

Proposed Draft Resolution for Regional Boards to bring to the General Board

We are indeed a “Bridge People.” As Baptists we are called to reach out, to overcome divisions, to make connections and rejoin that which has been separated.

We are centered in Christ. Our greatest hope and joy is to follow the teachings and the example of our savior, who ate with those considered to be sinners, preached good news to the poor, liberated the oppressed and welcomed the outcast.

Christ called for us to love one another as he loved us. (John 16:12-17)

We affirm that we are all children of God and we are all disciples of the same Jesus.

We affirm that we are not worthy to judge one another, as both Jesus and Paul taught.

We acknowledge there are deep feelings and long standing traditions regarding the interpretation of scripture, especially the scripture that deals with human sexuality.

We recognize that the church’s teachings on such topics as slavery, war, divorce and women’s roles have changed over the centuries, even though both modern understandings and former practices have claimed to be biblically based.

We also recognize that certain interpretations of scripture are creating injustice and doing harm to the whole body of Christ, as well as individual pastors and congregations, denominational staff and lay people.

Therefore, we call for the following actions:

We pledge to recognize injustice in our denominational life together, to speak out against it and to use all appropriate means to repair the breaches and provide support to those victimized by injustice.

We further pledge to protect the rights of those with whom we disagree and to zealously proclaim that those with whom we disagree and those who hold minority positions in our congregations, areas and regions are also children of God and members of our faith family.

We will refrain from removing congregations from their regions for espousing a “minority” point of view theologically.

We will refrain from altering national, regional or area policies regarding

- ordination, or recognition of ordination,
- membership criteria of local congregations,
- calling of pastors by local congregations, or
- affiliations by local congregations with other groups within our wider Baptist family;

when such alterations are offered

- in contradiction to biblical principles of honoring the whole people of God
- in violation of our historic Baptist principles regarding the freedom of individuals and congregations and pulpits
- or in contradiction to the Common Criteria that witness to our unity in the midst of our diversity.

We will restore the policies that have been altered in violation of our own rules and the above principles.

Policy Base

Call for Dialogue on Human Sexuality (June 1993)

“protect and defend the individual integrity of all persons...seek unity...avoid divisiveness...”

8175:12/88 American Baptist Resolution Against Manifestations of Prejudice

“The reconciling death of Christ has mandated the abolishment of all sources of hostility and separation.”

American Baptist Policy Statement of Christian Unity (June 1978)

“It is not a legalistic code which forms our faith; it is the living Christ.”

Supporting Statements

“A Bridge People in a World of Wall-Builders” Report to the General Board by ABCUSA General Secretary A. Roy Medley (November 2004)

New Testament Mandates

Mt 22:34-40, Mk 12:28-34, Lk 10:25-28 (29-37) Great Commandment

Mt 5:21-48 “You have heard it said...but I say to you...”

Mt 7:1-5 “Judge not...”

John 16:12-17 “Love one another...”

Acts 10 Peter and Cornelius “God has shown me I should not call anyone common or unclean...” “God shows no partiality...”

Acts 15:1-11 Paul and the Circumcision Party before the Jerusalem Council

Romans 8:31-39 “Nothing can separate us from the love of God...”

I Cor 12 “many gifts, one spirit...many members, one body”

Galatians 3:6-29 The time of the Law is passed

Old Testament Mandates

Isaiah 43:14-19 “I am making a new thing. Can you not perceive it?”

Isaiah 56:1-8 “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people”

Isaiah 58:1-13 “You will be called repairers of the breach, restorers of streets to live in...”

Jeremiah 31:31-34 “I will write my covenant on their hearts”

Micah 6:8 “What does the LORD require of you...?”