



The Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists

# Associational

An Ongoing eNewsletter from the Executive Director

Issue 43 ~ May, 2007

## From the Executive Director

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

I want to give you a status report on some of our new initiatives.

### Media Hits:

An editorial by Heather Rittenhouse and I was published in the Atlanta Journal Constitution on February 13, 2008 [www.ajc.com/opinion/content/opinion/stories/2008/02/12/baptistsed\\_0213.html](http://www.ajc.com/opinion/content/opinion/stories/2008/02/12/baptistsed_0213.html).

Outlets that covered the AJC story were:

- Associated Baptist Press: [www.abpnews.com/www/3042.article](http://www.abpnews.com/www/3042.article), [www.abpnews.com/3038.article](http://www.abpnews.com/3038.article).
- ProgressiveBaptist.net – Feb. 19, [www.Progressivebaptist.net](http://www.Progressivebaptist.net)
- The Baptist Standard (Texas) – Feb. 22 (170,000 readership), [www.baptiststandard.com/postnuke/index.php?module=htmlpages&func=display&pid=7460](http://www.baptiststandard.com/postnuke/index.php?module=htmlpages&func=display&pid=7460)
- Crossing The T — Feb. 14, <http://crossingthet.wordpress.com/2008/02/14/are-lgbt-baptists-inside-or-outside-of-the-new-baptist-covenant>.

In the Feb. 26, 2008, issue of Christian Century, AWAB was mentioned in an article entitled "Moderate Baptists test unity in diversity" (pg. 14).

### Capacity-Building Project:

Capacity-Building Project Coordinator Helen Bishop is currently helping us create organizational policy statements and manuals.

### Baptist Youth Camp, Aug. 17-23, 2008:

Baptist Youth Camp Director Tim Dean is working with a planning team to develop the curriculum for a fabulous week of summer camp at Camp Potawatomi, South Milford, Indiana.

### National Field Organizing Project:

Nine Baptists attended Anita Bradshaw's training in Minneapolis in February and developed an action plan to increase the number of W&A churches in Minnesota and Iowa. Anita will conduct a training primarily for Baptists, Sept. 19-21, 2008, at Wake Forest Divinity School, Winston-Salem, NC. AWAB's strategy for this training is for 20 Baptist pastors in NC to enlist 4 members of their congregations for the training (a potential of 100 Baptists at the Sept. training). Hopefully the AWAB Council will participate in the Sept. training also.

### Ecumenical Relations:

The Institute for Welcoming Resources (of which AWAB is a proud member) has approved the following priorities for 2008-2009:

- Many Stories, One Voice Leadership Conference, Sept. 3-7, 2008, New Orleans
- Finish Curricula (trans, families, Spanish Language Bible Study)
- Ann Thompson Cook curriculum for grade school children
- Youth and Young Adult Networking
- Transgender work
- Technology development
- W&A Toolkit

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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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- Faith-based Community Organizing Trainings
- Congregational Survey

### **Mentoring Connections:**

Mentoring Connections Coordinator Betty Detwyler (Emmanuel-Friedens Church, Schenectady, NY) has faithfully communicated with the MC congregations with a monthly challenge for “Light a Candle” Sunday.

### **Out in Ministry:**

Don Fonda (FBC Beverly, MA) is taking referrals for LGBT people seeking help on their journeys toward ordination and placement.

### **June Council Meeting/New England Field Organizing:**

The AWAB Council will meet at Andover Newton Theological School on June 19-22. I will do field organizing in New England until June 29.

### **“Many Stories, One Voice” Conference, Sept. 3-7, 2008:**

We’ve received \$5,000 from Dolores Street Baptist Church, San Francisco, CA, for 20 scholarships of \$250 for 20 young emerging leaders to attend the conference.

### **Office:**

Roman Shemayev is fully trained and is functioning well as our part-time office assistant/financial secretary.

Please consider making a financial contribution to AWAB today to sustain these and other vital ministries of our association. Donate online at [www.wabaptists.org](http://www.wabaptists.org).

Lovingly,  
Ken Pennings  
608-255-2155  
[ken@wabaptists.org](mailto:ken@wabaptists.org)

## **The Alliance of Baptists Convocation**

Report of AWAB Participation in The Alliance of Baptist Convocation  
March 28 – 30, 2008 at St. Charles Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans, LA  
By Kathy Stayton

AWAB representatives were Jim Singletary, Kathy Stayton, and Tim Dean

Arriving at this large, stately church on the afternoon of March 28, I discovered that all Exhibits were in the Dominican Center, across a side street of the church and a half block away. The hall had been transformed into an art gallery and a “coffee house,” which was used frequently by individuals and groups. (After staying in the Lower Ninth Ward for 4 days, this church might as well have been in another country. What a disconnect!)

Only six organizations had exhibits, and the exhibit hall was not visited by lots of people. However, those who did visit were curious about our organization, and it was a venue for Tim Dean to talk about Baptist Youth Camp and to distribute cards. Tim also gave a fine report at the end of a long business meeting

when the chair asked if anyone wanted to give “Good News.”

Jim provided a safe environment for people who attended the AWAB workshop. The content of the workshop was not as advertised, but people shared their hopes, fears, frustrations, and joys of being or trying to be an AWAB congregation. Although the title of the workshop, in keeping with the Convocation's theme, was “Creating the Inclusive Church of the Future,” it was clear that matters of the present were more on the minds of the dozen participants. Coming from churches along the W&A spectrum, from those that have been pioneers in the movement to those who have yet to initiate the discernment process, the participants, which included two seminary students, were more interested in talking about how to move their churches toward having a dialog around GLBT inclusion, especially those churches who have a sizable, if not quite visible, contingent of GLBT folks in their congregations.

## **Mid-Atlantic Gathering of AWAB**

Report by Kathy Stayton, Chair of Event Planning Committee

The Mid-Atlantic States Gathering of the Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists and Others took place April 18 and 19, 2008, at Central Baptist Church, Wayne, PA.

“This was a fabulous day!”

“I thank God to be here.”

“Great design, all presenters were wonderful, music lovely, food delicious, loved the people, felt very welcome, good information, sincere sharing.”

“Loved the tying of topics to faith and religion.”

Such were some comments written on evaluations at the end of the inspirational and educational day of this two-day AWAB gathering.

On Friday night, Jeffrey Barnes performed “And He Ran Screaming.” The many personal comments, identification with his experiences, and vulnerabilities shared truly were received with amazing grace. On Saturday, the teachings of the Rev. Dr. William Stayton and his invited guests struck a chord for attendees’ desire for more/new understandings about “What are a boy and a girl, REALLY?” “The Gender Spectrum,” and “Sexual Orientation.” The closing worship and communion, with Peggy Campolo as the speaker, pulled people even closer together with inclusive love.

At the end of the conference, those behind the scenes at Central Baptist Church could shout, “It was great!” “We had 70 on Friday night and 65 on Saturday!” Thanks were expressed for all who attended.

Then, on Sunday at CBC, the Rev. Heather Rittenhouse, chair of the AWAB council, gave a powerful sermon that touched and inspired us all. She asked us to see and hear the scripture and comments through the eyes and ears of a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender person. Someone commented after the service, “I never heard those passages (about Philip and the Eunuch) in such a powerful way.” What a gift!

“God bless you for making this happen.”

## Outreach Recommendations for Tax Rebate Contributions

By Katy Friggle-Norton

(The April issue of the Associational included an article by Rev. Ken Sehested and his Circle of Mercy Congregation, Asheville, NC, about tax rebates. Following are some specific ways in which the money could be put to good use.)

Our federal government will borrow more than \$100 billion to pay for the tax rebate, money that does not support our children today or their future and money that will be part of the debt that we leave our children tomorrow. The Board of Outreach recommends considering the *future generations* as we spend our tax rebates. These specific recommendations for *future generations* cut across our mission concerns for peace, for LGBT awareness and affirmation, for opportunities to overcome poverty through education, training, and nurturing talent in Philadelphia, New Orleans, and El Salvador, and for care for the Earth.

### CBC Youth – Baptist Peace Fellowship Conference, “Peace Camp”

To establish a scholarship fund for CBC youth to attend the BPFNA Peace Camp.

Costs for this year’s July 14-19 conference, *The Way that Leads to Peace*, is **\$375** for room, board, and registration for a youth.

*Youth work veterans Mary Meadows and Julie Reiswig will coordinate the youth morning sessions. Hector Aristizábal — 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.*

### Yes! And ... After-school Program in Kensington

- The entire cost of after-school for one young student is **\$1520** for the year.
- Reading Buddy -- A gift of **\$180**, which is \$1 for every day of the school year, greatly subsidizes the cost of After-School for one struggling reader.
- Library Friend -- A gift of **\$100** buys a comprehensive set of thematically related books to be used for Read-Alouds.

### New AWAB Youth Camp this summer

Each camper will pay approximately **\$250** for the week at Camp Potawatomi in South Milford, Indiana, August 17-22.

**Baptist Youth Camp explicitly works around LGBT issues in the context of faith. AWAB is convinced that it is the next generation that will resolve the issue of inclusion of LGBT people in the life, mission, and ministries of Baptist congregations. It is vitally important that teens connected with Baptist congregations start talking about LGBT issues that are challenging Baptist denominations today.**

### After-school Music Program in New Orleans

Used Student Saxophone -- **\$350**

New Student Clarinet -- **\$300**

Choral music for 50 -- **\$75-\$125**

Pastor Boutté and music director Hezekiah Brinson have a shared vision of training at-risk youth in the disadvantaged neighborhoods of New Orleans in instrumental and choral music. Music can offer hope to these young people, provide a medium for self-expression, and give them a point of pride in their own cultural heritage. Pastor Boutté and Mr. Brinson are currently working on grant proposals and choosing program sites, expecting to begin with about 100 students in the fall of 2008.

### Shekina Youth Scholarships

**\$300** a quarter, **\$600** a half-year, or **\$1200** a year pays the educational costs of a Shekina youth studying for technical training or at university.

The members of Shekina Baptist Church in Santa Ana raise scholarship funds to support the education of their youth, giving their young people a chance to envision a future for themselves in El Salvador, a bold alternative to considering emigration to the US as their only option.

### Photovoltaic Solar Panels (saving energy for future generations)

The CBC cost for the solar panels will amount to about **\$20,000**.

The solar panels are actually arrays of 56 modules, making the cost of the solar panels per module **\$357**.

Future generations will bear the brunt of global warming because carbon dioxide that is emitted into the atmosphere today will remain in the atmosphere for up to one hundred years. The solar panels that will be installed on CBC's roof will reduce carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere by 15,876 tons per year. Contributions for the solar panels can be made through The Center for Spirituality and Justice (CSJ) as matching funds for the community development grant that it has been awarded.

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## On Being a Gay Parent

"How to come out to your kids" is just one of the questions unique to the experience of same-sex parents that Brett Webb-Mitchell explores in his book, **On Being a Gay Parent: Making a Future Together** (Seabury Books, 2007). Mitchell, a Presbyterian minister, college professor and father of two, also offers advice for navigating the challenges that children of same-sex parents face at school, in church and at extended-family gatherings. Ultimately, Webb-Mitchell writes, it is not a question of "gay or lesbian or straight parenting, but good parenting."

For more information or to place an order, go to <http://www.onbeingagayparent.com/>

## Change of Heart, Change of Attitude

Beginning at the moment of birth, attitudes and beliefs begin to form. Children are affected by their caregivers and their surroundings, and much of what they experience affects people in adulthood as well. Much of what one encounters in life has a positive impact and aids the development of a sound moral base. But, people are also exposed to persuasions that engender negative, contemptuous, and exclusionary attitudes (i.e., hate and prejudice). Influenced by the prejudices of parents and grandparents, by misinformation, by societal expectations, and by religious dogma, individuals form biases that become guiding principles of their lives.

"Change of Heart, Change of Attitude," a doctor of ministry study, was based, therefore, in the thesis that transformative leaders can facilitate attitude change by heightening awareness through education, dialogue, and personal stories. A yearlong study was conducted with a United Church of Christ congregation that wished to discern if it should be "Open and Affirming" to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. Although further study is recommended, the results demonstrated a favorable outcome: Transformative leaders can facilitate attitude change by heightening awareness.

A discernment manual for churches considering a Welcoming and Affirming Stance was created based on the study and is now available in published, spiral-bound form. For more information or to purchase this manual, contact Rev. Dr. Barbara Hulsing, [bhulsing@timeposition.com](mailto:bhulsing@timeposition.com), 716-655-3463.

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## A Call to Knit and Pray for the Presbyterian General Assembly 2008

Mark and Edith Sutterlin, members of two AWAB churches – the Community of Reconciliation, Pittsburgh, PA, and Ravensworth Baptist Church, Annandale, VA, invite Welcoming and Affirming Christians of all blends to support our Presbyterian friends in this effort. Thank you for considering this opportunity to minister across denominational boundaries to witness to a wider truth of God's mercy!

**Background:** In the summer of 2007, Lutherans held their Churchwide Assembly. Before that gathering, Lutherans Concerned/North America, a sister

organization to **Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists and More Light Presbyterians**, proposed **the knitting of lovely rainbow scarves** to mark their hopes and prayers for that assembly. **Now it is our opportunity to combine the truth of GLBT inclusion and the beauty of handcrafted creativity into an unmistakable visual sign of God's all embracing LOVE.**

Last year, GLBT supporters were clearly marked at the Lutheran Assembly, and AWAB supporters wore their Rainbow cloth stoles and witnessed at ABC in Washington, DC, in June 2007 and at the New Baptist Covenant Celebration in Atlanta, GA in Jan. 2008. Let us help More Light Presbyterians also stand proud at their General Assembly!

This is a **social justice project, knitting us all together, compassionately, with our GLBT sisters and brothers** who suffer so from the rejection of gifts for service to the church, judgment of loving relationships, and silencing of voices among us. More Light Presbyterians challenge you to create as many rainbow scarves as you can, according to the directions below, between now and June 9, 2008. Experts and beginners are invited to pray and to knit in preparation for San Jose, establishing a solid fabric of spiritual support for the efforts for full inclusion of GLBT faithful at the Presbyterian General Assembly.

**Yarn: Red Heart Supersaver Multicolor; the color is Mexicana (0950).** The yarn can be purchased online at [www.coatscollection.com](http://www.coatscollection.com). You can also obtain the yarn online from JoAnn Fabrics or at their stores and Michael's. **Please use only this yarn, as this, along with Jesus' love, is the thread** running between us all! The scarves can be knit or crocheted **any size between 3 to 6 inches across and 48 to 68 inches long, using needles between sizes 8 and 11.** Remember as you choose your stitch that these will be used in summer in San Jose, mostly inside the air conditioned conference center. **Tammy Besser, one of the Lutheran knitters**, says, "for straight knit on size 10 and 11 needles, I'm casting on 10-14 stitches. Everyone is welcome to use whatever stitches, patterns, etc. you wish for these. It is a great project for trying out something new! My favorite to date is made with seed stitch, cast on 13 stitches on 10.5 needles alternate stitches (knit, purl) beginning with Knit on each row."

If you have questions, contact: Janet Edwards, More Light Presbyterians board member, [JMEA08@comcast.net](mailto:JMEA08@comcast.net). **Please mail finished scarves no later than June 9, 2008, to Janet Edwards, 5701 Fair Oaks St., Pittsburgh, PA 15217.**

## 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)).

**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.

**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 7 pm, 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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### 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. Workshop 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 Reisinger 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).**

**To learn more about the Association, go to:**  
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