

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

June 10, 2010



“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

IN THIS ISSUE

NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE MINISTER..... 2

ABCMC NEWS 2

Sunday June 13th - Baptist Youth World Day of Prayer/ Children’s Day..... 2

Camp ABCMC, June 27 – July 3..... 2

Thinking Theologically 3

NEWS FROM ABCMC CONGREGATIONS 3

Learning to Pray..... 3

ABCMC Congregations! Send Announcements for Upcoming Events!..... 4

Pub Night at Irving Park Baptist Church 5

ABCUSA NEWS..... 6

Medley Releases Statement Requesting Prayers for Peace 6

NEWS FROM ABC ORGANIZATIONS..... 6

2010 National Women’s Conference: “Women...Destined for God’s Purpose: Mission Possible!” 6

ANNUAL AMERICAN BAPTIST MEN / ABBOYS – USA LEADERSHIP TRAINING CONFERENCE 2010 7

Upcoming Meeting of Northwest Suburban Peace and Education Project.....	7
ABC CALENDAR	8
THINKING THEOLOGICALLY ABOUT THE COMMON GOOD.....	9

NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE MINISTER

Often I read something in a church newsletter that I want to share with our larger ABCMC family. And that happened again this week when I read Lindsey Braun's final report on her year as a chaplain at Jackson Park Hospital under the auspices of Hyde Park Union Church's Lilly Residency Program in Pastoral Ministry. It's not a typical report. I found her testimony on "Learning to Pray" to be wise counsel from a younger colleague. I trust you will appreciate it too. ("Learning to Pray" begins on page 3 of this *eWind*.)

In the cause of the Evangel,

Larry

ABCMC NEWS

Sunday June 13th - Baptist Youth World Day of Prayer/ Children's Day
from www.abc-usa.org

Sunday, June 13, is Baptist Youth World Day of Prayer. It is also Children's Day. Both of these events invite the opportunity to thank God for our children, and remember the gifts that God gives us through them.

Some churches celebrate Children's Day by allowing children in the church congregation to help lead the worship service. If your church is not doing this, consider giving the children a day to participate and be involved with leading the service. The Baptist Youth World Day of Prayer is also an opportunity to teach younger children about prayer let children's voices be heard.

"Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." Luke 11:1

Camp ABCMC, June 27 – July 3

Camp ABCMC is our region's home-grown, brand new week of camp, held at Green Lake from June 27-July 3. It is designed to offer resources and support to help youth claim faith in God for themselves – to develop a life of faith with which they can live. Camp ABCMC features a unique opportunity for youth who've completed grades 5-8 to get to know youth from other ABCMC churches, as well as ABCMC pastors and adult lay leaders. Camp ABCMC helps our region's churches cultivate transformed and committed youth who seek to serve God and others in their communities and the larger world, both now and in the future.

Are there one or two youth in your congregation you'd like to nominate? Time is running short, but there's still room. Contact Rev. Denise Janssen for more information @ 708.955.8913 or revdlj@att.net.

Thinking Theologically

Read “*Weeping*,” this week’s Thinking Theologically About the Common Good by Executive Minister Larry Greenfield, starting on page 9 of this *eWind*.

NEWS FROM ABCMC CONGREGATIONS

Learning to Pray

by Lindsey Braun, from recent newsletter of Hyde Park Union Church

By the time you read these words, I will have served my last day as Chaplain to Jackson Park Hospital, handing the pager and the keys back into the able hands of the Gilead Project’s Founding Director, Wesley Sun. During this last week at JPH, I have been reflecting on what has been most impressed upon me in my year of service. Of all the visits and crises and moments leading group, I find myself drawn back into prayer.

A large part of my job as a hospital chaplain has been the strange, wonderful, terrifying task of knocking on the doors of people I do not know, introducing myself as chaplain and asking them if they would like me to pray with them. It’s a weird thing. A strange specialization: professional pray-er. And what I find stranger yet is the fact that people accept, that people desire someone to sit with them, to ask what they’d like prayer for, what they hope and what they fear, what they struggle with and need to be forgiven for, and then lift those things up in simple words to the God we hope and fear already knows us inside and out.

When I started this work, even with an MDiv degree from the U of C in hand and years of church experience under my belt, the thought of knocking on doors and peddling my spiritual wares made me weak in the knees. The words of Paul to the Romans were my words. “For we do not know how to pray as we ought.”

I did not know how to pray. With the poet Mary Oliver, I knew how to sit quietly in the tall grass, watching birds and grasshoppers and the day pass by. I knew how to pay attention—which is all well and good and requisite work for prayer—, but in the hospital I needed constantly to move beyond the mindfulness that centered *me*, that made *me* feel peaceful and filled and at one with God, and find words to offer to *patients*, words of comfort and support, words of strength and encouragement. Those words had to form on my tongue and come out of my mouth and as often as not, I found them sticking in my throat.

Finding words to pray proved difficult for a couple of reasons. One is the eternal fear of perfectionists everywhere: what if I messed up? What if I left something out, or worse, read a situation wrong, said too much and offended or hurt someone who was already suffering? What if I did it wrong?

The other reason is a little more complex. When I choked on the words: “Can I pray for you?” I realized what a strong association there is for me between volunteering to pray for someone and judging them. I don’t know how many of you have family members who, when they say: “I’ll be praying for you,” you automatically translate their loaded short hand into some variation on: “Dear God make good choices! Make the choices I would make!” I had strong associations of the one offering to pray, praying not for God’s will to be done in my life, but for their own will to be done in my life. In those situations, prayer becomes a tool to execute judgment and even a weapon wielded by those practicing a certain kind of piety. Interacting with patients who were already vulnerable because of illness and crisis, in no way did I want to participate in prayer that judged or injured.

And yet, people want prayer. We desire to be prayed for, to be held in prayer that strengthens and encourages, offers comfort and holds us accountable. Over and over again, my patients have taught me this. Often, when I ask someone what they’d like prayer for, when I finally got over the word sticking in my throat, I find the floodgates open. Half an hour or an hour later, as the conversation is wrapping up, all those things that we have been talking about, the struggles with health and housing, the worries about

finances, the thanksgiving for family, the stress of family, become the petitions of the prayer I lift up. Prayer then becomes a way to hold and draw close to one another as we ask God to hold us and draw us close.

As my eyes and ears have been opened to this way of praying, and as I make the transition from service to the hospital to service to the church, I bring my questions from JPH to Hyde Park Union. As a congregation, do we have the kind of conversations that make us vulnerable to each other, that draw us close to one another, as we share what's been making us crazy at work or with our families, what we're hoping for in the year to come, what we're depending on, what we fear, what we're bracing for, what makes us laugh our faces off and rejoice in our good fortune?

And do our conversations become our petitions? Do we practice finding the words to pray for one another? I ask not as someone who has it all figured out, but as someone who does not know how to pray as I ought, who often feels the Spirit interceding within me with sighs too deep for words, and yet knows intimately, the importance of being able to find words to pray for others, and who has been blessed by those who have found words to pray for me.

Working at the hospital has been the best prayer practice I have ever had. And when I say practice, I mean both in the sense of a discipline, because it makes me pray every day, and in the sense that it's making me better, each prayer I offer teaches me something I can take to the next. If we claim prayer as our own, we need to practice it, to make it a discipline, to hold one another in care, *learning* how to pray as we ought.

And it's a strange and vulnerable thing to do this, to learn to do this together, to hold one another in prayer. As I said, I've been blessed not just to find words to pray for others, but to have someone find words to pray for me. A classmate and friend of mine from the U of C is now a Lutheran pastor on the South Side. We had been getting together every other week for lunch on our day off for several months before she sheepishly admitted to me that she had been reading a less-than-academic book that suggested practicing prayer. We had both been struggling in our first ministries. Would I be interested in praying together, she wondered? It was such an intimate and vulnerable question. And we had to laugh that we'd gone through three years of divinity school before thinking to ask it. But as we tentatively prayed the things we knew about one another, asking for strength and encouragement, for healing and insight, I know I cried as the spirit in the room changed and I felt myself searched and known by my friend and by God. Those words were healing, as they continue to be. Those words push me, and hold me accountable. Those words care for and comfort me.

People of Hyde Park Union, people of God, what do you need prayer for? What do you desire? What are you grateful for? What about this world makes you catch your breath and say, Wow! ? What do you need to say you're sorry for? We tell our friends these things. We need to tell God, too. Not for God's sake. God already knows. But we need to remind ourselves that God has a stake in our desires and our thanksgivings, our praises and our apologies. As a community dispersed for most of the week, it's not always easy to find time and ways to pray for one another. But, as my year of practice at the hospital has taught me, there is power and blessing in that practice. So I encourage you, whether the practice is old hat or seems foreign and strange: practice finding the words to pray for yourself and for one another, that you may draw closer to God.

ABCMC Congregations! Send Announcements for Upcoming Events!

Is there something exciting, transformative, and/or informative happening at your church in the near future? Vacation Bible School? Church Picnics? Bible Study (maybe with a unique focus)? Youth Programs? If there's an event that you would like to include in eWind, please send the announcement to me via email at veronica@abcmc.org. I KNOW there are great things happening... PLEASE SHARE!

Thank you!
Veronica

Pub Night at Irving Park Baptist Church

Pub Night at Irving Park

Friday, June 25, 2010

7:00 PM

Irving Park Baptist Church

4401 West Irving Park Road

Chicago, IL

773-286-6800



Enjoy a hot meal of tacos, refried beans and rice and cool music, featuring the soothing sounds of Dale Tippett, Jr. and friends. All are Welcome!



Adults \$10
Children 12 and under \$6

ABCUSA NEWS

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

Medley Releases Statement Requesting Prayers for Peace

VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 6/4/10)—General Secretary Roy Medley released a statement on Friday, June 4, regarding the conflict in the Middle East. "The deadly confrontation this week between the Israeli military and a flotilla seeking to break the Gaza embargo highlights again the need for prayer for a just and peaceful resolution to the situation between Israel and Palestine," said Medley.

"American Baptists have long been on record in support of the two state solution: one that guarantees the right of both Israel to exist secure and the right of the Palestinians to a homeland and their right to security as well."

Medley continued, "The Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) have said that 'the incident highlights the need for the United States to work for new, constructive Israeli policies toward Gaza that end the blockade and provide for the humanitarian need of those living there without diminishing Israel's own security.'"

"We are mindful," Medley added, "that this unresolved situation is a driving force in unrest in other parts of the world. Therefore, let us continue to pray and work for a peaceful and just resolution to this conflict."

NEWS FROM ABC ORGANIZATIONS

2010 National Women's Conference: "Women...Destined for God's Purpose: Mission Possible!"

"Women...Destined for God's Purpose: Mission Possible!" is a national conference for women sponsored by American Baptist Women's Ministries (ABCUSA), **July 10-15, 2010**, at the Ramada Plaza Hotel and Conference Center in Columbus, Ohio.

"Come and learn what it means to live with purpose and to accept the life that God dreams for you. Together we can face our struggles, find our strengths, and grow in Jesus. Together we can encourage one another to be the women God has called us to be," (Crystal Newton, conference coordinator).

Christ-centered experiences include Bible studies on the conference theme with Rev. Christine Roush, worship and singing with Christian performing artist Pam Noah, inspiring Sunday morning preaching by Rev. Marilyn Turner, morning "Java & Jesus" devotions, and a memorable closing communion service on Wednesday evening. Workshops, off-site tours, special meal events, and activities with the National Gathering for Girls offer great opportunities to build new intergenerational friendships and grow closer to God.

Visit www.abwministries.org and click on "Events" for more information and registration forms.

ANNUAL AMERICAN BAPTIST MEN / ABBOYS – USA LEADERSHIP TRAINING CONFERENCE 2010

COME JOIN US IN NEW ENGLAND SEPTEMBER 17-19, 2010
“Stir Up, Stand Up, Speak Up” 2 Tim 1:6-12, Eph 4:12

This year, the Annual American Baptist Men / ABBoys – USA Leadership Training Conference will take place at *Grotonwood Camp* located at 167 Prescott St, Groton, Massachusetts. A fellowship gathering and devotional will take place Friday evening, September 17, 2010, for those who arrive on Friday. Saturday, September 18, 2010, will have Plenary Sessions and exciting and informative Workshops for both Men and Boys, the day ending with a special youth concert. Sunday, September 19, 2010, the Conference will end with Sunday School and a Worship Service.

We will have two very exciting and “*out of the box*” thinking speakers, both of whom are well known nationally and have speaking engagements globally as well. Both are authors of several inspirational books and are involved in many leadership training programs. Rev. Dr. E. Glenn Wagner, former vice-president of Promise Keepers, Inc., is currently the Executive Director for the Center for Leadership Development and Deployment at University Park Baptist Church in Charlotte, NC. Timothy Eldred, Senior Pastor for New Beginnings Christian Family Fellowship in Six Lakes, MI, serves as the Executive Director of Christian Endeavor International and developed the “*Pray 21*” youth mentoring program, which the American Baptist Men-USA recommends for use in our ABBoys mentoring program. The bios of both of these fascinating men of Christ follow this article.

This “Conference” will be very different from most other ABMen training conferences or summits you may have attended in the past. Besides the men receiving great life changing encouragement and training, this weekend will also feature an emphasis on mentoring for ABBoys and young men. Those men and boys in the local area who do not wish to stay overnight will be offered a one day package for the Saturday program. The Sunday services will, of course, be open to whoever wishes to attend. Please plan to bring your sons, grandsons and their friends to participate in this great experience. Tony Pappas, TABCOM Executive Minister and Phil Anderson, TABCOM ABMen President, will both present workshops for men at the conference. Cost is \$105 for the weekend, including lodging and 5 meals, \$80 dollars for boys 18 and younger and \$50 for anyone who can only attend on Saturday.

For information and registration, please visit the American Baptist Men-USA website at www.abmen.org click on “Annual Mtg” and register online or contact our National Headquarters at 1-866-868-1050 and speak to Tracie Longwell, ABMen-USA Secretary.

PEACE NEWS

Upcoming Meeting of Northwest Suburban Peace and Education Project

The Northwest Suburban Peace and Education Project, which usually meets on the 2nd Tuesday of the month, will meet instead on Tuesday, June 22 at the South Church, 501 S. Emerson Street, Mount Prospect. The focus of this meeting will be the planning of an alternative career fair for high school students. Members of NWSPEP are concerned about the pressures young people are under to join the military in the current economy, when funding for college may be hard to find. The career fair will present career options for high school students and recent graduates to consider rather than enlisting in the military. All who want to help young people make positive career choices are welcome to get involved.

PRAYER REQUESTS

Please pray for “a just and peaceful resolution to the situation between Israel and Palestine.” *General Sec. Medley*

Please pray for all of those affected by and perpetrating violence in Chicago and cities around the country.

Please pray for the people and the environment affected by the BP oil eruption.

Please pray for our country in the midst of the struggle for immigration reform and financial reform.

Please pray for the people of Haiti, the people of Chile, and people around the world who are suffering.

Please pray for world peace.

Please pray for our troops and our government.

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

Please pray for all children who are homeless and/or hungry.

Please pray for ABCMC staff and all ABCMC churches for effective Christian witness and service in 2010.

ABC CALENDAR

June 21 – July 30 – A Cool Summer Experience, Summer Educational Program, First Baptist Church of Waukegan

June 25 – Pub Night at Irving Park Baptist Church, 4401 W. Irving Park Rd, Chicago, 7:00 p.m.

June 27 - July 3 – Camp ABC-MC, Contact Rev. Denise Janssen for more information (708.955.8913 or revdlj@att.net).

August 19 – 20 – *Women Together, Lifting and Encouraging One Another*, Conference for Female Clergy, New Prospect Missionary Baptist Church, Detroit, MI, www.abwministries.org for more information.

September 14 – One Hope United Charity Golf Outing, go to <http://www.onehopeunited.org/golf/> for more information.

September 17 – 19 - Annual American Baptist Men/ABBoys – USA Leadership Training Conference 2010, Grotonwood Camp located at 167 Prescott St, Groton, Massachusetts, www.abmen.org for more information.

June 24 – 26, 2011 – American Baptist Biennial, San Juan, Puerto Rico

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 Thursday. 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.

THINKING THEOLOGICALLY ABOUT THE COMMON GOOD

June 9, 2010

“Weeping”

One could get the impression from the opening lines of the story about Jesus eating with and at the home of the Pharisee named Simon (Luke 7: 36 – 50) that this was going to be just a pleasant dinner party, a break from the sparring that kept the Pharisees and Jesus apart yet persistently and contentiously together.

“How nice,” Jesus must have thought, “that, despite our constant arguing and trying to outwit each other, this chap has the grace to be hospitable, to signal – by seating me at his own table – that I am his equal, maybe even to treat me, in spite our differences, as a colleague.”

It wasn't an unreasonable assumption, since both Jesus and the Pharisees were intent on restoring a straying Israel back to its true calling, albeit by different means.

Jesus may have had fleeting second thoughts about this favorable evaluation of his host when he briefly realized that his own feet remained unwashed, un-dried, and un-anointed. But that customary hospitality could be overlooked given the other signs of welcome.

It took an uninvited guest to disrupt the spirit of good will that had, up to this point, characterized the evening.

Nothing that she said, mind you. In fact, not a word is recorded as coming from her lips.

But everything that she did.

This uninvited woman from the city – clearly a “sinner” – had learned that Jesus was dining with Simon that evening, so she broke protocol and entered the dining area, went to Jesus, bathed his feet with her tears, dried his feet with her hair, kissed his feet with her lips, and anointed his feet with the expensive jar of alabaster ointment she had brought with her – and all the time weeping.

Rather than seeing these actions by the sinful woman as an indictment of himself for what he had overlooked doing according to custom as a host, Simon the Pharisee, under his breath, condemned the woman for her sinful condition (and probably her intruding indiscretion) and questioned Jesus' credentials as a prophet for not recognizing the sinful condition of the woman who had interrupted the dinner party.

Jesus could perceive exactly what was going on in his host's head and indicated that he (Jesus) had something to say to Simon. When the host indicated he was ready to listen, Jesus told a story about two people who owed money to the same creditor but in different amounts. When the creditor realized that neither borrower could pay their debt, the creditor cancelled the debts of both. Jesus' question to host Simon was which of the debtors would love the creditor more, and the host correctly responded that it would be the creditor with the larger debt that had been forgiven.

Pointing to the sinful woman, Jesus reminded the host that it was the uninvited and sinful woman who showed respect and love for Jesus by washing and drying and kissing and anointing his feet while all the time weeping – showing, that is, the depth and extent and fervor of her respect and love and gratitude for what Jesus had done to receive her and, in that sense, to forgive her –while the host had, yes, shown a degree of respect and love and possibly even gratitude toward Jesus by inviting him to dinner, but had not, at the same time, expressed any deep sorrow for what he had failed to do as a host. Moreover, by condemning the woman and questioning Jesus' credentials as a prophet – even silently – the host had placed himself above both the woman and Jesus and thereby showed his diminished love for them.

Jesus tells his host: “Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little.” (v. 47)

In other words: to recognize the full extent and depth of one's sins allows for those sins to be forgiven and, in turn, the renewed capacity to love freely and abundantly; to recognize only partially the extent and depth of one's sins allows for only partial forgiveness and, in turn, the capacity to love little.

What then began as a pleasant dinner party, ended up anything but pleasant, for Jesus had, in effect, condemned his host for not weeping – for not recognizing the extent and depth of his sins, for not realizing how desperately he needed forgiveness, and, thus, for his continuing incapacity to love fully.

By not being able to weep, that is, Simon the host has not fulfilled the Great Commandment to love God completely and to love others as himself – a devastating condemnation.

* * * * *

Our question, of course, is whether we are weeping – weeping tears of sorrow for acts of commission and omission we have committed or weeping tears of joy for the cancelled debts and forgiven sins and the freedom again to love God fully and one another – inclusively – as we love ourselves.

Some of those sins might be similar to those of the weeping woman who came to Jesus during the meal and some might be similar to those of the non-weeping man who hosted the meal so incompletely. But surely there are plenty of other sins, ancient and contemporary, that could be added. Are we or aren't we weeping tears of sorrow and joy for them all?

It does seem to me, however, that there are a whole set of sins that might apply to many of us as Christian Americans – followers of Jesus, supposedly forgiven and freed – who have the capacity as citizens in this democracy to be involved socially, economically, and politically in processes that can make enormous differences in the lives of individuals and families, institutions and communities, states and nations, as well as the natural world.

Have we used those capacities that are ours as Christians in this democracy? Have we been concerned about and active in efforts to end the siege of Gaza, to stop the loss of life in Afghanistan, to press for a rigorous national energy policy, to reduce the growing inequality between the very wealthy and everyone else and address the needs of the poor and vulnerable, to bring fiscal integrity and fair taxation to our state governments, to adopt comprehensive immigration and education reforms, to bring a renewed sense of restorative justice to our so-called criminal justice system?

Are we weeping tears of sorrow, in confession, for the sins of what we have or haven't done on all these fronts and tears of joy, in affirmation and gratitude, for the forgiveness and the freedom and the power we have, in Christ and as citizens of this democracy, to join with God in transformation of the small and large worlds of which we are a part?

At both the personal/private and the public/political dimensions of our lives, are you and I weeping?