

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 10, 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

“Save your pennies!” Remember that one?

“Spend your pennies!” That was a more recent version, when political and economic leaders wanted us to help stimulate the depressed/repressed economy.

“***Share your pennies!***” This is the new and radically different invitation that American Baptists across the country are accepting as a way of expressing their Christian commitment to addressing our national disgrace of 14,000,000 children living in poverty.



We will celebrate the *Advent* of our Metro Chicago participation in *The Penny Project* at our *Advent Music Festival* this coming Saturday, December 12th at 3:00 p.m., at Irving Park Baptist Church, 4401 W. Irving Park Road.

Amid our carol singing together and enjoying the presentations by choirs, and ensembles, and soloists from our churches across the region (I’m particularly looking forward to the duets of David Gregg and Randy Creath), we will pray together a litany to inaugurate *The Penny Project* in our Metro Chicago region – and collect our inaugural offering with the pennies you bring. (There will also be an offering for ABCMC at another point in the celebration.)

The Penny Project began with the youth group of First Baptist Church of New London, New Hampshire, successfully collecting 60,000 pennies for the 60,000 children living in poverty in New Hampshire. The idea was picked up by other churches and then by National Ministries, through which it became a national project: ***to raise 14,000,000 pennies for the 14,000,000 children living in poverty in the United States.***

It won’t stop with the *Advent Offering of The Penny Project for ABCMC* this coming Saturday, of course. We will be asking ABCMC congregations, groups, and individuals to continue to collect their pennies (and loose change) into the new year.

But please be a part of the inaugural of this effort.

Join us this Saturday afternoon at the Irving Park Church for the Advent of “***sharing our pennies!***”

In the cause of the Evangel,

Larry Greenfield
Executive Minister, ABCMC

ABCMC NEWS

Don't Miss the 3rd Annual ABCMC Advent/Christmas Season Music Festival on Saturday, December 12th @ 3:00 p.m.!

Irving Park Baptist Church
4401 W. Irving Park Road
Chicago, IL



Come celebrate the Advent and Christmas season with us this Saturday as we enjoy a glorious afternoon of musical praise to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

- ❖ We'll commence with a mass **sing-a-long of timeless Christmas carols!**
- ❖ Choirs, Soloists, Quartets/Duets, Praise Dancers, and Musicians from Chicago Metro ABC Churches will offer **up expressions of praise to the Lord!**
- ❖ We'll all lift our voices to sing the **"Hallelujah Chorus!"**

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.

You don't want to miss this event! For further information, please contact Lowell Young, ABCMC Mission Support Associate, at 773-370-2003, or via email at younglowell@aol.com.

Festival de Navidad

TODAS LAS IGLESIAS AMERICANAS BAUTISTA
DE METRO CHICAGO ABCMC
ESTÁN INVITADAS A PARTICIPAR EN EL 3ro 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

"An Advent of Listening," last week's Thinking Theologically article has been carried over another week for those who did not have a chance to read and reflect. In this article, ABCMC's Executive Minister Larry Greenfield suggests that God has not only given us gifts of repentance and forgiveness, but also the gift of listening with new ears. Read the entire article on p. 10 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.

Announcements for Original Providence Baptist Church

There will be an **Appreciation Reception for Rev. Beverly Finley-Gardner** for her service as Interim Pastor for the Original Providence Baptist Church. The reception will be held Sunday, December 13, 2009 immediately following 11:00 am worship service. The church's address is 515 N. Pine Ave. Chicago, IL 60644.

Christmas Concert: The Original Providence Baptist Church presents **Christmas Joy, Sunday, December 20, 2009 at 3:33 p.m.** All are welcome! Come celebrate the joys of the seasons with us!

Divine Feminine Alternative Worship Service, Advent 2009 @ Lake Street Church:

*A Christian Service Celebrating Female Images of the Holy**

Sunday, December 13
1:00pm (lunch at noon)
Lake Street Church
607 Lake Street, Evanston

How is Sophia Christ, the Wisdom, breaking into your life this Advent Season? Women and men, come, worship and be held in the loving arms of the Divine Feminine. Explore the possibilities in community, by word, song and through communion, trusting that Her arms are strong enough for anything and kind and gentle enough for everything.

A simple soup and cornbread lunch will be served in the dining room at 12 noon. The one hour Divine Feminine Alternative Worship Service will begin at 1pm in the Parlor. Call 847-864-2181 to let the office know if you plan to come, so we can make enough soup, or please feel free to come at the last minute if you have a change of plans. She will provide enough to feed all Her children!

COMMUNITY NEWS

Free Training on Human Trafficking for Faith Community

Illinois Rescue and Restore, a state-wide coalition of social service organizations, law enforcement, advocacy groups, and community members, is seeking to combat human trafficking in Illinois. Please join us for a **free training on human trafficking, scheduled for January 14, 2010, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at LaSalle Street Church at 1111 N. Wells St., Chicago, IL.** This offer is extended to clergy, church staff, congregation members, and others from faith communities.

For more information or to RSVP, please contact Rachael Burke at Rachael.Burke@illinois.gov. You can also visit our website at www.dhs.state.il.us/rescueandrestore for more information and resources.

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



Celebrate with the families and friends of **more than 100 seniors who will graduate this Saturday**, December 12, at 2 p.m. in the Robert D. Lindner Fitness Center, 1151 N. State St. in Elgin, Ill. Reverend Aidsand Wright-Riggins will deliver the commencement address for **Judson's 61st Commencement**.

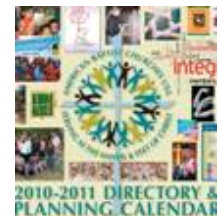
More than 133 students will graduate this Saturday. This commencement ceremony will mark the first graduating class receiving master's degrees for education in literacy, a new degree program that began in 2009.

ABCUSA NEWS

Visit the American Baptist News Service for current ABC-USA news at <http://www.abc-usa.org/Resources/AmericanBaptistNewsService/tabid/79/Default.aspx>

2010-2011 ABCUSA Directory and Calendar

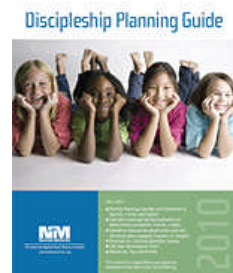
The 2010-2011 American Baptist Directory & Planning Calendar is now available on the web! Go to www.abc-usa.org and click on the photo of the calendar to download it as a pdf document.



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.



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/TITLinfo.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

Two Community Forums on the War in Afghanistan

As a special engagement, the **Chicago Chapter of World Can't Wait** is presenting the **documentary film *Rethink Afghanistan*** by Robert Greenwald. The movie screening will be followed by a discussion with H. Candace Gorman, human rights lawyer who represents two Guantanamo detainees and Anthony Wagner, Iraq War Veteran. This event will be on Saturday, December 12th, from 2:00 – 5:00 pm at the Sulzer Regional Library, 4455 N. Lincoln Ave Chicago, IL 60625.

The **Northwest Suburban Peace and Education Project (NWSPEP)** invites us all to a community forum on the war in Afghanistan. The program will also feature the documentary film *Rethink 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.

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.

Please pray for those who are bereaved during this Advent/Christmas season.



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 12 Judson University's 61st Commencement Ceremony, 2 p.m. in the Robert D. Lindner Fitness Center, 1151 N. State St. in Elgin, Ill.

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.