A TIME TO GATHER

Fall brings a time of renewal to our lives. The end of summer finds many of us reenergized and ready to tackle those tasks that require a fresh look. The AWAB Board of Directors is poised to do just that. Your board members are located in every geographic section of the country, and as a result meet in person only once a year. We meet by Zoom for the other five meetings each year. We were scheduled to meet in person in June of 2020, but that was canceled due to Covid. We scheduled this year’s meeting in September at the Berkeley School of Theology in Berkeley, California, and we intend to continue that plan with a hybrid meeting of those attending in person and those participating through Zoom. The safety and well-being of our board members remains a high priority for AWAB.

The agenda for this gathering includes a review of the AWAB Mission Statement. This statement drives our program elements which translate into how we can best serve both our churches and the LGBTQ+ community. We gather with that renewed energy of fall for both meaningful planning as well as warm and genuine fellowship with our colleagues.

We are pleased to welcome Jordan Conley to our meeting this year. Jordan joins AWAB as our Seminary Intern in his final year at the Baptist Seminary of Kentucky. He will be concentrating on communication with our present and future member churches. Our meeting will be facilitated by Rev. Don Ng, former pastor of Chinese Baptist Church in San Francisco and past President of ABC-USA. We will keep you informed regarding the outcome of this gathering, as the purpose of AWAB is to serve you.

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We could speak about renewed energy when speaking of our Administrative Coordinator, Janet Cole. That might be inappropriate because Janet is filled with energy all the time! In any organization there is that person behind the scenes that keeps the wheels turning smoothly. For AWAB Janet is that person. She maintains the records for us in our Louisville, Kentucky office. We thank you Janet for your unwavering dedication to this organization and our mission.

I am also grateful for the support of all of our member churches and those individuals and organizations who make AWAB possible; we would not exist without you. I hope that your energy will be renewed this fall as you do your work in God's world.

Blessings,

Bob Sittig, Board Chair

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**Highlighting a recent publication by Judson Press, authored by an AWAB Pastor**

Rev. Marcia B. Bailey, pastor of AWAB member First Baptist Church of Pottstown, Pottstown, PA, wrote: *Transformed by Pastoral Transition.*

Designed as a practical and deeply spiritual guide for congregations facing pastoral transition, this new book from an experienced transitional pastor and consultant on interim ministry uses the framework of the Christian worship service to help church leaders usher their faith community through a process of honoring the past, healing the present, and discerning the future. It includes worship resources for each stage in the transitional season, from bidding farewell and processing grief related to the outgoing minister, to celebrating the gifts of community and anticipating the next stage in the congregation's life together.

“Marcia offers helpful and pastoral insights that are based on her years of experience and rooted in her commitment to a ministry of love and compassion,” comments AWAB's National Coordinator, Brian Henderson. “You will find the book helpful no matter what season of life you may find yourself or congregation.”
Dear AWAB Members and Friends,

It continues to be an honor to serve as your National Coordinator. While the past year has presented all of us with challenges of different and varied kinds, I continue to stand with gratitude to the faithful and often quiet witness of so many of you in our welcoming and affirming ministries.

While we’ve been communicating and connecting more differently than ever over the last eighteen months, our work has continued and progress has been made. Many, many thanks to our AWAB Board of Directors and the fine leadership that Bob Sittig provides as Board Chair. I’m grateful too for the work and commitment of Administrative Coordinator Janet Cole, for the nearly daily updating of AWAB’s Facebook page by Rick Mixon, and for the ongoing maintenance of our website by Kurt Kaufman. We are blessed with a team of people who are invested in and committed to the ongoing success of our near half-century old welcoming and affirming ministry.

As you read this issue of Welcoming Spirit, I trust you'll sense the energy and momentum AWAB continues to experience. We’re excited to announce our Mixon and MacNair awardees, and I’m pleased to share that as of the publication of this issue, AWAB will soon welcome three new member congregations expanding our reach and ministry on both the east and west coasts!

As always, know that your ongoing care, prayer support and financial investment helps us do together what none of us can do on our own.

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

POSITION OPENINGS!

Have you checked out the latest open ministry positions posted on AWAB’s website? Check them out at:

awab.org/ministry-opportunities
Barbra MacNair Award for Christian Witness

Aubin Petersen—Broadway Baptist Church, Ft. Worth, Texas

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.

This year’s award goes to Broadway Baptist Church (Fort Worth, TX) member Aubin Petersen. Aubin is the founder of Another Story® (www.anotherstory-love.com). Another Story® is made up of straight allies, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning persons, indeed the whole of the alphabet which makes up God’s diverse creation of humanity. Another Story® creates a safe space for people to gather to learn from and explore the realities of our humanity.

Over the years, Aubin and her husband, Mark, have personally gathered hundreds of people in their home for intentional dialogue that foregrounds LGBTQ people’s stories and expertise. Additionally, Aubin has helped the parents of LGBTQ young people find supportive space for exploration of their child's sexuality or gender identity.

Of Aubin, Rev. Dr. Cody Sanders writes: “Aubin developed the brilliant idea of holding in creative relationship what I would identify as the threads of early house church community, queer theological scholarship and activism, and the centrality of testimony in the Christian experience and birthed Another Story®. For the past ten years, she and her husband Mark have made a substantive impact on LGBTQ inclusivity and justice in the North Texas region, and I often hold Aubin up as a model for others to emulate in other parts of the country. I am forever grateful for the hospitality I found in the Petersen home in the earliest days of Another Story®.”

AWAB will formally present this award to Aubin at a yet-to-be determined date.
Randle R. Mixon Award for Christian Service

Rev. April Baker—Glendale Baptist Church

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.

This year’s award goes to Rev. April Baker, Co-Pastor of AWAB member congregation Glendale Baptist Church (glendalebaptist.org), Nashville, TN. Rev. Baker joined the pastoral staff of Glendale in 2002, fresh from a stint in the corporate world and twelve years out of seminary. Rev. Baker is married to Deborah and together they find great joy in the outdoors. When indoors, she can often be found at her loom trying a new weaving pattern or creating something to use at home or give as a gift.

The gift of Rev. Baker’s life and testimony to God’s inclusive love for all is an inspiration to many throughout our larger Baptist family. Rev. Baker once served on the Steering Committee for American Baptists Concerned, the Pre-cursor to AWAB. Additionally, she has been very active in The Alliance of Baptists and the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America/Bautistas por la Paz.

AWAB Board Member Emeritus Rev. Rick Mixon says of Rev. Baker, “April is a consummate pastor who embodies the ideals of servant leadership. She is compassionate, wise, prophetic, and collegial in both her vision and practice of ministry. It is a joy for me to know her as colleague and friend.”

As with the MacNair Award, AWAB will formally present the Mixon Award to Rev. Baker at Glendale Baptist Church at a yet-to-be determined date.
AWAB’s 50th Anniversary Celebration & History Project Report

by Delane Tew, PhD

I have enjoyed being able to move from working mostly on researching the history to begin the writing. While continuing to do some research, I am putting much energy into writing the introduction. For an historian, the introduction to a book is very important. The first part of an introduction should capture the interest of the reader, something that will show the work is connected to personal stories, not just dates and data. Next, the author needs to lay out where the story will be taking the reader, what is the main topic of research, who are the people involved, and what is the author’s understanding of the story.

The introduction also needs to lay the foundation for the work ahead. I am including in the introduction a discussion of the terms I will be using. For instance, the audience needs to understand why the term “homosexual” is not in use today and why I will be using LGBTQ+. We do not need to assume that all readers of the book will be familiar with the organization of ABC/USA or for that matter of the “Baptist Principles” that were at stake during the struggle for recognition. I will be explaining these in the introduction. Most introductions also include an explanation of the sources used in the research and any limitations to the research.

Chapter 1 will focus on the early years of ABConcerned. I will use secondary sources to discuss how society in general treated the LGBTQ+ community in the 1950s and 1960s, the discrimination many endured and the fight for equal rights. I will also discuss events going on in the ABC/USA at the time that led Rodger Harrison to conclude that it was time to organize. I am thin on material concerning the very early years of ABConcerned. I have interviewed Louise Rose, Barbra MacNair, and Rick Mixon. They have shared a great deal of interesting information. However, until the Voice of the Turtle begins in 1978, I have no written documents from within the organization.

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I have been working with Darrell Lance. He has been sending me all the material he had from his time as interim director and as editor of The Inspiriter. This is amazing material. He is donating his records to the AWAB archives. He spent a good deal of money sending me the material. I continue to be excited about this project. Thank you for your support and interest.

In June of 2020, AWAB commissioned Dr. C. Delane Tew to write AWAB’s history in partial celebration of our golden anniversary year to take place in 2023. We anticipate the publication of this book in the Spring of 2023. If you have historical documents, materials, or any other archival information you think AWAB should have, please email our Administrative Coordinator, Janet Cole, at janet@awab.org.

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Praise for Sinless Sex Series

Throughout June and July AWAB, in partnership with author, scholar, theologian and friend, the Rev. Dr. William (“Bill”) R. Stayton, along with Kathy Stayton (married to Bill and former AWAB Board Chair) offered a course titled: “Sinless Sex: A Challenge to Religions” based on the book by that title written by Dr. Stayton. A dozen people from all four time zones participated. The following comments were given through the course’s evaluation:

“It was good to hear the stories of people's journeys. Also, I liked that Bill's book...formed a good grounding for our diverse conversations. Perhaps there might be a ‘Sinless Sex 201' class?” ~Marty

“Sinless Sex' provides information and insights concerning sexuality and identity portrayed in the Bible that I have never heard in 45 years of service as a Senior Pastor and Army Chaplain.” ~Teri

“I appreciated the openness with which Bill and Kathy facilitated that allowed people to share from their experiences, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity or relationship status. Bill's book was equally affirming and informative, and it was good to read and discuss it with others.” ~Nancy

AWAB is grateful for the ongoing dedication by Bill and Kathy Stayton to our welcoming and affirming work. Who knows? Perhaps there's more sinless sex to talk about soon!
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 2019:
- Chico First Baptist Church, Chico, CA
- Circle of Faith, St. Petersburg, FL
- First Baptist Church, Greenville, SC
- First Baptist Church, Littleton, MA
- First Baptist Church, Pottstown, PA
- First Baptist Church, Salt Lake City, UT
- Grace Baptist Church, San Jose, CA
- Grace Baptist Church, Statesville, NC
- Grace Baptist Church, Tacoma, WA
- Jacksonville Campus Ministry, Jacksonville, FL
- Pine Street Church, Boulder, CO
- United Campus Ministry, Billings, MT
- University Baptist Church, Charlottesville, VA

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:

Bob Sittig  
Chair, Seattle, WA  
Reba Cobb  
Louisville, KY

Dave Hunt  
Treasurer, Milwaukie, OR  
David Key  
Athens, GA

Shella Chace  
Secretary, Ithaca, NY  
Clifford Matthews, Jr.  
Charlotte, NC

Donnie Anderson  
Providence, RI  
Rick Mixon, Emeritus  
Palo Alto, CA

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Got Swag?
If your congregation or ministry is preparing to celebrate Pride or if you simply would like to have some AWAB swag, know that AWAB will send you what you want free of charge! Check out some of our newest items above, and then simply contact Administrative Coordinator Janet Cole and your swag will be on its way!