

**Missional Response Group
Board of General Ministries
November 2013 Notes**

**Crowne Plaza
260 Mall Boulevard
King of Prussia, PA 19406**

Missional Response Group Breakout Sessions

Thursday, November 14, 2013 (4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.)

Friday, November 15, 2013 (10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.)

Response Group: Duh Kam, Roy Medley (Leaders); Perla Belo, Shirley Fair, Danny Jack (absent), Ray Jepson, Jim Thomason, Tasha Wilson; Recorder: Cathy Brubaker

Welcome/Sharing

Roy welcomed members of the Missional Response Group. During a time of sharing and updates, it was noted that Roy and Duh will be traveling with other ABC leaders to Burma for the 200th celebration of the Judson landing in December 2013. Following this celebration, Roy will be making a second visit to the Chin Hills.

Perla shared reports of the devastation in the Philippines following Typhoon Haiyan, which struck on November 8, 2013.

Update on September Meeting of ABC, CBC and KBC Leaders

Roy and Duh reported on the September 25-26, 2013 meeting in Chicago of Chin, Karen and ABC leaders to discuss possible options for the formation of a special relationship between these independent organizations and the American Baptist Churches USA. Those present at this meeting were: ABC leaders: Rev. Dr. Roy Medley, Dr. Ruth Clark, Rev. Dr. Don Ng, Rev. Dr. Dwight Stinnett; Chin leaders: Rev. Dr. C. Duh Kam (Executive Minister) and Rev. Dr. Thlaawr Bawihrin (Pastor of Zophei Christian Church, Indianapolis, IN); Karen leaders: Rev. Tha Hgay (Chairperson), Rev. Has Moo (Vice Chairperson), Rev. Saw Ler Htoo (Executive Secretary).

Together they reviewed the ABC Bylaws and Standing Rules, the Covenant of Relationships and the Budget Covenant. In regard to current options for relationship (Associated Ministry Organization; Special Relationship, as ABC has with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship; Region Status), it was decided that the Associated Ministry Organization (AMO) relationship might work best as this status includes separate organizations that have their own boards but yet remain in close relationship/partnership with the denomination through ABCUSA. AMO status also provides an integrated relationship with the denomination and a seat at various tables within the denomination, i.e., at the Mission Table.

One issue that arose during discussion was the value of diversity within our regions, and concern that if ABC has ethnic-based regions whether that would decrease diversity in the existing regions. Chin and Karen leaders expressed their understanding of the importance of that concern and their desire to honor unity and diversity.

Duh Kam and Ler Htoo will bring this discussion to their respective executive committees and will report back on how they desire to move forward. Roy expressed ABC's desire to have Chin and Karen refugees to be part of the ABC, in a way that honors their self-determination and plans for concerns they have to move forward in ministry as independent organizations.

Questions discussed following this report:

Can an AMO establish a standard that would give them legal status? As an incorporated religious organization, they do have the right of ordaining and being recognized. They can set their own standards. Under regional status, an organization would come under covenant guidelines. Duh explained the Chin culture as it relates to ordination and he expressed great appreciation for Central Baptist Theological Seminary's role in theological education with students from Burma, including theological polity satellite classes. Duh, who serves on the Board of Bacone College, also noted that Bacone has a Christian ministry scholarship program in place to assist in the training of students from Burma and he shared his hope that other ABC-related colleges might begin something similar.

How might the concept of micro loans work in Burma? Roy will be in the Chin State in December to observe, to listen and to bring back information. However, the issue of micro loans is housed within the work of the World Relief Committee. The role of the Missional Response group is for advocacy. One of the questions needing to be addressed would be: who in the Chin State would be responsible for managing/setting up guidelines for management? Shirley, chair of the World Relief Committee, noted that every situation is different, but in all projects some good basics are set up to channel needs in appropriate ways. She provided several examples of International projects that ABC supports through the World Relief committee: Nation Builders in China, college students transforming community and building relationships; India, refurbishing buildings for training for women and youth, providing spiritual nourishment; Chili, building of Cobb Houses, helping restore dignity while building model homes, providing better housing and energy models; Mexico, raising chickens for egg production and assisting families with responsibility of the program and providing eggs and meat to others.

Duh inquired as to whether there is a channel for education, out of his concern for the need Chin Christians to have a provision for education in their own home region, including training Chin leaders to speak English. Shirley encouraged Duh to talk with IM area director Stan Murray and World Relief staff Lisa Rothenberger about what system might be currently in place, so as to not have to "reinvent the wheel." There was also discussion related to the possibility of the Palmer Grant.

Coalition to Transform Advanced Care (C-TAC)

ABC was invited to become a member of the Interfaith & Diversity Workgroup of the Coalition to Advance Transformed Care (C-TAC) to work with 4 initiatives to bring the faith community to bear with end of life issues. Responsibilities of membership would include having an AB representative provide support by participating in a working group, by disseminating information to the denomination as a whole

and acting in a communicative role on issues of legislation processes. The Missional Response Group met by phone on October 23, 2013 with John Broyles, C-TAC representative and Dr. Tyrone Pitts, Co-Chair of C-TAC's Interfaith & Diversity Workgroup to discuss C-TAC's founding, goals, mission, organizational structure and to ask questions for clarification. At this meeting more time was provided for discussion.

Following discussion it was by consensus decided that:

The Missional Response Group would like to have more information about C-TAC 's partnering with organizations and to experience firsthand one of its meetings.

Roy will contact Dr. Tyrone Pitts to ask if a representative from the Missional Response Group (Jim or Tasha, since they work with health-related organizations) might attend the Interfaith & Diversity Workgroup's June meeting, at the Workgroup's expense, in order to glean a better sense of its work. The decision related to membership will be made following C-TAC's June meeting.

Missional Response Work

In regard to this BGM working group being named "Missional Response", Shirley noted that many of our churches aren't as missionally minded as they once were. Discussion followed as to whether ABC needs to do more promoting through new connections or through some other mode in order to help churches to become more missionally minded.

It was agreed that there is a need to be more intentional to provide information/resources for missional work. ABHMS has some information under justice issues related to the Burmese Task Force work, but not resources. Roy will connect with Aundreia about this.

Shirley suggested that ABCUSA's Connections might carry a quip stating: "If your church is interested in work with refugees from Burma, here's where you go....provide link, etc." The question was asked, why Burma and not reference to mission work in other countries? It was noted that ABC has strong ties with Burma due to its close historic/missional relationship to ABC, also that there are currently so many refugees needing assistance with resettling in the U.S, and with church needs/ministry-related issues.

It was suggested that a missions manual might be made available to churches. Roy reported that when he was in Thailand, he received a copy of such a manual produced by the Thai churches focusing on "what to expect when you arrive in America." It might be good for ABC to print a similar manual focusing from the U.S. viewpoint on what they might expect when they come to America. Roy will also present this idea to the Burmese Task Force.

The challenge has been how to get information into to the pew. In the past, everything ABC did in mission was brought to the churches through WMS resource staff; they did workshops/conferences, distributed resources, etc. The question now is how to make up for the loss of WMS persons.

Duh explained how funding works in the Chin Baptist Convention and how churches are assessed for funding CBCUSA work, a system where the view is that the internal organization is important and needs to be strengthened for the good of all. It was recognized that ABC churches are now not as interested in

organization as a whole. Question: Is there a way to create materials for regions who wish to have a group, or an individual, to cover the role that was once held by a WMS person?

Shirley reported that ABC of the Central Region has a Mission and Stewardship Vision Team. One year the team divided up the list of giving churches in the region and sent handwritten notes thanking each for their UM support. Another year letters were written to non-giving churches, and a few did respond to those notes by giving. Trying to get to the local church is the goal.

Jim reported that his employment work group organized board and staff members to make personal calls to donors to say “thank you” for the support given to the organization and suggested that this as a method the Response Group might use. Roy will pass this idea on to Ken and Leo.

Roy suggested that we might also consider providing a national training event which would include representatives from ABCUSA, IM and ABHMS in order to provide a full picture of ABC mission, allowing congregations to meet with staff face-to-face and to let them know that “we will resource you and keep you resourced.”

The Missional Response Group ended its meeting on Friday, November 15 at 12:00 p.m.