

8165:9/89

AMERICAN BAPTIST

RESOLUTION ON THE AIDS CRISIS

We worship and follow Jesus Christ whose Gospel is a call to healing (Matthew 4:23-25). We recognize that we are called and empowered by God to be agents of healing (Matthew 10:8, 25:31-46, Luke 9:11). The world and our nation face the Human Immune Deficiency Virus (HIV) Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) epidemic, a medical condition characterized by an acquired breakdown in the body's natural immunity against disease. The AIDS Virus, HIV, newly infects 16,000 people a day. 40 million are living with the virus. The United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), World Health Organization and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention present the following figures:

- 4.9 million people have been newly infected with HIV by the end of 2001.
- 3.1 million people died of AIDS in 2005.
- 2.3 million children under the age of 15 worldwide have HIV.
- 25 million uninfected children will be orphaned to AIDS by 2010.
- 1 in 5 new HIV infections are in people under the age of 25.

Women are the fastest growing population with AIDS. Heterosexual transmission is responsible for the rapid increase. The progress from HIV infection to AIDS can be slowed or temporarily halted by use of combinations of HIV specific drugs that fight the virus by slowing down or preventing viral replication. The goal of all anti-HIV treatment is for those infected to remain healthier, feel well and live longer. There is, however, no cure or vaccine for HIV yet. The HIV virus is transmitted by intimate sexual contact, by contact with contaminated blood supplies, by use of contaminated needles, and during pregnancy from infected mother to fetus. The virus is not transmitted through casual contact such as sharing a home, school or work environment, eating, touching, etc.

The first cases of HIV/AIDS in the United States were among homosexual men and intravenous drug users; more recently there has been an increase among the general public. The majority of HIV/AIDS cases in other parts of the world have been among heterosexual men and women. Because HIV/AIDS often results from what most people consider unacceptable sexual and social behavior, there has been a reluctance to address the reality of HIV/AIDS as a major issue which impacts us all.

Given the epidemic proportions of the HIV/AIDS crisis, the fact that at the present time HIV/AIDS is a fatal disease, and that HIV/AIDS presents us with that which is unknown, menacing and incurable, there is a specter of fear and paranoia for multitudes. Due to the fear of and ignorance about the disease, rejection of those who have HIV/AIDS is common. Such rejection causes additional emotional pain for these persons, their families, and their friends. American Baptist individuals, families and congregations have not been immune to the tragedy brought on by this disease. Many within our denomination suffer in silence, not knowing what response they may receive from their congregations if they make known their own struggle or that of a loved one.

2

In obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ's call to heal, to bear the truth and to

cast out fear we call on all American Baptists and our churches to:

1. Recognize the HIV/AIDS crisis as an opportunity for the caring and educational ministries of our churches.
2. Declare that HIV/AIDS should be viewed as an illness and affirm our belief that the loving God revealed in Jesus Christ does not inflict illness as punishment.
3. Teach, preach and live in ways which reflect Christ's call for the stewardship of our bodies as God's gifts.
4. Encourage and offer prayers for the healing of persons living with AIDS and HIV Infection, insight for researchers, and strength for caregivers, families and loved ones.
5. Minister with love and support as faithful servants to those in the midst of sickness, pain and death.
6. Teach and preach in such a way that the fears and appeals to prejudice and hysteria surrounding this global crisis will be mitigated.
7. Teach and preach the healing Gospel of Jesus Christ in the midst of the HIV/AIDS crisis to the end of bringing about healing, hope and reconciliation.

Furthermore, we call upon American Baptist Churches to encourage governmental

and public health agencies to:

1. Support increased funding for HIV/AIDS research and long term care.
2. Seek to insure the protection of civil and human rights and adequate medical care for all persons affected directly or indirectly by AIDS and HIV Infection.
3. Support those educational and technological means which will reduce the spread of HIV Infection.
4. Work to eliminate discrimination in all sectors of life against those thought to have HIV.
5. Respond to the global HIV/AIDS crisis through the national and international structures of churches, government and health organizations.

Adopted by the General Board of the American Baptist Churches - June 1988

170 FOR, 3 NO, 2 ABSTENTIONS

Revised by the Executive Committee of the General Board - September 1989

Modified by the Executive Committee of the General Board - March 1992

Modified by the Executive Committee of the General Board - September 1998

Modified by the Executive Committee of the General Board - September 2002

Modified by the Executive Committee of the General Board - September 2006

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3

POLICY BASE

Policy Statement on Health Care

1. Make health care resources, private and public, available in keeping with the total needs of people. . .
2. Direct health care resources toward the prevention of disease and the maintenance of health as well as toward the treatment of illness.

Policy Statement on Human Rights

1. The right to the basic necessities of food, shelter, clothing, and health care;
2. The right to human dignity, to be respected and treated as a person, and to be protected against discrimination without regard to age, sex, race, class, marital status, income, national origin, legal status, culture or condition in society.

Policy Statement on Health, Healing and Wholeness

SUPPORTING DOCUMENT

Statement of Concern - A.I.D.S.: Care and Prevention