

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PLAN (101)

I. Administrative Policies Development

A. Introduction

The American Baptist Churches (ABC) is committed to living out its theological and biblical insights about justice and fairness in employment. It seeks to model these values in the way it hires, compensates, and promotes staff. Those insights speak of maintaining the personhood of individuals. They view the workplace as one of the communities to which persons belong.

As an expression of the church, ABC lifts up the biblical concept of the body of Christ and the concept of the building properly constructed. Every part of the body does what it is intended to do. Every stone in the building gives shape to and bears its share of the weight of the building. Each member of the body exercises his/her gift of the Spirit as she/he fulfills a career. No part of the body is looked down upon. All members perform valuable functions without which the body could not fulfill its mission. When all the members function well, when all the parts of the building bear their share of the weight, the body or the building functions beyond expectation. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Justice and fairness, as well as quality combined with productivity, are values to be upheld. These values recognize that persons should be allowed to grow into their jobs with support from the employing organization.

Affirmative Action (AA) goes beyond equal opportunity in that it takes seriously the employment potential of those target groups who have historically been denied entry on an equal basis in society. Equal Opportunity implies that persons who have the needed training and experience will be hired without regard to race, gender, age, or physical handicap. Affirmative Action says that where targeted ethnic minorities and women lack preferred training and experience, but have the potential for gaining such and growing into the positions, they may be considered for such jobs depending on organizational needs and available training opportunities. Affirmative Action further states that organizations will seek to improve the representation of women and minorities through positive outreach and targeted recruitment consistent with applicable legal requirements.

Finally, Affirmative Action implies that minorities and women will advance appropriately within the organization based on each person's talents and efforts. The organization will take active steps to be aware of those in the targeted groups who are qualified for promotion and encourage such individuals to apply to be considered for available promotion opportunities.

It is toward that sense of wholeness under the Lordship of Christ that the ABC seeks to move. ABC has rich textures in terms of its varied ethnic population and in terms

of the many women in its membership. Affirmative Action allows ABC to build a work community in which the variety in ABC can come together to create a new and more richly textured whole.

Implementation of these policies is the task of the chief executives of the four organizations within the ABC-- American Baptist Churches, USA, American Baptist Home Mission Society, American Baptist International Ministries, and the Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board.

Administrative policies are established in the following section to guide the four organizations in their Affirmative Action programs. These administrative policies are designed to provide a framework and common set of guidelines. From these, a commonality will emerge without denying the particularities of each organization.

B. Administrative Policies

1. Affirmative Action Plan Development

Each ABC organization will develop within these guidelines its own Affirmative Action plan. The intent of these policies is to insure that each organization develops a plan that is within certain boundaries and will reflect the cooperation and coordination which are the distinguishing marks of the body of Christ.

2. Accountability

The chief executives of the four ABC organizations are accountable for implementing policies regarding Affirmative Action within their respective organizations. The administrative policies are guidelines for the organizational planning that these organizations must do in response to the overall policy on Affirmative Action.

Each of the four chief executives of the ABC will appoint an Affirmative Action officer who will have direct access to the top management of the organization. The major function of the Affirmative Action officer (spelled out in more detail below) will be to monitor the achieving of the organization's Affirmative Action plan. The plan will be the implementation of these administrative policies by the organization given its setting and mission.

3. Affirmative Action Council

The Affirmative Action Council will serve as a subcouncil of the National Executive Council (NEC) of the ABC. The Council shall be comprised of the Affirmative Action Officer of each national organization. Each would serve terms determined by his/her chief executive.

The Chief Affirmative Action Officer of the ABC shall be elected by the members of the Affirmative Action Council from among themselves.

The Affirmative Action Council will:

- a. develop and/or review ABC administrative policy in the area of Affirmative Action on an annual basis or upon direct request of the National Executive Council;
- b. share experiences coming from the various participating organizations with the intent to help each other develop more efficient approaches to Affirmative Action;
- c. provide staff work in the area of Affirmative Action for the NEC; and
- d. hear and adjudicate Affirmative Action appeal cases that are unresolvable in the organization in which they originate. The decisions of the Council will be final.

4. The Chief Affirmative Action Officer will be responsible for:

- a. developing the agenda of the Council;
- b. representing the Council before the NEC and their respective Board upon their request unless the Council has reason to designate another Council member;
- c. being chairperson of the meetings of the Affirmative Action Council unless she/he designates another member of the Council on a temporary basis; and
- d. monitoring the implementation of Council agreements.

5. The Affirmative Action Officer of each organization will:

- a. participate in the review of Affirmative Action complaints within processes developed by his/her organization;
- b. meet on a regular basis with the Affirmative Action Council of the ABC to fulfill required reporting of Affirmative Action experiences and completion of assignments made by the NEC;
- c. review and remain knowledgeable about Affirmative Action principles as they evolve from sources not only within the church but also within business and government;
- d. direct the establishment of Affirmative Action employment goals for his/her organization;

- e. insure that all vacancies in positions are properly posted; and
 - f. prepare various Affirmative Action Plan reports.
6. Staff Development Among Affirmative Action Target Groups
- ABC has a responsibility to be one of the contexts in which the future leadership of the denomination is prepared. One way to accomplish this is to provide in-house training to enhance potential or existing skills of members, including members of under-utilized groups who will be specifically encourage to participate in such training opportunities.
7. Appeals Process in the Four ABC Organizations
- Each organization shall have an Appeals Committee of staff members (plus the Affirmative Action Officer) to hear cases which cannot be resolved between the staff member and supervisor. This will be a peer council, hearing only cases related to Affirmative Action, and will render a recommendation to the organization's chief executive. Although not a legal procedure, at the hearing the staff member may be accompanied by another person.
- Should the decision of the chief executive be unsatisfactory to the staff member, a final appeal may be made to an arbitrator mutually agreed upon by the chief executive and the staff member.
8. Appeals Procedure
- A staff member who feels discriminated against because of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, handicap, or age will have the opportunity to seek redress through a formal appeals procedure. The steps will be as follows:
1. The staff member will discuss the problem with the supervisor involved to determine whether or not the situation can be resolved to the staff member's satisfaction.
 2. If the problem cannot be resolved between the staff member and the supervisor, the staff member will discuss the situation with the organization's Affirmative Action Officer, who will assist the staff member to write a brief but complete statement of the problem, and will seek to conciliate the problem with the staff member's supervisor.
 3. If the problem remains unresolved and the staff member wishes to pursue the matter further, the Affirmative Action Officer will refer the matter to the Affirmative Action

Appeals Committee of the organization.

The organization will appoint an executive staff AA Appeals Committee. It will be composed of four executive staff, with the Affirmative Action Officer of the organization as ex-officio and chairperson. Membership will be representative of the groups in the executive staff work force. The committee will review disputes referred to it and make written recommendations in each case to the staff member, the supervisor, and the chief executive. Although not a legal procedure, the staff member may be accompanied by another person at the Appeals Committee hearing.

4. The organization's chief executive must make a decision within thirty days. Should the decision of the chief executive be unsatisfactory to the staff member, a final appeal may be made to an arbitrator mutually agreed upon by the chief executive and the staff member.
5. In cases where the appealing staff member is sustained, the staff member must be employed in the same or comparable job within the organization; the staff member shall not suffer any loss of income from the proceedings or from any prior supervisory decision that has been overturned by the final decision.