

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 17, 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

OK, I admit that I'm sending a mixed message in my "Thinking Theologically" this week, but I'm persuaded that the biblical message is mixed when it comes to the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus.

I hope you will have a chance to at least skim it and take note, at the end, of the reference to the "Kairos Jerusalem Document" that was released earlier this month. If you have thoughts about how we can or should wrestle with the challenge it presents to us and the whole of the Christian community, please let me know.

So, given what I'm finding in the ancient biblical texts and in the contemporary document from Jerusalem, I can't only wish you a joyous Christmas; may it also be a serious -- and maybe even disturbing -- one this year.

Allow the radical justice and peace and grace of God revealed to us in Jesus be with you, and among you, and in you, to share with God's world.

In the cause of the Evangel,

Larry Greenfield
Executive Minister, ABCMC

ABCMC NEWS

Celebrating Christmas in Music and in Song

By Lowell Young, ABCMC Mission Support Associate

On the afternoon of Saturday, December 12th more than 150 people attended ABCMC's Third Annual Celebration of the Christmas Season in Music and Song at Irving Park Baptist Church in Chicago.



The afternoon featured a wide variety of music, singing and dancing, ranging from moving piano and vocal solos, a stirring and highly entertaining praise dance presentation, to the sweet, innocent voices of a children's choir, to the more mature voices of several adult choirs. Also, ABCMC president Rev. Denise Janssen, along with Rev. Randy Creath and Rev. David Gregg, brought back memories of Peter, Paul and Mary with their guitar backed renditions of two charming children's songs. (The full Program can be found on p. 9 of this *eWind*.)

Rev. Janssen and ABCMC Executive Minister Rev. Dr. Larry Greenfield together conducted two offerings—The "Penny Project" in behalf of ABC's Children In Poverty initiative, and an offering supporting the work of ABCMC. Both offerings were enthusiastically supported by those in attendance, with this year's ABCMC offering topping the results of the previous two years.

The participating churches were: Central Spanish Baptist Church; Community Church of Wilmette; First

Baptist Church of Berwyn; First Baptist Church of Chicago; Grace Baptist Church; Greater Bethesda Baptist Church; Irving Park Baptist Church; North Shore Spanish Baptist Church and Wellstone Community Church.

The 150+ attendees were not left to sit and merely observe the proceedings; the program opened with the mass singing (in both Spanish and English) of A Medley of Songs of the Christmas Season and, for the third consecutive year, concluded with a mass, unrehearsed singing of the “Hallelujah Chorus.”

Sincerest thanks to all the participants in the program for a job well-done. Thanks also to Irving Park’s musical director Dale Tippett, Jr. for his invaluable technical assistance. ABCMC also thanks Irving Park Baptist Church for once again hosting the event and for this year providing a post-event reception featuring a variety of home-made Christmas cookies and warm and friendly Christian fellowship. And special thanks to Virginia Prince, musical director of First Baptist Church of Chicago, who for the third year in a row flawlessly conducted the singing of the “Hallelujah Chorus”, and to Aurora Ramos, musical director of North Shore Spanish Baptist Church, who did a wonderful job as the “Hallelujah Chorus” pianist for the third consecutive year.

All in all, it was a great day—one I’m sure all those who were there will cherish and remember. Not only was it a day of fine Christmas music, singing and dance, it was also a beautiful multi-racial, multi-cultural gathering of God’s children. Surely the presence of The Lord was in that place and those who were there were truly, truly blessed.

Thinking Theologically

We invite you to read Executive Minister Larry Greenfield’s column, “Thinking Theologically” on p. 10 of this issue of *eWind*.

NEWS FROM ABCMC CONGREGATIONS

Central Spanish Baptist Church – Seeking Gently Used Clothing for Homeless and Families in Need

The Central Spanish Baptist Church distributes food to the homeless and persons and families in need every Saturday from 8 a.m. – 10 a.m. The church will be distributing clothing as well, and is looking for donations of gently used clothing, coats, shoes, boots, etc. Donations will be picked up. For more information or for pick-up please call Jose Verduzco at 773) 419-8507. The church is located at 2417 N. Campbell, Chicago, IL.

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.

Christmas Joy at Original Providence Baptist Church

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! The church is located at 515 N. Pine Ave, Chicago, IL.

COMMUNITY NEWS

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO - OFFICE OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMIT

Join Ann Marie Lipinski, Vice President of Civic Engagement, on Thursday, December 17, 2009, 8:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., for community engagement updates and stimulating round table conversations with faculty and administrators leading urban efforts in:

- Education and Youth Development
- Health and Wellness
- Arts and Culture
- Energy and Sustainability
- Business Development and Entrepreneurship
- Campus Planning

The University of Chicago
School of Social Service Administration
969 East 60th Street, Chicago, IL 60637
Complimentary valet parking

Please register by using the following link: <http://www.uchicago.edu/rsvp/communitysummit/>

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.

Kids Hope United



Mad Hatter's
TEA PARTY
Featuring the 7th Annual Blue Ribbon Fashion Show



Don't be a dodo and don't be late.
Save this very important date!

Sunday, April 18, 2010
1 – 5 p.m.

A very merry **unbirthday charity party** to benefit Kids Hope United!

Kids Hope United is throwing a Mad Hatter's Tea Party featuring the 7th Annual Blue Ribbon Fashion Show and Auction to raise funds for programs and services that benefit at-risk children and families throughout northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin. This magical event, which will transport guests into the mad adventures of Alice in Wonderland, includes a delectable lunch, a family-style fashion show and silent and live auctions.

Down the rabbit hole:

The Lehmann Mansion
485 Milwaukee Avenue
Lake Villa, Illinois

How you can help:

- Become a corporate or individual sponsor
- Become a volunteer
- Donate an item for our silent auction

For more information

on how you can make a difference by getting involved with our charity event, please contact:

[Kristy Cechini](#)
847.245.6505

Kids Hope United is registered as a 501c3 organization (Federal Tax ID #36-2181967)

NEWS FROM JUDSON UNIVERSITY



Judson University will be closed for the Christmas holiday from December 24, 2009 until January 3, 2010.

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. 2010 Pocket Calendars are also available! Call 1-800-4JUDSON to order one today.



MINISTERS COUNCIL NEWS

The Together in the Lord Conference

The Together in the Lord Conference taking place in Orlando, Florida from January 4-7, 2010, will be a time of growing, networking, learning and experiencing God's grace. The selection of workshops gives something for everyone, from every background and interest, and Church leaders will benefit from this unique conference. For more information on the conference, please visit the ABC-USA website at <http://www.abc-usa.org>.

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. 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 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 17—University of Chicago, Office of Civic Engagement Summit, 8:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., University of Chicago, School of Social Service Administration, 969 East 60th Street, Chicago, IL 60637

December 18—Jazz Vespers followed by Christmas Concert, 7:00 p.m. at Woodside Church, 1509 E. Court St., Flint, MI 48503

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*.

December 20—Christmas concert, *Christmas Joy* at 3:33 p.m. at Original Providence Baptist Church, 515 N. Pine Ave, Chicago, IL.

January 4-7, 2010—Together in the Lord Ministry Renewal Conference, Orlando, Florida. Please go to <http://www.ministerscouncil.org/Together%20in%20the%20Lord/TITLinfo.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.

April 18, 2010—Kids Hope United Mad Hatters Tea Party, The Lehmann Mansion, 485 Milwaukee Avenue, Lake Villa, Illinois

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 via email at office@abcmc.org.

AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF METRO CHICAGO
3RD ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF THE CHRISTMAS SEASON IN MUSIC & SONG
Saturday, December 12, 2009 at 3PM at Irving Park Baptist Church
4401 W. Irving Park Road, Chicago, IL

PROGRAM

<i>Musical Prelude</i>	<i>William Wallin</i> <i>Community Church of Wilmette</i>
<i>Welcome</i>	<i>Rev. Dr. Larry Greenfield</i> <i>ABCMC Executive Minister</i>
<i>Opening Prayer</i>	<i>Rev. Dr. Alice Greene</i> <i>Irving Park Baptist Church</i>
<i>A Medley of Songs of the Christmas Season</i>	<i>ALL</i>

PARTICIPATING CHURCHES & PERFORMERS

<i>First Baptist Church of Berwyn</i> <i>Sandy Cervenka</i> <i>"I Wonder As I Wander"</i> <i>"Lo How A Rose Ere Blooming"</i>	<i>North Shore Spanish Baptist Church Choir</i> <i>"A La Nanita Nana"</i> <i>"En La Noche Los Pastores"</i> <i>"Angles Cantando Estan"</i>
<i>First Baptist Church of Chicago</i> <i>Praise Dancers</i> <i>"Walk With Me"</i>	<i>Rev. Denise Janssen, Rev. Randy Creath (Wellstone Comm. Church) and Rev. David Gregg (Grace Baptist Church)</i> <i>"Light Of The Stable" & "The Friendly Beasts"</i>
THE "PENNY PROJECT" OFFERING <i>Fred Lauritzen</i> <i>Irving Park Baptist Church</i> <i>"Ding Dong Merrily On High"</i>	ABCMC OFFERING <i>Benjamin Ramos</i> <i>North Shore Spanish Baptist Church</i> <i>"Chopin Waltz in E Major"</i>
<i>Irving Park Baptist Church Choir</i> <i>"The Christ Child's Lullaby"</i> <i>"Glory To God In The Highest"</i> <i>"Can You Hear The Christmas Bells"</i>	<i>Central Spanish Baptist Church</i> <i>Children's Choir</i> <i>"Navidad, Navidad"</i> <i>"Jingle Bells"</i>
<i>Greater Bethesda Baptist Church</i> <i>Sanctuary Choir</i> <i>"Behold That Star"</i> <i>"For God So Loved The World"</i>	"HALLELUJAH CHORUS" <i>ALL</i> <i>Conducted by Virginia Prince</i> <i>First Baptist Church of Chicago</i>

Pianist: Aurora Ramos

North Shore Spanish Baptist Church

THINKING THEOLOGICALLY ABOUT THE COMMON GOOD

December 15, 2009

“Cries”

Good thing the son of elderly Elizabeth and Zechariah – commonly known as John the Baptist – was born in a “Judean town in the hill country” (Luke 1: 39) and not “in and around Bethlehem” (Matthew 2: 16).

Otherwise, pregnant Elizabeth would have shrieked a much different cry than the one she loudly shouted when she heard the greeting of the recently impregnated Mary from Nazareth.

And it wasn’t just Elizabeth who was excited to hear and see Mary. The story goes that the fetus in Elizabeth’s womb “leaped” as soon as it heard Mary’s voice. As Elizabeth confessed to Mary:

Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb...For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy.
(Luke 1: 42, 44)

That, in turn, causes Mary to cry out in song:

My soul magnifies the Most High,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
who has looked with favor on the lowliness of God’s servant.

And the remainder of Mary’s psalm would, then and over the centuries, bring cries of joy to those who, otherwise, would have to live without hope:

God has shown strength with God’s arm,
and has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
God has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
God has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty...
(Luke 1: 42-43, 51-53)

These cries from Elizabeth and Mary and all those of low estate are the joyous cries responding to the presence/incarnation and work/ministry of a just and merciful God.

But only months later, after the births of sons to Elizabeth and Mary, the *other* cry -- that much *different* cry – came from mothers “in and around Bethlehem.”

That was because the birth of Mary’s son – a child named Jesus – was seen as a threat to the rule of a king, a threat interpreted to be so serious as to cause the king to send his armed forces into the area “in and around Bethlehem” to kill – get this -- every single child two years of age and

younger. All of them!

John and Jesus were spared: John because he was still with his parents far away from Bethlehem, and Jesus because his father, Joseph, was warned in a dream to flee to Egypt.

The death of all those other children, which became known as the “Slaughter of the Innocents,” was seen, tragically, as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah. It was the cry of Rachel for the butchery of her babies:

A voice was heard in Ramah,
Wailing and loud lamentations,
Rachel weeping for her children;
She refused to be consoled, because they are no more.
(Jeremiah 31: 15, Matthew 2: 18)

So, in the space of just a few days, a few weeks, a few months - two radically different cries: cries of overwhelming joy and hope and cries of unbearable sadness and despair.

* * * * *

Last year at around this time (December 27, 2008 – January 18, 2009), there was again a massive attack against Palestinian people by a ruling power, this time in the Gaza Strip, based again on what was seen as a threat to its security {not, by common consensus, a threat to its *existence*, even though one of the two Palestinian (Hamas) parties refused to acknowledge Israel’s right to exist. }

The Israeli attack followed a nearly five-month and largely successful “lull” in the longstanding conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Yes, both sides accused the other of violations and failing to live up to commitments. But the “lull” was broken on November 4, when Israel raided a disputed tunnel near the border, killing six Hamas combatants, and provoking a rocket response from Hamas. Over the next six weeks several attempts were made to re-establish the ceasefire, but finally Israel took the offensive and began its “Operation Cast Lead” on December 27 with massive air and rocket attacks, followed by a ground invasion on January 3, 2009.

The result of the 22-day war?

I suppose there were some cries of joy and satisfaction on one side. Only thirteen Israelis lost their lives (ten combatants, and of those, four by friendly fire), injuries were minimal, and the country suffered no physical damage.

But on the other side there has been, to quote the Gospel of Matthew, much “wailing and loud lamentations” for the large losses incurred in the war: 1,434 Palestinians killed, of which 235 were combatants, leaving just under 1,200 civilians (288 children and 121 women) who lost their lives – the very ones who are to be protected under international law and the laws of war. Just over 5,300 Palestinians were injured, which includes more than 1,600 children and 828 women. In the range of 400,000 Palestinians were left without running water; 4,000 homes were

destroyed or severely impaired; 80 government structures were destroyed or damaged; thousands of people were left homeless.

It is important to note that not all Israelis cried out with joy and satisfaction. Israel's daily newspaper, Haaretz, stated on February 1:

The questions are troubling; the mass killing of civilians, among them 300 children and 100 women; the shooting at medical crews; the use of illegal munitions against civilian populations, including white phosphorus shells; the prevention of the evacuation of wounded; bombing and shelling of schools, hospitals, supply convoys and a UN facility. These questions cannot remain unanswered. The suspicion that Israel committed war crimes in Gaza is liable to cause it great damage. This is precisely the moment at which Israel needs to preempt the others and investigate itself.

But that self-investigation never happened.

Instead, over Israel's objection, a United Nations inquiry was created in April, led by Judge Richard Goldstone (a distinguished Jewish jurist from South Africa, with an impeccable record of rigorous and fair assessments of war crime and human rights disputes). The inquiry produced an extensive report (575 pages) on the Gaza conflict in September, which was endorsed by the UN Human Rights Council in October, finding war crimes and possibly crimes against humanity on both sides – on *both* sides – including the rocket attacks by Hamas into civilian villages as war crimes and a conclusion that “the Israeli military operation was directed at the people of Gaza as a whole, in furtherance of an overall and continuing policy aimed at punishing the Gaza population, and in a deliberate policy of disproportionate force aimed at the civilian population.”

The Goldstone report recommended that there was sufficient evidence to demand that both parties – Hamas and Israel – carry out thorough self-examinations of the charges placed against them, and that if they failed to do so, the UN Security Council should determine if the matter needed to be referred to the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

Any chance these cries for self-examination will be heeded?

I suppose it is understandable that both parties would resist that invitation, especially Israel, since it refused even to participate in the inquiry at any stage of the process and has consistently dismissed the credibility or even the basis for the inquiry.

But what about other nations? In the United Nations vote adopting the central recommendations of the report, 114 voted affirmatively, 44 abstained, and only 18 voted against it, including the United States and seven members of the European Union (the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, and Slovakia).

In opposing the report, the Obama administration also undermined the leadership of the Palestinian Authority by pressuring it to agree to a delay on action regarding the Goldstone recommendations – a position that, bowing to popular pressure in Palestine, the Fatah leadership soon had to reverse. And, perversely, the American position ended up crippling the Middle East

peace process that it had worked so hard to advance.

Adding insult to injury, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to call on the President and the Secretary of State “to oppose unequivocally any endorsement or further consideration of the Report on the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict in multilateral fora.” The bi-partisan vote was 344 in favor, 36 opposed, and 22 registering present.

So much for an (official) American hearing of Rachel’s cry!

* * * * *

There is an even more recent cry (December 11, 2009) – one that doesn’t easily fit the pre-established categories of “cries.”

It, too, comes from the Land we call Holy, from a group of Palestinian Christian leaders of numerous communions, calling for an end to the occupation by Israel.

Known as “The Kairos Palestine Document” (to acknowledge relationship to a similar statement from South African churches in the mid-1980s), it is entitled: “A moment of truth: A word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering.”

The statement defies categories because it is inclusive of both suffering and hope:

We, a group of Christian Palestinians, after prayer, reflection and an exchange of opinion, cry out from within the suffering in our country, under the Israeli occupation, with a cry of hope in the absence of all hope, a cry full of prayer and faith in a God ever vigilant, in God’s divine providence for all the inhabitants of this land. (From the Introduction)

After an extensive descriptive, analytic, and theological discourse, the document ends with this affirmation:

In the absence of all hope, we cry out our cry of hope. We believe in God, good and just. We believe that God’s goodness will finally triumph over the evil of hate and of death that still persists in our land. We will see here “a new land” and “a new human being,” capable of rising up in the spirit to love each one of his or her brothers and sisters.

In these days when we Christians find ourselves “in and around Bethlehem,” and amidst all the cries of joy and jubilation of this season, we are also invited to hear the cries of those across the globe who await the coming of the God of justice and peace.

Could it possibly be that we, feeble and finite, could be incarnations of that God, as we attempt to be followers of the bearer of the truly Good News – witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth? (Acts 1: 8)