



The Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists

# Associational

A Ongoing eNewsletter from the Executive Director

Issue 29 ~ March 7, 2007

## From the Executive Director

Dear Sisters & Brothers in Christ,

The Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists is gearing up for two national gatherings of Baptists this year—the Alliance of Baptists Convocation in Washington, DC, April 13-15, and the National Gathering of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists held in conjunction with the ABC-USA Biennial in Washington, DC, June 29-July 2.

The theme of the Alliance Convocation is *"Every Now and Then - Celebrating the Alliance's 20th Anniversary,"* and the keynote speaker is Harvey G. Cox, Hollis Professor of Divinity, Harvard. Be sure to look for AWAB Council members Sandi John, Heather Rittenhouse, and Kathy Stayton, who will be staffing an AWAB display and leading a workshop entitled "Becoming a Welcoming & Affirming Congregation." The Convocation will be held at Calvary Baptist Church, Washington, DC. Register at <http://www.allianceofbaptists.org/>.

And, if you're planning to attend the ABC-USA Biennial in Washington, DC, please participate in all the exciting AWAB events we have lined up for Saturday, June 30th! In fact, we hope that you'll consider that day "AWAB DAY" at the Biennial! We want to spend the time fellowshiping with YOU in all five events being planned for the 30<sup>th</sup>: business, worship, luncheon, performance/talk-back with actor Jeffrey Barnes, and informal visiting in the AWAB Hospitality Suite (at Embassy Suites Hotel). To register for the AWAB luncheon on June 30th, send a check for \$15 per person along with names/contact information to AWAB, P.O. Box 259257, Madison, WI 53725. You may participate in the AWAB events on June 30th, which will be held at Calvary Baptist Church, Washington, DC, even if you're not officially registered for the Biennial.

See you in D.C.!

Lovingly,  
Ken Pennings

608-255-2155  
[ken@wabaptists.org](mailto:ken@wabaptists.org)

## Congratulations to Wally Bryen!

On Sunday Feb 11th at 4:00 p.m., Wally Bryen, an openly gay man, was ordained by Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church, Oakland, California. Congratulations Wally!

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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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PO Box 259257, Madison, WI 53725

## Ravensworth Baptist Church Is AWAB's Latest Member Church

Fabulous news! Ravensworth Baptist Church, Annandale, VA, has applied for membership in AWAB (with a gift of \$195). A whole lot of wonderful people led this congregation to this important decision, including our own Sandi John, who visited the congregation a number of times to speak about AWAB. Thanks Sandi for making this happen for our movement!

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## Career Opportunities

### Faith-Based Organizer

California Faith for Equality (CFE) has an immediate opening for a full-time staff member. CFE is seeking an energetic, articulate organizer who will build relationships and mobilize progressive clergy and people of faith to accomplish full equality for GLBTQ people. The focus of this position is to work with progressive interfaith organizations to achieve civil marriage equality for same-gender couples. The work involves extensive one-on-one contact with clergy, lay leaders and members of congregations. This position will direct, manage and evaluate all associated organizing activities, in partnership with CFE's Steering Committee.

#### Job Responsibilities:

- Develop working relationships with clergy and other leaders of faith-based organizations throughout Southern California
- Coordinate the implementation of key organizational objectives, including clergy- and lay-leader training, house party-based education strategies, target recruitment of clergy in diverse ethnic communities of faith, conduct public education campaigns and identify 40,000 supporters of marriage equality through grassroots strategies.
- Build partnerships with, and provide resources for, clergy and congregations seeking support to become welcoming and affirming congregations.
- In partnership with the Steering Committee, define and implement fundraising strategies to sustain and expand CFE's work statewide.
- Work with, and provide staff support to, CFE's Statewide Organizing Committee;

assist in the building of a representative ethnically diverse statewide Board of Directors

#### Core Job Qualifications:

- Extensive experience working with progressive clergy and congregations
- At least 2 years of grassroots organizing experience, with an emphasis on mobilizing and supporting volunteers, preferably with experience in faith-based organizing.
- Faith leadership training and ability to speak the language of faith with authenticity desirable
- Demonstrated experience as a proactive, flexible, innovative, self-motivated organizer, problem solver and team leader who takes initiative to create results.
- Demonstrated ability to work with diverse interfaith communities to build coalitions across multiple constituencies; a commitment to multi-racial faith-based organizing.
- Advanced knowledge of, and commitment to, the achievement of full equality in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community.
- Excellent public speaking, training and writing skills.
- Ability to thrive in a fast-paced, team-focused organization.
- A well-developed sense of humor.
- Competent computer skills, including Microsoft Office Suite; administrative experience beyond minimum required

Salary DOE. Position will be based in Los Angeles and will remain open until filled. Please send a resume with cover letter and three references to [RevNeil@mccla.org](mailto:RevNeil@mccla.org) or send hard copies to:

California Faith for Equality, Hiring Committee  
c/o Rev. Neil Thomas  
8714 Santa Monica Blvd.  
West Hollywood, CA 90069

CFE is dedicated to the achievement of equality of opportunity for all its employees and applicants for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, real or perceived gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, age, national origin or disability. For further information, go to <http://www.cafaithforequality.org>.

**Part Time Coordinator of Music:** Central Baptist Church of Wayne, PA (near Philadelphia), one of our Partner Churches, is currently seeking a 15-

hour/week coordinator of music. About themselves, they say: “We are a caring and risking congregation actively involved in issues such as environmental concerns, racial and economic justice, and equality for sexual minorities. At the same time, we seek to notice the movement of God's spirit among us, resting and drawing our strength from communion with God.” AWAB says: “This is an amazingly vibrant and committed congregation with a wonderful, talented staff that practices team ministry. This would be a fabulous opportunity for a musician with a heart for peace and justice.” To learn more, contact Laurie Sweigard at 610-688-0664 or [lsweigard@cbcwayne.org](mailto:lsweigard@cbcwayne.org).

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**Part Time Minister of Music:** The members of Glendale Baptist Church, a caring community of equality and grace, in Nashville, TN, are seeking a part-time Minister of Music. This is an exciting opportunity to join a meaningful music ministry program! Glendale is a progressive, Southern (geographically only), creative congregation. To learn more about GBC and details of the job description, please visit the website: <http://www.glendalebaptist.org/musicministersearch>.

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**Office Assistant:** The Baptist Peace Fellowship is seeking someone for its communications office. You can find the job description at <http://www.forusa.org/getinvolved/commcoord06-description.html>

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

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**University Chaplain & Dean for University Ministries:** Baylor University invites inquiries, nominations and applications for the position of University Chaplain & Dean for University Ministries. Chartered in 1845 by the Republic of Texas and affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Baylor is the oldest institution of higher learning in continuous operation in the state and the largest Baptist university in the world.

Baylor University is at the mid-point in the implementation of an ambitious plan to advance the University into the top echelons of American colleges

and universities while remaining true to the integration of Christian faith and intellectual life. Baylor has grown to almost 14,000 students, and its nationally recognized academic divisions provide 146 baccalaureate degree programs at the undergraduate level. The University also offers 73 masters and 22 doctoral degrees, as well as the degrees of Juris Doctor, Master of Divinity, and Doctor of Ministry. The 735-acre campus is located on the banks of the Brazos River in Waco, Texas, a metropolitan area of 200,000 people.

Reporting to the Vice President for Student Life, the University Chaplain & Dean for University Ministries supervises a comprehensive set of ministries, programs and staff. This person, in collaboration with faculty, staff, students and other campus ministers, plans, implements, and evaluates efforts to guide students through academic and student life programming that promotes understanding of life as a stewardship and work as a vocation. He or she also maintains responsibility for nurturing relationships with local churches, supervises the Baptist Student Ministries and Department of University Ministries, and ensures that pastoral care, ethical challenge and spiritual growth are part of the Baylor learning environment.

The successful candidate will be an individual of deep and vibrant Christian faith who is at home in the Baptist tradition and appreciates the diversity of Christian theological perspectives. He or she will be able not only to nurture and connect with the diversity of students at Baylor, but also maintain the respect of the faculty and staff, serve as a representative of Baylor's Baptist heritage and Christian aspirations, act as a spiritual resource and advocate for both men and women as they discover their callings, as well as be an unusually capable administrator who can use effectively the human and fiscal resources provided for the purpose of university ministries. A doctoral degree with substantive experience in a higher education setting is required. A commitment to advancing the imperatives of Baylor 2012, the University's ten-year vision, is crucial.

After completing the Baylor University on-line application at [www.baylor.edu/hr\\_services](http://www.baylor.edu/hr_services). Interested applicants should send a letter of interest, curriculum vitae, names and contact information of three references, and a one-page essay describing the role of a Christian university in nurturing the spiritual formation of students to:

University Chaplain & Dean for University Ministries  
Search  
Baylor University  
One Bear Place #97372

Waco, Texas 76798-7372

Review of applications will commence on March 1, 2007 and continue until the position is filled. Confidentiality will be maintained, and references will not be contacted without prior knowledge or approval of the candidate.

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### **Social Justice Intern position available at Jan Hus Presbyterian Church, New York City**

An extraordinary opportunity of learning and service within an open and affirming congregation and a church committed to social and economic justice, peacemaking and mission. Jan Hus Presbyterian Church is a welcoming and affirming More Light Presbyterian Church, [www.janhus.org](http://www.janhus.org). This Social Justice Internship program falls under the excellent, faithful and inspiring leadership of Luciano Kovacs, the Social Justice Director, and the remarkable congregation and ministries of Jan Hus Presbyterian Church, New York, NY.

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## **Presidents Carter and Clinton Announce Unprecedented Gathering of Baptists**

ATLANTA, GA (ABNS 01/11/07)-Two former Presidents of the United States helped announce an unprecedented gathering of diverse Baptist groups set for Jan. 30-Feb.1, 2008 in Atlanta. That news came out of a Jan. 9 meeting at the Atlanta-based Carter Center with representatives from some 30 Baptist organizations in Canada and the U.S. affiliated with the North American Baptist Fellowship (NABF - <http://www.nabf-bwa.org/>) under the Baptist World Alliance (BWA - <http://www.bwanet.org/>).

"For the past several years," said Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley, general secretary of the American Baptist Churches USA, "Baptist leaders in the North American Baptist Fellowship of the BWA have been earnestly praying for greater missional unity and cooperation among us. Many of us have already take concrete steps in that direction President Carter's call has provided an even broader and richer forum to accelerate common gospel efforts."

Presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, both Baptists, told the media following the meeting that they are eager to see members of their denominational family cross racial and convention

lines to worship and work together. "This may turn out to be one of the most historic events, at least in the history of Baptists in this country, and perhaps Christianity," said Carter, a longtime Baptist Sunday school teacher who will be the keynote speaker at the New Baptist Covenant Celebration next year.

Clinton, who sang in the choir at Little Rock's Immanuel Baptist Church while serving as governor of Arkansas, has also been asked to speak. He is a "cheerleader" for the effort, he said, and hopes the celebration will be followed by concrete ministry efforts by the various groups claiming combined memberships of over 20 million. Organizers say the larger gathering will be "prophetic, but not partisan," and focus on Jesus' reading of the prophet Isaiah as recorded in Luke 4:18-19, calling for preaching the gospel to the poor, healing the brokenhearted and giving liberty to captives.

"This event will provide a wonderful opportunity for Baptists in North America to work together on the basis of Jesus' inaugural sermon in Nazareth," said Medley. "We will gather together from across this continent to network, share best practices and lift up those historic principles which have made the Baptist movement so dynamic." Carter and Mercer University President Bill Underwood called a meeting last spring that resulted in Baptist leaders signing a North America Baptist Covenant expressing a willingness to cooperate in ministry. They said Southern Baptists would be invited to share in the 2008 celebration even though the group pulled out of the NABF and BWA in 2004.

NABF members include: American Baptist Churches USA, Baptist General Association of Virginia, Baptist General Conference, Baptist General Convention of Missouri, Baptist General Convention of Texas, Canadian Baptist Ministries, Canadian Convention of Southern Baptists, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, General Association of General Baptists, Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention USA, National Baptist Convention of America, National Baptist Convention USA Inc., National Missionary Baptist Convention of America, North American Baptist Conference, Seventh Day Baptist General Conference, and Progressive National Baptist Convention Inc.

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## **American Baptists Organizing in the Southwest**

VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 02/09/07)—Initially formed early in 2006, a new Association of American Baptists in the Southwest (ABC-SW) has begun

reaching out to ABC churches in that area. Their goal is the rebuilding of regional infrastructure for over 200 churches in the former Pacific Southwest Region (PSW). According to Rev. Jose Guerra, member of the Association's Coordinating Committee, informal meetings in Alhambra, CA, and Phoenix, AZ, in recent months have yielded opportunities for churches to discover what resources are still available to them under ABCUSA as well as what process will be in place as they make their individual decisions on organizational membership.

The first formal meeting will take place in Los Angeles during the American Baptist Churches of Los Angeles' (ABCLA) Mission Conference (held March 2-4, 2007 and sponsored jointly by ABCLA, ABC-SW and International Ministries) featuring American Baptist speaker, Tony Campolo. Approximately 200 churches will be invited via letter to this meeting (March 3) representing all former PSW churches that have not formally declared separation. At this meeting, the Coordinating Committee for ABC-SW will form task forces to address such topics as leadership, bylaws, mission priorities and identity. The goal of these task forces is to have proposals in place to be voted on at the Association's second organizational meeting on May 4 in Los Angeles.

Dr. Bill Godwin, pastor of University Baptist Church in Palm Desert, CA, said that his church was "excited about the upcoming organizational meetings." The church voted to withdraw from the former PSW in November 2006 and also voted to transfer its deed to ABCUSA until they realign with a new region. While the new Association forms, ABCLA will be acting as "shelter and support in the spirit of Good Samaritan response" for churches who desire to remain American Baptist according to ABCLA Executive Minister, Dr. Samuel S. Chetti. Their support will act as an administrative bridge between former PSW churches and the denomination until the Association votes to either form a new region or to join an existing one.

"There is a positive missional future for American Baptists in the Southwest," said the Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley, general Secretary for American Baptist Churches, USA (ABCUSA). "The denomination, including National Ministries, International Ministries and MMBB, is committed to working alongside these congregations to strengthen both their life and their expressions of missio. Dr. Jeff Woods, Associate General Secretary for Regional Ministries, on behalf of the denomination, is working with ABCLA and the churches to form an association that will achieve these goals.

"Because of the dedicated efforts of Drs. Alonso Cooper and Joe DeRoulhac and the Revs. Jose

Guerra and Jim Kilinsky, a continuing American Baptist ministry and witness are growing in the region. In response to the request of my office on behalf of the denomination, the American Baptist Churches of Los Angeles led by Dr. Sam Chetti agreed to provide strategic and administrative support to their efforts. Former IM missionaries, the Revs. Stan Crews of Phoenix, AZ, and Chuck Shawver of Glennville, CA, together with Revs. Jose Menendez and Dennis Casaje of Los Angeles, CA, will provide outstanding support to these congregations in their new role as 'Regional Associates' for the budding association."

The four Regional Associates are available to all former PSW churches to answer questions about organization, resourcing and programs. Also, assisting the new Association is new ABCLA staff member, Debbie Gentry. For further information, please call 213-955-4950. Churches that belong to both the denomination and the region still retain their membership in both organizations unless they make a formal announcement of separation. To date, ABCUSA has received 16 formal declarations of separation from over 200 former PSW churches, although only 14 of those have stated that they chose to align themselves to the former ABCPSW, now known as Transformation Ministries. The new organization has not yet begun the process of confirming church affiliation, so no numbers of churches that have formally separated from Transformation Ministries are available. Other possibilities open to churches are to belong to both bodies or to separate from both of them.

Questions still exist for former PSW churches concerning deeds, titles and other financial matters but will most likely be dealt with on a case-by-case basis as churches make their individual decisions regarding membership. Even as these changes have occurred and Transformation Ministries has begun to function as a new organization of churches, some cooperation for the sake of mission has continued. On January 17, Reid Trulson, executive director of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society known as International Ministries (IM), and Dale Salico, executive minister of Transformation Ministries, signed an Agreement of Cooperation in mission. Trulson notes that the mission society has been engaged in broad collaborative efforts for the sake of Christ's mission since its inception. In 1819, the mission society joined forces with the Richmond African Baptist Missionary Society to jointly appoint Lott Carey and Colin Teague as its first missionaries to the African continent. Trulson explains, "Cooperation with a wide range of church, non-denominational and secular agencies is one of the 15 core mission principles that guide the way IM responds to Christ's call to global mission."

IM and Transformation Ministries have agreed to work together to provide churches and individuals a wide variety of ways to become personally engaged in international mission, including prayer, short-term mission experiences and involvement in the ministries of IM missionaries. Transformation Ministries' involvement in the work of IM missionaries will include continued participation in the World Mission Offering—the single largest source of financial support for IM missionaries—and in the development of Missionary Partnership Networks and Teams. The agreement does not follow the ABCUSA denominational pattern of providing for representation from either Transformation Ministries or IM in the governance or employment structures of each other's agency. IM's By-laws require candidates for missionary appointment to be American Baptists or Baptists whose denomination is in fellowship with the Baptist World Alliance. Notwithstanding, Transformation Ministries is moving forward on its path of separation from the rest of the denomination. According to Rev. Bruce P. Schipul, Church Resource Minister for Transformation Ministries, the new organization has gained membership in the National Association of Evangelicals and they have just organized their own Women's Ministries body.

For American Baptists in the area, mission work continues. On February 18, a worship service at The Terraces, an American Baptist-related Homes and Caring Ministries retirement community, provided the opportunity for those interested in creating a possible new ABC congregation to gather together. New Church Planting Coordinator for National Ministries, Dr. Thomas V. Johnson went on to speak about an additional event for Phoenix-area churches. "Later that same afternoon, at the Monte Vista Baptist Church, there was an introductory session of missional church training for ABC churches and any interested individuals. The goal is to break out of the survival mentality that has gripped many churches and recreate a strong sense of missional outreach to the community."

Andrew C. Jayne, American Baptist Churches, USA,  
Mission Resource Development,  
<http://www.abc-usa.org/>

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## **Baptist Churches Leave Baptist State Convention of North Carolina Over Anti-Gay Stand**

by Gay.com Newscenter Staff  
Posted: February 5, 2007

(Charlotte, North Carolina) For the second time in a week a Charlotte Baptist church has voted to leave the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. In November delegates to the annual meeting of the state Baptist Convention voted to expel any church that welcomes gays and lesbians.

Members of St. John's Baptist Church voted overwhelmingly by a show of hands on Sunday to leave the convention contingent on a determination of what the decision will mean to its tax exempt status. The statement put to the congregation accused the Baptist State Convention of choosing "to narrow its membership to exclude churches and institutions that do not adhere to its exclusive and discriminatory view of who is welcome in its fellowship."

Last week Park Road Baptist decided to quit the convention and some 18 other state Baptist churches are reportedly considering similar action. All 20 churches are self-described "welcoming churches" for LGBT parishioners. "The November vote (by the convention) was the last straw for us," the Rev.

Russ Dean, of Park Road, told the Charlotte Observer.

A third church under investigation for its inclusion of gay parishioners - Myers Park Baptist - rather than taking a preemptive approach and quitting has publicly invited leaders of the state convention to visit the church before ousting it. "We will not allow our conscience to be coerced by [the convention's]

exclusionary conditions of membership," the church said in a statement. The North Carolina Baptist Convention has 1.2 million members and 4,080 churches making it the second largest association of Baptist churches in the country.

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## **Subscribe to the eNewsletter of *The Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry (CLGS)*!**

CLGS programming changes lives and transforms institutions – one weekend seminar, one website surf, one welcoming congregation at a time. For more information or to subscribe, email: [clgs@clgs.org](mailto:clgs@clgs.org) or call (510) 849-8206. You can also check out their web site: <http://www.clgs.org>.

## Comments from the Coordinator of Revival of Progressive Baptists

When AWAB Director, Ken Pennings, wrote Rev. Mindi Welton to thank her for coordinating the Revival of Progressive Baptists at Andover-Newton Theological Seminary, Feb. 16-17, this was her reply:

"Thank you, Ken—I really appreciate that. As you may remember, I grew up in Church of the Covenant in Palmer, AK, and with two gay uncles, was pretty much raised in a welcoming environment.

Unfortunately I encountered exclusivist teaching at the ABC camp I attended as a youth, and in college.

But when I attended the 2001 Biennial in Providence and went to the AWAB worship at FBC in America, and looked back over the packed church, I knew I was in the right place, and if there was one thing I was going to stand for in my life and ministry, this was it.

I'm so happy this all is coming together (the Revival), and I'm glad to be a part of it!

Blessings, Mindi"

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## New Inclusive Congregation Forms in Birmingham

Earl Harris has been trying to establish a church in the Birmingham/Tuscaloosa area for some time and has experienced some difficulties. God, however, is opening doors for this new venture. This church will be inclusive, open to all people who want to worship God freely. Doctrine and theology is the focus, while love is essential. The government of the church is similar to some mega-churches. There will be three directors: Earl, director of the church and pastor; Ashley French, director of youth and children's ministries; and the director of worship, who will, for the time being, also lead the financial department.

Earl is looking for people who are interested in being a minister or director in this church. If interested, email Earl with some information about your interests and passions. After the director of worship is hired, other positions within the church will be filled.

Contact Earl Harris at [earlharris000@gmail.com](mailto:earlharris000@gmail.com).

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## Revive Us Again! Experience Reported by Kathy Stayton, Chair of AWAB Council

**Revive Us Again!** was a gathering of progressive Baptists saying, "We are Christian, we are Baptists who practice our Baptist Principles, and we can be both progressive and evangelical." It was held February 16 and 17, 2007 at Andover Newton Theological School in Newton Centre, Massachusetts

A Service of Healing, with about 80 people present, opened the conference on Friday night. The service was inspiring and creative in its use of violin, keyboard, Taize, singing responses, and interaction with the congregation. This worship was designed to address the pain we experience at the divisions within congregations and within our denomination. One man said it was the most meaningful service in which he has ever participated. The offering that night was for AWAB.

*Hear Me that I May See*, given by the Rev. Cynthia Maybeck, pastor of the Northboro Baptist Church in Massachusetts, was a powerful testimonial on the power of the holy spirit in the eight years at her growing church. This church learned to accept her now-legal, 17-year union with her wife, Elaine, and also to accept the ability of a West Virginia pastor and to begin to close the gap of distrust as they 'heard each other to see' the value in each other. The Healing stations around the room at the end of the service provided a way for those who wished to move toward healing through a prayerful blessing or light a candle or remember their own baptism. Cynthia suggested that we might not be ready for our denomination to be healed, because we cannot see the gifts in others who believe so differently. Going to the home of Gordon and Edith Swan for refreshments after the service allowed about 25 of us from NYC, PA, and MA to get to know one another.

Saturday was an educational and inspiring day featuring an excellent plenary with Rev. Nick Carter, the Baptist president of Andover Newton Theological School, a W & A seminary. The day also included hard-to-choose-from workshops and another excellent plenary with Alan Newton, Executive Minister of the Rochester Genesee Region. After dinner, there was a worship service held at the FBC of Newton Centre, MA. The offering was given to Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America.

One worthwhile workshop was facilitated by Jim Singletary, Chair of the Communications Committee of the AWAB council. He effectively asked people to share the story of their church or themselves, in

regards to AWAB. About half of the attendees were from AWAB churches and half were not. This mix provided good interaction for those who needed some ideas to help their church take the big step. Each process is different because of the history or culture of each church. The most recent member church, whose minister was in this workshop, is the Baptist church in Jamaica Plain, MA, whose building was greatly damaged by a fire last year, and who went ahead with the AWAB vote while meeting in a tent.

It is the only AWAB church within the city limits of Boston. Those in attendance did not realize they could also be individual members of AWAB.

All are asked to keep the congregation of First Baptist Church, Greenfield, MA, in prayer for their healing after a surprising and spiritually violent reaction among about 25% of its members who left when the church called a wonderfully qualified gay pastor.

Many thanks go to the young pastor of First Baptist Church in Framingham, MA (the Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell) for planning this gathering. Close to 100 people attended all or part of the event. The leadership during the day was exceptional. We are among a communion of saints!

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## Upcoming Events

**Colloquium on Membership: Who Decides and on What Basis?** March 3, 2007, 8:30 am - 3:00 pm  
*Wesley United Methodist Church, Dover, Delaware*

The basic question to be addressed is a simple one: In consideration of a person's desire for local church membership, who decides and on what basis? Recent discussion has centered on issues of sexual ethics. The Colloquium is open to all. Churches of the Peninsula-Delaware Conference are encouraged to provide some lay and clergy representation. The Colloquium carries out a resolution adopted at the June 2006 Annual Conference.

**Ecumenical Welcoming Leadership Training,** March 15-18, 2007, Evanston, IL (near Chicago)  
Faith-Based Community Organizing Leadership Training is an intense 3+ day, hands-on workshop intended to give participants the skill set and knowledge base to build local or regional teams equipped to expand welcoming programs and congregations in as many denominations as possible.

Registration Fee: \$50

**Safe Spaces: A Reconciling Retreat,** March 23-25, 2007, Suttle Lake, Oregon

This camping retreat is co-sponsored by Oregon-Idaho Camping and Retreat Ministries and Reconciling United Methodists. It will provide LGBT persons and their friends and families a safe space for sharing their stories of struggles and hope in a faith community. Resource leaders are Rev. Mark Williams and Rev. Don Frueh.

**A Clergy Call for Justice and Equality,** April 17, 2007. Clergy from every state in the nation will converge on Capitol Hill to raise public awareness of the need for Congress to pass legislation that combats hate motivated violence and ends workplace discrimination. The aim is to get 5 clergy from each of the 50 states. Because clergy care for the spiritual and physical well being of congregations, they understand better than most how injustice to any of us is an injustice to the entire community. Clergy experience from the front lines the rippling effects hate-motivated violence has on an entire congregation. They also are often the first to witness the economic and spiritual crises faced by an entire family when one member loses his or her job because of discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. You can register and learn more about the event by going to [www.hrc.org/clergyccall](http://www.hrc.org/clergyccall).

Harry Knox, director  
Sharon Groves, manager  
Kyla Bollens-Lund, assistant  
Abbey Kos, intern

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## ABCUSA Becomes Founding Member of Christian Churches Together

VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 02/16/07)—American Baptist Churches, USA (ABCUSA) joined with 36 other churches and national organizations last week to form Christian Churches Together (CCT: <http://www.christianchurchestogether.org/>), an ecumenical body whose overall goal is to provide a forum for Christian organizations to grow closer together in Christ in order to strengthen their Christian witness in the world.

General Secretary, Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley, who signed the charter member roll on behalf of ABCUSA, said, "I consider it one of God's minor miracles: the

bringing together of Pentecostals, Evangelicals, Mainline, Historic African American, Orthodox and Roman Catholics to form a common table for dialogue and cooperation.”

The gathering, which ran Feb. 6-9, focused on both evangelism and poverty and the theme for the first day was “Is Jesus’ Proclamation Our Proclamation?” responding to Luke 4:18. Participants in CCT discussed evangelism in their church and faith family contexts and how evangelism shapes or includes actions towards social justice and the healing of the deep hurts in our world.

CCT also used the opportunity to issue a statement on poverty whose four objectives were: to strengthen families and communities, to reduce child poverty, to make employment work, and to strengthen the educational system. ABCUSA is already a key force in CCT’s efforts in this area with the Children in Poverty initiative already under way through the work of National Ministries (NM). Rev. Marilyn Turner, NM’s associate executive director, Program Ministries, said, “ABCUSA’s ongoing commitment to make a difference in the lives of children living in poverty is made even more powerful by relationships with other Christians like these—churches and organizations who, like us, are striving to be the healing and ministering hands of Christ in the world today.”

“Christian Churches Together in the USA has been a process of five years of intensive and deliberate dialogue between Mainline Protestant churches, the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Evangelical/Pentecostal and Racial Ethnic groups of the Christian family,” said Rev. Rothangliani Chhangte, director of Ecumenical Formation for ABCUSA. “The participation of churches/denominations and national para church organizations has grown every year since twenty-seven people met Sep. 5, 2001 to share their longing for a broader ecumenical engagement and a stronger Christian witness in the United States. Participants at the meeting lamented the divided witness of the Christian family in the country and called on churches and all Christians to reconcile and heal the divisions so that the world might believe Jesus as Savior and God. “We have all grown together as we met annually to pray and worship, learn about each

other’s traditions and beliefs, and sought to find ways we could witness together as Christians in a broken society that needs the love of Jesus Christ. It has been an exciting journey and I am so glad for the opportunity to have represented the American Baptist Churches from the very beginning to this point of CCT’s formal founding. While there are still many differences among us, we have learned to listen deeply to each other and to dialogue with honesty, respect and love. It is my prayer and hope that all Christians can practice this model of interaction and being together in their local churches and communities.”

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## AWAB Wish List

The Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists has many needs. Please consider contributing to our “wish list”:

- Office Supplies (business-size envelopes, large manila envelopes, reams of paper, Avery labels [1/2” x ¾”], paper clips, etc.)
- Office Equipment (copier, laminating machine, etc.)
- Auction Items and Give-aways

If you can contribute, contact Rev. Ken Pennings: [ken@wabaptists.org](mailto:ken@wabaptists.org)

Associational is a periodic e-newsletter of the Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists, a network of 66 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).