



The Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists

Associational

A Ongoing eNewsletter from the Executive Director

Issue 25 ~ October 5, 2006

From the Executive Director

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

What is AWAB's strategy for increasing the number of congregations which openly welcome and affirm people of all sexual orientations and gender identities?

Faith Based Community Organizing Leadership Training!!

The Trainings will be intense 3+ day hands-on workshops intended to give participants the skill-set and knowledge-base to build local or regional "Core Teams" equipped to expand welcoming & affirming programs within area congregations.

The Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists (AWAB), The Brethren Mennonite Council for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Interests (BMC), the Gay, Lesbian and Affirming Disciples Alliance Inc. (GLAD) and the Welcoming Congregation Network of the Community of Christ (WCN) have received a grant from the Arcus Foundation to help expand the number of welcoming and affirming congregations in all four movements!

In March 2007, the four organizations will jointly hire a full-time national field organizer for a three-year project to increase the number of supportive congregations in each denomination through faith-based community organizing training, strategic initiatives and educational campaigns.

We hope the field organizer will hold the first two trainings in the fall of 2007.

Isn't this exciting?!

Lovingly,
Rev. Ken Pennings
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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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New AWAB Council Member

Ron Green is AWAB's new Council member who will serve as the Chair of the Finance Committee. Ron comes to us with a tremendous wealth of experience chairing finance committees of non-profits. He is from Myers Park Baptist Church, Charlotte, NC, and is on the faculty of Winthrop University. Ron will be a great addition to our Council. Welcome Ron at rk3@comporium.net

.Advent Covental Vows

We gather 'round this table to recall the past and to speak our vows for the future.

Around this table of memory and mercy, give us eyes to see, ears to hear, and courage to respond. Have mercy, O Christ, and make us merciful.

Our memories stretch back to the dawn of creation, when the Blessed One took delight in all that was made. Though bruised and battered, Eden's promise of delight still shines in our darkness.

Have mercy, O Christ, and make us heirs of your delight.

We remember the prophets and saints and humble servants, both known and nameless, who in large ways and small leaned into the promise of shame's demise.

Have mercy, O Christ, and make us heirs of your forgiveness.

We remember the shout of Mary, who proclaimed the end of arrogance and the advent of righteousness. We remember Joseph, and the shepherds, and the magi, who boldly cradled the Promise of steadfast love.

Have mercy, O Christ, and make us heirs of your steadfast love.

We remember those who first formed this Circle, fostering hope for the Beloved Community, for the day when all the world shall feast and be satisfied.

Have mercy, O Christ, and make us heirs of your Beloved Community.

Therefore this day we declare our fidelity: to the Reign of God writ large, by means of faithfulness to the sisters and brothers in this Circle.

Have mercy, O Christ, and make us heirs of your faithful care.

Grant grace, as we extend tender mercy to each other, with patience; as we teach each other, with diligence; as we receive assistance from each other, with gratitude; as we offer up our assets, sacrificially, to the building of this body.

Have mercy—tender mercy—O Christ, and make us heirs of your clemency.

Having eaten from this table, having sipped from this cup, having made these covenant vows, we are implicated in God's insurgency: against the world and all its vengeance, for the earth and its destiny of hope.

Hear these promises, Gracious God, as we wander in the starlight of your Wonder. Have mercy, and make us heirs of your hopeful Presence.

May it be so, now and always, in this Circle of Mercy, as we live our proclamation: seeking justice, pursuing peace, following Jesus.

AMEN. May it be so!

—*Covenant renewal vows said by members of Circle of Mercy Congregation (Asheville, NC – W&A) around the communion table on 3 December 2006, the occasion of their fifth anniversary as a congregation. Blessings to our entire AWAB family!—*
Rev. Ken & Nancy Seheste

Editorial in The Washington Post by W&A Pastor

Editorial published in *The Washington Post* (Dec. 12) by Rev. Bart Cockran, pastor of Ravensworth Baptist Church, Annandale, VA. Regarding the Dec. 4 front-page article "Episcopal Churches to Vote on Departure":

The historic Falls Church and Truro Church congregations in Virginia are contemplating severing ties with the U.S. Episcopal Church and aligning instead with a controversial African bishop who advocates prison for those engaging in homosexual activity. The Virginia churches' spokesman indicated that this position gives him "pause."

So what would be a "show-stopper," the death penalty for gay people?

My little, not-so-historic church in Annandale, Ravensworth Baptist, is one of a handful of Baptist churches in Virginia that are welcoming and affirming to all who come to Christ's table, including our homosexual brothers and sisters. As such, we are not unfamiliar with controversy.

But as a body, we choose to grow together and stand on the side of love and inclusion, as directed by the spirit of our Lord and by his apostle Paul, who implored us to "do everything in love."

BART COCHRAN, Alexandria

(Ravensworth just voted to join AWAB. AMEN!!!)

AWAB Seeks Nominations for Two Awards

Every two years, the AWAB Council is privileged to honor two individuals whose efforts to improve the path of GLBT people of faith have been inspirational and transformative. We are currently seeking nominations for these two awards, to be presented at the AWAB gathering in Washington D.C. in June 2007.

The Randle R. Mixon Award for Christian Service is given to an individual whose work has helped to increase the inclusion of sexual minorities within Baptist bodies and has served to advance the cause of justice by educating congregations and organizations about sexual minority and gender identity issues.

The Barbra MacNair Award for Christian Witness is given to an individual whose life has inspired understanding and acceptance of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people by opening dialogue that would not otherwise be there, opening the eyes of those who might otherwise turn away, and, by example, helping to advance the affirmation of everyone, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Please submit nominations to AWAB at ken@wabaptists.org by January 31, 2007.

Help Sponsor AWAB Hospitality Suite

Would you, your AWAB church, group of churches, or AWAB chapter be willing to help sponsor AWAB's ABC/USA Biennial Hospitality Suite? This is a place for welcoming & affirming people to gather for a time of fellowship and conversation after AWAB and ABC/USA events at the Biennial meeting in Washington, DC, June 29-July 2. Please contact

Sandi John at sandijohn@verizon.net, or Heather Rittenhouse at angels4871@hotmail.com.

Give to AWAB from your IRA in 2006 or 2007

This summer, the Pension Protection Act (PPA) became the law of the land. The PPA permits you to make charitable contributions from your IRA up to \$100,000 per year for two years, 2006 and 2007. Consult an attorney, tax expert, or investment professional for more information.

Events Sponsored by AWAB & Partners

February 16-17, 2007...Revive Us Again!

Revival of our Spirit, Revival of our Baptist Principles, at Andover Newton Theological School, Newton, Mass.

This is a gathering of progressive Baptists from around the country, ready to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. We are gathering to say that we are Christian, we are Baptist, and we believe our Baptist Principles are foundational to our understanding and sharing of the Gospel. We are gathering to say that we can be both progressive and evangelical!

Speakers include: Rev. Cynthia Maybeck, pastor, Trinity Church in Northborough, MA; Rev. Nancy Hitt, pastor, First Baptist Church of Natick, MA; Rev. Dr. Liliana Da Valle; Rev. Alan Newton, Executive Minister, ABC of Rochester-Genesee.

Friday, February 16th, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Healing Service and Worship, led by the Rev. Cynthia Maybeck

Saturday, February 17th, 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Bible Study and Discussion Groups; Afternoon Workshops; Forum: Update on ABC-USA

Closing Revival Worship at the First Baptist Church in Newton

There will be a registration fee (to cover the cost of meals on Saturday) of approximately \$30. For accommodations, please see the separate Travel and Accommodations notice.

Revive Us Again! is endorsed by the following churches and organizations: The American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts, The Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists, The Samuel Stillman Association, First Baptist Church, Framingham, MA

Please RSVP to Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell at 508-872-1176 or email fbcf Framingham@verizon.net by January 31st.

~ **Feb. 17-18, 2007:** Ken Pennings at University Baptist Church, Minneapolis, MN for an "AWAB Sunday"

~ **March 15-18, 2007:** Ken Pennings and our new field organizer at the Faith-Based Organizing Training in Evanston, IL. To register, visit www.welcomingresources.org.

~ **April 13-15, 2007:** Alliance of Baptists Convocation, Washington, DC.

~ **June 29-July 2, 2007:** ABC-USA Biennial

July 23-28, 2007, AS THE POWERS FALL: SUSTAINING OUR FAITH AND EACH OTHER AS EMPIRE CRUMBLES, Berea College, Berea, Kentucky – BPFNA Peace Camp

This conference is for you, if you have ever...
 ... Wondered if things could be different but questioned what you could do.
 ... Dreamed of what could happen if powers and principalities were defeated.
 ... Wished to understand how destructive systems come into being and how they can be undermined by ordinary people.
 ... Wanted concrete training in bringing change for the social good in your church, school, job, or neighborhood.
 ... Longed for companions in your commitment to and your work for peace rooted in justice.

Join us in beautiful Berea, Kentucky for a week of
 - challenge and sustenance - gathering and nurture - training and fun -
 - community and learning - protest and art - music and worship -
 - a week that will renew your focus, your energy, your work, your spirit.

We will be led by:

- Michelle Tooley, sharing the inspiring story of Berea College as it lives out a vision of inclusion and equality.
- Si Kahn, singing and strategizing.

- Alicia Pagan and Ray Two Crows Wallen, leading the Mural Project, interactive art designed to discover and embody the hidden strengths and resources of our community.
- Al Staggs, bringing to life historical figures who challenged Empire - Deitrich Bonhoeffer, Oscar Romero, Clarence Jordan, and Jesus of Nazareth.
- Vern Ratzlaff, awakening us to the sweeping Biblical stories of the rise and fall of mighty empires and connecting us to the Divine spirit which outlasts them all.
- Rita Nakashima Brock, unmasking false theologies that allow the church to support Empire and providing an alternative theology that brings life even while it undermines Empire.
- Daniel Hunter, describing possibilities for the fall of the U.S. Empire, the impact this will have around the world, and strategizing for creating communities that will thrive even as that Empire fails. A myriad of workshop leaders who will help us discover what we can do right where we are.

You will go home rested, grounded, equipped, and nurtured for the road ahead, knowing that you are a part of a thriving community creating peace. Save the date and plan to join us for Peace Camp 2007.

A Simple Way to Support HIV-AIDS Research

Bristol-Myers is donating a dollar to AIDS every time someone goes to their website and moves the match to the candle and lights it, by clicking on the wick.

Please forward this to your friends to spread. It takes a second to raise a dollar.

Please visit the site.... <https://www.lighttounite.org>

Resources

'FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO

A feature-length documentary on homosexuality and the Bible. The film has interviews with Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Peter Gomes, Chrissy Gephardt, Gene Robinson, and AWAB's own Susan Sparks, soon to be Sr. Pastor of Madison Avenue Baptist Church, NY, NY. Find out more at www.forthetellsmeso.org

INCLUSIVE HYMNS FOR LIBERATING CHRISTIANS

by Jann Aldredge-Clanton and Larry Schultz --.

Inclusive Hymns for Liberating Christians will expand the spiritual experience of any group, large or small. These hymns inspire justice and peacemaking. They empower women, men, and children of all races to become all they are created to be in the divine image. These hymns will lift the heart, invigorate the mind, and enliven the spirit. The wide variety of biblical divine names and images in Inclusive Hymns for Liberating Christians will contribute to belief in the sacredness of all people and all creation. Peace and justice flow from this belief. These hymns draw from the prophetic, liberating tradition in Scripture. Predominant themes of the hymns are peace, justice, resurrection, abundant life, liberation, new creation, and partnership in relationships. This collection includes hymns that celebrate the seasons of the church year and other special occasions.

Balancing feminine and masculine divine names, Inclusive Hymns for Liberating Christians will lead to deeper understanding and experience of the Creator of all. Some of the hymns resurrect feminine divine images, like Wisdom and Ruah, that have long been buried in Scripture and Christian tradition. Bringing feminine sacred names into worship will encourage the revaluing of the feminine so that the Gospel values of liberation and equality are realized.

Inclusive Hymns for Liberating Christians will also support the sacred value of people of color by changing the traditional negative symbolism of

darkness. These hymns symbolize darkness as creative bounty and beauty. Inclusive Hymns for Liberating Christians will help churches and individuals in their journey toward freedom from racism, sexism, and other injustices.

For many of these hymns Jann Aldredge-Clanton draws from the rich tradition of hymn tunes, giving new expression to familiar music. This hymn collection also includes original tunes and arrangements by composer Larry E. Schultz. This new, vibrant music enhances the meaning of the texts.

Inclusive Hymns for Liberating Christians will rejuvenate the hymn tradition for groups and individuals alike. Inclusive Hymns for Liberating Christians will make a valuable contribution to church hymnody. ORDER: Eakin Press, 800-880-8642; OR jannaldredgeclanton.com

Associational is a periodic e-newsletter of the Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists, a network of 67 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.