

President's report: June 2016

These first six months as President have been full with many opportunities to learn, share, and grow in my understanding and appreciation of this role. The many American Baptist sisters and brothers I've met have been a gift of great joy. With them, I have explored new possibilities and embraced a new level of hopefulness for our denominational families.

In early February, our Interim General Secretary, Susan Gillies, and I had an email exchange. In it I articulated my goals as your president in this biennium.

First-To lead us through the search process for a new General Secretary with grace and a heart open to discern the leading of God's Spirit among us. I daily find myself in prayer for this process. In discernment with the Executive Committee in March, it was decided to employ an Executive Search Recruitment firm. I have been interviewing firms and will ask three of them to make presentations to the Search Committee at our first meeting. I trust God's Spirit to give us wisdom, grace, and openness as we begin this sacred task. Please hold the committee and potential candidates in prayer.

Second-To continue to renew and strengthen relationships within our American Baptist family. With three retirements completed and others on the horizon, we stand in a holy moment for our denomination. The time is ripe for rich conversations that will open pathways for new vision and movement in our mission and ministries. Strengthening relationships is vital to how we listen to God's heartbeat within the American Baptist family. To this end, as I was present at the April meeting of the REMC and NLC, I made it my goal to listen and hear the words beneath the spoken words. It was a week of relationship building and renewing for which I am thankful. I have deep respect for the ministry of regional ministers as well as all our national staff. A new day is dawning among us as a spirit of openness to each other is shifting the way we work and speak together.

Third-To raise up the significance of discipleship and spirituality. We are only able to listen to God's Spirit and be the hands and feet of Christ when we have a growing deepening practice of engaging God in daily life. Rhythms of the Spirit continues to be a priority for me. By the time this report is filed I will have traveled to Taizé, France with Rhythms as a way of supporting this vital ministry. At the 2015 Mission Table I volunteered to champion the role of discipleship in our churches. These two aspects of our faith journey set us on a course with Christ that opens us to grace, hope, and endless possibilities.

Four-To walk with the UM AD team as we launch United Mission is the Vehicle as a full emphasis across the denomination. We have met twice and amazing creative energy bursts forth from this diverse group of American Baptists. We will miss Leo Thorne's leadership, but are so very grateful for the path he has paved that brings Mission Resource Development to this creative point. In this same vein, I plan to keep the United Mission Adaptive Challenges before us. We may not fully engage these challenges until a new

General Secretary has begun, but we can begin to seek platforms for living into these challenges.

In addition to these goals, I have met with the Biennial Mission Summit Planning Team. Another dynamic group of American Baptists are listening to the Spirit and working on your behalf to plan a Biennial that will bring us together in the love of Christ Jesus. It promises to be a blessed family reunion!

Working with Interim General Secretary, Susan Gillies, has been a tremendous blessing. Susan brings incredibly deep and rich leadership skills to us that are so very appropriate for this moment in time. She is a calm steady force in this time of transition.

It is an honor and privilege to serve with you and represent you throughout the American Baptist family. I ask for your continued prayer support, that together we listen to God's nudging and bring out the best in who we are as ABCUSA.

Serving alongside you as the hands and feet of Christ,

Judy Fackenthal

President, ABCUSA 2016-2017