



The Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists

Associational

An Ongoing eNewsletter from the Executive Director

Issue 48 ~ October 2008

From the Executive Director

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

This has been a tremendous year for AWAB in building our capacity as "The National Voice for LGBT Baptists."

Eight months ago, AWAB launched its Capacity Building Project with Dr. Helen Bishop (Etowah, NC) serving as our consultant. We now have all new policies and procedures, all new roles, responsibilities and job descriptions for those in leadership, and a new commitment to developing comprehensive strategic plans in Media, Development, Communications and Membership. I am thrilled about the good work we have done and with all the necessary changes we have made to strengthen the organization.

As never before, AWAB is poised to make a difference for LGBT inclusion and equality in Church and Society. And, like never before, we need your help!

We are moving steadily toward the creation of the following committees: Personnel, Membership, Fund Development, and Leadership Development. Not only will we be trying to find capable volunteers for these committees, but we'll be looking for volunteers who will take on short-term service projects.

Will you help us by volunteering your time, talents and energy? Even a couple of hours of your volunteer work each month will make a great difference in accomplishing our mission.

Please email your responses to the following questions to ken@wabaptists.org or snailmail the more comprehensive questionnaire at www.wabaptists.org (click the link for "Volunteer" on the homepage, copy the form) to AWAB, P.O. Box 259257, Madison, WI 53725.

- 1) How did you become familiar with the Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists and why would you enjoy serving as a volunteer?
- 2) In what capacity would you enjoy serving as a volunteer?
- 3) What are your particular gifts, skills, aptitudes, interests, and strengths that prepare you to volunteer in this capacity?
- 4) In what roles have you served in your church, denomination, and/or community?
- 5) Would you be open to a longer term service on one of AWAB's boards, committees, or task forces? Or would you prefer short-term service projects?
- 6) Can you provide the names and contact information of others who may wish to volunteer for AWAB?

INSIDE

- **From the Executive Director** – pg 1
- **Rev. Howard Bess Featured** – pg 2
- **5000th Church Added to Welcoming Church Directory** – pg 2
- **National Survey on Transgender Discrimination Launched** – pg 3
- **Glendale Baptist Youth Participate in PeaceJam** – pg 3
- **Bits 'n' Bytes** – pg 5
- **Upcoming Events** – pg 5

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.

© 2007, The Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists,
All rights reserved

Barbara Hulsing, Editor

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

Please provide your name, address, phone(s), time zone, email(s), web address, church affiliation / membership. Thank you.

Lovingly,

Rev. Ken Pennings
ken@wabaptists.org

Rev. Howard Bess Featured

The Rev. Howard Bess, retired Pastor of Valley Baptist Church in Alaska and author of "Pastor, I Am Gay," has been featured in two recent articles. Both can be seen on www.open.salon.com. In the first, by Linda Kellen Biegel, entitled "A retired pastor could be Sarah Palin's undoing," Ms Biegel states, "This ordinary-looking plain-speaking man and his wonderful wife are heroes because they believe that God loves everyone equally and worshipping Him in ANY church is a right as children of God."

The second article, "Authoritarian Populism in American Politics," is written by Normal Kelley, an independent journalist from Washington, DC. Mr. Kelley says, "If you want an inkling of her [Palin's] world view, which doesn't appear to be that different from the present occupant of 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., consider what an Alaskan pastor, [Howard Bess](#), who has tangled with Palin when she was Wasila's mayor, said of her:

Forget all this chatter about whether or not she knows what the Bush doctrine is. That's trivial. The real disturbing thing about Sarah is her mind-set. It's her underlying belief system that will influence how she responds in an [international crisis](#), if she's ever in that position, and has the full might of the U.S. military in her hands. She gave some indication of that thinking in her ABC interview, when she suggested how willing she would be to go to war with Russia. Alaskans liked that certitude when she was dealing with corrupt politicians and the oil industry -- and there is something admirable about it. But when you're dealing with a complex and dangerous world as commander in chief, that's a different story.

Bess ought to know, for it was his book *Pastor, I'm Gay* that was in her target sight when she was a mayor."

5000th Church Added to Welcoming Church Directory

GALIP Foundation, September 19, 2008

The 5,000th church has been added to the www.gaychurch.org welcoming Christian church directory! This is a major milestone in that when the directory was started some eight years ago the organization struggled to find 2,000 Christian churches worldwide that had opened their doors to the gay and lesbian (GLBT) community. Since that time growth has steadily increased, even during a long stretch of anti-gay sentiment around the time of the last election. For a look at how the directory has grown over the years and where that growth has taken place from year to year (denomination and geographical location), read the section of the www.gaychurch.org site titled "Welcoming Church Report."

Also, if you haven't already done so, please consider "linking up" with www.gaychurch.org. Quality links from sites such as your home church's web site help folks find important resources. The more folks that find us the more folks we can send your way! You can find linkage information in the section of our site titled "Link up with us."

Thanks for helping us get the word out and thank you for ministering to all of God's people!
Elaine Sundby, GALIP Foundation, www.gaychurch.org, "Welcoming" Church Directory, and author "Calling the Rainbow Nation Home."

For more articles such as this, go to www.welcomingresources.org. Their web site is updated weekly with vital news for the LGBT and allies community.

National Survey on Transgender Discrimination Launched

In the wake of one of the most violent years on record of assaults on transgender people, the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE) and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force have teamed up on a comprehensive national survey to collect data on discrimination against transgender people in housing, employment, public accommodations, healthcare, education, family life and criminal justice.

To date, in 2008, several young gender non-conforming people of color have been murdered, including California junior high school student Lawrence King, who was shot in public during the school day. King's murder, and the murders of Simmie Williams in South Carolina and Angie Zapata in Greeley, Colorado come in a year in which we are still working to include transgender provisions in a federal bill to protect lesbian, gay and bisexual workers from discrimination in employment.

Hate crimes against transgender people suggest multiple points of vulnerability, which can compound each other: discrimination in employment may lead to unstable housing situations that in turn can leave transgender people at the mercy of public programs and public officials who may not respond respectfully or appropriately to them. These stressors add burdens in a healthcare system that is often unprepared for transgender people's needs. The list goes on. "We know that transgender people face discrimination on multiple fronts," said Mara Keisling, executive director of NCTE. "This data will help us sort out the combination of forces that leave transgender people vulnerable to unemployment, homelessness and violence."

Jaime Grant, director of the Task Force Policy Institute, noted, "There is so little concrete data on the needs and risks associated with the widespread discrimination we see in the lives of the transgender people we know. This data will help point the way to an appropriate policy agenda to ensure that transgender people have a fair chance to contribute their talents in the workplace, in our educational systems and in our communities."

NCTE and the Task Force have partnered with Pennsylvania State University's Center for the Study of Higher Education to collect and analyze the data. Applying rigorous academic standards to the investigation will strengthen any case made to legislators, policy makers, healthcare providers and others whose decisions impact the lives of transgender people. A national team of experts in survey research and transgender issues developed the questionnaire, which can be completed online at <https://online.survey.psu.edu/endtransdiscrim>.

Keisling notes: "This is an absolutely critical national effort. We urge all transgender and gender non-conforming people to take the survey to help guide us in making better laws and policies that will improve the quality of life for all transgender people. We need everyone's voice in this, everyone's participation."

For more articles such as this, go to www.welcomingresources.org. Their web site is updated weekly with vital news for the LGBT and allies community.

Glendale Baptist Youth Participate in PeaceJam

Glendale Baptist Church of Nashville, Tennessee (<http://www.glendalebaptist.org>) sent three youth and two adults to Los Angeles, California on September 11, 2008, to participate in the PeaceJam Foundation's Global Call to Action Conference at Loyola Marymount University. Joining them was a fellow "PeaceJammer" from Columbia, Missouri. The contingent joined seven Nobel Peace Prize winners and three thousand teenagers from around the world.

PeaceJam is not new to the Glendale youth. They have attended three conferences in Memphis, Tennessee, where they apprenticed with President Jose Ramos-Horta of East Timor, Betty Williams of Ireland and Rigoberta Menchu Tum of Guatemala. The Glendale youth have also attended the PeaceJam Conference in Denver, Colorado, where they presented their Global Call to Action project to President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica and participated in a service project with Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa. A total of ten Nobel Laureates, including The Dalai Lama, participated in the launch of The Global Call to Action in Denver.

“What makes PeaceJam so amazing is that we are up close and personal with some of the most experienced peacemakers in the world,” said Davis Gooch, a 17-year-old Martin Luther King Magnet High School senior. “We’ve been taught ‘Blessed are the peacemakers’ at Glendale and now we are learning just what that concept really means. We’re practicing our faith and making a difference,” he said.

Jonas Hill, a 17-year-old senior at The Ensworth School said, “Most of the teenagers that participate in PeaceJam come with a school club but we have established quite a reputation for being one of a few churches and probably the only Baptist church in the entire world that is involved.” “The concept of a Baptist Church being so deeply involved in world peacemaking efforts may seem odd at first,” said Thomas Conner, Glendale’s Minister of Youth. “But as you know, Martin Luther King, Jr. was a Baptist minister and one of the greatest peacemakers ever. We’re trying to honor that Baptist heritage of peacemaking by speaking out against injustice, learning ‘active nonviolent’ practices and being a church that offers unconditional love to the poor, the oppressed and the despised.”

PeaceJam’s Global Call to Action is a ten-year campaign intended to inspire over a billion acts of service and peace. The specific areas of the call address equal access to water, ending racism and hate, halting the spread of global disease, eliminating extreme poverty, social justice and human rights for all, rights for women and children, restoring Earth’s environment, controlling the proliferation of weapons, investing in human security, and breaking the cycle of violence.

Rachel White, a 17-year-old senior at Harpeth Hall said, “This year, our Global Call to Action Project touches on three areas—human security, violence and human rights. When we go to Los Angeles, we will speak out about the unacceptable policies that our own government has maintained against the people of Cuba for 50 years. Three of the four PeaceJam team members and both of our adult leaders have been to Cuba as part of a peaceful mission trip and we do not understand why the US government insists on denying families from seeing each other but once every three years, why essential goods and services cannot be traded between our countries or why educational and religious institutions in the US cannot freely enjoy peaceful relations with their counterparts in Cuba. This is wrong and not going to bring about peace in the world if the US government intends to be a bully to the Cuban people.” As part of their project, the teenagers have launched a website called www.peacewithcuba.com.

Controversial topics such as US-Cuban policies are not unusual for the Glendale youth. Their last Global Call to Action project on abolishing the death penalty in Tennessee was presented to Nobel Laureate Rigoberta Menchu Tum in February 2008. “Many of the adult leaders from the schools thanked us for speaking about the death penalty issue,” said Conner. “Luckily, because there are few church groups involved with PeaceJam, we actually have the freedom, and I would argue the responsibility, to speak out about unjust matters. It can be difficult for school clubs to address controversial topics. I am very proud that our teenagers are being the voice of a church that speaks about peace, justice, mercy, compassion and love. We look for ways to join our voice with others regardless of their religious faith or the secular nature of the forum.”

Glendale youth were particularly anxious to see Jose Ramos-Horta, the president of East Timor who was shot twice in February 2008 in an assassination attempt and failed coup. President Ramos-Horta survived the attack that hospitalized him in intensive care in an Australian hospital for five weeks. He planned to attend the conference in Los Angeles. “We’re very glad that he’s alive and still bravely leading his people,” said Rachel. “He has demonstrated a lot of grace and leadership since the assassination attempt and it’s that much more inspiring to me to have the opportunity to be with him again and to hear how he stays committed to peacemaking even as a victim of deadly violence. I am sure it will be an emotional reunion when he arrives at PeaceJam.”

Along with Conner, the Reverend April Baker, co-pastor at Glendale Baptist Church, accompanied the teenagers to PeaceJam. Glendale Baptist Church is a welcoming and affirming Baptist congregation affiliated with the Alliance of Baptists, the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists, the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. To learn more about Glendale Baptist Church, visit <http://www.glendalebaptist.org> or call 615-269-0926. To learn more about the PeaceJam Foundation or the Global Call to Action, visit <http://www.peacejam.org> or call 303-455-2099. Glendale Baptist Church is participating in PeaceJam through BRIDGES, a Memphis, Tennessee based non-profit organization. For more information about BRIDGES, visit <http://www.bridgesusa.org> or call Dana Wilson Montenegro at 901-260-3790.

Bits 'n' Bytes

- A New York State Supreme Court judge ruled that Gov. David Paterson's directive in May to recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states and countries is legal in New York. Justice Lucy Billings in Bronx Supreme Court ruled that to “recognize same-sex marriages legally solemnized in other jurisdictions is consistent with New York’s common law, statutory law, and constitutional separation of powers.” On May 14, Paterson issued a directive to state agencies to allow for gay married couples to have access to the same rights and privileges as heterosexual couples. Paterson based his decision on a ruling Feb. 1 by an appellate court involving a Monroe County couple, one of whom sued Monroe Community College after the school refused to provide health insurance for her partner, whom she married legally in Canada.
 - With strong support from the Spanish government, the nation’s federation of LGBT activist groups, La Federacion Estatal de Lesbianas, Gays, Transexuales y Bisexuales, won official consultative status to the United Nations Economic and Social Council. This represents a significant breakthrough at the world body. The consultative status had long been blocked by conservative UN member states but represents a key means for civil society to access the UN system. It allows nongovernmental organizations to deliver reports at UN meetings and to organize events on UN premises.
 - PFLAG (Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) has recently developed a program called Straight for Equality whose sole purpose is to get the straight community involved in advocating for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered People. For more information on taking a “pledge” on behalf of GLBT folk, go to <http://straightforequality.org> and click on “Take the Pledge.”
-

Upcoming Events

12th Annual GLBT Retreat

University Baptist Church’s Open Circle will hold its 12th annual GLBT Retreat on October 10-12, 2008! The program runs from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. on Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Saturday, and from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Sunday.

Open Circle serves as a ministry and outreach to the GLBT community within and outside UBC. University Baptist Church is a welcoming and affirming American Baptist congregation and welcomes all, just the way you are. This year’s theme is “We Are Not Alone” and will focus on the role of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender people within the church.

Highlights include:

- Screening of the film *For the Bible Tells Me So*
- Taize Prayer seminar
- GLBT Legal Issues seminar
- Gay and Christian—Is it possible?
- Roundtable discussions on “What and Who Are on Our Side” and “The Next GLBT Generation”
- Relating to Relatives seminar

Cost: \$20 (includes breakfast and lunch on Saturday).
Scholarships available!

Location: University Baptist Church
2130 Guadalupe Street
Austin, TX 78705
Phone: (512) 478-8559
FAX: (512) 478-8553
Email: kwhiteatc@hotmail.com
Web Site: www.ubcaustin.org

Songs of Faith & Freedom II ***October 18, 7:00 pm, Congregation Neveh Shalom, Portland***

Portland composer/director Dr. David York will bring multiple artistic talents to a concert to benefit The Community of Welcoming Congregations. Portland Gay Men's Chorus, local congregational choirs including Ainsworth United Church of Christ, First Unitarian Church, three local Centers for Spiritual Living, Metropolitan Community Church, and individuals will participate in the event to be held at Congregation Neveh Shalom, 2900 SW Peaceful Lane, Portland.

Titled "Songs of Faith & Freedom II," the benefit concert will build on last year's hugely successful event held in Portland's Trinity Episcopal Cathedral.

"Music is the universal language of love and hope", said Rev. Tara Wilkins, CWC's Executive Director. The Community of Welcoming Congregations is an Oregon and SW Washington interfaith ministry that dedicates itself to the full inclusion and equality for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning people. With 98 active congregations throughout the state, CWC celebrates the diversity of creation by bringing together top religious musicians to offer their inspirational voices to raise support and awareness for their ministry.

Last year CWC organized religious leaders supporting the Oregon Equality Act (SB 2) and the Family Fairness Act (HB 2007), which were passed by the legislature and signed into law by Governor Kulongoski. "Many clergy and congregational leaders support gay and lesbian equality", said Wilkins. "For us it is a matter of faith and justice to celebrate the gifts of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons and the contributions they make to our congregations."

The proceeds for this event will go toward the ongoing work of CWC, which will include building community coalitions, sponsoring a youth camp, hosting an interfaith transgender conference, mentoring congregations seeking to be inclusive and providing outreach to those seeking spiritual homes.

Towards a Welcoming and Inclusive Church Trainings

Goshen, IN

Oct 24 - 26, 2008
Assembly Mennonite Church
Goshen, IN

Independence, MO

November 7 - 9, 2008
Cornerstone Community of Christ
Independence, MO

These trainings are relevant for Baptist churches that are already W&A as well as for churches just beginning the conversation. Please get the word out to your networks about these trainings. Can you possibly register for one of the trainings yourself? Can you possibly get folks from your own local church to attend one of the trainings as a group so that you can return to your own community and work as a team to increase the number of W&A Baptist congregations? Info and registration materials at www.welcomingresources.org.

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 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