

# NAACP Freedom Fund Banquet honors Rev. Onie Cooper

The 66th Annual Reno/Sparks NAACP Freedom Fund Banquet, held on the evening of Saturday, May 14, 2011, at the Atlantis Resort Grand Ballroom, was attended by nearly 200 individuals, members and nonmembers of the NAACP. The banquet, titled "Building Nevada's Future," to celebrate the accomplishments of the local branch of the NAACP, to remember the Rev. Onie Cooper of Second Baptist Church and Dr. Milton Glick, President of the University of Nevada-Reno, and to award college scholarships to several worthy high school and university students from the Reno/Sparks area. A program of music and speakers, including keynote speaker, life coach Ondra Berry, preceded the awards. Messages of recognition for the event were presented by Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval, United States Senator Harry Reid, Reno Mayor Robert Cashell, and Sparks Mayor Geno Martini.



NAACP President Lonnie Feemster.  
PHOTO Stephan Fuelling

A letter addressed to NAACP President Lonnie Feemster by Bishop Gene Savoy Jr. memorialized the life and work of Rev. Onie Cooper. The letter was read at the program by Rev. Rebecca Willis in the absence of Bishop Savoy, who was

traveling in Japan.



Rev. Rebecca Willis reads Bishop Savoy's address at 2011 NAACP Freedom Banquet. PHOTO Stephan Fuelling

The body of the letter follows:

*"It is a great privilege for me to have been invited by the Reno-Sparks branch of the NAACP to say a few humble words on behalf of my friend and colleague, the late Reverend Onie Cooper. Unfortunately, I am not able to be physically present with you this evening; however, there certainly is no lack of participation in spirit!"*

*"Onie was a great friend to all of us. Indeed, he was not only a friend of this community, which he loved so dearly, but a friend of all humanity. I came to know Onie Cooper many years ago when the Advocates for Religious Rights and Freedoms, an association that seeks to preserve, protect and defend religious freedom and expression, honored the late Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. I immediately saw in Onie Cooper something that I admired. I now know that what I saw in him was his incredible championship of and for the*

*rights of man and woman. He fought for liberty, justice and equality of every person, not only here in northern Nevada, but everywhere. In this way, he followed in the footsteps and in the great traditions of Dr. King, the Mahatma Gandhi, the American Transcendentalists, and, yes, even Jesus the Christ.*

*“It was an extreme honor for Reverend Cooper to personally extend his hand to me and ask me to continue the work which he so ardently labored for in this community for so many decades. To be honest, at the time I was speechless! However, I do know that we, you and I, have an incredible legacy to carry on – a great work in order to keep the dream alive.*

*“So I say to you this evening, I know that we must – and will! – go on to do great things together. That will make Onie Cooper proud of all of us. I again thank you for the opportunity of being with you this evening. God bless.*

*“Most sincerely yours,*

*“The Right Reverend Gene Savoy, Jr.  
Bishop, International Community of Christ  
President, Nevada Clergy Association  
Chairman, Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Committee”*

The event was supported by the International Community of Christ Church with a patron table. Attending from the Church were The Revs. Rebecca Willis, Robert Petrovich, Robert Anderson, Barbara Whitney, Michael Tamburello, Thomas Lee, Amanda Buchanan, Stephan Fuelling, Claudia Grady. Radheka Patel was expected to attend but was prevented by an illness in her family.



Second Advent Church members at patron table. From left to right, Rev. Amanda Buchanan, Dr. Stephan Fuelling, Rt. Rev. Rebecca Willis, Mrs. Claudia Grady PHOTO Stephan Fuelling