

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.

Church Highlight . . . Irving Park Baptist Church

In our continuing series in which we are getting to know the 62 churches of our Region, this week I have the privilege to share with our ABCMC Family about my own church, Irving Park Baptist Church, where I am currently the Interim Pastor. We are located on the Northwest side, on the corner of Irving Park Road and Kostner Avenue, near the Blue Line.

This summer, we have enjoyed a sermon series called "God's Voice in Art." It is based on the conviction that God's voice is all around us and that God reaches out to us through nature, text, people, music, and more. In visual works of art, too, we can "see" God speak in powerful, breathtaking ways. The art we are encountering speaks *about life in God's voice*.

Our inaugural piece was August Rodin's *Carytide*. We have also conversed with Azechi Umetaro's *Volcano Path*, ancient Greek vases, and Gustav Klimt's *The Kiss (Lovers)*.

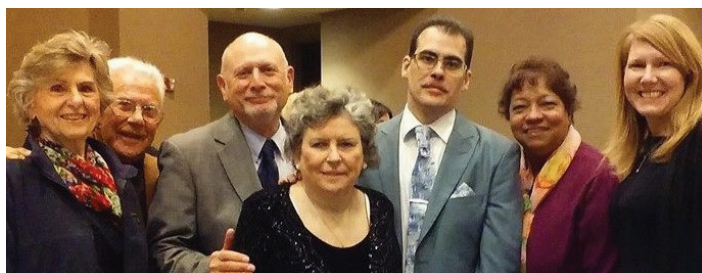
We are blessed to have a partnership with Iglesia Bautista Central and Rev. Shakespeare Osorio and share in common our building, fellowship time on Sundays, and special worship services.

We are a small church, which brings challenges, yet this also means we can honor birthdays and anniversaries, get to know each other well, and have time for everyone. One of our church members describes entering the church Sanctuary on Sunday mornings as receiving a "warm hug."

When I think about Irving Park Baptist, these are the words that come to mind: Simplicity, welcome, creativity, respect, community, and spiritual maturity.

We believe that people are more valuable than material goods, power, or wealth, and you can feel that here. Uniqueness is celebrated. Many of our members are musical, theatrical, and artistic. Many hail from other countries around the globe. The weekly church Bible study is one of our favorite times of the week – always interesting and challenging.

The people in our community outside of the church walls are important to us, too, and one of the main ways we seek to serve them is through a longstanding relationship with the Irving Park Food Pantry and a neighborhood housing outreach called Hands to Help.



IMPORTANT NOTICE



**American Baptist Churches
of Metro Chicago**

**THE ABCMC FAMILY COUNCIL MEETING
WILL BE HELD AT
NORTH SHORE BAPTIST CHURCH
5244 N. LAKEWOOD AVE.
CHICAGO, IL 60640
ON AUGUST 20, 2016**

AGENDA

**8:00 AM
PRAYER MEETING
[HOSTED BY SISTERS IN SERVICE –
ABCMC LAY AND CLERGY WOMEN LEADERS]**

**8:30 AM
REGISTRATION AND BREAKFAST**

**9:00 AM
FAMILY COUNCIL MEETING**

*****PLEASE NOTE – THIS IS A
CHANGE IN LOCATION.***

ABHMS' Barnabas Partners Demands Legislative Action To End Police Brutality

With deep concern for increasing racial violence in the United States, American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) has published a statement from Barnabas Partners demanding legislative action to end police brutality.

Barnabas Partners—a group of American Baptist clergy convened by ABHMS Executive Director Emeritus Dr. Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins, III and Dr. J. Alfred Smith, Sr. several years ago—encourages pastors, shares knowledge, advocates for justice and prays for the organization.

The statement advocates three steps toward healing the injustice and violence that pervades American society today: First, America needs to reckon with its historic race issues; second, America needs to confront the spread of racism in the ranks of its police forces; and, third, there is an urgent need for the White House and Justice Department to name the evils of racial bias and police brutality as unacceptable and unlawful.

Barnabas Partners' statement closes with this prayer for justice and peace in our nation during these perilous times:

"As faith leaders, we reject violence and advocate for respect and security for all human life. We speak in the name of the loving God who created all people in God's image and loves us all equally and unconditionally. God does not tolerate injustice, or look the other way when human beings are violated. We pray for grace and healing for all those who are victims of injustice and violence. We pray for righteousness and justice on behalf of all those who have been treat-

ed wrongly. We seek reconciliation and recompense on behalf of all those who deserve and want better. We dedicate ourselves to working tirelessly in our community and our nation on behalf of change and progress, while speaking truth to power, correcting injustices, and improving the quality of life for all people."

To read the full statement, visit:
<http://abhms.org/about-us/news/9790/>

Save The Date



Retreat, Renew and Re-create
a time of spiritual retreat for faith leaders (pastors, spouses, specialized ministers, music directors, etc.)

Step away into nature,
build relationships, laugh,
and restore yourself

September 18 (evening) thru
September 21 at Camp Grow
(in the Brim Grow Lodge)

Cost for all meals and lodging, \$99
Led by Rev. Keith CerK
[thecerks@aol.com]

ABCMC Congratulates Reverend Derek Mason



ABCMC congratulates and celebrates with Reverend Derek Mason (center), newly ordained by Moraine Valley Community Church where he is the pastor. His ordination took place

during the morning service on July 10. Reverend Dave Bauer, Director and President of Bible Related Ministries, (left) gave the charge to the pastor and the church and Reverend Sarah Jay, Acting Executive Minister of ABCMC, (right) brought greetings on behalf of the region. Reverend Mason is deeply loved by the people of his church, a newly revitalized and growing congregation in Palos Hills.

New: Pulpit Supply List

ABCMC is creating a list of preachers available for pulpit supply when a pastor is away on vacation. If you would like your name to be on this list, please send your name, telephone number, email address, and a one-sentence description of your preaching style to Janet Jamieson at admin@abcmc.org.

If your church would like a copy of this list when it is complete, please email us to request one, and we will be happy to send it along.

Central Baptist Theological Seminary Webinar Series

Central Baptist Theological Seminary invites you to join their Central Leadership Series: A Theological Approach to Understanding Human Sexuality WEBINAR series. The purpose of these webinars is to provide resources for faculty, students, and congregations as they process the challenges of full inclusion of sexual minorities. The Arcus Foundation provided a two-year grant for Central to educate pastoral leaders and students in Myanmar and the US. This new series extends the work already completed with resettled persons from Myanmar as well as conferences held there.

Join us! Register ONLINE at <http://cbts.edu/event/theological-approach-understanding-human-sexuality/>. The cost is \$10 for each session in the series.

Upcoming Webinars will be held on:

- August 16 – How To Be A Straight Ally, \$10
- September 20 – Homosexuality And The Bible, \$10

American Baptist Seminary of the West (ABSW) Seeking Gifted Leader To Become Its Next President

ABSW is a multi-racial Christian seminary with historic ties to the American Baptist Churches USA and the Progressive National Baptist Convention and maintains a vibrant partnership with The Graduate Theological Union. These relationships create a diverse student body and a rich ecumenical experience with international reach. The Seminary is located in Berkeley, CA within walking distance of the main campus of the University of California. ABSW has a reputation for preparing gifted academic, church, and community leaders who excel in their professional fields, and who are able to fulfill their unique calling while sustaining a keen social awareness and passion for justice.

The successful candidate will be able to build on the Seminary's storied past (it was formed in 1968 by the merger of the Berkeley Baptist Divinity School and the California Baptist Theological Seminary) and cast a vision for its ongoing role in the rapidly changing cultures of church, community, and education. The president will need to successfully leverage the opportunities and creatively overcome the challenges presented by our changing economy and boldly lead a diverse faculty, staff, and academic community.

It is the desire of the Board of Trustees that the 7th President of the Seminary begin employment prior to the start of the 2017-2018 academic year. The new president will serve as the Seminary's Chief Executive Officer and will report directly to the Board of Trustees.

Letters of Nomination may be sent, no later than October 1, 2016, to:

Presidential Search Committee
American Baptist Seminary of the West
2606 Dwight Way
Berkeley, CA 94704-3029

Letters of Interest, together with a current CV and five professional references, should be sent to the same address no later than October 15, 2016. Interested persons who have a current ABPS (American Baptist Personnel Services) profile are encouraged to include a copy with their Letter of Interest.

Lectionary Studies for Sunday, August 7, 2016 – Dr. Jay Wilcoxon

12th Sunday after Pentecost Year C
Isaiah 1:1, 10-20; Psalm 50:1-8, 22-23;
Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16; Luke 12:32-40.

*What does God really want?
Justice, mercy, and pilgrims who live by faith.*

Isaiah 1:1, 10-20

Justice and Mercy – The eighth-century prophets declared these more important to God than sacrifice and religious ceremonies. Especially in three famous passages in Amos, Micah, and this Sunday's reading in Isaiah.

- Amos voiced God's outburst, "I hate, I despise your festivals... But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:21-24, NRSV).
- Micah of Moresheth gave instruction concerning proper service of God: "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? . . . He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:7-8).

In our **Isaiah** passage, the prophet proclaims the "teaching [*torah*] of our God" to the notorious sinners of Jerusalem and Judah (verse 10).

A "**torah**" is an instruction by priests about **what God requires** of those seeking access to the holy place. We hear the original life-situation of such a *torah* in the Micah passage referred to above.

With what shall I come before the Lord,
and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old? (Micah 6:6)

People need instruction about how to approach a God who is holy and powerful enough to bring better crops, to provide healthy offspring, and to keep away – or bring in judgment – the armies of a mighty Assyria. "What must I do . . . ?" The business of the priest's *torah* was to tell you what to do to be saved at this place at this time.

The answer in **this Isaiah passage**, as in the Amos and Micah passages, is that God does not require abundant sacrifices and awesome religious ceremonials – God even hates such things. At least, God hates them when they are the doings of a crooked people.

"I cannot endure solemn assemblies *with iniquity*" (verse 13).

The finest religious action, even personal prayer before God, becomes intolerable when the hands spread out in prayer have blood on them (verse 15)! Whether visible to everyone or not, God sees the blood, and the presence of such a person is a desecration.

However, there is more to God's word: God also says, **it is not too late**. No matter how scarlet or crimson your hands are (verse 18), a complete renewal is possible. It is possible on the condition that you radically change.

What must I do?
Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;
. . . cease to do evil,
learn to do good; seek justice,
rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan,
plead for the widow (verses 16-17).

With such a conversion of your habitual ways, you may still be able to "eat the good of the land" (verse 19).

Psalm 50:1-8, 22-23

The Psalm reading presents **the coming of God** to assemble the covenant partners for judgment.

An awesome and glorious power out of Zion is this Lord with devouring fire and tempest (verses 1-2). The "faithful ones" who made covenant with God by sacrifices are gathered to hear the righteous judgment of God witnessed by the heavens – that is, by infallible witnesses to all human deeds (verses 4-6).

The divine declaration to those under judgment is that their sacrifices have been duly noted; these things "are continually before" God (verse 8). Our reading skips over one declaration of God that prepares for the psalm's conclusion. Instead of the flesh of bulls and blood of goats, what God wants is "a sacrifice of thanksgiving" (verse 14). Then, the conclusion.

Those who bring thanksgiving as their sacrifice honor me;
to those who go the right way
I will show the salvation of God (verse 23).

The psalm, too, delivers the *torah* concerning true religious service to God.

Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

One of the most famous passages about faith in all of scripture is from the Letter to the Hebrews, the opening of our reading.

[Continued on page 5]

Lectionary Studies for Sunday, August 7, 2016

[Continued from page 4]

"Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (verse 1, NRSV).

The rest of this chapter identifies and celebrates certain heroines and heroes of faith in the Hebrew scriptures, though our reading is confined to Abraham and his immediate family – after a brief comment on faith in the creation of the world by the word of God (verse 3).

In our reading, the showcase example of faith is **Abraham**. Abraham is the archetype of those who live in the world as **pilgrims**. They live "in tents," trusting in the promise that ultimately they will reach "the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (verse 10).

There is a recognition that fulfillment of hope may be distant. "All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them.... If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country..." (verses 13-16).

This model of Christian life as a pilgrimage from a past degenerate world toward a future of God's making in God's time is steadily reinforced in the rest of this Letter. This model also played a long role in later Christian life, particularly famous in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678).

Luke 12:32-40

The requirement of justice and mercy was what led ultimately to the pronouncement of **God's coming judgment**. Jesus, following the older prophets and his mentor John the Baptist, repeated that announcement.

All Jesus' preaching assumed that his hearers stand immediately before that judgment. For some – the poor, the oppressed, the meek – the coming of God's judgment was good news: Relief at last! For others (most?), it was threatening news. Their whole past was about to catch up with them.

Our Gospel reading is about how people are supposed to live as they wait for the imminent judgment of God.

First, they are told to **give their goods to charity**. "Sell your possessions, and give alms" (verse 33, NRSV). This instruction is straightforward and unqualified. It is addressed, of course, to people who have just been told that theirs is the Kingdom of God: "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (verse 32).

Where one's treasurer is (verse 34) is the acid test for the faith of a disciple. Put in the cruder language of later times, "Follow the money," and you will know the secrets of the hearts, not only of

the pilgrims following their Lord but of the land-owners and merchants of the settled land (see the parable in 12:16-21).

The rest of the passage is not directly about possessions but about **watchfulness for the Son of Man's coming**. The transition is not strange, "for detachment from possessions and worries is an important part of preparation for the Lord's coming" (Robert Tannehill, *Luke*, Abingdon, 1996, p. 210).

The one who lives by faith is called (verses 35-40) not only to give up personal possessions, but also to **live on the edge**, with no long-range planning, no commitments that involve a long future. (No life insurance payments for the disciple.) Your Lord may return tonight. That is the stance of the Jesus follower. Live today as if it is your last day on earth. No homeowner knows when the burglar has scheduled a break-in (verse 39); no disciple knows when the Lord's return will be sounded by a knock on the door.

On Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, these instructions seem to be for the committed band that has known for a while that Jesus is the Anointed One – and perhaps also known that the journey leads to death. However, as part of the Gospel known to the churches of the second generation, they are also instructions for the band of witnesses who will eventually infiltrate lands far beyond Judea.

Those churches had gradually evolved a new way of life, a life lived day by day in expectation of being visited by their heavenly Lord. As more time passed, they realized that that Way of Life was, in fact, the "kingdom" which was being given to God's "little flock"!

THE WAY
THE TRUTH
THE LIFE } JESUS

I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE: NO MAN COMETH UNTO THE FATHER, BUT BY ME.
(THE BIBLE, GOSPEL OF JOHN, CHAPTER 14)



EWIND is the official publication of the American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago. Published each Monday, the deadline for submission of materials is Thursday of each week.

We welcome information on events that occur within ABCMC member churches. All articles/information for publication should be submitted electronically to abcmetrochicago@gmail.com.