

**A Statement on Lifelong Sexual Education, Sexual & Reproductive
Rights,
and Opposing Sexual Injustice and Violence
The Gathering of the Alliance of Baptists in Austin, Texas on April 14,
2012**

The Covenant of the Alliance of Baptists supports, “Theological education in congregations, colleges, and seminaries characterized by reverence for biblical authority and respect for open inquiry and responsible scholarship” and “The proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ and the calling of God to all peoples to repentance and faith, reconciliation and hope, social and economic justice.”

Our Mission Statement states that to keep faith with our covenant we will “Create places of refuge and renewal for those who are wounded or ignored by the church,” “Side with those who are poor,” “Pursue justice with and for those who are oppressed,” and “Work for peace.”

As part of embodying our covenant, we endorse the “Religious Declaration on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing” from the Religious Institute, a multifaith organization dedicated to advocating for sexual health, education, and justice in faith communities and society

(religiousinstitute.org). More than 3,500 religious leaders from more than 50 religious traditions have endorsed the Religious Declaration, which states:

Sexuality is God’s life-giving and life-fulfilling gift. We come from diverse religious communities to recognize sexuality as central to our humanity and as integral to our spirituality. We are speaking out against the pain, brokenness, oppression and loss of meaning that many experience about their sexuality.

Our faith traditions celebrate the goodness of creation, including our bodies and our sexuality. We sin when this sacred gift is abused or exploited. However, the great promise of our traditions is love, healing and restored relationships.

Our culture needs a sexual ethic focused on personal relationships and social justice rather than particular sexual acts. All persons have the right and responsibility to lead sexual lives that express love, justice, mutuality, commitment, consent and pleasure. Grounded in respect for the body and for the vulnerability that intimacy brings, this ethic fosters physical, emotional and spiritual health. It accepts no double standards and applies to all persons, without regard to sex, gender, color, age, bodily condition, marital status or sexual orientation.

God hears the cries of those who suffer from the failure of religious communities to address sexuality. We are called today to see, hear and respond to the suffering caused by sexual abuse and violence against women and lesbian, gay, bisexual

and transgender persons, the HIV pandemic, unsustainable population growth and over-consumption, and the commercial exploitation of sexuality.

Faith communities must therefore be truth-seeking, courageous and just. We call for:

- Theological reflection that integrates the wisdom of excluded, often silenced peoples, and insights about sexuality from medicine, social science, the arts and humanities.
- Full inclusion of women and LGBT persons in congregational life, including their ordination and marriage equality.
- Sexuality counseling and education throughout the lifespan from trained religious leaders.
- Support for those who challenge sexual oppression and who work for justice within their congregations and denominations.

Faith communities must also advocate for sexual and spiritual wholeness in society. We call for:

- Lifelong, age-appropriate sexuality education in schools, seminaries and community settings.
- A faith-based commitment to sexual and reproductive rights, including access to voluntary contraception, abortion, and HIV/STI prevention and treatment.
- Religious leadership in movements to end sexual and social injustice.

God rejoices when we celebrate our sexuality with holiness and integrity. We invite our colleagues and faith communities to join us in promoting sexual morality, justice, and healing.