SPACE FOR GRACE CONFERENCE
At the American Baptist Home Mission Societies’ November 2018 Space for Grace Conference, held in Philadelphia, several AWAB friends got together for a meet-up following one of the evening plenary sessions. Also...many within our LGBTQ and Allies family were filled with hope when we sang the lyrics to this song:

For gay and for straight, a place at the Table
A covenant shared, a welcoming space,
A rainbow or race and gender and colour,
For gay and for straight, the chalice of GRACE!

AWAB visits Alliance of Baptists’ Twinbrook Baptist Church
Over the weekend of March 2-3, 2019, Acting National Coordinator, Brian Henderson, visited Twinbrook Baptist Church (TBC), just outside of Washington, D.C. TBC is pastored by former AWAB Board Chair, The Rev. Dr. Jill McCrory. On Saturday evening, Pastor Jill and her husband, Jack, hosted a dinner at their home so that the church leadership could have personal conversations with Brian about AWAB’s past, present, and future work. On Sunday morning, the congregation filled their chancel with rainbow colors honoring their commitment to the LGBTQ community as well as the ministry that AWAB provides. Henderson reflected, “Pastor Jill and the TBC congregation are living out an authentic commitment to welcoming and affirming all of God’s children. It was wonderful to be in fellowship and worship with TBC.”

WELCOMING SPIRIT NEWSLETTER • 2019 SPECIAL EDITION
FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD...
The Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists (AWAB) is glad to be part of Baptist gatherings this year in Washington D.C., with the Alliance of Baptists, in Birmingham, AL, with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, in Virginia Beach, VA, with the American Baptist Churches, USA, and in Cali, Colombia, with the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America/Bautistas por la Paz.

As we celebrate our common Baptist commitments to ministry and mission, AWAB stands ready to support our LGBTQ and Allied members and friends so that we can do together what none of us can do on our own. Over 40 years ago, Rev. Rodger Harrison had a vision that when he shared it with others, evolved into American Baptists Concerned. American Baptists Concerned sought to unite Baptist LGBTQ individuals and their families and friends for mutual assistance, education, support, and communication. In 1993, American Baptists Concerned gave birth to the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists.

Nearly a half a century later, the vision shared by Rev. Harrison continues to provide inspiration for the welcoming and affirming ministry AWAB seeks still to promote and encourage so that all Baptists can do together what none of us can do on our own.

Baptist denominations have made great strides toward better equality and equity for all; however, we recognize that there is still much work to be done. AWAB is grateful for the openness of Baptist leaders and partners that have made it possible to participate as it is this year in national gatherings.

On behalf of the AWAB Board and its 106 member churches, we celebrate with all of our Baptist families as we work together to do ministry for all of God’s children that none of us can do on our own.

Rev. Brian Henderson, DMin
Chair, Acting National Coordinator
brian@awab.org

VISIT US ONLINE! www.AWAB.org @affirmingbaptists @affirmBaptist
AWAB Membership

Membership in AWAB allows your congregation: (1) to be part of an association of Baptist communities that publicly commit to being welcoming and affirming of LGBTQ members and friends; (2) to keep informed of how other W&A congregations are engaging in meaningful ministry; (3) access to resources to enhance your local W&A ministry; and (4) opportunity to search for LGBTQ candidates for ministerial positions.

“AWAB has faithfully provided the church with wonderful educational and welcoming resources—all the while, nurturing and growing our vital network of connections.”
—The Rev. Dwight Davidson, United Church of Granville, OH

New Member Churches since 2017:

- Trinity Church
  Shelburne, MA
- First Baptist Church
  Philadelphia, PA
- Royal Lane Baptist Church
  Dallas, TX
- University Baptist Church
  Starkville, MS
- First Baptist Church
  Dayton, OH
- Burlington Baptist Church
  Ontario, Canada
- Williamsburg Baptist Church
  Williamsburg, VA
- St. John’s Baptist Church
  Charlotte, NC
- Brockport First Baptist
  Brockport, NY
- Grace Baptist Church
  San Jose, CA

Why should my church join?

AWAB offers a support system for your ministry so that you have alliances and connections within the greater Baptist community and are not left feeling isolated. AWAB’s intention is to provide value that addresses your needs as a member church. AWAB provides a voice and image of God’s love that opposes the often exclusive narrative associated with Baptists.

AWAB is led by its Board:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brian Henderson</th>
<th>David Key</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chair, Denver, CO</td>
<td>Athens, GA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reba Cobb</td>
<td>Rick Mixon</td>
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<td>Treasurer, Louisville, KY</td>
<td>Palo Alto, CA</td>
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<td>Shella Chace</td>
<td>Bob Sittig</td>
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<td>Secretary, Ithaca, NY</td>
<td>Seattle, WA</td>
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<td>Lacy Dodge Hudgings</td>
<td>C. Welton Gaddy</td>
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<td>Louisville, KY</td>
<td>Monroe, LA</td>
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Contact Us

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American Baptist Pastors Visit Pulse Night Club Memorial

On February 26, a group of American Baptist pastors, on retreat together in Orlando, Florida, visited the Pulse Night Club Memorial. As one pastor commented afterwards, “This was one of the most moving memories I’ve ever experienced.” This group of ABC pastors represented AWAB member churches and those that are not. Their experience collectively reminds us all that there is more we can do together than any of us can do on our own.
PAUL BAXLEY CALLED TO BE CBF EXECUTIVE COORDINATOR

Paul Baxley, a 49-year-old pastor who has been active in the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship his entire ministry, has been named the organization’s fourth executive coordinator. He begins duties in March. On Tuesday the CBF Governing Board voted unanimously to hire Baxley, senior minister of First Baptist Church in Athens, Georgia, to succeed Executive Coordinator Suzii Paynter, who steps aside after five years at the helm of the Decatur, Georgia-based Fellowship.

Baxley was on the team that led the Illumination Project, a study of attitudes toward issues of LGBT inclusion in Fellowship churches that resulted in a much-discussed policy change. In February the Governing Board dropped a policy banning the intentional hiring of anyone who is gay but concluded that many churches and international partners are not ready to support the hiring of sexual minorities as missionaries or top executives.

In a sermon last October about whether God is calling gay and lesbian Christians into ordained ministry, Baxley described reconnecting with a member of the youth group he led early in his ministry who eventually became a minister and came out as gay.

“There is clear evidence, at least to me, of the work of the Holy Spirit in his life and obvious signs that the Holy Spirit is working through him in the lives of others, and I am now one of those people whom the Spirit has blessed, strengthened and challenged through his courageous faithfulness and his relentless love for the people of God,” Baxley said. “If God gave him the same gifts and calling that God gave me, who am I that I could hinder God?”

AWAB celebrates with CBF in this new season of ministry.

REV. DAVID GREGG NEW EXECUTIVE MINISTER OF ABC METRO CHICAGO

The American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago called Rev. David Gregg as its new Executive Minister in a special meeting of the region’s Family Council on January 12, 2019.

“Rev. Gregg is a thoughtful and passionate minister deeply committed to multicultural and inclusive ministry, shared leadership, and our Baptist ideals of individual and congregational freedom. In addition to his incredible pastoral and collaborative ministry within our region, Rev. Gregg has served in various leadership roles within the larger denomination and has edited a book on Baptist polity published by Judson Press. Our committee is excited about the skills, knowledge, and passion that Rev. Gregg will bring to this position,” said Search Committee Co-Chairs Rev. Annette Thornburg Owen and Rev. Robert Rawls.

David, who is openly gay, is a former AWAB Board Chairperson. AWAB rejoices with our friends in Chicago in this call to executive ministry.

In Memoriam

AWAB is sorry to share the news that, the Rev. Dr. Rodger Harrison, the founder of American Baptists Concerned (the precursor of AWAB) died on Friday March 15, 2019, in Palm Desert, California. Rodger was 90 years old. A service celebrating Rodger’s life was held on April 14, at St. Margaret Episcopal Church in Palm Desert. Throughout his life and ministry, Rodger shared hope and love with many. “May flights of angels waft thee to thy rest.”

STAY IN TOUCH!
Stay up to date with news and profiles by becoming a subscriber to our monthly Welcoming Spirit email newsletter. Sign up today at www.awab.org.
AWAB’s Awards*

The Randle R. Mixon Award for Christian Service is given to an individual clergyperson 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 layperson 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.

Past Recipients

Randle R. Mixon Award for Christian Service Awardees
- Randle R. Mixon 1997 • Geyserville, CA
- H. James Hopkins 1999 • Des Moines, IA
- Brenda Moulton 2001 • Providence, RI
- Craig Darling 2003 • Richmond, VA
- Darrell Lance 2005 • Denver, CO
- Howard Bess 2007 • Washington DC
- Stan Hastey 2009 • Pasadena, CA
- Heather Rittenhouse 2013 • Providence, RI
- Robin Lunn 2015 • Overland Park, KS
- David Reese Weasley 2017 • Portland, OR

Barbra MacNair Award for Christian Witness Awardees
- Barbra MacNair 2005 • Denver, CO
- Chris Boisvert 2007 • Washington DC
- Kathy Stayton 2009 • Pasadena, CA
- Peggy Campolo 2013 • Providence, RI
- Jodi Robinson 2015 • Overland Park, KS
- Bea Hoff man 2017 • Portland, OR

*Historically awards have been presented every two years, usually in conjunction with the American Baptist Churches, USA, biennial meeting.

AWAB MEMBERS SUPPORT OUR LARGER-CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

The First United Methodist Church of Moorestown, NJ, is opening its doors to the LGBTQ community. FUMC has become a “Reconciling Congregation” through the Reconciling Ministry Network, a national network of Methodists committed to the inclusion of all sexual orientations and gender identities. FUMC is one of only eight reconciling churches in New Jersey.

Some AWAB Baptists have provided assistance in the process. Peggy Campolo met with them about a year ago to help them in this discerning process. After spending nearly 15 months researching and consulting with members, the church put it to a vote this past November, and 93 percent of the congregation voted to become a reconciling church.

On Sunday, January 20, 2019, the First United Methodist Church of Moorestown, NJ, held its first “Reconciling Sunday.” The celebration’s guest speaker was Dr. Marvin A. Marsh, a retired American Baptist pastor who has been involved with the activities of AWAB for many years.

MEET JANET COLE, AWAB’S ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR

Janet joined the AWAB staff in February 2017 to assist in communication and management of member records. She lives in Louisville, where she is a member of Crescent Hill Baptist Church and has been their Administrative Assistant since 1992.

A native of Birmingham, Alabama, her home church was Ruhama Baptist Church. Janet is a graduate of Auburn University (WAR EAGLE!!). She is married to Pat Cole and has one adult daughter, Hilary Jones, who has graced the family with a beautiful granddaughter, Amelia. Her hobbies are reading, sewing, watching Law & Order (all versions), Longaberger baskets—and being Gran!

Please contact Janet at the info on page 2 with any AWAB inquires. She’ll be ready and happy to assist you!

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!
If your congregation has a story to share or an event you want to celebrate, please email us and we’ll be sure to include it in our monthly newsletter. Don’t forget to send PICTURES!! All newsletter content can be sent to admin@awab.org.