

**AMERICAN BAPTIST
RESOLUTION ON THE CHURCH AND MINISTRY WITH PERSONS
WITH DISABILITIES**

Mindful that over the centuries persons with physical, emotional, mental and developmental disabilities have been subjected to mockery, disparagement and denial of their human and civil rights, and

Aware that over the centuries the Church often expressed a condescending attitude which is paternalistic and which treats such persons as objects of good works, and

Recognizing that the consequences of such attitudes are not only demeaning, dehumanizing and counter-productive to the emotional, social, cognitive and spiritual well being of persons with disabilities, but are also contrary to belief that humankind is created in God's image, and to the mandates of Christ's ministry, and

Remembering that persons with disabilities have as those without disabilities unique gifts to share within the daily life of the church. And all people are invited to share their gifts and to participate in ministry. Acknowledging the contributions that persons with disabilities have made in local communities as well as in the larger society in such varied fields as the arts, medicine, science, education, law, politics, business, and religion, and

Realizing that their full participation in church life is essential to the wholeness of Christian fellowship and the churches' visible witness to the message of Christ.

Therefore, the General Board of the American Baptist Churches calls upon American Baptists to recognize persons with disabilities as integral members of the Christian fellowship and to take immediate affirmative action to enable their full inclusion in society and in local congregations and in church organizations, in such ways as the following:

- Exploring ways to increase sensitivity and awareness of the importance of being in ministry with persons with disabilities.
- Seeing that church and public facilities provide adequate and accessible accommodations which invite and assist persons with disabilities in being involved with church life.
- Exploring ways in which churches individually and ecumenically can enlarge opportunities for employment, training, education and service.
- Enabling concerned and disabled persons to link connect with local, state and national support networks.

Further, American Baptists locally, regionally and nationally are urged to consult with persons or task forces of persons with disabilities to attitudinal and architectural barriers to their full participation in church and society and to work together to eliminate those barriers.

Adopted by the General Board of the American Baptist Churches - June 1978
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POLICY BASE

American Baptist Policy Statement on Human Rights

As American Baptists we declare the following rights to be basic human rights, and we will support programs and measures to assure these rights:

1. The right of every person to choose a religion freely, to maintain religious belief or unbelief without coercion; the right for communities of faith to meet together to engage in public worship, to witness publicly to others, to speak prophetically from religious conviction to government and society, to live out religious beliefs, and to be free from governmental intrusion, coercion, and control in the free exercise of conscience and religion;
5. The right to grow in mind and self-fulfillment, to secure an education, to develop knowledge, to exchange ideas; and to receive, impart and have access to information;
8. The right to develop skills and abilities, to utilize these in economic, political, social, intellectual and religious institutions, and to receive a just return for one's labor;
9. 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;