



The Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists

Associational

An Ongoing eNewsletter from the Executive Director

Issue 33 ~ July 19, 2007

From the Executive Director:

Dear Sisters & Brothers in Christ,

Excited? You bet we're excited! AWAB is claiming its identity as "The national voice for LGBT Baptists." From now on, you'll read this identity statement on everything: publications, website, business cards, media releases – Everything!

And it's not simply a catchy phrase that we hope will bring AWAB to mind as quickly as "your kind of place" brings MacDonald's to mind. More importantly, it motivates our mission of advocating for the full inclusion of LGBT Christians in Baptist congregations *throughout* the United States. We expect that when something happens in our nation that is of major concern or importance for LGBT-Allied people, the media will call us first. And we expect that every Baptist church (in the entire nation) that is responding to God's call for radical inclusion of all people will want to link with us.

It's a new day for AWAB, a day for claiming our identity and sounding our voice, a day for modeling radical new ways of being the Church! And the movement that begins with AWAB will liberate *all* who are oppressed.

Who are we?!!! We are The national voice for LGBT Baptists!

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

AWAB Council Members Reflect on National Gathering

Heather Rittenhouse: As co-chair of the recent AWAB National Gathering Planning Team, I come away from the weekend's events with two thoughts in mind -- "I'm so glad it's over!" and "I wish we could do it again!" Nearly 200 of us from the AWAB family gathered in Washington D.C. for worship, connection, food, and lots of fun. Although I am starting to count myself as a grizzled veteran of these events, I always come away refreshed, energized, and empowered from this encounter with so many of you. Judging by the comments I heard from those in attendance, many others feel exactly the same way. Thanks to each of you who came to D.C. to be with us in a powerful witness that we are indeed God's beloved. Thanks be to God for each one of you! And for those of you who missed this gathering, don't worry...we WILL be doing this again. Stay tuned!

Jim Singletary: It seems odd to draw inspiration from an event so prosaic as a "Business Meeting," but I was heartened to see such a strong turnout on June 30. To me, 65% representation from member congregations, along with a sizable number of individual members, is quite impressive when one considers the geographical dispersion of AWAB churches, the multiplicity of conflicting Biennial events, and the fact that more and more of our congregations are not part of the ABC. It was reassuring to me, as a

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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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Barbara Hulsing, Editor

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

member of the AWAB Council, that there is such a hunger for real participation in this organization.

Dave Parnell: I appreciate the affirmative approach AWAB took during its meetings and services. We truly focused on the positives within ourselves and within ABC-USA. The highlight for me was the Rainbow choir singing in the Convention Center. It represented a way of witnessing that all Baptists can identify.

Burton Bagby and Ron Grose: What a surprise blessing the American Baptist Biennial Meeting was for us. Peace and justice issues seemed to be on everyone's lips, but in loving and supportive ways. What a strange departure from our experiences at Southern Baptist and Cooperative Baptists gatherings. We listened to a Baptist seminary president proudly accept membership in the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists. We heard a marvelous statement of concern about the importance of peace and justice issues particularly as they pertain to the Iraq War. We heard about impressive efforts to combat poverty in the United States. We listened to many stories of missionaries doing wonderful social justice ministries across the world. We heard about the important comprehensive redesign of the curriculum of America's oldest seminary and graduate school: Andover Newton Theological School, a welcoming and affirming Baptist institution. We saw hundreds of rainbow stoles being worn throughout the Biennial by gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender people and our allies as signs of solidarity. We saw the recognition of almost 50 American Baptist congregations at the roll call of member congregations during the annual meeting. Only 5,750 American Baptist congregations to go! Attending this, our first Biennial, hearing Baptists speaking prophetically about social justice and the importance of following Christ's example of ministry to all, was a marvelous experience.

Anita Bradshaw Helping Baptist Congregations Engage in Welcoming & Affirming Discernment

By AWAB Director Ken Pennings

At a recent focus group facilitated by AWAB's newly-hired field organizer, Rev. Dr. Anita Bradshaw, Anita drew our attention to young Samuel who with Eli's help discerned the call of God and responded, "Speak, for your servant is listening" (I Samuel 3:10). Anita explained, "Our challenge is to help Baptist congregations discern the call of God and to authentically open their arms to all people." Anita continued, "Naively, some congregations may think they are welcoming and affirming of LGBT people, but in fact they are not. For example, a deacon once challenged me 'Why do we have to become a welcoming and affirming congregation? We already let those people in here!' This attitude is precisely the reason a church needs to respond to God's call to engage in a welcoming & affirming discernment process."

As Anita designs trainings for AWAB's constituents, she is listening for the reasons our churches thought it was important to join AWAB, the processes they used, and the key elements they think should be included in the trainings. She is collecting stories of how becoming a welcoming and affirming congregation (and joining AWAB) contributed to the congregation's growth, health, and stability. It's thrilling to envision how AWAB's field organizing

project, under Anita's capable leadership, will help Baptists throughout the U.S. embrace radical new ways of being the Church, and participate in the new thing God is bringing about.

Contact Anita at nfo@welcomingresources.org.

Hyde Park Union Church Joins AWAB

The congregation of Hyde Park Union Church of Chicago, Illinois, an American Baptist and United Church of Christ, recently voted to join both AWAB and O&A. The Rev. Susan B.W. Johnson says, "We had a lovely and non-controversial time introducing and discussing it as a congregation . . ." Excitement at the church is running high since they are also in the process of renovating their 101-year-old sanctuary. Congratulations to Hyde Park Union Church.

Thoughts on Atlanta Gay Pride

I had the great pleasure of celebrating with my GLBT friends at the Atlanta Gay Pride Celebration. I must say that I feel proud to help represent my church community in this celebration. Oakhurst Baptist is one of only 5 or 6 churches represented in this

parade. And, of course, the only Baptist Church!

The energy of celebration definitely was great. And I was only humbled when the parade onlookers looked at our float with disbelief, celebration, and Thankfulness.

Jo Ellen Holmes.

The following is a link to the pictures of this great day. <http://indecaturga.smugmug.com/gallery/3051898#166151268>

Fight for Gay Rights Fits into Long History of Progressive Struggles

Published Wednesday, June 27, 2007, in The Baltimore Sun
by **Thomas Schaller**

Three years ago my wife and I attended our first - but, I suspect, not last - gay wedding.

Two of our women friends exchanged vows in a most ironic location: a church directly behind the U.S. Supreme Court building. When I consider that Justice Antonin Scalia might have been working that Saturday - his car in the court's underground garage closer to the chapel than the curbside spot three blocks away where we parked - I relax, knowing that gay marriage in some form is here to stay.

The movement for sexual orientation-based equality is part of a proud, progressive tradition that includes abolition, women's suffrage, the ending of child labor, racial integration of the armed forces, the civil rights movement and anti-miscegenation reforms.

Three patterns hallmark this long tradition: a defiant insistence by conservative doom-and-gloomers that the proposed reforms will undermine the fabric of American life; the inevitable rally by progressive and altruistic-minded Americans to the cause of expanding to others the protections they already enjoy; and, finally, widespread agreement a generation or so thereafter that conservative hysteria was not only misplaced, but America was stronger for having ignored their pinched, wrongheaded warnings.

Sure enough, conservatives who bemoan the "radical homosexual agenda" again find themselves losing the debate - not because the homosexual share of the population is growing but because straight Americans are rallying to their defense in the same way whites pushed for abolition and men marched with suffragettes.

According to The Gallup Poll, in 1982 only 32 percent of Americans felt that "homosexuality should be considered an acceptable alternative lifestyle." Last month, the figure was 57 percent - an all-time high. It's effectively a gay-straight movement now.

Is this so surprising? After all, heterosexuals not only live near, work alongside, socialize with, and are related to gays and lesbians, they are increasingly aware that they live, work, socialize and are related to gay people.

"Kids grow up today with gay friends, gay parents, gay parents of friends and gay friends of parents," wrote Time columnist Michael Kinsley earlier this month. "If only blacks and whites were as thoroughly mixed together in society as gays and straights are."

Previous generations were not blind, of course. But they were either more oblivious or chose to avoid the reality that some of their neighbors, co-workers, bowling team members and relatives were gay. By outing themselves, gays and lesbians forced the rest of us out of our closet of collective obliviousness.

Last year, in Arizona, for the first time a referendum to ban same-sex marriage narrowly failed. To be fair, many Arizonans who voted against the measure told pollsters that they were upset about the referendum's restrictive provisions for straight, unmarried couples.

But a win is a win. And if heterosexual couples who are unmarried by choice are finding common ground with gay couples who are unmarried by prohibition, well, all the better.

And what, exactly, is required of heterosexual couples wanting to marry? As journalist Jonathan Rauch notes in his new book, *Gay Marriage: Why It Is Good for Gays, Good for Straights, and Good for America*, not much.

So long as two people are adults, not close blood relatives, consenting and not already married, almost any man and woman can marry. If they are infertile, just met the night before at a Las Vegas strip club, or have had a dozen previous failed marriages between them, they can wed. Even convicted felons "on their way to the chair" can marry, scoffs Mr. Rauch.

"Within those rules, a marriage is whatever spouses agree it is," writes Mr. Rauch. "So the laws say almost nothing about what marriage is for: just who can be married."

Herein lies an absurd double-standard: Noncohabitating spouses who neither love nor remain faithful to each other, and who may not want children, enjoy greater status than two men who truly

love each other and hope to spend their lives together raising adopted children who otherwise might be orphaned.

The only thing more ridiculous would be the U.S. military deciding it was less important in this post-Sept. 11 era to have sufficient Arabic translators in our military than to banish them because they're gay. Oh, wait ...

Thomas F. Schaller's column appears Wednesdays in The Sun. His e-mail is schaller67@hotmail.com.

Task Force Releases Analysis of 2008 Presidential Candidates' Positions on LGBT Issues

CUT TO THE CHASE: According to the report, all Democratic candidates are supportive of the majority of LGBT issues, including transgender-inclusive nondiscrimination and hate crimes laws. Only two Democratic candidates support marriage equality for same-sex couples, however, yet all of them are in support of other partnership recognition rights, such as civil unions. Across the board, Republican candidates were in opposition to the majority of LGBT issues, with most publicly opposing lifting the military's ban on openly lesbian, gay and bisexual service members. Ten of 11 Republican candidates also oppose any partnership recognition for same-sex couples, whether it be marriage equality, civil unions or domestic partnerships. U.S. Rep. Dennis Kucinich is the only 2008 presidential candidate who has publicly supported all eight LGBT issues. Former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney is the only 2008 presidential candidate who has publicly opposed all eight LGBT issues.

[Other important news from The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, Inc may be read at www.thetaskforce.org under "The Latest" (near top of left column). Note link below to download the entire report: http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/reports/reports/final_candidates_positions.pdf

Job Connection's Career Opportunities

Director of Christian Education

First Baptist Church of Granville Ohio, a liberal American Baptist congregation seeks a Director of Christian Education. This is an exciting job for a person who can bring energy, creativity, and vision to a growing program:

- Part-time position (15 hours per week)
- Serving ages nursery through high school
- Opportunity for innovative leadership
- Must enjoy working collaboratively

For detailed information and to submit application materials please visit www.firstbaptistgranville.org <http://www.firstbaptistgranville.org> and click on the Christian Education Director search link

Director of the Interfaith Chapel and M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence

The University of Rochester is seeking a dynamic leader to become the Director of the Interfaith Chapel and The Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence located on the University of Rochester campus. This person will play a key role in developing a multi-faith religious program at the Chapel and will work with Arun Gandhi directing and promoting non-violent initiatives of The M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence on campus and across the nation. Building on the strengths of these two programs, the University is seeking to enhance and develop a model program that promotes respect and cooperation among the world's people and its faith traditions.

Requirements: A minimum of master's degree in a relevant field and/or equivalent experience (Ph.D.) in relevant field preferred.

To apply: Send resume, letter of intent and three names of reference to:
Richard Feldman, Dean of The College
Lattimore 317, Box 270401
Rochester, NY 14627

Review of candidate material will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled. The University of Rochester is an equal opportunity employer.

Director of Pride in Action

Location: New York City

Summary: The Empire State Pride Agenda is New York's statewide lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) civil rights and advocacy organization. Our mission is to win equality and justice for LGBT New Yorkers and our families. Through education, organizing and advocacy programs, we work toward creating a broadly diverse alliance of LGBT people and our allies in government, communities of faith, labor, all sectors of the workforce and other social justice movements to achieve equality for LGBT New Yorkers and the broader goals of social, racial, and economic justice.

Job Description: Lead Pride in Action: Pride in the Pulpit, Pride in Our Union, and Pride in My Workplace—the Pride Agenda Foundation program for LGBT inclusion, equality, and justice in communities of faith, workplaces, and the labor movement in New York. Provide opportunities for allies in these sectors to advocate for LGBT equality and justice in the media, the community, and with government.

Principal Duties:

- Provide vision and leadership, setting goals and deliverables, for the Pride in Action campaign
- Lead, train, mentor, and direct two Pride in Action project coordinators, one of whom will coordinate Pride Agenda volunteers
- Directly staff and coordinate either the Pride in Our Union or Pride in My Workplace project. This includes developing goals, strategies, and tactics for that sector; recruiting and training volunteers; staffing monthly volunteer committee meetings; growing the number of supportive individuals, leaders, and unions/businesses; staffing public speaking engagements; and producing program materials
- Plan, implement, and evaluate Pride in Action strategy and tactics; help prepare reports for funders
- Strengthen straight ally and people of color involvement in Pride in Action
- Work with Pride Agenda staff to organize LGBT support for selected issue campaigns that build the strategic alliance between Pride Agenda and religious, business, and labor sectors
- Represent Pride Agenda at trainings, community meetings, forums, and conferences

• Job Qualifications:

- Commitment to the mission of Pride Agenda and to serving LGBT communities through straight-ally and anti-racist organizing

- Experience in program management and volunteer management
- BA degree and several years of campaign, organizing, or union experience
- Ability to provide leadership and motivate staff; experience directing other staff
- Electoral campaign experience is preferred but not required
- Ability to think strategically and work independently; ability to work as part of a leadership team in a large campaign
- Excellent listening, communication, and writing skills; high degree of computer literacy (Microsoft Office, databases, internet-based organizing)
- Ability to work late nights and weekends and to travel statewide
- Fluency in Spanish is preferred, but not required

Compensation: Salary is commensurate with experience and nonprofit sector. Excellent employer paid benefits.

How to Apply: E-mail cover letter and resume to jobs@prideagenda.org or fax to 212-627-4136 or mail to Director of Pride in Action Search, Empire State Pride Agenda, 16 West 22nd Street, New York, NY 10010. No phone calls please.

The Empire State Pride Agenda Foundation is an Equal Opportunity Employer; women, people of color, disabled and transgender people are encouraged to apply

Upcoming Events

Crossing Borders, Confronting Racism, Claiming Grace: Generations, Geographies, Genders

A national conference is being held by Christian Lesbians OUT (CLOUT), an ecumenical, national organization founded in 1990 on July 12-15 in Atlanta.

Keynote speakers include: Bishop Yvette Flunder, Rev. Dr. Irene Monroe, Dr. Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, Olga Perez Stable Cox, Dr. Beverly Wildung Harrison, Rev. Delores Berry, Lavon Stalling, Rev. Eily Marlow, Rev. Dr. Judith Hoch Wray, Rev. Jessica Vazquez Torres, Rev. Dr. Nadean Bishop, Chris Paige, Rev. Donna Prince, Rev. Ruth Garwood, Roberta Robles, Dawn Sorenson, Rev. Jan Griesinger.

Dialogue groups, fishbowls, workshops, and storytelling will accompany panels and worship services. The Sunday morning worship will be sponsored with and held at All Saints Christ's Church United.

For more information contact: www.cloutsisters.org or 740-448-6424

Reclaimed Faith, a special on the journey of GLBT Christians returning to their religious identity, was featured on LOGO TV (see <http://www.logoonline.com> for more details). It will be replayed on Saturday, June 2nd at 7:30 pm and Monday, June 4th at 7:30 pm. The documentary features a trip to the GCN conference in Seattle, Washington, in January 2007 as well as worship at the Dignity service in St. Louis, MO. Additional footage was shot at several locales in Chicago.

The Naming Project Summer Camp

July 29-August 3.

The Naming Project Summer Camp is for 15-17 year-olds who are gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender or straight allied youth interested in discussing and understanding sexuality alongside spirituality and who are excited to spend time with other teenagers and adult staff while canoeing, swimming, hiking, singing, and doing arts and crafts.

For more information and applications --
www.thenamingproject.org
612-332-2397
staff@thenamingproject.org

God & Gays Gathering 2007: Unity is Our Identity

August 3/4 - Nashville, TN

Based on the hit documentary, *God and Gays: Bridging the Gap*. The movie comes to life with featured speakers Bishop John Shelby Spong, Rev. Dr. Mel White, Peggy Campolo plus musical inspiration from Jason & deMarco and laughs from comedian Jason Stuart. An exceptional gathering event for church leaders, allies, and for GLBTQ who are looking to reconnect with their faith. Be there and Be Moved!

www.godandgaysthemovie.com/conference

Kim Clark , Producer
831.440.9788 office , 831.206.7261 cell

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