

OGS Report

Acting General Secretary, Rev. Dr. C. Jeff Woods

Activity Report September thru November 2018

It has been an honor to serve as Acting General Secretary this fall as Dr. Lee Spitzer recovers from his recent heart surgery. I am pleased that his recovery is progressing according to schedule and I know that he is grateful for the many thoughts, cards, and prayers. Throughout this assignment I have sought to keep the priorities of ABCUSA moving along while operating within the parameters of the current vision of the office. OGS has a very talented and dedicated staff who have continued to serve with great commitment and camaraderie during this time. The accomplishments and advancements below are due to their dedication.

Vision for the Assignment

- Throughout the interim period, OGS has continued to emphasize Dr. Spitzer's five priorities, namely:
 - Unity of the denomination
 - Serving Regions
 - Promoting the work of National Organizations
 - Growth
 - Creative Partnerships
- In addition to these priorities, three organizational values were also resurrected from a previous OGS retreat for emphasis, namely:
 - Treating one another with dignity and respect
 - Communicating openly and honestly
 - Taking responsibility for doing the right thing

OGS Staff

- Internship. As a result of some networking efforts among ABC institutions, applications for the newly developed ABCUSA internship position were expanded to a reputable pool. Through the staffing of Ken Marsenburg, the pool was narrowed and interviews were conducted. Ken also conducted background and reference checks on the two finalists. We hope to extend an offer soon to the final candidate. We are grateful for the gift of a generous donor who made this internship possible. For further updates regarding our work with donors please see Ken Marsenburg's report in the staff reports section.
- Meals together. In order to get better acquainted and model our organizational values, the staff gathered for an all-staff picnic in September and a soup and chili cook-off in October. Dave Kahn won the chili cook-off and generously revealed his family recipe that has been handed down for generations.
- Celebrating Christmas with the ABC family. Ad hoc teams were formed and began planning for the staff Christmas Party and the distribution of the ABCUSA Christmas card. As an act of generosity, the staff will collect and send funds to a previous recipient of the Matthew 25

grants. This congregation provides 350 backpacks to children in poverty on a weekly basis. We are also working on a toy drive to be distributed through a local congregation.

- Leadership and staff issues. Monthly leadership team meetings were held in order to problem solve, reflect, and think strategically about our upcoming Biennial/Mission Summit, Orientation to ABC Life, communication, United Mission, resourcing efforts, regional visits, OGS budget, etc. Several individual staff issues were also addressed. While I already had several commitments to regional events, trainings, and retreats, I was able to maintain a weekly physical presence in the office for most of the weeks in this role.
- Office of Travel and Conference Planning. Annie Marcucci and her office continued planning for several events including this BGM meeting and the upcoming Space for Grace event next week.
- Healthcare. Laura Miraz conducted an educational seminar regarding health care provider options. Also, a decision was made in conjunction with Alan Musoke on the medical loss ratio associated with the Affordable Care Act.
- Communication. Several press releases and web articles were posted and distributed under the leadership of Bridget Lipin, communications director.
- Treasurer's Office. Alan Musoke worked diligently to propose a balanced budget to the BGM for their review and action.
- United Mission. Tina Turner kept the OGS display moving along this fall to various regional and national events as staff members and board representatives helped provide staffing for the display. The new OGS display made it to 23 regional annual meetings and events and 8 national events this year. Additionally, 11 United Mission bulletin inserts were distributed this year nationally and regionally. An initial meeting of the newly formed United Mission Task Force was also held in October with anticipated feedback to occur at an upcoming regional staff session in conjunction with Space for Grace. The formation of this task force was called forth at the NLC meeting in April. Tina is also working on a new United Mission video that hopefully will be ready for a BGM preview.
- ABCUSA Nominating Committee. Evon Moody responded to several requests for information and nomination forms. A lay woman is needed for the office of president and a male clergyperson is needed for the office of vice-president. Nominations for these positions could be coming to the BGM.

Building and Finance Issues

- Plans for the relocation of staff to a new building continue. Drawings for building updates at the new location were approved and are underway for the new home of ABCUSA and the AB Historical Society. The targeted move date is the first quarter of 2019. Alan Musoke will have further updates on the building move and finances. Bridget Lipin also arranged for a staff inventory of OGS artifacts so that they do not get lost in the move.

Biennial Mission Summit

- While Lee Spitzer had made initial contacts with most of the plenary speakers and workshop leaders for the Biennial Mission Summit, many of these persons needed additional information and confirmation. Through the work of Annie Marcucci and Phillip James, the plenary speakers are now set and workshop leaders are nearly finalized for the Biennial/Mission Summit. Through the work of Marsha Scipio, plans are also progressing for the youth gatherings. Online registration should be available soon. For further updates on the Biennial Mission Summit, please see Annie Marcucci's report on the 2019 Biennial Mission Summit.

Orientation to American Baptist Life (OTABL)

- Kevin Walden met with REMC representatives to the OTABL committee and devised a plan to surface names of new pastors from the regions. He also is working on seminary recruitments for the event. For a more complete update of OTABL, please see Kevin Walden's report in the staff reports section.

Fulfilling the ABCUSA Priority of Unity and Relationships

- AB Foundation. Ken Marsenburg attended the AB Foundation on behalf of ABCUSA.
- Professional Ministries Team. The Professional Ministries Team (PMT) met in October focusing upon innovative models for ministry, one of the seven Mission Table priorities. Rev. Pat Murphy presented an excellent reflection paper on the topic. A covenant of agreement for pastors and congregations of less than full-time ministers was also produced by Dr. Jim Kelsey, a member of PMT, and will be distributed to the REMC.
- Mission Summit Conversations (MSC). An online survey seeking feedback regarding the Mission Summit Conversations and Baptist Talk has been distributed and analyzed. I also distributed a follow-up impact survey to the participants of the Baptist-Muslim Dialogue, facilitated earlier this year.
- Joint Venture. Bridget Lipin created a website article communicating a joint continuing education venture between GRR and Judson College.

Fulfilling the ABCUSA Priority of Promoting the Work of Our National Boards

- ABHMS relocation. It was an honor to participate in the consecration service for the new ABHMS property with Dr. Jeffrey Haggray. Staff members and guests held a service of remembrance and releasing emotions tied to the current building. We then walked to the adjacent property to engage in a consecration service for the new building. I will also be bringing greetings on behalf of OGS at the upcoming Space for Grace event.
- National Board Conversations. During the interim period, several face to face conversations were held with other ABC staff from our national boards including Jeff Haggray and Laura Alden of ABHMS; and Zofia Dripps and Mark Kirchoff of IM, and Gina Jacobs-Strain of ABW Ministries.
- MMBB Request. Perry Hopper of MMBB asked if we could locate a list of nondenominational churches for MMBB. A list was secured from Scott Thumma, director of Faith Communities Today (FACT) and forwarded to MMBB.

- Ministers Council Request. I responded to a request to review a new set of proposed bylaws for the ABCUSA Ministers Council.
- Reduced Costs through OTCP. Annie Marcucci brokered a new contract with the Cvent registration software company on behalf of IM resulting in substantial savings of \$10,650 over two years for IM. She also reduced the ABHMS audio/visual bill for Space for Grace from \$87,000 to \$68,863.40.

Fulfilling the ABCUSA Priority of Emphasizing Regional Ministries (From the overall OGS perspective)

- Region Visits. Extra emphasis has been placed upon visits to our regional offices this year and the staff responded very well to the challenge. The OGS staff made a total of 54 visits to regions this year. These visits included:
 - 13 Region annual meetings
 - 22 Search committee meetings
 - 10 Regional board and region staff training events
 - 4 Regional workshops
 - 6 Clergy retreats and events

Additional regional visits and resourcing efforts can be found in the regional ministries staff report. Note: Regional visits by Lee Spitzer yet to be added to these totals.

Fulfilling the ABCUSA Priority of Growth

- IT Project. Progress is continuing on the C.O.R.E. online networking project.
- Fresh Expressions. Kevin Walden continue to resource regions and congregations interested in the newly developed Fresh Expressions Partnership. For a more complete review of these plans, please see Kevin Walden's report in the staff reports section.
- American Baptist Women in Ministry. ABWWIM is partnering with AB Women's Ministries to celebrate the rich legacy of women in ministry with the theme of "*Celebrating Ministering Women: Radical. Redeemed. Ready.*" Mark June 16-19 on your calendars and see Pat Hernandez staff report for more information on this event.

Fulfilling the ABCUSA Priority of Creative Partnerships

- ABCUSA continues to partner with new agencies for common mission. We are grateful to Marsha Scipio for her connection to the Institute for Civil Discourse, the organization that is providing the educational component for our board work at this meeting. Marsha has also been working with the Blessed Tomorrow leadership team on developing the 3-5minute Creation Justice video for ABCUSA. For further updates on our creative partnerships, please see Marsha Scipio's report in the staff reports section.