



The Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists

Associational

The Ongoing Monthly eNewsletter

Issue 50 ~ December 2008 ~ Christmas

From the Director of Community Outreach

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Last December 9th, I had the privilege of attending a Sunday morning worship service at AWAB member church, First Baptist Church, Beverly, MA. It was the highlight of my Advent/Christmas season. Dr. Esther Chang Redington's masterful playing of the organ lifted me into the third heaven! Rev. Beth Loughhead's poignant and powerful homily on the love of God revealed in and through the weakness of human flesh and human suffering helped me let go of some resentment I was carrying and trust in God's wisdom. The choir's magnificent rendition of "O Holy Night" moved and challenged me greatly, especially the liberation-theology of verse three:

Truly He taught us to love one another,
His law is love and His gospel is peace.
Chains he shall break, for the slave is our brother.
And in his name all oppression shall cease.
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we,
With all our hearts we praise His holy name.
Christ is the Lord! Then ever, ever praise we,
His power and glory ever more proclaim!
His power and glory ever more proclaim!

I rejoice in the ministries of AWAB congregations like FBC, Beverly, MA, social justice churches with a rich history of breaking the chains of poverty, hunger, homelessness, illiteracy, racism, and heterosexism -- churches which are ending all oppression and setting people free in the powerful name of Jesus! This advent and Christmas, may we ourselves experience total freedom from all that oppresses and enslaves through the power of love! May we work to free others from all that oppresses and enslaves through the power of love!

Have a blessed advent and Christmas,

Rev. Kenneth L. Pennings
Director of Community Outreach

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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.

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Global Baptist Peace Conference

In February, 2009, some 300 Baptist leaders and activists from every continent will gather in Rome, Italy, for the Global Baptist Peace Conference. Four times in the last 20 years this international network of Baptist-flavored folk have met to share stories, receive practical training and clarify theological vision for the things that make for peace—1988 in Sweden, 1992 in Nicaragua, 1996 in Thailand and 2000 in Australia, each hosted by regional Baptist conventions and unions. In 2009, the Italian Baptist Union is the host body. For registration either go to www.globalbaptistpeace.org or send an e-mail to Daniel Buttry, dbuttry@comcast.net.

Peggy Campolo Speaks Out

The Associated Baptist Press recently carried an article, written by Peggy Campolo and entitled *Gay Christians Can't Wait Any Longer*. In her commentary, Peggy states, "I am a committed Baptist who has worked within the church of Jesus Christ for more than 20 years to foster the understanding and acceptance of my gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender sisters and brothers - I'll just say "gay" for shorthand. I can personally testify to the anguish gay people feel when rejected by church and family because of who they are. I have also witnessed the joy of the many gay people I know who have found church homes where they are loved and accepted." The link to read the entire article is:

http://www.abpnews.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3469&Itemid=9

Out for Equality Celebrates Inauguration

Out For Equality is coordinating an LGBT community commemoration of Barack Obama and Joe Biden's Inauguration on Tuesday, January 20, from 7:00 to midnight. The Event will take place at the Mayflower Hotel, 1127 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, DC. Tickets can be acquired at www.boxofficetickets.com/outforequality. Featured entertainment and appearances by Melissa Etheridge, Cyndi Lauper, Rufus Wainwright, Thelma Houston and others to be announced. Tickets (which will be released for sale in mid-December) are \$350 per person before December 16 and \$375 thereafter and include an open bar and cocktail buffet. Attire should be festive or formal.

Also, stay tuned for more details about Dance for Equality, An Inaugural Commemoration, Tuesday, January 20, 9PM – 3AM, Town Danceboutique , 2009 8th Street, NW , Washington, D.C. Tickets will be released for sale mid-December

These events will be brought to you by: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund, Human Rights Campaign Foundation, Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund & Leadership Institute, PFLAG, Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, National Black Justice Coalition, Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, Freedom to Marry, BiNet USA, DignityUSA, Out & Equal Workplace Advocates, Equality Federation, National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, National Coalition for LGBT Health, LGBT Community Center of NY, International Federation of Black Prides, CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers, Family Equality Coalition.

Additional information can be seen at <http://WelcomingResources.org>

Church News

First Baptist Church, Jamaica Plain, MA, was featured in a story by the Boston Globe earlier this year. Although the 165-year-old structure was severely burned in 2005 and the cost of repairs are estimated to be over \$7 million, the parishioners have vowed to rebuild. As stated in the feature article, "The church remains a gutted shell, surrounded by a chain-link fence and beset by questions about whether the Centre Street landmark will ever rise again . . . The Rev. Ashlee Wiest-Laird, who works out of First Baptist's temporary home, a trailer that members have nicknamed 'the sacred double-wide,' is asking the community to have faith in parishioners, who come from various ethnic backgrounds. 'We're located in such a diverse community, such a great place, and the residents here are very interested in what is going on with the church,' she said. 'I understand that there is some skepticism out there, and I would encourage those people to come speak with me, to see what's been happening.' To read more, the link is http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2008/03/23/a_churchs_mission?p.

Pullen Memorial Baptist Church, Raleigh, NC, appeared in the New York Times in September in an article titled *Church Gives Sanctuary to Gay Man and His Family*. The article describes the journey of Randy and Jill Keel after Randy "came out" and their concern about finding a welcoming church. "Both Randy and Jill had grown up in

Southern Baptist churches in small North Carolina towns, and even as their theology and politics turned liberal, they clung to the comforts of the faith's rhythms and rituals, the thick mesh of community. While raising their children, they had helped found a congregation in a Raleigh suburb. Mr. Keel taught Sunday school and served as a deacon, and with Ms. Keel took adult Bible-study classes . . . Yet on Easter Sunday in 2006, the Keels' three sons — Adam, Sam and Seth — were baptized, with their grandparents looking on, and with both Mr. and Ms. Keel attending with their respective boyfriends. (Their daughter, Molly, the eldest child, had been baptized years earlier in their previous church.) What made this unlikely event not only possible but ordinary was the place where it was occurring, Pullen Memorial Baptist Church." To read the entire article and learn more about the Keels and Pullen Memorial, go to <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/20/us/web20religion.html?n=Top/Reference/Times%20Topics/People/F/Freedman,%20Samuel%20G>.

Woodside Church, Flint, MI, is participating in a community program called Out 'N About. It is sponsored by the Greater Flint Arts Council and showcases GLBT artists in various venues over several months. Last year we hosted both Jason & DeMarco and emma's revolution as our part in the effort. This year we hosted a public showing of a movie made by a local artist, David Garcia, called *Fences* about the Matthew Shepherd murder and *Remember Who Made You* which was part of AWAB's conference in DC two years ago. *Fences* was presented on November 15 and was followed by a panel discussion. *Remember* was featured on December 5 with a dinner and dialog. We at Woodside are not only reaching out to people of faith; we are also modeling in our community what it means to be welcoming and affirming.

Bits 'n' Bytes

- Next skirmish in culture war is gay parenting. An Arkansas adoption ban passes despite shortage of homes for needy homes. Arkansas residents recently voted to ban people who are "cohabitating outside of a valid marriage" from being foster parents or adopting children. The measure was written to prohibit straight and gay people who are living together from adopting or becoming foster parents, but its real objective, child welfare experts say, is to bar same-sex couples from raising children—even if it means youngsters who desperately need families will wait longer. "We don't have enough quality homes as it is, and now we're going to place more restrictions?" asked Susan Hoffpauir, president of the Arkansas chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. "A lot of us are still shell-shocked by this."
- Floridians seem out of step with most Americans, three-quarters of whom favor marriage or civil unions for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people, according to a new national survey by Harris Interactive. The Pulse of Equality survey, commissioned by the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) and released today, shows a majority of Americans favors a broad range of policies and protections for gays, as well as supporting them as adoptive parents. More than six in 10 would allow openly gay people to serve in the military. Another 63 percent favor expanding hate laws to include gays, lesbians and transgender people. Also, 69 percent support gays adopting. Last month, Floridians approved a constitutional amendment that defines marriage as exclusively between a man and a woman. Florida law also bans gay adoption, but two judges recently ruled the law unconstitutional and gave gay couples custody of children in Monroe and Miami-Dade counties.
- [The] Reformation Lutheran Church . . . known as . . . the congregation of the bells is seeking to cast a wider net by welcoming gays and lesbians as a Reconciling in Christ congregation." So many faithful people are essentially told in so many ways your church doesn't want you," said the Rev. Bill Eiwien, Reformation's pastor. "The love of God is truly something that we have to share, and I don't think we get to pick and choose." The decision to be more intentional in their outreach was made over several months and after lengthy Bible study and conversations among members and their pastor, along with other Lutheran leaders. Surprisingly, it came without the overt turmoil that has rocked other Protestant congregations grappling with issues of homosexuality and faith.
- The Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles has joined seven other dioceses in passing a resolution asking the church to let gays and lesbians become bishops. . . . The resolution will be forwarded for consideration at the July 2009 national convention in Anaheim.

For a complete reading of the above articles and additional Bits 'n' Bytes of information, go to www.welcomingresources.org/news.

IWR Offers Many Opportunities

The Institute for Welcoming Resources provides many opportunities for learning about the welcoming movement. For listings of all trainings offered by the Welcoming Programs of IWR member denominations, visit www.welcomingresources.org/news.

Holiday Greetings from the Editor

As the year 2008 draws to an end, I know the horizon looks bleak, but we must have hope in Christ. As John writes in the fourth Gospel, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ***The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it*** (emphasis mine)." May the *light* and the peace of Christ be with you during this season bringing you a blessed Christmas and a hopeful New Year. Rev. Barbara Hulsing

Associational is a periodic e-newsletter of the Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists, a network of 75 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 with SUBSCRIBE in the subject line. To be removed from this list, send an e-mail to unsubscribe@wabaptists.org with REMOVE in the subject line. To read back issues of Associational, go to: www.wabaptists.org/associational.htm.

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