**ABHMS Sponsors Service to Celebrate ADA**

**VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 7/28/15)—**American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) was among the sponsors of an interfaith service held Sunday at First Trinity Lutheran Church, Washington, D.C., to celebrate the progress and promise of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). President George H.W. Bush signed the ADA 25 years ago Sunday.

The service opened with remarks by Curtis Ramsey-Lucas, who is both managing director of Resource Development for ABHMS and director of Interfaith Engagement for the American Association of People with Disabilities’ (AAPD).

“In his blessing before President Bush signed the ADA … the Rev. Harold Wilke prayed that God would ‘strengthen our resolve as we take up the task, knowing our work has just begun,’” noted Ramsey-Lucas. “As joyous an occasion as the ADA signing ceremony was, Rev. Wilke understood it was a beginning and not an end in and of itself in the struggle for access, inclusion, dignity and belonging for people with disabilities within communities of faith and within society as a whole.”

A highlight of the service was presentation of the Thornburgh Family Award to Rabbi Lynne Landsberg for her advocacy with and for people with disabilities. Landsberg is senior advisor of disability rights at the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism; co-founder and co-chair of the Jewish Disability Network; co-founder and co-chair of Hineinu: Jewish Community for People of All Abilities; and a member of AAPD’s Interfaith Disability Advocacy Coalition steering committee.

The service also included the reading of a letter from President Obama recognizing Rabbi Landsberg for her work expanding opportunities for people with disabilities. “By bringing people of diverse faiths and backgrounds together around the mission of expanding opportunity, you have helped shape a more inclusive future for generations to come,” the letter said. “Your leadership reflects essential beliefs at the core of our Nation’s creed: that all things are possible for all people, and that we all do better when we lift each other up. While our work to uphold fairness and equality is unending, our country is stronger and truer to itself because of the progress leaders like you have inspired.”

The AAPD established the award this year to honor a religious leader who exemplifies the spirit of the ADA as demonstrated by former Pennsylvania Gov. Dick Thornburgh and his wife, Ginny, who is retired after years of service with AAPD.

First Trinity is home to Lifeline Partnership, which has been ministering for more than 50 years to teens and adults with intellectual disabilities.

*ABHMS—the domestic mission arm of American Baptist Churches USA—ministers as the caring heart and serving hands of Jesus Christ across the United States and Puerto Rico through a multitude of initiatives that focus on discipleship, community and justice.*

*American Baptist Churches USA is one of the most diverse Christian denominations today, with over 5,200 local congregations comprised of 1.3 million members, across the United States and Puerto Rico, all engaged in God’s mission around the world.*