

# Called to Action to Help Preserve Baptist Freedom

Many of us arriving in Des Moines for the ABC/USA Biennial meeting were greeted with the news that the General Board had voted not to uphold the appeal of the four California churches and that the churches had been disfellowshipped. The first evening, people from American Baptists Concerned, the Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists, Baptist Principles and other concerned individuals met to discuss how to best respond to the General Board's actions. We did not want people attending the Biennial to leave without knowing of the action taken and the consequences.

We asked people to gather each evening as part of the ABConcerned sponsored, Rainbow Choir, led by the Rev. Gary Harris. And gather they did. The choir sang at



Peace Pole, Valley Forge, PA

Veterans Memorial Auditorium each evening before the plenary session, holding banners and crosses representing the four dismissed churches. We distributed flyers as people listened to the powerful witness of the choir. We asked people to carry a stone from the W&A worship service to Veterans

Auditorium and to stack them stone upon stone as a sign of support for the churches and as a protest at the loss of local church autonomy. The crosses, bearing the names of the four churches, were carried by people in the prayer march, sponsored by National Ministries, to remember victims of violence. Many of us regarded the action against the churches as an act of violence. The last night of the biennial, more than 150 people marched into the evening plenary session in a peaceful, silent protest.

The marchers, who entered the hall during the opening hymn, and exited afterward, were joined by many more people who stood with them in the isles. Following the Biennial, the crosses were carried to national headquarters in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, where they were planed at the *Peace Pole* ▼

## Christian Service Award Presented at Biennial

The Rev. H. James Hopkins, senior pastor of Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church in Oakland, California was presented with the Randle R. Mixon Award for Christian Service at a gathering in Des Moines, Iowa in June. The award, presented by American Baptists Concerned for Sexual Minorities is presented every two years during the biennial convention

of the American Baptist Churches/USA. The award is given to an individual who has worked to advance the call for justice on behalf of sexual minority Baptists. An award was also presented Dr. Rev. Randle Mixon, in who's honor the award is named.

Jim Hopkins is pastor of a diverse, multi-cultural congregation of about 300. During Jim's tenure at Lakeshore, the church became a charter member of the Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists, voted to ordain an openly gay member who had been unjustly denied ordination, and was disfellowshipped from it's Region.

Jim's call for justice extends to other arenas as well. He is active in the movement to preserve Baptist principle within the American Baptist Churches and has worked to build bridges though participation in groups such as the Oakland Coalition of Congregations. We hope you join us in congratulating Jim Hopkins on this honor ▼

## Welcome 2000 W&A Gathering

The ecumenical welcoming church movement invites you to *Welcome 2000: God's Promise Is For You*. The gathering, August 3-6, 2000, will be held at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Illinois, 60 miles west of Chicago.

People will gather as members and friends of the welcoming church movement to worship, study and play. People will gather in our human diversity to celebrate God's love for people of all sexual orientations. People will gather to experience the presence of Jesus Christ and participate in the Spirit's work to transform church and society. Welcome 2000 will serve as the national gathering of the Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists in 2000.

For more info or to volunteer contact Brenda Moulton at AWAB, P.O. Box 2596, Attleboro Falls, MA 02763, (508) 226-1945, email: wabaptists@aol.com. You may also contact Ruth Garwood at (718) 832-3265, email: garmack@worldnet.att.net ▼

### Concerned American Baptists Meet in Connecticut

Join with family and friends from across Connecticut in gathering as a supportive community.

*American Baptists  
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