

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.

Guest Column – Conjuring and Collaboration: Thriving without Being Trumped

By Rev. David Watkins,

Pastor of Greater Bethesda Missionary Baptist Church and Associate Regional Minister, ABCMC



Greetings sisters and brothers of ABCMC,

Donald J. Trump is the 45th president of the United States of America. This new reality, which was predicted by journalist H.L. Mechen and by the satirical comedy *The Simpsons*, is no laughing matter. This observation is not to cast aspersions on the electoral process, as much as it is an acknowledgement of the unsettling disequilibrium and unknown (and fearful) future many are facing under the Trump Administration. While this new reality is settling in, the Black Church Tradition offers to us an abiding witness and tremendous tools for thriving in uncertain times: conjuring and collaboration.

Conjuring is the ability to summon the collective imagination of people by employing “*various images, stories, and rituals in order to transform the reality in which they live.*”¹ Since Africans touched the American soil, we have used conjuring as a way of turning difficult realities into transformative experiences of the Divine. The Slave Narratives and Negro Spirituals provided the images and stories needed to buoy the faith and inspire faithful action of a people to fight systems and structures of slavery and Jim Crow. The book of Joshua and the image of a “*promised land flowing with milk and honey*” is an inspiring vision of abundance and stability in the “land of opportunity” for those still struggling in the wilderness wanderings of racism, poverty, and white privilege. The “*valley of dry bones*” is a conjure for the African American community: a powerful reminder that even in the midst of gun violence, New Jim Crow incarcerations, and death, God can resuscitate life and resurrect new hope and new possibilities. The Scriptures are replete with conjures – images, stories and rituals – that testify about a God who “*is a very present help in the time of trouble.*” Conjuring is a means of transforming present pain into transcendent purpose. Despite all outward signs to the contrary, conjuring is to believe, in the words of The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice.”

As a black man living in America, I’ve learned that the arc does not bend by itself. Additionally, I’ve discovered, the work of bending the arc towards justice is not God’s alone to bend. This is our work too. Through conjuring, God renews our sense of identity and reminds us of God’s vision – the kingdom of God on earth. Through conjuring, God empowers us to deeply engage this new, unsettling reality of our times with hope and “faithful flexibility,” because we are called to effectively meet the challenges of today and make the kingdom of God on earth a reality. To accomplish this transcendent purpose, God gives us to each other as a gift through collaboration.

The African American Collaborative is a witness to the power of conjuring and collaboration. Together, we are committed to nurturing, developing, and supporting our collective leadership for a broader and deeper impact in our neighborhoods. Together, we experience the power of collective visioning for strengthening our congregations. Moreover, through intentional collaboration, we gain new leadership skills and “faithful flexibility.” Thanks to the generosity of the American Baptist Foundation / The Virginia and Gordon Palmer, Jr. Trust Grant Program and the leadership of Dr. Barbara O. Ragland, our work of conjuring and collaborating is being deepened. Through the Faith-Based Strategies for Congregational Agility™ Pilot Project, we are: increas-

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ing capacity within the congregation to sustain the vision; refining ministries for maximum impact in mission-consistent ways; and fostering the “faithful flexibility” to adapt and thrive in uncertain times. As we re-imagine together, retell stories together, and recreate rituals and practices that will support and strengthen us for such a time as this, we hope to offer ourselves and our work within the collaborative as resources to the wider ABCMC family.

Change in the White House has occurred. A new reality is setting in. As President Trump and the policies of his administration threaten to reverse course on equality and justice, the call of God on the church has not been revoked or changed. Through conjuring and collaboration, we can manifest God’s vision for the world knowing that our work will not just “move the needle” of progress but bend the arc of the moral universe towards justice until “a new heaven and a new earth” appears.

¹ Homer Ashby, Jr., *Our Home is Over Jordan: A Black Pastoral Theology* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2003), 19.

Preaching Resources

Text Week

<http://www.textweek.com/>

Working Preacher

(includes resources in Spanish)

<http://www.workingpreacher.org/>

Worshiping with Children

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.com/2016/08/year-c-proper-22-27th-sunday-in.html>

The African American Lectionary

<http://theafricanamericanlectionary.org>

Lectionary Studies By Dr. Jay Wilcoxon

<http://abcmc.org>

International Sunday School Lessons

<http://www.standardlesson.com>

SAVE THESE DATES . . .

ABCMC UPCOMING REGION MEETINGS

Please mark
these new dates
in your calendar.

JANUARY CABINET MEETING

Saturday, January 28, 2017

Irving Park Baptist Church • 4401 West Irving Park Rd.

FEBRUARY COUNCIL MEETING

Saturday, February 18, 2017

First Baptist Church of Park Forest • 80 North Orchard Dr.

A Report from Reverend Wesley Sun, our Board of General Ministries Representative

Dear friends,

I regret that I have been MIA from the region this past year! The demands of my rigorous travel schedule have prevented me from attending most of the Family Council meetings in 2016 and I have truly missed the collegiality and fellowship of the Metro Chicago region! Yet despite my apparent absence in Chicagoland, I have remained present and active representing our region to the Board of General Ministries. What follows is my BGM Annual Report for 2016. It is my goal in this report to offer what I see as the significant work and direction of the Board and our denomination this past year. For anyone interested in the specific motions, actions, and financial reports from the BGM, I would be happy to supply any minutes and documents that would be helpful.

In June 2016, the BGM was blessed to have Zina Jacque elected to the Board as a General Director, and also serve on the Executive Committee (class of 2019). Also in June, we engaged in a **Board Retreat** at the urging of the Beloved Community Action Group, of which I provide some leadership. This Retreat was planned and executed in many ways as a response to the debacle surrounding our attempts at hiring a new General Secretary the prior year, the details of which I covered in my last annual report. This retreat was a time to express grief, restore some trust and goodwill among Board members, as well as to envision and commit to new ways of engaging difficult conversations in the years ahead. It was, in my estimation, a very good and responsible use of our time and resources. The search for a new General Secretary has since continued, and the BGM is hopeful to announce a new General Secretary at the 2017 Biennial Mission Summit, June 30-July 2 in Portland.

Our past President Don Ng has been helpful in observing that the BGM, operating under the “new” ABCUSA Bylaws and Standing Rules, has now experienced two Biennial Mission Summits without the opportunity for delegates to voice Public Witness Statements, as was formerly provided by the Statements of Concern process under the old Bylaws. In response to this need for further conversation, Don proposed a new **Baptist Talk Taskforce**, charged with the task of finding new ways for American Baptists to engage in honest conversation, respectful disagreement, and productive argument without dividing our denomination in destructive ways. Both myself and Zina have been active in the planning and executing of this new “Baptist Talk,” and we will be facilitating a pilot Baptist Talk program at the 2017 Mission Summit.

In our November 2016 meeting in Valley Forge, our interim General Secretary Susan Gillies and our current Board President Judy Fackenthal led us on a tour of the Mission Center. And while the details of its future are highly

confidential, there has been an open question for some time as to what proper stewardship of the “holy donut” entails, and the exploration of various options for the building continues. Also at this meeting, the **Young Adult Caucus** was granted national recognition, elevating its reach and resources beyond its former standing as a caucus of the Board. This was proposed by Ashley Whitaker, who now chairs the YAC and who also resigned her position on the BGM due to her appointment at Hyde Park Union Church (welcome, Ashley!). The Board’s recognition of the Young Adult Caucus marks the second non-ethnic caucus of our denomination, following the institution of the Women’s Caucus in 2014.

I would like to conclude by remarking on what I see as the overall direction of the BGM and our denomination moving forward. With the work of the Board Retreat underway, the re-institution of tough Baptist Talk immanent, and the appointment of a new General Secretary on the horizon, I believe ABCUSA is once again poised to engage publicly the complex and challenging issues surrounding race, identity, and sexuality. The disintegration of the first General Secretary search was due to our inability to discuss openly and honestly the dynamics (and politics) of race and gender, but we have committed to do the hard work of further conversation. I’ve also mentioned that the appointment of non-ethnic caucuses paves the way for a LGBTQ caucus, and it may be that in the very near future such a caucus ought to be formed, in order to give voice and legitimacy to those in our family so often ignored and persecuted. Perhaps the Baptist-Muslim dialogues, which had previously offered so much in the way of mutual learning and friendship, ought to resume in new and robust ways at a time when Islamophobia continues to persist in the public discourse.

All of this, combined with the civil unrest and nationwide uncertainty surrounding our new US president, calls us into a time in which religious leadership must model compassion, offer strength, and exhibit courage in the face of so much fear, violence, and misunderstanding in our world. It is my prayer that the American Baptist churches are not absent from this public conversation, and it is my sincere hope that our past negligence will be transformed (by the Spirit) into an opportunity for prophetic witness.

I have always been proud to represent Metro Chicago on the Board of General Ministries, and strive to serve in ways that are true to our shared identities in this region. I would welcome further questions, comments, and concerns when we gather together on February 18 in Park Forest - I will be there!

Peace.

- Wesley Sun

With Sympathy . . .

We are saddened to learn of the unexpected death of

MR. ARTHUR MYREN

The husband of our former
Executive Minister, Millie Myren.

Art died late Tuesday, January 17,
after suffering a stroke.

A Memorial Service will be held on
Saturday, February 4, at 1:00 PM
MORGAN PARK BAPTIST CHURCH
11024 South Bell Avenue
Chicago, IL 60643

Please hold Millie and the family in prayer.

Cards and notes may be sent to Millie at:
10713 S. Keeler Avenue • Oak Lawn, IL 60453

ABC METRO CHICAGO

Reverend Carol McVetty
Reverend Douglas Harris
Interim Executive Ministers

182nd Annual Meeting American Baptist Churches of Metropolitan Chicago Planning Team

We would love your help making this year's
Annual Meeting a great success!

We have two areas of need:

- 1) Planning Team Members with a
variety of perspectives
- 2) Hospitality Team Members who can help with
registration and welcome on May 20

If you are able to help in either of these areas,
please call or email Rev. Sarah Jay
773.634.1495, ext. 7
or revjay@abcmc.org.



2017 Biennial Mission Summit: Register your church as a Sponsor today!

The Biennial Mission Summit is just over six months away! For the June 30-July 2, 2017 event in Portland, Oregon, we are again inviting churches to register as Sponsors. When a church is registered as a Sponsor, individuals from the church are able to attend at a discounted rate, saving at least \$100 off the regular rate to register for the Biennial Mission Summit. The church will also be listed on the event website at www.americanbaptists2017.com and in the event program book. Sponsoring churches will help to support the Biennial Mission Summit and make it a success.

More information, including pricing and savings, can be found [here](#). Don't miss the deadline for Church Sponsorship: March 15, 2017!

*Members of sponsoring churches can individually register at a discounted rate. If a church is not a Sponsor, church members will pay a higher individual registration fee for the event. Individual registration opened in January 2017.

Church Sponsorship for the 2017 Biennial Mission Summit will be based on average worship attendance for each church, as follows:

Less than 100 members - \$250	101-200 members - \$415
201-500 members - \$580	More than 500 - \$745

[Click here](#) to learn more and to register as a Church Sponsor today!



The American Baptist Home Mission Societies is hiring!

We seek an Associate Director for Chaplaincy and Specialized Ministries...could it be you?

The *Associate Director for Chaplaincy & Specialized Ministries* is a key member of the Chaplaincy & Specialized Ministries team. The mission of the American Baptist Chaplaincy & Specialized Ministries unit is to connect partners to cultivate and equip chaplains, pastoral counselors, campus ministers and life coaches to heal and transform communities. Collaborating toward this goal, the *Associate Director* provides ministry and pastoral care, guidance, resources and support to those seeking ecclesiastical endorsement as well as to American Baptist chaplains, pastoral counselors and others in specialized ministry settings. The *Associate Director* also serves as the Associate Ecclesiastical Endorser.

The *Associate Director* reports to the Director of Chaplaincy/Ecclesiastical Endorser and is a fulltime exempt position based in our King of Prussia, Pa. offices. This position is open immediately with relocation assistance available.

Core Responsibilities While not exhaustive, these represent some of the essential responsibilities of the *Associate Director for Chaplaincy & Specialized Ministries*:

- ☐ Support and advance the mission and ministry of ABHMS
- ☐ Provide ministry, pastoral care, leadership and support to American Baptists serving in specialized ministry settings.
- ☐ Enhance the ministry of American Baptists in specialized ministries thru encouragement, communication and mentorship.
- ☐ Integrate American Baptist Chaplaincy and Specialized Ministries in the mission and ministry of ABHMS and denomination.
- ☐ Collaborate with ABHMS partners and denominational structures – local, regional and national – on behalf of ABHMS/American Baptist Chaplaincy and Specialized Ministries.
- ☐ As the Associate Ecclesiastical Endorser, assist with the work of the Endorsement Council and the endorsement process while maintaining endorsement standards and trends.
- ☐ Represent ABHMS/ABCUSA in key professional chaplaincy/pastoral care organizations as assigned by the Ecclesiastical Endorser
- ☐ Facilitate recruitment of American Baptists discerning a call to chaplaincy and specialized ministry.
- ☐ Communicate ABHMS mission and vision to all, particularly those serving in specialized settings.
- ☐ Coordinate and mobilize ABHMS ministries and resources as needed to support ministries in chaplaincy and specialized settings.
- ☐ Travel assignments, approx. 20%.
- ☐ Perform other duties as assigned.