

**AMERICAN BAPTIST
RESOLUTION ON THE CHURCH AND CHILD CARE**

BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL BASE

We recognize that all persons are created in God's image (Genesis 1:26a). Both the Old and New Testaments specifically instruct the faithful to do justice and to care for all persons, especially the young. The prophets called on the people to be charitable and just to orphans (Exodus 22:22; Isaiah 1:23). When Jesus said that we must become as children, he affirmed that children have an essential part in the community of faith (Matthew 18:1-5). A careful reading of Scriptures, demonstrates how children and the state of childhood were prominent in Jesus' ministry. He showed his love, compassion and affirmation of children through his identification of them as examples, symbols, and metaphors in his teachings (Mark 9:36-37). Jesus affirmed the level of importance of children when he rebuked his disciples for interfering when he blessed them (Mark 10:13-14). Through his actions and words, Jesus not only cared for children himself, but also mandates that we should do the same and commends them to our care. We, as American Baptists, have a commitment to actively respond to the needs of children and support their families in meeting those needs.

TODAY'S FAMILY

Today's families are required to face many challenges and unforeseen situations.

The following are some trends that challenge the church to support families and be involved in the assurance that families receive childcare.

- The incidents of child abuse and neglect are increasing at an alarming rate.
- Low-income families are the ones who suffer the most when affordable and quality child care is not available.
- Parents of both genders and all socioeconomic classes are entering or returning to the labor force, schools, and job-training programs.
- The number of divorced, separated, and unmarried parents is on the rise.
- There is evidence of future numbers of families who will need child care outside of the home.
- More men and women with established career patterns are having children later in life, making it more likely that they will remain in or rejoin the work force.

In the face of these realities, children's needs are not always met in the family setting. The church has a critical role in meeting child care needs for the sake of children, of families and society as a whole.

CHILD CARE AS PLANNED MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH

Child care is of urgent concern to all families with children. Today the church is the major provider of child care facilities. Therefore, the church has an important responsibility to initiate, encourage, and participate in the highest quality of care for children and families. Whether a congregation actually sponsors and manages a program or is a landlord, a church is morally responsible for child care programs that take place in its building.

In response to Jesus' teaching, the church has the blessing and responsibility to:

- Support the family and help parents in the crucial years of child rearing, from birth to adolescence;
- Provide a model of the Christian faith for children and their families;
- Support children in early childhood education so that they may develop to their highest potential in physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual growth;
- Educate parents in the skills needed to nurture and provide a healthy emotional and spiritual environment.

When providing child care, the church is called to maintain or require maintenance of the highest standards in regard to space, safety, health, and staff requirements. For this reason, annual reviews of the child care program should take place. Concern should be given to the curriculum, the appropriate involvement of the congregation with the program, pastoral availability to families involved in child care, safe and clean buildings and equipment, and ensuring the highest quality in staff and support.

ACTION FOR THE CHURCHES

In light of these circumstances surrounding today's children and families, be it resolved that American Baptist churches:

- Become sensitive to and informed of the needs of children, whether in or out of the church;
- Advocate for adequate child care for all families who need it by contacting and persuading policy makers and legislators to provide the support needed;
- Affirm child care ministry as an authentic expression of Christian discipleship;
- Make child care an intentional part of ministry, whether as single congregations or in concern with others;
- Work with community services and other organizations who oppose injustice in the social system, especially as it impacts child care;
- Promote the prevention of child abuse and neglect by working with the parent, caregivers, and community agencies responsible for child care.

*This resolution is not directed toward child care that is offered to parents attending worship and other meetings and programs of the church.

Adopted by the General Board of the American Baptist Churches - December 1989

160 For, 1 Against, 1 Abstention

(General Board Reference #8176:6/89)

Modified by the General Board Executive Committee - September 1992

Modified by the Executive Committee of the General Board - September 1996

Modified by the Executive Committee of the General Board - September 2000

Modified by the Executive Committee of the General Board - September 2004

Modified by the Executive Committee of the General Board - September 2008

POLICY BASE

American Baptist Policy Statement on Family Life - June 1984

6. We are committed to providing programs of education and support...to empower parents striving to raise children according to Christian principles; to enable parents in their roles as teachers, managers, and advocates...
7. We are committed to working with others for public policies and practices which enhance the status of families and empower them to do their unique work of nurturing succeeding generations of citizens.
8. We are committed to advocating for the rights of all families, and especially those with dependent children...