

Communicating ABC Identity Action Team Meeting Notes: Friday, June 13, 2014 – Green Lake

Leo – Overview of Mission Resource Development (MRD)

- Began about 8 years ago Associate General Secretary (AGS) – MRD
- Current staff – Bridget Holmstrom, Lorie Smith, Stacy Emerson (deployed personnel, Stewardship)
 - Small staff means that the Action Group's "human capital" is needed and appreciated
- Where we have been as AGS – MRD
 - Office created in 2006 – before this, there were two other entities in OGS – World Mission Support, Communication
 - Budget Covenant challenges led to hiring a consultant; consultant who recommended restructuring into MRD that oversees Communication, UM, Development, Stewardship, and resources for denomination. MRD also coordinates the Mission Summit Biennial with a national team of planners.
 - Two other AGS: Jeff Woods (REMC), Alan Musoke (Finance/CFO)
 - Disbanded staff in Valley Forge and nationwide – consultant recommendation was that if we had a centralized MRD that told our story uniformly, people would be more inclined to increase giving
 - Leo originally planned to hire staff in communication, stewardship, etc. but financial crisis and internal debate affected this plan
 - Identity hasn't been a major part of communication in the past, but Transformed by the Spirit and the adaptive process brought to the forefront the critical need to focus more intentionally on identity
 - Two Challenges: we don't like to talk about ourselves and celebrate great things that we're doing; un-clarity of who we are as ABC and our story (we say we are ABC but it's not felt deeply as a point of pride/gift from God; new clergy from other backgrounds are joining/leading ABC and aren't familiar as they should be with our distinctives and identity)
- Where we are now:
 - TbyS has brought to ABC something fresh, different, and new
 - "God is working and it's good, we should be talking about it and sharing it!" – this is new for us
 - Work of General Secretary (GS) and OGS is doing great things in ecumenical relations, NCC, etc.
 - Refocusing on publications from OGS and other media work are being strengthened
- Our role here is:
 - To enhance the possibilities embedded in a vital communication ministry
 - To clarify and emphasize who we are as ABC?



Bridget – Overview of what we've produced recently

- Two most recent issues of ABCUSA *Connections*
 - This is sent to all ABC churches, board members, giving list members, posted on website, included in e-newsletter

- Focus on what Roy is doing and what TbyS is doing
- Recent UM publications
 - UM letter and flier from this spring
 - UM letter and flier from September 2013
- E-newsletter
 - Tool to get the word out about and also direct people back to ABC website
- ABCUSA Website
 - Question: Is our site available in Spanish, etc.?
 - There is a Google Translate button but we don't know how accurate it is. Should we advertise the button?

Bridget – ABCUSA E-newsletter Analytics

- Began in February 2013
- Blue: opened newsletter
- Red: clicked through to a link in the newsletter
- The reason the number sent went down in February 2014 was a list cleanup to remove dead email addresses/bounce-backs
- The article that people click on the most is related to photos and seeing what's going on
 - Most clicked article is the June 2013 Mission Summit pictures
- Surveys and opportunities for interaction and feedback have been popular
- Generally published in the middle of the month, near the 15th
- Approximately 30% open and click rate is good for a church or business sending marketing/newsletter emails like this.

Bridget – ABCUSA Website Analytics

- Blue: total page-views
- Red: unique page-views are by different users on different computers
- Top ten pages are fairly consistent across timeframes
- People are very interested in knowing who ABC is – identity is an important issue
 - #3 – 10 Facts You Should Know About ABC
 - #4 – What We Believe
 - #5 – Our History
- 33% of Millennials found their church online

Leo – What UM Provides

- Budget Covenant gives a percentage basis for distribution (see flier)
- UM is core area of support from churches for denominational ministries
- 47% of churches do not give to UM, for varying reasons
- Provides resources back to the congregation; stay in contact with congregations; pays for promotional items; mailings, brochures, informational materials
- How do we get information about UM to people who need it in the churches so that the people responsible for promoting UM in the churches know about it?
- The more we get the word out about UM the better/stronger giving might be. But it has been a struggle to keep the value of UM before the congregations

- Challenge: ABCUSA can't impose giving (e.g. 47% of churches aren't giving...not all have obvious reasons...but we can't force them to give)
- UM isn't entirely about money...it's also about who we are as ABC and as part of our identity

Video: not identity but “celebrate who we are as ABC”

Discussion on Goals & Targets

MRD/Communication:

- 4 Target Areas wrapped in identity knowledge and work:
 - Marketing Plan – DVD, etc.
 - Transformed by the Spirit – getting down/into to the pew level
 - *Connections* mailing
 - Website
- Expanding our reach
 - Who is getting this information?
 - Analytics work, making changes or adjustments based on analytics
- Social Media
 - Campaign needed to get people involved
- Working with other organizations to communicate identity – working with ABHS to provide resources with the video for November event

Action Group Goals:

- Need to work with REMC on communicating identity messages – “gatekeepers” in REMC
- Standardized educational materials for pastors, lay leaders, new members, etc. as “best practice” across denomination
 - We have some of this available now but: when's the last time it was updated in content, does it match our branding now, are there educational/teaching materials available to go with it
 - Downloadable on website
 - Multilingual resources available
 - “Suggested resources for new member orientation to AB Life and continuing education”
 - What's been done already? ...what needs to be done?
 - *Down by the River* – needs to be translated

Action Steps by Group Members:

- September Conference Call – please share in advance of the meeting
 - Research the “state of the materials available” on ABC identity
 - How updated is the content?
 - Are there educational materials that go with it?
 - Is it available in languages other than English?
 - If it's a brochure, does it match our most updated branding?
- Thoughts on social media campaign and options/ideas

- Tasha will set up the quarterly schedule of a prayer list idea for the e-newsletter and *Connections* highlighting regions and various programs (including AMOs) within the denomination. Tasha to take first quarter to start in September 2014.

How can we focus our time in November to answer the question: “For any group to function effectively, what is needed to communicate ABC identity that will draw us together to do mission and ministry?”