

**STANDING
RESOLUTIONS**

of the

**WEST VIRGINIA
BAPTIST CONVENTION**

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West Virginia Baptist Convention Standing Resolutions

DENOMINATIONAL

ALDERSON-BROADDUS 1982

Since 1871, the West Virginia Baptist Convention has been closely related to our Baptist College, Alderson-Broaddus College. Today, church-related schools are feeling new financial challenges, coupled with a decline in student population, which are threatening their very existence.

We, therefore, urge our West Virginia Baptist family to do the following:

To encourage our young people to consider Alderson-Broaddus College for their higher education;

To increase church budget support for Alderson-Broaddus College for current expenses, through the annual mission budget of the church;

To consider financial support in the form of loans and scholarships for our Baptist students, in order that they may attend Alderson-Broaddus College;

To plan and hold an Alderson-Broaddus Sunday to highlight the ministry of our college; and

To pray that God will grant us vision, creativity, and imagination equal to meeting the challenges of these days.

AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES, USA 1968

Recognizing that our State Convention and the local churches of our State Convention are a part of the wider fellowship known as the American Baptist Churches, USA, we urge the regular support of its work, including the Basic Missions Budget.

We also urge that our churches and State Convention participate actively in the work of the Convention and influence its policies, activities and the theological orientation through democratic process at Convention time and in other legitimate channels open to us.

We further urge our membership to carefully search out the truth in all matters conveyed through news mass media and other printed materials whenever the matters being presented relate to any or all of the following: American Baptist Churches, or local Baptist Associations or West Virginia Baptist Convention and/or American Baptist Churches, USA. We encourage individuals, congregations and associations to make contact with the principals involved in any discussion or conflict in order to secure the facts, and not to rely on "second-hand" information.

We strongly recommend that all of our churches and their members pray fervently and faithfully for the leadership of our West Virginia Baptist Convention and our American Baptist Churches, USA.

We believe that these men and women are chosen by God to serve His work through our Baptist witness.

Therefore, we urge your support of them all in prayer and in every other way possible.

(1983 addition)

We further urge that congregations give careful consideration, when calling a pastor, to his

willingness to give loyal support to the West Virginia Baptist Convention and the American Baptist Churches, USA.

AUTONOMY 1983

Desiring to maintain our historic roots as Baptists, we of the West Virginia Baptist Convention family express our support for the autonomy of the local church. We respect the rights of the local church to conduct its own business, forms of worship, and practices and request that all other organizations observe this fundamental Baptist belief. We further encourage the local churches to recognize that though we are separate in respect to our particular churches, yet we are all one in communion and fellowship holding Jesus Christ to be our head and Lord. Thus we ought faithfully to band together in the use of our spiritual and physical resources to the mutual benefits and edification of the whole church.

BAPTISTS BELIEFS 1986

In as much as we profess to be “Baptists,” and, in as much as we are named the West Virginia Baptist Convention and are associated with the American Baptist Churches, USA, we encourage each church and association to give prayerful consideration and study as to what it means to be a “Baptist.”

There are an ever increasing number of cults and an ever increasing number of churches carrying the label “Baptist,” and an ever increasing cry within our Convention for identity.

Therefore be it resolved that we:

1. Encourage each congregation to study Baptist history and polity especially as it applies to the historic Baptist beliefs including the authority of the Bible, a regenerate church membership, believers baptism, the priesthood of all believers, freedom of conscience, and the separation of church and state.

2. Encourage each congregation to use available Judson Press materials pertaining to Baptist life and thought

3. Encourage each congregation to be aware of and preview for use the new Judson Press curriculum materials, which will portray a strong American Baptist point of view.

BIENNIAL EXHIBIT HALL 1991

As a result of the misunderstandings concerning the Exhibit Hall at the 1991 Biennial in Charleston, we recommend that the General Board of the American Baptist Churches, USA, adopt a set of regulations dealing with the Exhibit Hall which is related to the Biennial, allowing space only to those groups which are related to the ABC, USA, and in harmony with its bylaws, policy statements, and resolutions.

We request that this action be sent to the General Executive Council of the ABC, USA, and to the Executive Committee of the General Board of the American Baptist Churches, USA.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION 1982

We believe that Christian Education is the planned approach to the enabling of persons to gain maturity in Christian living. Self-education through prayer, meditation, and reading of the Scriptures and other devotional literature can best be encouraged by an atmosphere of learning within the community of believers. Churches should seek to provide resources and encouragement of Christian growth.

Each local church should take deliberate steps in the formulation of Christian Education policy and program, should plan for evaluations and adjustments in approach, and should seek to discover those methods and procedures best adapted to the local congregation and service area. Christian Education planning must take into account that all Christians are in continuing need of growth and increasing knowledge.

- All ages, from nursery to senior citizen;
- All pastors, professional and volunteer staff;
- All conditions, such as disabled, shut-in, handicapped, etc.
- All families and singles, according to needs; and
- All within the community served by the Church.

The full Christian Education program will contain elements of evangelism, witness, stewardship, social concern, leadership, vocation, socialization, knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. The purpose of Christian Education is to serve the individual, the congregation, the greater community of believers, and the kingdom of God.

Therefore, West Virginia Baptist churches are urged to encourage members to participate in statewide and regional conferences, workshops, demonstrations, etc., as provided by the West Virginia Baptist Convention. Associations are urged to work closely with Area Ministers in the planning of Christian Education events to make best use of the resources of the West Virginia Baptist Convention. Local churches are urged to provide training of Christian Education personnel for the upgrading of talents. All West Virginia Baptists are urged to fulfill their personal calling to “teach all nations.”

CHRISTIAN HIGHER AND CONTINUING EDUCATION 1994

WHEREAS we are taught in the Bible to “Love God with all our mind,” and

WHEREAS the need is great for well-educated and well-trained pastors and other Christian leaders to fulfill the high calling to which God has called these individuals and the church,

WHEREAS West Virginia Baptists have a moral obligation for the integration of youth into the implementation of the mission of the church, including the recruitment, support, and preparation of youth going into full-time Christian vocations; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that the churches be encouraged to support those educational centers, institutions, foundations, and programs that provide Christian higher and continuing education for pastors, church leaders and young people, including West Virginia Baptist Camp at Cowen, the West Virginia Baptist Conference Center at Parchment Valley, American Baptist Assembly of Green Lake, Wisconsin, Alderson-Broadus College, West Virginia Baptist Foundation for Campus Ministry, The West Virginia Extension of Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, our American Baptist Seminaries and including the West Virginia Baptist Educational Society, Inc., and **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that these

educational organizations be encouraged to provide courses of instruction that are directly related to missionary outreach, church extension, and leadership education, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we affirm the importance of a four-year (bachelor's) degree and a seminary (master's) degree for pastors and other professional church servants.

HOWEVER, WHEREAS not everyone who is called by God to pastor or serve in other leadership positions is able to earn a bachelor's or a master's degree and

WHEREAS many churches cannot afford a pastor or other leader,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we affirm those who are genuinely called and gifted for such ministries, but are unable to achieve a high level of formal education should be welcomed and affirmed by local churches and associations, and that such leaders should be helped in every way possible by the West Virginia Baptist Convention and the American Baptist Churches/USA, to continue their education in ways which are appropriate to their particular circumstances. We further affirm the importance of the Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary's West Virginia Baptist Extension Program as a way of enabling bivocational and others to pursue a seminary education.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that pastors and church leaders be encouraged to participate in continuing education programs, and that the churches of the West Virginia Baptist Convention be encouraged to provide funded opportunities and time for their pastors and other church leaders to continue their education in subject areas and at educational levels related to their personal development and to their respective ministries and program commitments, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that pastors, church leaders, and parents be encouraged to challenge in a deliberate way the young generation to assume increased responsibilities in the local church, to be open to God's calling to church vocation, and to continue their formal education, integrating academics and career development with Christian convictions.

CHRISTIAN VOCATION 1973

In the Christian faith, we hold a concept of God's calling. We read of His call to Moses, Isaiah, and the calling of the first disciples. We understand rather clearly that God calls us to be His followers, to serve Him and to be Christians. Likewise, we understand that God calls each one who is willing to listen to a particular occupation or career. While we may respond to this calling in our daily work, we must also respond to it in all other areas of life, worship, leisure, in family relationships, and in our relationships with other people in our society. Few choices need be made more responsibly and reverently than our vocation in the light of our Christian calling. We need to help our youth develop deep religious values that can bring satisfaction in doing their work, redeeming their leisure and living their whole lives. This can best be done by:

Developing within our church curriculum a program of vocational guidance counseling which can reveal a person's abilities, likes, dislikes and specific skills.

CHRISTIAN VOCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES 1984

Inasmuch as no one of us is privy to the whole council and purpose of God and His children; and
Inasmuch as one of the principle doctrines of the Baptist faith is the priesthood of all believers; and
Inasmuch as the inexorable toll of retirement and death makes frequent inroads into our national

and local leadership, and

Inasmuch as new opportunities in church leadership are opening on a wider scale, and our most obvious source of coming leadership is in our youth and young adults, therefore

We recommend that a renewed effort be made to lay before those planning careers and/or those changing careers after previous training in another field the strong possibility that God may be calling them into a career in His service; that we urge youth leaders and pastors especially to be sensitive to the ones in their congregations who are searching;

We recommend furthermore that churches be in touch with the youth and campus ministry departments of our work for suggestions and materials which could help such a person look more carefully at a possible Christian vocation;

We further recommend that the whole stewardship of life be presented to ourselves and our children and youth that we not be caught up in the fallacy prevalent in our world that all that is important is how much we can earn and how much we can own.

CONCERN FOR CARING AND SHARING OF THE CHURCHES WITHIN THE ASSOCIATION OF THE WEST VIRGINIA BAPTIST CONVENTION 1985

For nearly 200 years the Association has been a vital part of the American Baptist Churches of West Virginia. Early records of some of our older churches relate that representatives from Association churches met monthly to discuss progress of their churches and problems that confronted each church individually and were always eager to maintain an excellent fellowship between churches. History of the Associations throughout our state will support that the Associations have always been a vital link within the network of our West Virginia Baptist Convention.

When the West Virginia Baptist Convention was formed in 1865, its objective was defined as “to promote the preaching of the Gospel, establish and strengthen the Baptist Churches of West Virginia, and develop in them a missionary spirit and vital interest in all lines of Christian work throughout the world.” This objective also is vital to the work of each church on the Association level.

Recognizing that all Associations are a part of a broader fellowship known as the West Virginia Baptist Convention - Be It Resolved:

1. That we pray that God will grant us vision equal to meet the challenges of the world of today and of the future.
2. That we encourage each church to become more informed and involved in the work of the Association.
3. That we support financially the work of the Association, taking careful consideration of their individual share of the stewardship needs of each Association.
4. That we develop and support Christian Education programs beneficial to all churches within each Association.
5. That we share in the joy and responsibility of encouraging and preparing persons feeling the call to the ministry, as well as the interrogation and ordination of ministers of the association.
6. That we support prayerfully and financially the Mission efforts of the Association.
7. That we support the youth of our churches in their efforts on the Association level.

8. That we give careful consideration and attention to the appointment of delegates to the Association meeting and to faithfully attend all Annual Meetings and Christian Education Events planned and sponsored by the Association in order to develop a keener sense of caring, sharing and fellowship of all churches within our 25 Associations of the West Virginia Baptist Convention.

CONGREGATIONAL GROWTH 1990

We believe that the message of the Gospel must be at the heart of all that the church is doing. Our understanding of the Gospel must be strong, and give purpose to the ministry of each congregation. We also believe that the ministry of the laity is critical to the growth of each church. At the center of this principle is our understanding of the priesthood of all believers. When the people of God - the congregation - take seriously the call of Christ, there will be more love, trust, and proclamation of the Gospel by that body of believers. In the process, we will all recapture the power of God which was at the heart of the early church, and helped it to grow.

Therefore, we call upon the church of the West Virginia Baptist Convention:

- To yield to the moving of the Holy Spirit as we seek out new ways of ministry.
- To equip our members to minister, by teaching visitation skills for evangelism, ministry to shut-ins, and people with other needs, as well as serving in the life of the church school, and in promotion of the world-wide mission of the church.
- To provide quality worship which includes inspiration, information about the Christian life, opportunities for service, and ways of participation.
- To help lay people discover their spiritual gifts, that they may develop a sharing faith based on a greater understanding of the New Life in Christ.

CONTINUING EDUCATION 1971

Whereas the finest preparation, spiritual and academic, is to be sought in the leadership of our churches, we commend the availability of many opportunities for continuing education for our pastors and other church leaders. Especially we would offer thanks to West Virginia University for the Appalachian Regional School for Church Leaders.

We affirm the value of sharpening skills and express the hope that every minister would seek some continuing education periodically. We urge that the churches make scholarships and time off with pay available for their pastors to seek continuing education. The guidelines suggested by the M&M Board is that one week per year be granted which may be cumulative up to three years.

EDUCATION FOR MISSION 1989

Someone once said that the church exists by Missions as a fire exists by burning. A church can exist only if it has a mission. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations..." should be our mission, that our churches might be fanned to fire by these words as was the church at Jerusalem.

West Virginia Baptists affirm their commitment to further the mission of Jesus Christ throughout the world. That we:

- bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the world
- to seek the mind of Christ on moral, spiritual, political, economic, social and denominational matters

- to guide and assist churches in their witness in the world, in preparing members for the work of ministry
- to encourage unity among constituent churches
- to become familiar with the work of National and International Ministries through programs of education
- to be diligent in our financial support of those serving on mission fields at home and around the world.

EVANGELISM 1981

Evangelism has been an instrument in the hands of the church from its inception. The proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the means of bringing the whole person to a confrontation with God, and with His challenge of obedience, discipleship, and fellowship. Evangelism was the great focus of the church which brought the great international missionary effort into being. The American Baptist Churches in the USA continues as their heir of early American Baptists and their concern for the spread of the Gospel. As West Virginia Baptists, we reaffirm that the great command of our Lord Jesus Christ to make disciples of all nations, including our own, remains the basic reason for the existence of the church today.

We, as West Virginia Baptists, believe that Jesus Christ is God's Son and the only means of our salvation through the redemption of the individual by commitment to Him as our personal Lord and Savior. It is imperative that churches of the West Virginia Baptist Convention maintain an evangelistic concern at all times by the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed, providing all hearers with understanding and acceptance, by reconciling the redeeming love.

We urge every constituent church to examine its evangelistic outreach; to present the call of Christ at home and abroad to all persons of all conditions in all walks of life; to affirm, educate and support those responding to the call of Christ through the fellowship and programs of all the structure of the church; and to enrich the evangelistic outreach of the local church by incorporating any or all of the following suggestions:

- A. By the scheduling of evangelistic meetings and supporting elements of preparation and follow up of such meetings.
- B. By the organizing of small discussion groups in the church or home, and inviting to these groups those who are unchurched and those who have become delinquent in their Christian life and witness.
- C. By the promotion of personal commitment through the encouragement and preparation of individuals for responsibility in evangelism through personal and congregational witness.
- D. By the evaluation and assessment of all church programs and organizations as they relate to the promotion of Jesus Christ and His teachings, and the enrichment of Christian life style.
- E. By the encouragement of leaders in the local church to attend, study and participate in efforts of the American Baptist Churches in the USA, the West Virginia Baptist Convention and associational promotion of programs and methods of evangelism.
- F. By the presentation of a definite invitation or opportunity for personal response by individuals to the challenge for a personal confrontation with the claims of Jesus Christ and commitment to His cause.

- G. By the support of community efforts in evangelism through coordination and cooperation with other denominations while preserving our unique witness as American Baptists and West Virginia Baptists.
- H. By the exploration of new or revitalized efforts of evangelism, and to share with fellow churches the insights gained through these efforts.

FOUNDATION FOR CAMPUS MINISTRY 1970

The Foundation for Campus Ministry is the bridge we have between the local church and the academic community in secular society. The need for campus ministry is apparent as we too often see the tragic breakdown in our permissive society. As West Virginia Baptists and as parents we have a serious responsibility to our students while on the campuses of our state colleges and universities.

Be it resolved that we recommend all West Virginia Baptist Churches support prayerfully and materially the Foundation for Campus Ministry.

We urge that the churches include in their annual budget an item for the Foundation for Campus Ministry. (Adopted in 1967)

IDENTITY AS WEST VIRGINIA BAPTISTS - 1987

Under the historic polity and practice of Baptist churches, we set forward the following principles:

1. Believers baptism by immersion.
2. The priesthood of believers.
3. Regenerate church membership by voluntary association.
4. Congregational autonomy, which rejects connectionalism by polity or creed.
5. Association of congregations for -
 - a. Mutual support in prayer and practice.
 - b. Implementation of Mission in the broad sense of the ministry of reconciliation under the commission of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures and the leadership of the Holy Spirit throughout.
 - (1) our historic associations.
 - (2) the state of West Virginia with the West Virginia Baptist Convention, and
 - (3) the nation and the world with the American Baptist Churches, USA.

To this end, we call attention to the body of resolutions, passed by delegates in the Annual Meetings of the West Virginia Baptist Convention, and in particular: AUTONOMY - 1983; BAPTIST BELIEFS - 1986; AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES, USA, - 1968; CONCERN FOR CARING AND SHARING OF THE CHURCHES WITHIN THE ASSOCIATIONS OF THE WEST VIRGINIA BAPTIST CONVENTION - 1985; RESOLVING GAPS OF MISUNDERSTANDING - 1985; AND STRENGTHENING EXISTING CHURCHES/ NEW CHURCH DEVELOPMENT - 1984.

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING 1980

Just one day after the Tug Fork flooded, 2,000 blankets from the American Baptist World Relief Committee were in the valley, before any local West Virginia Baptist Church could react. A total of \$100,000 was offered by the World Relief Committee to meet emergency and rehabilitation needs.

Funds already in India could be released immediately for cyclone disaster recovery, because the World Relief Committee could pledge their replacement and move as quickly as international financial transactions could be made.

American Baptist Churches, USA, are able to move quickly to meet emergency and long-term human needs at home and abroad through the annual One Great Hour of Sharing Offering rather than relying upon the slower process of called emergency relief offerings. By making use of International and National Ministries personnel and structures, the cost of administration is kept to less than three cents for each dollar of aid delivered.

Therefore, we urge all churches of the West Virginia Baptist Convention and members of these congregations to give first consideration to the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering in their contributions to relief at home and abroad, and to familiarize themselves with the ways in which the World Relief Committee utilizes these funds to meet our Scriptural obligations to the least of these, His brethren and ours.

PASTOR-CONGREGATION RELATIONS 1983

The relationship between pastor and congregation has great potential for harm and healing for both. Often this pattern has developed in the local church over long periods of time, greatly influenced by the personalities and problems of the past. If the association of pastor and congregation is to be a vital process, it must be evaluated in terms of the present day needs and goals of the church, the pastor and members of his/her family, not past traditions.

The West Virginia Baptist Convention therefore recommends:

- (1) that job descriptions and mutual expectations of both church and pastor be made part of the process of calling a pastor to the local church, following procedures such as those set forth in *Calling A Baptist Minister*.
- (2) that provision be made in each local church governing structure for responsibility for Pastor-Congregation to be assigned to an ongoing group, preferably a specific Pastor-Church Relations Committee which would meet on a regular basis. This group should conduct a periodic evaluation of expectations of the congregation and pastor under guidelines such as those in the Code of Ethics for Church and Pastor or some similar process.
- (3) that each church member review his/her own expectations of pastor, spouse and family in realistic terms, seeking to include them fully in communal, social and personal relationships, rather than to separate them by idealistic expectations made of them alone thus putting them outside the congregational circle; and that concerns of the pastor and church members be channeled to the Pastor-Church Relations Committee for resolution.

PERMANENT ENDOWMENT FUND 1983

Whereas many needs of the West Virginia Baptist Convention are likely to arise, the funding of which will become difficult, we endorse the establishment of the Endowment Fund. The income from this fund should be used as specified by the donors of the principal amount in the Fund, in proportion as their gift relates to the total amount in the fund.

REACHING THE CHILDREN FOR CHRIST 1992

Children are our invaluable resources by which the church will continue to witness in the future. Inviting neighborhood children to church, sponsoring a child for camp, being an interested adult, and sharing God's love by caring are a few of the ways of "Reaching the Children for Christ."

Therefore, be it resolved that the West Virginia Baptist Convention encourages the local congregations to enlist and minister in the name of Christ, to children in each community.

REAFFIRMING OUR AMERICAN BAPTIST HERITAGE 1992

Whereas we as American Baptists deeply care for our denomination, we are disturbed about the dissatisfaction many of our American Baptist churches have expressed regarding the national direction of the ABC/USA. This dissatisfaction has been present for several years, recently increasing in intensity. We are perplexed at the insensitivity of the national leadership to the numerous regions and churches that it serves. Because of that insensitivity, we are sympathetic to the indignation that has caused many of our churches to redirect their financial support away from national levels of leadership. We are saddened by the potential loss of congregations from our American Baptist family. These congregations are repeatedly citing incompatibility with the national leadership of the ABC/USA as the main reason for their potential departure. Should overall conditions not change, we fear an even greater fragmentation of our denomination.

Whereas we as American Baptists treasure our rich heritage, we draw from our Baptist predecessors for inspiration. According to our American Baptist heritage, the Scriptures are the final authority in matters of faith and practice. Our American Baptist heritage includes a strong stand on the "autonomy of the local church." We have agreed, though, to associate together in seeking God's will for church life, in strengthening God's people for Christian service and in fulfilling God's purposes and our common mission in a needy world. According to our American Baptist heritage, within the association of our churches the leadership of our denomination is to be responsive and accountable to the churches which it serves.

Whereas we as American Baptists cherish such a rich heritage, we are grieved that our national leadership has departed from it in the following ways:

- * The General Board of the ABC/USA is currently the sole policy making body for our denomination. This can effectively ignore the will of our associating churches in policy-making decisions, and insulate our national leadership from direct accountability to our local churches.
- * The American Baptist principle of "the Gospel for all people" compels us to be inclusive of all persons in our outreach. However, the Gospel often is offensive because it reveals our sin. The concept of "inclusiveness" is being distorted, diminishing the Gospel's clear call for lifestyles and moral values consistent with Biblical teaching.

- * The various administrative groups within the national leadership lack the accountability to one another and to our associating local churches that our heritage demands.

Therefore, be it resolved, we recommend that revisions be made in the By-Laws and Standing Rules of the American Baptist Churches, USA that would:

- * enable the delegates of our associating churches, meeting at the Biennial, to make ABC/USA policy that is binding on the General Board and all denominational agencies.
- * make all denominational committees (e.g. The Biennial Program Committee) accountable to the General Board for approval of all plans before those plans are enacted.
- * reduce the over representation of some regions to the General Board by virtue of the “at-large” members, by making these selections in proportion to the number of Election District Representatives from that region.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM 1981

Baptist history and the struggle for religious liberty are inseparable. We are grateful to our forefathers who struggled tirelessly for religious freedom. Their sacrifice to separate the church from the political process and to foster an attitude of noninterference in the religious life of our nation by the government, gives the freedom of worship which we enjoy and treasure today.

We are mindful of the dangers posed by both friendly and hostile governments and trends within the religious community itself which threaten religious freedom at home and abroad. We feel compelled by our faith and the example of those who went before us to continue the struggle for religious freedom wherever it is abused.

We call upon American Baptist Churches in the USA to exert all opportunities at their disposal to nurture religious freedom here and abroad.

We call upon the Baptist World Alliance to continue to speak out boldly against religious persecution. It is our conviction that silence in the name of expediency is shortsighted and a repudiation of our heritage.

The West Virginia Baptist Convention deplores the attempt to mute the call for freedom in the name of political consideration. We believe that any political profit at the expense of human freedom is unacceptable in the light of the Word of God.

We are calling upon the constituency of our State Convention:

- to be vigilant in their own communities
- to maintain freedom of worship on national, state and local levels
- to include in their prayers those who are in jeopardy because of their faith
- to work in the political process for separation of church and state
- to continue to bring to the attention of our political leaders our convictions about human rights and religious freedom
- to encourage the study of our Baptist history and heritage, the story and the meaning of religious freedom.

RENEW FOR MISSION 1994

We believe God works through people, the family of God known as the church, to accomplish His will in the world. As part of that work, the primary focus of the West Virginia Baptist Convention is and will continue to be:

1. To strengthen and empower local churches to be what God desires.
2. To help local churches work together to fulfill our mission and ministry within the state and around the world.

The Executive Board of the West Virginia Baptist Convention has adopted as its five-year theme for the years 1994-1998: "RENEW for Mission." The theme is an acronym with each letter representing one broad area of ministry consistent with the ministry of Jesus and the mission of the church:

R -- Reach out through evangelism

E -- Educate and disciple

N -- Needs of people

E -- Equip for ministry

W -- Worship the King

As West Virginia Baptists focus upon our vision and purpose, we believe the five year theme "RENEW for Mission" should be used as a guide for planning, adopting, implementing programs, and evaluation of ministry in all facets of the convention, associations, and local churches.

Therefore, we call upon each West Virginia Baptist Convention church to:

1. Adopt "RENEW for Mission" as their emphasis for the period 1994-1998.
2. Evaluate their total ministry in each of the five areas highlighted in the theme with a view to strengthening their local ministries and optimistically look at potentials for meeting the needs of both believers and non-believers.
3. In each theme year, sponsor study and special programming in the emphasis for that year.
4. Encourage members to participate in convention sponsored activities centering around the theme.
5. Work in concert with other churches in the association to implement the theme at the association level.

RESOLVING GAPS OF MISUNDERSTANDING 1985

The biblical record reveals that while the human race was created by God for **shalom**, perfect peace and harmony, that sin brought about a devastating fall from God's original intent. One consequence of this fall was the ensuing brokenness and separation experienced by every member of the race. This alienation and brokenness is manifested in the relationships between persons and their creator, between various individuals, between individuals and their environment, and between the person and his or her own inner self. Nations, communities and families all experience the hostility, envy, jealousies, hatreds and brokenness that are manifestations of sin's subsequent effect in our world.

We proclaim that when an individual comes to faith in Christ, old things have passed away, and all things become new (II Corinthians 4:17). Within the brotherhood of faith a wholeness is experienced

which is beyond anything known elsewhere in a threatened, hostile and tense world. We rejoice over the substantial reconciliation brought about between God and believing humanity, between fellow believers, and between individuals and their inner selves. This new wholeness has brought about a new sensitivity to the environment and to the needs of others, which we affirm is good and right.

However, we must also confess that this substantial healing of our brokenness is incomplete, that much of the old nature still lives within us, striving against the wholeness which faith in God brings to bear within us. One manifestation of this old nature is the tendency toward misunderstanding, disharmony, and misinterpretation of motives that so often characterize relationships within our local Churches, our Associations, our State Convention, and our Denomination.

In light of this continuing tendency toward brokenness and fragmentation, we call upon our brothers and sisters in the Churches of the West Virginia Baptist Convention to strive against the inroads of mistrust and alienation which the powers of darkness would seek to thrust upon us.

Therefore, Be It Resolved That:

We urge each believer to be on the alert against the wiles of the devil, knowing the adversary stalks about seeking whom he may devour (I Peter 5:8).

The covenant common to many of our Churches states:

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.

Therefore, Be It Resolved That:

The principles expressed herein be applied throughout our denominational life wherever gaps of misunderstanding occur.

Jesus Himself said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9). He went on to command that believers express toward one another the same love He had expressed toward the disciples (John 13:35), naming this as the grand mark by which all would know they were His followers.

Therefore, Be It Resolved That:

Believers be exhorted to take upon themselves the ministry of reconciliation committed to us by the risen Christ (II Corinthians 5:18).

In light of the gaps of mistrust which too often confront us,

Therefore, Be It Resolved That:

We be slow to believe that which is evil but quick to praise that which we can affirm; that all individuals take it upon themselves to seek further information when confronted with that which seems to speak ill of a believer; that all our constituents be always anxious to speak the truth in love to those with whom we have cause to disagree, and that working toward the resolution of misunderstanding and mistrust within our denominational family, we grow together as a fellowship of truth and grace.

We, as West Virginia Baptists, are given the great privilege of living and proclaiming the gospel in our world, our communities, and our homes. To accomplish this demands integrity, zeal and unity. Let us, then, strive to walk in a manner worthy of our calling, “being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:1-3). As the spokes of a wheel grow closer to one another as they approach the central hub, so may we grow closer to one another as we seek to draw closer to our blessed Savior.

SCHOOL OF CHRISTIAN STUDIES 1994

WHEREAS it is vital for all Christian leaders to continue learning in order to better serve the Lord, the church and the world,

BE IT RESOLVED that we affirm the importance of the West Virginia Baptist Convention School of Christian Studies, with its two tracks of study:

1. the certificate in lay ministry, and
2. the diploma in pastoral ministry.

SENIOR ADULTS 1988

It is estimated that the number of persons in the USA over the age of 60 will increase to 32 million people by the year 2000. The number of older West Virginians has increased more than six times since the turn of the century. The proportion of the state’s older population has more than tripled during the same time period, from 5.3 percent to 18 percent. This age group will continue to constitute the fastest growing segment of the state’s population, as well as membership in our churches.

As a result of the depreciation in income and health, some of our senior adults are living in substandard housing, eating foods of poor nutritive value, and unable to secure adequate health care. More depressing, they are living in isolation, immobilized for lack of transportation, living lonely lives for lack of visits and communication from their church family.

Today’s older adults constitute a reservoir of talent and ability that our churches could draw on for strengthening a variety of ministries. These are many older adults, as well as the care giving/families, in our churches who need supportive services.

We call upon the churches of West Virginia to:

- Gather information about older adults in your church and community. Find the “hidden elderly” who were once a vital part of the Church.
- Organize a Task Force, or assign responsibility to a Board to keep in touch with these persons on a continual basis.
- Make a survey of the needs and plan for the church to help meet those needs.
- Involve active older adults in congregational planning, outreach ministries, and intergenerational ministries.
- Initiate resources of a program for homebound persons, such as a Bible Study or Discussion group.
- Develop support groups within the church for caregivers and families caring for the elderly.

- Identify existing groups within the community. Provide a list of resources and information: health, finances, activities and other programs, such as daily visitation, telephone ministry, etc. Avoid duplication. Some things are done better on a community basis.

SINGLE ADULTS 1980

We as West Virginia Baptists recognize that in today's world a crucial problem to which we must, as Christians, address ourselves is that of the Single Adult (widow, widower, divorcee, and single-by-choice). As four out of ten persons are single and more than 1,003,000 divorces occurred last year, we must minister to the needs and problems of the Single Adult.

The foundation of the church, as we have known it, is threatened by the disintegration of the family unit. Loneliness, rejection, and the sense of failure are causing bitterness, hatred, depression, and withdrawal by persons of the broken family. Having no, or lost, status as a member of a family unit, the Single Adult very often feels that he or she cannot function within our church programs.

We recognize that if we are to follow Christ's instructions concerning ourselves as integral members of God's Family, and members one of another, we must study the needs of the Single Adult, and actively develop programs within the church that will minister to them as individuals, and that will include them as a vital part of the total church ministry.

Therefore, we recommend that the West Virginia Baptist Convention, Associations, and Local Churches study and implement programs which will enable the Single Adult to find a meaningful role within the church family, as the church seeks to bring to all membership in the family of God.

STRENGTHENING EXISTING CHURCH/NEW CHURCH DEVELOPMENT 1984

The strengthening of existing churches and the establishment of new churches is essential for American Baptists in West Virginia for two reasons:

First, our survival as a denomination with a strong witness is contingent upon it.

Secondly, an adequate response to our Lord's command to evangelize demands it.

Flexibility, alertness, sensitivity, imagination, and innovativeness are some of the characteristics which must be present on both the denominational and local church levels if we are to be fully responsive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit as He guides us in responding to this challenge.

In view of this, we make the following recommendation:

That on all levels of our American Baptist Witness -- local, association, and state -- we be open to opportunities to provide help and encouragement to those churches within our fellowship which, because of circumstances, internal problems or pressures from without, find themselves in a stagnant, deteriorating or fragmenting situation.

That we constantly be on the alert for opportunities to initiate action which could possibly lead to the founding of new churches. We strongly believe that in most cases the local church is in the best position to serve as a catalyst for new church development.

That our local churches prayerfully seek the leadership of the Holy Spirit as they make their resources -- human and material -- available for the challenge of new church development.

That on all levels of our witness we keep the channels of communication open -- seeking input from each other and encouraging one another -- as we address the challenges of strengthening our existing churches and developing new churches.

CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP - 1987

In this day of the multiplicity of appeals that are aimed at the Christian community from all sides, we have witnessed a decline in the individual's response to the gifts of God, both within and outside the church family. Therefore, we urge our people:

- (a) To reconsider, reevaluate, and rededicate themselves to the Christian principle that all of life comes from God and that Biblically we are expected to use our talents and resources wisely in a constantly growing sense of Christian stewardship;
- (b) To support the ministry of the local church and its worldwide mission outreach as a primary and principal agent of Christian witness throughout the world, and
- (c) To exercise good judgment in the support of responsible Christian causes which are primarily concerned with evangelizing the world, rather than in providing programs of Christian entertainment and making false claims of ministry to others.
- (d) To evaluate all charitable appeals on the basis of fiscal openness and effective program actions. In the giving of gifts, we are called to be both generous and wise.

We further urge members of our churches to express their personal objections against and not give financial support to those who use the cause of Christ for personal gain, in the process misleading others in such a way that they become cynical of the true meaning of Christian stewardship and commitment. We object to money raising techniques that carry with them unrealistic promises, and encourage our people to exercise responsible stewardship as members of the Kingdom of God.

TEEN RELATIONSHIPS WITH ADULTS 1988

John Q. Baucom, in his book: **Fatal Choices**¹ writes, "Churches have a long history of working with teenagers to meet their social and emotional needs. The opportunity for helping teenagers is greater than ever before. The challenge is also greater. Today's adolescents are exposed to far more information and technology than most adults can even imagine. Simply holding their attention can be a major accomplishment. However, teens do respond if adults express a personal interest in them as people." A survey of National Merit Scholars rating characteristics of influential teachers places as number one "expressing a close personal interest in me as a person." This quality would be primary in all who deal with teenagers, such as parents and youth workers.

Our society is bombarded through the entertainment media with the glorification of violence and death. Suicide is approved of and urged as a solution in some music aimed at the teenage audience. Such stimuli can be overwhelming for young persons in the process of making choices of goals in life.

Teenage suicide is the most noticeable and final of choices made by teenagers. Statistics report ever increasing numbers. Other choices damage, perhaps irreparably, the future of teens.

Therefore, we urge the churches of the West Virginia Baptist Convention to provide youth programs that promote significant relationships with adults and that encourage the self-esteem and

self-worth of teens. We urge local churches to undertake individual members to form significant, supportive and self-esteem promoting relationships with teens, both within the church and within the community at large.

¹Baucom, John Q., **Fatal Choice**, Moody Press, Chicago, IL, 1986 pp. 118-119. See also West Virginia Baptist Resolutions CHILD ABUSE, 1980: EDUCATIONAL: SEX, DRUGS AND ALCOHOL, 1987; FAMILY LIFE, 1982; AND UNWED TEENAGE PARENTS, 1986.

“THANK YOU” OFFERING 1980

In a time when high inflation eats away at the effective purchasing power of every individual; and, when considering the difficulty of meeting budgets for the average American family; we must, as American Baptists, turn our attention to the heartfelt needs of many of our retired ministers and missionaries or their survivors.

Pensions for some of these individuals are quite small, due to small salaries earned during the years of service. Inadequate resources, coupled with the extreme rate of inflation of recent years, have left some of these retired servants of God struggling to meet even the basic necessities of life, and others in some difficulty.

The Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering, called the “Thank You Offering,” is a means to help bridge the gap between hardship and meeting basic needs for these retired men and women. In 1978, West Virginia Baptists received back into the state, in the form of grants and emergency assistance, over 35% more than we contributed to this offering. In addition, the annuitants received an “extra” check over the annual mandated amount.

Therefore, it is strongly urged that the churches of the West Virginia Baptist Convention adopt the “Thank You Offering” as an integral part of each church’s extended ministries, and in this manner show our thanks to these men and women who over the years helped to shape our ministry and mission in the name of Jesus Christ.

WOMEN AND MEN AS PARTNERS IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY 1990

Partnership involves collaboration and mutual support. It encourages doing what one does best and supporting one another in such endeavors. It recognizes, uses and celebrates the gifts that each one has been given for serving the common good (I Corinthians 12:7). Its objective is building up the church in love (Ephesians 4:16), and its ultimate goal is the glory and praise of God (Ephesians 3:21).

Women and men are called to be partners in the Christian life and ministry. This is the biblical message as given in the creation story, in Jesus’ life and ministry, in the early church, and in Paul’s preaching and teaching.

Therefore, be it resolved that:

- We affirm that the gospel of Jesus Christ frees all persons, male and female, to serve in those ways to which they have been called by God and for which they have God-given gifts. They should be full partners in the life and work of the church.
- We affirm that for the church to be whole and effective in its witness, it must have both women and men as full partners in all parts of its ministry.
- We affirm that both women and men in church and society should share concern for strong

family units and consistent childcare, with both parents assuming responsibilities in the home.

- We affirm that the practice of partnership between women and men can most effectively be taught in the home with the church's active help, with mother and father modeling mutual love and respect for the gifts and qualities that each brings to the marriage. Churches can help single parents teach mutual respect and love to their children.
- We affirm that Christian women and men have a special calling to be advocates and models for children and youth, giving them consistent personal support and encouragement for positions of leadership in church and society.

MORAL

ABORTION 1981

Believing in divine purposeful creation by God of all human life, be it so resolved that abortion not be used as a method of birth control; it should only be considered as a medical procedure to save the life of the mother, or to terminate a pregnancy resulting from incest, forcible rape, or other felonious acts.

Giving affirmation to the Biblical principle that life begins at conception, we believe that abortion constitutes the termination of a life.

Further, we encourage all of our churches in the West Virginia Baptist Convention to extend counseling to distressed persons and stress the sanctity of human life.

CHILD ABUSE 1980

We as Christians recognize that there is a problem known as "Family Abuse" (Child, Spouse, and Parent). Therefore, we urge that churches and individuals within the West Virginia Baptist Convention support organizations which are endeavoring to alleviate such abuse situations by helping those involved to recognize and deal with their problems, and which offer programs that such persons can accept and respond to: Self-help programs, such as Parents Anonymous, The Salvation Army Child Abuse Hotline, Refuge Centers, etc.

CRIME AND LAW ENFORCEMENT IN WEST VIRGINIA 1978

Murder, rape, burglary and other violent crimes in West Virginia are reported day by day on the news media. Poor comfort is afforded in the knowledge that our state rates among the lowest in the United States in the matter of violent crime, for the level of violent crime jeopardizes the safety of all West Virginians.

The record for total crimes, nationwide, in 1976 showed a small reduction, in general, significant only in that an increase was not registered; and while the record showed a decrease in most categories, it showed notable increases in prostitution, commercialized vice, gambling, arson, driving under the influence of drugs, and violation of liquor laws.

Causes assigned have been unemployment, inflation, more leisure time, peer pressure, television, publications and human drives of hunger, lusts, avarice and hatred. But in the final analysis, rate and

kind of crime reflect the culture - particularly, the attitude of society.

In the realm of enforcement, we note the uneven justice measured out to the criminal: acquittal, probation, minimum sentence, parole without rehabilitation, and other apparent aberrations. Often the victim is humiliated and the criminal declared to be the injured party.

When one follows through the whole process from arrest to investigation, to prosecution to judgment, it is found that too often there is reluctance to be a witness or become involved in the process. Too often the alleged criminal can bring terrific pressures to bear on police officers, witnesses, prosecutors, judges, and probation officers -- pressures of sentimentality, persuasion, threats, rewards - pressures aimed at some supposed weakness. In some instances, the weak point submits.

Again, the level of enforcement reflects to a large degree the current culture - the support and demand of society. Nevertheless, we reaffirm our support of those enforcement officials who are dedicated, conscientious, and loyal to their oath of office, taking risks, even suffering death, in order to perform their sacred duty.

DISABLED PERSONS 1981

It is estimated that one person in ten has some type of disability. The opportunity to work and worship, to learn and grow as respected and accepted members of society is their desire. Barriers, such as the limiting attitudes of others, as well as the limits imposed by an inaccessible physical environment keep many disabled persons from entering the mainstream of community life.

Therefore, be it resolved that each church of the West Virginia Baptist Convention be urged to be creatively involved in becoming a more caring community for disabled persons in their congregation and in their community by volunteering to serve those with special needs; by presenting realistic appraisals of their problems, and the programs offered to the disabled person; by providing adequate accommodations which invite and assist disabled persons; by showing loving concern for all persons; by seeking independence for all; and by focusing upon the unity of all in the worshiping and working church.

EDUCATION: SEX, DRUGS AND ALCOHOL 1987

Believing that the human body is the temple of the Holy Spirit; and

Holding that purity and wholesomeness of the body are ideals toward which we are striving;
and

Aware that many pressures are placed upon children, youth and adults to enter upon unhealthy, as well as immoral, practices; and

Defining the use of beverage alcohol as usage of a drug which leads to addiction and bodily harm;
and

Noting the rise of sexually transmitted diseases, including Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (A.I.D.S.), chlamydia, antibiotic resistant strains of gonorrhea and syphilis, and others:

Therefore, we urge associations, congregations, and individuals associated with the West Virginia Baptist Convention to support those efforts seeking to address these conditions and offer the following as starting points:

- (1) Programs of sex, drug and alcohol education in public and church schools, appropriate to age and under adequately trained instructors that realistically set forth the physical and psychological dangers inherent in practices other than those of chastity (outside of marriage) and total abstinence from the use of beverage alcohol and illicit drugs;
- (2) Support of the United Church Alcohol Action Program (UCAAP) in its legislative and educational efforts;
- (3) Education in the proper use of prescription medication, through medical personnel and health institutions;
- (4) Education toward the establishment of family life practices that uphold the high ideals expressed in the Gospels and Epistles of Holy Scripture; (See also these resolutions: UNWED TEENAGE PARENTS - 1986 and FAMILY LIFE - 1982)
- (5) Opposition to the weakening of legislated restraints on the consumption of beverage alcohol; (See also the resolutions - ALCOHOL, 1971 and ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES 1980)
- (6) Establishment of judicial practices which do not accept self-induced drug or alcohol impairment as a mitigating circumstance;
- (7) Effective enforcement of Driving Under the Influence (DUI) laws and provision for reformatory sentences;
- (8) Individual and congregational support of and participation in community efforts to study and remedy local conditions of drug and alcohol abuse, such as (but not limited to) Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), and Teens Against Alcohol and Drugs (TAAD), sponsored by UCAAP.
- (9) Encouragement of legislation for the imposition of a tax on beverage alcohol for the specific purpose of underwriting alcoholic rehabilitation programs; and
- (10) Programs of rehabilitation and reconciliation of those who are victims of the results of sexually transmitted diseases and/or drug and alcohol abuse.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP 1990

The problem of solid waste is now a national crisis. We presently have one half the number of landfills as we had in 1980. Within the next five years, one in every three will be filled to capacity. Other means of solid waste disposal are presently environmentally unsafe, filling our air, water, and soil with toxic pollutants.

According to the WV Department of Commerce, Labor, and Environmental Resources, solid waste management will be one of the most serious problems facing the state and local governments in this decade. There are 63 landfills now operating in the state of West Virginia, but within the next two years 38 of these will be closing. Recycling shows the most promise of any of the available solutions, both environmentally and economically.

We see through scripture that “environmental stewardship” is a Christian responsibility that began at creation. (Genesis 1:26, 2:15). We clearly have done a poor job of ‘tending’ the earth.

Because as Christians we are a “people of hope” and recognize through scriptural truth that what we do or refuse to do does make a difference in our world, we call upon our churches of the West Virginia Baptist Convention to:

1. Examine our own personal stewardship of the care of God's earth.
2. Commit ourselves to a "lifestyle of environmental stewardship" as we take our God-given responsibility seriously by:
 - a. Reducing solid waste. ('Wasteful habits' is the number one offender of the solid waste problem.)
 - b. Reusing items, when practical, which would otherwise be thrown away. (ex. Plastic items, freezer and grocery bags, composting of garbage and yard waste.)
 - c. Recycling - participating as individuals, as families, and as churches in an on-going community recycling program, or establishing one if a local recycling program does not presently exist.
 - d. Encouraging businesses to use recyclable products.

1. James J. Callare, *Plastics World*, (Cahners Publication, Sept. 1989 ed., p. 13).

2. Charles Capet, Administrative Assistant, Solid Waste Management Office, WV Dept. of Commerce, Labor, and Environmental Resources, 1356 Hansford St., Charleston, WV 25301, May 21, 1990.

FAMILY LIFE 1982

The fundamental unit of society, the family, has been a continuing concern of the West Virginia Baptist Convention. We recognize the need to establish homes where Christian principles are taught and practiced. Marriage is ordained of God, and, as such, provides the basis for self-fulfillment and the continuity of the human race. Understood properly, it gives opportunity for personal growth and development.

Today there are many non-traditional family patterns developing, and great pressure is being placed upon Christian family units, particularly the youth, by these often non-Christian life styles which attempt to change the moral climate of our country to the attitude of complete permissiveness.

As Christians, we strongly reject such contemporary life styles as homosexual marriage, pre-marital or extra-marital intercourse, etc. Our stand toward the persons who adopt such a non-Christian life style is that we love the sinner, but condemn the sin.

We affirm our need to commit ourselves once more to Biblical faith, Christian family worship, and Christian nurture within the home as priorities. Instructional materials should be made available by churches to provide help in family Bible study, family prayer, family togetherness, and support for each individual within the family.

We affirm that each individual must consciously accept responsibility for his actions and attitudes regarding life style, and that the final judgment is with God. We also affirm that upon confession and repentance full forgiveness is granted.

We affirm that family styles need to be subjected to close scrutiny and evaluation in the light of New Testament teachings, and that we need to approach them with understanding while we strive to affirm Christian principles.

As West Virginia Baptists, we need to recognize that the traditional American family has changed and that we need to deal realistically with these changes and to develop programs to meet the needs of all persons.

Therefore, we urge that West Virginia Baptist Churches study the following issues to the end of response in ministry to the changing patterns of family life, making use of study materials already available, and others now in preparation:

The making and breaking of marriages, including the rights of children in such situations.

New and changing roles for men and women.

The problems of parenting, within traditional, single parent, and blended families.

The tensions between individual fulfillment, and family and social responsibility.

The changing patterns of family structure.

The place of the single within the church program. (See also SINGLE ADULTS 1980.)

GAMBLING 1989

Gambling panders to the desire to get something for nothing, and can lead to financial instability, the breakdown of personal and family relationships, and crimes against person and property. Therefore, we have been, and are, opposed to gambling promoted and sponsored by the state government, charities, and private organizations. We have opposed, in West Virginia Baptist Convention Resolutions, the lax enforcement of gambling laws, the legalization of Bingo, and the introduction of a State Lottery in West Virginia. We will continue to press for stricter laws and enforcement of regulations governing legalized gambling, and for stricter enforcement of laws banning other types of gambling.

The enticing advertisements depicting the happiness gained from purchasing a West Virginia Lottery ticket have made many people believe the Lottery is morally right and a quick solution to their problems. We decry the State's influence in pushing a Lottery player to become a compulsive gambler. Compulsive gambling is a disease as serious for some victims and their families as alcohol and drug addiction, resulting in the breakdown of personal family relationships and depriving families of their basic needs. Having opened the door to legalized gambling within our state, our elected officials are being bombarded by the Casino Gambling interests to legalize Casino Gambling in the State of West Virginia.

We urge all West Virginia Baptists to make known to our elected and appointed state officials our concerns about the detrimental effects of gambling upon family and personal relations, and toward the development of contempt for the law arising from the 'blind eye' turned toward illegal gambling. We further express our vehement rejection of the fiction that Casino Gambling will bring in additional revenue and reduce unemployment.

We urge all West Virginia Baptists to work toward the education of the public in the dangers of Casino Gambling and the refutation of the promoted image of Casino Gambling as harmless fun.

We urge all West Virginia Baptists to express indignation at the news media for sensationalizing Lottery Jackpots. In so doing, we understand they are providing the Lottery Industry with free advertising.

We urge all West Virginia Baptists who are members of organizations where forms of gambling, such as raffles, games of chance, etc., are used to raise funds to work for the elimination of dependence upon the human weakness for gambling as a method of fund raising.

We urge all West Virginia Baptists to work through the political, elective and legislative processes toward the de-legalization of all forms of gambling now permitted by law, and toward the total ban of

gambling in the State of West Virginia and to remain vigilant when other new forms of gambling, such as off-track betting, river boat gambling etc., are introduced on a local or state-wide basis.

HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE CHURCH 1991

There is increasing pressure by homosexuals to gain popular acceptance by Christian churches of their lifestyle; to establish homosexual churches; to have such churches officially received by various denominations; to obtain recognition of homosexual caucuses in religious organizations; and to ordain avowed homosexuals to the Christian ministry. As American Baptists, we feel compelled to state our position concerning this issue.

In Scripture, our Creator God offers to us His plan for the fulfillment of our sexual natures through the union of one man and one woman within the institution of New Testament marriage. There is no scriptural endorsement of homosexual life styles as Christian life styles. God's intended order for humankind's expression of sexuality is heterosexual, monogamous, and life-long. Jesus endorsed this order.

We recognize that homosexuals are persons to whom the redeeming love of Christ is available, as it is to all who turn to Him in repentance. It is the responsibility and privilege of the church to minister to homosexuals as we minister to other persons, making known to them the grace and goodness of God.

Therefore, we call upon our denominational leaders, our churches and each American Baptist to:

Teach, by precept and example, the true nature and sanctity of the marriage bond as revealed in the Scriptures;

Reject attempts by those who seek to rationalize and promote sexual conduct, homosexual or heterosexual, which is outside the will of God for His children;

Affirm the teachings of the Bible as the only sure rule of faith and practice for life's pilgrimage; and,

Minister, in love and concern, to those caught up in sexual activities that grieve the heart of God.

HUMAN SEXUALITY AND THE CHURCH 2004

Because we are all wounded and broken people in need of the healing power of God's grace in Christ Jesus, and being aware of the confusion of voices pertaining to human sexuality, the following statement defines our common understanding for human sexual behavior.

We affirm the Bible as the inspired, perfect and authoritative Word of God and our only rule for faith and practice. We embrace its ethical compassion, love and ministry to all persons and the availability of God's grace through repentance (2 Timothy 3:14-17, Luke 5:30-32, John 8:1-11, 1 Corinthians 6:11).

We affirm that God's gracious creation intent for human sexual conduct as defined in scripture is faithful, lifelong heterosexual union for married persons and committed celibate behavior for unmarried persons. All sexual relations outside these God defined boundaries are sin and, as such, are offensive to God and are destructive of individuals, of family, of community, and of the fellowship of believers. These practices, like all sin, call for repentance, openness to the transforming power of

God, and restoration to the community of faith. (Genesis 1:27, 2:24, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8, Hebrews 13:4, Leviticus 18:22, 20:13, Romans 1:18-32, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

We reaffirm the following existing West Virginia Baptist resolutions as being applicable to this resolution: Homosexuality and the Church 1991; Pornography 1988; Morality 1974; and Family Life 1982, which states in part “As Christians we reject such contemporary lifestyles as homosexual marriage, pre-marital or extra-marital intercourse, etc. Our stand toward the persons who adopt such a non-Christian lifestyle is that we “love the sinner, but condemn the sin.” And finally, our American Baptist Resolution on Homosexuality which states “We affirm that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching.”

Therefore, we resolve that the West Virginia Baptist Convention will encourage grace motivated ministries which respond to human need and offer God’s transforming love to all wounded and broken people.

We resolve that the West Virginia Baptist Convention will not recognize for ordination or recognize the preexisting license or ordination of any person practicing, affirming, endorsing and/or celebrating adultery, fornication, gay/lesbian/bisexual behavior, or any other sexual practices that are contrary to God’s creation intent as defined above. We call upon our association ordination committees and the Committee on Ministerial Standing to recognize their responsibilities as gatekeepers in this regard.

We resolve that any church that endorses, celebrates, or affirms unrepentant adultery, fornication and/or gay, lesbian or bisexual behavior is choosing not to agree with the churches and associations of the West Virginia Baptist Convention. Such action will be deemed to indicate that church’s desire not to be affiliated with the West Virginia Baptist Convention and its desire to sever its relationship with the West Virginia Baptist Convention. We call upon our associations to recognize their responsibility as gatekeepers for the West Virginia Baptist Convention.

While remaining steadfast in our united ministry as American Baptists in spreading the gospel message of salvation through Jesus Christ throughout the nation and the world, the West Virginia Baptist Convention resolves to be an active participant with dynamic forces at work within our denomination to make the full acceptance of the biblical truth of human sexuality expressed above denominationally universal.

MASS MEDIA 1970

We recognize that the mass media of communications have become intimately related to all aspects of our lives and influence the thinking and morality of everyone, either for good or evil. Therefore,

- A. We recommend our state paper, the “West Virginia Baptist,” to our churches and their members and urge that means be found to increase subscriptions through the local church (1) by encouraging individual subscriptions, or (2) by subscriptions paid by the church for all church families that request them.
- B. We therefore urge all our churches to provide the “In Mission” magazine to all church families desiring it.
- C. Whereas, increased television watching is affecting so much of our lives, therefore we ought to be able to use it to help us constructively. We suggest our constituency (1) develop a system of evaluation for television watching and some skill in its use,

- (2) discover ways to use television as a means of Christian growth,
- (3) support educational television.

- D. We urge our constituency to make use of available printed material relative to the fields of evangelism, stewardship, Christian education student work, and other related activities.
- E. We recommend the use of cassette players in church programming as an excellent medium for religious instruction and inspiration. Like the radio, the cassette player is a medium which extends one single sense in a high definition, that is, the audio. This provides a method for the church to extend itself into streets, offices, homes and automobiles.
- F. We would urge our constituency to commend those people of radio, television, motion pictures, and publication businesses who present entertainment, education, and information consistent with our Christian faith.
- G. Finally, we urge our constituents to practice a disciplined and discriminating selection in their reading, viewing, and listening.

MORALITY 1974

Morality and American Society

Morality is a standard of conduct accepted by the individual, by communities or by society at large. This morality can be standardized by an authority outside ourselves, such as the Word of God, or it is guided by the contemporary experience and understanding of society. The moral climate of today is characterized by the absence of moral absolutes. The understanding of what is right or wrong is dictated by convenience, accommodation and utilitarian considerations.

The moral principles expressed in the Word of God and lived in the ethical conduct of Christians is not a determining factor in the life of our society today. This is evident in two areas of contemporary experience.

Morality and the Individual

We believe that those who profess Jesus Christ and avow His name are guided in their lives by the words and example of our Lord. Their standard of conduct cannot be divorced from their contemporary experience.

We call upon all Christians to examine their moral code in the light of the Gospel. It is our conviction that the cause of Christ suffers greatly by an inadequate understanding of His demands in our relationships in the exercise of our influence and in the political and social decisions we help to shape. Our nation is faced with a number of serious problems: worldwide famine, the demand of minorities for true emancipation, the consistent rise of crime and the concurrent brutalization of our society, inadequate health care for the poor, elderly and rural population, the rise of a moral revolution with the growth of pornography and sexual license, the drug problem, including beverage alcohol, America's number one drug problem, etc.

We call upon our constituency to repent of a way of life which made it impossible for God to work His will in these social, economic, moral problems.

We are asking West Virginia Baptists to forego the narrow viewpoints of class, race, and nationalism, as well as culture, and accept a standard of conduct proclaimed by God in His Word, who

is the Creator of all mankind.

Morality and Public Institutions 1981

Public institutions, such as government, schools, business, and the media, derive their power and viability from society. Without the support of the population, they cannot exist. Public institutions have a responsibility to society, which is the medium of their operations. Failure to apply moral discretion in the areas of government, business, the media, educational, and other institutions of American society adversely affects the viability of our social and national life; however, justice, truth, and a living concern for all segments of our society are the building stones upon which an enduring civilization can be built.

We call upon our government officials and the leadership and the staff of the American Baptist Churches, USA, to show leadership in reversing the process of moral decay in our country by their example and by the policies they choose to pursue. We believe the equal administration of justice, truth in all public affairs, and a concern for those governed are essential for good government.

We urge West Virginia Baptists to exercise their constitutional power in the electoral process. We believe that the people of God have a responsibility to work for the establishment of justice. It is important to elect leaders who exhibit a strong moral character. Integrity must exceed partisan interests.

We are asking West Virginia Baptists to exert their influence in government, business, the media, education, and in other public institutions for a revival of ethical practices and the establishment of a moral code wherein moral values are respected.

PEACE MAKING AND PEACE KEEPING 1968

We believe that peace is secured and maintained by the possession of Jesus Christ in the human life as Savior and Lord and by the practice of His principles and teachings in all our relationships with others.

We therefore urge that all our membership carefully search the scriptures to find and know the Savior's principles of behavior and follow them at all cost.

We believe that this will call for great sacrifice, great control, great love, and great action. It will require the abandonment of violence as the means of achieving ends, and at the same time it will require the abandonment of oppression, prejudice, discrimination and injustice. It will also require those who have received material possessions from the Lord to share them with those who are in need. Further, it will require that we do all in our power to enable every man to live with dignity and to have sufficient material possessions to meet his physical, psychological, and sociological needs, and those of his family as well.

THE YEAR 2000 AS A YEAR OF PEACE 1989

Jesus Christ, the "Prince of Peace" came to bring "peace on earth" and to call us to be "peacemakers." The year 2000 presents an occasion for a new beginning. Many persons are joining together to declare the year 2000 as a year of peace. Let us:

- Commit ourselves to being agents of peace, a peace that incorporates the total well-being of humanity, through prayer, evangelism, pursuit of justice and the improvement of international relations.
- Encourage West Virginia Baptists to reaffirm our part in the mission of the church, to announce the good news of salvation and liberation in Jesus Christ.
- Covenant with all peoples and pray in the intervening years to spread worldwide the hope that the year 2000 will see persons at peace with God, self and others in a world that is at peace.

Adapted from: Statement of Concern of American Baptist Churches, Biennial 1989

POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT 1988

Recognizing that Baptists have often excused themselves from political involvement on the basis of our insistence on the separation of Church and State; we therefore offer the following resolution for consideration by all American Baptist of West Virginia:

Be it resolved that we urge all of the members of our local churches to take seriously and prayerfully their responsibility to vote in the elections of this year and in all elections in which one is privileged to have a vote. Voting would be done only after a careful study of the issues and the stand which individual candidates take on such issues. Prayer for divine guidance and the attempt to overcome partisan prejudices in the interest of the welfare of all the people of the communities, state and nation should hold the utmost interest of the Christian voter.

Be it further resolved that, in spite of the low opinion of government and politics by many of our state, individuals become involved in correcting the wrongs by becoming personally active as candidates and by urging others who have a love for their communities and the people therein to do the same. Baptists should do all they can with God's help to support and elect those who truly desire to give loving service to God's people.

Finally, be it resolved that the guidance of the Holy Spirit be sought for the people of this great land as we select those who serve us in all levels of government. We urge all West Virginia Baptists to pray for our present leaders and for those whom we shall choose in the future.

PORNOGRAPHY 1988

The proliferation of "hard core and illegal" pornography is of great importance and concern to West Virginia Baptists. Such pornography demeans the individual, promotes illicit sex and violence in our society and is contrary to the tenets of religious and Biblical teachings that we believe and support. Accordingly, we urge our West Virginia Baptist churches to:

1. Unite with the entire Christian community to eliminate this bane to society.
2. Express our disgust with explicit portrayals of sex, violence and coercion which depicts women, men and children as sexual objects.
3. Be concerned as Christians with the adverse spiritual, social, and psychological and public health effects of pornography.
4. Recognize that pornography which victimizes and demeans children is especially abominable.

5. Understand that pornography attracts prostitutes, drug dealers and criminals to local pornographic outlets.
6. Minister to and help families and individuals to develop healthy attitudes and to resist the presence of all pornographic materials.
7. Call on local and state law enforcement officials to take strong actions to eradicate the scourge of pornography.

PUBLIC EDUCATION 1990

Education is a crucial concern for all citizens of a free society. This is particularly true of education in America today. Education stands at a very decisive crossroad. The conflict between traditional and secular values, between opposing theories of thought and the completion of public social policy in the school systems are but a few of the concerns.

West Virginia is not immune from these concerns about public education. In fact, West Virginians are concerned about this and more. With the economic order as it is there is a crisis in funding adequate education for all our children. There is increasing legislative directive and a diminishing financial base.

American Baptists have traditionally had a strong commitment to education and particularly to public education.

Therefore, be it resolved:

1. That the West Virginia Baptists reaffirm our strong and historic commitment to public education.
2. That all West Virginia Baptists become fully informed and fully participate in the decision-making processes regarding public education.
3. That gifted West Virginia Baptists become involved by seeking school board membership.
4. That West Virginia Baptists call upon our state legislators to provide necessary funding to support excellence in the classroom. This includes providing salaries commensurate with teacher qualifications and performance as an indication of their importance to our society.
5. That West Virginia Baptists call upon our state legislators and the state education department to return more decision making authority to the local school boards, administrators and teachers.

RACE RELATIONS 1968

We recommend that our churches support positive efforts to correct racial or ethnic discrimination in our society. We urge that such discrimination be exposed as a flagrant contradiction to the ideal of democracy and as a threat to the unity of our nation. We believe that discrimination against any person denies the Christian affirmation that all men are created by God with equal rights and thereby are worthy of respect. Since God in Christ is seeking to reconcile all men to Him, we believe that we are to be reconciled to one another.

RAISING THE DRINKING AGE TO 21 1985

Alcoholism is the third largest health problem in the United States today. Alcohol related death is the leading killer among young people between the ages of 18 and 21.

1. Physically-Alcoholic beverages impair reflexes and lower resistance to infection.
2. Emotional-Alcoholic beverages interfere with emotional growth and development.
3. Behavioral-Alcoholic beverages cause one to over react.
4. Academic-Teens, who use alcoholic beverages, tend to have a higher rate of absenteeism from school. The dropout rate for teenagers, who use alcohol, is higher than the average student.
5. Legal-The crime rate is higher among teens who use alcohol.
6. Moral-The use of alcohol impairs judgment, which can often result in unwanted pregnancies and other injudicious acts.

Therefore, Be It Resolved:

1. That the West Virginia Baptist Convention go on record as supporting legislation which would raise the drinking age to 21.
2. That we encourage our constituency to communicate our concern to our legislators.
3. That we urge more strict sentencing and control of those convicted of driving under the influence of alcohol and other drugs.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY 1986

Unemployment has become a serious problem for many in West Virginia with the level of unemployment among the highest in the nation.

While we are aware that the church does not act as an employment agency, we recognize the problems of living without the dignity of employment and the inability of supporting a person's own self and loved ones. We are also aware that unemployment and poverty contribute to a person's feeling of lack of self-worth.

We further urge each church to be aware of those within its congregation, who may be without financial support, by helping to secure employment (if only temporary), trying to understand the emotional problems involved, and by prayers.

UNWED TEENAGE PARENTS 1986

God established the institution of marriage and the home in the Old Testament for the welfare of men and women as well as for the increase of the human race (Genesis 1:28, 2:18, and 9:1, Ephesians 6). The New Testament strongly reinforces this viewpoint in Ephesians 5 and 6, and other passages.

Inasmuch as marriage and the home are a sacred trust from God;

Inasmuch as the West Virginia Department of Health report that 10% of all babies born in West Virginia during 1991 were to unwed teenagers, up 7.3% from 1985; and

Inasmuch as an unwed teenage mother, who does not continue her education, is likely to have a second child out of wedlock, and

Inasmuch as a lack of education will increase the chances of mother and child being destined to a life of poverty,

We urge each church in the West Virginia Baptist Convention to set up programs of sexuality for girls, boys, and their parents, making such programs available to the community in a Christian context. Many Church memberships include medical doctors, nurses, school health personnel and counselors. Panels can make interesting presentations. Slides and films are excellent teaching tools and small discussion groups can follow up on these presentations. Our youth, the most valuable possession with which we are entrusted, deserve our best efforts.

WORLD HUNGER: ROLE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH AND CHURCH MEMBER 1979

Whereas, more than 25% of the world's four billion people know the gnawing pain of hunger day after day, and many with swollen abdomens die of starvation every day;

Whereas, the typical person of the affluent segment of our country already overweight, gorges daily in food and drinks some 25% more than needed for adequate nutrition;

Whereas, such over-indulgence results in gastric illness, groggy mind, obesity, shortness of breath, heart attacks, strokes and earlier death, to our shame; and

Whereas, our over-indulgence and waste take food from the mouths of the impoverished, and tend to fuel inflation in the cost of food and drink, with additional secondary increased costs in clothes, insurance and medical attention:

Therefore, be it resolved that we affirm the following ways to express our concern, as delegates of the local churches of the West Virginia Baptist Convention and as individual church members: that we will consecrate ourselves to the ideal of moderation and conservation (1) in food to serve our plates with no more than we need, (2) in our concern for the impoverished to support agencies that provide for them, and (3) to support programs such as the One Great Hour of Sharing. We make this resolve to the end of helping to conserve and provide food to the poor, to reduce our family budget, and to increase our own well-being, and to make a positive contribution to the well-being of our individual families, our local communities, and other communities afar off, (4) encourage the formation of study groups on hunger in local churches, to provide the opportunity for sharing of information by the interchange of ideas and insights.

OTHER

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA - 1985

We affirm the foundational and traditional acceptance and use of God as Supreme Being in all Scout oaths, literature and programs. We also affirm their God-centered values.

We reject any consideration or practice that would remove God from the Scout oaths, literature and programs.

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA - 2001

Be it resolved that the delegates of the churches of the West Virginia Baptist Convention, in agreement with the American Baptist Churches, USA resolution stating, "We affirm that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching," do hereby commend the Boy Scouts of

America for refusing to allow avowed homosexual members and leaders in their organization. We call upon all individuals and Christian churches to support the Boy Scouts of America in this important moral issue.

COOPERATION WITH OTHER CHRISTIAN GROUPS 1968

We recognize the freedom of our churches to choose whether or not they wish to consider themselves affiliated through our denomination with the National Council of Churches and the West Virginia Council of Churches, and recommend continued freedom in this area.

CONVENTION ACTION: 1977 - "That the West Virginia Baptist Convention go on record this day as opposed to the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches."

COOPERATIVE CHRISTIANITY 1968

Other Baptists and Baptist World Alliances.

We recognize our kinship with another/other like Baptist groups which are a part of the larger fellowship of Baptists who are evangelical and missionary in outlook. We urge that the General Board of the American Baptist Churches/USA develop closer ties with these Baptist groups which would hopefully lead to cooperative efforts of service for Jesus Christ and His Kingdom.

Further, we urge that conversations be held between our American Baptist leadership and with the leadership of other Baptist groups of like faith with the goal of union into one body.

We further encourage our West Virginia Baptist Convention leadership to do all in its power to develop a closer relationship with all other Baptist groups in our state of West Virginia, and whenever or wherever possible and advisable enter into cooperative efforts of Christian service.

We further urge churches to become more familiar with the Baptist World Alliance which provides a means of cooperation among Baptists on a global basis and encourages Baptist minorities in other countries.

CULTS 1979

Whereas, many groups using Christian terminology and distorted interpretations of Scripture, have lured persons with an inadequate church education into submission to the demands of cultist leaders;

Whereas, many organizations have outgrown the cult or sect label and occupy a position of respect as a variant of Christianity, while denying basic Christian doctrine;

Whereas, in the wake of the mass suicide in Guyana and revelations of techniques of mind control used by some groups, many Americans are concerned with the inroads upon the religious scene made by cults, sects, and Eastern religions;

Whereas, many are now calling for full governmental investigation into the finances and practices of religious groups, without regard for the preservation of the liberties guaranteed under the first amendment of the U.S. Constitution;

Whereas, Baptists have always stood for the principle of the separation of church and state, but are, nonetheless, concerned about the turmoil caused by the proliferation of cults; and

Whereas, Baptists have as a fundamental tenet of their theology and concept of the freedom of conscience in matters of man's relationship to God:

Therefore, be it resolved that the local churches of the West Virginia Baptist Convention be urged to undertake a program of educating congregation and community as to the actual theology, aims, programs, and methodology of variant religious groups on the present American scene, emphasizing the doctrine, practice and polity of American Baptists, in order that the choice implicit in freedom of conscience may be based upon factual knowledge; and

Be it further resolved that the West Virginia Baptist Convention be supportive of the local churches in such an educational effort.

HEALTH CARE 1989

Health care in America today is the best known in the history of mankind. Equal health care in America today presents the greatest challenge ever known to mankind. Technology has enabled the blind to see, the lame to walk, the previously incurable, whole. In addition, this same medical technology has prolonged the vegetative state, escalated medical care costs and made health insurance beyond the reach of many. While the survival rate from diseases like cancer is the highest ever, the poor still die at the same rate of 10 years ago. While advanced medical care is available in the major medical centers, many of our small communities are without adequate medical care. When it is necessary to travel a distance for medical care, patients and their families are either forced to endure additional expenses for housing or to be away from one another. While there is more sophisticated technology for blood work than ever before, there is increased fear of contamination of the blood supply.

In face of these many challenges we call upon the churches of the West Virginia Baptist Convention to:

1. Seriously study the issues of life and death and medical care from the perspective of our theology.
2. Work to insure that medical care is available to all persons.
3. Join with groups active in recruiting medical personnel, particularly to serve the small communities of our state.
4. Provide transportation for those unable otherwise to meet medical appointments or treatment.
5. Support and seek for the expansion of the Project Good Samaritan.
6. Take part in volunteer blood donor programs and consider the establishment of a "Walking Blood Bank" program.
7. Make available the use of church buildings for health clinics, such as Child Health, Mental Health, High Blood Pressure screening, Glaucoma Screening, Blood Collection, Adult Day Care, etc.
8. Encourage all members to consider a "Living Will."
9. Advocate and work towards the establishment of Pastoral Care Departments in every hospital.
10. Support and encourage the work of local hospices.

11. Work to enable our members to better understand their responsibilities and choices in regard to the care of loved ones who are terminally ill.

HEALTH CARE DELIVERY SYSTEMS 1975

Many areas of West Virginia are identified as Medical Manpower Scarcity areas in a 1974 report by HEW. These areas are sometimes lacking in health care facilities, medical manpower, and emergency treatment centers. West Virginia Baptists, as individuals, are urged to take part in the following projects as they apply to their own area, talents, and abilities as a part of their service in following Jesus Christ, Who is known as the Great Physician:

- A. Study, explore and work for plans to bring adequate health care to all persons, including the indigent.
- B. Join with groups active in recruiting medical manpower.
- C. Assist in the raising of funds for expansion of medical/health facilities and participating in volunteer services.
- D. Provide transportation for those unable otherwise to get to medical appointments or treatments.
- E. Take part in a volunteer blood donor program as donor and/or volunteer worker.
- F. Work to establish a Volunteer Ambulance Service and participate as a trained Emergency Medical Technician, dispatcher, or other worker.

West Virginia Baptists, as congregations, are asked to consider and act upon the following suggestions for participation in meeting community health needs:

- A. Conduct or cooperate in a study of the local health care delivery system (including medical manpower, hospital bedspace and nursing care, in-home care for invalids, public health and preventive medicine, emergency treatment and transportation, nursing and convalescent homes, etc.) to identify areas of inadequate services and facilities.
- B. Explore the possibility of the use of church buildings for health clinics, such as Child Health, Family Planning, Mental Health, High Blood Pressure, Glaucoma Screening, Blood Collection Days, etc.
- C. Examine the need for a congregational blood donor group to meet the needs of members (20% donor participation is usually required for 100% coverage of blood needs).

JUDICIAL COMMUNICATIONS 1971

Whereas, a minister is expected by some in his parish to receive confidential information, we believe that a minister must have judicial immunity to fulfill his call professionally. We, therefore, call upon our legislators to enact legislation to protect clergymen of all faiths from testifying before a jury concerning information received in spiritual counsel.

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