



The Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists

# Associational

A Ongoing eNewsletter from the Executive Director

Issue 17 ~ December 24, 2005

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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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## From the Executive Director

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

In his commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Venerable Bede wrote: Mary said, 'My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. The Lord has exalted me by a gift so great, so unheard of, that language is useless to describe it, and the depths of love in my heart can scarcely grasp it. I offer then all the powers of my soul in praise and thanksgiving. As I contemplate his greatness, which knows no limits, I joyfully surrender my whole life, my senses, my judgment, for my spirit rejoices in the eternal Godhead of that Jesus, that Savior, whom I have conceived in this world of time. The Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.'

With the enthusiasm of young Mary, the Welcoming Church Movement proclaims the wonders of God's love revealed in Jesus!

In a recent phone conversation with my pastor, Rev. Mark Clinger (First Baptist Church, Madison), I shared some of the great things the Almighty has done for AWAB. His reply was, "Ken, get that word out to everyone!"

So here's the gist of my conversation with Mark, "I really love this work! It's giving me an opportunity to minister to many people who call or email for help. I'm able to refer them to people in our movement who have made themselves available for pastoral care and crisis intervention.

A number of churches are discerning whether to take an official welcoming & affirming position, or whether to join AWAB. Some are facing disfellowshipping from their regions. I'm able to direct them to resources and counselors, and offer my support.

Many in our movement are ready to be mobilized for service. I'm able to direct them to volunteer opportunities.

AWAB's vision is to create and support genuine community among our members. I'm now working with 12 teams of people throughout the country, each planning a community-building event to bring together welcoming Baptists for food, fun, fellowship, worship, education and witness.

I love working with the program leaders of other welcoming programs. We're working on a strategy to make the Institute of Welcoming Resources (IWR) more easily accessible and more complete in the resources it offers.

Each member of the AWAB Council has taken on a key position of leadership, in membership, finances, pastoral relations, denominational relations, communications, and programming. I love working together as a team!

We know about all that has transpired in the ABC/USA, and are resolved not to be distracted from our mission by what might happen in the denomination. We will invest our energy doing the great work God has called us to do."

Indeed, The Lord has exalted AWAB by a gift so great, so unheard of, that language is useless to describe it, and the depths of love in our hearts can scarcely grasp it. We offer then all the powers of our souls in praise and thanksgiving. The Almighty has done great things for AWAB, and holy is God's name!

Lovingly,  
Rev. Ken Pennings  
Executive Director, The Association of Welcoming  
and Affirming Baptists  
[ken@wabaptists.org](mailto:ken@wabaptists.org), (608) 255-2155

## When We Phone Our Members, We Hear...

- "The 12-stop tour sounds fabulous. I'm eager to attend the gathering in my area."
- "Yeah!! Keep up the good work. Thanks for the details."
- "We're sending our usual Dec check."
- "We're a lone voice in our region and in our church, but we appreciate your encouragement and will keep our light shining."

## 10th Anniversary of Disfellowshipping of Churches

Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church, Oakland, CA, is hosting a worship service on January 6, 2006, 7 p.m., to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the disfellowshipping of Lakeshore, 1st Berkeley, New Community of Faith and San Leandro Community Church. In song, prayer, scripture and the spoken word we will lift up the themes of standing strong and moving forward.

## Results of the November ABC General Board Meeting

<http://www.abc-usa.org/news/20051118b.htm>

GREEN LAKE, WI (ABNS)—The General Board of the American Baptist Churches USA voted in favor of a region-sponsored petition from cooperating churches asking the denomination to take a stronger stand against homosexuality and same-sex marriage.

The vote was 59-45, with five abstentions.

Passage of the petition, from the denomination's Indiana-Kentucky region, changes a descriptive document titled "We Are American Baptists" by adding to the document a phrase reading "who submit to the teaching of Scripture that God's design for sexual intimacy places it within the context of

marriage between one man and one woman, and acknowledge that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Biblical teaching."

Larry Mason, executive minister of the Indiana-Kentucky region, said after the meeting that "we don't see it as a victory so much as a statement by our constituency that the Bible is our authority."

The vote on the petition was preceded by spirited discussion on both sides of the issue, and a motion to table was defeated, 66-30.

A resolution from the Mid-America region (Iowa and Minnesota), "of concern for the family and our American Baptist family of churches," was defeated by a vote of 58-49 with three abstentions. The resolution had been criticized from the floor as saying "too much about too many subjects."

Since 1992, the denomination has had a national resolution that "the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching." However, under American Baptist polity this resolution contained no implementing provisions and has not been binding on local churches or on area or regional associations. Supporters of the Indiana-Kentucky resolution had criticized the national denomination for not taking further steps to implement the 1992 resolution. In recent months, the debate has been especially sharp, and one of the church's 35 regions, the Pacific Southwest, has begun the process of separating from the ABCUSA.

Pacific Southwest Regional Minister Dale Salico addressed the General Board Friday morning and laid out three actions the ABC-USA could take to persuade PSW to halt its move to leave the denomination. These have been received by the General Board's executive committee.

The Indiana-Kentucky Resolution originally called for allowing regions to consider affiliation requests only from churches within their own or contiguous regions, and stating that a church dismissed by a region could gain re-entry into the ABCUSA only through the region from which it was dismissed. These provisions were dropped from the final resolution after questions were raised about whether their wording was specific enough to satisfy denominational bylaws or allow informed debate.

The debate on homosexuality and same-sex marriage has proceeded in several forums within the denomination. In August, 2005, the Senate of the denomination's Ministers Council voted 32-30 to reject a requirement that would have barred practicing homosexuals from Senate membership. In

a November, 2004, meeting, the Regional Executive Ministers Council voted by 20 to 3 with three abstentions to refrain from recommending practicing homosexuals for positions and ministries at the regional and national levels, and not to participate in same-sex marriage ceremonies.

In June, 2005, a national “consultation statement on mission and ministry” reviewed the history of the debate, noting the original 1992 national resolution and one by the General Board in 1993, calling for continuing dialogue on issues of human sexuality and recognizing “that there is an ongoing difference of opinion among American Baptists on the issue of homosexuality.”

The 2005 statement added, “Today we have deep divisions around our understanding of Biblical interpretation, human sinfulness, and the potential of ministering together. We further acknowledge that not all churches consider this issue to be central to mission and ministry.”

For presentation to the General Board, the Indiana-Kentucky Resolution had obtained the required support of at least 200 churches in five regions.

## AWAB Churches Seeking Pastors

**Granville, OH:** First Baptist Church, Granville, Ohio, a small, active Welcoming & Affirming congregation, seeks a full-time pastor steeped in social justice. We welcome applicants from any denomination who value substance over style and questions over answers. For more information, see our Website: [www.firstbaptistgranville.org](http://www.firstbaptistgranville.org). Contact: Reverend Alan Newton, Executive Minister, American Baptist Churches of the Rochester-Genesee Region, 1100 S. Goodman St., Rochester, NY 14620. Phone: (585)340-9520. Email: [anewton@crcls.edu](mailto:anewton@crcls.edu)

**Memphis, TN:** Prescott Memorial Baptist Church, Memphis, TN (ABC/Alliance of Baptists/BPFNA), is beginning its search for a senior pastor. Rev. Martha Brahm will be leaving in mid-January. Ken Yarborough is a member of the search committee, and will be receiving resumes and profiles at [prescottchurch@timewarnerbroadband.com](mailto:prescottchurch@timewarnerbroadband.com). Write to Prescott Memorial Baptist Church, 961 Getwell Rd., Memphis, TN 38111, 901-327-8479.

**Ithaca, NY:** First Baptist Church, Ithaca, NY, is seeking an interim pastor, and eventually a full-time

senior pastor. Contact (607) 273-5800. Or write FBC, Dewitt Park Mall, Ithaca, NY 14950.

**Madison, WI:** first Baptist Church, Madison, WI, is seeking a Minister of Discipleship. Contact (608) 233-1880. Or write FBC, 518 N. Franklin Ave., Madison, WI 53705.

## Metropolitan Community Church on the Impending Catholic Purge of Gay Men from U.S. Seminaries

<http://www.mcccchurch.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Search&template=/CM/HTMLDisplay.cfm&ContentID=1048>

More from *The Boston Globe*:

[http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2005/11/29/debate\\_over\\_gay\\_clergy\\_is\\_testing\\_many\\_faiths/?page=1](http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2005/11/29/debate_over_gay_clergy_is_testing_many_faiths/?page=1)

## Calendar of Events

### Ken Pennings' Speaking Engagements:

**February 19, 2006**, 10 am...Ken Pennings will be preaching at Woodside Church (ABC/UCC), 1509 E. Court St., Flint, MI 48503-6202 (810) 767-4911, [info@woodsidechurch.net](mailto:info@woodsidechurch.net). Dialogue Discussion with Ken 11:15 am.

**February 26, 2006**, 11 am...Ken will preach at Madison Avenue Baptist Church (ABC), 30 East 31<sup>st</sup> St., NY, NY 10016, (212) 685-1377, [www.mabcnyc.org](http://www.mabcnyc.org).

**March 19, 2006**. Ken will preach at First Baptist Church, 2345 Channing Way, Berkeley, CA 94704 (510) 848-5838, [fbckerk@aol.com](mailto:fbckerk@aol.com).

**March 22, 2006**, 12 noon – 2pm. Ken will be the presenter at BLT (Baptists Lunching Together) - a dialogue group of ABC folks. To be held at Grand Lake Gardens (ABC Retirement Facility), 401 Santa Clara Ave., Oakland, CA, 94610 (1/2 mi. from Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church). Cost \$8. Call Joan Thatcher (510.843.4656) for reservations by Monday, March 20<sup>th</sup>. Capacity: 50 people.

### AWAB's Big Event for 2006:

**June 26-29, 2006... *Tapestry: Live, Laugh, Love & Lead*** - Joint National GLBT-Allies Gathering, sponsored by AWAB, UCC Coalition, and GLAD (Disciples of Christ), at University of Indianapolis, Indianapolis, IN. Visit <http://www.tapestry2006.org>. There will be time for discussion and worship led by each of the convening

groups. Brian Dixon and Kevin Rose are AWAB's representatives on the planning committee.

### **Regional AWAB Gatherings -- (2006 Expanding the Welcoming Church Movement 12-Stop Tour):**

**February 17-19, 2006...Michigan Area AWAB Gathering**, Woodside Church, 1509 East Court Street, Flint, Michigan 48503-6202 (810) 767- 4911, [info@woodsidechurch.net](mailto:info@woodsidechurch.net) (located in the College/Cultural area of Flint, Michigan, right next to Mott Community College). Contact Steve Blinks, (810) 733-2618, [rsb62@aol.com](mailto:rsb62@aol.com). Tentative schedule: Friday Jazz Vespers, Saturday Community-Building Event, Saturday evening supper, Sunday worship and discussion with AWAB Director, Ken Pennings.

**February 23-26, 2006...Northeast AWAB Gathering**, at Madison Avenue Baptist Church, 30 East 31<sup>st</sup> St., NY, NY 10016 (212) 685-1377. We will have an informal registration/meet and greet on Thursday evening. The gathering will run until noon on Saturday. Official registration and fees and where to send both is being worked out right now. Housing, however, is as follows: if you want to stay with a host family/person, then contact Bethene Trexler at Judson Memorial church [midtowners@sprintmail.com](mailto:midtowners@sprintmail.com). If you are going to book a hotel you may want to look at [http://www.expedia.com/hotels/United\\_States\\_of\\_America-201/New\\_York-234/New\\_York\\_City\\_%28\\_and\\_vicinity\\_-178293/Union\\_Square\\_Murray\\_Hill-800084\\_01.asp?Ccheck=1](http://www.expedia.com/hotels/United_States_of_America-201/New_York-234/New_York_City_%28_and_vicinity_-178293/Union_Square_Murray_Hill-800084_01.asp?Ccheck=1) Hotel Thirty Thirty is one of the most reasonable. It is around the corner from Madison Ave Baptist Church. AWAB Director Ken Pennings will preach at Madison Ave Baptist on Sunday, the 26<sup>th</sup> for those who can stay until Sunday. Contact Event Coordinator Mike Cornwall at (585) 442-4156, [Butch31752@cs.com](mailto:Butch31752@cs.com).

**March 18-22, 2006...San Francisco Bay Area AWAB Gathering**, in Oakland and Berkeley, CA. Contact Event Coordinator Jesus Portillo (510-326-8097, [jportillo@att.net](mailto:jportillo@att.net)).  
Schedule:

**Saturday, March 18:** Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church, 3534 Lakeshore Ave., Oakland, CA 94610, (510) 893-2484.  
10:00 am Welcome, Prayer, Music  
10:20 am Reports from each welcoming congregation  
10:50 am Break  
11:00 am "Expanding the Welcoming Church Mov't" - Ken Pennings  
12:00 pm Lunch (Potluck)  
1:00 pm Conclude

**Sunday, March 19:** AWAB Director Ken Pennings will preach at First Baptist Church, 2345 Channing Way, Berkeley, CA 94704 (510) 848-5838, [fbcbcrk@aol.com](mailto:fbcbcrk@aol.com).

**Wednesday, March 22,** 12 noon – 2pm. Ken Pennings will be the presenter at BLT (Baptists Lunching Together) - a dialogue group of ABC folks. To be held at Grand Lake Gardens (ABC Retirement Facility), 401 Santa Clara Ave., Oakland, CA, 94610 (1/2 mi. from Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church). Cost \$8. Call Joan Thatcher (510.843.4656) for reservations by Monday, March 20<sup>th</sup>. Capacity: 50 people.

**September 29-October 1, 2006...Upper Midwest AWAB Gathering** (MN / WI). Contact Rev. Dr. JoAnne Juett (pastor of First Baptist Church [ABC], Eau Claire, WI), if you would like to help in the planning of a Wisconsin/Minnesota AWAB Regional Gathering to be held in Eau Claire, WI (JoAnne Juett, 715-832-0642, [icjuett@sbcglobal.net](mailto:icjuett@sbcglobal.net)).

**Note: 2006 AWAB Regional Events are being planned for Birmingham, AI; Chicago, IL; Washington D.C.; Northampton, MA; Seattle, WA; Austin, TX, Lake Erie Region; and North Carolina. Stay tuned for more information!**

#### **Events Sponsored by AWAB's Partners:**

**February 9-11, 2006 Breathing Life:** (A training event to help Disciples faith communities breathe life into dry bones). Sponsored by the Open & Affirming Ministry Team of the GLAD Alliance Inc. To be held at First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); Las Vegas, Nevada.

**July 10-15, 2006 BPFNA Summer Conference: Becoming the Beloved Community**, Atlanta, GA. Keynoter: C. T. Vivian. Contact (704) 521-6051, [bpfna@bpfna.org](mailto:bpfna@bpfna.org).

**July 27-30, 2006 Together in Toronto: Claiming an Open Spirit.** Joint gathering of Affirm United, the Brethren Mennonite Council for Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Interests (BMC), and Lutherans Concerned / North America (LC/NA). Contact Ralph Carl Wushke (416) 532-8591, [rwushke@interlog.com](mailto:rwushke@interlog.com).

#### **Book Recommended by First Baptist, Ithaca, NY**

Gifted By Otherness, by L. William Countryman and M. R. Ritley

### **New Mailing Address & Phone Number**

Please note that the Association has a new mailing address and phone number:

**AWAB, P. O. Box 259257, Madison, WI 53725,  
608-255-2155**

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Associational is a periodic e-newsletter of the Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists, a network of 59 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).