



The Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists

Associational

An Ongoing eNewsletter from the Executive Director

Issue 37 ~ November, 2007

From the Executive Director

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Would you be willing to help increase the number of Welcoming & Affirming Baptist Congregations right where you live? Then I'd like you to enroll in a training for Faith-Based Community Organizing. The schedule is as follows:

2007		2008	
Oct 18 - 21	Santa Fe, NM	Jan 17 - 20	Clearwater, FL
Nov 15 - 18	New York, NY	Feb 21 - 24	Los Angeles, CA
		Mar 6 - 8	Portland, OR
		Apr 3 - 6	Lubbock, TX
		Aug 7-10	Columbus, OH

What is it?

Ecumenical Faith-Based Community Organizing Training is an intense 3+ day, hands-on workshop intended to give you the skills and knowledge to build local teams equipped to expand the numbers of welcoming congregations within your area. It prepares you for strategic action, rooted in faith.

What can you expect?

Concrete skills for making change
 Outlines of action plans for a welcoming and affirming process
 Spiritual enrichment
 Working hard each day
 Stretching mind and heart
 Good food!

Training Areas of Focus

Faith-Based Community Organizing: Learn the skills to organize people and organize money including the one-to-one visit, the proposition (*it's not what you think*), and the process for building an activist team in your area.

Biblical Self-Defense and Bible Bullets: Participants will take part in a thorough session dedicated to the "Bible bullets" - texts that have historically been used to validate bigotry and discrimination against LGBT folk in the church. A grounded understanding of the purpose of such texts and ways to combat hateful interpretations will be at the core of these discussions. Participants will also engage Biblical texts that offer hope and promise for our welcoming work and learn ways to speak from them.

The Implications Wheel®: The I-Wheel® takes the emotion out of the conversation. The results may be objectively scored to predict points of conflict and possible negative and positive outcomes. This training includes an introduction to the I-Wheel® process as well as a sample I-Wheel® session.

Welcoming Processes and Resources: Learn how to use a variety of welcoming resources. You will learn how to do a congregational assessment and design a study process based on that assessment. Role plays are used to contrast typical situations of Church Council conflict with other more successful methods of discernment.

Trainers

Emily Eastwood, *Executive Director*, Lutherans Concerned/North America
 Rev. Rebecca Voelkel, *Executive Officer*, Institute for Welcoming Resources
 Rev. Troy G. Plummer, *Executive Director*, Reconciling Ministries Network
 Jerry Vagts, *Grassroots Organizer*, Lutherans Concerned/North America

INSIDE

- **From the Executive Director** – pg 1
- **Reflections on 2007 Carolinas Regional Gathering** – pg 2
- **U.S. Senate Passes Matthew Shepard Act** – pg 2
- **TransFaith On-Line** – pg 3
- **New Books** – pg 3
- **Debate Heating Up in SC** – pg 4
- **Career Opportunity** – pg 4

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

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Dr. Michael J. Adee, *National Field Organizer*, More Light Presbyterians

AWAB's own field organizer, Dr. Anita Bradshaw, will be hosting and conducting similar trainings in the near future.

If interested in enrolling in a training, please contact me at ken@wabaptists.org or 608-255-2155, or log onto the website of the Institute for Welcoming Resources (IWR), and follow the links to register online for the training that suits you best (www.welcomingresources.org).

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

Reflections on 2007 Carolinas Regional Gathering

From Burton Bagby:

Energizing, Admiration. Nurturing. Those are just a few of the words that come to mind as I reflect on the 2007 Carolinas Regional Gathering. It was energizing to spend time meeting with folks who are so very committed to creating welcoming and affirming Baptist communities of faith. I felt tremendous admiration for the Rev. Steve Shoemaker (senior pastor of Myers Park Baptist), Rev. Mahan Siler (former pastor of Pullen Memorial Baptist), and Rev. Cathy Tamsberg (minister of outreach and adult education at Pullen) as I listened to them tell their stories. I felt particular admiration for Rev. Fran Cook, the Myers Park member who coordinated the gathering. Her organizational skills were evident throughout the weekend. It was a special joy to share a table all day Saturday with Rev. Robin Coira (executive minister at Myers Park) and to hear about her journey. The whole experience, from meeting with pastors of potential new AWAB congregations to worshipping Sunday morning at Myers Park, was nurturing. It nurtured our hearts, minds, and spirits.

From Barbara Hulsing:

I can sum up my entire experience in one word: Excitement. I believe a sense of excitement permeated the entire event, from our church visits on Thursday through the worship at Myers Park on Sunday. There is no doubt that a movement of welcome and affirmation is afoot.

From Jim Singletary:

My major impression is that the AWAB Council seems to be moving beyond a period of dreaminess to a period of focus and implementation—and a growing up.

My major impression of the conference is what a good leader and organizer Fran Cook seems to be and what great things might come from her further involvement with AWAB.

U.S. Senate Passes Matthew Shepard Act

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) supporters sent 350,000 emails, made 30,000 calls to Congress, and wrote over 5,000 letters to local papers. Their commitment was inspiring, and even Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) acknowledged the work of the Human Rights Campaign during debate on the Senate floor.

Even as we celebrate this victory, however, we know we face a tough road ahead. **The bill has to survive final negotiations between the House and Senate before it gets to President Bush. Even then, he has threatened to veto it.** As you know, pressure from the radical right will be fierce the whole way. Our support must be fierce as well – so we will continue to ask for your support over the coming weeks.

It's been nine years since Matthew Shepard was senselessly murdered because of who he was. HRC stands firmly committed to this being the year we finally make sure every American is protected from this kind of violence. Read more about the passage of the bill in HRC's press release.

Human Rights Campaign – www.hrc.org.
1640 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20036-3278
Phone: 202-628-4160; TTY: 202-216-1572; FAX: 202-347-5323

TransFaith On-Line

TransFaith On-line was founded in 1999 by Chris Paige (former publisher of The Other Side magazine) in order to provide an index of internet resources that provide insight into the Transgender faith experience. While the old site was recently noted as the #1 Google search result for "transgender Christian," it was also in need of a dramatic makeover.

The new TransFaith website includes a fresh new design, hundreds of new and updated links, exclusive content, and new features. Some highlights include:

The new list of study guides on Transgender experience from a faith perspective offers practical support for allies who want to lead a discussion in their church (includes links to four study resources available on-line for free!)

Virginia Mollenkott's latest thoughts on LGBT politics in Transwomen, Lesbians, and the "Border Police".

Expanded section on "The Basics" highlights the best of general-interest, educational Transgender resources available on the internet.

In addition to developing new content, TransFaith On-line is bringing back otherwise unavailable content, such as the four articles originally published in The Other Side magazine's special issue on Transgender concerns (May/June 2001). Virginia Mollenkott reflects on Scripture, creation, and current experience as she explores the complexities of gender, asking whether simple poles of "male" and "female" serve us well. Transgender minister Erin Swenson shares her story, and considers the questions it raises for our churches. Chris Paige reflects on the wisdom that comes when we resist either-or choices in seeking a way to live more authentically. Robyn Shanor explores how the issues raised by transgendered people are similar to-and different from-those of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people.

Spread the Word, Stay Connected. The new TransFaith On-line has only just begun . . . Please help us spread the word! Add a link to TransFaith from your website. Tell people about TransFaith On-line on your favorite e-mail mailing list. Mention TransFaith On-line in your blog or church newsletter. Then stay connected! We are interested in your feedback, encouragement, and ideas as we redevelop this new resource . . .

Sign-up for our email update list. Subscribe to one (or more!) RSS/XML news feeds. Let us know what other resources you think should be included. Contact us to talk about contributing with your own writing, ideas, or financial support. Stay connected!

New Books

AVoluptuous God: A Christian Heretic Speaks

"AVoluptuous God: A Christian Heretic Speaks, published by CopperHouse of Wood Lake Publications. Chapters of interest include information on "The Hospitality of Heaven Is a Queer Thing." In other words, Jesus welcomed queer people. He made a place for everyone; no one is left out. All are invited. The book is written by Rev. Robert VS. Thompson, who can be contacted at Lake Street Church of Evanston, 607 Lake Street, Evanston, IL 60201, 847-864-2181 ex 111, www.lakestreet.org, www.avoluptuousgod.com.

The God Box

Alex Sanchez's new novel [The God Box](#) is getting enormous press. The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop and Primate of the Episcopal Church, writes that the book evokes "the crucifying experience of adolescents wrestling with their sexual identity and their identity as Christians." [The God Box](#) explores the

intersections of religion and sexuality in a way that is both gripping and illuminating. For information: Human Rights Campaign – www.hrc.org.

Sodomy: A History of a Christian Biblical Myth

Sodomy: A History of a Christian Biblical Myth by Michael Carden is an important study of how biblical passages have been used to demonize LGBT people. Carden offers extensive readings of Genesis 19, Sodom and Gomorrah, together with the parallel story in Judges 19-21 and the outrage at Gibeah, in both Christian and Jewish traditions. For information: Human Rights Campaign – www.hrc.org.

Debate Heating Up in South Carolina

Faith in America has been running full-page ads in The Greenville (SC) News, stating that “Using religious teachings to deny equal rights to anyone, including Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender people, is clearly wrong.” These ads have created much controversy and responses have appeared in the “letters to the editor” section of the paper. If you’d like to follow this debate, go to www.greenvilleonline.com.

Career Opportunity

FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF LOUISIANA’S INCARCERATED CHILDREN (FFLIC) SEEKS A NEW ORLEANS BASED PARENT ORGANIZER!

FFLIC is seeking an experienced organizer to build the numbers and power of our New Orleans chapter, develop strong community-based leaders, and wage a successful campaign to stop the school-to-prison pipeline in the New Orleans school system.

FFLIC is a statewide membership-based organization that fights for a better life for all of Louisiana’s youth, especially those involved in or targeted by the juvenile justice system. As mothers and fathers, grandparents, aunts and allies we believe in and implement a model of organizing that is people and community centered, and is explicitly anti-racist. We engage in education, community building, and leadership development through strategically chosen campaigns in order to empower individuals, families, and communities to transform currently oppressive systems and institutions into ones that uphold justice for our families.

THE ORGANIZER WOULD PARTNER WITH OUR CURRENT ORGANIZER TO:

- Conduct regular outreach and recruitment of new FFLIC members in order to build a strong FFLIC chapter;
- Advocate with parents and families struggling with a child in the system and those struggling to resettle into the Orleans Parish region;
- Facilitate political education, leadership development, and skill building with members and leaders;
- Work with members to wage (and win!) the School to Prison Pipeline campaign in New Orleans. The campaign is currently working to change the Recovery School District’s prison-like atmosphere in schools and break the \$20 million contract the RSD has with the ineffective and inept private security company.
- Work with the FFLIC team statewide to build FFLIC as a whole and to encourage the development of other chapters and campaigns.

QUALIFICATIONS:

MUST BE:

- An experienced community organizer with developed skills in either: Base Building, Leadership Development, and/or Campaign Development
- From or very knowledgeable of Southern poor Black communities
- Outgoing and great with people! **Loves** talking to mothers and community members about their lives
- Strong communicator, both written and verbal
- Passionate about racial and economic justice with a strong political analysis
- Team player, willing to work with a diverse staff and membership

PREFERABLY:

- Is from New Orleans
- Has first-hand knowledge of the juvenile and/or criminal justice system
- Is very organized, with attention to detail
- Has some organizational management or development experience

Salary range: \$32,000 - \$40,000 commensurate with experience.

Please submit resume and brief cover letter to: Gina Womack, FFLIC, 1600 Oretha Castle Haley Blvd, New Orleans, LA 70113, gbwomack@fflic.org. Call 504-522-5437 x242 for more info. Women of color strongly encouraged to apply!

Associational is a periodic e-newsletter of the Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists, a network of 68 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