

AMERICAN BAPTIST IDENTITY STATEMENT

We Are American Baptists

An Expression of Christian Faith Representative of American Baptists adopted by the General Board, American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., November 2005

American Baptists worship the triune God of the Bible, who is eternally one God in three persons. This one, true God is most clearly revealed to us in the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

American Baptists proclaim the Good News of the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, knowing that salvation (forgiveness of sins, release from guilt and condemnation, reconciliation with God) and eternal life are granted in grace to all who trust Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. This Gospel is the central message of the Bible.

American Baptists believe that the Bible, composed of the Old and New Testaments, is the divinely inspired Word of God, the final written authority and trustworthy for faith and practice. It is to be interpreted responsibly under the guidance of the Holy Spirit within the community of faith. The primary purpose of the Bible is to point to Jesus Christ, the living Lord of the Church.

Although Baptists have produced numerous confessions to express our common understandings of Christian faith, we hold the Scriptures, the Old and New Testaments, as our final authority. We accept no humanly devised confession or creed as binding.

American Baptists affirm that God is sovereign over all and that this sovereignty is expressed and realized through Jesus Christ. Therefore, we affirm the Lordship of Christ over the world and the church. We joyously confess that Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord. We are called in loyalty to Jesus Christ to proclaim the power of the Holy Spirit, the Good News of God's reconciling grace, and to declare the saving power of the Gospel to every human being and to every human institution. We celebrate Christ's charge to "make disciples of all nations" and to bear witness to God's redeeming reign in human affairs.

American Baptists are summoned to this mission in common with all Christians. With the whole body of Christ, we also believe that God has been revealed in Jesus Christ as in no other, and that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Corinthians 5:18). We anticipate the day when every creature and all creation, on earth and beyond, will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:10-11).

God has given this particular community of believers called Baptists a distinctive history and experience. As we share in common with Christians everywhere, so Baptists everywhere celebrate a common heritage.

THEREFORE

With Baptist brothers and sisters around the world, we believe:

- That the Bible is the final authority and trustworthy for faith and practice. It is to be interpreted responsibly under the guidance of God's Holy Spirit within the community of faith;
 - That the Church is a gathered fellowship of regenerated believers, a sign of the coming universal reign of God;
 - That the freedom to respond to the Lordship of Christ in all circumstances is fundamental to the Christian gospel and to human dignity; and
 - That witness to Christ is the ongoing task of every Christian and of every church.
 - Within the larger Baptist family, American Baptists emphasize convictions which direct our special task and ministry.

We affirm that God through Jesus Christ calls us to be:

A Redeemed People

- who claim a personal relationship to God through Jesus Christ;
- who follow the Lord in believer's baptism;
- who gather as a believer's church;
- who share in the meal of the kingdom known as the Lord's Supper;
- who honor the priesthood of all believers; and
- who live their faith as visible saints.

A Biblical People

- who affirm the centrality of Scripture in our lives;
- who pursue the study of God's inspired Word as a mandate for faith and practice; and
- who seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the understanding of Scripture, while respecting the common interpretation of Scripture within the community of believers.
- Who submit to the teaching of Scripture that God's design for sexual intimacy places it within the context of marriage between one man and one woman, and acknowledge that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Biblical teaching.

A Worshiping People

- who gather regularly to praise God;
- who receive nourishment by communion with the Risen Christ;
- who share an open and public confession of faith; and
- who believe that personal devotion brings vitality to corporate celebration.

A Mission People

- who strive to fulfill the Great Commission to make disciples;
- who invite persons to receive salvation and follow Christ;
- who engage in educational, social, and health ministries;
- who seek justice for all persons; and
- who provide prayer and financial support to sustain a worldwide mission outreach.

An Interdependent People

- who affirm the Church's unity as given in Jesus Christ;
- who gladly embody in our practice the ministry of the whole people of God;
- who recognize God's gifts for ministry and honor all offices of pastoral ministry;
- who live and work together "in association"; and
- who bring the free church tradition to cooperative and ecumenical Christianity.

A Caring People

- who care for the needy, the weak, and the oppressed;
- who care for the earth and for all its creatures.

An Inclusive People

- who, gifted by a variety of backgrounds, find unity in diversity and diversity in unity;
- who embrace a pluralism of race, ethnicity, and gender; and
- who acknowledge that there are individual differences of conviction and theology.

A Contemporary People

- who have a remembrance for the past and a vision for the future;
- who are committed to religious liberty and to the separation of church and state;
- who call our present world to make Jesus Christ Lord of all life; and
- who trust the Holy Spirit for insight and power to live in the present age.

We further believe

- That God has called us forth to such an hour as this;
- That we live with a realizable hope;
- That all things are held together in Christ;
- That all creation will find its ultimate fulfillment in God;
- That we shall see the One whose we are; and
- That Jesus shall reign for ever and ever

We Are Committed to Our Churches

We American Baptists passionately celebrate our churches. We exist as a denomination to serve those nearly 5,800 congregations, to provide them with resources that enable them to minister effectively.

Generation after generation of believers has seen the local church as a tremendous source of immeasurable spiritual strength: preaching that inspires, education that enlightens, worship that draws one closer to God, fellowship that encourages respect and service. The church at its best is an exemplary community of faith, a home for individuals to express, and mature in, their relationship to God and to one another.