

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.

A Word From The Acting Executive Minister



If you could use only one word to describe God, what would it be? What's the one song every child should learn? When we seek to understand God, we look at the overarching message of scripture, from beginning to end. The answer we come up with is "God is love."

God teaches the people to welcome the stranger and the foreigner – to treat them as citizens. God builds into the law

that the harvest at the edges of the fields should be reserved to provide food for the poor. God's prophets urge the people to care for the needy and to value the poor above gaining wealth and to practice honesty in all commercial dealings.

The vision of God's future is peace, with a wolf and a lamb and a lion and a kid able to lie down together – the most vulnerable not being at risk even when exposed to the most powerful. Because the powerful one lays down the power to harm.

And in the New Testament, Jesus comes, the clearest window for us onto who God is. He shared meals with all of the people that he wasn't *supposed* to share meals with – sinners, prostitutes, tax collectors. He touched all of the people that he wasn't supposed to touch – lepers, a bleeding woman, a dead body. He broke the Sabbath law when it kept him from showing mercy – to heal the man with the withered hand, to feed his disciples. He fed the hungry, he healed the sick.

Ultimately, he chose to die rather than to protect himself because of love for humanity, including the people who were nailing him to the cross and the people who were hanging there next to him as criminals.

And yet, in the midst of this grand message of welcome and love, I have heard people advocating a form of Christianity that includes hatred and division and exclusion.

Let us bring a different word. The message of Christ has nothing to do with hate and everything to do with welcome. The message of Christ has nothing to do with division and

everything to do with reconciliation. The message of Christ has nothing to do with exclusion and everything to do with inclusion and partnership.

In this world where so many people need to feel welcome, need to find reconciliation, need inclusion and partnership, I don't want to let the loudest voices speak for me and define Christianity as something far from my heart and my understanding of Christ.

Because I am a Christian, I believe that immigrants, legal or illegal, are God's children and deserve dignity and protection and rights. *Because* I am a Christian, I believe that refugees fleeing war should be given a safe space. *Because* I am a Christian, I believe that black lives matter and that we need to urge and work with our police departments to root out racism. I have heard the stories of my fellow pastors who are AfricanAmerican, about the young men in their churches who feel afraid to drive and the mothers who fear when they leave the house.

Because I am a Christian, I weep with the families of the police officers who were shot. *Because* I am a Christian, I believe that people who are gay and lesbian and transgender should be loved and treasured and accepted. *Because* I am a Christian, I believe that Muslim people are my brothers and sisters in Abraham.

This is what Jesus teaches me.

God's people love, even when it is hard, even when it means giving something up, even when it means rethinking our identity, God's people love. What does the hymn say? "And they'll know we are Christians by our love."

This past week, my son and I rode the Metra, and I noticed a yellow sign on the door that said, "Watch the Gap." As Christians, we need to be mindful of the gaps: gaps in truth, gaps in justice, gaps in programs for the homeless or the mentally ill. We need to be the ones who "watch the gap" and who seek to name it, first, and then close it up, in Jesus' name.

Reverend Sarah Jay

Acting Executive Minister

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

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.**

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.



Region AOL Address Being Discontinued

The ABCMC AOL email address is being discontinued effective August 31. If you are still using that address to send information, please change your records and forward all materials to admin@abcmc.org.

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

Watch for an announcement on the date
for this retreat coming in a future edition of EWIND.

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



American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago

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Announcement of Important Agenda Item for August 20 Family Council Meeting

Dear Friends,

At the August 20th Family Council Meeting at North Shore Baptist Church we will be called upon to make a crucial decision about the future lease arrangements for Camp Grow Ministries. Pastors and church representatives, please plan to attend or send a representative in your stead.

The attached document explains the question at hand in greater detail. Should you have any follow-up questions, please feel free to contact Acting Regional Minister, Rev. Sarah Jay at 773-634-1495, ext. 7, President, Rev. David Gregg at 773-761-7538, Treasurer, T.J. Litwiler at 708-442-3418, or any of the Associate Regional Ministers or members of the Family Cabinet for clarification.

Associate Regional Ministers

- Rev. Shakespeare Osorio, 773-634-1495, ext. 4
- Rev. Dr. Chakravarthy Zadda, 773-634-1495, ext. 5
- Rev. David Watkins, 773-634-1495, ext. 6

Family Cabinet Members

Rev. David Gregg, Rev. Carol Jamieson Brown, Rev. Zina Jacque, T.J. Litwiler, William Wallin, Judy Healy, Rev. David Sagar, Rev. David VanBrakle, Rev. Craig Jenkins, Rev. Joseph Coney, Carlos Rivera

Meeting Details

North Shore Baptist Church
5244 N Lakewood Ave
Chicago IL 60640

8:00 am, Prayer for All (Hosted by Sisters in Service)
8:30 am, Breakfast and Registration in Howel Hall
9:00 am, Family Council Meeting in Howel Hall

Note: *The document explaining the question at hand in greater detail was emailed and sent snail mail on last week.*

Taskforce on Race and Race-Based Violence Issues a Letter for Action

In less than a month, our nation has been riddled with acts of unspeakable violence. On June 12, 2016, forty-nine people were killed and fifty-three more wounded in an Orlando nightclub. More recently, two men – Alton Sterling of Baton Rouge, La., and Philando Castile of Falcon Heights, Minn. – were fatally shot and killed by police officers. These acts once again have opened historical wounds for many African Americans and sparked outrage in the streets reminiscent of that seen following the deaths of Trayvon Martin, Oscar Grant, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland and many others including the Emmanuel Nine. These sentiments of frustration and anger have been compounded by the senseless killings of five innocent police officers and the wounding of seven others in Dallas, Texas.

On July 6, 2016, ABCUSA President Rev. Judy Fackenthal, reminded the ABC family that “we are better together” through a video message. Sadly, these most recent acts of violence have left our nation deeply divided around issues of race and racial violence. There are those within our ABC family that have been deeply impacted by these events. Many are hurting, questioning and feeling powerless to address this behemoth that has plagued America since its inception.

Maintaining unity often requires difficult and courageous conversations. Thanks be to God for our General Secretary Emeritus, Dr. Roy A. Medley, for issuing the clarion call to the American Baptist Churches USA family to not retreat from these issues but rather face them head on. In his Biennial Address, June 27, 2015 – Dr. Medley stated, “Like any deadly virus, racism depends on a host in which it can live, grow and multiply. Racism depends on good people not speaking up. Racism depends on good people looking the other way. Racism depends on good people doing nothing. We can’t afford to be good people.” As one of his final acts before retiring, he appointed a taskforce to prayerfully work, discern God’s leading, and recommend ways the ABC family can begin to effectively confront the divisive issue of racism and race-based violence.

This issue seems so pervasive that we are left asking, “What can we do...How can we make a difference?” The American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) has provided for us an excellent example of how we can begin. In November 2015, they hosted “Space For Grace” in Los Angeles, Calif. Space for Grace sought to restore human connections in a world divided by race, religion, culture and class by intentionally inviting diverse voices to explore differing perspectives about contemporary issues affecting congregations and communities across the United States today.

The Taskforce on Race and Race-Based Violence encourages American Baptist local congregations, regional offices, national program boards, associate ministry organizations, individuals and collaborations to answer the call to prayer issued by the National Executive Council AND to actively commit to creating a “Space for Grace” in your context. We can do this by engaging in earnest reflection and extending intentional grace to others in these tension-filled moments. Remember: reconciliation for Christians is not optional, it is imperative: “be ye reconciled” (2 Corinthians 5:20). We invite you to consider the following:

- Consider your own personal (and corporate) explicit or complicit sin in matters of racism and race-based violence; appropriately confess privately and publicly pleading for forgiveness from God and others; and pray for freedom from the bondage of racism and a violence-saturated culture and for the individual and corporate empowerment toward the ministry of reconciliation.
- Create a private “peace-space” for people in your congregation/organization to reflect, meditate, and have heart-to-heart conversations.
- Create a public space, such as a prayer wall, for people to offer their heart’s cry.
- Plan a seminar designed to promote cultural and racial understanding.
- Invite local political leaders to share local issues of justice.
- Exchange pulpits with Pastors of another race.
- Sponsor a Racial Justice Sunday in partnership with local activist organizations.
- Select a book around race to study as a congregation.
- Host a Service of Reconciliation with churches of other races and ethnicities.
- Seek and trust God’s Spirit to guide you and your community toward creative and transforming inter-relational and systemic practices.

Understanding that we need each other and being committed to staying together are key components of facilitating hope and healing. ABHMS Executive Director Dr. Jeffrey Haggray underscores this notion in his statement to End Police Killings of Innocent Black Lives. He says, “Ultimately, we need respect for the dignity of all human life with a firm resolve as a nation to live together in peace as a beloved community.” LET AMERICAN BAPTISTS LEAD THE WAY!

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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



McCormick
McCORMICK
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY

Fall Baptist Polity Class at McCormick

**Baptist Movement:
Heritage, Values & Polity**
Instructor: **David Gregg**

September 6, 2016 – December 9, 2016
Mondays 6:00 PM– 9:00 PM

McCormick Theological Seminary
5460 S. University Ave
Chicago, IL 60615

To apply, contact:
admit@mccormick.edu | 773.947.6276

Taskforce on Race and Race-Based Violence Issues a Letter for Action

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This letter is only the beginning of the good (and difficult) work God has called us to do. We invite you to make use of the resources available on the ABHMS webpage <http://abhms.org/groundswell/racial-justice/> and to continue the conversation on their Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/groundswellforjustice/>. We need the encouragement of one another, the prayers of one another, and the love for one another to help generate a new life of unity, peace, and reconciliation.

Taskforce On Race and Race-Based Violence Members

Jacqueline A. Thompson, Co-chair, Assistant Pastor of Allen Temple Baptist Church, Oakland, Calif.

Larry Greenfield, Co-chair, former Regional Minister of ABC of Metro Chicago, Chicago, Ill.

Susan Gillies, ABCUSA Interim General Secretary, Valley Forge, Penn.

J. Alfred Smith, Sr., Advisor, Pastor Emeritus of Allen Temple Baptist Church, Oakland, Calif.

Linda Callaway, Member of First Baptist Church, Junction City, Kan.

Ernest Flores, Pastor of Second Baptist Church, Germantown, Pa.

Zina Jacque, Pastor of Community Church, Barrington, Ill.

G. Travis Norvell, Pastor of Judson Memorial Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minn.

Marie Onwubuariri, Regional Executive Minister of ABC of Wisconsin, Elm Grove, Wis.

Deborah Svec-Carstens, Member of Wellspring Community Church, Des Moines, Iowa

Justin Thornburgh, Pastor of Emerson Ave. Baptist Church, Indianapolis, Ind.

Michael Ware, Pastor of Webster Baptist Church, Webster, N.Y.

...me, so now I say to you
...ommandment I give unt
e love one another; as
...ou, that ye also love on
...shall all men know th

2016 RESOURCE INSTITUTE – Working With Clergy and Congregations: Resources for Mental Health Care and Recovery Support



The 2016 RESOURCE INSTITUTE – Working With Clergy and Congregations: Resources for Mental Health Care and Recovery Support will be held Thursday and Friday September 29 - 30, 2016, at Medinah Banquets, 550 Shriners Drive Addison, IL (20-30 minutes from O'Hare airport). This is a gathering for faith community and service leaders, congregational consultants, trainers and educators.

How can we build caring congregations for people who struggle with mental health? Those who are healing, family and faith leaders, pastoral counselors, chaplains, faith community nurses, and mental health providers are a rich resource for taking the initiative to build caring congregations.

We can tell our stories of illness and recovery and provide information about mental illness, brain disorders, trauma and emotional challenge. We can share what is effective and working in congregational mental health care. During this two-day institute we will work together to develop tools and resource notebooks to use in conversations, consultations and trainings with faith groups. You are invited to become part of a growing network of faith leaders, educators and consultants helping congregations to join the journey toward wholeness in body, mind, spirit and community.

REGISTRATION

The registration for the Institute is available by clicking the link for the Resource Institute on the Pathways to Promise website [www.pathways2promise.org] or by calling Dawn at 314.810.2234.

Lectionary Studies for Sunday, August 14, 2016 – Dr. Jay Wilcoxon

13th Sunday after Pentecost Year C

Isaiah 5:1-7; Psalm 80:1-2,9-19; Hebrews 11:29-12:2;
Luke 12:49-56.

God judges his own choice vineyard, and pilgrims struggle on their way to a better time.

Isaiah 5:1-7

The reading from the Prophets is the second passage from Isaiah of Jerusalem, a passage often called the **Song of the Vineyard**.

The drama of this song should be appreciated: it is an imitation of the complaint of **disappointed lover**. (In the lounges and inns of Jerusalem the "vineyard" would be understood as a sought-after woman.)

It begins, "Let me tell you a love story." My friend planted his vineyard, a long-term investment with lots of infrastructure – site selection, land-clearing, plantings that take years to yield well, a watchtower built in the center, and a wall and a hedge around the cultivated area. My friend provided everything a first-rate vineyard needs. But my friend was disappointed; the vineyard produced only sour grapes.

The singer appeals to his audience, the people of Jerusalem and Judah, to judge the friend's case. He has done everything; why these sour grapes?

The appeal is to the *justice of his further action*. It is only fair that he tear down the wall and the hedge and let the vineyard be overrun by animals and wanderers. He will no longer cultivate and prune it; it will go to waste. And he will – but here a new dimension is introduced – command the clouds that they no longer rain on this vineyard.

This commanding the clouds breaks the convention of the song. This is not an ordinary lover of vineyards; this is a God who shepherds the clouds of heaven.

And with that the allegory is dropped and the indictment declared directly.

The vineyard is the house of Israel, and the planting is the people of Judah. These should have produced the good grapes of Justice and Righteousness, but instead they produced Bloodshed and a Scream. The word translated "Bloodshed" occurs only here and is vague in meaning, but the "scream" or "outcry" is used to describe oppressed people, crying out to God and evoking a strong act of deliverance for them – Israelites in Egypt (Exodus 3:7 and 9) or Israelites oppressed by Philistines (I Samuel 9:16). Here it is God's people, the "poor," who scream because they are oppressed by their leaders.

The Lord enters into judgment
with the elders and princes of his people:
It is you who have devoured the vineyard;
the spoil of the poor is in your houses.
What do you mean by crushing my people,
by grinding the face of the poor?
says the Lord God of hosts. (Isaiah 3:14-15, NRSV)

This other indictment of the leaders is the plain prose meaning embodied in the poetry of the Song of the Vineyard.

Psalm 80:1-2, 8-19

The Psalm reading sustains **the image of the vine** planted in a vineyard by God. Here the vine symbolizes Israel brought out of Egypt and planted in a good land. However, in this song, the judgment that the prophetic song viewed as still in the future

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Lectionary Studies for Sunday, August 14, 2016

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has already been carried out. The vineyard has been overrun, the walls broken down, wild animals ravage it, the vine has been burnt and cut off (verses 12-16).

Given this judgment, the purpose of the psalm is to appeal for a restoration. The climax is a direct appeal for a strong king – “the one at [God’s] right hand” (verse 17, NRSV). Such an Anointed One will not turn back in defeat (verse 18).

All through the psalm a refrain has run like a drum beat, which in its fullest form is the concluding word of the communal lament: “Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; / let your face shine, that we may be saved” (verse 19).

Hebrews 11:19-12:2

In the Epistle reading we continue to hear the names of the “**cloud of witnesses**” who lived by faith down through the ages of Israel’s prophets, kings, and martyrs.

There are brief allusions to those who followed their faith through the Red Sea and then through all the ups and downs of Israel’s life in the promised land, down to the severe sufferings of the martyrs of the Maccabean times who were crushed by their opponents (the stories of II Maccabees 6-7 are alluded to in verses 36-37). By faith Jericho fell and judges and kings conquered Israel’s enemies, but “Rahab the prostitute” is also remembered as a heroine of faith, as are the widows whose sons were raised from the dead by Elijah and Elisha (verse 35). The pilgrimage of faith is peopled by many who were not native Israelites.

The writer of the Letter sees present-day Christians in continuity with these past witnesses, except now the goal they all lived and died for has come into view.

These past champions of faith did not receive their rewards in their own times, “since God had provided something better so that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect” (verse 40, NRSV). It is the appearing of that Anointed One at God’s right hand that inaugurates the fulfillment of the promises to the past worthies. Jesus became “the pioneer and perfecter of our faith” (12:2).

That does not mean the pilgrimage to the city of God is yet complete. **The trip continues**, but now all know where they came from and where they are going. The trials and challenges of the pilgrimage can be met with joy and renewed faith in the final rest, which is now promised to us as well as to all the worthy ancestors of yore.

Luke 12:49-56

Hardship and opposition **for the pilgrims** who follow Jesus is reinforced by the Gospel reading.

Here there are three statements by Jesus about his own mission, statements that implicate the disciples in the strife and violence that Jesus himself faces.

- I came to bring [literally “cast, hurl”] fire to the earth . . .
- I have a baptism [= violent death, in this case] with which to be baptized . . . Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather
- division [the Matthew parallel reads “a sword”]! (Verses 49-51, NRSV.)

The “division” to come is illustrated by **divided families**, father against son, etc. (Luke 12:52-53, a wordier version of the saying given in Matthew 10:35-36).

This picture of the families torn by conflict most likely comes from meditating on Micah’s prophecy of the last days before God’s final judgment. Micah 7:1-7 portrays a literally God-forsaken society in which everyone consumes those near them and no one can be trusted.

Put no trust in a friend,
have no confidence in a loved one;
guard the doors of your mouth
from her who lies in your embrace;
for the son treats the father with contempt,
the daughter rises up against her mother,
the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;
your enemies are members of your own household.
(Micah 7:5-6)

This is followed in Micah by Zion’s expression of confidence that her Lord will deliver her, and then by prophecies of return from exile and rehabilitation of the holy city.

The social chaos is followed by the urban utopia.

The **great dissolution of society** is the darkness before the dawn. It is standard procedure in apocalyptic writings that things must get worse before they can get better. In later traditions this time of severe trial was called “the birth-pangs of the Messiah.”

Thus Jesus’ announcement of coming conflict and enmity, right down to the family level, is part of the announcement that *things are going to get worse* before they get better. Jesus and the disciples are on their way to Jerusalem, a journey toward rejection, abuse, and death. In that view the pilgrim’s journey by faith threatens the security one feels “at home,” and is weighted with sadness for those who will be lost. However, the end they labor toward will be a transformed life and a new family of faith in that city whose architect and builder is God.



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.