

**THE COVENANT OF RELATIONSHIPS
AND ITS AGREEMENTS
AMONG
THE GENERAL, NATIONAL, AND REGIONAL BOARDS
OF THE
AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES**

This document contains the “Covenant of Relationships” and the related “Statements of Agreement” referred to in Article VIII, Section 1 of the Revised By-laws of American Baptist Churches in the USA

Published by the
Office of the General Secretary
American Baptist Churches in the USA
Valley Forge, PA

June 24, 1984

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I.

**The Biblical Expectation
To be in Covenant with God
And with Each Other**

Baptist have always been a covenanting people -- a people related to God through faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who has established our relationship in His free and full self-giving in the eternal Covenant. American Baptists have affirmed and reaffirmed "faith in the New Testament as a divinely inspired record and therefore a trustworthy, authoritative and all-sufficient rule of our faith and practice." This affirmation leads us to recognize our covenantal relationships with God and one another.

The love of God for His people has been manifested in repeated covenantal relationships, which were climaxed in the Word becoming flesh, inasmuch as covenantal language could not adequately express this divine-human relationship.

Baptist congregations were initially formed by covenanting with God and each other to walk together in all the ways which He would make known to them. Moreover, Baptist history is replete with mutually developed and voluntarily accepted covenants.

It is appropriate, therefore, that American Baptists join together in local congregations and in denominational organizations by way of covenant in order to accomplish common purposes related to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Believing that the strength of our fellowship lies in unity achieved through voluntary cooperation, the General, National, and Regional Boards of the American Baptist Churches enter into a Covenant of Relationships.

We mutually pledge to support one another in determining, assigning, implementing, and evaluating the ministries of our respective organizations. We find God's will in local congregations and in associational, regional, national and world bodies as we receive from one another mutual counsel and correction within Covenant.

While affirming our belief in the independence of the local church, and in the advisory nature of all denominational organizations composed of representatives of churches, we enter into covenant as a means of implementing the purpose of American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. We thereby affirm the unity of the mission to which we have been called by our Lord and our intention that all levels of this mission be adequately and effectively implemented.

II.

**Assumptions Underlying
Denominational Relationships**

The parties to the Covenant acknowledge the validity of the following assumptions as they relate to American Baptist denominational life:

A. Biblical and Theological Assumptions:

1. The Church is all the people of God who have committed themselves to live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
2. While the primary expression of the Church is the local congregation, the Church is also expressed in groupings of interdependent congregations in associations, regional units, or national bodies.
3. A local congregation, in order to be a faithful witness to the gospel and to the universality of the Church, should covenant with other like-minded congregations regarding cooperative mission and interdependence within the Body of Christ (that is, acknowledge the appropriate limits to its legitimate independence).
4. A local congregation, as a company of believers covenanting together to maintain a worshiping, caring, and witnessing fellowship in the name of Jesus Christ, is endowed by the Holy Spirit and is free and capable of ordering its inner life, for example: (a) determining its membership, (b) maintaining a disciplined life, (c) selecting its officers, (d) determining the nature of its relationships with other congregations and/or ecclesiastical bodies, and (e) determining its own confessional position.
5. Broader expressions or manifestations of the Church (associational, cluster, area, regional, national, international, denominational, and interdenominational) have and demonstrate churchly characteristics.
6. The freedom of the congregation is genuine, but not absolute, since the nature of the body of Christ calls for interdependence between congregations whether in associational, regional, national, denomination-wide, or international expressions of the Church.
7. Self-government under the Lordship of Jesus Christ must be balanced by an affirmation of the biblical imperative for Christian unity.
8. Essential marks of the church include being a: (a) worshiping community, (b) fellowship of regenerate believers, (c) caring, supportive Christian community, (d) an agent for proclaiming the gospel and being involved in God's mission in the world, and (e) an inclusive fellowship that transcends all discrimination on the basis of race, sex, ethnic background, social position or economic status.
9. Local congregations covenant together to form broader manifestations of the Church of Jesus Christ in order to carry out his mission.
10. Broader manifestations of the Church should strengthen local congregations in their fidelity to the gospel and in evidencing the essential marks of the Church.
11. The broader expressions of the Church, being manifestations of the Body of Christ, are also led by the Holy Spirit to discover the mind of Christ.
12. Expressions of the Church beyond local congregations can themselves, with their constituencies' consent, form or cause to be created additional expressions or manifestations of the Universal Church.

B. Organizational and Operational Assumptions

1. American Baptists comprise a diverse denomination committed to a common purpose and mission.
2. American Baptist Churches, in its several expressions, has a unique role to play within the Body of Christ.
3. Local congregations are the constituency both of the ABC and of the Region/State/City corporations.
4. A free flow of communication is necessary among the various expressions of denominational life.
5. The General and Regional Boards have clear accountabilities to establish direct communications with their constituent congregations, to exercise their legitimate responsibilities within American Baptist polity.
6. In the representative system, representation flows from, not toward, the "grass roots." The local congregation is represented at the Region/State/City and ABC levels, but the ABC and the Regions/State/Cities are not represented on the boards of the local congregations.
7. The choice of the representative is that of the group that is being represented within limitations specified in the by-laws of organizations where the representative will serve.
8. It is important for denominational structure and methodology to be flexible.
9. Effective participation in decision-making processes includes both those whose role and knowledge are most nearly related to the decision and those whose support is most essential to its implementation.
10. Constituency response will increase as mission, program, and administration are carried out at the local level.
11. Denominational structures are established to facilitate dialogue, debate, and even dissent in dealing openly with our disagreements.
12. American Baptists affirm the right and ability of persons or organizations to disagree without fracturing the life of the family.
13. Regular review and renewal of agreements enhance dynamic and mature denominational relationships.

III.

**The Covenanting Parties and
Their Constituencies**

The bodies privileged to be parties to this Covenant are: The General Board of the American Baptist Churches, USA (ABC); the four national Related Boards of the ABC; the thirty seven boards of the Regions State Conventions and Standard City Societies (R/S/C's) currently affiliated with the ABC, and the boards of any future R/S/C units.

The constituencies of the covenanting parties are: (a) for the ABC, the American Baptist Cooperating Churches and the Regions, State Conventions, and Standard City Societies which become parties to the Covenant; (b) for each of the four ABC National Boards, the Representatives voted by Delegates from Cooperating Churches in Election District Assemblies and/or from Cooperating Churches and Regional Organizations in ABC Biennial Meetings; (c) for each Regional Organization (as well as for each Affiliating Organization), the congregations which the R/S/C has voted into fellowship as "Cooperating Churches" and Related Organizations.

IV.

Affirmation by the Covenanting Parties

The covenanting parties agree to new relationships within the denomination in order to advance our cooperative mission and support of local congregations. The nature of these relationships is set forth in certain documents:

- 1) this Covenant of Relationships and its Agreements
- 2) Together in Mission (The SCOR Report)
- 3) Revised By-laws of the ABC (San Diego, CA; June 1977)

The provisions stated in these documents are basic to the intent of this Covenant of Relationships.

V.

The Process for Amending the Covenant

Any covenanting party, following formal action at a scheduled or duly called board meeting, may ask the other parties to consider a proposed amendment to the Covenant. At such time as one-third (1/3) of the parties then in covenant shall have taken formal action to become co-sponsors of the proposed amendment, the initiating party may present a petition, listing the co-sponsors, to the General Staff Council.

If the General Staff Council, after discussing the amendment, gives it a two-thirds (2/3) affirming vote, the Council will offer the amendment to the General Board. The General Board, after review and a two-thirds (2/3) affirming vote, shall: 1) present the amendment simultaneously to the National and Regional Organizations, asking them to vote on the amendment within the next nine months; or, 2) return the amendment to the General Staff Council for further work.

If two-thirds (2/3) of the voting National and Regional Organizations affirm the proposed amendment, it shall become effective on January 1 of the following year.

VI.

The Process for Withdrawing from the Covenant

Any covenanting party, at a scheduled or duly called board meeting, may withdraw the corporation and its board from its covenantal relationship with the other parties to the Covenant, as of the time of the next ABC Biennial Meeting.

The decision to withdraw from the Covenant shall be communicated to the General Board, with a request that the General Board notify all covenanting parties.

VII.

Commitment to Covenant

The following parties voluntarily enter into the Covenant of Relationships and its Agreements, affirming its spirit and agreeing to fulfill its provisions.

On authority granted by the Board of

President

Date

Executive Director/Minister

On authority granted by the General Board

President

Date

General Secretary

VIII.

Agreements

1.

Agreement Regarding "Together in Mission"

The covenanting parties agree that "Together in Mission" (dated December 9, 1976)* states the fundamental provisions for relating the Regions, State Conventions, and Standard City Societies with the American Baptist Churches in the USA in an organizational structure which serves the needs of American Baptists in national, regional and local expressions of our Denomination's life and work.

* A copy may be secured by writing to the Office of the General Secretary, American Baptist Churches, Valley Forge, PA 19481.

September 26, 1977
Corrected April 20, 1978

2.

Agreements Regarding the
Revised By-Laws of the ABC

The covenanting parties agree that the Revised By-laws of the American Baptist Churches, USA

(which Delegates to the 1977 Biennial Meeting approved contingent upon the adoption of the SCOR Report by two-thirds of the Regions, State Conventions, Standard City Societies on or before October 31, 1978)*:

- (1) appropriately deal with the natures, roles, functions, and relationships of: the American Baptist Churches, its National organizations, its Regional Organizations and its Affiliating Organizations, and
- (2) accurately express the American Baptist denominational patterns within which these Organizations pledge themselves to operate to achieve the Purpose and related goals of the ABC.

*This parenthetical statement may be deleted after the two-thirds action.

September 26, 1977

3.

Agreements Regarding

Adjudication of Differences

The covenanting parties agree that whenever two or more of them differ on any matter and are unable to resolve their differences through discussion, any one of the parties involved may initiate Adjudication by sending a written request thereof to the General Secretary. The General Secretary shall nominate to the differing parties an Adjudicator, usually the General Board Executive Committee. If the General Board is one of the differing parties, the General Staff Council Executive Committee shall nominate an Adjudicator.

When the differing parties have accepted an Adjudicator, they shall each state the difference in writing to the Adjudicator and appoint one person to participate with the Adjudicator in the Adjudication without vote. The General Secretary shall participate in the Adjudication, without vote.

The Adjudicator, as deemed necessary by the circumstances, shall:

1. Meet individually with each of the differing parties in any one or combination of modes:

The Adjudicator may meet with:

- a) The Chief Executive Officer;
- b) The Chief Executive Officer and the Executive Committee;
- c) The President;
- d) The President and the Executive Committee;

2. Meet jointly with the differing parties, in any one or combination of modes:

The Adjudicator may meet with:

- a) The Chief Executive Officers;
- b) The Presidents;
- c) The Chief Executive Officers and President together;
- d) The Chief Executive Officers, President, and up to three lay members from each of their Executive Committees;

3. Be a fair and impartial person or group who will hear the evidence from both sides and will reach a determination which is intended to be conciliatory and just.
4. Report in writing to all parties and to the General Secretary the adjudicated conclusions reached in "(3)," above.

The decision of the Adjudicator shall be final.

September 26, 1977

4.

Agreements Regarding
Ratification of Decisions

The General Board shall have no authority to take any of the following actions unless the proposed action is ratified by two-thirds of the Regional Boards voting on such action and two-thirds of the votes cast by the Delegates in Biennial Meeting.

- a) to propose to the Representatives a plan of merger of the Denomination or the ABC with or into any other religious body or corporation;
- b) to propose to the Representatives any amendment to the Statement of Purpose of the ABC, or to the corporate objects or purposes of the ABC as stated in its Act of Incorporation; and
- c) to change the “free church” polity of the Denomination.

The General Board at its discretion may submit any other proposed General Board action to ratification by the Regional Boards and the Delegates in Biennial Meeting.

The General Board shall have no authority to authorize a Denomination-wide capital funds campaign unless the proposed action is ratified by two-thirds of the Regional Boards voting on such action.

The General Board at its discretion may submit any other proposed General Board action to ratification by the Regional Boards.

September 26, 1977

5.

Agreements Regarding
Responsibilities of the General Board

The covenanting parties agree that, as provided in the SCOR Report, the General Board shall:

- *1. Adopt common criteria for a “Cooperating Church”;

2. Upon report that a Regional Board has either denied or not acted upon the application of a local church to be a Cooperating Church, decide whether to receive the church as a Cooperating Church of the ABC (but not of the R/S/C), according to the common criteria for a Cooperating Church;
- *3. Periodically review the Covenant of Relationships and Statements of Agreement;
- *4. Determine boundaries of, and the number of churches within each Election District;
5. Act upon plans for grouping Cooperating Churches into Election Districts;
- *6. Adopt criteria and guidelines for Election District procedures;
7. Determine policy in the areas of program assignment, planning, coordination and evaluation;
8. Determine and assign ABC functions; state expectations for each;
9. Set policies and criteria for evaluating the performance of assigned functions, in terms of the expectations it states with each assignment;
10. Adopt ABC Policy Statements;
11. Receive and adopt or return ABC Policy Statements recommended to it;
12. Consider requests to develop, amend, or rescind an ABC Policy Statement or an ABC Resolution;
13. Adopt ABC resolutions by concurring with such Resolutions as are adopted and recommended to it by a National or Regional board;
14. Adopt such ABC Resolutions as are non-programmatic or pan-board in scope;
- *15. Implement ABC Policy Statements and ABC Resolutions within the area of its denominational functions;

* Also a responsibility of another board

16. Provide staff for coordinating of the implementation of ABC Policy Statements and ABC Resolutions;
17. Establish policies and criteria for the review of the ABC Policy Statements and ABC Resolutions;
18. Establish policies and criteria to guide the implementation of ABC Policy Statements and ABC Resolutions;
- *19. Provide denominational Mission Support functions;

- *20. Determine and adopt, in accord with the ABC Planning Policy, common goals and objectives for the denomination;
- 21. Establish ABC standards for professional church leadership, on recommendation of the Commission on the Ministry;
- 22. Decide ABC memberships in national and international religious bodies;
- 23. Elect the General Secretary and the four National Secretaries as officers of the ABC;
- 24. Appraise the work of the General Secretary at least every four (4) years;
- *25. Set policies to appraise the performance of the ABC Secretaries;
- *26. Assess public statements of its staff.

* Also a responsibility of another board

September 26, 1977

6.

Agreements Regarding
Denominational Responsibilities of National Boards

The covenanting parties agree that as provided in the SCOR Report, the National Boards shall:

- *1. Periodically review the Covenant of Relationships and Statements of Agreement;
- *2. Accept present activities as functions currently assigned by the General Board;
- *3. Implement the ABC functions the General Board assigns to them in accord with the denomination's planning policy and General Board expectations;
- *4. Design, carry out, and report to the General Board its implementation of the denominational functions assigned to them;
- *5. Develop and recommend ABC Policy Statements for General Board action, on their own initiative or by General Board request;
- 6. Recommend that the General Board develop, amend, or rescind ABC Policy Statements or ABC Resolutions;
- *7. Develop and adopt Resolutions on their own initiative or by General Board request; recommend to the General Board that it adopt them as ABC Resolutions;
- 8. Develop and adopt National Resolutions based on ABC Policy Statements within their assigned functions;
- *9. Implement ABC Policy Statements and ABC Resolutions within the areas of their assigned functions, subject to General Board review;
- *10. Determine and adopt common goals and objectives for the denomination, in accord with the ABC Planning Policy;
- *11. Determine and adopt particular goals and objectives;
- *12. Assess public statements of its staff.

* Also a responsibility of another board

September 26, 1977

7.

Agreements Regarding
Denominational Responsibilities of Regional Boards

The covenanting parties agree that, as provided in the SCOR Report, the Regional Board shall:

- *1. Adopt common criteria for a "Cooperating Church";
2. Receive and dismiss local congregations as Cooperating Churches of the R/S/C and of the ABC, according to the common criteria for a Cooperating Church;
3. After receiving a local church's application to be a Cooperating Church, begin action within six (6) months and act within one (1) year of the receipt of the application; report the decisions to the General Board. Send the application to the General Board if there is no action in one (1) year;
4. Endeavor to develop a covenantal relationship with its Cooperating Churches;
- *5. Periodically review the Covenant of Relationships and Statements of Agreement;
6. Have authority to elect Delegates to the ABC Biennial Meeting;
7. Administer Election District procedures to elect Representatives;
- *8. Develop a plan for grouping Cooperating Churches into Election Districts, determining the boundaries of each district so all districts contain approximately the same number of Delegates; present the plan to the credentials and caucus committee of the General Board;
- *9. Adopt criteria and guidelines for Election District procedures;
10. Provide staff for Election Districts;
11. Name one member of an Election District's Nominating Committee;
12. Name Election District Representatives as members or observers of their Boards;
- *13. Accept present activities and functions currently assigned by the General Board;
- *14. Implement the ABC functions the General Board assigns to them in accord with the Denomination's planning policy and General Board expectations;
- *15. Design, carry out, and report to the General Board its implementation of the denominational functions assigned to them;

* Also a responsibility of another Board

- *16. Develop and recommend ABC Policy Statements for General Board action, on their own initiative or by General Board request;
- *17. Recommend that the General Board develop, amend, or rescind an ABC Policy Statement or an ABC Resolution;
- *18. Develop and adopt Resolutions on their initiative or by General Board request; recommend to the General Board that it adopt them as ABC Resolutions;
- 19. Develop and adopt Regional Resolutions based on ABC Policy Statements within their defined functions and geographical areas;
- *20. Implement ABC Policy Statements and ABC Resolutions within the areas of their assigned functions, subject to General Board reviews;
- *21. Cooperate with the General Board in providing denominational Mission Support functions;
- *22. Determine and adopt common goals and objectives for the Denomination, in accord with the ABC Planning Policy;
- *23. Determine and adopt particular goals and objectives;
- 24. Represent the ABC within its geographical boundaries;
- *25. Assess public statements of its staff.

* Also a responsibility of another board

September 26, 1977

8.

Agreements Regarding
Inherent Responsibilities of Regional Boards

The covenanting parties agree that as provided in the SCOR Report, the boards of the Regions, State Conventions, and Standard City Societies shall:

1. Determine their corporate identity, representative process, and decision making procedures;
2. Determine their Regional functions, programs, and projects;
3. Evaluate their Regional functions, programs, and projects in accord with their planning policies;
4. Develop and adopt resolutions appropriate to their geographical areas;
5. Determine their R/S/C memberships in regional religious bodies.

September 26, 1977
June 24, 1984

9.

Agreements Regarding

Denominational Functions of General,
National, and Regional Boards

The covenanting parties agree that denominational functions of General, National, and Regional Boards shall be determined and designated by the General Board in accord with:

1. Agreement #5 of the Covenant of Relationships (regarding the responsibilities of the General Board),
2. Charter and By-law provisions of the General, National, and Regional Boards,
3. Understandings described in the paper, "Autonomy and Interdependence within the American Baptist Denomination: a Declaration," adopted by the General Board, December, 1983,
4. Denominational goals and objectives established by a process in which the covenanting parties participate.

The covenanting parties agree that denominational functions of the **General Board** shall, as described in the By-laws of the ABC, include

- a) setting policy in the areas of program functions, planning, coordination and evaluation (Art. X, Section 4b);
- b) adopting, with the National and Regional Boards, common goals for the denomination (Ibid.);
- c) determining and designating denominational functions for itself, for National Boards, for Regional Boards, stating its expectations for each such function (Art. X, Sec. 4g);
- d) engaging if and as required in an adjudication to resolve any differences which may arise with regard to any designated function (Art. XVIII, Sec. 11);
- e) setting policies and criteria for evaluating the performance of denominational functions in light of the stated expectations (Art. X, Sec. 4h);
- f) adopting procedures and processes related to referenda of the Constituencies of the denomination (Art. X, Sec. 4m);
- g) submitting specific and other proposed actions for ratification by Regional Boards (Art. X, Sec. 5 & 6).

The Covenanting parties agree that **Regional Board** functions shall, as described in the By-laws of the ABC, include

- i) voting in a ratification process on any plan of merger of the denomination with any other religious body or corporation (Art. X, Sec. 5a);
- ii) voting in a ratification process on any proposal to recommend to the Representatives any amendment to the Statement of Purpose of the ABC, or to the corporate objects or purposes of the ABC (Ibid. Sec. 5b);
- iii) voting in a ratification process on any change in the "free church" polity of the denomination (Ibid. Sec. 5c);

- iv) voting in a ratification process on authorizing any denomination-wide capital funds campaign (Art. X, Sec. 6);
- v) engaging if and as required in an adjudication to resolve any differences which may arise with regard to any denominational function designated by the General Board (Art. XVIII, Sec. 11);
- vi) implementing denominational functions in accord with denominational planning policy, the General Board's stated expectations, and the relevant corporate charter (Art. VI, Sec. 3);
- vii) designing, carrying out, and reporting to the General Board on programs and projects related to designated functions (Ibid.).

The covenanting parties agree that **National Board** functions shall, as described in the By-laws of the ABC, include

- I) receiving national program functions of the denomination as designated by the General Board (Art. XIII, Sec. 1 & 6);
- II) engaging if and as required in an adjudication to resolve any differences which may arise with regard to any denominational function designated by the General Board (Art. XVIII, Sec. 11);
- III) implementing denominational functions in accord with denominational planning policy, the General Board's stated expectations, and the relevant corporate charter(s) (Art. XIII, Sec. 6);
- IV) designing, carrying out, and reporting to the General Board on programs and projects related to designated functions (Ibid.).

June 24, 1984

10.

Agreements Regarding
The Accountability of Representatives and Officers

The covenanting parties agree that each Representative elected by an Election District Assembly administered by the Executive Minister of a Regional Organization is, at one and the same time, a Representative of the Cooperating Churches located within that Election District and of the Regional Corporation in whose boundaries the Election District is located.

Each Representative of an Election District administered by the General Secretary (that is located within the geographical area of an Affiliating Organization) is a Representative of the Cooperating Churches located within that Election District.

Each Representative elected by Delegates assembled in a Biennial Meeting of the ABC shall be accountable to those Delegates (and to the Cooperating Churches and Regional Organizations which sent them as Delegates to that Biennial Meeting).

The elected officers of covenanting parties shall be accountable to their corporate by-laws.

September 26, 1977

11.

Agreements Regarding

Secretaries of the ABC

The covenanting parties agree that the Denominational Secretaries shall be the General Secretary, the National Secretaries, the Regional Secretaries, and such Associate National, Associate General, or Assistant General Secretaries as may be appointed. Secretaries, individually or as a group, shall report to the General Board through the General Secretary.

The covenanting parties further agree that, as provided in the SCOR Report, Secretaries shall carry the following responsibilities:

General Secretary. The General Secretary shall:

1. Be the chief administrative officer of the ABC;
2. Coordinate the implementation of American Baptist Policy Statements and Resolutions;
3. Implement General Board policy decisions;
4. Be a member of the National Executive Council, the Regional Executive Ministers Council, and the General Staff Council;
5. Provide staff services for Biennial Meetings and meetings of Representatives, for the General Board, and for committees, commissions, and councils of the ABC and of the General Board;
6. Organize the Office of the General Secretary in consultation with the Executive Committee and supervise the work of its staff;
7. Have such other duties as may be assigned by the General Board.

National Secretaries. National Secretaries shall:

1. Be the Executive Director of a National Board;
2. Implement American Baptist Policy Statements and Resolutions in areas related to the work of their respective corporation;
3. Be corporate officers of the ABC;
4. Implement the National Resolutions and policy decisions of their respective National Boards;
5. Be members of the National Executive Council and the General Staff Council;
6. Have such other duties as may be assigned by the General Board.

In consultation with the appropriate National Board, the General Secretary shall evaluate the work of each National Secretary at least every four (4) years.

In consultation with the General Secretary, each National Secretary may appoint, from among the staff of the appropriate National Board, one Associate National Secretary to be a member of the General Staff Council.

Regional Secretaries. Executive Ministers of Covenanting R/S/C's shall be Regional Secretaries who shall:

1. Implement the Denominational functions assigned to their Regional Board by the General Board;
2. Implement American Baptist Policy Statements and Resolutions in areas related to the work of their respective corporation;
3. Administer and provide staff services for the work of Election Districts located within the areas of their respective Regional Organization;
4. Be members of the Regional Executive Ministers Council and the General Staff Council;
5. Have such other duties as may be assigned by the General Board with the concurrence of the Regional Board.

September 26, 1977

12.

Agreements Regarding
The Selection Process for Executive Ministers

The covenanting parties agree that Regional Organizations shall involve the General Secretary in the process of selecting an Executive Minister. The General Secretary shall staff the Region/State/City Search Committee, providing services similar to those given a local congregation's pulpit committee by the R/S/C Executive Minister and/or Area Minister.

The General Secretary shall:

1. Be a non-voting participant with the Region/State/City Search Committee;
2. Provide information and assist the Committee to seek a person with the qualities and experiences needed for the dual roles of the Executive Minister of the R/S/C and Regional Secretary of the ABC;
3. Attend and participate in the initial meeting of the Committee; with the Search Committee, agree on an appropriate deputy to staff the remaining meetings;
4. Present general guidelines for search committees, helping the Committee to use such guidelines in developing its own objectives, guidelines, and processes;
5. Help the Committee develop forms for gathering R/S/C self study information and for securing reference information about candidates;
6. Assist the Committee to develop interview questions for prospective candidates;
7. Through the American Baptist Personnel Services and other sources, provide profiles for each person the Committee decides to consider;
8. Process candidates' expense reports so that the Committee may protect their confidentiality; submit one bill for such expenses;
9. Assist the Committee in evaluating the information secured from self study and candidate interviews;
10. Help the Committee decide whether to interview or to nominate a candidate for Executive Minister;
11. Assist the Committee to prepare its nomination report and to present its recommendation;
12. Assist the Committee to evaluate the materials and processes it used and the staff services it received.

September 26, 1977

13.

Agreements Regarding
The Appraisal Process for Executive Ministers

The covenanting parties agree that Regional Boards shall appraise the work of their Executive Ministers, in consultation with the General Secretary, at least every four (4) years.

The General Secretary shall staff the Appraisal Committee by:

1. Helping it develop the process and instrument(s) to be used in the appraisals;

2. Assisting it to appraise the work of the Executive Minister;
3. Sharing with it the General Secretary's perception of the Executive Minister's service as a Regional Secretary of the ABC.

The Appraisal Committee shall:

1. Determine the process and instrument(s) to use;
2. Give the person being appraised an opportunity to complete a copy of the instrument;
3. Use the instrument to gather data from key persons;
4. Send all completed copies of the instrument to one person, who shall prepare a composite appraisal and distribute it to the Committee, along with a copy of the Executive Minister's self-appraisal;
5. Confer with the Executive Minister;
6. Prepare an appraisal report on the person, including both affirmation and recommendations for change, concerning the person's service and capacity as Executive Minister and as Regional Secretary;
7. Provide a copy of the report to the Executive Minister;
8. Make every effort to reach common agreement on the report;
9. Submit the report to the Executive Committee or the Board of the Regional Organization; with a copy of the written report to the confidential files of the Regional Organization, to the Executive Minister, and to the General Secretary.

The appraisal, while not directly affecting the salary of the person appraised, should be shared with the group that recommends merit and other increases in salaries for consideration in its decision process. It is assumed that the Regional Organization would provide sufficient time for the person to make those changes, if any, that are recommended.

September 26, 1977

14.

Agreements Regarding the Common Budget Covenant

The covenanting parties recognize that the Common Budget Covenant Among the American Baptist Churches in the USA, Its Related Corporations and Its Affiliated Organizations,* adopted in 1976 and implemented January 1, 1977, governs actions and procedures related to raising, collecting, distributing, accounting for and reporting contributions of churches and individuals for carrying out the American Baptist Mission beyond the local church.

Amending the Common Budget Covenant

Parties who desire a change in the Budget Covenant shall petition the Budget Commission. The petition shall state the desired change and shall give reasons for the change. The Budget Commission shall report its recommendations to the Budget Review Committee and the General Staff Council. The Budget

Review Committee and the General Staff Council may concur, reject or take no action on the Commission's recommendations. The Committee and the Council shall report the petition with all actions and recommendations to the General Board.

If the General Board approves the amendment, it shall be sent to the other covenanting parties. All covenanting parties must approve the amendment to change the Budget Covenant.

If the General Board denies the petition for changing the Budget Covenant, the proposed amendment dies.

* A copy may be secured by the writing to the Office of the General Secretary, American Baptist Churches, Valley Forge, PA 19481.

September 26, 1977

15.

Agreement Regarding
Institutional Covenants

The covenanting parties recognize that covenantal relationships may be established between the American Baptist Churches in the USA and related institutions through appropriate covenants.* Such covenantal relationships may be requested by any covenanting board and shall be recommended by the General Staff Council to the General Board for its action.

* A model Church-Seminary Covenant may be secured by writing to the Office of the General Secretary, American Baptist Churches, Valley Forge, PA 19481.

September 26, 1977

16.

Agreements Regarding

Review of the Covenant of Relationships and
Amendment of Statements of Agreement

The covenanting parties agree that both the Covenant of Relationships and the Statements of Agreement shall, no less often than every fifth year after their coming into effect, be placed on the agenda of the General Staff Council and of the boards of the covenanting parties for "normal periodic review." Any amendments to the Covenant of Relationships shall follow the process in the Covenant.

Amendments to the Statements of Agreement may be proposed by any covenanting party. The initiating party may present a petition to the General Staff Council. Notice of the proposed modification shall be distributed to the membership at least one-hundred-twenty (120) days prior to the meeting in which the amendment is considered to allow the Executive of each covenanting party the time required to receive counsel or instructions for voting. The Statements of Agreement can be modified by three-fourths (3/4) vote of the chief executives of all covenanting parties, and the approval of the General Board.

September 26, 1977

17.

Agreement Regarding
Selection and Election of Representatives

The American Baptist Churches, USA (with the concurrence of its National Boards) and thirty-four Regions

in the ABC/USA hereby covenant to provide the process by which Representatives are nominated and elected for terms of service. One goal is to provide strong leaders who reflect the geographic, ethnic, gender, and age inclusiveness of our churches. Another goal is to provide active local church leaders familiar with the life and work of the Region and supportive of a strong interdependent denomination. Such Representatives will be available for communication with the churches of each Region.

The covenanting parties agree that each Region shall:

1. Nominate and elect Regionally Nominated Representatives (RNRs) in accordance with the apportionment and formula as defined in Article III of the ABC/USA By-laws.
2. Develop and submit to the ABC/USA Credentials and Caucus Committee a plan for the election of its RNRs which demonstrates compliance over a reasonable period of time with the following guidelines:
 - a) reflect the racial/ethnic inclusiveness of the membership of the Region's churches;
 - b) ensure fair representation of all geographic areas of the Region;
 - c) achieve specified ratios of professional church leaders (40%), lay women (30%), laymen (30%) and young (under age 35) persons (20%).
3. Collaborate with the Credentials and Caucus Committee and Office of the General Secretary concerning the design, implementation, and monitoring of such plans so that guidelines and balance for the General Board membership are met.
4. Recognize that RNRs not fulfilling the criteria established by the Region plan will not be seated as Representatives.
5. Proactively seek out and nominate potential Nationally Nominated Representatives (NNRs) from the Region who could serve on the General Board, consulting with the variety of Regional subgroups and ethnic caucuses. (Other sources shall also nominate potential candidates including Program Boards, ABC Caucuses, and individuals.)
6. Assist the ABC Nominating Committee by providing references for persons within each Region being considered as a NNR. (ABC and Regional Caucuses will also assist in such referencing.)
7. Receive nominations of NNRs from the ABC Nominating Committee and elect them at the annual or biennial meeting of the Region for appropriate terms.
8. Refrain from electing any person to serve as a Representative at the same time as any RNR or NNR from the same church.
9. Accept all Representatives (RNRs and NNRs) elected by the Region and any NNR who may move to a church within the Region as full members of the Region Board with assignments and responsibilities to be negotiated with the Region's Executive Minister and appropriate committee.
10. Assign all Representatives (RNRs and NNRs) to an equitable number of churches to communicate with and hear responses from those churches.
11. Facilitate and assist, through the office of the Region Executive Minister, communication between Representatives and their respective assigned churches of the Region.

The covenanting parties further agree that references in the Covenant of Relationships and its Agreements to "Election Districts" or to "Election District procedures" shall be deemed to refer to procedures for elections pursuant to paragraphs 1 and 7 above and that references therein to "Representatives elected by Election District Assemblies" or to "Election District Representatives" shall be deemed to refer to RNRs.

10/10/92
Rev. 6/19/94
Rev. 10/20/94