



The Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists

Associational

A monthly eNewsletter from the Executive Director

Issue 21 ~ May 31, 2006

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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 advocates for the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons in the life and ministries of Baptist churches.

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

1. From the Executive Director

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Many Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) people experience "coming out of the closet" as resurrection in this life. Dr. Christine M. Smith describes this beautifully in her delightful book, *"Risking the Terror – Resurrection In This Life."*

"In the face of persistent bodily, economic, spiritual, and ecclesiastical silence and violence, coming out has everything to do with resistance and new life. In the face of statistics that tell us that teenagers who are struggling with issues of sexual orientation are three times more likely to commit suicide than their peers, coming out has everything to do with resurrection....Not only does coming out join one to whole dimensions of one's self that have been denied, forgotten, or repressed, but coming out resurrects gay and lesbian people into a new community that will be the community which often will sustain their very lives.

Coming out involves countless acts of courage and risk. Coming out involves acts of rising out of graves of silence and death and vacating chambers of comfort, familiarity, and safety. Coming out is a movement toward coming home to one's self, one's community, one's people. Carter Heyward would say it is a way of coming into our 'Yes.'

If coming out can be a resurrection experience for so many gay and lesbian people and the church demands secrecy, silence, and closets, then as a student in one of my classes once said, 'The church has abandoned sites of resurrection.'

Do the words and messages of our sermons keep people in alienating closets of lies and secrets, or do our sermons help open those suffocating doors? What would it look like and sound like if preachers of the Christian church were to claim the sites of coming out as sites of resurrection and places and moments of Gods' salvific activity?" (pages, 106, 107-108).

We are a movement of people claiming the sites of coming out as sites of resurrection! Together may we rise out of graves of silence and death, vacate chambers of comfort, familiarity, and safety, and come into a new community that will sustain our very lives!

With love,

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

2. It's Not Too Late to Register For Tapestry!



**Joint Gathering of
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and
Affirming Christians**

**Tapestry 2006:
Live, Love, Laugh and Lead**

**June 26-29 ~ University of
Indianapolis, Indianapolis, IN**

Each day of the gathering will lift up the empowering aspects of what it is to be a person of faith in an affirming Christian community through keynote speakers, worship, workshops, and opportunities for group discussion and meditation. The sponsoring organizations are The Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists (AWAB), Gay Lesbian and Affirming Disciples Alliance (GLAD), and The UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns (Coalition).

Register today at www.tapestry2006.org

3. Chicagoland Gatherings of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists June 2 - 4, 2006

Turning Brokeback Mountain into an Open Range

June 2 (Strawberry Ice Cream Social & Message)
• **6 pm:** Strawberry Icecream Social

• **7:30 pm:** Inspirational Music / Message: Rev. David Gregg , preaching. Lake Street Church, 607 Lake St., Evanston, IL 60201 (847) 864-2181

June 3 Community Building Event

- **9 am:** Continental Breakfast, Welcome, Agenda
- **9:30:** Rev. Heather Rittenhouse Shares Her Story
- **10:30:** Break
- **10:45:** Small Groups
- **12 noon:** Lunch (\$8)
- **12:45 pm:** Rev Ken Pennings: Expanding the Welcoming & Affirming Movement
- **1:15:** Worship and Communion – Rev. Jacki Belile
- **2:00:** Conclude

Lake Street Church, 607 Lake St., Evanston, IL 60201 (847) 864-2181

June 4

- **11:15 am:** Adult Education - Speaker: Ken Pennings

North Shore Baptist Church, 5244 N. Lakewood Ave, Chicago, IL 60640 (773-728-4200)

- **6 pm:** Worship (Ken Pennings preaching)

Grace Baptist Church, 5253 N. Kenmore Ave, Chicago, IL, 60640 (773) 334-9003

4. AWAB Welcomes 3 New Churches

Broadway Church (Alliance of Baptists), 3931 Washington, Kansas City, MO 64112, 816-561-3274, fax: 816-561-1031, office@broadwaychurch-kc.org, www.broadwaychurch-kc.org
Pastors: Marcia Fleischman & Paul Smith

Community Church of Wilmette (ABC/USA), 1020 Forest, Wilmette, IL 60091 847-251-4370, fax: 847-251-3218, ccw1020forest@aol.com, www.communitychurchofwilmette.org
Pastor: Rev. Denise Janssen

God's Harbor Community Church (Independent-Non Denominational), 4667 Idaho Avenue, Saint Louis, MO 63111, 314-457-0472, ghec7@msn.com, www.godsharborcommunitychurch.net
Pastors: Richard J. Lee & Will Hughey

5. Rick Mixon Accepts Call to First Baptist Church, Palo Alto, CA

At the Special Business Meeting on April 30, the congregation voted overwhelmingly to call the Rev. Randle R. (Rick) Mixon to serve as Senior Pastor of

First Baptist Church, Palo Alto, CA. Rick accepted the call and will begin on July 10.

6. AWAB Congregations Featured in the News

Peace Community Church, Oberlin, OH

(Alliance of Baptist, American Baptist, BPFNA)

Saturday, May 20, 2006

By Jennifer Gonzalez, Plain Dealer

[Plain Dealer Link](#)

As a freshman at Oberlin College four years ago, David Reese had a lot to do. But one task had nothing to do with academics.

He wanted to find a church. He settled on Peace Community Church because of its commitment to peace and justice issues, its informal worship and its diversity of congregants.

"What I like most is the way PCC combines people who would not otherwise associate to do really amazing and beautiful things," says Reese, 22, a religion major from Mayville, N.Y.

"The high number of potlucks is also important," he says, half-joking.

The church was founded as the First Baptist Church of Oberlin. In 2000, it changed its name to better reflect its mission, says the Rev. Mary Hammond, co-pastor of the church. The name brought about 25 new people, most of whom would never have thought about visiting, she says.

Reese says he likes that the church makes decisions by consensus. Everyone -- not just a small group -- is involved. For example, last year, after much discussion, the church joined the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists, which publicly advocates the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people within the Baptist communities of faith.

Reese, who graduates later this month, plans to attend Chicago Theological Seminary and earn a master's degree in divinity.

He's not sure whether he'll lead a congregation, but he wants to be involved in church work.

At Peace Community, Reese is the peace and justice intern, in which he acts as a liaison between the campus and town activist groups. He also has led several study groups and even preached a couple of times.

Reese says being active in the church makes him feel alive. "It's good for me, and it's good for the world," he says. "God's greatest glory is a human being fully alive."

A recent visit: From the outside, Peace Community Church is a handsome, towering two-story brick building with a bell tower. Inside, however, it looks and feels like a quaint country church.

The mood is casual. Church-goers chat in the sanctuary before the service. As the Rev. Steve Hammond (co-pastor at the church) approaches the pulpit, their voices become hushed and they take their seats.

Announcements are made and then the Rev. Mary Hammond plays a hymn on the piano.

After a welcome from Steve Hammond and a song from the choir, Hammond hands the microphone to congregants. Some share prayer requests for the sick while one tells about his visits to colleges with his son.

During his sermon, Hammond speaks about how the disciple Thomas doubted the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He challenges congregants to come out of their own tombs.

"We know racism," he says. "We know nationalism. We know homophobia. We know greed, lust and betrayal. We know what it means to hate our enemies, to do bad things to those who do bad things to us.

"We want to strictly define who is the neighbor we will love, and who is the stranger we won't. We know about retaliation.

"Forgiveness is a little harder to comprehend."

The service ends with members making a circle and clasping hands for a final prayer.

Old Cambridge Baptist Church, Cambridge, MA

(American Baptist, BPFNA)

Not Your Father's Baptist Ministry

(Article in Bay Windows)

By Ethan Jacobs, ejacobs@baywindows.com

[Bay Windows Article](#)

Old Cambridge Baptist Church combines faith with politics to work for LGBT causes



Rev. Irv Cummings of OCBC

Viewed from the street, Old Cambridge Baptist Church projects a stately, tranquil elegance: the building, constructed in 1870, stands out with its beautiful stone façade, stained glass windows and a steeple that towers above the neighboring buildings. The only hint from the outside that the church is different from your run-of-the-mill traditional New England

congregation are the signs along the sidewalk welcoming people inside, which include proud and weather-worn rainbow stickers alongside the invitation to attend Easter Sunday services.

Yet walk through the doors any day of the workweek, when many churches are shuttered and focused on internal business, and it becomes immediately clear that this is no typical church. In the main sanctuary, the altar, lectern and all the other staples of Sunday services have been pushed aside, and in their place a group of ballet dancers practice in a room filled with practice bars. Jose Mateo's Ballet Theatre, a nonprofit dance company, has practiced and performed in the space for the past five years and has helped the church embark on major renovations, including rewiring the building and repairing some of the building's structural defects.

Wandering downstairs, the church basement is bustling with activity. Long hallways stretch down the length of the building, connecting a network of offices rented out to a handful of busy nonprofits. In one room people take computer classes in a computer lab, while in another vendors of Spare Change newspaper stop by to pick up the latest copies of the homeless advocacy paper (the editorial offices are also located in the church basement). And most surprising given the church's traditional exterior, Sue Hyde, coordinator of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's (NGLTF) Creating Change conference, works out of one office planning next year's event.

Pastor Irv Cummings, who is openly gay, said the church has opened its space to nonprofits since 1975 and has seen that as a part of its mission to promote social justice.

"In 1975 the church decided to open up its building as the result of what a good Baptist would call a calling," said Cummings. "It came to feel that for us to have

this resource of this building here in the middle of Harvard Square that wasn't used except for half a day one day a week, was bordering on the sinful, and we really needed to open the space up."

For more than two decades, both through its work with LGBT nonprofits and through its work as a welcoming and affirming congregation, Old Cambridge Baptist Church has made advocating on behalf of the LGBT community a priority. The Boston area has no shortage of LGBT-inclusive churches, but few can boast that the gay agenda is being plotted in their own church basement.

Cutting-edge ministry

When many LGBT people hear the word "Baptist" the first thing that comes to mind is the Southern Baptists, one of the more vocally anti-gay denominations in the country which famously boycotted Disney for nearly a decade in part because of the company's pro-gay policies. Like their Southern counterparts, the American Baptists oppose same-sex relations at the national level, but such a policy has no hindrance on Old Cambridge Baptist Church's efforts on behalf of LGBT equality. The American Baptists allow individual churches to set their own policies, giving Old Cambridge Baptist Church the authority not only to welcome the LGBT community but to appoint LGBT clergy and staff and to join same-sex couples in holy matrimony, despite the national denomination's stance. Old Cambridge Baptist Church is still in the minority; of the 5800 congregations across the country only 50, including Old Cambridge Baptist Church, are part of the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists, the denomination's program for LGBT-inclusive churches.

Even by the standards of pro-gay mainline Christian churches, Old Cambridge Baptist Church is about as pro-gay as one could imagine. The church boasts an openly gay pastor, an openly gay music director and a congregation with nearly a third of its membership LGBT-identified. Beyond having the NGLTF running its Cambridge operation out of its basement, Old Cambridge Baptist Church was the first congregation to join the Religious Coalition for the Freedom to Marry (RCFM) as a congregation, rather than having its pastor join as an individual. Cummings also serves as a board member of RCFM. Cummings said the church, which became welcoming and affirming in 1983, was one of the early leaders in the movement for LGBT-inclusion in the denomination, although he said in the last few years other churches have stepped up to help in the effort.

Old Cambridge Baptist Church may be exceptionally pro-gay, but Cummings said its stance is unsurprising given the church's strong and historical progressive leanings.

"Since the late 60s the church has been very involved in civil rights and anti-war stuff," said Cummings. "And then it became involved in the sanctuary movement, which assisted refugees from Latin America and had been involved also in women's ordination issues."

Progressive politics has been carefully woven into the church's spiritual life. During the March 26 sermon, Cummings discussed the biblical story of the prophet Deborah and critiqued the Old Testament for its valorization of war and militarism and contrasted that with the church's own mission as a "peace church." Later during the service, parishioners were given the chance to make prayer requests to the congregation, and people asked for prayers not only for the benefit of themselves and loved ones but also on behalf of political refugees and on behalf of peace in the Middle East.

That focus on progressive politics is part of what drew the NGLTF to the space. Hyde knew of Old Cambridge Baptist Church's progressive leanings from her work at the now-defunct Gay Community News, and when she was looking for office space in the Cambridge area in 1993 she set up shop in their basement. Since then, NGLTF and Old Cambridge Baptist Church have collaborated on a couple of occasions. In 2002 they joined with other churches in Cambridge and Jamaica Plain to co-sponsor a march for LGBT families called "Walk with the Ones You Love." In June 2004 they teamed with the Homeless Empowerment Project, another nonprofit operating out of the Old Cambridge Baptist Church basement, to hold a protest service following the death of President Ronald Reagan in memory of those who had been negatively impacted by his administration, particularly the homeless and people with AIDS.

"I felt that media representations of Ronald Reagan at the time of his death were adulatory to the point of misrepresenting a whole point of view about the impact of Ronald Reagan's policies on this country," said Cummings. "And if we were going to celebrate the life of this president as if he were a great president, which I don't think he was, then I felt that there needed to be a counter voice, and that counter voice could only come from the people who were mistreated on account of the policies he brought forward in this country."

Yet most of the interaction between Hyde and Cummings has been of an informal nature, and they

have used their relationship to help inform the work that each does on social justice issues.

"Irv and I have an informal kitchen cabinet with each other. I guess you should call it a coffee cabinet," said Hyde. "He and I check in with each other about once a week about things going on politically. It can be anything from local politics in Cambridge to what's going on with MassEquality and the Religious Coalition for the Freedom to Marry... It's always good to have a sounding board."

A place for LGBT Christians to call home

For about the past 12 years the attendees at the American Baptist Church's Biennial Meeting have been confronted by a rather unconventional protest. As thousands of delegates from across the country file into the site of each conference they are met at the doors by a church choir singing traditional Baptist hymns. Cummings, who began the tradition, said that the choir sings beautiful, reverential versions of the hymns, but what makes them stand out is their rainbow banner marking them out as LGBT Baptists and their allies. The choir is made up of parishioners from Old Cambridge Baptist Church and from other churches across the country. In a denomination that officially considers homosexuality incompatible with Christian teachings, such a public statement of LGBT pride still provokes an impassioned response from observers, Cummings said, although he himself no longer organizes the chorus.

"The response of the crowd varies from thumbs up support to people spitting at us. It's pretty uncomfortable to be spit at, but on the other hand that's when you know it's important that you're there," said Cummings, who is himself openly gay. "One thing that was quite wonderful about it is the music is just fabulous. If folks are going to get it together to spit at something that beautiful then they need to look at some of the feelings in their hearts."

That drive to seek justice for LGBT people has informed Old Cambridge Baptist Church's work in Cambridge for more than two decades. Cummings came to Old Cambridge Baptist Church in October of 1990 from a small congregation in Vermont, and from day one he was out to the congregation, but he said the church's pro-gay leanings had been in place long before he arrived. The church became welcoming and affirming in 1983 after its then-pastor came out to the congregation as a lesbian, and months before Cummings arrived the church held its first religious marriage ceremony for a same-sex couple.

That commitment to the LGBT community has drawn in parishioners who have felt alienated from their

churches because they were LGBT-identified. One of those who found a home in the church is openly gay music director Tom Jones. Just five years ago Jones thought that anti-gay sentiment had put an end to his long career as a church music director. For 14 years Jones served as music director at another American Baptist church, Boston's Tremont Temple Baptist Church, but in 2000 he said he was pressured to resign after he disclosed to then-interim pastor Ronald Mansdoerfer that he was gay and in a relationship with his partner since 1990 (see "Tremont Temple, Which Will Host An Ex-Gay Conference, Not Welcoming To Gays," Oct. 29, 2005). He continued his work as a professional singer and began attending churches strictly as a parishioner. Then in 2002 Cummings, who officiated at Jones and his partner's commitment ceremony in 1992, offered him a position at Old Cambridge Baptist Church.

"The thing that I missed the most [after leaving Tremont Temple] was the opportunity to serve as a choir director," said Jones. "When the opportunity came up at Old Cambridge to actually conduct again I thought, wow, I never thought I'd have this opportunity again, and I took it."

He has been there ever since, and while the 50-member congregation at Old Cambridge Baptist Church may be smaller than at Tremont Temple, Jones said that he has been able to find a home at a church that is equally committed to social justice and biblical thinking.

Kevin Henze, a 28-year-old Brighton resident and a transplant from Indiana, began attending Old Cambridge Baptist Church three years ago and is now a deacon and chair of the church's spiritual life team, which coordinates the sermons and the music for services and works to keep its fingers on the pulse of the church's spiritual life. Henze grew up in a nondenominational Protestant church in Indiana that he said had few if any conversations about homosexuality and assumed that all of its parishioners were straight. When he moved up to Boston for graduate school he felt disillusioned with the church and stopped attending for about four years. After that absence from church he said he felt like there was something missing in his life, and a friend recommended Old Cambridge Baptist Church as an affirming congregation. Like Jones Henze said he felt immediately at home in large part because of the church's focus on social justice.

"I would say the major thing that's attracted me and kept me at Old Cambridge Baptist Church is that the focus is on social justice, making the world a better place, and I've heard a number of sermons from Iv

or guest preachers that have specifically addressed LGBT issues, but I've also heard the same amount addressing issues of poverty, issues of war," Henze said. "One thing I think is so refreshing is, in some ways my experiences at Old Cambridge Baptist Church have let me know that my faith experience is not something that only occurs on Sunday but should inform how I live in the world."

For Marcia Deihl, a 56-year-old Cambridge bisexual activist who has been a longtime member of the Cambridge Lavender Alliance, also cited the church's politics as a major draw. She left the Presbyterian church she had grown up in at 17 and had not returned since, but in the past decade she felt the desire to reconnect with a church, and for eight years she has been attending Old Cambridge Baptist Church, singing in the choir for four. Prior to that she had a difficult time finding a church that struck the right balance between religion and politics.

"I went church shopping, and to make a long story short some churches were not left enough or not queer enough for me, and other churches were all politics, there was no mention of the 'g word,' meaning God," said Deihl. Old Cambridge Baptist Church struck the right balance.

Cummings said the opportunity to pastor in a mainline Christian church as an openly gay man with outspoken progressive politics is a boon that he tries not to take for granted.

"What it means is for me personally I feel like I live in a bubble," he said. "Occasionally I get reminded at how special this all is. I mean, I basically consider myself a pastor who happens to be gay, so I leave town or I hear horror stories from other pastors, particularly gay and lesbian pastors, and I think, 'my God I'm lucky.'"

7. Alliance of Baptists' Statement on Same-Sex Marriage

In light of the upcoming vote in the U.S. Senate on the discriminatory anti-gay Federal Marriage Amendment, please review the statement below, which was adopted at the Annual Meeting of the Alliance of Baptists at First Baptist Church in Dayton, Ohio, and seek discernment about promoting justice and equal treatment for same-sex couples in America.

The Alliance of Baptists' Statement on Same-Sex Marriage, April 17, 2004

Affirming that our federal and state constitutions exist to protect the rights of minorities from the tyranny of the majority and in the context of the current debate over same-sex marriage, we of the Alliance of Baptists decry the politicization of same-sex marriage in the current presidential contest and other races for public office. We specifically reject the proposed amendments to the constitution of the United States and state constitutions that would enshrine discrimination against sexual minorities and define marriage in such a way as to deny same-sex couples a legal framework in which to provide for one another and those entrusted to their care.

As Christians and as Baptists, we particularly lament the denigration of our gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender sisters and brothers in this debate by those who claim to speak for God. We affirm that the Alliance of Baptists supports the rights of all citizens to full marriage equality, and we affirm anew that the Alliance will "create places of refuge and renewal for those who are ignored by the church."

8. ClergyForFairness.org

Clergy For Fairness is an organization of clergy members and religious leaders strongly opposed to the Federal Marriage Amendment. If you are clergy, join the fight to stand up for individual rights and religious liberty. Visit ClergyForFairness.org today, and add your name to the growing list of Americans who oppose writing discrimination into our Constitution.

9. ABPSW Withdraws from the ABC/USA

On May 11, 2006, the Board of Directors of the American Baptist Churches of the Pacific Southwest voted to withdraw from the Covenant of Relationships of the American Baptist Churches USA effective, November 1, 2006. The Board's vote was unanimous.

On April 29, 2006 delegates from the churches of the American Baptist Churches of the Pacific Southwest voted on the recommendation of the Board of Directors to withdraw from the Covenant of Relationships and Agreements of the American Baptist Churches USA; voting Yes: 1,125 delegates, Voting No: 209 delegates. The Board of Directors called for this vote to provide the Board with guidance and input needed to make a responsible and informed decision on withdrawing from the Covenant of Relationships with the American Baptist Churches USA. In order to complete the necessary

legal and governance actions required, November 1, 2006 will be the effective date of withdrawal.

The American Baptist Churches of the Pacific Southwest will become Transformation Ministries: "a movement of Baptist churches committed to change their worlds for Christ," said Dr. Dale Salico, the ministry's Executive Minister.

10. 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. Tom Walsh is a member of the search committee, and will be receiving resumes and profiles at pastorsearch@prescottchurch.org. Write to Prescott Memorial Baptist Church, 961 Getwell Rd., Memphis, TN 38111, 901-327-8479.

Ithaca, NY: First Baptist Church, Ithaca, NY, is seeking a full-time senior pastor. Contact (607) 273-5800. Or write First Baptist Church / P.O. Box 254 / DeWitt Park / Ithaca, NY / 14851.

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.

Long Beach, CA: First Congregational in Long Beach, CA is looking for a director of youth and family ministries. This is a large, liberal, urban, open & affirming, just peace, social justice church. Robert Stapp, former music minister at Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church, Oakland, CA (W&A) is on the search committee. Visit: www.firstchurchlb.org

Kent, WA: Panther Lake Community Church, a member of Evergreen Association, will be looking for a new pastor. Marilyn Marston has left. They may have an interim. They are not W&A but may be open to a gay pastor. Panther Lake Community Church, 10630 SE 204th, Kent, WA 98031-1512, 253/854-4540

11. 2006 Regional AWAB Gatherings -- Expanding the Welcoming Church Movement 12-Stop Tour

June 2-4: Chicagoland Gatherings
Contact Ken Pennings, (608) 255-2155, ken@wabaptists.org.

July 21-22: New England Gathering. Hosted by First Churches, 129 Main St, Northampton, MA, 01060, (413) 584-9392. Contact Bruce Baker at bpenke@aol.com, (617) 669-2974

September 22-24: North Carolina Gathering. Hosted by Olin T. Binkley Memorial Baptist Church, 1712 Willow Drive, Chapel Hill, NC 27514. Contact Ken Pennings, (608) 255-2155, ken@wabaptists.org.

September 29-October 1: Upper Midwest Gathering (MN/WI). Contact JoAnne Juett (715) 832-0642, icjuett@sbcglobal.net.

October 13-15: Northwest Gathering. Hosted by Seattle First Baptist Church and University Baptist Church, Seattle, Washington. Contact Craig Darling (craigdarling@companis.org) or Tim Phillips (tim@ubcseattle.org) for more information.

October 20-22: Texas AWAB Retreat. Hosted by University Baptist Church, 2130 Guadalupe St., Austin, TX 78705. Contact Bill Cox, (512) 619-4909, bcoxal@yahoo.com.

November 3-5: Philadelphia Area Gathering. Hosted by Drexel Hill Baptist Church, 4400 State Rd., Drexel Hill, PA 19026. Contact (610) 259-2356, rickardsh@msn.com.

12. 2006 Events Sponsored by AWAB's Partners

See <http://www.welcomingresources.org/> (calendar)

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

July 14-15...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 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.

October 21-22... Interfaith Conference: *Transforming Faith - A Transgender Witness*, at First United Methodist Church, Corvallis, OR. Sponsored by The Community of Welcoming Congregations and the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies. Keynote: Dr. Virginia Ramey Mollenkott. Plenary Speakers: The Rev. Dr. Erin Swenson, The Rev. Malcolm Himschoot, The Rev. Dr. Justin Tanis. Concert by the gospel choir Transcendence. Contact: The Community of Welcoming Congregations, PO Box 14948, Portland, OR 97293, 503-665-8741, tara@welcomingcongregations.org

13. Resource

Sign up to receive updates on the first lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender preaching and devotional resource, **Out In Scripture**. All you have to do is go to the website <http://www.hrc.org/scripture> and provide your e-mail address in the top left column.

Whether you're a minister who has felt called to preach sermons faithful to the Bible and the authentic lives of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people, or you're looking for a devotional resource that will deepen your spiritual practice and honor GLBT lives, you'll want to get this free resource. By signing up now, you'll receive regular updates about **Out In Scripture** and, starting in September, you'll

receive regular weekly installments. Guided by the Revised Common Lectionary, a listing of Bible passages for the church year, **Out In Scripture** features thoughtful commentaries written and reviewed by some of the most respected scholars from around the country and across the variety of Christian denominations.

This resource is a first of its kind. I hope you'll not only sign up for it but encourage others to do so as well. Together we can change the conversation about religion and LGBT people.

*Harry Knox,
Director, HRC Religion and Faith Program*

Associational is a periodic e-newsletter of the Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists, a network of 63 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.