

BGM Item 6(10) Parking Lot

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Board of General Ministries Members
Office of the General Secretary, ABC USA
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FUTUREBAPTIST CONVOCATION

NORTH AMERICAN BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP

Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church
Philadelphia, PA

March 6-7, 2014

Summary

The NABF FutureBaptists Convocation was an excellent gathering of diverse representatives of North American Baptists from across the U.S. and Canada, including young adult participants. The convocation provided opportunity for conversation and networking in an intimate, small group setting regarding issues of concern selected by convocation participants. Presenters and speakers, several of which connected to Baptist World Alliance, provided information that aided small group discussions and offered best practices exemplars of collaborative efforts. We expect that over the next 18 months the NABF will engage registered participants in continuous working groups of interest to reach goals for a Collaborative Missional Movement.

On request from Dr. Don Ng, President, ABC USA, and Dr. A. Roy Medley, General Secretary, ABC USA, we (Mr. Dean Parker and Dr. Ernest H. Jones) attended the FutureBaptist Convocation of the North American Baptist Fellowship (NABF), “a voluntary organization of Baptist Conventions in Canada, the United States, and Mexico,”¹ at the Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church of Philadelphia, PA, March 6-7, 2014. The convocation was an excellent gathering of North American Baptists – 88 in total - from across the country and Canada including young adult representation, making it as denominationally diverse as it was intergenerational.

The convocation commenced with introductory and purpose statements from Dr. George Bullard, General Secretary, NABF and Dr. David E. Goatley, Executive-Secretary Treasurer, Lott Carey Foreign Mission Convention. Dr. Bullard described the gathering as an opportunity for participants to identify collaborative missional priorities that will serve as guiding principles among and between NABF member organizations for the next half century, using small groups to drive the conversation. Issues of effective collaborative strategies were Dr. Goatley’s focus. Particularly, how can we (Baptists) function and coordinate efforts positioning ourselves for optimum effectiveness, while quickly identifying and addressing obstacles that impede cooperation? Linking his remarks to those of Dr. Bullard, Goatley pushed the point asking if we as Baptists “want to survive or do we want to thrive?” The point being quite clear: our responsibility is to thrive.

Our time in convocation revolved around small group discussions on 12 issues pre-selected by convocation participants by way of two online surveys. The survey methodology was straightforward: circulation of a sampling of potential issues from which each participant

selected seven (7) of greatest import. Once tabulation of survey number one results was complete, the second online survey was administered to participants and those selections collated. These final selections comprise the top 12 Collaborative Missional Movement issues listed below.

PRIORITY	ISSUE
1.	Congregational Transformation/Renewal
2.	Hunger: Alleviation and Elimination Efforts
3.	Economic Oppression: Need for Systematic Reform
4.	Religious Liberty: Freedom from Persecution
5.	Evangelism: Authentic and Genuine
6.	Ministry Preparation: New Models/Lower Cost
7.	Racism: In its Many Forms
8.	Education: Life Skills/Job Training
9.	Women in Ministry
10.	Church Planting/Congregational Multiplication Movement
11.	Immigration: Policies and Practices
12.	Human/Sex Trafficking/Prostitution

Groups were assigned rooms and charged with the following tasks for discussion Session 1:

- Identify topics that people readily agree upon rather than disagree, then
- Explore the question, ‘What seems impossible today that, if it were to change, would transform our missions and ministry?’

Session 1 discussions ran approximately 90 minutes. Session 2, held after the dinner/networking break, continued the evening's discussions format. Sessions 3 and 4, held Friday morning and afternoon, slightly shifted the discussion focus.

Before our second day of discussions commenced, however, several denominational/organizational heads and representatives brought greetings and spent time describing their particular ministries. Speakers included Dr. Neville Callam, General Secretary, Baptist World Alliance; Dr. John Upton, President, BWA; and Dr. Albert Reyes, President and CEO, Buckner International. Afterwards, our attention turned to small group discussions.

The expansive nature of the topics required narrowing the focus to encourage increasingly productive dialogue. Dr. Bullard elicited Ken Callahan's mantra to aid participants' conceptualization of this task: "plan to accomplish more by planning to do less." To facilitate this refinement, groups redefined and reframed their top three priority issues, placing issues in language that resonated with participants within each group. Put differently, groups had leeway to state priority issues in ways that made most sense to them. Lastly, groups brainstormed as to how NABF can help achieve those priorities. From there, groups reported the results of their work to the larger gathering.

The convocation's intimate setting provided substantial time to meet individuals from the U.S. and Canada and hold healthy dialogue using survey derived topics. We believe the presence of Holy Spirit was replete during our gathering, and this experience will engender a healthy missional movement to address numerous areas of concern for Baptist. We also expect that over the next 18 months the NABF will engage registered participants in working groups of interest to continue the Collaborative Missional Movement process.