

2015 BIENNIAL MISSION SUMMIT MINUTES

FRIDAY EVENING GATHERING, JUNE 26, 2015

WORSHIP 7:00 – 9:00 PM

Transformed By the Journey

1. Attendees were welcomed with music by the worship team, consisting of Brad Berglund, Dan Borquin, Melanie & Randall Burns, Del Lamont Coleman, Claire Dent, Johnson Eapen, Julio & Annie González-Paniagua, Joe Greemore, and Kevin Padworski.
2. Worship began with the congregation singing *Called To Gather as God's People*.
3. Don Ng, president of American Baptist Churches USA, opened the 2015 Biennial Mission Summit and welcomed attendees. Don Ng announced that as of 5:00 pm today there are 1,628 participants registered and 618 delegates, setting the quorum for conduct of business at 206. While only delegates may vote on motions, all attendees are welcome to attend the business session on Sunday morning.
4. Don Ng announced that the information shared throughout our time together, especially during the Sunday morning business session, will constitute the information related to the ABCUSA budget and actions of the Board of General Ministries.
5. Susan Gillies, chair of the 2015 Biennial Mission Summit Planning Team, was recognized to make a motion. She moved to adopt the Rules of Procedure for the conduct of business at the 2015 Biennial Mission Summit meeting of delegates. (This document was posted on the ABC website prior to the Biennial and included in the delegate packets.) There was no discussion, and the motion was adopted.
6. Susan Gillies made a motion to adopt the provisional program as printed in the program book subject to any further changes the Biennial Mission Summit Planning Team, acting as the Committee on the Order of Business, might recommend. There was no discussion and the motion was adopted.
7. Don Ng introduced Dennis Johnson, BGM Parliamentarian and pastor of Charleston Baptist Temple in Charleston, WV.
8. Don Ng, reminded attendees that the Rules of Procedure include information on how they may register to propose a future amendment to the By-Laws. Questions about these procedures should be submitted to the ABCUSA Office located in the Pipes Executive Conference Room just outside the exhibit hall. Finally, he invited all attendees to participate in the Mission Summit conversations scheduled for Saturday and Sunday.

9. Marshall Peters, John Williams, Dwight Stinnett, and Robin Stoops, executive ministers from Mid-American, Central, Great Rivers and Nebraska regions respectively, welcomed the attendees.
10. Fausto Vasconcelos, director of the Division on Mission and Evangelism of the Baptist World Alliance, brought greetings from the wider Baptist family.
11. Anjo Keikung, chancellor of the Northeast Christian University of India, brought greetings from the Council of Baptist Churches of Northeast India.
12. Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins, III, executive director of the American Baptist Home Mission Societies, and Lois Chiles, vice-president of the Board of ABHMS, presented the Suzan Johnson Cook Religious Freedom Award to the Chin Baptist Churches USA and to the Karen Baptist Churches USA. Duh Kam, executive minister and Ngun Awi, president, accepted the award on behalf of Chin Baptist Churches USA. Saw Ler Htoo, executive secretary, and Hsa Moo, chairperson, accepted the award on behalf of Karen Baptist Churches USA.
13. Jeff Woods, associate general secretary for Regional Ministries, introduced the Mission Summit concept, first initiated as part of the 2013 Biennial Mission Summit. The Mission Summit conversations include an open opportunity for anyone attending the Biennial Mission Summit to engage in meaningful dialogue about a topic of interest by self-selecting into a small group. In addition to receiving suggestions of topics from the 2013 Mission Summit Conversation evaluation forms, many more topics were identified by local churches, regions, national agencies and seminaries and, with the help of an online survey, rated to be included in the 2015 Mission Summit conversations.
14. Harry Riggs, pastor of First Baptist Church, Lincoln, NE, and Susan Gillies, from Omaha, NE, introduced themselves as Biennial Mission Summit hosts.
15. The congregation began worship with the singing of *Hosanna*.
16. Wil Brown and Kathy Longhat, Oklahoma Baptist Indian Association, performed a Welcome Ritual and Blessing, followed by the Oklahoma Baptist sign language performers signing Psalm 23.
17. Judy Fackenthal, pastor, Garfield Park Baptist Church, Indianapolis, IN and vice-president of American Baptist Churches USA introduced the speaker, Amy Butler.
18. Millie Edwards Nottingham, Kansas City musician, brought a message in song, *We Shall Behold Him*.
19. Fred Lewis, pastor of First Baptist Church of Indianapolis, read the scripture, Acts 9:1-19.

20. Amy Butler, pastor of The Riverside Church, New York City, NY, brought the message *Transformed By the Spirit*.

- Amy mentioned that our own denominational beginnings are inextricably linked to racism and white supremacy, the original sins of our country and even our church. Leading up to the Civil War, as were most mainline denominations in America, Baptists were deeply divided on the issue of slavery.
- In 1845, when James Reeve, a known slave holder, was nominated for missionary service, the Home Mission Society refused to appoint him. In typical proud Baptist tradition, this resulted in a schism. The group that would become known as American Baptist Churches USA first came into being. On their journey together they were convicted that they not become voices sanctioning the evils of slavery, but that they live into the radical transformation offered by Jesus Christ.
- Amy referring to the scripture read earlier, Acts 1:1-19, pointed out the persecution and hatred of Jesus and his disciples. She also noted the transformation of Saul that occurred during his journey. Even those with a legacy of persecution and hatred can turn and head home another way to find themselves transformed by the journey and find themselves the most unlikely agents of God's love and healing in the world.
- We must pause, to remember a bit of the journey that we've been on in this country in our lifetime: Christmas day, 1956, Bethel Baptist Church in Birmingham, AL and the pastor's home damaged by an exploding bomb; September 15, 1963, four black school girls killed and 20 injured by the detonation of a bomb at the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, AL; June 16, 1964, Mt. Zion AME in Longdale, MI burned to the ground and 5 days later 3 civil rights activists killed by the Ku Klux Klan; in 1980, in just over one week, three black churches in New York were set ablaze; between 1990-1997, seventy black churches burned by fires, thirty of those happening between 1995 and 1996; and on June 17, 2015, a gunman walked into a Bible study at Mother Emmanuel AME church and shot killed 7. All these and so many more precious lives lost because people of faith wouldn't stand up and say "No," because as a nation we have failed to address the original sins of our country.
- To live lives of radical love, lives transformed by the journey of life with Christ, is the very mandate of our faith. We must end access to deadly weapons and the culture in which their possession and use is tolerated and celebrated. We must address systems that oppress and incarcerate African Americans at nearly 6 times the rate of whites, that create massive inequity in income, housing and education. We, the church of Jesus Christ, must build the beloved community that Jesus came to show us, here, on earth, right now.
- God is asking us to step up, to speak out, to live out radical love. The moment is now.

21. The congregation, led by the worship team, sang *Shine Your Light*.

22. Robert Southard, retired pastor and businessman, spoke of the Bethel Neighborhood Center, the recipient of Friday evening's offering.
23. Del Coleman, playing the piano, sang *Great is Thy Faithfulness* as the offertory.
24. Harry Riggs and Susan Gillies shared a few announcements including the #MissionSummit2015 hashtag.
25. The congregation sang *Since Jesus Came into My Heart*.
26. Cheryl Dudley, executive minister of American Baptist Churches of Metropolitan New York, brought the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON GATHERING, JUNE 27, 2015

MISSION SUMMIT REPORTING, 4:00 – 5:00 PM

27. Susan Gillies, Harry Riggs and Jeff Woods welcomed the group.
28. Jeff reported that the Mission Summit conversations have caught on. Several caucuses and regions have included such conversations at the heart of their meetings. Transformed by the Spirit (TbyS) is about taking these conversations to a deeper and wider level, into the community to listen and interact with people in new ways. One of the learnings from TbyS is that you cannot orchestrate the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has been doing amazing things bringing about transformations new thinking and new identity, resulting in new visions. As a result, conversations that you'll hear today really have been shaped by Transformed by the Spirit and come from many different areas.
29. Susan invited the guests who will be interviewed to come and join them on stage.
 - Katie Jo Suddaby, is the point person for the Mission Table group on New Church Planting. Speaking with Harry Riggs, Katie described some of the conversations. "Church planting is almost a separate call than being called to be a pastor of an established church. It takes an entrepreneurial spirit and a certain level of stupid gumption to just try it and it takes a lot of skills that traditional pastoring doesn't require because you're starting from scratch." Her church decided the best way to grow their church was not to invite young people to listen to Bach at 10am, but instead to have a Wednesday night totally separate congregation. This congregation is actually an interfaith congregation for young artists called the Open Circle, for the lonely suburban young folks who need a congregation but will not get up at 10am. The congregation had dropped to 30 people and had a beautiful building that

was used more by rental groups. They realized that they were going to run out of money and people. While planting a new congregation within their building, the traditional group could maintain their service and open the space to be hospitable to young artists which they had been doing for years anyway. It grew out of their natural inclinations but grew in a way that without the fear of closing would not have come to fruition.

Katie is trying to organize the new church planters and new church organizers around the country because our congregational structure does not allow us to communicate well. She is coordinating a conference in Rochester, New York in October to begin networking to determine how we can help one another, how we can help the denomination, or how we can support one another both financially and with our intellectual resources.

- Nikita McCalister is the chair of the TbyS Journey Team and point person of the Mission Table Women in Ministry group. Nikita reported on the face-to-face retreat. She is encouraged by the outcome of the work the group has done. One of the things that was discussed is that in our heads we know women should have equality, women should have equal access to being pastors, but in terms of how it impacts our day-to-day lives we don't see that implemented. Today only 9% of women in ministry are solo pastors. How can we change the way we as a denomination empower women to enter and engage in the pulpit? One of those ways is through opportunity and exposure. As more people engage with women in ministry, that opens doors for other women.
- Alan Selig is facilitator of the Pastoral Attrition Action Learning Team. Alan reports that some of the learnings of this team were from a survey of about 330 clergy on this subject. Some of the questions asked were: What were the factors either to remain or to leave pastoral ministry? What were the experiences through that process? Where were the resources that helped you? What was missing? The learnings from that experience resulted in amazing recognition of programs and projects being done by some regions. At the same time often there was an unawareness of those resources. The action learning team saw that clearly a sharing of materials, ideas, locations, and contact persons should be available through the Ministers Council.
Approximately 1/3 of those responding to the survey were no longer in pastoral ministry. Over 85% of the entire group said they were able to see the working of God and the Holy Spirit through even the most difficult and stressful of those experiences.
Harry Riggs offered a prayer for those that may be struggling through a pastoral situation that what they heard would cause them to see that there is light and God's leading.
- Chakravarthy Zadda is the point person of the Next Generation of Leaders Mission Table group. These meetings bring groups of very different ages (18-40 and 50+) together for one hour for six different conversation times. These meetings took place in Seattle, San Francisco, and Chicago. Though there were six conversations they were not able to find one topic to bring to the table.

Instead they said, let's talk. By the end they were able to generate a new relationship built an understanding where their different generations were coming from.

One of the things he found insightful is that the older people are willing to learn and the younger group is willing to teach. In an Asian context this was a surprise to him.

Conversations such as these are being encouraged through the Asian Alliance which will help Asian churches who are interested.

- Deborah Jackson, executive director of The Ministers Council shared what adaptive challenges the organization has identified. Alan Selig already mentioned the Pastoral Attrition team. Deborah spoke about the other two action teams – Women in Ministry and Clergy Help.

The Women in Ministry team focused on the issue of retiring pastors and the need for congregations to pave the way for women to be considered for pastoral positions. They also put together resources that would be available to churches about this issue and the issue of inequity. The hope is that there would be more women in senior pastoral roles in some of the healthy churches in our ABC family.

With regard to health, clergy are some of the most overweight, unhealthy people in the country so we need to talk about physical health as well as financial health and retirement readiness.

- Carl Ratliff spoke about Joining God in the Neighborhood. Church doesn't just happen inside the building. If you continue to try to figure out how to draw people into your building you're probably not going to get very far. In his congregation they have started listening to what's going on in their neighborhood.

For the last 5 years, they have served approximately 25,000 Sunday evening meals to the community. The people attending these meals aren't part of the church. They don't feel like they're coming to a worship service or attaching themselves to the church. They meet, share their stories and minister to one another.

Carl's wife heard someone say they had never read through the Bible. After doing a little advertising, the first group of about 20 met to start reading "The Story." After 31 weeks they decided to invite others which led to 3 groups of Bible study.

These people are not regular attendees of the worship service but are contributing members of the congregation. This has provided an amazing transformation of the people within the church as they have become extremely generous with their gift of time.

30. Susan introduced a video which provided a sample of what happened during the Mission Summit Conversations earlier on Saturday afternoon. Some of the participants shared:

- One person in a group talking about spirituality summed it up this way: God kissed me and then pushed me off the cliff.
- Conversation was about people from Burma and how deeply and profoundly their lives are impacting the face and life of the ABC.
- The discussion at my table was on violence which led to several insights:
 - i. Violence in America is acceptable. America loves violence.
 - ii. Violence is part of our value system. America values violence, as long as it does not happen to us.
- One group discussed human trafficking.
 - i. It was a very interesting discussion about a complicated issue, with a lot of routes to the problem and a lot of different ways to address it.
 - ii. The most important element are those who are caught up in it. We should not look at them as criminals but as the victims.
- On the topic of the missional church, many exciting stories about churches that are engaged and meeting the needs of their communities were shared, but the greatest challenge is helping people make a paradigm shift in their thinking that God is the one who has the mission, not the church who has the mission.
- A table group talking about volunteerism, shared the key concept learned is that you don't have to do something big to make a difference. The little things are important.
- Making connections with the people at the table, regardless of the topic we were discussing was valuable. Coming together with brothers and sisters in Christ is always a fun thing at these events.

31. Jeff Woods introduced the interactive website which will provide an opportunity to not just read about the process but be engaged in it. Already on the website are reports from conversations that happened in 2013 and those that are happening up until this point as well as messages from today. Find a topic that was discussed today, click on that topic, and make a comment. We hope that the conversations continue online.

32. Harry Riggs closed the meeting in prayer.

SATURDAY EVENING GATHERING, JUNE 27, 2015

WORSHIP 7:00 – 9:00 PM

Transformed In the Journey

33. Attendees were welcomed with instrumental music by the band.

34. The congregation, led by the worship leaders, sang *How Great is Our God/How Great Thou Art*.

35. The opening prayer and welcome were given by Harry Riggs and Susan Gillies.

36. Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins III, the executive director of the American Baptist Home Mission Societies and J. Alfred Smith, Jr., pastor of Allen Temple Baptist Church, Oakland, CA, presented the Edwin T. Dahlberg Peace and Justice Award to Congresswoman Barbara Lee.
37. Don Ng, ABCUSA President and A. Roy Medley, general secretary of American Baptist Churches USA presented the Cora and John Sparrowk President's Award to David Gnirk, ND rancher and member of First Baptist Church of Lucas, ND.
38. Reg Mills, Past Chair of the Biennial Mission Summit Planning Team, brought a welcome to the special guests in attendance. These included Roy Medley's family, the ABCUSA staff and international guests.
39. The Community Christian Credit Union introduced a video they produced honoring Roy Medley.
40. The congregation sang *10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord, O My Soul)*.
41. Robin Sandbothe, Central Baptist Theological Seminary Director of Seminary Relations, gave the invocation.
42. The band provided a musical response with *More Light, More Truth*.
43. Bob Phares, member of First Baptist Church of North Platte, NE, read the scripture, Luke 24:13-17.
44. Margene Phares, member of First Baptist Church of North Platte, NE, read Luke 24:25-35.
45. Young women representing Bacone College invited the attendees to the offering.
46. The offertory music sung by the worship leaders was *Down to the River to Pray*.
47. Nikita McCalister, American Baptist Churches of Rhode Island, introduced the celebrations of experiences of the Transformed by the Spirit journey. A short video highlighted some of the stories shared by people, congregations and communities being Transformed by the Spirit. Nikita invited everyone to the Sunday afternoon sessions, Next Steps in the Mission Summit Conversations with Jeff Woods.
48. Clayton Ford, National Co-Director for Holy Spirit Renewal Ministries, offered a prayer before the congregation sang *Jesus, Be the Center*

49. Roy Medley began his message by thanking all of those who have supported him and that he has worked with during his life with American Baptist Churches. He welcomed and thanked his family for their unending love and support and recounted a few humorous memories that he and his wife Pat have shared during their travels.

- The account of Cleopas and his companion's travel from Jerusalem to Emmaus shows how they were transformed in their journey with the risen Lord.
- From our earliest beginnings, Baptists have emphasized "heart religion." At the heart of our faith is not a philosophy, not a program, but a person: Jesus of Nazareth, the Living Lord.
- Early Baptists expressed their conviction in the declaration, "There is more light yet to break forth from the scripture." It is this principle that has led us as American Baptists to be a headlight and not a tail light in striving for social justice, peace and reconciliation as a people centered in Christ.
- Roy recalled some memories of being a young boy in the Deep South. His parents taught him that you are poor only when you fail to be generous to those in need. They had grown up in segregation. Leaving behind old prejudices and old ways was difficult, but in the journey they were transformed by the Living Christ speaking through a Living Word. He noted that it is important for us as a community of believers to remember who we are, where we came from, and how we have been transformed by a Living Christ speaking through the Living Word in our journey as American Baptists. American Baptists need to be reminded of the stock from which we sprang.
 - Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson were founding leaders of Baptist life in America. Both were declared heretics by the Puritan leaders of Massachusetts and exiled. Both remained undeterred in their emphasis on a faith that is personal and the right of religious liberty for all. New light was breaking forth.
 - George Lisle was the first American overseas missionary. Born a slave, he bought his freedom, sought education and took the gospel to Jamaica where he founded a thriving Baptist community and was influential in ending slavery on the island. New light was breaking forth.
 - Anne and Adoniram Judson faced stiff opposition from Old School Baptists who insisted on the doctrine of predestination. The Judson's were part of a theological revolution that changed Baptists into a "whosoever will" missionary force unparalleled in modern history. New light was breaking forth.
 - John Mason Peck and Isaac McCoy led the movement of Baptists across the Mississippi into the burgeoning West. At a time when there was debate as to whether Native Americans had souls, Peck, McCoy and other home missionaries were founding churches and schools among Native Americans and advocating for their rights. New light was breaking forth.
 - During and after the War Between the States, Henry Morehouse steered the home mission society in advocacy against slavery and the founding of schools for the newly freed. Joanna P. Moore, unable to convince the home mission society that she should be appointed to serve in the South during reconstruction was undeterred. So she founded the Woman's American Baptist

Mission Society to send her into Tennessee and Mississippi starting fireside schools for African-American women and children and became beloved because of her self-sacrifice. New light was breaking forth.

- Helen Barrett Montgomery and Walter Rauschenbush led a revolution of justice and compassion. Montgomery, the first woman president of the Northern Baptist Convention, was a Biblical scholar active in the struggle for women's rights. Walter Rauschenbush, created the Social Gospel movement because as a Baptist pastor in Hell's Kitchen in New York City he saw the cruelty of child labor firsthand. New light was breaking forth.
- Carl F.H. Henry was a leader in the evangelical movement in America. A close friend of Billy Graham, he became the first editor of *Christianity Today* the foremost publication for evangelicals. New light was breaking forth.
- Martin Luther King, Jr., galvanized the conscience of the world as he led America in a nonviolent pilgrimage toward equality and reconciliation through the teachings of Jesus. New light was breaking forth.
- Everyone should expect to be received with love and respect in Christ's church. We belong to the church; the church does not belong to us. Who are we to refrain from offering the mercy, the comfort, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to any? Such is not our right for it is Christ who says without qualification, "Come unto me all that labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest." "All" he says and contradicts us when we want to say, "some." We cannot live as a gated community. New light is breaking forth as to the breadth of the embrace of God's love. Dare to love all fearlessly.
- Regardless of where you stand on the issues of global warming, each of us as stewards is called to exercise care for this gift of God we call creation. To exercise good and responsible stewardship of this gift is to honor God who created all that is, "seen and unseen" and declared it good.
- Around the globe, religion is implicated as a source of violence. American Baptists, do not be afraid to join hands with people of other faiths to work for peace in the world. As long as people of different faiths cannot live in peace with one another, the world will not live in peace. As Christians, we understand that work for peace is an expression of God's love toward all. As Baptists we understand that it is an expression of our commitment to religious liberty. In the midst of violence in the name of God, we must allow new light to break forth.
- We are here tonight just over a week after the slaughter of brothers and sisters at Emanuel AME church in Charleston, SC. Let us not be shy. Let us be bold in declaring: Black lives matter – all lives matter. Fifty years ago, American Baptists played an important role in the civil rights movement. Today, we must find our voice anew and rededicate ourselves to the task of equality for all. Like any deadly virus, racism depends on a host in which it can live, grow and multiply. Racism depends on good people not speaking up. Racism depends on good people looking the other way. Racism depends on good people doing nothing. We can't afford to be good people.

- Let us not just mourn the deaths in Charleston, let us take concrete steps of repentance, justice and reconciliation and let us each begin with ourselves and our attitudes towards people of other colors and ethnicities. New light must break through the pall of racism that hangs over us as a death shroud. Whatever your complexion, we all have skin in the game of getting race right in our country. New light must break through. Dare to love fearlessly.

50. The congregation sang *Be Thou My Vision* as a song of response.
51. Josue Gómez-Menendez, president of the ABCUSA Hispanic Caucus, presented General Secretary Roy Medley with a plaque of appreciation.
52. Dennis Johnson, ABCUSA parliamentarian and pastor at Charleston Baptist Temple, Charleston, WV, Marie Onwubuariri, executive minister of American Baptist Churches of Wisconsin, and Jeffrey Haggray, pastor of Zion Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia and recently elected executive director of the American Baptist Home Mission Societies, brought greetings and thanks to Roy Medley for his 14 years of service as the general secretary of American Baptist Churches USA.
53. Roy Medley responded to the abundance of well wishes and invited his family on stage to join him as he thanked everyone for their love and support.
54. Trinette McCray asked the congregation to stand and hold hands as she offered prayer for Roy and his family.
55. The entire congregation sang *Blest Be the Tie That Binds*.
56. Roy Medley offered the benediction to close the service.

SUNDAY MORNING BUSINESS SESSION, JUNE 28, 2015

9:00 – 9:30 AM

57. Don Ng welcomed Biennial Mission Summit delegates, called the meeting to order and led in prayer.
58. Don Ng reminded us that rather than ballots, the voting card included in delegate packets will be used for voting. Having received no nominations for any position from the cooperating churches, each vote will be a yes or no vote by uplifted voting card.
59. Ruth Clark, member of the ABCUSA nominating committee, brought the report of the for the 2016-2017 officers and moved their election:

President – Two-year term, ending December 31, 2017

Rev. Judy Fackenthal, Garfield Park Baptist Church, Indianapolis, IN

Vice President – Two-year term ending December 31, 2017

Dr. Josue D. Gómez-Menendez, First Baptist Church, Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico

Budget Review Officer – Two-year term, ending December 31, 2017

Mr. Paul Higgins, Rainbow Acres, Camp Verde, AZ

60. Don Ng called for a delegate vote, and the officers were elected.
61. Ruth Clark referred the delegates to the nominees for At-Large members of the Board of General Ministries, located on page 13 of the Program Book. Ruth asked the delegates to add the name of Annie Svitavsky for Vermont/New Hampshire for the term of 2017-2018. Ruth also informed the delegates that for West Virginia, Mary Jane Kiley, class of 2018, was elected by the BGM to complete the unexpired term of the At-Large Director from West Virginia. On behalf of the nominating committee, she moved the election of these for the terms specified.
62. Don Ng called for a delegate vote, and the slate of At-Large members was elected.
63. Judy Fackenthal, president-elect was invited to share a few words.
64. Judy Fackenthal, vice president of ABCUSA, moved the adoption of the minutes of the business sessions of the 2013 Biennial. The motion was seconded, a vote was taken and the minutes were adopted.
65. Paul Higgins, budget review officer, presented the Auditor's Report on the 2014 ABCUSA Audited Financial Statements for the years ended December 31, 2014 and 2013, ABCUSA received from Tait, Weller, and Baker LLP, public accountants. Some of the highlights of the report were shared via power point.
 - To clarify the question of a correction to the minutes, there was some awkward wording in the 2013 business session minutes but the language is correct. No change was necessary.
 - The scope and opinion paragraphs state that this is a clean or unqualified opinion.
 - The simplified balance sheet shown to the delegates for the years 2013 to 2014 shows that ABCUSA has current assets of about \$5.5 million and non-current assets of about \$34.5 million. Liabilities are \$5.3 million, consisting of money to be disbursed to other ABC organizations and money received in advance for upcoming year's use of the Mission Center property. The difference between the

assets and liabilities is net assets or surplus. And of those net assets, \$3.2 million was restricted by donors to be used solely as endowment. Another \$5.6 million was also restricted by donors but for particular projects or purposes. The rest, almost \$26 million, does not have restrictions. However, in the past, the General Board set aside most of that, almost \$24 million, for specific purposes.

- ABCUSA has several sources of revenue through the provision of services to other ABC organizations and its receipt of payment for those services. Income is also accrued from the Mission Center property, although this dropped significantly in 2014 due to unexpected costs associated with the building. When your church supports United Mission it helps fund a variety of American Baptist efforts including ABCUSA. Last year we received almost \$2.2 million this way. Another major source of income is our investments. In 2014 our investment income was less than half of what it was in 2013 due to the overall performance of the investment market.
- Last year total revenue for ABCUSA was about \$6.6 million, down from \$8.4 million in 2013 primarily due to the fluctuations in the investment market but also in part because of the Mission Center property.
- Our expenses rose a modest 3% between 2013 and 2014.

Copies of the financial statement were available outside the door of the room. For a complete audit report, visit the ABC website at www.abc-usa.org or call the Treasurer's office for a copy.

66. Don Ng stated the next item of business was the proposed by-law amendments. Our experience with the by-laws adopted in 2011 and the advice of New York Counsel regarding some amendments to the NY Non-Profit corporation law, have led us to believe it appropriate to propose these changes. This is a formal notice of submission of those proposed by-laws amendments to the delegates for their consideration at the 2017 Biennial Mission Summit. This was a notice only, and time for questions and discussion on the proposed amendments will be allotted at the 2017 biennial meeting in Portland, Oregon.

- Article 19, Section I of the by-laws provides that bylaws may be added to, amended or repealed only with the consent of the delegates at any biennial meeting of delegates provided that 1) notice of any such proposed addition, amendment or repeal has been given to the delegates upon the recommendation of the Board of General Ministries either, a) at least 90 days prior to the biennial meeting at which such proposed addition, amendment or repeal is to be submitted, or b) at the biennial meeting immediately preceding the biennial meeting at which such proposed addition, amendment or repeal is to be submitted. Any addition to, amendment of or repeal may be recommended by majority vote of the entire Board of General Ministries taken at any meeting of the Board of General Ministries. The Board of General Ministries has recommended that the amendments as summarized on the screen, which are available online at www.abc-usa.org and also available in hard

copy for distribution to interested delegates at the biennial office, be presented to the delegates for their consideration at the 2017 Biennial Mission Summit.

- The summary of the proposed changes to the amendments are:

Article 4, Section 2 –

To note that the flexible stewardship plan no longer exists.

Article 7, Section 1 –

To add the Intercaucus President as a Mission Table participant.

Article 10, Section 1 –

To provide that the Board of General Ministries director appointed to fill a vacancy of less than 2 years is eligible for reelection for an additional 4 year term.

To provide that regions will suggest 3 people, rather than 5 for nominees for At-Large Directors.

To provide that the President, General Secretary and the Region Executive may agree to submit only the incumbent's name as a nominee to a second term.

Article 15, Section 1 –

To provide that neither the President nor the Vice President be an employee of ABCUSA.

Article 17 -

To provide that the standing rules shall list the Associated Ministry Organizations.

- A Notice of a Move to Amend was received in the ABC office. According to the Rules of Procedure, Marcus Almonte was invited to the microphone. He was given 5 minutes to explain his Move to Amend Notice, after which 15 minutes was allotted to discussion of Rev. Almonte's presentation. Each following speaker was allowed to speak for 3 minutes. Following that discussion the delegates will have an opportunity to choose whether or not to act on what is presented.
 - Marcus Almonte, from Puerto Rico, a life-long American Baptist, and Senior Pastor of Brandywine Baptist Church in Chadds Ford, PA which was founded in 1692, proposed an amendment to the ABC Bylaws in the section entitled "Prologue, Our Faith in the Bible." He noted that it is important as a people of faith to recognize that we are also a people of the book of the Word of God. The current wording of the Prologue is "we believe the Bible composed of the Old and New Testaments is the divinely inspired Word of God., the final written authority and trustworthy for faith and practice. It is to be interpreted responsibly under the guidance of the Holy Spirit within the community of faith. The primary purpose of the Bible is to point to Jesus Christ, the living Lord of the Church." He further stated that he believes that we are living in a day and age when we need to be more specific on what we believe about the Word of God.

As a result, he proposed a change to read as follows: “We believe the Bible composed of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, is the divinely inspired, infallible Word of God, without error in the original writings are [sic] final authority for all matters in life, faith and practice. It is to be interpreted responsibly under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; the primary purpose of the Bible is to point to Jesus Christ, the living Word and the Lord of the church.” He explained that it is important for us to be specific. Since the Old and New Testaments can include many other books there is a need to affirm that there are 66 books as the canon of scripture. The other important change is that it is the divinely inspired and infallible Word of God, without error in its meaning for us. It is our final authority in all matters, not just in stately matters but in life. When within our diverse community of faith there are people who disagree with the authority of the Word of God, therefore the interpretation should be responsibly done by the Holy Spirit with scripture interpreting scripture.

- In answer to a question about whether action would be taken on the proposed change to the Bylaws, it was explained that a vote on this would not be taken during this meeting but would have to be taken at the next Biennial.
 - Laura Jones, Milwood Baptist Church, Massachusetts, suggested using “Hebrew Scriptures” instead of “Old Testament” because God’s word is never old, but ever living.
 - Bill Douglas, FBC, Pasadena, CA expressed his concern at the attempt to “tamp down every word” and proposed that each one allow the Holy Spirit to speak.
 - Jonathan Malone, FBC, East Greenwich, RI, while applauding the passion of Rev. Almonte and recognizing the importance of saying that the Bible is our authority, noted the risk of cutting people out by changing the wording and cautioned against changing the Bylaws for this reason.
 - Jackie Biliel, Ninth Street B.C. Evanston, spoke against the amendment for three reasons: 1. She does not believe that the statement suggesting that we disagree about the authority of Scripture is accurate but rather that we vary in our sense of the method of application of Scripture. 2. She believes that it is factually inaccurate to say that we have consensus about describing Scripture as stated by Rev. Almonte; and, 3. She does not favor the amendment because it introduces and unnecessary obstacle to ecumenical life and also to the value of intellectual rigor as understood by some in the history and development of Scripture.
 - Jerry Sprock, FBC, Hays, KS, spoke in favor of the amendment, suggesting that the statement as presented, can be edited prior to the next biennial.
 - Manuel Luquin, FBC, Yakima, WA, also spoke in favor of the amendment, explaining that he feels that we sometimes interpret the Bible according to our own laws and traditions rather than allowing the Holy Spirit to direct us.
- The proposal presented is to amend the Prologue of the ABCUSA Bylaws under the section “Our Faith in the Bible”, specifically lines 12-17. The vote is for the Intent to Amend at the 2017 Biennial Mission Summit meeting. If the vote is in favor, then the Committee on Standing Rules & Bylaws will receive the proposal and it will come to the

delegates in 2017. If the vote is negative, then the proposal will go no further.

- A vote was taken by having delegates raise their voting cards at the appropriate time, either for or against the motion. Since there were no designated tellers, delegates were asked to help confirm the results of the vote. The larger number of votes were against the motion and the motion failed.

67. Don Ng spoke about how we need to acknowledge and recognize the struggles we have as a country. In the aftermath of so many instances of racial hate and violence in our country, many have expressed their convictions to make a difference in the world. The call of our General Secretary last night to form a task force on racial justice is an expression that can be recognized as our response. All can network, pray and work hand in hand to seek justice and reconciliation. Don promised that there would be follow-up.

68. Don read a statement regarding the General Secretary search:

“The General Secretary search activity has brought forth strong and qualified candidates, each of whom is uniquely gifted in ways worthy to be celebrated and honored. Unfortunately, breaches of confidentiality have compromised the integrity of the search. As a result the Board of General Ministries during Executive Session Wednesday morning, voted to suspend the search process at this time. In moving forward the Board of General Ministries will name an interim general secretary at its November 2015 meeting, and will discern when to resume the search process. As you know, searches are personnel matters, and for this reason further details will not be given nor questions taken. The Board of General Ministries covets your continual prayers for its ongoing vital work especially the critical task of calling our next general secretary who will lead the American Baptist family into the future as the hands and feet of Christ.” As president I ask that we pause to pray together.

69. Don Ng adjourned the Business Session for the 2015 Biennial Mission Summit.

SUNDAY MORNING GATHERING, JUNE 28, 2015

WORSHIP 9:30 – 11:15 AM

Transformed For the Journey

70. Harry Riggs and Susan Gillies opened the time of worship with a word of welcome.

71. Susan Gottshall, director of communications for the American Baptist Home Mission Societies presented their board report.

72. Leo Thorne led a time of celebration of all churches that give to United Mission. A letter of thanks is sent annually to all churches who increase their United Mission giving, renew giving to United Mission after a time away, or become new givers to United

Mission. Gifts to United Mission express your appreciation for and participation in ABC. Top givers to United Mission were recognized and presented with a certificate:

- Number 1 in United Mission giving, and Number 1 in United Mission giving among Hispanic congregations is Primera Iglesia Bautista de Carolina, Carolina, PR, Carmen Adames-Vazquez, pastor, and Roberto Dieppa-Baez, executive minister, Iglesias Bautistas de Puerto Rico. Accepting for the church was Carmen Adames.
- Number 2 in United Mission giving, and the top giving Euro American church is Fifth Avenue Baptist Church, Huntington, WV, Allen Reasons, pastor, and David Carrico, executive minister, West Virginia Baptist Convention. Accepting for the church was David Carrico.
- Number 3 in total United Mission, and the top giving Multi-Racial congregation is North Shore Baptist Church, Chicago, IL, Larry Greenfield, executive minister, American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago. Douglas Harris and Carole McVetty two of the pastors along with some members accepted on behalf of the church.
- Highest giving church to United Mission among African American congregations and number 9 overall is Hartford Memorial Baptist Church, Detroit, MI. Charles Adams, pastor and Mike Williams, executive minister, American Baptist Churches of Michigan, accepted for the church.
- First Baptist Church Champaign, in Savoy, Illinois had the highest increase in total United Mission giving. Dwight Stinnett, executive minister, Great Rivers region accepted the award on behalf of the church.
- New Life Community Church in Burlingame, CA is the congregation with the top new giving to United Mission. Steve Bills, executive minister, Central Pacific Coast accepted the award.

Leo Thorne again thanked all churches for their support of United Mission and encouraged them to continue to give to United Mission and the other four annual offerings.

73. Harry Riggs announced the winners of the Ministry Story Opportunity contest. For video entries there are three prizes at \$500. These submission winners are:
Project Loaves and Fishes, United Faith Community, Bally, NE
Iglesia Bautista Comunidad Nueva Esperanza, West Virginia
Joya Scholars, Epic Church, Fulton, CA
Winning the top \$1,500 video prize is Cadillac Area backpack program First Baptist Church, Cadillac, MI.
For the written portion of the contest the \$500 prize is Organizing Against Gun Violence, Mill Creek Baptist Church, West Philadelphia, PA.
The top prize of \$1,500 for written entries is Firefighter Ministry, FBC, Scottsbluff, NE

74. The congregation joined in singing *Crown Him With Many Crowns*.

75. Laura Harris-Adam, North Shore Baptist Church led the call to worship litany and invocation.
76. The congregation joined in singing *Crown Him with Many Crowns*.
77. The Karen Choir sang a song.
78. Susan Gillies and Harry Riggs read Psalm 24.
79. Betty Wright-Riggins read Philippians 1:1-6.
80. Margaret Cowden, former ABHMS staff, introduced the speaker for the morning, Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins, III.
81. The choir from Missionary Baptist Church, Kansas City, Kansas provided a musical response.
82. Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins, III, executive director of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, brought the message.
- Aidsand talked about growing up in Compton, California and some of his experiences as a youth, and some of the ways kids in those days expressed themselves at being the target of bullies and older siblings alike. These expressions were in response to anger, frustration, hostility, indifference, and being treated unjustly.
 - In reading Philippians, Aidsand remarked that Paul could have expressed himself in the same way. Paul had plenty of reasons for singing the blues at Philippi, he was mistreated, scourged and saw little to nothing for the fruit of his labor. But still he writes, "I thank God every time I remember you. Constantly praying of joy in my prayers for all of you..."
 - In Charleston, weeping mothers say my feet are tired but soul is rested. I hear the angelic voices of little black boys and little black girls rising above hate, soaring beyond hopelessness and aiming for transcendence. I saw the children and great-grandchildren of slaves living in sub-standard housing, longing for food, longing for education.
 - Humans demonstrate the capacity to move beyond, to say I forgive you. This forgiveness is not cheap. This kind of forgiveness is an act of resistance; an act of refusing to allow one's self to be defined by what others think of you. It is an act of affirmation because God does not make junk, I am somebody.
 - The key to a truly transformative journey of sharing and inclusion is found in the second verse we heard this morning. My ministry has been to demonstrate and articulate as best as I can these words. If American Baptists are to ever bring down the dividing walls between people of color and other people of color, between liberal and conservative, between male and female, between gay and

straight, between the haves and have-nots, between home ministries and foreign ministries, between general ministries and regional ministries, between laity and clergy, if American Baptists are ever going to move from paralyzing fear to momentous faithfulness, we must learn to say to each other and demonstrate to each other this greeting, “Grace, to you. And peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

- Grace is received on high but we are to distribute it below to our brothers and sisters. To everyone, everywhere, right here and right now. The way to the promised land is through the river of grace.
- When no one is forgotten remarkable things happen. First, there are no big I’s and no little you’s. Second, God calls us to a shared journey.
- We aren’t there yet. There is still a lot of ain’t in our saintly-ness. Racial justice, we ain’t there yet. Creation justice, we ain’t there yet. Generational age justice, we ain’t there yet. Gender justice, we ain’t there yet. Sexual orientation and identity justice, we ain’t there yet. And we destroy and hurt each other sometimes because we forget to truly greet each other with peace and justice, or we don’t grant a space for grace to each other; the ain’t in us rises up and struggles with the saint that Christ calls us to be.
- There is too much ain’t-ness in the saints for us to get there by ourselves. Who shall rescue us when we get weary and don’t want to go on? Paul says, “I am confident of this, that the one who began the good work among you will bring it to completion on the day of Jesus Christ.” We cannot get there on our own. Jesus will bring it to completion. Jesus greets us in peace and opens the pathway for us.
- American Baptists, in the face of trials, hold on to God, and hold on to each other. Be confident that the one who began a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

83. *Grace of God, God of Glory* was led by the worship team and sung by the congregation.

84. Virginia Holmstrom led the prayer of confession and the passing of peace.

85. Reid Trulson invited the worshipers to the table.

86. Louis Barbarin and Brad Berglund provided the prayer of thanksgiving with music.

87. Roy Medley led The Lord’s Prayer, blessed the bread and the cup and invited the congregation to partake at the communion stations.

88. Reid Trulson offered a prayer after receiving Communion.

89. Virginia Holmstrom offered a blessing and the benediction.

SUNDAY EVENING GATHERING, JUNE 28, 2015

WORSHIP 7:00 – 9:00 PM

Transformed Through the Journey

90. The congregation joined the worship team in singing *Let the Glory of the Lord Rise Among Us*.
91. Susan Gillies and Harry Riggs brought words of welcome.
92. Heather Entrekin, Des Peres Associate Professor of Congregational Health, Central Baptist Theological Seminary, talked about the Festival of Young Preachers which were a part of the Biennial Mission Summit. Twenty three young preachers from age 12 to 25 participated in this event. Winterbourne LaPucelle Harrison-Jones spoke about his own experience as part of the Academy of Young Preachers.
93. Emile Rodriguez, Convenor, AB Girls National Leadership Team, reported that this year AB Girls celebrated its 100th anniversary and gave a summary of some of the things that the Girls do and experience as members. A video was then shown.
94. Susan Gillies mentioned that Ottawa University choir would be singing later and recognized that they are celebrating their 150th anniversary.
95. Harry Riggs introduced the video sharing International Ministries' report. Reid Trulson, executive director of International Ministries, reported on the Board of Directors meeting during which they approved a new statement on vision and priorities based on Matthew 6:10. *Responding to the Call* is a result of the process which included interviews with over 1,000 people around the world. During the next 9 months, International Ministries will develop specific plans to implement the *Responding to the Call* priorities.
96. Rev. Undra Parker, Assistant Pastor, Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church, Anchorage, Alaska, opened the worship service with a prayer.
97. Mark Hayes, special musical guest, led the congregation in a hymn sing. Songs included *Brethren, We Have Met to Worship* and *We Are Called to Be God's People*.
98. Jackie Saxon read the scripture Mark 5:21-43
99. The worship team sang *Come Thou Fount* while Chloe Lang, Liturgical Movement Dancer, performed on stage.
100. Roy Medley, General Secretary, American Baptist Churches USA, introduced, Don Ng, the preacher this evening.

101. The choir of Ottawa University sang two songs, *Be Still* and *My Soul Has Been Anchored*.

102. Don Ng, president of American Baptist Churches USA, thanked the choir for bringing inspiration to us tonight. Before beginning the message, Don read a statement that many have signed and believe it represents and captures where we are in our faith journey. "In light of the sin of racism, that has infected each and every part of our nation, we, the gathered delegates and participants of the 2015 Mission Summit of the American Baptist Churches USA, the most diverse protestant body in our nation, grieve racism's effects on our people. Therefore, we collectively speak against and repent of our participation in the sin of racism wherever it is found. The presence of white supremacy for too long has gone unacknowledged and has prevented us from living as the body of Christ. Therefore, between now and the 2017 Mission Summit we urge each ABC congregation to covenant in order to seek justice and reconciliation. Hold one another accountable in this endeavor and pursue local incarnated manifestations of the beloved community."

- As American Baptists we need healing. The gospel text refers to a healing within a healing. The wealthy man wants Jesus to heal his daughter but he must wait until Jesus heals a destitute woman who has faith. This raises our own personal question, "will I be healed?"
- Sometimes we find it easier to be in respectful dialogue with coworkers who don't share our faith than we do with other American Baptists. When we are with our Baptist sisters and brothers we become distrustful and our own ability to communicate just shuts down.
- We must do the hard and difficult work to open the doors to welcome all so that we may enjoy the rich diversity that we have claimed as American Baptists. We need each other to be an American Baptist family.
- Jesus wants to hear our troubles. If we have troubles of gender discrimination, Jesus heals both the women and little girls. If we have trouble with people's sexual orientation, believe that it is God who created each one of us in God's own image with love. Jesus commanded us to love one another as we love ourselves. If you have trouble with this, talk to Jesus about it. You can bother and trouble God with your frustration, but know that God's timing is not necessarily ours. If we have trouble with your health, Jesus the healer is working on it. Go ahead and trouble God. God is mightily ready to be troubled.

103. The worship team sang *Great is Thy Faithfulness* in Spanish and asked the congregation to join in the chorus.

104. Ben Chan, Area Director for East Asia and India, International Ministries, shared that tonight's offering will go the One Great Hour of Sharing to support earthquake relief in Nepal.

105. Debora Jackson, executive director, The Ministers Council, sang *Where He Leads Me* as the offertory.
106. Ben gave a prayer of consecration and thanks for the offering received.
107. Leo Thorne, Associate General Secretary for Mission Support Development, ABCUSA and Biennial Coordinator, thanked the many persons who work behind the scenes including Brad Berglund and his tech team, the worship team, Annie Marcucci and her staff, Susan Gillies, the Biennial Mission Summit Planning Team, Harry Riggs, Jeff Woods, Gary Lanette and his staff, Lois Chiles and the Local Arrangements Committee, John Williams and ABC of the Central Region, our Native American family, all of the speakers, workshop leaders and bible study leaders, Fred Stone and the IMS team, Professional Staff Advisory Team, all of the volunteers and so many others who make this event possible. Leo thanked Roy Medley for making time in his busy schedule to work with the planning team as well as to speak on Saturday night. A special thanks to the pastors in the Kansas City area who brought members of their congregations to tonight's worship service. A slideshow showing all of these people was shown in the background. Leo also thanked the delegates, participants and friends for coming together to join the American Baptist family to worship and praise God at this event.
108. A promotional video from the Travel Oregon Chamber of Commerce was shown. Steve Bils, chair of the 2017 Biennial Mission Summit commented on the many reasons to come to Portland. A very special welcome awaits the American Baptist family as the American Baptist Churches of the Central Pacific Coast rolls out the red carpet in June 2017.
109. Harry Riggs and Susan Gillies thanked everyone for attending these events. Susan took a moment to talk about the prayer requests that had been posted to the Prayer Wall over the past few days. Harry prayed over these request.
110. A brief video reflecting this weekend was shown.
111. The congregation joined in singing *Like the Beat of a Drum*.

This is a draft of the minutes from the 2015 Biennial Mission Summit in Overland Park, Kansas. These minutes are not official until voted on at the 2017 Biennial Mission Summit in Portland, Oregon, June 30 – July 2, 2017.