



The Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists

Associational

An Ongoing eNewsletter from the Executive Director

Issue 30 ~ March 17, 2007

From the Executive Director:

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

I am honored to be able to participate in the **Clergy Call for Justice and Equality** on April 17 in Washington DC, convened by Harry Knox, Director of the Religion & Faith Program of The Human Rights Campaign (HRC). I will be one of 250 clergy, representing every state in the country and reflecting our nation's rich diversity in terms of theology, geography, race, gender, sexual orientation and gender expression. It's important for clergy to demonstrate public support of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people who are being denied basic legal protections. We need religious voices to let Congress know how important it is to act now to pass legislation combating hate-motivated violence and ending workplace discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Americans, the legal protections offered by the **Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act** and the **Employment Non-Discrimination Act**.

Earlier this month, Ryan Keith Skipper, a 25-year-old man from Polk County, Florida, was brutally stabbed to death in a clear anti-gay hate crime. In another part of Florida was a service of healing for the transgender community struggling over the firing of the City Manager in Largo simply for revealing her plans to transition from male to female.

The presence of faith leaders advocating for GLBT equality will dramatically change perceptions about religious advocacy on Capitol Hill.

Congress is so used to hearing clergy from the radical right that, for many, religion has become synonymous with discrimination against the GLBT community. We know differently. And now, Congress will see that in every part of our country — from Massachusetts to Mississippi — religious leaders are standing with those who have been denied basic human rights. They are preaching a faith message of care for the marginalized and ostracized and an expansive love that welcomes all of us to the table.

I look forward to participating in the interfaith celebration planned for 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. on April 16 and to hear some of the most impressive religious speakers in the country at the morning press conference on April 17th:

- Peggy Campolo, renowned evangelical Christian leader
- Father Charles Bouchard, president of the Aquinas Institute
- Rabbi Denise Eger, rabbi of Congregation Kol Ami
- The Rev. William Sinkford, president of the Unitarian Universalist Association
- The Rev. Dr. Erin Swenson, transgender Presbyterian minister
- The Rev. Nancy Wilson, moderator for the Metropolitan Community Church
- The Rev. Dr. Miguel de la Torre, Southern Baptist minister and professor of ethics and religion at Iliff School of Theology
- Bishop Carlton Pearson, leading authority of the modern Pentecostal church and pastor of New Dimensions Worship Center.

In the afternoon of the 17th, I'll be visiting my Congressional representatives to urge their support of the **Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act** and the **Employment Non-Discrimination Act**.

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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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608-255-2155, mail@wabaptists.org
PO Box 259257, Madison, WI 53725

Please contact your representatives of Congress to urge them to do the same!

Lovingly,
Ken Pennings
608-255-2155
ken@wabaptists.org

Wanted: A Few Good Artists

In preparation for the AWAB National Gathering worship service to be held on Saturday, June 30, in Washington D.C., the AWAB worship team is looking for a few creative and artistic folks to share their skills in this fabulous celebration. Specifically, we are hoping to hear from people with gifts in these areas:

- Liturgical dancers, especially those who might have experience with African music
- Drummers and /or bjembe players
- Artists or potters (paint, pencil, chalk, or clay)
- Scripture readers with a flair for the dramatic, for contemporary and/or dialogic readings

If any one of these items describes you and you have a heart for what God is doing in the GLBT movement, please contact AWAB at ken@wabaptists.org. We would love to hear from you!

Delegates Needed to Help Preserve the ABC-USA

by Ron and Cindy Green

We have been members of Myers Park Baptist Church (MPBC) for over 10 years and came here because it is an American Baptist Church. Cindy grew up in the First Baptist Church of Camas, WA and Ron in the First Baptist Church (FBC) of Oakland, CA. Ron's great grandfather brought the Free Baptists of Northern California into American Baptists to form FBC. Note that this was just three years after ABC was formed in 1907.

This summer, June 29 to July 2, the ABC-USA will be holding its biennial national meeting in Washington, DC. Delegates from ABC-USA churches from around the nation will gather to worship, learn, and take positions on "statements of concern." We have been delegates to previous biennials in San Jose, CA and Syracuse, NY, and Ron was a delegate representing MPBC at the Denver biennial two years ago. Our collective experience has been that these are

wonderful and critical events at which to make sure ABC-USA maintained support for basic Baptist principles. In Syracuse, there was a charge from right-wing evangelical Baptist churches from West Virginia and in Denver, like-minded churches from the southwest and the central valley of California. At both meetings those delegates prevailed that believed ABC-USA needed to maintain a stance of welcoming all Baptist congregations regardless of their diversity.

This has resulted in a number of "interesting" events this last two years. A large number of the very conservative churches in the Southwest withdrew from ABC-USA. In reaction, the General Secretary of the Convention, who had up to that time been a unifying force, aligned himself with the right wing. One of the strongest voices in opposition to his stance came from the Executive Minister of the American Baptist Churches of the South (our group). This year, the first statement of concern posted is one that reaffirms ABC-USA's commitment to basic Baptist principles such as the Priesthood of all Believers, Soul Freedom and the autonomy of each local Baptist church (<http://www.abcusa.org/leadership/reports/biennial06/07BiennialSOC.pdf>). Support of this statement will provide the opportunity once more to prevent what happened in the Southern Baptist Convention..

MPBC, because of its membership size and financial support of ABC-USA, is able to send a delegation of between 20 and 30 to this year's biennial. At this point, the two of us and Evelyn Hanneman are the only sanctioned delegates. We need more help from those of you who believe in what MPBC stands for; we need you to volunteer to join us. ABC-USA maintains wonderfully effective national and international ministries. We need to keep these under control of churches like ours. Please let Robin Coira or either of us know if you would be willing to join us: Ron Green, rkq3@comporium.net

Career Opportunities

Networking and Development Coordinator: The Baptist Peace Fellowship is looking for an individual to work in a Team Ministry with our Operations Coordinator and Program Coordinator.

THE TASK FORCE: Program Associate: The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force is the national organization that builds political power of the LGBT community from the ground up in order to attain complete equality.

Complete listings at AWAB's Job Connection:
<http://www.wabaptists.org/jobconnection.htm>

Spring 2007 Meeting of the Gathering of Baptists

What's New in the Parables as Subversive Speech?

A Conversation with William Herzong

Friday, April 27 and Saturday, April 28
 Toronto, ON, Canada

<http://www.gatheringbaptists.ca/Spring/>

Consultant Eager to Work for AWAB Congregations

Hewett Consulting provides fundraising counsel, strategic planning, conflict resolution and board development services to churches and nonprofit organizations across the country. The firm's principal, Dr. John Hewett, CFRE, has worked closely with several AWAB churches including Myers Park Baptist Church and Pullen Memorial Baptist Church to help them achieve their stewardship and

fundraising goals. An ordained Baptist minister, Dr. Hewett understands the unique needs of our churches and is committed to helping them thrive and grow.

HEWETT CONSULTING
 John H. Hewett, Ph.D., CFRE, Principal
 1835 Arch Street, Suite 1604
 Philadelphia, PA 19103 (267) 408-4425
jhewett@hewettconsulting.com
www.hewettconsulting.com

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 manilla envelopes, reams of paper, Avery labels [1/2" x 3/4"], 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

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 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.

To learn more about the Association, go to:
www.wabaptists.org.