

## **Mission Table 2015: Case Statement on Women in Ministry**

*The affirmation of women as full partners with men in ordained ministry and the full acceptance of the gifts women bring to ministry is needed for the Body of Christ to thrive and our churches to flourish.*

Women and men are both created in the image of God (Gen 1: 27). Men and women are both gifted by God (Romans 12). Women and men are both called to use their gifts in ministry (1 Peter 4:10). The Old and New Testament both affirm the role of women in a way that was counter to the cultural norms of the day. Deborah was one of the early Judges (Judges 4:4-9). The Woman at the Well was one of the first evangelists (John 4:39-42). Women were the first to witness the resurrection and first to proclaim the Risen Christ (John 20). Women were included among Jesus' early disciples (Luke 8: 1-3) and were named as leaders in the early church (Romans 16:1-7). Finally, the Spirit was poured out upon both men and women, and both women and men were empowered to carry out the Gospel (Acts 2:17-18).

American Baptist churches began ordaining women even before the formation of the denomination. Our heritage and history has been one of recognizing that God calls and gifts women for ministry. Colonial Baptist life included women preachers. Ordination of women began as early as 1815. Women have followed God's call to preach and teach as both home and foreign missionaries. Over the years, progress has been made as increasing numbers of women have been called to serve as pastors, seminary professors, pastoral counselors, and chaplains. Women have been called to regional, as well as national, associate and executive leadership positions. In addition, American Baptist Churches USA has affirmed the partnership of women and men in ministry through policy statements, resolutions, and numerous resources.

**Yet, while progress has been made with women now representing 50% of the students at ABC seminaries as well as increasing numbers in leadership positions throughout ABC life, women comprise less than 10% of senior or solo pastors, a figure that has not grown significantly over the past several decades.**

Although differences in Biblical interpretation continue to pose challenges, the full acceptance of women in ministry is further impacted by cultural norms. The "principality of patriarchy" continues to exert influence as evidenced by congregations continuing to overwhelmingly select male over female pastoral candidates. The result is that many qualified, seminary-educated, and ordained women are unable to find opportunities of service within our churches. Their vocational calling goes unfulfilled and their gifts are lost to ABCUSA and to the church community at large.

**We therefore call upon our American Baptist family to:**

- **Pray** for God's spirit to open hearts and minds to the God-given gifts women bring to ministry.
- **Explore** our own church's attitude toward women in ministry.
- **Tap** the array of existing resources\* and share them with our congregations.

- **Reach** out to ABC constituents—especially youth—to expose them to the gifts of women in ministry.
- **Ally and Partner** with AB Women’s Ministries and other groups to share and distribute resources.

American Baptist churches need the gifts of both women and men to grow and flourish. To that end, women are indispensable partners in Christian ministry. The health of the church (Body of Christ) is dependent on all the gifts of all God’s people being used for the good of all and the glory of God.

**Will you join us?**

**\*Existing Resources:**

**Brochures:**

*Responding to God’s Call* (Molly T. Marshall)

*Challenging Gender Discrimination in the Church* (Marvin McMickle)

*A Biblical Basis for Equal Partnership: Women and Men in the Ministry of the Church*  
(David Scholer)

**Bible Study Materials:**

*Junia: A Bible Study and Story-Telling Resource for the Church* (Susan Crane)

*The Question About 1 Timothy 3* (Susan Crane)

*Bible Study on Women In Ministry* (Susan Crane)

**Booklist:**

Retiring Pastors Initiative

**ABCUSA Policy Statements and Resolutions:**

American Baptist Resolution on the  
**EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN THE AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES** (1977)  
<http://www.abc-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Women-Empowerment-of.pdf>

American Baptist Resolution on the  
**EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT** (1983)  
<http://www.abc-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/EQUAL-RIGHTS-AMENDMENT.pdf>

American Baptist Policy Statement on  
**WOMEN AND MEN AS PARTNERS IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY** (1985)  
<http://www.abc-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Church-and-Society.pdf>

*These and other resources are available on the ABWIM website: [www.abwim.org](http://www.abwim.org).*