

8201:3/93

AMERICAN BAPTIST RESOLUTION CALLING FOR DIALOGUE ON HUMAN SEXUALITY

Since our founding days, we American Baptists have heralded the Bible as central to our lives. Individuals have the right and responsibility to interpret Scripture under the guidance of the Holy Spirit within the community of faith. We have also come together to seek the mind of Christ on contemporary issues, knowing that none of our corporate statements claims to speak for all of us. The time has come for our churches, Regions, National Boards, and the General Board of the American Baptist Churches, USA to consider prayerfully the mind of Christ regarding human sexuality.

Therefore, we call on American Baptists to:

1. Testify that Jesus Christ is the unifying presence in our denomination.
2. Explore the biblical and theological issues of human sexuality.
3. Consider using the resources identified and gathered by the ABC Commission on Resources on Human Sexuality.
4. Acknowledge that there exists a variety of understandings throughout our denomination on issues of human sexuality such as homosexuality and engage in dialogue concerning these issues.
5. Respect and defend the individual integrity of all persons within our denomination and their Christian commitment as we engage the issue of human sexuality.
6. Pray fervently that as we honestly address these concerns we may seek unity and avoid divisiveness as we grow in our common mission for Jesus Christ.

Regional Boards recommending and adopting this resolution:

American Baptist Churches of Connecticut (February 20, 1993)
American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts (November 21, 1992)
American Baptist Churches of Rhode Island (November 15, 1992)
American Baptist Churches of Rochester/Genesee (December 2, 1992)
Philadelphia Baptist Association (November 21, 1992)

Adopted by the General Board of the American Baptist Churches, USA - June 1993
96 For, 69 Against, 3 Abstentions
Modified by the Executive Committee of the General Board - September 1998

POLICY BASE

Historical American Baptist Statement Concerning Freedom - Adopted June 1978

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 in all kinds of political and religious climates to maintain a continuing witness to the principle of liberty and conscience.

We affirm our devotion to liberty or conscience under God and under law. We reaffirm our loyalty and devotion to truth fairly arrived at, by free inquiry and debate without restriction or coercion.

Policy Statement on Human Rights - Adopted December 1976

Baptist history is rooted in concern for conscience and freedom for persons to believe, to choose, to live unregimented, whether by religious dogma and institution or by social and political structures. John Bunyan in prison and Roger Williams driven from Massachusetts, reflect commitment to these ideas, as did Martin Luther King, in his witness to human dignity and the rights of minority groups. Resolutions by the American Baptist Churches over the years have particularly sought to reflect the denomination's basic principles of freedom of thought and belief, the right of dissent, the responsibility to speak prophetically to church and society and support for human dignity and social justice.

As American Baptists we declare the following rights to be basic human rights, and we will support programs and measures to assure these rights:

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

Policy Statement on Christian Unity - Adopted June 1978

We can explore with others the Bible, seeking with them the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in an effort to discover more fully what is the will of God for His people in this time and to determine the nature of the unity we seek and how we manifest it. We must engage in fresh, biblical studies which can be based on a frank examination of the conscious or unconscious presuppositions with which Baptists have traditionally read and interpreted the Scriptures. We must avoid rigid stereotypes and seek to express our witness with an openness of mind and spirit. The Christian faith is centered in a person. It is not a legalistic code which forms our faith; it is the living Christ. Basic, then, to our task is the rediscovery of our genius as Baptists for religious liberty and freedom of opportunity for the dialogue and discovery so that our faith may not be idolatrous but centered on God.

Supporting Documents

American Baptist Resolution Against Manifestation of Prejudice
1989 (8175:12/88)
