Community and Congregational Supports at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School's The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities. ABC television stations nationwide will begin airing the program December 6. Check your local listings for times in your area.

Essay Contest

This announcement is from the Baptist Joint Committee on Religious Liberty.

The Religious Liberty Council of the Baptist Joint Committee announces the 5th annual Religious Liberty Essay Scholarship Contest, which is open to all high school students in the graduating classes of 2010 and 2011. This year's contest will commemorate the 50th anniversary of John F. Kennedy's landmark speech about the relationship between his religion and his politics and the separation of church and state.

The scholarship contest offers a grand prize of \$1,000 and a trip for two to Washington, D.C. Second prize is \$500, and third prize is \$100. To read this year's topic and to download entry forms, visit www.BJOnline.org/contest. Entries are due March 1, 2010.

MINISTERS COUNCIL NEWS

Come to Orlando

STILL TIME TO REGISTER!

REGISTRATION EXTENDED TO DECEMBER 16



Ministry Renewal Conference

January 4 – 7, 2010 in Orlando, FL

Presented by American Baptist Churches USA

To be held at the Wyndham Resort and Conference Center

- **Worship led by Brad Berglund** will refresh your soul.
- **World Class speakers led by Shane Claiborne and Miroslav Volf** will stimulate your minds and hearts.
- **An outstanding line-up of workshop leaders** will inform and revitalize your ministry.
- **The company of colleagues** will allow for networking and growing your direct community.
- **The change of pace and the Orlando setting** will rest and renew your body following the excitement and intensity of Advent and Christmas.
- **Disney prices are at their lowest** during this season.

Register now for Together in the Lord, at
www.ministerscouncil.org/Together%20in%20the%20Lord/TITLinfopage.aspx.

You may qualify for a \$300.00 scholarship through National Ministries that will help offset the cost. For more information, go to www.nationalministries.org/education/financial_aid/ministerial_info.cfm and click the link for "Cultivating New Life Grant Application", then follow the instructions given there.

HEALTH CARE NEWS

This recommendation comes from Joe Kutter, Acting Executive Director of the Ministers Council of the ABCUSA.

FAITHFUL REFORM IN HEALTH CARE

Over 45, 000 people die each year because they lack the insurance they need for adequate health care. This is a moral issue that we, as people of faith, must respond to. National Ministries (The American Baptist Home Mission Society) has signed on to Faithful Reform In Health Care in order to help facilitate American Baptist action on behalf of the 40 million people in this country who lack health care insurance. Please visit the web site at <http://www.faithfulreform.org>

PEACE NEWS

Community Forum on the War in Afghanistan

The Northwest Suburban Peace and Education Project (NWSPEP) invites us all to a community forum on the war in Afghanistan. This gathering will take place at the Arlington Heights library, 500 N. Dunton Avenue, Arlington Heights on Friday, December 18 at 7 p.m. This event is free and open to the public. The program will feature the documentary film *Rethink Afghanistan*.

The film is a ground-breaking, full-length documentary focusing on the key issues surrounding the war. The program will raise critical questions regarding Afghanistan—concerns that Congress must address in oversight hearings, which inform the public and challenge policy makers.

Discussion will follow the viewing of the film. Everyone is welcome to participate.

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 the ABCMC Christmas/Advent Music Festival.

Please continue to pray for ABCMC staff.

Please pray for all persons facing job loss and job searches in the current economy.



CALENDAR

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

December 18—Community Forum hosted by Northwest Suburban Peace and Education Project, Arlington Heights Memorial Library, 500 N. Dunton Avenue, Arlington Heights, 7 p.m. The program will feature the documentary film *Rethink Afghanistan*.

January 4-7, 2010—Together in the Lord Ministry Renewal Conference, Orlando, Florida. Please go to <http://www.ministerscouncil.org/Together%20in%20the%20Lord/TITLinfolpage.aspx> for online registration and more information.

March 1, 2010—Deadline for entries for BJC’s essay contest.

March 7, 2010—Sing to Live Community Chorus concert, Anne and Howard Gottlieb Hall, 38 S. Prairie, Chicago, 4 p.m.

March 13, 2010—Sing to Live Community Chorus concert, Chicago Music Institute, Nichols Concert Hall, 1490 Chicago Avenue, Evanston, 7:30 p.m.

May 15, 2010—Sing to Live Community Chorus concert, Chicago Music Institute, Nichols Concert Hall, 1490 Chicago Avenue, Evanston, 7:30 p.m.

May 16, 2010—Sing to Live Community Chorus concert, Pilgrim Congregational Church, 460 Lake Street, Oak Park, 4 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 send them to office@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

December, 2009 by Larry Greenfield

“An Advent of Listening”

A friend remarked the other day that 90% of the American population couldn’t hear anything someone said to them.

It was an unscientific and unsubstantiated observation. To be sure, it had little to do with the physical loss of hearing – in the U.S. the best estimates are that ten million people qualify as “hard of hearing” and a million as “functionally deaf,” a far cry from the percentage my friend projected. With a count of 308, 060, 454 residents in the country as of this date (December 1, 2009), that would mean some 277, 254, 409 of us who say “huh?” a lot should visit an audiologist soon.

No, my friend’s reference was to people who had something in their ears most of the time, thus making it nearly impossible to get their attention by means of a sound we produce – and, instead, requiring on our part a kind of Sarah Palin hand-waving or a tap on the shoulder to achieve a chance at verbal communication.

That 90% figure may still be too high, but not if we include people who have willfully decided to “tune out” of what is happening in the world.

How, that is, could you actually be listening if you heard that 45,000 human beings in the United States will lose their lives this year for reasons related to the lack of health insurance and not be telephoning and e-mailing and visiting your congressperson repeatedly to demand fundamental health insurance reform to cover everyone, not four years from now but as soon as next year?

How could you actually be listening if you heard that salaries and bonuses for those employed in the financial, banking, and investment industry will be higher this year – after being resurrected with an infusion of billions of dollars in taxpayer money – than in earlier peak years, while the unemployment rate for the rest of the population is steadily rising above 10% (the highest since April, 1983), while the rate of property foreclosures increases at a rate of 5% per quarter (23% increase over the third quarter of 2008), and while the rate of poverty climbs dramatically (from 12.5% to 13.2% in 2008, and further increases recorded in 2009) and shows no signs of a reversal even if the economy improves, and not be demanding a comprehensive restructuring of the nation’s economic system?

How could you actually be listening if you heard that the U.S. rate of incarceration is “six times greater than Canada’s, eight times greater than France’s, and twelve times greater than Japan’s,” and that “blacks are incarcerated at a rate eight times higher than whites – a disparity that dwarfs other racial disparities.” (*New York Review of Books*, 11/19/09, p. 41) and not be calling for a thoroughgoing reformation not just of our criminal justice system (which has become strikingly more punitive than rehabilitative), not just a thoroughgoing rethinking of our drug policies (which has raised the rate of incarceration by 80% in the decade between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s, with the large predominance of African Americans serving more time than whites for non-violent violations), but also a thoroughgoing transformation of our racist policies?

Ninety percent not listening? That’s probably setting the bar too low.

So it’s probably fortunate that John the Baptist didn’t appear in the early decades of the twenty-first century. He would have had to deal with much different audiences for his preaching than the ones he confronted in the early first century of the Common Era.

Those first century folks clearly had their ears open. They listened, whether they liked the sermon they heard or not.

From all around the cities and towns and surrounding countryside, they came out to the wilderness around the Jordan River to hear what this preacher had to say about the possibility of repentance and forgiveness in preparation for a time of salvation.

Even those John wished would just as well have stayed at home or at work or at play – the “brood of vipers” – came and listened. The politically and religiously privileged, along with the pious and self-righteous, came and listened. So did those who thought their destinies were secure because of their favored ancestry.

They all received the same message: that by God’s grace and mercy they were not locked into their role or condition or standing but could, in the voluntary act of baptism, signal their readiness and commitment to pursue a different path toward the salvation that was to come.

My goodness, even Jesus came to be baptized!

What then, they asked, were they to do with this gracious and merciful possibility that God had given them to repent and be forgiven?

John's answer to the question of "what then shall we do?" was simple and direct: whatever your role or condition or standing, give up whatever you possess in excess and give it to those who don't have any. If it is clothes – say, two coats – give up the one you don't really need to the one who is coatless. If it's food, do the same. The instruction is uniform, whether for a tax collector or business type, a soldier or a social worker, a leader or a follower: by God's grace and mercy you can repent from your self-preoccupation and self-concern, your self-protectiveness and your self-righteousness, and be forgiven from all that, now liberated to love and care for those who don't have what you have.

But, of course, none of this would be operative for those who aren't listening. And that makes it especially difficult for a lot of us in our society in the 21st century.

It might be that the God of grace and mercy provides us another distinctive opportunity for our own century, even before we have the chance to embrace repentance and forgiveness. It may be the favor of taking whatever it is that blocks our hearing and giving us again the gift of listening.

It would first be an Advent of Listening – listening to the God of grace and mercy who speaks to us through those who are dying and needlessly suffering for lack of health insurance, through those who are losing homes and jobs and security, through those who are incarcerated because of a racist and uncaring system of criminal injustice.

Maybe then we could actually hear, a little later on, the angels singing.