

Explore your journey in faith at First Baptist



Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley
General Secretary
American Baptist Church USA
P. O. Box 851
Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851

Dear Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley,

A Biennial Request for 2017

As described by one of this year's keynote speakers, Amy Butler, senior minister of Riverside Church in NYC, our church embarked upon a journey 3 years ago "out of our comfort zones" into "places of fear and unfamiliarity...that most often give birth to things more beautiful than we could ever imagine". Called by God, strengthened by prayer and a long period of discernment, First Baptist Church of Rochester chose to welcome and affirm the LGBTQ community within God's family to our church family. We sought the advice and experience of other American Baptist congregations who have felt a similar call in preparing to accept this challenge given to us by God. The Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists (AWAB) is a valuable resource for congregations such as ours who wish to practice the welcome, the embrace, the healing offered by Jesus to those who are marginalized, broken and so in need of spiritual support.

The 2015 Biennial is to be commended for representing the great diversity of the American Baptist life – the National Black Caucus, American Baptist Women, the Indian Caucus, the Asian Alliance, the Hispanic community, and building bridges between the Baptist and Muslim worlds. Yet, it is our understanding that the nearly one hundred welcoming and affirming churches such as ours were not recognized and that AWAB was not allowed a place of recognition in the Biennial. We believe that our church and others like us are a vital part of the full scope of American Baptist Home Missions as described by Dr. Aidsand Wright-Riggins, "including evangelism and emancipation, spiritual formation and social justice".

It is our fervent hope that at the Biennial in 2017 the **total diversity** of American Baptist life will be openly acknowledged and will include those American Baptists who welcome and affirm the LGBTQ children of God. One positive step would be the inclusion of AWAB within the exhibit hall at the 2017 Biennial.

We thank you in advance for your prayerful consideration and look forward to having a conversation with you,

Sincerely,

First Baptist Church of Rochester, NY

Committee on Welcome and Affirmation

cc: Rev. Dr. Leo Thorne, Associate General Secretary for Mission Resources Development; Rev. Steve Bils, Executive Director ABC/CPC; Rev. Judy Fackenthal, President Elect ABC USA.

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