



## Intercaucus American Baptist Churches, USA

### *President's Report to the Board of General Ministries Friday, November 15, 2013*

Madam President Clark

Sr. Presidente eleito Ng

Sr. Pasado Presidente Frank

Monsieur le Secrétaire Général Medley, et les secrétaires généraux adjoints

Most esteemed sisters and brothers of the Board of General Ministries

¡Qué la paz y la gracia de nuestro Señor Jesucristo esté con ustedes!

Que la paix et la grâce de notre Seigneur Jésus Christ soit avec vous!

Que a paz ea graça de nosso Senhor Jesus Cristo esteja com você!

May the peace and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you!

Psalm 107 served as the foundation of my report to the Intercaucus biennial meeting during the past Mission Summit in Kansas City, MO. This is the Psalm many quote when leading peoples in calls to worship or inviting them to communion, affirming that God invites the people to worship and to remembrance from north and south and east and west. But for many decades, and certainly for little over two years since the San Juan biennial gathering, the Intercaucus has been deliberate in modeling for the denomination that our diversity is not only racial and ethnic, and that it is much more powerful than a historical representation of others in the local, regional, national and global of American Baptists. Surely, as the psalmist wrote, American Christianity, and American Baptists particularly, are more than a gathering of people from all over the globe, but also from an array of life experiences and transitions.

Our friend and mentor, Yosh Nakagawa, constantly reminds me that, although we have (for sure) come a long way as racial and ethnic minorities in our denomination, this journey has taken decades. Yosh has been a psalmist for those of us committed to the multiple expressions of diversity within our denomination, both reminding us of the long journey that has been traveled, but also of the newness that is yet to be attained. Racial and ethnic leaders in our denomination – whether we are serving the groups we come from, or have the opportunity to minister to a diverse group of people – know that they are still in that space of the “already, but not yet.” We know this historical moment of our denomination was made possible by the intentional – and often painstaking – work of women and men who were committed to their contextual particularities, but were also committed to a more excellent, vibrant and relevant witness of the Gospel in their context, for the country, and the world.



*Asian - Black - Indian - Haitian - Hispanic - Portuguese-speaking*



## Intercaucus

### *American Baptist Churches, USA*

The new structure of our denomination will continue to provide with interesting ways to live out this passion for a diverse and relevant American Baptist witness in all of our endeavors and relations. Earlier this week, many racial and ethnic caucus presidents joined the gathering of regional and national elected leaders and staff to begin the discernment of the many challenges and opportunities that were voiced during the Mission Summit. The preparation for the Mission Table began for many of the caucuses during their biennial gatherings in Kansas City, MO, where many dedicated meeting time to gather insight to share during the Mission Table. From observer status in the former structures, to expectation of presence, contribution, influence and vote, the new structure we continue to live into will not only provide caucuses opportunities to witness to the uniqueness of their constituencies, but also expects that these particularities continue to form and shape the new way American Baptists live and work together, relate to other Christian fellowships, and witnesses to the nation and the world. It is in this intentionality of engagement that I believe and hope racial and ethnic groups in American Baptist life will inform and shape the narrative and ministry of the ABCUSA.

There are also other groups, that are not racial and ethnic, for whom I hope and pray for significant spaces to gather, to organize, and to inform the narrative of the life and ministry of our denomination. American Baptist Women's Ministries and American Baptist Women in Ministry have a history in American Baptist life that is longer than people realize. Some would even argue that denominational life as the gathering of parties interested in common mission and ministry in our tradition was begun by women. A space for women to come together, beyond ministries for and by women, and the needed collegial gathering of what is still a minority (and sometimes discriminated against) group of women ministers, may provide for the instance for the distinctive voice of women to distill from and flow to the other "diversities" in our Baptist family, and our common mission.

I would also like to speak on behalf of a young adult caucus, beyond the gathering of the occasional "under 40" group in the BGM. Many of the "under 40s" that have gone through the last few years of the General Board, and who are present in the BGM went to, or has relations to someone who went to the emerging leaders gathering that took place in the 2005 Biennial in Denver. Perhaps an unintended result of this gathering was that many of us still keep in touch, and more often than not can organize fairly quickly when there is an issue coming up in denominational life that we feel needs our input. I hope that soon this adhoc gatherings, which remains dependent on an active and intentional under-40 presence on the BGM, would develop into a denominational caucus, as an expression of the interest and commitment of the BGM and ABCUSA to its emerging leadership and to its young and young adult populations.



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Through the last two years, the Intercaucus has shifted from a space of fellowship and networking, to a collegial working group of shared experiences, interest and ministries. This collegial relationship will be key in continuing the transition of the new structure of relationship in our denomination. As this transition continues, I see one added challenge to the Intercaucus. As many have and will continue to hear, the narrative of American Baptist life and ministry usually begins with the claim that the ABCUSA is one of the most diverse Christian denomination today. The challenge, however, is to move from a claim of diversity to living within this diversity. I look forward to the day that we can claim and tell the story of a Christian people of prayer, purpose and passion whose ministries and witness is the intentional engagement across one of the most diverse gatherings of communities of faith reflecting an impressive diversity of racial, ethnic, national, gender, generational and theological expressions and experiences joined by the mission of Jesus in the world - American Baptist Churches, USA. And I believe the Intercaucus of the ABCUSA is now in the unique position to be itself an engagement with and across cultures, and teach our denomination to live our diversity in unity. And as passionate and optimistic as I am for the future of our denomination, I realize the decades of work it took us to get to this day, and the work it will take to move us along.

And I see good news in our moving along. The fact that the last president of the General Board is a Black lay man from southern California, that the first president of the Board of General Ministries is a white lay woman from the Heartland, and the president elect is an Asian American clergy working in California, but from Boston are signs of our diversities playing into the fabric of who we say we are and what we say we are for. In its last biennial meeting, those present at the Intercaucus elected The Rev. Kenneth "Ken" Kho as president-elect, and new leadership was introduced in many of the racial/ethnic caucuses.

It has been a privilege to serve as Intercaucus observer in the last two years of the General Board, and as Intercaucus President in the 2012-13 biennium. And I remain at your service in everything possible.

A dreamer, and your fellow wayfarer,

The Rev. Amaury Tañón-Santos, D.Min.  
President, American Baptist Intercaucus 2012-2013