



American Baptist Home Mission Societies' Board Adopts Gun Violence Statement

VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 1/29/13)—In a unanimous vote at its meeting in Atlanta, Ga., last week, the Board of Directors of American Baptist Home Mission Societies adopted a Public Witness Statement on Gun Violence that included recommendation of 10 measures aimed at reducing the impact of firearms on individuals, families, communities and our nation.

These measures include: banning assault weapons; requiring criminal background checks for sales at gun shows; strengthening regulations of gun dealers; required reporting of lost or stolen guns to law enforcement; and restoring firearms research funding to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“We want to provide the tools for local churches to take action,” said Board President Dr. Clifford Johnson when he introduced the statement. “This will be a board of action,” he said. “If we are to be true to our history, we have to speak out on issues on like gun violence.”

The meeting of the board served as a retreat to explore the theme “Proclaiming Liberty,” based on Leviticus 25:10: “Proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants.” Retreat leader Dr. David Laubach asked members to consider liberty in the context of personal freedom that allows Christians to follow a moral compass leading God’s way rather than the way of popular culture.

Included in the two-day retreat were visits to the American Baptist Historical Society, which holds the largest collection of Baptist materials in the world; Habitat for Humanity International; Ebenezer Baptist Church; the childhood home of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.; and the tombs of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his wife, Coretta Scott King. The latter three visits were led by the Rev. Dr. Albert Brinson, a personal friend of the King family and former associate general secretary of American Baptist Churches USA.

Rhea Triche, an organizational consultant with Habitat for Humanity’s Global Programs, led the board’s tour of Habitat’s international headquarters. In her message, she posed the question: “Is American Baptist Home Mission Societies doing what God has called you to do?” Triche challenged members to embrace the past, “but run toward the mark that you need to accomplish

to meet today's needs." She reminded the board that both organizations are "vehicles for delivering God's love."

Referring to Joshua 4:6-7, Dr. Aidsand Wright-Riggins III, American Baptist Home Mission Societies' executive director, closed the meeting with the question: "What do these stones mean?" Wright-Riggins challenged members to consider: "What has God brought us? What is God calling us to remember?"

American Baptist Home Mission Societies—the domestic mission arm of American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA)—ministers as the caring heart and serving hands of Jesus Christ across the United States and Puerto Rico through a multitude of initiatives that focus on discipleship, community and justice.

American Baptist Churches is one of the most diverse Christian denominations today, with over 5,200 local congregations comprised of 1.3 million members, across the United States and Puerto Rico, all engaged in God's mission around the world.

[Read](#) American Baptist Home Mission Societies' "Public Witness Statement on Gun Violence."

[Watch](#) Board President Dr. Clifford Johnson present statement to American Baptist Home Mission Societies' Board of Directors.