



The Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists

# Associational

An Ongoing eNewsletter from the Executive Director

Issue 44 ~ June 2008

## From the Executive Director

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

On May 4, 2008, Dr. Roy Medley, the General Secretary of the American Baptist Churches USA, visited my home congregation, First Baptist Church, Madison, WI (W&A). Our pastor, Rev. Mark Clinger, wrote the following reflection on Roy's visit:

"Dear Friends:

Yesterday's visit by the General Secretary of the American Baptist Churches, the Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley, was a very positive, inspiring and reassuring experience. In his sermon, Dr. Medley encouraged us to serve as the hands and feet of Christ, by strengthening our Christian practices of gratitude, generosity, and engagement in the wider world. He called us to live in a 'new ecology of relationships' begun by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

"During the luncheon following worship, Dr. Medley spoke to a number of issues within our denomination, beginning with the 'recent unpleasantness' on matters surrounding the issue of sexual orientation. He upheld the twin historic Baptist emphases upon the 'authority of scripture' as well as the final role of the 'local congregation' in scripture's interpretation. He recognized that standing for these principles cost the denomination the loss of one region but added that we could not surrender these convictions of conscience. Dr. Medley's assertion of the primacy of these principles in the ongoing life of our denomination was deeply reassuring.

"Dr. Medley went on to share some other observations about our life together. He spoke of the 'catholicity' of the American Baptist family, recognizing we are the broadest and most inclusive band of Baptists in the country, spanning a greater diversity of theological belief, race and culture than any other national gathering of Baptists. He encouraged us to reclaim the joy of living together, out of this diversity, as we simply share in the work of God. He also celebrated the many relationships that are growing between us and other Baptists as seen in both the Alliance of Baptists and the New Baptist Covenant. He added, 'Excluding different views is not how we conduct our life.'

"Finally, I was keenly impressed by the leadership and initiative Dr. Medley is taking in building an 'ecology of relationship' between our denomination and the Islamic Society of America. He is particularly emphasizing dialogue on how we can work together to insure peace and dignity for all, a prophetic stance in this time of growing anti-Islamic prejudice.

"In all, I found in Dr. Medley, as I so often do, a genuine Christian spirit deeply committed to the principles of conscience that ground our denomination in the best of times. His visit, his presence, and his honest addressing of the issues at hand were deeply reassuring to me and should serve to strengthen our continuing relationship with our American Baptist family."

Lovingly,  
Ken Pennings  
608-255-2155  
[ken@wabaptists.org](mailto:ken@wabaptists.org)

## INSIDE

- **From the Executive Director** – pg 1
- **New W&A Congregations** – pg 2
- **California Court Affirms Same-Sex Marriage Rights** – pg 2
- **Call for DC Metro Participants** – pg 3
- **Bits 'n' Bites** – pg 3
- **Upcoming Events** – pg 4

## About Associational

Associational is published monthly by the Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists, an organization of churches, groups and individuals that advocate for the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons with Baptist churches.

© 2008, The Association of  
Welcoming & Affirming Baptists,  
All rights reserved

**Barbara Hulsing, Editor**

608-255-2155, [mail@wabaptists.org](mailto:mail@wabaptists.org)  
PO Box 259257, Madison, WI 53725

## New W&A Congregations

A warm welcome to three new member congregations (and four new pastors):

- **Cumberland First Baptist Church**  
(ABC, Alliance)  
116 S. Muessing Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46229  
317-894-2645  
Fax: 317-894-2645  
[www.cumberlandfbc.org](http://www.cumberlandfbc.org)  
Rev. T. Wyatt Watkins  
Rev. Kevin D. Rose
  - **Fairview Community Church**  
(UCC, ABC, Evergreen Assoc.)  
2525 Fairview Road, Costa Mesa, CA 92626  
714-545-4610  
Fax: 714-545-6416  
[www.ocfairviewchurch.org](http://www.ocfairviewchurch.org)  
Rev. Sarah Halverson
  - **Federated Church of Grand Forks**  
(ABC, UCC)  
2122 17th Avenue South  
Grand Forks, ND 58201  
701-775-9089  
[www.uccwebsites.net/federatedchurchgrandforksnd.html](http://www.uccwebsites.net/federatedchurchgrandforksnd.html)  
Rev. Keith A. Mills
- 

## California Supreme Court Affirms Same-Sex Marriage

(NY Times, [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/16/us/15cnd-marriage.html?\\_r=1&hp&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/16/us/15cnd-marriage.html?_r=1&hp&oref=slogin))

The California Supreme Court, striking down two state laws that had limited marriages to unions between a man and a woman, ruled on May 15th that same-sex couples have a constitutional right to marry.

The court's 4-to-3 decision, drawing on a ruling six decades ago that struck down the state's ban on interracial marriage, would make [California](#) only the second state, after Massachusetts, to allow same-sex marriages.

The decision, which becomes effective in 30 days unless the court grants a stay, was greeted with celebrations at San Francisco City Hall, where thousands of same-sex marriages were thrown out by the courts four years ago. It was denounced by religious and conservative groups, who pledged to support an initiative proposed for the November ballot that would amend California's constitution to ban same-sex marriages and overturn the decision.

Same-sex marriage has been a highly contentious issue in past presidential and Congressional elections, but it was not immediately clear what role the ruling would play in this year's elections. The Democratic and Republican candidates for president have all said that they believe marriage should be between a man and a woman, but Republicans could use a surge in same-sex marriages in the country's most populous state to invigorate their conservative voters.

Given the historic, cultural, symbolic and constitutional significance of marriage, Chief Justice Ronald M. George wrote for the majority, the state cannot limit its availability to opposite-sex couples. "In view of the substance and significance of the fundamental constitutional right to form a family relationship," he wrote, "the California Constitution properly must be interpreted to guarantee this basic civil right to all Californians, whether gay or heterosexual, and to same-sex couples as well as to opposite-sex couples."

Supporters of gay marriage said the ruling was a milestone. “This decision will give Americans the lived experience that ending exclusion from marriage helps families and harms no one,” said Evan Wolfson, executive director of Freedom to Marry, who noted that same-sex marriages are now legal in South Africa, Canada, Spain, Belgium and the Netherlands. But opponents said they expected the proposed ballot initiative, which has been submitted to state election officials with more than one million signatures, to pass in November.

“The court was wrong from top to bottom on this one,” said Maggie Gallagher, president of the National Organization for Marriage. “The court brushed aside the entire history and meaning of marriage in our tradition.”

There are about 110,000 same-sex couples in California, according to census data, and the state has a strong domestic partnership law giving couples who register nearly all of the benefits and burdens of heterosexual marriage. But the majority of the justices said that is not enough. The court left open the possibility that the Legislature could use a term other than “marriage” to denote state-sanctioned unions so long as that term was used across the board — for both opposite-sex and same-sex couples.

The state’s ban on same-sex marriage was based on a law enacted by the legislature in 1977 and a statewide initiative approved by the voters in 2000, both defining marriage as limited to unions between a man and a woman. The question before the court was whether those laws violated provisions of the state Constitution protecting equality and fundamental rights. Mathew D. Staver, a lawyer with Liberty Counsel, a public interest firm that defends traditional marriage, said it would ask the court to stay its decision until the election in November, meaning that Thursday’s decision could be overturned before it becomes effective. “It would only be logical” for the court to grant a stay, Mr. Staver said, given the confusion that would arise if same-sex marriages were available for only a few months.

Governor [Arnold Schwarzenegger](#), a Republican, said in a statement that he respected the court’s ruling and did not support a constitutional amendment to overturn it.

---

## Call for Metro D.C. Participants

By Jill McCrory

This year Metro DC has five Baptist Churches that will walk together as a contingent in the Capital Pride parade in Washington, D.C. and be at the festival the next day offering communion. If you are in the area and would like more information or would like to participate, please respond directly to me at [jmccrory@leadership outfitters.com](mailto:jmccrory@leadership outfitters.com) These are exciting times in the Metro DC area and, if you are here, we would love to include you.

---

## Bits ‘n’ Bites

- The **Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA) passed through the New York State Assembly Codes Committee** by a bipartisan vote of 16-2. This now means that the only step left for GENDA in the Assembly is a floor vote. GENDA passed the Assembly's Government Operations Committee on April 30 and this vote increases the momentum. While there is still more work to do to make sure the state gets a vote on GENDA this year, advocates are very excited about this action and GENDA's chances for being considered for the very first time by the full Assembly.
- The country of Columbia’s Constitutional Court has ruled that the government must extend pension and health benefits to same-sex partners. Columbia’s Congress is considering legislation that would give same-sex couples most of the same rights as married couples, which President Alvaro Uribe has said he would sign into law, despite opposition from the Catholic Church.
- Mariela Castro, daughter of Raul Castro, has chaired a conference of Cuban government officials and local LGBT activists at the first Cuban International Day Against Homophobia, held on May 17. Cuba’s parliament is currently studying proposals to legalize same-sex unions.

- The Time of India has reported that Sunil Babu Pant, the 35-year-old founder of the Blue Diamond Society, one of the best-known LGBT rights groups in South Asia, has been nominated by his political party as the first gay representative to the Nepal National Assembly.
  - The conservative Jewish Theological Seminary, located in New York City, has dropped its ban on admitting, teaching, and ordaining openly gay students seeking to become rabbis or cantors, after the Rabbinical Assembly's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards authorized the ordination of gays and lesbians.
  - Gay Methodists protest rejection by church. Protestors draped in black placed their bodies on the sidewalk outside the convention center in Fort Worth, Texas, where United Methodists had passed anti-gay resolutions at the General Conference the day before. Delegates had to walk around or over the bodies. Inside, during its Wednesday morning session, it was not business as usual as gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people of faith, in a negotiated interruption of the proceedings, processed into the auditorium draped in black to represent their grief and the brokenness of the church in response to the church's refusal to recognize gay people as anything but "incompatible with Christian teaching." **For more "Bits 'n' Bites like this one, log onto [www.welcomingresources.org](http://www.welcomingresources.org). This web site contains a wealth of information regarding LGBT life and actions.**
- 

## Upcoming Events

### AWAB Affiliate Plans & Promotes Events

Take a look at what one of AWAB's affiliates is up to! For more information, contact AWAB Massachusetts Affiliate Coordinator, Bruce Baker ([bpsenke@aol.com](mailto:bpsenke@aol.com)).

**June 12 & 13: The Gay Men's Chorus performs.** Ross Dekle is a member of the Gay Men's Chorus. Arrangements can be made for a group to meet and attend together.

**June 14: AWAB Massachusetts will once again host a booth at Boston's Gay Pride.** However, due to many members being actively involved with other groups, AWAB will not march as a group in the parade. Volunteers are needed to work the booth. There is also an Inter-faith service prior to the start of the parade.

**June 21: Barbecue.** 5:00–9:00 p.m., at the home of Clif Holbrook, 21 Morley Street, Needham MA. For directions or additional info, email Bruce Baker at [bpsenke@aol.com](mailto:bpsenke@aol.com).

\*\*\*\*\*

### The Way that Leads to Peace

**July 14-19, 2008, John Abbott College (Saint-Anne-de-Bellevue, Quebec, Canada)**

You are invited to gather this summer for a conference sponsored by the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America. The focus will be what each of us can do in our own personal lives to create peace -- starting with peace within ourselves and circling out to our ways of being in our families, churches, neighborhoods . . . and the world.

Monday night, July 14, keynote address by Jim Loney.

Jim is a member of Christian Peacemaker Teams who, along with three others, was held hostage in Iraq for months in 2005-2006. His peaceful witness before, during, and after his capture has received worldwide attention and opened many hearts to the idea of living life in a peace-filled way, even in the midst of immense violence.

Mornings (Tuesday through Friday) will include music, morning prayer, Bible Study, and workshops. Lawrence Martin will begin our day with prayer. Wapistan (Lawrence) is a member of the Cree First Nation from Moose Factory Reserve, located on James Bay in Ontario. Wapistan is a story-teller, an environmentalist, a vocalist and drummer, and a Juno award winning musician -- he won the very first Canadian Aboriginal Juno Award. He plays many instruments in a style that is a blend of indigenous, country, and folk music.

Bible Study will be led by Glen Stassen, Lewis Smedes Professor of Christian Ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary. Focusing on the practices of peace outlined in his book *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War*, Glen will explore both international and personal implications for his practical research into the actions that truly move us toward peace.

Workshops will cover a wide variety of topics -- everything from creating peace within your marriage to supporting the just recovery of New Orleans or addressing lasting issues of injustice toward First Nations people and communities. Workshop leaders who are artists, dramatists, human rights workers, environmentalists, social justice trainers, parents, teachers, pastors, and more will share their wisdom and gather ours.

Children and youth will spend the mornings in their own programs designed to join them into a transformative community and offer them real-life skills for creating peace. Youth work veterans Mary Meadows and Julie Reisinger will coordinate the youth morning sessions. Hector Aristizabal -- artist, human rights worker, therapist, and actor -- will serve as a special resource leader with the youth program, using innovative theatrical techniques to teach conflict transcendence and life affirming group processes. Long-time children's leader Elaine Pennington, will once again coordinate the morning program for children, drawing on various conference leaders to share their skills of art, drama, story-telling, music, conflict transformation and more to help our children develop as peacemakers.

A special afternoon workshop series called "Transforming Conflict: Transformed by Conflict" led by Dwight Lundgren will be offered for adult participants desiring intensive training. Other afternoon offerings will include family-friendly field trips in the Montreal area, intergenerational peacemaking activities, and a peace and justice film series.

Worship together will take place each evening. Preachers will include Mary Hammond of Oberlin, Ohio, USA, and Lee McKenna of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Nightly worship will include music, dance, drama, and sermons examining the life of peace from the inside out. After hours events will include plays, concerts, and open mike events in which all attendees are invited to share their talents. Hector Aristizabal will present two one-man plays "Nightwind" and "IN-TE-A-RRO-R-GATOR." Lawrence Martin will be in concert.

For more information, contact Rev. LeDayne McLeese Polaski, Program Coordinator  
Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America  
4800 Wedgewood Drive  
Charlotte, NC 28210  
phone: (704)521-6051 fax: (704)521-6053  
[ledayne@bpfna.org](mailto:ledayne@bpfna.org)  
[www.bpfna.org](http://www.bpfna.org)

\*\*\*\*\*

## **UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns Fellowship Conference**

**June 25-29, 2008 – Dallas, TX**

The United Church of Christ Coalition for LGBT Concerns will be holding its annual Fellowship Conference in Dallas, TX. Among the scheduled speakers and preachers will be Bishop Yvette Flunder, Pastor of City of Refuge UCC, and Rev. Linda Jaramillo, Executive Minister of Justice and Witness Ministries for the UCC. Visit [www.uccoalition.org](http://www.uccoalition.org) for more information.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **NEXUS MYSTERIORUM: God/Church/Bible & Homosexuality**

**July 7-17, 2008 - Edgewood College, Madison, WI**

Summer seminar with internationally renowned gay theologian, Dr. James Alison - on campus housing available. For information, <http://religst.edgewood.edu/Alison%20Summer%20Course/AlisonSummerCourse.htm>.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Important Training – Date Changed!**

***CALLING ALL WELCOMING & AFFIRMING BAPTISTS TO ATTEND IMPORTANT TRAINING!***

***September 19-21, 2008 - Wake Forest Divinity School, Winston-Salem, NC***

Along with its ecumenical partners, The Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists has hired Rev. Dr. Anita Bradshaw to train our constituents to become ambassadors of the Gospel of Inclusion right where we live! Our hope is that we will take what we've learned at the training in Winston-Salem, return to our home towns, and begin to work in teams to increase the number of Welcoming & Affirming Congregations in our own areas. Shortly, you'll be able to register for the first training of our National Field Organizing Project at <http://welcomingresources.org>. Contact Anita L. Bradshaw for more information: [nfo@welcomingresources.org](mailto:nfo@welcomingresources.org), 612-791-821.

---

Associational is a periodic e-newsletter of the Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists, a network of 71 churches and hundreds of individuals who have joined together to advocate for the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons within Baptist communities of faith. Please forward this e-newsletter to interested friends. Copy relevant information into your organization's bulletin and newsletter. To subscribe, send an e-mail to [subscribe@wabaptists.org](mailto:subscribe@wabaptists.org) with SUBSCRIBE in the subject line. To be removed from this list, send an e-mail to [unsubscribe@wabaptists.org](mailto:unsubscribe@wabaptists.org) with REMOVE in the subject line. To read back issues of Associational, go to: [www.wabaptists.org/associational.htm](http://www.wabaptists.org/associational.htm).

To learn more about the Association, go to: [www.wabaptists.org](http://www.wabaptists.org)