

2007 BIENNIAL MINUTES

FIRST SESSION - FRIDAY EVENING GATHERING, JUNE 29, 2007 **WORSHIP AND COMMUNION SERVICE with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.**

7:00-9:00 PM

1. As people entered the hall, pre-session music was provided by the Haitian Alliance Choir, Duval Denis, director. As the session opened, District of Columbia Baptist Convention pastors, attending in a group, were introduced.
2. ABCUSA President Arlee Griffin, Jr., called to order the 2007 Biennial Meeting of ABCUSA and announced the quorum.
3. President Griffin then called for adoption of the Provisional Biennial Program and noted that the Biennial Program Committee now was designated as the Committee on Order of Business for the remainder of the meeting.
4. Following the showing of a video highlighting collaborative efforts of the ABC Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board (MMBB) and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF), a response was given by Sumner Grant, Executive Director, MMBB, and Gary Skeen, President, Church Benefits Board, CBF.
5. ABCUSA worship designer, Brad Berglund, gave the invitation to worship and, along with the Biennial Worship Team, led a time of singing: "Spirit of the Living God," "Forever," "Santo Santo Eres," and "Great Is Thy Faithfulness."
6. The Litany of Celebration was led by Molly Marshall, President of Central Baptist Theological Seminary, and Regional Youth Representatives Deivid Ribeiro, ABC of Massachusetts, and Jestine Ware, ABC of Rochester/Genesee.
7. Following the Invocation by CBF member Renee Bennett, the Haitian Alliance Choir provided a time of special music.
8. Aidsand Wright-Riggins, III, Executive Director of the Board of National Ministries, and Valoria Cheek, President of the American Baptist Extension Corporation, presented the American Baptist Religious Freedom Award to the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty. The award was accepted by Brent Walker, Executive Director of BJCRL.
9. Cheri Coleman of Coatesville, PA, sang "We Shall Behold Him," accompanied by her brother, pianist Del Coleman.
10. The keynote address took the form of an interview of A. Roy Medley, General Secretary, ABCUSA, Daniel Vestal, Coordinator, CBF, and Tyrone S. Pitts,

General Secretary, Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc. (PNBC).
Interviewer: Nancy Morrow, pastor of the Baptist Church of Danielson and Moosup, CT.

11. The congregation sang “The Servant Song,” led by Susan Deal (CBF).

12. CBF and ABCUSA next participated in a Celebration of Cooperative Mission led by Reid Trulson, Executive Director, International Ministries, ABCUSA, and Rob Nash, Coordinator, Global Missions, CBF. This celebration highlighted the ministries of Duane and Marcia Binkley and Nancy and Steve James.

13. Following the Song of Response, “There Is a Redeemer,” Communion was led by A. Roy Medley, Daniel Vestal, Tyrone Pitts, and Jeffrey Haggray, Executive Minister, District of Columbia Baptist Convention.

14. Kate Campbell sang a song of response.

15. The spoken benediction was given by A. Roy Medley, Daniel Vestal, Tyrone Pitts and Jeffrey Haggray.

16. The song of benediction, “We Are Called to be God’s People,” was sung by the congregation.

17. The postlude was played by CBF musicians, David Schwoebel, pianist, and Elaine Payne, organist.

SECOND SESSION - SATURDAY MORNING GATHERING, June 30, 2007

CENTENNIAL DAY WORSHIP – 10:15-11:30 AM

18. The prelude and opening music were led by Brad Berglund and the DC Massed Choir.

19. The congregation sang “Lift High the Cross,” “God of Grace and God of Glory,” and “The Church’s One Foundation” as many groups (Pastors/Congregations; Chaplains/Pastoral Counselors; ABC-related Colleges & Universities; ABC-related Seminaries; National Staff; Regional Staff, etc.), some carrying banners, processed in behind a cross. Representatives of groups went up onto the stage to be greeted by Roy Medley and the National Executive Council.

20. The National Executive Council gave the Call to Worship.

21. President Griffin gave the Invocation, followed by liturgical dancers performing to “Shall We Gather at the River.”

22. The Old Testament scripture (Isaiah 60:1-5; 18-22) was read by Edwin H. Tuller, former General Secretary (1960-1970).

23. Wade Pryor and Kelsey Edwards, both young members of Shiloh Baptist Church, Washington DC, read the New Testament scripture for the morning (Matthew 5:1-2; 14-16) .

24. Following a video collage of historic ABC personalities, Roy Medley introduced the four “Emerging Voices” who brought the morning’s message: The Rev. Hector Ramirez, pastor of the Second Baptist Church of Cidra, PR - “Mission and Evangelism,” Adam Taylor, Senior Director of Campaigns and Organizing at Sojourners/Call to Renewal - “Justice and Mercy,” The Rev. Lauren Ng, Assistant Pastor, First Chinese Baptist Church, San Francisco, CA - “Unity in Diversity,” and Kim Kushner, International Ministries’ staff, Volunteer Services - “Global Mission.”

25. Congregational sung responses to the presentations (“We’ve Come This Far By Faith,” “Send the Light,” “All Are Welcome”) were led by the Biennial Worship Team, and special music also was provided by the DC Massed Choir.

26. Roy Medley led a time of prayer.

27. Leo Thorne, Associate General Secretary for Mission Resource Development and Biennial Program Coordinator, introduced the offering, which will be used in support of the Centennial Day Program.

28. Special music was provided by Bill and Virgie Thompson, First Mesa Baptist Church, Polacca, AZ.

29. The congregation sang the Doxology and Vice President Mary Hulst led a prayer of thanks.

30. G. Elaine Smith and Robert H. Roberts, Co-Chairs of the Centennial Task Force, gave a review of the day’s events, inviting all present to participate in the celebrations...afternoon panels on Past and Future, the 100th Birthday Party of ABCUSA, and three evening concerts: the *Messiah* at Shiloh Baptist Church, a hymn sing at Calvary Baptist Church, and a choir concert in Hall D of the Convention Center.

31. The congregation next “posed” for a 100th Birthday picture to memorialize this historic moment in ABCUSA life and ministry.

32. Robert Roberts led the congregation in a Festal Shout based on Psalm 150, followed by the “Hallelujah Chorus” sung by the DC Massed Choir as the benediction for the worship service.

THIRD SESSION - SUNDAY MORNING GATHERING, July 1, 2007
WORSHIP SERVICE - 10:30 AM - 12:30 PM

33. Pre-session music was provided by a choir composed of Burmese and Karen members from churches in Washington, DC, New York, and Minnesota.

34. The Biennial Worship Team led the congregation singing “Freedom Reigns,” “Holy, Holy, Holy,” “ This is Holy Ground,” and “Antiphonal Praise.”

35. Following a litany of celebration, President Griffin led in prayer and introduced the morning’s preacher, the Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, Associate Professor of Religious Education at Claremont School of Theology, Claremont, CA.

36. Carol Sutton, National Coordinator, New Life 2010, and Aidsand Wright-Riggins, III, presented the New Life 2010 Award to the Rev. Bill McCready and the First Baptist Church of Pocatello, ID. Pastor McCready gave a short response.

37. Special music was provided by the combined Burmese/Karen choir.

38. The Gospel reading by Regional Youth Representatives Thomas Davis, Evergreen Baptist Association, and Kelley Pernicone, Cleveland Baptist Association, was followed by special music played by pianist Cody McVey of Alderson, WV.

39. Following the sermon by Elizabeth Condé-Frazier, the Biennial Worship Team and Brad Berglund led the congregation in a musical prayer response.

40. The Volunteer Service offering was introduced by Victoria Goff, National Coordinator, Volunteer Services, National Ministries, Kim Kushner, International Ministries staff, and Royce Jones, American Baptist Men Disaster Relief Coordinator.

41. A spoken benediction by Roy Medley was followed by a sung benediction by the Biennial Worship Team.

FOURTH SESSION - SUNDAY AFTERNOON, July 1, 2007

BUSINESS SESSION - 2:45-4:45 pm

42. President Griffin called the meeting to order, and the first order of business was the report of the ABC Nominating Committee, presented by Jacqueline Saxon, Chairperson of the committee. The slate of nominees was:

ABCUSA Officers

President - two-year term, ending December 31, 2009

MARY ARMACOST HULST, Calvary Baptist Church, Denver, CO

Vice President - Two year term, ending December 31, 2009

FRANK CHRISTINE, Second Baptist Church, Los Angeles, CA

Budget Review Officer - Two year term, ending December 31, 2009

JAMES RATLIFF, First Baptist Church, Riverhead, NY

Statements of Concern Committee - four year term, ending June 2011

SOLOMON ERNST, SR., Trinity International Baptist Church, Columbus, OH

DEBORAH L. HUGHES, Lake Avenue Memorial Baptist Church, Rochester, NY

PAUL M. MARTIN, Macedonia Baptist Church, Denver, CO

DOUGLAS TATREAU, Emmanuel Baptist Church, Albany, NY

43. Following collection of ballots, the Boards of International and National Ministries gave their joint report of ministries as mandated by the ABCUSA bylaws.

44. The balance of the session time was devoted to the three Statements of Concern. Voice votes were taken on two statements:

STATEMENT #1 - AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES USA - OUR POLITY AND IDENTITY

American Baptist Churches USA is unique. Though our congregations are different, there are many similarities. Our roots reach back four centuries to Britain and Western Europe where some Christians began developing the convictions that have led to our being called Baptists.

Our distinctive Baptist identity lies in our polity, which is based on our theological beliefs and practices. That polity includes the principle by which we embrace the personal commitment to congregational representation that allows us to function together in association within American Baptist Churches USA.

We strongly affirm both our polity and congregational autonomy, which allows us to have sufficient unity and organization to carry out an effective Christian witness as American Baptists.

OUR CONVICTIONS

Based upon the Word of God and guided in scriptural understanding by the Holy Spirit, American Baptists have gathered to worship, seek God's will for their lives and actively live out their faith. American Baptists are a people who do not seek conformity through a particular creedal position or statement of faith. We do, however, acknowledge common convictions that characterize what we believe, and some are held in common with other Christians.

Many American Baptists hold these beliefs in common with other Christians:

- God's love is manifest as Creator, and in Jesus as Lord and Savior, and in the Holy Spirit as God's presence in and among us;
- The Bible is the divinely inspired Word of God that serves as our authority for living out the Christian faith through the guidance of the Holy Spirit as interpreted within the community of believers;
- Salvation is by grace through faith alone in Jesus Christ. Good works are an outward manifestation of a changed life in Jesus;
- The Great Commandment and Great Commission call us to love God and love people, to witness to what we believe to the ends of the earth, and to enable people to become disciples and part of the church through baptism.

These convictions commonly characterize American Baptists:

- The ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are commanded by Jesus Christ for implementation within the church body;
- Believer's baptism, signifying a commitment to new life in Christ, is reserved for those who have made a profession of faith;
- Soul Freedom calls each person to be responsible for the condition of his or her own soul before God;
- The Priesthood of Believers affirms that all persons have equal access before God;
- We function congregationally as gathered churches rather than parish churches;
- Each local church is autonomous;
- The local church is the fundamental unit of mission in denominational life;
- We embrace the separation of church and state, and support religious freedom and respect the expressions of faith of others;
- Other convictions direct our special tasks and ministries, in response to Christ's call to be: "a redeemed, biblical, worshipping, mission, interdependent, caring, inclusive, contemporary people." (1)

OUR CONCERN

"If it [the American Baptist Churches, USA] is to maintain its integrity in the midst of conflicting pressures, a denomination needs to have a clear concept of itself. The health and vitality of our denominational life depends upon such clarity." (2)

We are concerned that, with so many Baptist denominations existing in the United States, our members will be confused as to what makes us distinctively American Baptists.

We are concerned that some of our churches are calling pastors and other leaders who have not received education and training in, or are not sympathetic to, the

history and polity of American Baptist Churches USA.

We are concerned that today the average American Baptist church member has insufficient knowledge of the polity and characteristics that make us uniquely American Baptists.

We are concerned that our members may be confusing theological or social positions with the role our polity plays in making us distinctly American Baptists.

We are concerned that a lack of clarity in our identity and shifts in our polity may result in denominational disunity and an ineffective witness to the world.

OUR CALL

We have heard the call to be centered in Christ.

- We call all American Baptists to reaffirm our unique identity and unite to accomplish our mission;
- We call all American Baptists to study and learn what makes us distinctly and proudly American Baptists;
- We call our American Baptist congregations to provide education regarding American Baptist history and polity to church members and member candidates through new member/baptism classes and regular Christian education;
- We call American Baptist congregations to work closely with the American Baptist Personnel Services and regional leadership to call and equip pastoral leaders who will identify themselves with American Baptist convictions, polity and practice;
- We call American Baptists to actively support Christ's mission and ministry through our denomination by our tithes, offerings and service;
- We call American Baptists to participate in a mutually supportive relationship between the local church and all levels of the denomination;
- We call American Baptists to share our unique story with others and to seek ways to identify themselves as American Baptists.

NOTES

(1) *American Baptist Identity Statement: We are American Baptists* - an expression of Christian faith representative of American Baptists. Adopted by the General Board, American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. November 2005.

(2) Maring, Norman and Hudson, Winthrop. *A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1963), p. 1.

Statement #1 - Passed by voice vote

STATEMENT #2 - LIVING THE IMAGE OF CHRIST IN AN ADDICTIVE SOCIETY

American Baptists are living in a very complex and diverse society – a society that is plagued by a variety of addictive behaviors. Addictions are manifest in debilitating dependence on drugs, alcohol, tobacco, gambling and pornography, among others. Addictive behavior can be defined as that which results from any activity or substance that has become the major focus of a person’s life to the detriment of other activities, and which controls or harms the individual or others spiritually, physically, mentally, or socially. (1) Excessive behaviors lead to imbalance, such as in persons who work long hours to the detriment of their home lives, to those who compulsively consume and jeopardize themselves financially, relationally, and physically because of uncontrollable desires or needs.

Millions of Americans are struggling with addictive behaviors. However, we are not unique. Since the beginning of time, humans have sought methods of altering their consciousness in ways that produce overuse, abuse and addiction. (2) We recognize the existence of a spectrum which, without appropriate control, begins with innocuous habits, progresses with compulsions, and ends with addictions.

American Baptists recognize that humans are created in God’s image and that we are responsible for the care of our bodies, our families, and our world. We serve a God who can effectively address any behavior and/or spirit that is contrary to God or God’s plan for our wholeness. We are called by God not to be conformed to this world but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. (c.f. Romans 12:2)

We raise this concern about addictive behavior, not to be moralistic or to condemn, but to bring ourselves as well as others into accountability for the sake of healing and redemption. Following the example of Jesus Christ, we reach out to those whose lives are out of balance and who are seeking relief. We affirm the dignity and worth of each individual, and strive to minister to those who need to regain balance in and control of their lives.

Therefore we call upon all American Baptists to:

- Have a spiritually transforming relationship with Jesus Christ and to lead others to the same;
- Prepare the church to be a receptive, safe and redemptive place for people with addictions where healing can happen through prayer, education, support, Bible study, counseling, pastoral care and self-help groups;
- Support and facilitate recovery through professional counseling, twelve step recovery programs, “Celebrate Recovery,” and similar local efforts;
- Raise awareness of unrecognized patterns of excessive behaviors and addictions in ourselves and others in order to address them effectively;
- Identify ways that churches can become the model in balancing lives in

terms of time, relationships, personal conduct and behaviors.

FOOTNOTES

(1) Adapted from Engs, R.C. *Alcohol and Other Drugs: Self Responsibility*, Tichenor Publishing Company, Bloomington, IN, 1987.

(2) The earliest reference to an addictive substance appears in a Sumerian text dated 4000 B.C.

Statement #2 - Passed by voice vote

45. President Griffin recessed the business session until Monday morning, July 2, at 9:30 am.

FIFTH SESSION - SUNDAY EVENING GATHERING, July 1, 2007 **WORSHIP SERVICE - 7:00-9:00 pm**

46. Opening music was provided by the choir of Berean Baptist Church, Brooklyn, NY.

47. The Biennial Worship Team led several songs (“Hear Our Praises,” “The Solid Rock,” “I Love You, That Is Why My Heart is Filled with Praise”).

48. The Sparrowk Presidents’ Award was presented to Judge Albert Matthews by President Griffin and General Secretary Medley.

49. Following an opening litany, led by the Biennial Worship Team, the scripture was read by Angel and Ariel Griffin, Berean Baptist Church.

50. The Berean Baptist Church choir and Liturgical Dancers, Paulette Newberns, director, provided special music and dance.

51. President Griffin preached the evening sermon, “Hand Him Your Hands.”

52. Mary Hulst led a time of prayer.

53. Robert Roberts introduced the offering, to support the Biennial, followed by an offertory played by Jazz pianist, Barry Sames.

54. New Regional Executive Ministers, Liliana DaValle, ABC of Rhode Island, and Frank Frischkorn, ABC of Pennsylvania and Delaware, were introduced by C. Jeff Woods, Associate General Secretary for Regional Ministries.

55. President Griffin introduced the newly elected ABCUSA officers for the 2008-2009 Biennium: President-elect Mary Armacost Hulst, Denver, Colorado; Vice President-elect Frank Christine, Los Angeles, California; and Budget Review Officer-elect James Ratliff, East Hampton, NY.

56. President-elect Hulst gave a brief response.

57. The congregation sang a hymn of affirmation: "We Sing Your Mighty Power."

58. A Celebration of Centuries of American Baptist Home Mission was presented by National Ministries Executive Director Aidsand Wright-Riggins, III along with National Ministries staff Laura Alden, Susan Gottshall, David Laubach, and Laura Miraz.

59. The closing benediction was given by President Griffin.

SIXTH SESSION - MONDAY MORNING, July 2, 2007
BIBLE STUDY/BUSINESS SESSION - 9:00 am - 12:00 Noon

60. Jeffrey Haggray, Executive Minister, District of Columbia Baptist Convention, led the morning's Bible Study.

61. Video Greetings on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of ABCUSA (the Northern Baptist Convention) from Denton Lotz and the Baptist World Alliance were shared.

62. Samuel Chetti, Executive Minister, ABC of Los Angeles, and Mr. Walter Clarke, President of ABC of Los Angeles, greeted attendees and extended an invitation to the 2009 Biennial Meeting to be held in Pasadena, June 26-29, 2009. They also shared a video presentation on the Pasadena/Los Angeles area.

63. Two resolutions for bylaws changes were presented:

Resolution #1 -

FIRST RESOLUTION TO AMEND THE BYLAWS OF AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES IN THE USA as proposed by the General Board for Action By the Delegates in Biennial Meeting in June 2007 relating to the request by the Chaplains and Pastoral Counselors to have voice and vote representation on the General Board.

Recently the GBEC received a request from George Langhorne, Ecclesiastical Endorsing Agent, to consider changing the ABCUSA Bylaws to allow the more than 900 endorsed, affiliated or approved chaplains and pastoral counselors to have voice and vote representation on the General Board.

The GBEC agreed that these specialized ministers should be given representation on the General Board. Therefore, Article II of the ABCUSA Bylaws will need to be altered in the following way (additional language is underlined and in bold):

On and after January 1, 1979 the membership of American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. (herein the "ABCUSA") shall, consistent with the Act of Incorporation of the ABCUSA and the laws of the State of New York, consist of: (i) those

persons who have been duly elected and are serving their terms as Representatives in accordance with Article III of these Bylaws and the Standing Rules of the ABCUSA adopted pursuant to Article XIX, Section 2; (ii) those persons who are then serving as President, Vice President, and Budget Review Officer of the ABCUSA in accordance with these Bylaws and the Standing Rules; the immediate Past President of the ABCUSA; those persons who are then serving, respectively, as the Presidents of The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board of American Baptist Churches, The American Baptist Historical Society, American Baptist Men, American Baptist Women's Ministries, and The Ministers Council of the ABCUSA; and (iii) one (1) person designated by each of the American Baptist Association of Seminary Administrators, American Baptist Association of Colleges and Universities, American Baptist Homes and Hospitals Association **and the American Baptist Chaplains and Pastoral Counselors**. The members of the ABCUSA shall be known as "Representatives."

PROPOSED ACTION: To amend ABCUSA Bylaw Article II as recommended.

One amendment to return this proposed change to the General Board was presented by James Oldham, Cleveland, OH.

The following reasons were given to support the amendment to return this proposed Bylaw change to the General Board:

- Chaplains and pastoral counselors already serve as representatives on the General Board and are represented through the Ministers Council
- Less funding is available for the representative process.
- We are in the midst of a major denominational restructuring process which would include attention to such representation.

This amendment passed, and the proposed change was returned to the General Board.

SECOND RESOLUTION TO AMEND THE BYLAWS OF AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES IN THE USA as proposed by the General Board for Action By the Delegates in Biennial Meeting in June 2007 relating to how the number of Biennial Delegates will be determined.

This proposed Bylaw change to Article IV, Section 2, Paragraph (a) was originally presented to the Biennial Delegates in June 2005. The proposed change was returned to the Standing Rules Committee for further work following the defeat of the proposal by the Biennial Delegates. Staff from the Office of the General Secretary held a conversation with the Reverend James Oldham who had raised concerns about the proposed change from the Biennial floor.

In light of recent changes made to the Common Budget Covenant, changes needed to be made to the ABCUSA Bylaw Article IV, Section, 2, Paragraph (a)

which delineates how the numbers of Delegates to Biennial Meetings are determined.

Currently Article IV, Section 2, Paragraph (a) reads:

Section 2. Election.

- (a) Cooperating Churches. Each Cooperating Church may elect from its membership:
 - (i) two (2) Delegates;
 - (ii) one (1) additional Delegate for every one hundred (100) members of such Church in excess of the first fifty-one (51) members;
 - (iii) one (1) additional Delegate if such Church's per capita giving to the American Baptist United Mission Basics (or any successor thereto) in the calendar year preceding the Biennial Meeting equaled \$40, plus one (1) additional Delegate for each whole number multiple of \$10 of such per capita giving in excess of \$40 in such year; and
 - (iv) one (1) additional Delegate for each whole number multiple of \$5,000 of such Church's total giving to the American Baptist United Mission Basics (or any successor thereto) in the calendar year preceding the meeting. If any question shall arise with regard to the number of Delegates to which a Cooperating Church is entitled, the determination of the General Secretary shall be conclusive with respect thereto.

In order to determine the number of delegates for those regions who selected the United Stewardship Plan and the regions that selected the Flexible Stewardship Plan, **the following changes underlined and in bold are being proposed:**

Section 2. Election.

- (a) Cooperating Churches. Each Cooperating Church may elect from its membership:
 - (i.) two (2) Delegates;
 - (ii.) one (1) additional Delegate for every one hundred (100) members of such Church in excess of the first fifty-one (51) members;
 - (iii.) one (1) additional Delegate if **(in the case of Churches within Regions that have elected the United Stewardship Plan or any successor thereto)** such Church's per capita giving to the American Baptist

“Total United Mission” (or any successor thereto) **plus the four denomination-wide offerings of America for Christ, Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering, World Mission Offering and One Great Hour of Sharing, or (in the case of Churches within Regions that have elected the Flexible Stewardship Plan or any successor thereto) such Church’s per capita giving to the total of the General Ministries Option, the United Mission Option and the AB Women’s Ministries Love Gift (or any successor thereto) plus the four denomination-wide offerings of America for Christ, Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering, World Mission Offering and One Great Hour of Sharing, in each case** in the calendar year preceding the Biennial Meeting equaled **\$100**, plus one (1) additional Delegate for each whole number multiple of **\$50** of such per capita giving in excess of **\$100** in such year; and

- (iv.) one (1) additional Delegate for each whole number multiple of **\$10,000** of **(in the case of Churches within Regions that have elected the United Stewardship Plan or any successor thereto) such Church’s total giving to the American Baptist “Total United Mission”** (or any successor thereto) **plus the four denomination-wide offerings of America for Christ, Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering, World Mission Offering and One Great Hour of Sharing , or (in the case of Churches within Regions that have elected the Flexible Stewardship Plan or any successor thereto) such Church’s per capita giving to the total of the General Ministries Option, the United Mission Option and the AB Women’s Ministries Love Gift (or any successor thereto) plus the four denomination wide offerings of America for Christ, Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering, World Mission Offering and One Great Hour of Sharing, in each case** in the calendar year preceding the meeting. If any question shall arise with regard to the number of Delegates to which a Cooperating Church is entitled, the determination of the General Secretary shall be conclusive with respect thereto.

PROPOSED ACTION: To amend ABCUSA Bylaw Article IV, Section 2, Paragraph (a) as recommended.

This proposed bylaw change passed by voice vote.

64. The next item of business was the recommendation on the Number of General Board Representatives for the 2008-2009 Biennium.

Resolution of General Board Recommending Numbers of Representatives for Next Biennium 2008-2009

WHEREAS, as amended at the 1991 Biennial in Charleston, West Virginia, Article III, Section 2(1) of the ABCUSA Bylaws states that there shall be sufficient numbers of Representatives, as determined by the Biennial meeting upon recommendation of the General Board, to perform the functions of the General Board;

WHEREAS, as research by numerous scholars has demonstrated conclusively, a smaller board functions much more effectively and also produces much greater satisfaction and sense of accomplishment; and Representatives have confirmed that research by reporting that their work in smaller bodies is more satisfying, more productive in setting policy, and more effective in holding staff accountable;

WHEREAS, each Representative can participate more fully in work of smaller boards, and smaller plenaries will make debate more manageable, enabling a larger proportion of the membership to speak and facilitate shorter meeting times;

WHEREAS, smaller boards are more cost efficient in that travel, food and lodging expenses are reduced both directly because fewer people travel and indirectly because smaller, less expensive meeting sites become feasible and because shorter meetings reduce the demand for food and lodging;

WHEREAS, the Representative Process Review Commission (RPRC), in 1991 concluded, after extensive investigation and study, that a smaller General Board and therefore smaller national program boards (because the membership of each national program board is approximately one-third of the General Board) would be more effective and efficient, would constitute better stewardship of the Denomination's resources and would not impair representation or communication; and the General Board, after thorough consideration, approved the RPRC Report;

WHEREAS, as costs continue to increase and revenues continue to decrease, better stewardship of the Representative Process Budget becomes more and more imperative;

WHEREAS, the RPRC recommended that the General Board be reduced by attrition from approximately 210 to 160, comprised of 111 Election District or Regionally Nominated Representatives, 37 at Large or Nationally Nominated Representatives, and 12 ex-officio or designated Representatives, and the General Board approved that recommendation;

WHEREAS, the 1995 Biennial in Syracuse voted to begin the process of reducing the size of the General Board as recommended by the RPRC and therefore to fix the number of Regionally Nominated Representatives at 143 for 1996 and 130 for 1997 and the number of Nationally Nominated Representatives at 46 for both 1996 and 1997, producing a total General Board of 201 in 1996 and 188 in 1997;

WHEREAS, the 1997 Biennial in Indianapolis voted to continue the process of reducing the size of the General Board by attrition and therefore to fix the numbers of Regionally

Nominated Representatives at 126 for 1998 and 123 for 1999 and the number of nationally Nominated Representatives at 42 for both 1998 and 1999, producing a total General Board of 180 in 1998 and 177 in 1999;

WHEREAS, the 1999 Biennial in Des Moines voted to continue the process of reducing the size of the General Board by attrition and therefore to fix the numbers of Regionally Nominated Representatives at 114 for 2000 and 111 for 2001 and the number of Nationally Nominated Representatives at 38 for both 2000 and 2001, producing a total General Board of 164 in 2000 and 161 in 2001.

WHEREAS, the 2001 Biennial in Providence voted to continue the process of reducing the size of the General Board by attrition, and therefore, to fix the numbers of Regionally Nominated Representatives at 111 for both 2002 and 2003 and the number of Nationally Nominated Representatives at 37 for both 2002 and 2003, producing a total General Board of 160 in both 2002 and 2003;

WHEREAS, because of the pending dissolution of the American Baptist Board of Education and Publication resulting in one less program board, the General Board approving a new Budget Covenant with significant budget implications, and the proposed reduction in number of representatives, the 2003 Biennial in Richmond voted that the number of Regionally Nominated Representatives be fixed at a number no greater than 111 and no less than 90 in 2004 and no greater than 111 and no less than 86 in 2005; and, that the number of Nationally Nominated Representatives be fixed at no greater than 37 and no less than 31 for both 2004 and 2005, producing a total General Board of no more than 160 and no less than 133 in 2004 and no greater than 160 and no less than 129 in 2005 (totals include the standard 12 ex officio or designated Representatives);

WHEREAS, the 2005 Biennial in Denver voted to continue the process of reducing the size of the General Board by attrition, and therefore, to fix the numbers of Regionally Nominated Representatives at a number no greater than 81 and no less than 75 in 2006 and no greater than 78 and no less than 75 in 2007; and, that the number of Nationally Nominated Representatives be fixed at no greater than 27 and no less than 25 for both 2006 and 2007, producing a total General Board of no more than 120 and no less than 112 in 2006 and no greater than 117 and no less than 112 in 2007, these totals including the standard 12 ex officio or designated Representatives;

WHEREAS, the Pacific Southwest Region (now known as Transformation Ministries) has withdrawn from the Covenant of Relationships, and is no longer eligible to send representatives to the General Board, reducing the number of Regionally Nominated Representatives by 4;

WHEREAS, there is a proposed Bylaw revision (Article II), which, if voted, will add 1 person designated as a representative by the American Baptist Chaplains and Pastoral Counselors;

NOW THEREFORE, the General Board recommends to the 2007 Biennial Meeting that the number of Regionally Nominated Representatives is fixed at a number no greater than 72 and no less than 71 in 2008 and at 71 in 2009; and, that the number of Nationally Nominated Representatives be fixed at 24 for both 2008 and 2009, producing a total General Board of no more than 109 and no less than 107 in 2008 and no more than 108 and no less than 107 in 2009. (These totals include the standard 12 or 13 ex officio or designated Representatives.)

This motion passed.

65. General Secretary Medley gave the report of the Office of the General Secretary and Leo Thorne, Associate General Secretary for Mission Resource

Development, joined him to present certificates to churches in recognition of their outstanding giving to United Mission:

- 1 – Calvary Baptist Church, Denver, CO
- 2 - Prairie Baptist Church, Prairie Village, KS
- 3 – South Parkersburg Baptist Church, Parkersburg, WV
- 4 - First Baptist Church, Lansdale, PA
- 5 – Fifth Avenue Baptist Church, Huntington, WV
- 6 – First Baptist Church of Palmer, Rio Grande, PR
- 7 – New Beginnings Christian Fellowship, Renton, WA

66. National Ministries and International Ministries presented the second of two reports.

67. Statements of Concern were the focus of the remaining session time. The statement, “Democracy in America,” was affirmed.

Statement of Concern: Democracy in America

The ideals of democracy and civil liberty in the United States have been cherished for well over 200 years. Since the earliest days, this constitutionally-based representative form of government has been evolving within American society. Various political crises, legal challenges, and social changes have left their mark upon the exercise of freedom, equality, and justice for all. Thomas Jefferson and his peers viewed democracy as an “experiment” where humans “may be trusted to govern themselves without a master.” However, as the French philosopher Voltaire warned, “So long as the people do not care to exercise their freedom, those who wish to tyrannize will do so... .”

FREEDOM – A BIBLICAL BASIS

“Freedom is what we have—Christ has set us free! Stand, then, as free people...” (Galatians 5:1a TEV). As Baptists, our sense of freedom is derived from our redemption from sin and the liberty of the spirit established in Christ and only reinforced by constitutional protections. Although we respect laws and roles of authority in an orderly society, we still affirm the right to dissent, even though our theological and moral convictions may not always garner support. Likewise, our understanding of freedom is best served by a democratic form of government where the individual is free, but equal and responsible to others for the common good of society. Thus, our freedom is not a license to do harm to others, but to serve them in the same spirit as Jesus. We seek to “do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God” (Micah 6:8) and with those with whom we share this land.

A BAPTIST UNDERSTANDING OF FREEDOM

Baptists, historically, have been strident advocates for the protection and

advancement of constitutional freedoms and the democratic form of government. Beginning with early appeals for religious liberty and resistance to the establishment of a state church, Baptists have fostered civil liberties and democratic principles. Furthermore, we have established schools to educate the population, promoted civil rights from the pulpit and in the public square, and maintained a democratic form of polity for the governance of churches and denominations. Prominent leaders such as Roger Williams, John Clarke, Obadiah Holmes, Lott Cary, John Mason Peck, Joanna Moore, John Leland, and many others contributed to the nation's developing sense of democracy, even while serving the cause of Christ. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and others led the Civil Rights movement in the call for the expansion of democracy that included all people of color, the underprivileged, and the under-represented. Their Christian witness became the national symbol for true equality and justice for all.

DEMOCRACY AFTER SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

As the twenty-first century begins, recent events and circumstances have undermined both our democracy and our civil liberties. Following September 11, 2001, the tyranny of terrorism and the consequent actions of the federal government have impacted some of the freedoms that have defined our collective lives for generations, such as the right to privacy.

The integrity of the representative form of government itself repeatedly has been called into question in recent years, as evidenced by issues related to campaign financing, fairness of the electoral process and preservation of the intent of one person/one vote. In recent elections, the votes of some U.S. citizens did not count due to election irregularities, equipment failures, or because of controversial redistricting and election laws that favor one party or impact minority voters. This is no small matter. As Franklin D. Roosevelt cautioned: "Let us never forget that...[t]he ultimate rulers of our democracy are not a President and senators and congressmen and governmental officials, but the voters of this country." The right to vote and the fairness of the electoral process is fundamental for maintaining confidence in our form of governance.

CALL TO ACTION

"For such a time as this," we come to our nation's capital to raise our voices in tribute to and support of our country and its democratic ideals. We call upon our country and its leaders to live up to these ideals, even in a time of war. We call upon our American Baptist family, in our roles as citizens and as community and religious leaders to:

- Affirm the ideals of democracy and civil liberty;
- Communicate these ideals to our elected leadership on the local, state and national levels;
- Become informed about issues of public interest, locally and nationally;

- Foster non-partisan discussion of issues of public interest, cultivating respect for majority and minority views;
- Pray for our country and its leaders;
- Encourage active civic service, including holding public office;
- Promote voter registration and education;
- Vote, and encourage others to do the same; and
- Advance the cause of freedom, equality, and justice for all.

Vote: 383 Yes; 55 No; 1 Abstain

68. Signature Statements were presented and will be sent with transcripts of discussion for further discussion by the Statements of Concern Committee and possible consideration at the 2009 Biennial.

SEVENTH SESSION, MONDAY EVENING, July 2, 2007

Worship Service - 7:00-9:00 PM

69. The Biennial Worship Team led a time of praise singing and a musical invitation to worship.
70. The congregation sang “How Great Is Our God” and “ I Give You My Heart” followed by a litany of celebration.
71. Following the congregational hymn, “How Great Thou Art,” the Invocation was given by the Rev. Douglas Stowers, pastor of Mt. Calvary Baptist Church, Atlanta, GA, and member of the 2007 Biennial Program Committee.
72. The Dahlberg Peace Award was presented to the Rev. DeeDee Coleman, Director, Wings of Faith, Inc. and pastor of the Russell Street Missionary Baptist Church, Detroit, MI, by Aidsand Wright-Riggins, III.
73. Following introduction of the evening preacher, the Rev. Lauran Bethell, Global Consultant, International Ministries, ABCUSA by A. Roy Medley, The West Virginians provided a time of special music.
74. The Scripture (Isaiah 60:1-2) was read by Shari Canzius, Regional Youth Representative from ABC of New Jersey.
75. The evening offering for support of ministries with Children in Poverty was introduced by Rev. Dorian Mendez-Vaz, National Coordinator of Children’s and Intergenerational Ministries, National Ministries.
76. The offertory was provided by pianist/vocalist Chad Ingram of Mt. Holly, NJ.
77. Lauran Bethell gave the evening sermon, relating her experiences with ministries in many locations world-wide which seek to address the exploitation and abuse of women and children, and encouraging American

Baptists to “Arise and Shine” and fulfill their own calling and ministry to the world’s needy people.

78. A closing video collage of the week’s highlights preceded the call to follow the cross from the hall out into the waiting world.

79. President Griffin gave the closing benediction.

80. As people left they sang a hymn written for the Biennial by the Rev. Dr. G. Daniel Jones, pastor of Grace Baptist Church of Germantown, Philadelphia, PA:

Arise and Brightly Shine

(Sung to the tune of “Rejoice Ye Pure in Heart”)

Verse 1

Arise and brightly shine
Arise, believeingly
Give thanks to God who saves us all
And makes us one in Him

Refrain:

Arise, Arise, Arise, Arise, Arise and brightly shine
Arise, and shine, Arise, and shine, Arise and brightly shine
Arise, Arise, Arise, Arise, Arise and brightly shine

Verse 2

Arise and shine today
Arise with life in Him
Our mortal strength alone is weak
We find our strength through Christ

Refrain

Verse 4

Arise and shine within
Arise and shine without
Your life a glow shed radiance
For all who would be blessed

Refrain

Verse 3

Arise and shine always
Arise with Christ Jesus
Our faith in Him will sustain us
Without His grip we fall

Refrain

Verse 5

Arise from slothfulness
Arise for work today
The harvest is so plentiful
For witnessing church growth

Refrain

REGISTRATION REPORT FOR THE 2007 BIENNIAL:

Registered Delegates:	1,188
Registered Visitors:	880
Staff:	253

Total: 2,321

2007 BIENNIAL PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Class of 2007:

Keiko Chew, Oakland, CA
Rev. Herschell Daney, Sand Springs, OK
Pastor Manuel Luquin, Yakima, WA
Sue MacDonald, Ronks, PA
Rev. Dr. Robert Roberts, Orlando, FL
Larry Willison, Canvas, WV

Class of 2009:

Beverly Fink, Manhattan, KS
Esther Fisher, Toms River, NJ
Fred Robbins, Kulpville, PA
G. Elaine Smith, Esq., Washington, DC (Chair)
Rev. Douglas Stowers, Atlanta, GA
Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Haggray, District of Columbia Baptist Convention
Rev. Dr. Arlee Griffin, Jr., ABCUSA President
Rev. Dr. Mary Armacost Hulst, ABCUSA Vice President

Consultants:

Rev. Brad Berglund, Centennial, CO – Worship/Music Design
David Greenfield, Bloomington, IL – Production Coordinator

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Kim Rafferzeder, International Ministries, Special Events Assistant
Dr. Laura Miraz, National Ministries, Associate Executive Director, Missionary Support Services
Rev. Dr. Leo Thorne, Associate General Secretary for Mission Resource Development, Biennial Program Coordinator

LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE

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Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Haggray, Co-Chairperson

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Lashanor Doolittle
Saul Garcia
Leroy Gilbert
Harold Green
Blanche Hudson
Ronald James

Grealy Marshall
Blanch Moose
Vivian Neilsen
Margarita Pinto
Johnell Powell
Yolanda Sampson
Terrell Sheppard
Elizabeth Simms

Emily Jenkins
John Johnson, Jr.
Mae Johnson
Tish Jones
Gail Lacy

Todd Thomason
Curtis Townsell
Thomas Tyler
Ruth Wienclaw
Dorothy Whitehead

BIENNIAL WORSHIP TEAM

Leader: **Brad Berglund**, Acoustic Guitar/Vocals
Melanie Burns, Rehearsal Director, Keyboard, Piano, Organ/Vocals
Marcel Carter, Drums/Percussion
Frank Colon, Keyboard, Piano/ Vocals
Debbie Dimaculangan, Vocals
Jason Malmberg, Bass
Trinette McCray, Vocals
Tammy Rodriquez, Vocals
Daryl Walker, Keyboard, Piano /Vocals
Mark Weisser, Electric Lead Guitar
Sandra Wimpleberg, Vocals

CENTENNIAL TASK FORCE

Core Members:

Katharine Bau Hsiao, Castro Valley, CA
Rev. Rachel E. Olsen Cocar, Dixon, IL
Rev. Dr. George Cummings, Berkeley, CA
Héctor González, Scottsdale, AZ
Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Haggray, Washington, DC
Rev. Dr. G. Daniel Jones, Philadelphia, PA
Rev. Nancy E.F. Morrow, Danielson, CT
Rev. Dr. Robert H. Roberts, Co-Chair, Orlando, FL
G. Elaine Smith, Esq., Co-Chair, Washington, DC
Dr. Deborah Van Broekhoven, Valley Forge, PA

Auxiliary Members:

Thomas Bowen, Washington, DC
Miriam Gutiérrez, Guaynabo, PR
Elizabeth F. Pinto, Reseda, CA
Rev. Ashley Smith, Stephentown, NY

STATEMENTS OF CONCERN COMMITTEE

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Edgir Jean, East Orange, NJ
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Rev. Michael-Ray Mathews, San José, CA (Chair)
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