



The Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists

Associational

A Ongoing eNewsletter from the Executive Director

Issue 18 ~ January 31, 2006

INSIDE

- From the Executive Director
- AWAB In Need of Immediate Help
- Daniel Pryfogle, on Baptists Without Borders
- Ken Sehested, Attends IWR Church Leaders' Summit
- AWAB Churches Seek Pastors
- New Pastors for AWAB Congregations
- New Educational Resource on Biblical Views of Sexuality & Homosexuality
- Seeking More Information About National Baptist Conference of Welcoming & Affirming Churches USA, Inc.
- Calendar of Events
- Remembering Baynard Rustin
- Condolences

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.

Use of contents is strictly prohibited unless permission is granted.

© 2006, The Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists, All rights reserved.

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

From the Executive Director

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

When I first came out to myself, to God, to the world in 1998, I was not prepared for the reaction of my fundamentalist family, friends and colleagues. Naively, I reasoned, "They've known me, loved me, respected me for years. Why would telling them I'm gay change how they feel about me or how they relate to me?" But one after another severed relationship with me. In my total isolation, I became extremely depressed and despondent. I grieved deeply the loss of Christian community.

Then in 2000, I read about a conference to be held in DeKalb, Illinois, called "WOW-2000," or "Witness Our Welcome-2000," sponsored by a number of welcoming church programs, including the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists. I attended the conference, met a number of gay Christian men, began corresponding with them by email, and eventually recovered the Christian community I had lost. My virtual church was John in Wayne, PA, Mark in Boston, Tim in Minneapolis, Mark in Kansas City, and James in Mill Valley, CA. These email-friends walked with me through the darkest period of my life. They assured me of their love, support and prayers, and inspired me with hope.

Perhaps now you know why I have such a keen interest in and energy for convening community-building events for welcoming & affirming Baptists all over the country. I hope that hundreds of others who are feeling isolated, depressed, despondent over the loss of family, friends and colleagues will find the Christian community they seek at one of these community-building events.

The first three community-building events planned for 2006 will take place in Flint, Michigan, New York, New York and Oakland, California. Please promote and attend the event nearest you!

Northeast Gathering: Feb. 23-25 "Welcome Back Again: Our Journey from Pain to Power" at the Madison Avenue Baptist Church, NY, NY. Participants will have an opportunity to worship, share spiritual journeys, heal, make spiritual connections, and build new networks of friends. Guest speakers include Rev. Ken Pennings, executive director of the Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists, and Rev. Alan Newton, executive minister of the Rochester/Genesee Region of American Baptists. Friends and family of AWAB will provide housing in New York for those interested who register before February 10. A \$50 fee includes a reception with hors d'oeuvres and beverages and two light lunches. Ken Pennings will preach at Madison Ave Baptist on Sunday, the 26th, for those who can stay an additional day. Contact welcomingandaffirming@hotmail.com. Or consult www.wabaptists.org/northeast.htm.

Michigan Gathering: Feb. 17-19 "Expanding the Welcoming Church Movement." Sponsored & hosted by Woodside Church, Flint, MI. For all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer-curious, allied people seeking christian fellowship, with AWAB Director Rev. Ken Pennings and Rev. Heather Rittenhouse: AWAB Council Member and Pastoral Staff Member of First Baptist Church, Granville, OH. Out-of-towners should make own arrangements for accommodations. Contact Steve Blinks, (810) 733-2618, rsb62@aol.com, or Rev. Deborah Kohler, (810) 767-4911, deborahk@woodsidechurch.net

Feb. 17, 6-7:30 pm: Jazz Vespers, at Woodside Church, 1509 East Court Street, Flint, Michigan, 48503-6202 (810) 767- 4911 (next to Mott Community College).

Feb. 18, 9 am-3 pm: Community-Building Event, at Woodside Church, 1509 East Court Street, Flint. Lunch included: \$5. Come celebrate our Christian unity and diversity through inspirational music & messages and through group interaction. Also find out more about the Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists.

Feb. 18, 6-10 pm: Dinner Social, at the home of Jim Hazen, 5476 Woodfield Parkway, Grand Blanc, MI 48439. Dinner provided by the members of Woodside Church. No charge.

Feb. 19, 10 am: Worship at Woodside Church - Preacher: Ken Pennings; **11:30 am: Talk-Back** - Facilitators: Heather Rittenhouse & Ken Pennings.

Bay Area Gathering, March 18-22, "Expanding the Welcoming Church Movement"

March 18, 10 am-1 pm: Community-Building Event: Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church, 3534 Lakeshore Ave., Oakland, CA 94610, (510) 893-2484. All welcoming & affirming

Baptists of all denominations and affiliations invited!

March 19, 10 am: Worship: First Baptist Church, 2345 Channing Way, Berkeley, CA 94704 (510) 848-5838, fbcbark@aol.com. Preacher: AWAB Director Ken Pennings.

March 22, 12 noon-2pm: BLT (Baptists Lunching Together): Ken Pennings will be the presenter. 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 20th. Capacity: 50 people.

Also, dear friends, please make every effort to attend **Tapestry - Live, Love, Laugh & Lead**, the first-ever collaborative national gathering of AWAB, UCC, and Disciples of Christ welcoming congregations.

Tapestry: Live, Love, Laugh & Lead, will take place June 26-29 at the University of Indianapolis, Indianapolis, Indiana. Register at www.tapestry2006.org.

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

AWAB In Need of Immediate Help

Contact Ken Pennings (608) 255-2155, <mailto:ken@wabaptists.org> if you're willing to do an invitational mailing for one of our upcoming regional community-building events. AWAB will cover the cost if local funds not available.

The job would involve:

- 1) Printing approx. 500 flyers (Ken will email you the text for the flyer)
- 2) Folding flyers
- 3) Using excel file (which Ken will email) to apply addresses to envelopes (Return address on envelope should read: AWAB, PO Box 259257, Madison, WI 53713)
- 4) Stuffing flyers into envelopes
- 5) Applying first class postage (yes, AWAB has a bulk permit, but we would go first class with this mailing);
- 6) Mailing envelopes.

Former AWAB Interim Director, Daniel Pryfogle, on Baptists Without Borders

Dear Friends:

Many months have passed since Baptists Without Borders met in Greenville, South Carolina. I promised to send you notes from our conversation, and in typical "Pryfogle time," as my family calls it, I am finally getting around to the task. I am also sending this message to others who were not with us in Greenville but are interested in the conversation about Baptists Without Borders, a name proposed by Canadian Margie Bell at the 2004 Summit of Baptists on the Margins in Dayton, Ohio.

My apologies for the belatedness, especially to those who may have been waiting anxiously by their computers these past nine months for word of next steps, for a proposal or a plan, some kind of strategy for this movement. Let not your hearts be troubled. Your Internet connection is not to blame.

Here in Cary, North Carolina, we have closed the doors on Strategies R Us. Goals, objectives and

tactics have been mothballed. Despite management's initial objections, the union was able to secure generous severance packages for all workers: chocolate-covered parachutes, books of poetry, seed packets, ballroom dance lessons, and continuing de-education grants. Thus dispatched, we comfort each other with the words of the prophet: "The end of strategic planning is the beginning of wisdom."

Now at my leisure, I join friends at the local coffee shop to trade gossip and listen in on the news of the day:

Dissident Baptists are organizing in Brazil, reports Devaka Premawardhana. A Cuban rather than a U.S. staff member is one of the Alliance of Baptist's first emissaries to this nascent group.

Baptists in Australia and the U.S. are practicing like monastics. Leaders are discovering they need communities where they can let go of leading, be "out of role," to use Baptist prophet and monk Mahan Siler's phrase, and practice Sabbath. Letting go, they notice that Order emerges.

Others notice that mission moves in many directions. Canadian Baptist Lee McKenna duCharme is engaging people in conflict transformation in Sudan, the Philippines, and elsewhere. A Baptist congregation in Puerto Rico ministers in Venezuela. Sam Weeks of First Baptist Church of Ithaca, NY, is heading to Zambia for a year to work with AIDS orphans. Desmond Hoffmeister, a Baptist leader in South Africa's anti-apartheid movement, is now the transitional executive minister for the American Baptist Churches of the Rocky Mountains, and like a scout of old is helping people and churches cross steep divides.

Baptist Gary Gunderson is working with colleagues in Southern Africa to identify resources already present in Africa for the healing of Africa. The effort is called the African Religious Health Assets Program. In a similar way, Baptist doctors Laura Parajon and husband David are discovering the capacity of Nicaragua's rural poor to develop healthy communities.

That's the news with just one cup of coffee. But there's more, so much more and so surprising it blows the binder off the strategic plan.

For instance: Youth at seven progressive Baptist churches in the U.S. South and Southeast are extending their community, and linking their congregations, beyond the one-week summer Baptist Youth Camp through letters, instant messaging, and cheap airfare. Their parents wonder how it is that

kids in Raleigh, Chapel Hill, Charlotte, Winston-Salem, Decatur, Nashville and Monroe want to spend so much time together.

The Alliance of Baptists, American Baptist Churches USA, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, District of Columbia Baptist Convention, and Progressive National Baptist Convention are working together in the rebuilding of the U.S. Gulf Coast. Perhaps they'll dance and march soon in a New Orleans second line.

Or this: Baptist Rick Warren, pastor of the megachurch Saddleback and author of the best-selling "The Purpose-Driven Life," tells the writer of a recent New Yorker article that he has been doing some soul-searching. He says, "God led me to Psalm 72, which is Solomon's prayer for more influence. It sounds pretty selfish. Solomon is already the wisest and wealthiest man in the world. He's the King of Israel at the apex of its glory. And in that psalm he says, 'God, I want you to make me more powerful and influential.' It looks selfish until he says, 'So that the King may support the widow and orphan, care for the poor, defend the defenseless, speak up for the immigrant, the foreigner, be a friend to those in prison.' Out of that psalm, God said to me that the purpose of influence is to speak up for those who have no influence. That changed my life. I had to repent. I said, I'm sorry, widows and orphans have not been on my radar. I live in Orange County. I live in the Saddleback Valley, which is all gated communities. There aren't any homeless people around. They are thirteen miles away, in Santa Ana, not here. I started reading through Scripture. I said, How did I miss the two thousand verses on the poor in the Bible? So I said, I will use whatever affluence and influence that you give me to help those who are marginalized."

Last month Warren hosted a conference for 1700 pastors to awaken evangelicals to the gospel imperative to minister to those with AIDS. Warren's wife, Kay, delivered a keynote address. "The evangelical church has pretty much had fingers in our ears, hands over our eyes and mouths shut completely," she said, according to an Associated Baptist Press report. "We're not comfortable talking about sex in general and certainly not comfortable about talking about homosexuality -- and you can't talk about HIV without talking about both of those things."

"Wow!" is what I say. Warmed and energized by this news and the coffee, I step outside the cafe into a cold December day, and there on the sidewalk next to a sign that says "Resist Empire - Sit A Spell" is a man telling stories about the Movement to anyone who will listen.

He says, "The Movement is like a bridge that is purposefully and intricately built across a deep chasm. The people walk across the bridge with the noblest intentions until the wind knocks it apart and scatters the people below. They land on pieces floating in the current and clasp hands to pull each other to safety. The current and the clasping hands - that's what the Movement is like."

"What other story can we use to describe the Movement?" he asks the gathering crowd, hoping someone else will chime in. It's not a rhetorical question, but no one replies.

So he continues. "Well, it's like a bone dry day when the plants are dying and you're worried about the landscape, then the rain comes and now you're worried about flash flooding yet somehow amid the anxiety you spot a clod of grass carrying two worms float across the front yard and replant itself."

We're delighted but confused. So he says, "The Movement is like a play where everyone forgets their lines but people in the wings remember, in fact everyone remembers for each other, and this leads to such laughter and lightness of being that the actors start floating above the stage."

Finally, he adds, "The Movement is like a crowd of people hurrying this way and that along the sidewalk, so intent on where they are going, then the traffic light stops them, and bending their heads, they notice their zippers are down. Looking up, their eyes catch each other, and they smile in recognition of the fact that they are all fools. That smile -- that's what the Movement is like."

Returning to the office, which is a complete mess and over which plays the music of U2 -- "Sometimes You Can't Make It On Your Own" -- I somehow find the notes from the April 1 (yes, April Fools) Greenville meeting.

Our group included representatives from the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, Alliance of Baptists, Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists, Roger Williams Fellowship, and Coalition for Baptist Principles. Many participants were American Baptist. Two participants were from Western Canada.

In our introductions we answered a question Mahan Siler sometimes asks groups: What time is it? We thought about the moment in our particular organizations, in the larger progressive Baptist movement, and in society in general. Common threads ran through our stories:

- A desire to act

- The ebb and flow of energy for associational connections
- The network model is emerging - or re-emerging: the Triennial Convention of Baptists in the U.S. pre-Civil War was a network model
- A desire to enhance informal networks
- A desire to be a safe place for people
- A yearning for alternative community
- A need to reduce isolation of minority voices
- A need/opportunity to provide shared services and support for ministers

Walls between the groups, walls blocking greater collaboration, were named:

- Isolation - it's comfortable
- Fear of loss of mission
- Class myopia
- Ossified denominational structures
- Painful history
- Romanticism of movement

Someone said we need to deal with the fear of institutionalization; another said we need strategic focus.

The Alliance of Baptists was named as a potential organizer for moving this Baptists Without Borders conversation forward. It was our third summit. Some in the room were eager for a new structure, especially amid the fighting and the dying of the American Baptist Churches. It was suggested I draft a memo to the Alliance, telling them we sense that the Alliance is a gravitational center for progressive Baptists in North America and inquiring as to whether the Alliance feels called to provide leadership for this larger network of Baptists.

Alas, I didn't write the memo. My heart didn't leap at the task, and a number of other things claimed my attention as I completed the interim with AWAB. Truth is, I'm satisfied just to be in each other's company telling Movement stories. That's enough for me. (Besides, the Alliance was already in the room.)

To be sure, others will have the organizing passion; and I suspect the organizing question will surface here and there. That's only natural, and good things can surely happen as people think intentionally about collaboration.

But my encouragement to all of you is to first say yes to the reality of a Movement that moves without our making it happen. You will find that this reality changes the question for those who would lead from "How do we fix things/organize things?" to "How do we participate in the good work already underway?"

A Movement text puts it this way: Do not worry about your life ... But pay attention to the Life of the Movement that is already here, all around you, and everything you need will be provided.

I look forward to being in your company again. Until then, may the Peace of Christ, presented as gift over and over amid all our Advent waiting and ordinary striving, be with you.

Daniel Pryfogle
Principal
Signal Hill, mission-driven consulting
Cary, North Carolina
919-460-7069
daniel@signalhillspot.com
www.signalhillspot.com
"Explore, Grow, Proclaim"

Ken Sehested, AWAB's Representative on the IWR Board, Attends Church Leaders' Summit

In January 2006, Macalester-Plymouth United Church, Minneapolis, MN, hosted national leaders from ten denominations in the USA and Canada, including Ken Sehested, AWAB's representative on the Institute of Welcoming Resources (IWR) board.

The Welcoming Church Program Leader's (WCPL) network is composed of national church leaders from their denomination's national welcoming and affirming congregational-based program. WCPL has a tradition of meeting twice a year for strategic planning, resource development, skills-building and spiritual nurture.

WCPL works for the full embrace of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons and their families in the following denominations: Presbyterian Church (USA); United Methodist Church; Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; United Church of Christ; American Baptist Churches USA/Alliance of Baptists; Brethren/Mennonites; Reformed Church in America; Disciples of Christ; Community of Christ; and the United Church of Canada.

The summit featured a special tribute honoring the tenth anniversary of the Shower of Stoles Project (SOSP) and Martha Juillerat's tenth anniversary as National Program Director of the project. This celebration also marked the transition and transfer of the Shower of Stoles Project to the Institute of Welcoming Resources - Rebecca Voelkel, Director.

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. 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

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. 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.

Palmer, AK: Church of the Covenant is looking for a staff person. "We're looking for a seminary graduate, who is committed to social ministries. While Church of the Covenant cannot afford a full-time pastor, our related ministries certainly can. A gay person, male or female, would be welcomed. A partnered person would be welcome. The idea is to find someone who ultimately would replace me. After all, I am 78. Palmer is a great place for someone who wants a little adventure and who loves a variety of people." – Rev. Howard Bess, pastor of Church of the Covenant.

New Pastors for AWAB Congregations

1) Rev. Donna Schaper is to be the new pastor at Judson Memorial Baptist Church in Greenwich Village, NYC. We wish Donna and our wonderful partners at Judson all the best, as they enter into ministry together!

Donna Schaper is Pastor of the North Hadley Congregational Church in Massachusetts. She is also full time Executive Director of the Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts which raises money for women and girls and promotes justice and holistic economic development. Donna is also active with the StillSpeaking Campaign of the United Church of Christ. She is author of more than 18 books, including the upcoming title from Acta Publications, *The Shiver of Grace: Thirty Years of Ordained Ministry*.

2) Bruce Bramlett has been named interim pastor of First Baptist Church, Berkeley, CA. Welcome Bruce!

New Educational Resource on Biblical Views of Sexuality & Homosexuality

The Rev. Barbara Swartzel Anderson, PCUSA clergywoman and pastor, has written a new education resource that I commend to you, your church, youth group, campus ministry, seminary community and AWAB Chapter.

The entire text can be downloaded as PDF. Please know that this educational resource is copyrighted by the author.

www.wabaptists.org/bible/biblical-views.pdf

Seeking More Information About National Baptist Conference of Welcoming & Affirming Churches USA, Inc.

Some AWAB members are receiving email messages from The National Baptist Conference of Welcoming & Affirming Churches USA, Inc. - Jade Rodney Harris (Director of Media/ Promotions), Dr. John Harris (President). The email messages announce the 4th ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY - OCTOBER 2006 - "Answering the Call to Reconciliation, Restoration, Revival, & Renewal"

Can you verify that this is a legitimate group? Or should we continue to regard these messages with suspicion?

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. Dialogue Discussion with Ken 11:15 am.

February 26, 2006, 11 am...Ken will preach at Madison Avenue Baptist Church (ABC), 30 East 31st St., NY, NY 10016, (212) 685-1377, www.mabcnyc.org.

March 12, 2006, 10:30 am...Ken will preach at First Baptist Church, Madison, WI.

March 19, 2006. Ken will preach at First Baptist Church, 2345 Channing Way, Berkeley, CA 94704 (510) 848-5838, fbcbark@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 20th. Capacity: 50 people.

June 4, 2006, Ken will preach at The South Church, Mt. Prospect, IL in the morning, and at Grace Baptist Church, Chicago, IL in the evening.

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 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 (located in the College/Cultural area of Flint, Michigan, right next to Mott Community College). Contact Steve Blinks, (810) 733-2618, 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 31st 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. 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 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 26th for those who can stay until Sunday. Contact Event Coordinator Mike Cornwall at (585) 442-4156, Butch31752@cs.com, www.wabaptists.org/northeast.htm

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). 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, fbcbek@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 20th. Capacity: 50 people.

April 21-23, 2006...Southern AWAB Gathering (In conjunction with The Alliance of Baptists Convocation), Birmingham, AL.

AWAB's council will attend the Alliance of Baptists Convocation, April 21-23, and then will host the Southern AWAB Gathering on April 23rd, at Southside Baptist Church, Birmingham, AL, 12:30 – 3:30 pm. To register for the Convocation, visit www.allianceofbaptists.org. For more information about the southern AWAB Gathering, contact Ken Pennings (608-255-2155, ken@wabaptists.org).

June 2-4, 2006...Chicagoland AWAB Gathering.

Contact Ann-Louise Haak (alhaak@lakestreet.org) for more information.

Sunday AM - Ken Pennings speaking at The South Church, Mt. Prospect, IL;

Sunday PM – Ken Pennings speaking at Grace Baptist Church, Chicago, IL.

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, jjuett@sbcglobal.net).

October 13-15, 2006...Northwest AWAB

Gathering. Hosted by Seattle First Baptist Church and University Baptist Church, Seattle, Washington. Contact Rev. Craig Darling (craigdarling@companis.org) or Rev. Tim Phillips (tim@ubcseattle.org) for more information.

Note: 2006 AWAB Regional Events are being planned for Washington D.C.; Northampton, MA; 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.

February 10-12, 2006, More Light Presbyterians Conference for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons of faith, their families, friends and heterosexual allies, at Vanderbilt Divinity School, Nashville, TN.

Experience sanctuary, community, and skill-building to equip all of us to work for the change we seek in our Church and world. The inclusive and affirming worship, workshops, keynote address, and educational materials will all have ecumenical relevance and be helpful to you and your work within your own church and faith tradition.

Registration at www.mlp.org. Or contact Michael J. Adee, (505) 820-7082, michaeladee@aol.com.

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

July 14-15, 2006, Whosoever Ministries, Inc. will host a conference at Virginia Highland Church in Atlanta, Georgia. The **"Reaping the Spiritual Harvest"** conference will feature many inspiring workshops and keynote speeches from Harry Knox, director of the Human Rights Campaign's faith and religion program and Candace Chellew-Hodge, the founder of Whosoever Ministries, Inc. Renowned lesbian Christian singer Marsha Stevens will give a special concert. Visit <http://www.whosoever.org/conference/>

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.

Remembering Baynard Rustin

Though Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was the central figure in the Civil Rights Movement, others made significant contributions. Among them was Baynard Rustin, an African American gay man, the pivotal behind-the-scenes strategist and organizer for the 1963 March on Washington. Check <http://www.rustin.org/biography.html> for an excellent summary of Rustin's life.

Condolences

We grieve the loss of Martha Barr, a good friend of AWAB and a faithful member of Central Baptist Church, Wayne, PA.

We also grieve the loss of Dick Sutton (Norristown, PA), another dear friend of AWAB.

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

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 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.