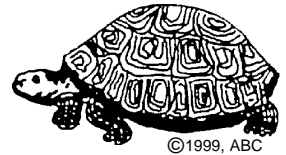


Voice of the Turtle

THE NEWSLETTER OF AMERICAN BAPTISTS CONCERNED FOR SEXUAL MINORITIES



"Behold the turtle: it makes progress only when it sticks its neck out."
— James B. Conant

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Eight ABC Regions Appeal Dismissal of California W&A Churches

By Chris Boisvert

Eight Regions of the American Baptist Churches/USA have requested an adjudication process be begun between the Regions and the General Board, the denomination's governing body, over the dismissal from the denomination of four California churches. The adjudication process means that the four churches dismissed by the ABC/USA at its biennial meeting in Des Moines, Iowa, will remain cooperating churches in good standing within the ABC/USA until the completion of the process.

The Regions requesting adjudication are ABC of Metro Chicago, ABC of Metro New York, ABC of Connecticut, Philadelphia Baptist Association, ABC of Massachusetts, ABC of the Rochester/Genesee Region, ABC of Wisconsin and the ABC of the South. In written requests for adjudication to General Secretary Daniel E. Weiss, the Regions criticized the General Board actions for lacking procedural due process and violating local church autonomy, and for failing to prove that the churches had violated the common criteria (Standing Rule 5.1) to which all cooperating churches subscribe. Since the General Board is one of the differing parties, this issue is now under the jurisdiction of the General Executive Council Executive Committee, which will appoint an adjudicator/s. The adjudication process (Standing Rule 18.11.2) is a means of resolving conflict between two or more regional or national bodies within the denomination.

First Baptist Church of Berkeley, Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church in Oakland, New Community of Faith in San Jose and San Leandro Community Church were expelled from ABC of the West after the Region

changed the Covenant of Relationship between itself and the churches. The change provided for the immediate dismissal of churches that were already members, as well as forbidding any additional churches from becoming members, of the Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists, an association of congregations that includes sexual minority people in all aspects of church life.

This change in the Covenant between the ABC of the West and its member churches placed the Region in conflict with its Covenant of Relationship with the denomination, a Covenant which only provides for the disfellowshipping of a church that has violated one of the five Common Criteria for a cooperating church. Because of this conflict, the ABC of the

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Dialogue With Dignity at ABC Concerned Retreat

By Chris Boisvert

Dialogue With Dignity: Gay and Christian is Not an Oxymoron was the theme of the American Baptists Concerned Retreat that took place June 26-29 in Indianola, Iowa. The retreat leader was the Rev. Cynthia Maybeck from Worcester, Massachusetts. Cynthia led retreat goers through a process on how to dialog about sexual orientation with one's self and also with others.

One topic discussed was how gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people have to continually make a judgement about how and with whom to dialogue about who they are as both spiritual and sexual beings. Whether or not to speak of spirituality in the same context of having to speak about their sexuality is a decision that heterosexual people do not have to face. Most heterosexual people assume that the people they encounter are also heterosexual. Many LGBT people, however, have to continually dialogue internally as to when it is safe or unsafe to reveal one's self as a sexual minority person or to let people assume that they are

heterosexual. Either decision can have consequences. Coming out to someone can put one's relationship with family, friends and colleagues at stake and possibly threaten

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The Inside Scoop

- ▼ "Youth Focus," a special feature on youth at risk.
- ▼ Georgia church expelled, calls gay associate pastor.
- ▼ Biennial "Reflections" and "Who's Who" by Lynne Kelley.
- ▼ ABC Concerned and others called to action at Biennial.
- ▼ Mixon's Musings: "Growing in Grace."
- ▼ Christian Service Award given.
- ▼ W&A worships held.