

BGM Item #4



ABCUSA Identity Experiment

ABCUSA's recent restructuring has prompted the need to identify a clear Identity for the denomination. The ABCUSA Identity Action Learning Team (ALT) proposes an experiment to achieve this objective in the belief that, with the proposed experiment, the new ABCUSA identity would emerge from the evolving life of the new Board of General Ministries (BGM).

When the new BGM met in Orlando in January 2012 for its inaugural orientation meeting, the members left with strong, positive feelings and visions of a board that chose to incarnate its responsibilities. The activities at that meeting created an atmosphere for board members to interact and to become more familiar with one another. The ALT heard compelling stories from BGM members themselves about the positive impact of being able to get acquainted with one another and become more familiar with our lives and ministries as ABC people.

The ALT understands that, since the BGM draws from a wide variety of persons and seeks in its representation to have one person serving from each region in order to act as the governing board to broadly reflect American Baptist life, the board itself experiment with what we seek to discover as our ABC identity. The ALT believes that, if we as a board practice this "incarnational" approach in our meeting, in God's time a new and clear ABCUSA identity will emerge.

This new culture and practice would include:

- Meeting American Baptists face-to-face in the geographic settings they are serving by placing board meetings "on location" with the aim to get to know the different **contexts** of ministries.
- Finding opportunities of sharing and interacting with **ABC people** in selected local churches and regions as a way of entering into their lives and various ministries with the hope that they get to know us and our ministries and we get to know them. Such visits may also have a positive impact on United Mission giving.
- Strategizing and **prioritizing issues** that may emerge from engaging with ABC constituents and with each other.
- Working and collaborating more together as a full board to harness the **synergy of the whole** and give shape to the **bigger picture** of ABC ministry and mission.
- Addressing regular business items with **expediency** and using alternate modes of conducting business, leaving time for greater collaborative efforts.
- Involving BGM members to become **directly engaged** with ABCUSA's wider ecumenical and other ministries.

The ALT's proposed experiment is to consider revising the June 2013 BGM meeting schedule to reflect the above qualities. In the time that we would have at our discretion, ideas may include: a visit to an ABC church in Kansas and/or Missouri; a visit to Bethel Christian Center or Central Seminary or Ottawa University. A time to debrief and reflect on such experiences might affect what we do and would begin to give shape to the identity that we seek.

If this is acceptable, we would allocate some time at our March 13-14, 2013 BGM Executive Committee meeting in Chicago to discuss the merits of this proposed experiment and to revise the June BGM schedule with the cooperation of Conference Services.

February 26, 2013