

**8055:6/80**

**AMERICAN BAPTIST RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF HISTORIC BAPTIST PRINCIPLES AGAINST STATE MANDATED PRAYER**

Baptists, both historically and presently, believe that religious faith must involve a vital encounter between persons and God, and no religious form should be substituted for this encounter. Thus, Baptists have long opposed any compulsion to conformity or coercion of conscience in religious belief or practice. While Baptists gather together in fellowship with other believers to pray and worship, we also affirm prayer to be a constant part of our individual lives which does not need a prescribed form, or official sanction to be real and vital.

Therefore, the General Board of the American Baptist Churches USA:

- Reaffirms our historic Baptist belief that religion should not be mandated and that prayers and religious practices should not be established or prescribed by law or by public policy or officials;
- Supports the Supreme Court decision on prayer in the public schools<sup>1</sup> and recognizes that it does not prohibit the free exercise of religion while sustaining the liberty of a free conscience;
- Opposes any attempt through legislation or other means to circumvent the decision of the Supreme Court on mandated prayer in the public schools.

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Adopted by the General Board of the American Baptist Churches - June 1980

117 For, 2 Against, 1 Abstention

Modified by the Executive Committee of the General Board - September 1998

(General Board Reference # - 8055:6/80)

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**POLICY BASE**

**American Baptist Policy Statement on Human Rights - December 1976**

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 for 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 of conscience and religion;

**American Baptist Convention Resolution on Separation of Church and State -  
Adopted 1964**

And we affirm our historic Baptist belief that religion should not be a matter of compulsion and that prayer and religious practices should not be prescribed by law or by a teacher or public school official.

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1 Engel v. Vitale, 370 US 421, 8 LEd2d 601, 82 SCt 1261 (1962)

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