

# Metro Chicago *EWIND*

Seeking Justice • Loving Mercy • Walking Humbly

*A weekly electronic newsletter from and for the American Baptists of the Windy City and its environs, covering matters as diverse as our region.*

## “IN THIS MOMENT”

**W**ith all its multi-facet elements the moment that we are in as region and about to celebrate during our Annual meeting is certainly a *kairos* in the life of ABC Metro Chicago. As this Greek word references, it is the right moment or a moment of opportunity. Thus the call for us as the churches of the region is to seize the moment from God. Then the question is how do we seize the moment?

The way to seize the moment is primarily by realizing God in the moment. We are not here by accident but were consistently led by His Spirit. God's spirit has been active in the region, working and reworking, molding, shaping and reshaping us both structurally and spiritually for His mission. Realizing God's work makes us part of the *kairos*.

One of my tasks over the past three years as the Associate Regional Minister for the Asian Churches was to walk with the Asian churches in their moments of *kairos*. Realizing that God's spirit is moving among them to make them the hands and feet of our Lord has inspired them to actively participate in the life of the region.

It is also with deep sense of *kairos*, that a workshop on Conflict Transformation is scheduled for Saturday 23rd April at North Shore Baptist Church to equip attendees for present day challenges. This event is currently open for all the pastors and leaders in the region to enroll.

The second way is to seize the moment is to participate in God's mission. This reminds me of queen Esther who invites the whole community to be part of the *kairos* in her efforts to stand up for the lives of the people.

*"Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my*

*attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."* Esther 4:16

Esther teaches the importance of the community to participate in the *kairos*. She teaches the people that her journey is not in isolation but thoroughly integrated and inter-woven into the lives of her community. She invites the community to join her in fasting and praying, that God would prepare her to represent the cause of people before the King.

As the region moves forward seizing the moment under the new leadership of Rev. Sarah Jay as Acting Regional Minister, along with the team of Associate Regional Ministers (ARMs), until Interim Regional Minister is called, pastors and leaders in the region can participate in what God is doing through lifting up the team in prayer. It is through these prayers that we can actively participate in the *kairos*.

Finally, the moment cannot be seized unless we celebrate what God has done in the past, is doing in the present, and wants to do with us in the future. Through our annual meeting May 13-14 we will be intentional about the celebration of the *kairos*. It will be a celebration of God's faithfulness in the life of the region churches. It will be a moment to thank God for the leadership and faithful witness of our friend and colleague Rev. Dr. Larry Greenfield.

I invite you all to seize the moment and be part of this *kairos* of our region.

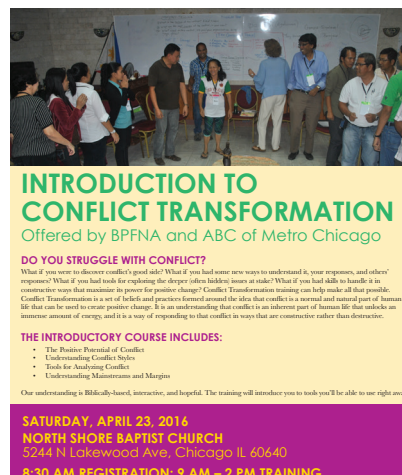
*Rev. Chakravarthy Zadda PhD*  
Associate Regional Minister, ABCMC

# Introduction to Conflict Transformation Training Is This Weekend

A Conflict Transformation training session organized for the ABCMC region leaders and pastors will be held on Saturday, April 23 at North Shore Baptist Church. Have you registered yet??

All are invited and encouraged to attend. There are two ways to RSVP:  
 contact Rev. Dr.Chakravarthy Zadda at  
 REVCHAKS@ABCMC.org  
 OR  
 register at Eventbrite by clicking the following link:  
<http://conflicttransformationrsvp.eventbrite.com>

Rev. Dr. Chakravarthy Zadda  
 Associate Regional Minister for Asian Ministries  
 ABCMetro Chicago



## Registration for the 181st Annual Meeting is now open.

### THE MEETING

Distinguished speakers, engaging presenters and insightful discussions will all be a part of the 181st Annual Meeting on May 13-14, 2016.

A Christian Education Network Thank You Luncheon will kick off the 181st Annual Meeting, followed by a plenary session designed to motivate and inspire – it all begins at 12 Noon on Friday. The day will end with a reception and live music. Saturday will include an opening session followed by breakout sessions. A Luncheon and Annual Business Meeting will be held during the afternoon followed with additional breakout sessions.

The meeting will end with celebration during a Reception and the Disciples' Dinner on Saturday evening as we present the Regional and Local Church "Daily Disciple" Awards for 2016 and thank Dr. Larry Greenfield for his years of service.

### THE VENUE

The Westin Itasca features comfortable guest rooms and breathtaking hotel grounds. Enjoy complimentary wireless internet access in guestrooms and Atrium/Lobby area, 24 hour fitness center and complimentary self-parking. The ABCMC negotiated room rate is \$99.00 per night for single or double occupancy.

Join us as we look back with gratitude on the places the Spirit has led us over the last decade, and as we look to the future with hope. In this moment, we can begin to see glimpses on the horizon of the new places the Spirit is leading us.

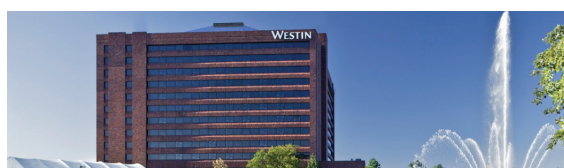
**181st Annual Meeting**  
 American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago  
 Friday and Saturday | May 13 and 14, 2016  
 The Westin • Itasca, Illinois  
**"In This Moment"**

**SCHEDULE AT-A-GLANCE**

<b>Friday, May 13, 2016</b>	11:00 am Registration Opens 11:30 am Fellowship and Networking 12:00 Noon Christian Education Network Thank You Luncheon 1:45 pm Break 2:00 pm Plenary Session 5:30 pm Dinner On Your Own Ministers Council Fellowship Supper [RSVP required] Reception and Live Music
<b>Saturday, May 14, 2016</b>	7:30 - 8:45 Orientation/Training Session for Family Council Members 8:00 am Registration and Continental Breakfast 9:00 am Worship/Devotion 9:30 am Plenary Session Break 10:45 am Worship 11:00 am Lunch and Annual Business Meeting 12:15 pm Breakout Sessions 2:00 pm Reception 4:30 pm Disciples' Dinner 5:00 pm Celebration and Thank You For Service - Dr. Larry Greenfield Presentation of Regional and Local Church "Daily Disciple" Awards Benediction
	7:30 pm



Use this link to register for the meeting at EventBrite  
<http://annualmeetingregistration.eventbrite.com>



Use this link to register at The Westin Hotel  
<https://www.starwoodmeeting.com/Book/ABCMC2016>

## Lectionary Studies for Sunday, April 24, 2016 – Dr. Jay Wilcoxon

### 5th Sunday of Easter 2016

Acts 11:1-18; Psalm 148; Revelation 21:1-6; John 13:31-35

*The peoples of the nations, all of heaven and earth,  
are included in the new command to love one another.*

#### Acts 11:1-18

This first reading tells how **Peter took the gospel to the nations.**

The whole passage (10:1-11:18) relates, with repetitions, Peter's experience with the household of the Roman military officer, Cornelius. In this selection from chapter 11, Peter repeats the essentials told in chapter 10. He repeats it to inform Jewish disciples back in Jerusalem. These Jewish-Christian disciples have challenged this crossing the line from Jews to people of the nations ["gentiles"]. Peter is reporting that God has done a new thing – sent the gospel message to the non-Jewish nations.

Peter had a vision that told him to treat **all animals as clean** for dietary purposes. Peter resists such conduct, which would be sacrilege for a Jew. God insists, however, telling him, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane" (verse 9, NRSV). This declaration has radical implications for Jewish practice; it abolishes the food laws of Leviticus 11. It abolishes a major reason for separating Jews from non-Jews in table fellowship.

(This step had been taken by Jesus himself, according to Mark, 7:1-23. Luke had omitted that entire episode from his Gospel, knowing that in the circuit of his churches, God would work directly through Peter to make the Jewish food laws obsolete for Christians. In actual history, Paul discovered that Peter did not consistently hold such a view; see Galatians 2:11-14.)

When Peter went to Caesarea, the capital city of the Roman province of Judea, he recited to Cornelius' household a version of the gospel of Jesus (the version used in the Lectionary on Easter Sunday). He has only begun when "the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had at the beginning" (verse 15).

This **coming of the Holy Spirit** is taken by Peter and his companions as divine proof that uncircumcised people are intended by God to be included in the Jesus community. Peter recalls Jesus' words that John baptized with water but the followers of Jesus will be baptized by the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit was given to these non-Jewish folks, Peter says, "who was I that I could hinder God?" (verse 17). His previously critical believers in the circumcision are convinced and acknowledge that God "has given even to the Nations the repentance that leads to life."

This episode of Peter with Cornelius is one of the more **deliberately constructed passages** in the book of Acts. The mature Luke, late in the first century, is putting a spin on some Caesarea traditions to make Peter the first apostle to the non-Jewish people. This writer wants to present Paul, to whom the last half of Acts is devoted, as *following* and paralleling the work of Peter, and thus presents Peter as the first "apostle to the nations."

(Acts elsewhere indicates that the first acceptance of non-Jewish disciples probably happened in Antioch and was done by Greek-speaking Jewish-Christians from Cyrene and Cyprus, Acts 11:20-24.)

The point of this reading during the Easter season is that it was the Spirit of the Risen Jesus who expanded the work of the gospel to include all the nations – the nations who, therefore, belonged with Israel in God's final saving work.

#### Psalm 148.

This psalm is used several times in the Lectionary as a **grand Hallelujah psalm**. I give here my comments from one of the earlier occasions of this reading.

This psalm is an exuberant and delightful **summons to heaven and earth** to praise the Lord, to "hallelu" (the plural form) God. The craft exhibited by the composer is not complicated but is pleasing to watch as it unfolds.

There are two large sections, each elaborating those called upon to praise, those in heaven and those on earth. The call to **heavenly things** (verses 1-4) repeats in rapid sequence seven imperatives to praise, moving from one aspect to another of the heavenly realm: from the heavens, in the heights, all God's angels (messengers), all God's host (army), sun and moon, all lighted stars, and supremely, the heaven of heavens enclosed by the cosmic waters. These seven imperatives are followed by an exhortation: "Let them praise . . .," which in turn leads, finally, to a *reason* for the praise: because all these summoned entities were "created" by God and fixed forever.

The strategy of the second section (verses 7-13) is not to repeat the call to praise each time, but to elaborate more fully those to whom it is addressed. The imperative "Praise ye . . ." is given only once at the beginning, then followed by a **chain of earthly things** included in this imperative: the earth; sea monsters and deeps; lightning and hail, snow and frost, storm winds (all weather elements kept in ends-of-the-earth storehouses); mountains and hills; fruit trees and huge cedars; and, moving toward the human world, animals wild and domestic, crawling creatures and winged birds; and finally the varieties of people – kings and clans, princes and judges, young men and maidens, old folks and kids. The long enthusiastic enumeration intends to be exhaustive – all are addressed by the command to "Praise the Lord [hallelu Yah]." Again, the imperative chain is followed (verse 13) by an exhortation, "Let them praise the name of the Lord." And, finally again, a *reason* for the summons to praise is given: because "his name alone is exalted; his glory is above earth and heaven."

Does this reason for praise seem too general, too vague? The poet's basic structure is completed, but both creative art and faith erupt in a final declaration, a **final proclamation** of why God is to be praised: "He has raised up a horn for his people, . . . for Israel, the people close to him" (verse 14).

[continued on page 4]



## Lectionary Studies for Sunday, April 24, 2016

[Continued from page 3]

Yet, this psalm is not about this horn, this pillar of strength to empower the people; it is about the universal praise that this new act of God prompts throughout the cosmos.

### Revelation 21:1-6

The Epistle readings continue from the book of Revelation. However, **we leap forward**, skipping the great middle sections about the times of Tribulation and the Millennium, and go straight to the grand climax when the heaven and earth are made new.

When there is a new heaven and earth, there will no longer be any Sea (21:1). This does not mean earth will not have its great bodies of bounded water; it means the ancient enemy of an ordered cosmos, the Sea (Psalm 93:3-4; Psalm 74:13-14; Isaiah 51:9-10) will be finally and conclusively defeated and banished.

The main element of this vision, however, is the coming of **the New Jerusalem**. The seer beholds it descending as the bride (which in the prophets is the restored Zion). He hears a voice declaring that God has taken up residence with the people. In Greek this is literally, "behold the Tent [Tabernacle] of God is with humans, / and [God] will tent with them." This holy residence will be where God wipes away every sorrowful tear, and where Death [capitalized in NRSV] will be no more. Mourning and weeping will be no more because "the first things have passed away" (verse 4).

The seer is commanded by God from the throne to **write down this vision**, because the words he has heard "are trustworthy and true" (verse 5). And though there is more for the seer to learn about the great New Jerusalem, God now says, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end."

And as if the real end is a gentle touch of care and mercy, "To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life" (verse 6).

### John 13:31-35

The Gospel reading is the beginning of Jesus' talk about **going away from the disciples**, a topic that continues in John's Gospel for several chapters.

First, we may note here (beginning just before our reading) a strange juxtaposition of **betrayal and glorification**. Jesus has just identified his betrayer (for those who have eyes to see) by giving him a piece of bread. That act liberates the traitor to perform his treacherous deed. "So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. After he received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. . . . So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. It was night" (John 13:26-30, NRSV).

### Betrayal.

But immediately (in our reading) Jesus' talk is about the mutual glorification he shares with God. "When he [Judas] had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has

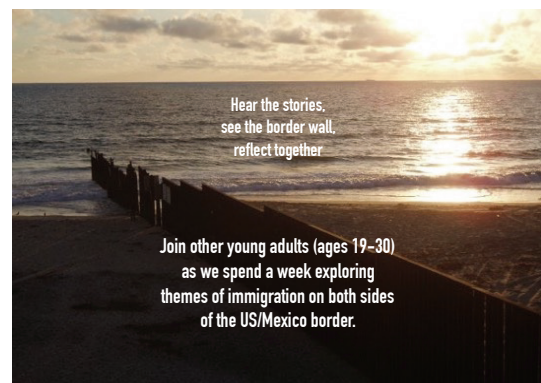
been glorified in him'" (verse 31). Apparently being betrayed IS being glorified! *Submitting* to the rampage of evil in the world IS making the glory of God evident in the world. A more than usually ironic touch in this subtle Gospel!

The main burden of this part of this Gospel is Jesus' departure. " . . . [A]s I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'" (verse 33). But when Jesus himself is gone, his disciples will have **a mark that identifies them in the world**. "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (verse 35).

This is probably one of the places where one passage in John needs to be expanded and interpreted by another. The full version of this "new" command is given in 15:12-15. "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. . . . I do not call you servants any longer, . . . but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father."

Put in the language of the old heavenly court where God and God's Anointed preside over an entourage of servants, messengers, and armed forces, this means that you, the disciples, are no longer servants and errand boys sent on specific tasks, but you are now part of the inner council of the risen Lord himself. You are Friends of Jesus, sent into the world to love one another to the point of giving one's life for each other.

When these disciples live in the world this way, they are truly witnesses to the risen heavenly Lord.



## IM YOUNG ADULTS

immigration immersion

Young adults, ages 19-30  
Dates: July 24-30, 2016

Location: Tijuana, Mexico  
Cost: \$350, plus airfare (to San Diego, California, USA)

Join International Ministries' Young Adult program as we spend a week on the US/Mexico border exploring immigration. Experience life on both sides of the border and see multiple sides of a complicated

issue; walk with the US Border Patrol, hear from migrants who have been deported, sit with families separated from their loved ones by the border wall, and reflect together.

Cost includes in-country transportation, food, lodging, and all site visits. We will be staying at Duborah's House, a ministry of IM in Tijuana, Mexico.

Not included in the price is roundtrip travel to San Diego, California. A valid passport is required.

Questions? Interested? email [sarah.in.mission@gmail.com](mailto:sarah.in.mission@gmail.com)