



It's hard to believe that we are approaching the end of another calendar year. It may go without stating, but for many of us, I suspect there will be a sigh of relief when we can finally turn the page into the New Year. 2020 has been hard for many reasons, not the least of which has been the global pandemic, the presidential election season, as well as the ongoing social unrest and challenges of systemic racism.

Through all that has been this year, AWAB has worked hard to stand in solidarity with our member congregations, ministries, and friends. Over the Spring and Summer, we hosted a series of Zoom meetings to connect our AWAB members and to offer encouragement and support during much of the United States' shelter-in-place period. Additionally, in early October, it was energizing to bring together AWAB members and friends from throughout the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico as we hosted our first ever National Zoom Conference. Many thanks to everyone who participated making the experience so rich.

As you read through this issue of *The Welcoming Spirit* I trust you'll sense that in the face of so many challenges, there remains much for us to celebrate and for which to be grateful.

As we soon move into the holiday season, may we be thankful for all we can and may the spirit of Emmanuel, God with us, keep us and hold us in these days.

Sincerely,

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

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:

- Grace Baptist Church, San Jose, CA
- Chico First Baptist Church, Chico, CA
- Jacksonville Campus Ministry, Jacksonville, FL
- United Campus Ministry, Billings, MT
- First Baptist Church, Pottstown, PA
- First Baptist Church, Littleton, MA
- Circle of Faith, St. Petersburg, FL
- University Baptist Church, Charlottesville, VA
- Grace Baptist Church, Statesville, NC
- Pine Street Church, Boulder, CO
- First Baptist Church, Greenville, SC
- Grace Baptist Church, Tacoma, WA

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 <i>Chair, Seattle, WA</i>	Dave Hunt <i>Portland, OR</i>
Reba Cobb <i>Treasurer, Louisville, KY</i>	David Key <i>Athens, GA</i>
Shella Chace <i>Secretary, Ithaca, NY</i>	Rick Mixon, Emeritus <i>Palo Alto, CA</i>
Donnie Anderson <i>Providence, RI</i>	

Contact Us

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ABC MINISTERIAL COVENANT AND CODE OF ETHICS UNDER REVIEW

By Rev. Micky Holmes



The Minsters Council of Northern California and the Ministers Council of Evergreen Baptist Association were formed in 2003 and 2004, respectively. It was a time of intense debate within the ABC denomination over homosexuality. In the West, regions were splitting, churches were disfellowshipped, and collegial bonds broken. These two councils were formed to provide support, healing, and advocacy for all ministers regardless of theology, gender, race, culture, sexual orientation.

In 2005, I attended the infamous National Minsters Council Senate when a proposal to use sexual orientation as a restrictive criterion for Senate membership was considered. After embarking on a yearlong process of education, discussion and prayer, the Senate voted down the amendment, affirming our diversity in ministry and autonomy of local councils.

It has been 15 years since the Senate vote and the struggle for inclusion of our LGBTQ+ pastors continues. The ABC Ministerial Covenant and Code of Ethics is undergoing revision. The document calls for greater awareness and sensitivity to those who are discriminated against. Nevertheless, the proposed list of discriminated groups excludes sexual orientation and gender identity. While I understand the statement has been rewritten to be more inclusive, I am discomforted that our work for acceptance of LGBTQ+ ministers is not finished.

The Covenant and Code of Ethics is a wholistic document whose purpose is to hold ABC ministers accountable in their relationship to self, God, and others. In the coming months, we will be asked to ratify the revised Covenant and Code of Ethics and commit to upholding the purposes and ideals of the code. It is my prayer we can do so in the spirit of inclusivity, pledging to support all who are called by God for service in the building of God's Beloved Community.

Rev. Michelle (Micky) Holmes, retired Vice President/CFO from Berkeley School of Theology (ABSW). Currently, Rev. Holmes serves as Moderator of Shell Ridge Community Church and a member of the Board of Directors for HumanGood. Rev. Holmes is a third generation, ordained ABC minister. Her grandfather signed the first Code of Ethics in 1938.

Congratulations

TO ERICA HARTMANN COOPER & TIM SCHAEFER



AWAB celebrates with **Rev. Erica Hartmann Cooper** and Baptist Church of the Covenant, Birmingham, AL, as they begin ministry together as Senior Pastor and Congregation. AWAB also celebrates with **Rev. Tim Schaefer** and First Baptist Church, Madison, WI, as they too begin ministry together as Senior Pastor and Congregation.

WELCOME TO GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH, TACOMA, WA



AWAB welcomes into membership **Grace Baptist Church**, Tacoma, WA. Grace Baptist Church has had a history of being welcoming and affirming but after a recent, intentional process, under the leadership of Pastor Gordy Hutchins, Grace Baptist Church has now gone on record as being overtly welcoming and affirming. Grace Baptist Church is the third congregation in the state of Washington to formally join AWAB.

CONGRATULATIONS TO AWAB BOARD TREASURER REBA COBB



Baptist Seminary of Kentucky trustee **Reba Cobb** received the By Faith award presented during the Autumn Celebration of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Kentucky.

The award, which recognizes contributions to CBF life, was given during a virtual event held over October 9-10. Rev. Cobb was a member of the first executive committee of CBF Kentucky. She was also a member of the national CBF's inaugural Global Coordinating Council and was a "founding mother" of Baptist Women in Ministry.

Rev. Cobb is a member of Broadway Baptist Church in Louisville, where she was minister of spiritual formation from 2005 until her retirement in 2012. AWAB is grateful that Rev. Reba Cobb serves as our Board Treasurer.

POSITION OPENINGS



Williamsburg Baptist Church, Williamsburg, VA, is searching for a **Pastor & Spiritual Leader**. For more information, click here: awab.org/williamsburg-baptist-church



Warren Wilson
COLLEGE

Warren Wilson College, Asheville, NC, is searching for **Chaplain** of the College. For more information, click here: awab.org/chaplain-of-the-college-warren-wilson-college

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**IN
MEMORIAM**



AWAB extends its condolences to the family of **The Rev. C. Irving Cummings**. Irv was the long time pastor of member congregation, Old Cambridge Baptist Church and an early leader with American Baptists' Concerned and AWAB.



AWAB also extends its condolences to the family of **Virginia Ramey Mollenkott**. Teacher, theologian, and pioneering lesbian feminist activist, Virginia led the first ever American Baptists' Concerned retreat at Kirkridge Conference Center in the 1980s.



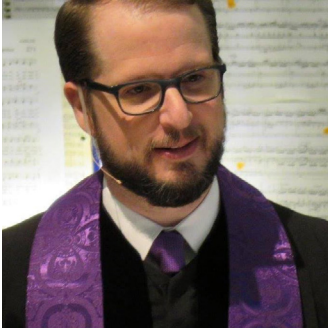
Cumberland First Baptist Church, of Cumberland, IN, honored the late **Rev. Kevin D. Rose** on September 27. Rev. Rose served as the congregation's co-pastor and he also served AWAB as a member of its Board.

GRANTS GIVEN TO EIGHT AWAB MEMBER CONGREGATIONS

As result of the global pandemic, AWAB has not used its travel budget as intended for 2020. At its August Board meeting, the AWAB Board decided to reallocate its travel budget to support our member congregations and ministries in need. Grants of \$500 haven been given to 8 congregations.

If your congregation is in need, please email National Coordinator Brian Henderson and request up to \$500. This grant opportunity will be available while funds remain or until the end of 2020.

PRAYERS & SUPPORT FOR FORD GREGG



AWAB continues to pray for Ford Gregg, Dallas, Texas, son of Amanda and Mike Gregg. The Gregg family asks for care and prayers as they learn how to care for a medically fragile child. If you would like to help support the Gregg family, friends have set up a [GoFundMe account here](#). Rev. Mike Gregg is the pastor of AWAB member congregation Royal Lane Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas.





Soar with Us!

- AWAB offers Support during COVID-19—including COVID-19 Support Gatherings via Zoom
- While national gatherings have been moved to online platforms, AWAB staff, Board, and members have been actively present—if you're connecting with folk via any of these times, please share how AWAB has been meaningful to you
- Does AWAB have your most current information? Please email church and personal contact information updates to janet@awab.org
- Your financial gifts to AWAB help us continue to do together what none of us can do on our own. Thank you for your support. To donate now go to: <https://awab.org/support>
- If you have any documents, photos, or stories to tell about AWAB's history, we want to know! Please contact email our National Coordinator, Brian Henderson, at brian@awab.org, or our Administrative Coordinator, Janet Cole, at janet@awab.org.



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