

7012:6/78

## **HISTORIC**

### **AMERICAN BAPTIST POLICY STATEMENT ON PRIVILEGED COMMUNICATIONS**

The effective pastoral counseling of the ministry depends upon the assurance of those who seek it that the information they reveal in confidence to their pastoral counselor may be given with full freedom. The American Baptist Churches U.S.A. expressed its conviction that such confidential, spiritual communications to its ministers should have the status of privileged communications. The ABC further recommends that measures be initiated and supported in the various states of our constituency in cooperation with other denominations to enact statutes, state and federal, which should be based on the principle of the protection of the confidante or communicant and should provide that communications thus made should be held privileged unless the privilege is waived by those giving the information. Such statutes should protect all confidential, spiritual communications thus made as well as confessions, regardless of whether the minister consulted is of the same faith as the confidante and whether or not the confidential disclosure is made according to some explicit discipline of the Church. Such statutes already adopted in Minnesota and Iowa may well be studied in this regard and information about such a provision for privileged communications may be secured from the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in which our denomination is represented in Washington.

The American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. further declares that, whether or not appropriate statutes are enacted, it is a principle with us that any of our number who receive confidential information in the course of responding to a request for spiritual counseling are not morally obligated to disclose it without consent of the other party.

Adopted by vote of the Convention at Des Moines, Iowa, June 9, 1959  
Affirmed as a historic American Baptist Policy Statement by the Executive Committee of  
the General Board - June 19, 1978  
(General Board Reference # - 7012:6/78)

---