



THE MESSAGE BOARD
A Newsletter from
A. Roy Medley, General Secretary



Personal Reflections

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A Biblical Perspective: Current Financial Crisis

Considering our current financial crisis, Walter Rauschenbusch would be in his element. Rauschenbusch was an American Baptist pastor/theologian who, at the turn of the last century, excoriated the greed of the titans of industry. Their unfettered greed put children in dark factories for 12-hour shifts; kept the great mass of working people underpaid, underfed and ill-housed; and piled up unimaginable riches for themselves. While some dismissed Rauschenbusch's deeply biblical criticism of the economics of his day as outside the pale of theology, his message would probably draw a lot of "amens" today.

Some would describe the present U.S. system as rich man's capitalism and poor man's socialism: gain is privatized, pain is socialized, so that the rich play and the poor pay. Over the past several years the income gap has consistently widened between the richest Americans and the average worker. At the same time, health care has become unaffordable by not just the poorest (an ethical issue in itself), but also by the average American family. A friend's son recently wrote an article about million dollar "affordable" homes in Vail.

Harnessing self-interest and greed to serve as the engine of economics has always been a tricky task. It's like harnessing nuclear energy. If self-interest isn't transformed into something nobler, and to the contrary if it is fed, you wind up with an economic Chernobyl. By dismantling the economic safeguards imposed after the Great Depression in the name of unfettering the economy, leaders placed their bets on Adam Smith rather than the prophets.

Michael Riley, American Baptist pastor, writes for the Asbury Park (N.J.) *Press*. In a recent column he notes: "It is easy to dump on people living paycheck to paycheck. I understand the desire of folks of modest means to own a house, to want it so badly—not out of envy or greed, but out of a sense that the American Dream is within reach. You can understand how they wanted it so much that they believed the guy with the keys in his hand and jumped at the chance."

The titans of finance who blindly pursued profit at any cost and at any risk have replaced the American dream with an American nightmare for thousands. The mantra that a corporation's only duty is to the stockholders of the company has not only been shown to be morally bankrupt, but financially bankrupt as well. Scripture does not allow for such a narrow calculus of responsibility. Jesus and the prophets demand that we care for the neighbor, the poor, the oppressed, and the vulnerable. The foolishness and folly of acting otherwise has been proven to us yet again.

Notable Events on Roy's Calendar

- **10/5/2008 & 10/12/2008**
Preaching in Congregations, Shinglehouse, PA & Parkesburg, PA
- **10/14/2008 – 10/15/2008**
Speak Until Justice Wakes – J. Alfred Smith Institute for Prophetic Justice, Oakland, CA
- **10/16/2008 – 10/19/2008**
Orientation to American Baptist Life (for seminarians and pastors new to ABCUSA life), Green Lake, WI
- **10/21/2008 – 10/22/2008**
Gathering of American Baptist Asian Pastors, Dallas, TX
- **10/31/2008 – 11/1/2008**
Annual Meeting of American Baptist Churches of Oregon, Cottage Grove, OR

Prayer Matters

- For those who have lost their jobs and/or homes
- For communities that have become economically decimated
- For churches that will struggle with increased heating costs
- For all who are at the "end of their rope" that they might find hope and support in the gospel and the church
- For Regional staff as they work with local churches during this time of economic turbulence
- For the seminarians, clergy and presenters attending the Orientation to ABC Life conference

American Baptists Serving as the Hands and Feet of Christ

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