

8166:12/87

**AMERICAN BAPTIST
RESOLUTION ON THE UNITED STATES RATIFICATION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION
OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN**

Background and History

In the years between 1946, when the United Nations established a Commission on the Status of Women, and 1975, the International Women's Year, the Commission struggled with issues of discrimination against women: employment, health care, minimum age for marriage, family planning and political rights. In 1967 the Commission adopted a "Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women." (A United Nations declaration has moral suasion but no legal force.)

Then in 1975, in Mexico City the World Conference on Women adopted a World Plan of Action for implementing the Objectives of the International Women's Year and the Declaration on the Equality of Women and their Contribution to Development and Peace. In addition, the UN Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace was launched.

In the first five years of the Decade, the Voluntary Fund for the UN Decade for Women was established, a study of the influence of mass media on attitudes about the roles of women and men was initiated, and most significant of all, the "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination" Against Women was adopted by the United Nations in 1979. (A convention, compared to a declaration, is the United Nations' equivalent to a treaty, and has behind it the force of law once ratified.) In the years since, more than 100 nations have ratified that Convention, among them are: Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Japan, Norway, Sweden, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United Kingdom. The United States Senate, however, has not ratified the Convention.

The Convention calls for:

- declaring the equality of women and men;
- ensuring the full development and advancement of women;
- modifying social and cultural patterns;
- guaranteeing the right to vote and to engage in political activity;
- providing equal access to all forms of education;
- paying equal wages for equal work;
- making available health services, including family planning;
- providing equality before the law, as well as in banking, securing of mortgages, and in owning property;
- ensuring the same rights and responsibilities in marriage and in the dissolution of marriage.

A special Commission was set up to monitor the progress in ratifying and implementing the Convention. Reports on the Convention were part of both the 1985 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) Forum and U.N. Conference on the Decade for Women held in Nairobi. The Convention is seen as an effective means of opening discussion

and dialogue about these issues in some countries, and provides guidelines for possible action and legislation.

With the economic plight and health care levels of many women and their children worsening each year, it is not only appropriate but important that we sound the call for ratification of this Convention.

The Bible has always claimed the equality of all people within the church. "But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus," (Galatians 3:25-28 NRSV.)

American Baptist Churches have also claimed the equal partnership of men and women both in church and in society.

"Partnership, as best evidenced today, calls both men and women to work in leadership roles and share in a broad spectrum of positions in church, home and society. It calls for men and women to cultivate and use the unique gifts God has given each of them. Genuine partnership calls for women and men to work for opportunities for each person regardless of sex." (The ABC Policy Statement on Women and Men as Partners in Church and Society.)

Therefore, be it resolved that:

- 1) National Ministries bring the issue of U.S. ratification of the United Nation Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women to the attention of congregations and regions as part of its resourcing.
- 2) Our American Baptist Churches' National Boards and other appropriate groups be encouraged to determine accountability for preparing resources for study and action concerning the significance and the contents of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and encourage each of its constituent groups to participate in this project.
- 3) The Office of the General Secretary be requested to write a letter to all Senators urging ratification of the Convention.

4) American Baptists work toward ratification of the Convention by the United States Senate.

Adopted by the General Board of the American Baptist Churches - June 1988
162 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions
Modified by the Executive Committee of the General Board - March 1994
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Policy Base

American Baptist Policy Statement on Human Rights

2. The right to the basic necessities of food, shelter, clothing, and health care;
4. The right to a secure and healthy environment, clean air, pure water and an earth that can nurture and support present and future generations;
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;
6. The right to follow the dictates of conscience, to express dissent individually or in groups to prevailing ideas, governments and institutions;
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;

11. The right to citizenship in a nation, to participate in the political process, to form political parties, to have a voice in decisions made in the political arenas, to be secure from fear of deportation or expulsion, to emigrate and to have political asylum.

American Baptist Policy on the Partnership of Women and Men in Church and Society

Affirmations

1. We affirm that the Gospel of Jesus Christ liberates all persons, female and male, to serve in any ministry to which they have been called by God and for which they have God-given talents. This means that women, as well as men, should have access to and serve at all levels of church and society - local, regional, national and international - in the roles of policy makers and implementers.
