

8099:9/82

**AMERICAN BAPTIST
RESOLUTION ON FREEDOM OF THE PULPIT AND PEW**

It is a deep historic principle of Baptist belief that the Word of God which comes to us through the biblical witness must be proclaimed freely, that the preaching of the Word without fear or favor is grounded in our basic conviction concerning soul freedom, and that each age places its own peculiar responsibilities upon us as Christians to uphold the mind of Christ as sovereign over all our common life.

Holding these convictions:

We affirm without reservation that freedom of the pulpit is an inalienable right under God, rooted and grounded in the tradition of every church;

We urge our congregations to give full assurance to our pastors that this historic principle of freedom is faithfully reaffirmed in this time of radical moral decision;

We urge our American Baptist boards and organizations to support staff persons in the exercise of such freedom;

We urge our pastors and denominational leaders to use such freedom to full measure, courageously bringing the Word of God to a troubled generation;

We acknowledge that such freedom carries with it a corresponding responsibility to give evidence that both the freedom of the pulpit and the freedom of the pew are under obedience to Christ and to Him alone; and

We recommend that our churches, associations, regions, states and cities, national boards and affiliated agencies, come to the aid of the pastors and the laity who thus suffer for their witness.

Adopted by the American Baptist Convention ?1965

Affirmed as an American Baptist Churches Resolution by the Executive Committee of the General Board ? September, 1982

Modified by the Executive Committee of the General Board – September 2004
(General Board Reference # ? 8099:9/82)

POLICY BASE

American Baptist Policy Statement: A Statement by American Baptist Concerning Freedom

"For Baptists the word 'freedom' is a watermark. It is impressed into our doctrine, our polity, our practice. It cannot be eradicated. Baptists, mindful of Roger Williams pattern, have endeavored all kinds of political and religious climate to maintain a continuing witness to the principle of liberty and conscience...

"...action by Christians must express itself in the fearless utterance of personal conviction; the development of personal character resistant to hysteria; the assumption of responsibility in political life; the

support of free and democratic institutions; the acceptance of risks as well as privileges of freedom; and cooperation in maintaining our common Protestant heritage...

"We reaffirm our devotion to liberty of conscience under God and under law.

"We reaffirm our allegiance to the historic principle of the separation of church and state..."

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 of 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 to conscience and religion.

6. The right to follow the dictates of conscience, to express dissent individually or in groups to prevailing ideas, governments and institutions."