

ABCRM Statement on Homosexuality

Prologue

The Human Sexuality Task Force, meeting at the direction of the ABC of the Rocky Mountains, has struggled with the issue at hand, namely, how to deal with the matter of homosexuality in the churches. The issue was prompted by the motion on Human Sexuality presented at the 2005 Annual Meeting of the ABCRM.

In the course of its meetings, the Task Force came to recognize that dealing with homosexuality is difficult. It is colored by differences among our member churches in their approach to several matters, including:

- *hermeneutics*—having to do with the way one interprets Scripture,
- *church authority*—the degree to which individual churches are responsible to the Region or the denomination with respect to teaching and leadership,
- *association*—the matter of how affiliation with the church/Region/Body of Christ is determined.

The Task Force worked diligently to bring these issues into perspective. In the course of these discussions, it was evident that each member of the Task Force was passionate about his/her faith in Jesus Christ, and was seeking to express that faith commitment in ways that others could respect and understand. In the same way, the members repeatedly affirmed their appreciation for the Region, the denomination, and the local constituent churches

The Task Force considered several positions for presentation to the Region for approval. Our Region is a collection of churches, joined together by the associational principle, that is diverse in its theology and in the social concerns it addresses. We are aware, however, that there is a tension between congregational autonomy and the need to be united in our basic theological affirmations. For that reason, we support the ministries many churches have to the homosexual community and recognize that numerous biblical teachings identify homosexual behavior as being out of keeping with God's will.

The Task Force affirms that as Christians, we are believers who stand before God as

- sinners saved by grace,
- people still struggling with sin, yet,
- children of God already being transformed from glory to glory, because we are found "in Christ."

With this in mind, the following statement is presented to the Region for adoption at the 2006 Gathering:

Statement

WHEREAS, the delegates at the 2005 Gathering mandated the Transitional Executive Board to define a process to respond to the challenges of human sexuality and present a proposed resolution to be considered for adoption during the 2006 Gathering; and

WHEREAS, the Transitional Executive Board named the Human Sexuality Task Force to represent the Region's constituency in this process;

THEREFORE:

"WE AFFIRM that God intends marriage to be a monogamous, life-long, one flesh union of a woman and a man, who in response to God's call leave father and mother and cleave to one another. We affirm God's blessing and active presence in marriage relationships so entered in response to God's call."

(General Board Policy Statement, adopted June 1984)

WE ARE A BIBLICAL PEOPLE "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."

(American Baptist Identity Statement, revised November 2005)

WE AS A REGION ARE COMMITTED to the position expressed by our denomination. We take seriously the statements that have been adopted with regard to human sexuality. Further, the Region Board and staff will not knowingly employ, appoint to leadership positions, or recommend for ordination any practicing homosexual persons.

WE ENCOURAGE CHURCHES to

- examine and remain faithful to the Scriptures,
- engage in grace-motivated ministries which respond to human needs and offer God's love to all,
- practice compassion while holding to deeply held convictions,
- place in leadership positions individuals who live exemplary lives of the highest ethical responsibility in all matters, including matters of sexuality,
- remain in conversation and fellowship with those who hold differing views,
- welcome all who come, ministering to them in the name of Jesus, but not affirming any behavior contrary to scriptural teaching,
- condemn and seek to prevent all acts of hate, violence or injustice, and
- engage in ongoing discussions about this difficult and divisive issue under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

WE ENCOURAGE THE REGION BOARD AND STAFF to

- provide resources to further explore hermeneutics, church authority, and association as they relate to human sexuality in a local context,
- provide leadership and tools for discussing difficult and divisive issues, and

- provide a safe context for honest dialogue, prophetic witness, and mutual respect in dealing with this and other difficult and divisive issues.