



The Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists

Associational

An Ongoing eNewsletter of Voice and Vision

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AWAB June Events in Sothern California

June 26-27, 2009 ~ Westin Hotel ~ Pasadena, CA

AWAB Business Meeting ~ Friday, June 26 ~ 1:30 p.m.

The biennial business meeting is a time for AWAB members to get an update about the work and mission of AWAB. There will also presentation of the Randle R. Mixon Award for Christian Service and the Barbra MacNair Award for Christian Witness. The meeting will be held at the Pasadena Westin Hotel at 191 N. Los Robles. Member congregations and organization will receive a mailing in May with more information about the business meeting and others will be able to access materials online.

Worship Service ~ Saturday, June 27 ~ 10:00 a.m.

All are welcome in a service of worship in which everyone is invited to the table, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. For many this has become a highlight of the American Baptist Biennial Meeting, during which time the worship is held.

Rev. Heather Rittenhouse, AWAB's Council chairperson, will preach. Immediately following there will be a time of fellowship with snacks and light food. The location is the Westin Pasadena, 191 N. Los Robles, which is adjacent to the Pasadena convention center.

AWAB Council Member, Jill McCrory, Ordained

Jill McCrory was ordained by Luther Rice Memorial Baptist Church in Silver Spring, MD, March 1, 2009. She has served at several churches in the DC/MD/VA area including Hillandale Baptist, Washington Plaza Baptist (an AWAB church), and Luther Rice Memorial. She served as Minister of Outreach at Washington Plaza Baptist and as Associate Minister at Luther Rice.

Jill was raised in the Southern Baptist church; however, from childhood, her mother instilled a sense of justice and inclusiveness in her. When called to the ministry, it was to a ministry that she describes as "being an affirming Baptist voice to the LGBT community." She has a passionate commitment to welcome and affirm all God's children into Christian life and into the Church. Her first ministry experience was in a conservative church, where she was not welcomed into the pulpit. Therefore, her first preaching opportunity was at a Metropolitan Community Church (MCC of the Spirit) in Harrisburg, PA. Her call to preach was confirmed when a young man approached her and said, "I needed to hear what you said, and I needed to hear it from a Baptist." She went on to minister at Washington Plaza with Rev. Sandi John, a former AWAB Council member. There she was instrumental in organizing the AWAB churches in the DC area into a Pride Parade contingent. In 2008, five Baptist churches marched in the parade and offered communion at the festival. She anticipates more churches participating in 2009.

Jill is led by Psalm 25, which says, "Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths." She feels that her call, seminary, and ministry experience have been a great journey and a path on which she has been led. Her business partner at Leadership Outfitters, a leadership development and training company, is also an ordained minister, serving at MCC LA. Together they share in both business and the welcoming and affirming movement.

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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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Through her extensive travel speaking to audiences on leadership, Jill has found many opportunities to have conversations about inclusiveness in the church. She feels that her ministry is not just within the walls of a church, and not just on Sunday morning but reaches out into all parts of her life. Her husband Jack (yes, Jack and Jill) is a big part of her ministry and has stood by her side every step of the way.

Her ordination is another visible testimony of inclusiveness. Clergy from the Baptist churches in Washington, DC, Maryland and Virginia shared the platform with clergy from MCC. Jill wore a special stole that serves as not only a reminder of welcome but a reminder of those who are still not welcome and all the work that is yet to be done.

Rev. Marcus Pomeroy Retires

The Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists congratulates Rev. Marcus Pomeroy on his retirement! We are so very grateful for his forty years of faithful ministry in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Rev. Ken Pennings says, "I first saw you at an AWAB worship service during the 2005 ABC Biennial in Denver. You were moving through the aisles in a parade of worshippers, waving a colorful streamer, singing 'We are marching in the light of God.' I'll never forget the look of joy, even ecstasy on your face, as you danced before the Lord. I knew in that moment you were a free spirit, and I uttered a silent prayer, 'Lord, give us more Baptist ministers like him!'"

Marcus is a hero of the welcoming & affirming movement! He has advocated strongly for the full inclusion of LGBT people in the life, mission, and ministries of Baptist congregations. Also, he has advocated for LGBT rights and equality in the community and nation. Central Baptist Church has been a beacon of light for LGBT-Allied people who have found hope, healing, and belonging. Thank you, Marcus, and thank you Central Baptist Church, for your faithful witness for Christ these many years!

AWAB wishes you and Nancy all the best in your retirement.

New Transgender Education Resources Available

The Institute for Welcoming Resources (IWR), a program of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, announced the release of transACTION, a new curriculum designed for churches and religious institutions to help congregants and members understand and welcome transgender persons into their congregations and faith settings.

"Too often transgender people looking for a place to worship can't find one to call their spiritual home because most congregations and religious institutions are not ready to welcome them as their companions in faith," says the Rev. Rebecca Voelkel, Institute for Welcoming Resources and faith work director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. "Yet, many transgender people of faith are searching for the same things that other believers want: a loving community where worship and working for equality and justice are the focus of their faith experience."

transACTION is designed to help churches and institutions address this issue of understanding and welcome by providing step-by-step training about the needs, apprehensions and fears of transgender people — as well as the wealth of gifts and graces they bring — while responding to the concerns of the church or religious institution.

The program can be used in three sessions: How Do We Get to Understanding, How Do We Get to Acceptance, and How Do We Get to Welcoming. All sessions include discussions and activities to go along with the information provided in the curriculum.

"We tried to make this a learning experience that would go beyond just the basics of gender identity and gender expression in order to give participants an understanding of the issues and concerns that transgender people have when trying to express their faith and spirituality in a church or any religious setting," says Barbara Satin, author of the curriculum and a transgender advocate around issues of faith and aging.

transACTION is available for download from the Institute of Welcoming Resources Web site at www.welcomingresources.org. There are two versions of the program: a leader's version and a participant's version.

Resources for the Discernment Process

The following are some resources available for churches in the process of discernment to become Welcoming and Affirming:

Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth – A Resource for Congregations in Dialogue on Sexual Orientation (currently out of print, being updated, and will be re-released). You may be able to order a copy through Baptist Peace Fellowship at 704-521-6051;

Change of Attitude, Change of Heart (curriculum for churches in a Welcoming & Affirming discernment process), written by Rev. Dr. Barbara Hulsing (\$30), available directly through Barbara at 716-574-0164 or bhulsing@timeposition.com;

Claiming the Promise – An Ecumenical Welcoming Bible Study Resource on Homosexuality, by Mary Jo Osterman (leader and student guide). It is available at www.welcomingresources.org.

From the Editor

Dear Associational Readers,

Since this is my last issue of the Associational, I wanted to wish you all a fond farewell. I have enjoyed serving on the Council of AWAB and appreciate all the wonderful people I have met along the way.

AWAB is on an interesting journey, and I wish the organization every best wish for continued service to LGBT Baptists and their allies. My journey, however, must now take a different path.

I thank you, one and all, for the opportunity I have had to be part of this movement.

In faith, hope, and love,
Rev. Dr. Barbara Hulsing

Bits 'n' Bytes

- Dave Grohl, a founding father of the grunge movement, is at the forefront of another trend: he's among the first celebrities to wear the "white knot" signifying support of same-sex marriage. The former Nirvana drummer pinned the latest cause symbol on his lapel as he attended the MusiCares benefit and the Grammys over the weekend - a move that same-sex marriage supporters hope will unleash a wave of white knots on the red carpet come Oscar night.
- An Austrian priest who has been quoted as calling Hurricane Katrina God's punishment for sin in New Orleans has withdrawn his nomination to become auxiliary bishop, saying he had received "merciless" treatment for his views.
- The long-awaited position on ordaining gay clergy in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America isn't a clear yes or no. An ELCA task force admitted in February that it could not reach a consensus on the issue

that has polarized its members for years. But with the matter expected to dominate this summer's national convention in Minneapolis, its position paper offers this suggested solution: The ELCA will allow the ordination of gay pastors but will leave it up to individual congregations and synods whether to ordain or appoint pastors. The term used to describe this compromise is "structured flexibility."

- The family of Lawrence King, the gay teenager who was shot dead last February in his school classroom in Ventura County, Calif., has filed a wrongful-death suit that names some two dozen defendants, including the school's principal and a local gay rights organization. King's parents and brother also named the young man charged with the murder, Brandon McInerney, and his family in the suit, the Associated Press reports.
- Michigan courts can oversee a custody dispute between lesbian parents who adopted in Illinois even though Michigan doesn't formally recognize gay relationships, the state Court of Appeals said Friday. The court ruled 2-1 that the U.S. Constitution requires state courts to recognize Diane Giancaspro and Lisa Congleton as adoptive parents. It reversed a trial judge who said Michigan's 2004 voter-approved gay marriage ban kept her from enforcing the women's parental rights.

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

Upcoming Events

TransFaith Online Roundtable

Please spread the word!

TransFaith Online announces new spirituality track and Interfaith Trans-Clergy Roundtable to be held at Philadelphia TransHealth Conference (June 11-13, 2009; <http://www.transfaithonline.org/transhealth/>).

Transgender-identified religious and spiritual leaders are invited to an interfaith luncheon roundtable to share concerns, learn from one another, and strategize for the future. The Interfaith TransClergy Roundtable will be facilitated by the Rev. Dr. Julie Nemecek and the Rev. Jayden Sampson, Esq. on the PTHC Providers Day (Thursday, June 11, 2009). Clergy, seminarians, ministers, and other transgender-identified spiritual leaders are encouraged to attend. There is no cost for the luncheon, but pre-registration is required: (<http://www.transfaithonline.org/transhealth/register/>).