TWO STEPS FORWARD… By Bob Sittig, Board Chair

An expression most of us are familiar with that describes the reality of success and the lack thereof is, “Two steps forward, one step back.” The positive achievements made by AWAB and similar LGBTQ+ affirming organizations seem to be threatened these days by legislation proposed in some jurisdictions that would limit free speech regarding gay and transgender issues in our educational institutions and other public forums. Passage of these proposed bills would be a devastating blow to LGBTQ+ members and their families living in those communities, and to the entire queer population of the nation.

In the case of such an event, we must remember the “two steps forward” axiom. This organization and its predecessor have worked tirelessly for almost fifty years to create, protect and affirm the rights of this population. We presently have over 130 congregations proudly united in our cause. When setbacks occur, and they will, our work becomes even more relevant in achieving equality for all God’s people.

In the previous AWAB Newsletter I outlined some of the priorities we established at our board retreat in September 2021. I’m pleased to report to you that progress has been made in each area we designated, and with each being managed by an AWAB board member. You will soon learn of the programs we are establishing for resources for churches, personnel placement and financial stability. Stay tuned for details.

I think the coming of springtime and reduction of COVID restrictions will help us face the difficult tasks ahead with a more positive mindset. I want to personally thank you for support of our programs, both financially and spiritually. We at AWAB are committed to making sure we take many steps forward, so when that one step back comes along, we are still moving ahead.
TREASURER’S THOUGHTS...BY DAVE HUNT

ARE YOU A RAINBOW MAKER?

Every year, hundreds of member congregations and individuals fund the ministry of AWAB. Thank you for generously supporting this important work.

Your AWAB Board aspires to do even more by growing staff, educational resources, events, etc. to more fully:

- Provide support, education, and theological expression to Baptist congregations and organizations as they become more welcoming and affirming while honoring Scripture and Baptist heritage.
- Strengthen connections among congregations, which empower them to stand in support of LGBTQ+ people.
- Offer support to individuals and families experiencing difficulties reconciling sexual orientation and gender identity with serving in every aspect of Baptist life.
- Advocate for a faithful Baptist voice in support of LGBTQ+ full human and civil rights.

That’s our rainbow vision. Will you help make it a reality?

By actively partnering through the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists, we can accomplish so much more than any one (or 10) of us can accomplish alone. But AWAB currently has very few monthly donors. Will you help change that?

We are excited to launch Rainbow Circle! By signing up for a regular monthly donation from your credit card or bank/credit union (for as little as $8 per month), you can help ensure AWAB is better able to make the rainbow vision a reality.

Will you join our Rainbow Circle?

As part of the Rainbow Circle, you will receive:

1. Quarterly communications specifically for Rainbow Circle Members
2. Free or deeply discounted access to all AWAB events
3. Special recognition in AWAB’s newsletter and website (unless you prefer to remain anonymous).

Most importantly, you will receive the blessed assurance that you are turning some of your “green” into a colorful rainbow that welcomes and affirms all of God’s children.

Please consider joining the Rainbow Circle today.

Do it for the child who is struggling with their sexual orientation. Do it for the young adult who wants to understand their gender identity. Do it for the seminarian who needs help with ministry placement. Do it for the adult who wants to better affirm their child or grandchild. Do it for the congregation that wants to better understand and serve their community.

Please join the Rainbow Circle. Thank you for your partnership!
NOTES FROM NATIONAL COORDINATOR, BRIAN HENDERSON

It is humbling to be part of an organization that continues to excel at the ministry for which it cares and to which so many individuals give generously. As you read through this issue of Welcoming Spirit, I hope you’ll sense with me the ongoing momentum that the AWAB Board is creating for our churches, ministries, and many supporters around the country and world.

Personally, I want to express gratitude for Bob Sittig, our Board Chair. Bob’s leadership and vision give so much inspiration to the work AWAB is seeking to do in this season of its history. Along with Bob, our Board and Staff continue to help us do together what none of us can do on our own.

As we continue to live through challenging times and as we witness the passing of legislation that creates hurt and pain, I trust AWAB’s collective work for justice, equity, and equality, combined with the faithful witness of our W&A congregations and ministries, will provide for us the ongoing hope necessary to create space and opportunity for all God’s children.

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

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE ALLIANCE OF BAPTISTS

AWAB celebrates with the Alliance of Baptists as it celebrates its 35th Anniversary. We pray God’s blessings on Co-Directors Elijah Zehyoue and Carole Collins, and all of the Alliance of Baptists’ leaders, churches, and ministries as they move into their next chapter of ministry and mission.
NEWS FROM CROSSING LINES AFRICA

By Philip Kakungulu

We've started the LGBT Inspired Individuals Program under which we've begun construction of a Transit Crisis Center for many LGBT individuals and others in crisis. Initial funding came from individuals who have since been murdered on account of their sexual orientation. At this point in time, we still need significant funding to finish the Transit Crisis Center.

After initial construction of apartments, we will go to Phase Two to construct a kitchen, clinic, meeting hall, and library. Our dream is for the crisis center to be fully equipped with services necessary for the welfare of LGBT individuals. In time, we hope to have connections with consulates from the western world to facilitate asylum for special cases. As part of our vision, we also want to work with families and communities to facilitate resettlement of LGBT individuals. We have found that as families become more tolerant, so too can a whole community. Therefore, we are opposed to asylum seeking unless for special cases or special needs. It's difficult to determine which cases are special because all cases of rejection and violence against LGBT individuals are really special cases. However, we have cases involving people in high positions and also people who have been exposed and are at very high risk of being murdered for being LGBT.

We have been blessed to finish construction of four staff housing units at a refugee settlement which has definitely increased our missionary presence and reduced the cost of daily commuting to and from camps. Recently, we managed to rent a full house in Kampala Capital for one year. This is now being refurbished and staffed to house the activities of our newly formed Uganda Alliance of Welcoming and Affirming Churches. I believe that setting this kind of infrastructure in place is very important for sustainable reformation in Uganda, East and Central Africa.

We are grateful for any and all support our AWAB family can provide. Know that your financial gifts are helping us literally to save the lives of LGBT individuals and we are changing the ability of communities to be welcoming and affirming.

AWAB continues to invite members and friends to support Philip Kakungulu and Crossing Lines Africa by donating through the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America at: [https://www.bpfna.org/donate](https://www.bpfna.org/donate) — make sure to designate your gift to Crossing Lines Africa.
WELCOME TO NEW CHURCH

During its January Board meeting, AWAB's Board of Directors welcomed into our membership Christ the Liberator Church of Wilkesboro, NC. Please visit www.christtheliberator.org to learn more about this dynamic faith community that is making a significant impact on its community. We are delighted to have Rev. Brandon Anderson and the members of Christ the Liberator as part of the AWAB family.

PULLEN MEMORIAL BAPTIST CHURCH

AWAB celebrates with Pullen Memorial Baptist Church (Raleigh, NC) as it commemorated on February 27 the 30th Anniversary of becoming Welcoming & Affirming. Mahon Siler offered the morning sermon. To view this historic service visit: https://vimeo.com/showcase/9188230/video/682516669

BOOK & AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT

AWAB encourages you to check the following new reads...

New Directions for Holy Questions by Claire Brown & Anita Peebles


With accessible language, Bible stories, and connections to daily life, this book guides children and the adults who love them through the core teachings of Christianity. Kids have big questions about God and faith, and, while many of those questions don’t have one clear answer, Christians throughout the ages have given us helpful ways to think and talk about what we believe.

Continued, next page
Each chapter includes simple spiritual practices and questions for reflection, either in solitary reading or through conversation between children and caregivers or ministers. It is oriented towards anti-racism, gender equality, economic justice, care of the environment, affirmation of LGBTQ+ folks, trauma-informed practice, and global citizenship.


For many LGBTQIA+ Christians and allies, the infamous "clobber" passages (the handful of passages used by religious conservatives to demonize LGBTQIA+ people) elicit a similar response: stay far, far away. These verses haven't been used to make us uncomfortable; they've been used to cause us deep harm.

**Queering the American Dream by Angela Yarber**


Queer Baptist author, theologian, and artist, Angela Yarber, comments on her latest book: “Here it is. Over 6 years in the making, it’s my first memoir, my first foray into commercial publishing after a decade of writing academic tomes. And it’s ‘my’ story – the story of my queer family leaving it all and the revolutionary women who taught us how.

Our story began the day the supreme court ruled our marriage legal and ended the moment my brother's addiction spiraled into a deadly overdose. In between are 18 months of full-time travel with a toddler in tow, my wife and I experiencing America's jaw-dropping landscapes on the one hand, juxtaposed against US policies and politics that systematically hurt marginalized families like ours on the other hand. With each stop along the way, a different revolutionary woman from history or myth accompanies us, reminding us that it’s not just my family who is queering the American dream, but a subversive sisterhood of saints who have gone before us.

After publishing 7 academic books, I’ve stepped out in vulnerability with a small indie publisher, donating all profits to charity and hoping to spread the word about revolutionary women, addiction, grief, vocation, faithlessness, and, of course, what it means to queer the American dream. Deep breaths.”
**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*

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**New Member Churches since 2019:**

- Chico First Baptist Church, Chico, CA
- Christ the Liberator Church, Wilkesboro, NC
- Circle of Faith, St. Petersburg, FL
- Crossing Lines Africa, Uganda
- First Baptist Church, Chelmsford, MA
- 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
- Queer Conversations at Central Baptist Church, Lexington, KY
- Royersford Baptist Church, Royersford, PA
- Southside Baptist Church, Birmingham, AL
- 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.

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**AWAB is led by its Board:**

Bob Sittig  
*Chair, Seattle, WA*

Dave Hunt  
*Treasurer, Milwaukie, OR*

Sheila Chace  
*Secretary, Ithaca, NY*

Donnie Anderson  
*Providence, RI*

Reba Cobb  
*Louisville, KY*

David Key  
*Athens, GA*

Clifford Matthews, Jr.  
*Charlotte, NC*

Rick Mixon, Emeritus  
*Costa Mesa, CA*

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* @affirmingbaptists  
* @affirmBaptist
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!