



The Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists

# Associational

An Ongoing eNewsletter from the Executive Director

Issue 42 ~ April, 2008

## From the Executive Director

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Please plan to attend the Mid-Atlantic Gathering of Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists, April 18 & 19, 2008, at Central Baptist Church, 106 W. Lancaster Ave., Wayne, Pennsylvania. Details below.

Lovingly,  
Rev. Ken Pennings  
[ken@wabaptists.org](mailto:ken@wabaptists.org)

### ***Sexuality and Gender: What Do We REALLY Know?***

April 18 & 19, 2008, at Central Baptist Church, 106 W. Lancaster Ave., Wayne, Pennsylvania

The science and theories known well in the world of sexology are not well known in the theological/religious world.

Central Baptist Church (CBC) in Wayne, Pennsylvania, has discovered, through many classes taught by Bill Stayton, that the more they know about sexuality and gender—fads and myths, science and story—the easier it is for people to completely accept themselves and others in their sexual and gender diversity. Therefore, CBC offers this course to the Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists (AWAB) and friends—gay, straight, and transgender—and to those in other congregations who want to know more about sex and gender. Presented by a nationally known sex educator and his special guests, this program offers humor, comfortability, and a passion to integrate sexuality and faith.

**PRESENTER:** Rev. Dr. William Stayton, Scholar in Residence and Professor in the Doctoral Program in Human Sexuality at Widener University, Director of Center for Sexuality and Religion, ordained American Baptist clergy, Sexologist, Relationship Counselor, and Sex Therapist. Also, guests will share their personal stories to illustrate the science and theories presented.

**BIBLICAL REFLECTIONS:** Marcus Pomeroy and Laurie Sweigard, pastors at CBC. This pastoral team will bring biblical responses to each of the presentations.

**MORNING DEVOTIONAL LEADER:** Rev. Heather Rittenhouse, chair of the AWAB council, ordained Baptist clergy, authentic preacher.

**WORSHIP SPEAKER:** Peggy Campolo, sought-after speaker at evangelical churches around the country regarding the church and homosexual persons.

**PLAYWRIGHT AND PERFORMER:** Jeffrey Barnes, B.S. in theatre from University of Indianapolis, Associate degree in theology from Indiana Bible College. In his blog he writes: "What would happen if you could travel into the past to meet yourself at a younger age? What would she or he think of who you've become?" In his newest one-person show "And He Ran Screaming," Jeffrey Barnes attempts to do just that. See what

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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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**Barbara Hulsing, Editor**

608-255-2155, [mail@wabaptists.org](mailto:mail@wabaptists.org)  
PO Box 259257, Madison, WI 53725

happens when he meets the younger, more naive version of himself. Join him on this revealing journey filled with school bus bullies, gym class sissies, love, lust, betrayal, damnation, and salvation.

#### Program and Schedule

Friday, April 18

6:15 pm– 7:40 pm

Registration, reception

7:45 pm– 9:30 pm

Drama: *And He Ran Screaming*, and discussion with playwright and actor, Jeffrey Barnes

9:30 pm– 10:00 pm

Enjoy one another

Saturday, April 19

8:00 am – 8:45 am

Registration and cold breakfast buffet

8:50 am –12:30 pm

Introductions, Devotions, Discussion guidelines, Music, Two Presentations, Special guests, Biblical affirmations/reflections, Breaks, Small groups

Presentation topics:

*What Is a Boy or a Girl, REALLY?*

*The Gender Spectrum*

12:30 – 1:20 pm

Lunch

1:30– 4:10

Music, one presentation with guests, Biblical affirmations/reflections, Large group responses and What's new in AWAB?

Presentation topic:

*Sexual Orientation*

4:15 – 5:15 pm

Celebrative worship and communion

After dinner, on your own in a local restaurant, there will be a showing of the highly acclaimed movie, "For The Bible Tells Me So," at CBC for those who wish to see it.

For directions by car and train, housing options, and information about registration, please go to [www.cbcwayne.org](http://www.cbcwayne.org) or call church office, 610-688-0664. Need more info? Call Kathy at 610-647-9616

Costs: For entire conference including food: \$10 students, \$20 adults, Children free  
for Friday night drama only: \$5 students, \$10 adults

## AWAB Mentioned in *Christian Century*

In the Feb. 26, 2008, issue of **Christian Century** Magazine, the following was included in an article entitled "Moderate Baptists test unity in diversity" (pg. 14):

"At this meeting [of the New Baptist Covenant], a pro-gay group was not allowed to be an official participant in the meeting, and the number of black attendees slowly dwindled over the three days of the conference. As expected, the 16 million-member Southern Baptist Convention was not an official participant, and some organizers aimed to show the potential influence of North America's 'other' Baptist churches - those that are not Southern Baptist.

"This is just a first step, and we've got a long way to go to become a community that overcomes all the divisions that the culture has imposed upon us,' said author Tony Campolo, professor emeritus of sociology at Eastern University. 'That's one of the great challenges, and we hope that this new covenant is going to move in the direction of reaching that end.'

"Campolo scanned the crowd at the Georgia World Congress Center on the morning of January 31 and pegged it as 90 percent white. Around his neck, he wore a brightly colored stole to show solidarity with gay and lesbian Baptists.

"The Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists had sought to be designated a 'participating organization' in the gathering, but officials decided there was not a 'broad consensus' on the issue of gay rights and denied the group an official role.

"'We are not going to act as outsiders trying to get in,' said Ken Pennings, executive director of the pro-gay group. 'We're already in. Some just don't know it yet.'"

## Guest Opinion: New Covenant May Come in Old Wineskins

By Todd Thomason, Pastor of Baptist Temple Church, Alexandria, VA, Published February 21, 2008

(ABP) -- Many of my friends and ministerial colleagues recently returned from the Celebration of a New Baptist Covenant in Atlanta full of enthusiasm. I myself have yet to feel much excitement.

Not that I'm not happy to see African-American Baptists and Anglo Baptists coming together and standing together; I certainly am. Such a reunion is long overdue. Not that I object to the Covenant's platform of "seeking peace with justice, bringing good news to the poor, respecting diversity, welcoming the stranger, and setting the captive free," because I wholeheartedly believe in those biblical imperatives.

To see the entire article, go to <http://www.abpnews.com/www/3042.article>.

## North Carolina AWAB Church Responds to Tax Rebate

Rev. Ken Sehested and his Circle of Mercy Congregation, Asheville, NC, has written to President Bush about the upcoming tax rebate and has provided some suggestions for other congregations to consider. Portions of the letter are:

We want to thank you for your hard work in response to our economic crisis. Nevertheless, we have abiding questions about the recent economic stimulus legislation: Whose economy is being stimulated? Which arrangements are being strengthened and which are being breached?

There exists a frightening, and escalating, pattern of economic disparity both in the U.S. and between the U.S. and the larger family of nations. This is politically dangerous, economically unstable, and environmentally ruinous.

Compelled by our nation's economic divide and the mandates of our faith, members of our congregation voted unanimously to give away all or part of our anticipated tax rebates to organizations that foster justice. We do *not* believe that shopping is an appropriate response to our trauma—whether that of the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, or the crumbling lives being chewed up in our constricting economy. There is something very wrong in this assumption. Our gluttony, literally and figuratively, is laying waste to our commonweal.

We know that relinquishing our rebate checks is a modest step and that many other personal and public commitments are needed. Our vow to forego the extra income is simply a sign of our resolve to bear the cost of moving toward the beloved community.

Suggestions for congregational leaders include the following:

- *Find an appropriate occasion* to ask if there's interest among your members in thinking of alternate spending plans. Maybe raise this in a sermon, Sunday school lesson, newsletter column, prayer meeting, etc.
- *Tease your people's imagination*, doing a rough calculation of the total amount coming to the households in your congregation. (The calculus is a bit complicated, but generally speaking middle-income folk with get \$600 per adult, \$300 per dependent child. For instance, based on rough estimates our congregation of 48 adults and 25 children will collectively receive at least \$25,000—four times our '08 missions budget.) Then

tell your folk, “That’s a huge infusion of cash. The majority of us can get along without it. Is this a time for us to be bold? Think about what we could do with that money that would support the values we profess.”

- *Sound the call.* Organize a time to allow interested members to discuss such ideas. Give people a chance to daydream about what might be done with this money. You probably already have some mission projects that could use a boost. There are probably others things you’ve wanted to do but haven’t had the resources.
- *Feel free to use or adapt* the Circle of Mercy “open letter” in any way you think appropriate. Better yet, draft your own statement for circulation within your congregation and elsewhere.
- *Assure everyone’s freedom of choice*, including whether to contribute, how much to contribute, and where to contribute.
- *Consider communal decision-making.* Some in our Circle will make joint decisions, first developing a list of potential recipients (including brief advocacy statements), then agreeing on terms of the final vote (how many different recipients? gifts to be equal or proportionate).
- *Make this a public event.* Contact your local media if you take this step. A story like this is juicy enough to merit press coverage.
- *Use this exercise to stimulate additional reflection and action* on economic justice to promote ongoing attention for Bible study and commitment.

## Hooge Includes AWAB in Sunday Sermon

On Feb. 17, 2008, Rev. Diane Hooge, pastor of Judson Memorial Baptist Church, Minneapolis, MN, found a way to work AWAB's National Field Organizing Project, Capacity-Buidling Project, and Baptist Youth Camp Project into her sermon:

"The truth is that when we get on the path to transformation in our own lives, it pushes us to seek transformation within our systems. Sometimes calls for change take place within our own church structures. This weekend, [Judson Members] Keith Ford and Kevin Brown are at a four day training event at Mayflower Church [Minneapolis] preparing to be stronger advocates for the Gospel of Inclusion. The Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists hired Rev. Dr. Anita Bradshaw, who is a part-time staff member at Mayflower, to lead training events to help us become better advocates. Our AWAB system is in transition. What worked in the past is being transformed to meet the needs of 2008 and beyond. With the coming of Anita is the challenge to advocate in new ways. With the commitment of Welcoming and Affirming churches has come the challenge to find space and leadership to run a camping program that is based on the theology of hospitality, where children and youth can build on what they already experience in their own churches regarding inclusion."

## Virginia Tech Plans Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention

The President of Virginia Institute of Technology announced a decision to reclaim Norris Hall (where most of the shootings took place) for a state-of-the-art Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention. This proposal is the culmination of a Task Force led by Provost Mark MacNamee -- who is absolutely here “for such a time as this.” He has been grace upon grace from the first moment of this tragedy. Please take the time to voice your support and appreciation to Virginia Tech’s administration for such a courageous and compassionate decision. For more information, go to [www.vtnetletter.vt.edu/dec07/feature1.html](http://www.vtnetletter.vt.edu/dec07/feature1.html).

## Upcoming Events

### AWAB Affiliate Plans & Promotes Events

Take a look at what one of AWAB's affiliates is up to! For more information, contact AWAB Massachusetts Affiliate Coordinator, Bruce Baker ([bpenke@aol.com](mailto:bpenke@aol.com)).

**April 5th: Other Sheep.** See description below.

**April 13<sup>th</sup>: AWAB Bake Sale and Presentation at First Baptist Church, Framingham, MA.** Service is at 10:45 am, with the Bake Sale following the morning service. A short presentation about AWAB, both locally and nationally, will be followed by a time of Q&A.

**May 4th: AWAB Bake Sale at First Baptist Church, Needham, MA.** Service is at 10 am; the Bake Sale will follow the service. A short presentation about AWAB, both locally and nationally, will be followed by a time of Q&A. More info to follow as the date approaches.

**May 9th: AWAB Dinner and Meeting at the home of Clif Holbrook and Ross Dekle.** Arrive anytime after 6:30 pm. Food will be served about 7pm, followed by the meeting. Clif has graciously offered to prepare dinner; however, if you feel led to bring something, please call Clif and coordinate that with him. His number is 781-444-4547. If you are unable to bring anything, please plan on donating a couple of dollars to help Clif offset his grocery bill.

**June 12th & 13th: The Gay Men's Chorus performs.** Ross Dekle is a member of the Gay Men's Chorus. Arrangements can be made for a group to meet and attend together.

**June 14th: AWAB Massachusetts will once again host a booth at Boston's Gay Pride.** However, due to many members being actively involved with other groups, AWAB will not march as a group in the parade. Volunteers are needed to work the booth. There is also an Inter-faith service prior to the start of the parade.

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### Other Sheep

**Saturday, April 5, 3 p.m. (followed by potluck dinner at 5 p.m.), Peck Room, Worcester Hall, Andover Newton Theological School, 210 Herrick Road, Newton, MA**

The Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists/Massachusetts and the Evangelical Fellowship at Andover Newton welcomes Other Sheep to Andover Newton Theological School

**Other Sheep** is an ecumenical Christian ministry working for the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons within their respective faiths worldwide. Begun in Latin America in 1992, its purpose is to network with and equip those who seek to challenge existing prejudices and discriminatory practices, especially in the areas of theological and pastoral training, human and civil rights, and HIV/AIDS prevention and care.

**Steve Parelli**, Executive Director of Other Sheep, and **Jose Ortiz**, his life partner and Other Sheep co-Coordinator for Africa, will offer a presentation on their 2007 six-week summer ministry to Christian (and a few Muslim) LGBTs in Kenya and Uganda. Invited to Kenya by Ishtar MSM, an HIV/AIDS prevention, support and care organization for gay men, Parelli and Ortiz were asked to address the spiritual needs of LGBTs. During the trip, they led discussion groups, collected stories, visited churches and pastors, appeared on a live radio talk show, and helped organize a PFLAG chapter as well as an Other Sheep East Africa board.

We invite you to come and learn more about the exciting work of **Other Sheep** on the frontiers of international LGBT ministry!

For directions and a campus map, visit [www.ants.edu/ants-difference/map/](http://www.ants.edu/ants-difference/map/)

For more information on this event, contact Bruce Baker at [bpenke@aol.com](mailto:bpenke@aol.com) or 617-669-2974.

For more information about Other Sheep, visit [www.othersheep.org](http://www.othersheep.org).

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**Love Welcomes All: Gay and Straight Together**

**April 12, 2008, Trinity Presbyterian Church, 900 Blythe Street, Hendersonville, NY**

The purpose of this conference is to “explore issues of meaning and belonging in faith communities in light of sexual orientation and gender identity.” All interested people—particularly lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people; parents and friends; ministers and congregational leaders—are invited to consider difficult questions and find positive answers in a supportive environment.

In the last two years, more than 180 people attended “Love Welcomes All” conferences, and their evaluations were very positive. One participant said, “Experiencing the love and caring of allies was the highlight for me.” Another wrote, “Knowing that so many people are supportive of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender issues was the highlight of this conference.”

This year’s keynote speaker is Mandy Carter, a founding member of Southerners on New Ground. She is an African-American lesbian and an incredibly dynamic speaker. In 2005, Carter was a member of a group of 1,000 women nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize ([www.1000peacewomen.org](http://www.1000peacewomen.org)), and she continues her work as an award-winning, faith-based community organizer. Workshops of interest to people working to achieve fairness, equity, and justice for all residents of this region will be offered, including “Messages that Work: Advocacy From Your Faith Tradition,” “Realities of Gender Variance,” and “What Comes Next?”

Consider attending, becoming a conference sponsor, and/or giving financial support. Your contributions will be used to keep registration fees affordable and enable us to bring presenters and workshop leaders from outside our immediate area. We appreciate your indicating the level of sponsorship you’re interested in by sending the following information directly to the church address listed below or by responding via email to [HHBishop@aol.com](mailto:HHBishop@aol.com):

Name of individual or organization: \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_ Include my name/the name of my organization as a conference sponsor.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I would like to donate but do not want my name or organization to be listed as a sponsor.
- \_\_\_\_\_ In addition to including my name or the name of my organization as a sponsor, I’d like to make a contribution to support this vital work. Put me down for
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Donation of refreshments
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Donation of food for lunch
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Other in-kind contribution of \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_ **Donation of \$100**
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Donation of \$250
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to **Trinity Presbyterian Church with Love Welcomes All Conference** on the memo line, and mail to:  
Trinity Presbyterian Church  
900 Blythe Street  
Hendersonville, NC 28791

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**Tony Campolo to Preach at Andover Newton**

**April 14, 2008, 1:00 p.m. (Special Worship Service)**

Tony Campolo, Professor Emeritus of Sociology at Eastern University and founder and president of the Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education (EAPE), has worked to create, nurture, and support programs for “at-risk” children in cities across North America and has helped establish schools and universities in several developing countries. On April 14, at Andover Newton Theological School, 210 Herrick Road, Newton Centre, MA, Rev. Dr. Campolo will address the question “How can we be both progressive and evangelical?” For more information on this event, contact Burton Bagby at [BBagby@ants.ecu](mailto:BBagby@ants.ecu) or 713-829-1200. For directions to the event, visit [www.ants.edu/ants-difference/map](http://www.ants.edu/ants-difference/map).

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**TEN Conference 2008****May 22-25, 2008, Phoenix, AZ**

The Evangelical Network (TEN) is a group of Bible believing churches, ministries, Christian workers and individuals bound together by a common shared faith, united in purpose and witness and established as a positive resource and support for Christian gays and lesbians.

To learn more about the organization and the conference, go to [www.theevangelicalnetwork.net](http://www.theevangelicalnetwork.net).

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**The Way that Leads to Peace****July 14-19, 2008, John Abbott College (Saint-Anne-de-Bellevue, Quebec, Canada)**

You are invited to gather this summer for a conference sponsored by the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America. The focus will be what each of us can do in our own personal lives to create peace -- starting with peace within ourselves and circling out to our ways of being in our families, churches, neighborhoods . . . and the world.

Monday night, July 14, keynote address by Jim Loney.

Jim is a member of Christian Peacemaker Teams who, along with three others, was held hostage in Iraq for months in 2005-2006. His peaceful witness before, during, and after his capture has received worldwide attention and opened many hearts to the idea of living life in a peace-filled way, even in the midst of immense violence.

Mornings (Tuesday through Friday) will include music, morning prayer, Bible Study, and workshops. Lawrence Martin will begin our day with prayer.

Wapistan (Lawrence) is a member of the Cree First Nation from Moose Factory Reserve, located on James Bay in Ontario. Wapistan is a story-teller, an environmentalist, a vocalist and drummer and a Juno award winning musician -- he won the very first Canadian Aboriginal Juno Award. He plays many instruments in a style that is a blend of indigenous, country and folk music.

Bible Study will be led by Glen Stassen, Lewis Smedes Professor of Christian Ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary. Focusing on the practices of peace outlined in his book *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War*, Glen will explore both international and personal implications for his practical research into the actions that truly move us toward peace.

Workshops will cover a wide variety of topics -- everything from creating peace within your marriage to supporting the just recovery of New Orleans or addressing lasting issues of injustice toward First Nations people and communities. Workshops leaders who are artists, dramatists, human rights workers, environmentalists, social justice trainers, parents, teachers, pastors, and more will share their wisdom and gather ours.

Children and youth will spend the mornings in their own programs designed to join them into a transformative community and offer them real-life skills for creating peace. Youth work veterans Mary Meadows and Julie Reiswig will coordinate the youth morning sessions. Hector Aristizabal -- artist, human rights worker, therapist, and actor -- will serve as a special resource leader with the youth program, using innovative theatrical techniques to teach conflict transcendence and life affirming group processes. Long-time children's leader Elaine Pennington, will once again coordinate the morning program for children, drawing on various conference leaders to share their skills of art, drama, story-telling, music, conflict transformation and more to help our children develop as peacemakers.

A special afternoon workshop series called "Transforming Conflict: Transformed by Conflict" led by Dwight Lundgren will be offered for adult participants desiring intensive training. Other afternoon offerings will include family-friendly field trips in the Montreal area, intergenerational peacemaking activities, and a peace and justice film series.

Worship together will take place each evening. Preachers will include Mary Hammond of Oberlin, Ohio, USA, and Lee McKenna of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Nightly worship will include music, dance, drama, and sermons

examining the life of peace from the inside out. After hours events will include plays, concerts, and open mike events in which all attendees are invited to share their talents. Hector Aristizabal will present two one-man plays "Nightwind" and "IN-TE-A-RRO-R-GATOR." Lawrence Martin will be in concert.

For more information, contact Rev. LeDayne McLeese Polaski, Program Coordinator  
Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America  
4800 Wedgewood Drive  
Charlotte, NC 28210  
phone: (704)521-6051 fax: (704)521-6053  
[ledayne@bpfna.org](mailto:ledayne@bpfna.org)  
[www.bpfna.org](http://www.bpfna.org)

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## **Important Training – Date Changed!**

***CALLING ALL WELCOMING & AFFIRMING BAPTISTS TO ATTEND IMPORTANT TRAINING!  
September 19-21, 2008 - Wake Forest Divinity School, Winston-Salem, NC***

Along with its ecumenical partners, The Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists has hired Rev. Dr. Anita Bradshaw to train our constituents to become ambassadors of the Gospel of Inclusion right where we live! Our hope is that we will take what we've learned at the training in Winston-Salem, return to our home towns, and begin to work in teams to increase the number of Welcoming & Affirming Congregations in our own areas. Shortly, you'll be able to register for the first training of our National Field Organizing Project at <http://welcomingresources.org>. Contact Anita L. Bradshaw for more information: [nfo@welcomingresources.org](mailto:nfo@welcomingresources.org), 612-791-821.

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Associational is a periodic e-newsletter of the Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists, a network of 68 churches and hundreds of individuals who have joined together to advocate for the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons within Baptist communities of faith. Please forward this e-newsletter to interested friends. Copy relevant information into your organization's bulletin and newsletter. To subscribe, send an e-mail to [subscribe@wabaptists.org](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).

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