

**STANDING RULES**  
**of the**  
**American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.**

(A New York Not-For-Profit Corporation)

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# ABCUSA Standing Rules

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ADDENDUM #5 – "We Are American Baptists" (revised 6/19/98)

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**STANDING RULES**  
**of**  
**AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES IN THE U.S.A.,**  
**a New York Not-for-Profit Corporation**  
**June 2001**

**INTRODUCTORY NOTE**

Article XIX, Section 2 provides that ABC/USA Standing Rules may be adopted, amended, or repealed by ABC/USA Representatives (General Board), providing that each Standing Rule is consistent with the ABC/USA Bylaws. This provision gives ABC/USA Delegates in Biennial Meeting the power to review any or all Standing Rules.

The Standing Rules are numbered and formatted to show their correlation with a particular ABC/USA Bylaw: Rule 1 of the Standing Rules corresponds to Article I of the Bylaws, Rule 2 corresponds to Article II, and so on. There may be zero, one, or more Standing Rules for each Bylaws Article. When no Standing Rule exists for a Bylaws Article, the word "Reserved" appears in the text. This means the Standing Rule number is being reserved for possible future use for a particular Bylaws Article.

The original Standing Rules were voted by the General Board of the ABC/USA on June 23, 1978 (GB555), subject to approval of "The Report of the Study Commission on Relationships (SCOR)" by two-thirds (2/3) of the American Baptist region, state, city organizations (Regions) on or before October 31, 1987. Two-thirds (2/3) of the Regions approved the SCOR Report by September 30, 1978. The General Board has added to, deleted from, and amended the Standing Rules since the original rules were published.

This printing is a compilation of the 1/98 printing and the following actions taken by the General Board in 1998, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007: GB2942, GB2987, GB2988, GB3060, GB3061, GB3068, GB3078, GB3209, GB3279, GB3280, GB3419, GB3420, GB3489, GB3531, GB3588, GB3630, GB3645 and GB3698.

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**RULE 1**  
**CONSTITUENCIES**  
[Reserved]

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**RULE 2**

**MEMBERSHIP**

[Reserved]



### **RULE 3**

#### **REPRESENTATIVES**

##### **Rule 3.1 Election of Representatives**

- 3.1.1 Nominations of Representatives. Except as provided in Article III, Section 3 of the Bylaws, all nominations of Representatives shall be presented to the next annual or biennial Region meeting for election.
- 3.1.2 Vacancies. If vacancies occur pursuant to Rule 3.5 and action on a nomination of a new Representative before the next annual or biennial Region meeting is necessary in order to preserve the membership of the General Board, then a Representative may be elected by whatever body is empowered by the charter or bylaws of the Region to act between annual or biennial meetings or, if no body is so empowered, by the Region board. Any such election shall be presented for ratification to the next annual or biennial meeting of the Region.
- 3.1.3 Types of Representatives. The respective Regions (and the General Board) may elect Nationally Nominated Representatives only upon nomination by the ABC/USA Nominating Committee, and the respective Regions may elect Regionally Nominated Representatives only in accordance with a plan approved by the Credential and Caucus Committee pursuant to Rule 3.2.3.1.

##### **Rule 3.2 Regionally Nominated Representatives**

- 3.2.1 Number of Representatives. The total number of Regionally Nominated Representatives (RNRs) fixed by the Biennial Meeting in accord with the provisions of Article III, Section 2 of the Bylaws shall be apportioned among Regions by the General Board in accordance with a formula which assures each Region at least one RNR but otherwise gives equal weight to (a) the current number of churches in each Region, (b) a three-year average of the aggregate resident membership of such churches, and (c) a three-year average of the aggregate American Baptist Mission Support received from such churches, as determined by the Office of the Treasurer, ABC/USA.
- 3.2.2 Selection of Representatives. In selecting RNRs, each Region shall (a) reflect the racial/ethnic inclusiveness of the members of the Region's churches, (b) ensure fair representation of all geographic areas of the Region, (c) achieve a ratio of 40% professional church leaders ("PCLs"), including female PCLs, 30% laywomen and 30% laymen, and (d) include 20% younger (under age 35) persons. Any unavoidable imbalance in one year's RNRs shall be weighed in subsequent selections of RNRs.
- 3.2.3 Submission of Plan. In accordance with the Covenant of Relationships, each Region shall promptly develop and submit to the ABC/USA Credentials and Caucus Committee a plan for election of its RNRs. The

Region's plan shall demonstrate that the racial/ethnic inclusivity, geographic balance, and PCL/lay, age, and gender ratios required by Rule 3.2.2 will be achieved over a reasonable period of time.

- 3.2.3.1 The Credentials and Caucus Committee shall review the Region's plan for consistency with Rules 3.2.2 and 3.2.3 and shall either approve or return the plan. In addition, the Credentials and Caucus Committee shall consult with Regions and negotiate the beginning points and order of their racial/ethnic and PCL/lay, age, and gender rotations so as to improve the overall inter-Region balance of RNRs as a whole.
- 3.2.3.2 The Credentials and Caucus Committee shall monitor implementation of all Region plans. Among other things, the Credentials and Caucus Committee shall consult with each Region prior to each nomination of an RNR as to the criteria to be fulfilled by that particular nomination.

### **Rule 3.3      Nationally Nominated Representatives**

- 3.3.1 List of needs. The ABC/USA Nominating Committee shall develop and circulate annually a list of needs with respect to skills, experience, racial/ethnic inclusiveness, age, and gender balance, etc.
  - 3.3.1.1 Regions and ABC/USA caucuses shall, and Program Boards and individuals may, submit to the ABC/USA Nominating Committee names of candidates responsive to the needs list. In doing so, Regions shall consult Region caucuses.
  - 3.3.1.2 Names submitted to the ABC/USA Nominating Committee shall be referred to the respective Regions and local churches and to appropriate ABC/USA caucuses for specific and detailed comments, using a form supplied. The ABC/USA Nominating Committee shall select nominees from the pool of candidates endorsed by affirmative comments of the Regions and ABC/USA caucuses.
  - 3.3.1.3 Names of candidates shall be kept on file for four years but reconfirmed annually upon inquiry from the ABC/USA Nominating Committee to the Regions and ABC/USA caucuses.
- 3.3.2 Number of Representatives from racial/ethnic minorities. There shall at all times be at least the following aggregate numbers of Representatives (RNRs plus NNRs) from racial/ethnic minorities: 10 Hispanic Americans, 6 Asian Americans, 3 Native Americans, and 3 of any other racial/ethnic minority recognized by the Credentials and Caucus Committee. Other criteria shall include needs and geographic balance.

- 3.3.3 Persons from mission areas. Nominations of persons from mission areas not within or related to a Region and of Special Nationally Nominated Representatives (defined in Rule 3.3.4) shall be sent to the General Board for election, and all other nominations shall be sent to the nominees' respective Regions for election.
- 3.3.4 Special Nationally Nominated Representatives. In addition to the number of persons nominated pursuant to Article III, Section 3 of the Bylaws, any Regionally Nominated Representative who moves to a different Region while holding one of the offices named below may be nominated by the ABC Nominating Committee as a "Special Nationally Nominated Representative" for the remainder of his or her respective term of office. Representatives serving in the following capacities may become Special Nationally Nominated Representatives: (a) the President of each corporation managed by a National Program Board; (b) the chair of the finance committee of each such corporation; (c) any member of the Executive Committee of the General Board.
- 3.3.5 Representatives who move to a different region. In accordance with the Covenant of Relationships, any Nationally Nominated Representative who moves to a different Region shall be made a member of the Board of the Region to which he or she has moved and shall continue serving until the end of his or her term. If eligible, he or she may then be nominated by the ABC/USA Nominating Committee for reelection to a two-year term in accordance with Article III, Section I of the Bylaws.

#### **Rule 3.4      Credentials**

- 3.4.1 Review of qualifications. Upon the recommendation of the General Secretary, the Credentials and Caucus Committee shall promptly review the qualifications, nomination, and election of any person elected to serve as a Representative and recommend to the representatives in meeting assembled appropriate action with respect to any irregularity therein prior to the seating of such person as a Representative, all in accordance with these Standing Rules.
- 3.4.2 Refusal of nomination. On recommendation of the Credentials and Caucus Committee, the Representatives in meeting assembled may refuse to seat any Regionally Nominated Representative whose nomination fails to conform to a plan for that Region approved by the Credentials and Caucus Committee. If the Credentials and Caucus Committee has proposed to recommend such action to the Representatives, the position of the Region charged with failure to comply shall be presented to the Representatives in meeting assembled by a person of the Region's choosing before action is taken on the recommendation.

**Rule 3.5 Vacancies**

- 3.5.1 Procedure for filling vacancies. If the General Secretary shall determine that a Representative who was nominated pursuant to Article III, Section 2 of the Bylaws has become unavailable to serve as a Representative, or no longer resides in that Region, or has ceased to be a Representative pursuant to the Bylaws or these Standing Rules, the General Secretary shall so notify the Regional Secretary of the appropriate Region. Such vacancy shall be filled by a new Representative nominated in accordance with the Region's plan approved pursuant to Rule 3.2.3.1 and elected to serve a term commencing immediately and ending on December 31 of the third full year following election unless the election is later than September 30, in which event the term shall be four years commencing on January 1 of the year following such election.
- 3.5.2 Vacancy due to unavailability of Representative. If the General Secretary shall determine that a Representative who was nominated pursuant to Article III, Section 3 has become unavailable to serve as a Representative, or has ceased to be a Representative pursuant to the Bylaws or these Standing Rules, the General Secretary shall so notify the ABC/USA Nominating Committee. Such vacancy shall be filled by a new Representative nominated in accordance with Rule 3.3 and elected to serve a term commencing immediately and ending on December 31 of the third full year following election unless the election is later than September 30, in which event the term shall be four years commencing on January 1 of the year following such election.

**Rule 3.6 Qualifications, Functions, and Commitments**

- 3.6.1 Reporting. Each Representative shall report regularly to the Cooperating Churches and the Regional Organization which such person represents.
- 3.6.2 Function. Each Representative shall assess the diversity of attitudes and opinions in his or her constituencies, which are the Region from which he or she is elected and the Cooperating Churches of that Region. No Representative may be instructed by any Region or church or group of churches as to how to vote on any issue, but upon inquiry from a constituent Region or church a Representative shall report how he or she voted. Each Representative shall seek the mind of Christ in dialogue with brothers and sisters at General Board meetings.
- 3.6.3 Job description. A job description for Representatives is carried in Addendum #4 to these Standing Rules.

**Rule 3.7 Termination of Service**

The term of any Representative shall terminate upon the earliest of the following events:

- (i) expiration of the fixed term and election or designation of a successor;

- (ii) death or resignation;
- (iii) notification of vacancy as provided in Rule 3.5.1;
- (iv) dismissal in accordance with Rule 3.7.3.

- 3.7.1 Resignation. Any Representative may resign by giving written notice to the General Secretary, with copies of this notice sent to the appropriate National and Regional Secretaries.
- 3.7.2 Suspension. The President may suspend any Representative for not more than one General Board meeting for good cause stated. Good cause shall include:
- (i) failure to comply with any policy of the General Board mandatory upon Representatives;
  - (ii) dismissal pursuant to Rule 3.7.3, which is being appealed pursuant to Rule 3.7.4; and
  - (iii) refusal to comply with repeated requests of the presiding officer to come to order.
- 3.7.3 Dismissal. A Representative may be dismissed only by action of the Executive Committee.
- 3.7.3.1 Any Representative who is convicted of or pleads guilty to any felony shall be immediately dismissed.
- 3.7.3.2 Failure to cure any noncompliance with a mandatory policy within sixty (60) days after suspension pursuant to Rule 3.7.2 (i) shall result in dismissal.
- 3.7.3.3 Any Representative who is repeatedly suspended for failure to come to order may be dismissed.
- 3.7.4 Due Process. No Representative who has been seated may be dismissed without being given an opportunity to be heard on appeal by the Credentials and Caucus Committee. The Representative's request to be heard on appeal from dismissal must be postmarked within fourteen (14) days after receipt of notice of the Executive Committee's action regarding dismissal. The decision of the Credentials and Caucus Committee shall be final.

## **Rule 3.8**

### **Orientation to Responsibilities**

- 3.8.1 Commitment and responsibilities. All nominees for election as Representatives shall be apprised of the required commitment and responsibilities of service on the General Board (cf. Addendum #4 to these Standing Rules for a job description).
- 3.8.2 Orientation. The General Secretary shall maintain a mentoring of new Representatives, using both former and current Representatives and standard orientation processes, and continuing such mentoring at least through each new

Representative's second General Board meeting.

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## **RULE 4**

### **DELEGATES TO BIENNIAL MEETING**

#### **Rule 4.1      Qualifications**

[Reserved]

#### **Rule 4.2      Election**

[Reserved]

#### **Rule 4.3      Biennial Meetings**

4.3.1    American Baptists in Mission, published by the ABC/USA Office of Communication, is hereby designated, for purpose of publishing notice of Biennial Meetings, as the official periodical of the ABC/USA.

4.3.2    Report on Statements of Concern. The General Secretary shall report to Biennial Meeting Delegates the actions taken by the General Board, by National Boards, and by Regional Boards with respect to Statements of Concern voted at the previous Biennial Meeting.

4.3.3    Recording and publishing delegates' votes. Pro/con/abstain counts of Biennial Meeting votes on Statements of Concern shall be publicized with any communications about them.

4.3.4    Biennial Minutes. The Biennial Program Committee shall prepare the official Minutes of the Biennial Meeting. A draft of those Minutes shall be published in the ABC Yearbook together with notice that those proposed Minutes will be deemed approved in the absence of corrections or amendments submitted in writing prior to a specified date not less than ninety (90) days after distribution of the Yearbook. Any corrections or amendments to those proposed Minutes will be published in "In Mission" and in the subsequent ABC Yearbook.

4.3.5    Nominating Committee Notice. The Nominating Committee shall give notice of its proposed slate (of Officers and Members of the Statements of Concern Committee) at least thirty (30) days before the Biennial Meeting, through publication in American Baptists in Mission magazine, or otherwise. Notice of intention to nominate from the floor of an ABC/USA Biennial Meeting shall be given to the ABC/USA President, in writing, at least twenty-four (24) hours prior to the scheduled report of the Nominating Committee. The notice (1) shall state the name of the nominee and the office for which he/she will be nominated (which shall be identified by the name of the person nominated by the Nominating

Committee for that office), (2) shall represent that the proposed nominee

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has agreed to serve if elected, (3) shall establish that the nominee meets the eligibility requirement specified in the By-laws (Article III, Section 1); and (4) shall represent that the nominee has the same characteristics with respect to age, sex, ethnic and language group, and desired skills as the nominee of the ABC/USA Nominating Committee.

**RULE 5****COOPERATING CHURCHES****Rule 5.1 Qualifications**

5.1.1 Common criteria. The following "common criteria" shall serve as the minimal qualifications for a Cooperating Church:

1. Affirm the statement entitled, "We are American Baptists" (revised 6/19/98) as descriptive of American Baptist faith and practice. (See full statement, Addendum #5)
2. Affirm the mission/purpose of the American Baptist Churches USA and of the Region in which the church is a member.
3. Participate in the life and mission of the American Baptist Churches at local, regional, national and international levels.
4. Financially support the mission of the American Baptist Churches USA at a responsible level.
5. Share with the family the impact of the church's ministries in reaching the community and world for Christ by reporting annually on forms supplied by the region and/or the ABC/USA.

5.1.2 Interpretation. With respect to a Cooperating Church that has initially gained status as a Cooperating Church through a Region that subsequently elects to withdraw from the Covenant of Relationships, Common Criteria No. 2 shall be interpreted by the General Board, with respect to such Cooperating Church's relationship with ABC/USA, to mean that such Cooperating Church must "Affirm the mission/purpose of the American Baptist Churches USA and of the Region, *if any*, in which the church is a member" provided, however, that any such Cooperating Church's status as a Cooperating Church of the ABC/USA shall remain unchanged for a period not to exceed 24 months from the effective date of the withdrawal from the Covenant of Relationships by the Region of which the Cooperating Church was a member. During that period, the Cooperating Church, in consultation with the Associate General Secretary for Regional Ministries, shall either apply for membership in another Region or be part of a group of churches in Applicant Status under Standing Rule 6.1 to become a Region of the ABC/USA. If, by the conclusion of such 24-month period, such Cooperating Church fails to receive membership in another Region or is not part of a group of churches in Applicant Status under Standing Rule 6.1, the General Board shall cease to recognize that church as a Cooperating Church of the ABC/USA.

**Rule 5.2 Decision by a Region to Receive a Cooperating Church**

5.2.1 Adopting common criteria. The General and Regional



Boards shall adopt “common criteria” for a Cooperating Church, as specified in Rule 5.1.1.

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- 5.2.2 Receiving local churches. A Region shall receive a local congregation as a Cooperating Church of the Region and of the ABC/USA according to the “common criteria” for a Cooperating Church. (See Rule 5.1.1)
- 5.2.3 Acceptance of local church’s application. After receiving a local church’s application to be a Cooperating Church, a Region shall:
- (i) immediately notify the General Board, through the General Secretary, of receipt of a completed application; and
  - (ii) within one year, notify the applying church and General Board, through the Credentials and Caucus Committee, of its decision.

In the event that the Region fails to notify the applying church and the General Board, the applying church may appeal by contacting the General Board in order to pursue its right to apply to another Region.

### **Rule 5.3      Decision by a Region to Dismiss a Cooperating Church**

- 5.3.1 Dismissing a Local Church.  
If a Region acts to dismiss a local congregation as a Cooperating Church of the Region and the ABC/USA for failing to meet the “common criteria” for a Cooperating Church, the Region shall notify the dismissed church and the General Board, through the Credentials and Caucus Committee. (See Rule 5.1.1)
- 5.3.2 Notice of Dismissal.  
The General Board, upon notification of a Region’s action of dismissing a church, shall acknowledge the church’s dismissal as an ABC/USA Cooperating Church through its recognition of the Report of Changed Relationships of Local Churches. The General Secretary shall promptly notify the church of its changed relationship to ABC/USA. Such notification shall highlight the right of the church to appeal (by means of Rule 5.3.3) to remain an ABC/USA Cooperating Church (but not the Region).
- 5.3.3 Local Church Request to Remain. If the church wishes to remain an ABC/USA Cooperating Church, it shall make a written request to the General Board, through the General Secretary. Such requests must include:
- (i) a statement of the church’s willingness to abide by the “common criteria” and
  - (ii) the willingness of the church to pursue affiliation as a Cooperating Church of another Region.

- 5.3.3.1 The written request must be sent to the General Secretary by certified mail postmarked within sixty (60) days after the date of the General Secretary's notification as described in Rule 5.3.2. If the request is made, the church's status as a Cooperating Church of the ABC/USA (but not the Region) shall remain unchanged for a period of 18 months from the receipt of the Request to Remain. During that period, the church, in consultation with the Associate General Secretary for Regional Ministries, shall apply for membership in another Region.
- 5.3.3.2 If, after 18 months from the Request to Remain, a church fails to receive membership in another Region, the General Board shall cease to recognize that church as a Cooperating Church of the ABC/USA.
- 5.3.4 Failure to Request to Remain. If no Request to Remain is made, the acknowledgment of the church's dismissal by the General Board takes effect at the end of the sixty (60) day period after the date of the General Secretary's notification, as described in Rule 5.3.2.

**RULE 6****REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:  
REGIONAL BOARDS****6.1 PROCEDURE FOR ORIENTING AND ACCEPTING NEW REGIONS INTO THE ABCUSA**

- 6.1.1 **Inquiry.** A group of churches interested in becoming a Region of the ABCUSA notifies the Associate General Secretary for Regional Ministries (AGSRM) of its interest.
- 6.1.1.1 The AGSRM notifies the General Board Executive Committee and the General Executive Council of the inquiry.
- 6.1.1.2 The AGSRM, or her/his representative, and a mentor from the Regional Executive Ministers' Council (REMC) appointed by the AGSRM, meets with the group of churches at a location convenient to the churches applying to: establish personal relationships; introduce them to the life and mission of the ABCUSA; inform the group of the requirements of a Region of the ABCUSA; discuss the vision and mission objectives of the group; discuss commitment to the life and work of the ABCUSA; and inform them of the procedural steps involved in becoming a Region.
- 6.1.2 **Statement of Intent.** If, after the initial inquiry meeting, the group of churches wishes to continue in the process toward becoming a Region of the ABCUSA, the group, through its representatives at a duly called meeting, should vote its intent to become a Region of the ABCUSA.
- 6.1.2.1 The group of churches should forward a copy of its adopted statement of intent to the AGSRM.
- 6.1.2.2 The group of churches should include the proposed name of the Region and its proposed definition of membership.
- 6.1.2.3 The AGSRM will forward a copy of the statement of intent to the GBEC and the GEC, moving the group of churches to Applicant status.
- 6.1.3 **Applicant Status.** The AGSRM, or her/his representative, and the REMC mentor, works with the group to fulfill each

requirement for applicant status and to assist the group in understanding the culture, convictions, and organization of the ABCUSA. The AGSRM and the mentor will report to the GEC regarding the progress of the applicant.

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- 6.1.3.1 The group must accept the agreements and responsibilities contained in the Covenant of Relationships and Its Statements of Agreements including the Common Budget Covenant and demonstrate that it possesses sufficient financial resources to carry out the responsibilities of an ABC region.
- 6.1.3.2 The group must fulfill all legal requirements for regional status.
  - (i) The group must incorporate as a not-for-profit corporation under state law and adopt the requisite corporate documents. The group may not use the name “American Baptist Churches” until region status has been granted.
  - (ii) The group must obtain a Federal Employer Identification Number.
  - (iii) The group must apply to ABCUSA in order to receive income tax exemption under ABCUSA’s group tax exemption letter or must apply to the IRS for its own tax exemption letter.
  - (iv) The group should purchase general liability insurance as well as directors & officers’ liability insurance coverage.
  - (v) The group should apply for not-for-profit permits with the U. S. Postal Service.
  - (vi) The group should open banking accounts in its name.
- 6.1.3.3 The group must indicate its understanding of and assent to the convictions, organization and mission of the ABCUSA; e.g., *We Are American Baptists*, the Common Criteria for a Cooperating Church, and the purpose statement of ABCUSA.
- 6.1.3.4 The Applicant status ends when the GEC determines, by a two-thirds majority vote and the GBEC so ratifies, that the group of churches has met the legal and organizational requirements of a Region, as well as demonstrated its understanding of and desire to fulfill the commitments of covenanting partners of the ABCUSA.
- 6.1.4 **Provisional Status.** Once the newly incorporated association has complied with each requirement stipulated in the application process, it shall have provisional status as a Region of the ABCUSA.

- 6.1.4.1 The provisional Region signs the Covenant of Relationships and Its Statements of Agreements, thereby agreeing to be bound by the responsibilities and duties of a Region of the ABCUSA.

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- 6.1.4.2 The provisional Region may begin to receive its return of United Mission from participating churches, with ABCUSA serving as collecting agent.
- 6.1.4.3 The provisional Region's mentor and the AGSRM will continue to assist and guide the provisional Region.
- 6.1.4.4 The provisional Region may elect one person to serve as an Observer at all GB, GEC and REMC meetings.
- 6.1.4.5 If a church is already a member of ABCUSA and wishes to participate in the life of the provisional Region, it shall notify its current Region of its desire, and request its status with the current Region to be put on hold until the final vote of the General Board.
- 6.1.4.6 The provisional Region must remain in Provisional/Observer status for at least one year, but not more than two (2) years.
- 6.1.4.7 At the request of the provisional Region, the GEC discerns, by a two-thirds majority vote, whether the provisional Region has abided by the provisions in the Covenant of Relationships and Its Statements of Agreements including the Common Budget Covenant.

6.1.5 **Region status.** Upon recommendation of the GEC to the ABCUSA General Board, the General Board shall make its determination as to the final status of the provisional Region. Upon a two-thirds majority vote of the General Board favoring the acceptance of the provisional Region as a Region of the ABCUSA, the President and the General Secretary shall be authorized to countersign the Covenant of Relationships on behalf of the ABCUSA.

- 6.1.5.1 If the church is already a member of ABCUSA, it must notify its current Region of its decision to withdraw and affiliate with the new Region. No church may be a member of more than one Region.
- 6.1.5.2 The new Region may begin the search process for its Executive Minister in collaboration with the AGSRM.
- 6.1.5.3 The Credentials and Caucus Committee must re-allot General Board Representatives among all the Regions.
- 6.1.5.4 The AGSRM will assist the new Region in electing its

Representatives to the General Board of the ABCUSA.

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**Rule 6.2      Regional Board**

[Reserved]

**Rule 6.3      Denominational Functions**

[Reserved]

**Rule 6.4      Participation in Meetings**

[Reserved]

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**RULE 7**

**AFFILIATING ORGANIZATIONS**

[Reserved]

**RULE 8**

**COVENANTS OF THE DENOMINATION**

**Rule 8.1      The Covenant of Relationships and Statements of Agreement**

[Reserved]

**Rule 8.2      Other Covenants and Agreements**

[Reserved]

**Rule 8.3      Amendment and Termination**

[Reserved]



**RULE 9**

**MEETINGS OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Rule 9.1      Annual Meetings**

[Reserved]

**Rule 9.2      Special Meetings**

[Reserved]

**Rule 9.3      Notice**

[Reserved]

**Rule 9.4      Action by Representatives**

[Reserved]

**Rule 9.5      Chair of Meetings**

[Reserved]

**Rule 9.6      Annual Reports**

[Reserved]

**RULE 10**  
**GENERAL BOARD**

**Rule 10.1      Members of the General Board**

[Reserved]

**Rule 10.2      Vacancies of the General Board**

[Reserved]

**Rule 10.3      Meetings of the General Board**

10.3.1    Time and location of meetings. The time and place of each meeting and the purpose of each special meeting shall be set forth in the notice of such meeting which shall be mailed by the General Secretary to all members of the General Board not less than ten (10) nor more than fifty (50) days before the meeting. Special meetings of the General Board may be called at any time by the President and shall be called by the General Secretary upon the written request of ten percent (10%) or more of the members of the General Board.

10.3.2    Attendance. In the interest of effective participation of General Board members and of faithful stewardship of denominational funds it is expected that all members will attend all meetings of the General Board, National Boards, Commissions, and Committees to which they may be assigned, unless prevented by unavoidable reasons, and that they will arrive at all meetings on time and remain until the adjournment of each meeting. Authority to grant excuses for absences shall be vested in the General Secretary.

10.3.2.1      Consistent with this expectation, attendance will be checked during the first and last sessions of every meeting of the General Board, in order to know who was present. In order to know who was present when decisions on important issues were made, the attendance will be recorded from time to time during the meetings.

10.3.2.2      Unexcused absences of Representatives shall be reported regularly to their respective Regions and the ABC/USA Credentials and Caucus Committee.

10.3.2.3      The second unexcused absence during any Representative's term shall be deemed a resignation and shall result in a notification of vacancy pursuant to Rule 3.5.1.

- 10.3.3 General Board Parliamentarian. There shall be a Parliamentarian named to serve during the sessions of the General Board. The parliamentarian shall be elected by the General Board on nomination by the ABC/USA President. The Parliamentarian shall serve a term co-extensive with that of the nominating President.

**Rule 10.4        Functions of the General Board**

- 10.4.1 Functions. As part of its responsibility to elect or appoint members and officers of various bodies, the General Board shall:
- (1)        certify the President's three nominees to the Board of the American Baptist Assembly;
  - (2)        elect American Baptist members of the Governing Board of the General Committee of North American Baptist Fellowship;
  - (3)        elect American Baptist members of the Governing Board of National Council of Churches of Christ;
  - (4)        elect American Baptist delegates to the Assembly of the World Council of Churches;
  - (5)        select American Baptist nominees for membership on the Baptist World Alliance General Council;
  - (6)        elect the President's nominees to the Executive Committee of the General Board;
  - (7)        elect the Budget Review Committee members;
  - (8)        elect the members of the Committee on Christian Unity;
  - (9)        elect the members of the Credentials and Caucus Committee;
  - (10)       caucus its members into the three geographic sections of the ABC/USA referred to in Rule 18.1 and elect five members from each caucus to serve as members of the ABC/USA Nominating Committee (See also Rule 11.5.1.);
  - (11)       elect the members of the Planning and Evaluation Committee;
  - (12)       elect the members of the Reference Committee;
  - (13)       elect the members of the World Relief Committee;
  - (14)       elect the members of the Headquarters Management Commission;

- (15) elect the members of other standing or special committees;
- (16) adopt such procedures as it may deem proper concerning the appointment or removal of officers and agents of the ABC/USA

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and the fixing of their compensation, and direct and instruct such officers and agents concerning their respective duties;

- (17) adopt such procedures and processes not inconsistent with Rule 12.10 as it may deem proper relating to referenda of the Constituencies of the Denomination;
- (18) adopt such managerial procedures as it may deem proper, including those for the control, management, acquisition, and disposition of the real and personal property of the ABC/USA.

#### 10.4.2 First Readings and Second Readings.

##### 10.4.2.1 Definition.

10.4.2.1.1 Background. The General Board comprises the ABC/USA Representatives who through it function as the "legislative body of the ABC/USA." [ABC/USA Bylaws Section X.4(i).]

Since its early sessions the General Board has held "First and Second Readings" for proposed legislative action and for certain other proposed business. This practice ensures the ABC/USA Representatives, seated as the General Board, full opportunity, before voting, to consider policy statements and other major matters brought before them.

10.4.2.1.2 First Reading. At a First Reading the General Board receives and considers as a Report a proposed action submitted by an ABC/USA Representative, or by a body so empowered in the ABC/USA's Bylaws or Standing Rules.

10.4.2.1.3 Second Reading. At a Second Reading the General Board hears as an original main motion (for debate and vote):

- (a) the First Reading report exactly as previously submitted; or
- (b) the report modified within the scope and

focus of its original intent, to reflect the General Board's questions and comments offered during the First Reading and/or by amendments duly adopted.

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10.4.2.2 Distribution.

10.4.2.2.1 First Reading. A proposed action brought to the General Board for a First Reading must be in writing, with sufficient copies provided to the Office of the General Secretary by the sponsor for distribution to all ABC/USA Representatives (General Board Members).

10.4.2.2.2 Second Reading

10.4.2.2.2.1 If the sponsor decides that the document to be used for Second Reading will be the same as the one used in the First Reading, the sponsor shall have extra copies of the original document available for distribution as needed at the time of Second Reading.

10.4.2.2.2.2 If the sponsor decides that the document for Second Reading shall contain modifications to reflect, within the scope and focus of the First Reading document, the General Board's questions and comments made during the First Reading, special arrangements, as described in Rule 10.4.2.3.2 below, must be made.

10.4.2.3 Legislative Procedure.

10.4.2.3.1 First Reading

10.4.2.3.1.1 At its scheduled time on the General Board agenda a spokesperson for the sponsoring group will clearly repeat its intent, carded in the text of the agenda, that the document then coming before the General Board is for First Reading consideration only.

10.4.2.3.1.2 During a First Reading, General Board members may only ask questions for clarification; point out areas of potential reservation, or suggest to the sponsor

such modifications in writing which, though not amending the intent of the First Reading document, may tend to remove potential reservations at the time of Second Reading

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10.4.2.3.1.3 During a First Reading the sponsor of the document under consideration shall speak to the questions for clarification and take note of the comments and suggestions offered by members of the General Board.

In addition, the sponsor, with permission of the Chair and/or of the Board itself, may ask for an indication (such as by a "showing of the hands" or by a polling of the table groups) of the breadth of support engendered by one or another of the comments or suggestions offered by General Board members.

Further, individual General Board members who have suggestions for changes may submit these in writing to the sponsor within thirty (30) days following the First Reading, unless superseded by a three-fourths (3/4) majority vote as set forth in Rule 10.4.2.3.2.1.2 under Second Reading.

10.4.2.3.2 Second Reading

10.4.2.3.2.1 If the sponsor has modified a First Reading document other than a proposed Policy Statement or Resolution [See Rule 12.5.2] within the scope and focus of its original intent reported during the First Reading, a sufficient quantity of the modified report shall be prepared and given to the Office of the General Secretary for distribution to the General Board.

10.4.2.3.2.1.1 If the Second Reading is scheduled to occur at a General Board meeting subsequent to the one at which the First Reading was held, copies of the

modified report shall be included in the regular mailing to the General Board members prior to the meeting at which the Second Reading is to occur.

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10.4.2.3.2.1.2 If, on request of the sponsors, the General Board votes by a three-fourths (3/4) majority to schedule the Second Reading to take place later in the same meeting in which the First Reading occurred, the modified document shall be distributed before the beginning of the session in which the Second Reading will occur.

10.4.2.3.2.2 If one or more members of the General Board question whether the modifications made to a First Reading document are within the scope and intent presented at its First Reading, the question may be formally presented to the General Board for consideration. If a majority of the General Board members agree to receive a document for Second Reading it will be placed before them for their debate and legislative action. If, on the other hand, the majority of the General Board feel that modifications to a First Reading document go beyond the scope and focus of its original intent presented at the First Reading, the sponsor may request a change of the agenda item from a Second Reading to another First Reading.

10.4.2.3.2.3 If a sponsor plans no modification to the First Reading document the sponsor may proceed to a Second Reading by following the arrangements described in Rule 10.4.2.2.2.1 above, moving the recommended action for parliamentary treatment as an original main motion.

10.4.2.4 Force of Vote. Since a Second Reading takes the form of an original main motion (See Rule 18.15), the result of a General Board vote will follow normal parliamentary interpretation, except in specific situations covered by these Standing Rules (such as ABC/USA Policy Statements and Resolutions).

Thus, if the General Board votes affirmatively at the time of a Second Reading the motion is adopted, the action is recorded in the minutes of the General Board, and what is designated by the content of the motion is carried out by the Executive Staff.

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If at the time of a Second Reading the General Board votes in the negative, the motion is defeated, and a record of this action is entered into the minutes of the General Board.

If at the time of the Second Reading the General Board acts in other ways: to postpone action, to table the motion, or to refer to the sponsor, the chair and/or parliamentarian will interpret to the General Board at that time the effect of their vote.

**Rule 10.5      Ratification of Decisions by Regional Board and Delegates in Biennial Meeting**

[Reserved]

**Rule 10.6      Ratification of Decisions by Regional Boards**

10.6.1 Denomination-Wide Capital Funds Campaign. Whenever the General Board or a National Board wishes to initiate a denomination-wide capital funds campaign it shall submit a written request to the World Mission Support Council for its review and coordination with other denominational campaigns.

In addition to the purpose of the proposed campaign, the request should contain best estimates of the following:

- anticipated financial goal
- time frame for the proposed campaign
- key participating organizations
- type of campaign
- suggestions for a feasibility study
- the fund-raising firm to be engaged
- means to fund the cost of campaign

All denomination-wide capital funds campaign written requests shall be submitted five (5) years in advance of the planned solicitation, except in crisis or emergency circumstances as determined by the Executive Committee and approved by the General Board.

The World Mission Support Council will evaluate each written request taking into account other campaigns which may be scheduled, and make a recommendation to the General Executive Council with respect to each written request.



The General Staff Council will review the recommended request and make a proposal to the General Board.

As specified in ABC/USA Bylaws (Section X.6) the General Board may authorize a denomination-wide capital funds campaign only after such

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proposed action is ratified by two-thirds (2/3) of the Regional Boards voting.

All ABC/USA denominational units and related institutions affected by each proposed campaign shall be notified so they may make appropriate plans for raising their own funds.

**RULE 11****COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS OF THE GENERAL BOARD****Rule 11.1      General Rules**

- 11.1.1 Procedures. Each committee or commission of the General Board shall fix its own rules of procedure.
- 11.1.2 Meetings. Generally the meetings of Committees and Commissions shall be held at the time of the General Board and National Program Board sessions. Additional meetings may be held at such other times as each chairperson in consultation with the General Secretary shall determine. Members may participate in any meeting by means of conference telephone or similar equipment by means of which all persons participating in the meeting can hear each other at the same time, and such participation shall constitute presence in person at the meeting.
- 11.1.3 Action Without a Meeting. Any action required or permitted to be taken by any General Board committee or commission may be taken without a meeting if all members of the committee or commission consent in writing to the adoption of a resolution authorizing the action. The resolution and the written consents thereto shall be filed with the minutes of the proceedings of the General Board committee or commission.
- 11.1.4 Membership.
- 11.1.4.1 Unless otherwise provided in the By-laws or these Standing Rules, each committee or commission of the General Board shall have three or more members nominated by the President in consultation with the General Secretary and elected by the General Board. Upon election, each committee or commission member shall serve during her or his current term as a Representative.
- 11.1.4.2 Unless otherwise provided in the Bylaws or these Standing Rules, a vacancy in the membership of any committee or commission of the General Board shall be filled by a majority vote of the General Board at any meeting on nomination of the President in consultation with the General Secretary.
- 11.1.4.3 As provided in Article XV, Sections 2 and 3 of the Bylaws, the President and Vice-President, ex officio, shall be members of all committees and commissions of the General Board.
- 11.1.5 Chair. Except where otherwise provided by the Bylaws or these Standing Rules, the chairperson of each committee or commission of the General

Board shall be appointed from the membership of the respective committee or commission by the President in consultation with the General Secretary and shall serve until the expiration of the term of the appointing President. When the chairperson is not present, the committee shall elect an acting chairperson for that meeting to serve until the chairperson arrives.

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11.1.6 Staffing. The General Secretary shall be responsible for arranging staff support for all committees and commissions of the General Board.

11.1.7 Functions.

11.1.7.1 Each committee or commission of the General Board shall perform such functions as the General Board, the Bylaws, or the Standing Rules may from time to time specify.

11.1.7.2 Except where otherwise provided by the Bylaws or these Standing Rules, each committee or commission of the General Board shall report in writing to the General Board at least annually.

## **Rule 11.2**

### **Executive Committee**

11.2.1 Statutory Authority. The statutory authority for the described powers of the Executive Committee is Para. #712 of the New York Not-for-Profit Corporation Law (NPCL). Section (a) of Para. #712 reads in its entirety as follows:

"P/712. Executive committee and other committees (a) If the certificate of incorporation or the by-laws so provide, the board, by resolution adopted by a majority of the entire board, may designate from among its members an executive committee and other standing committees, each consisting of three or more directors, and each of which, to the extent provided in the resolution or in the certificate of incorporation or by-laws, shall have all the authority of the board, except that no such committee shall have authority as to the following matters:

- (1) the submission to members of any action requiring members' approval under this chapter;
- (2) the filling of vacancies in the board of directors or in any committee;
- (3) the fixing of compensation of the directors for serving on the board or on any committee;
- (4) the amendment or repeal of the by-laws or the adoption of new by-laws;
- (5) the amendment or repeal of any resolution of the board which by its terms shall not be so amendable or repealable."

11.2.2 Powers. The Executive Committee shall have broad power to act on behalf of the General Board between meetings, with the exception of the powers specifically reserved by New York law or by the General Board and the limitations regarding policy making and resolutions (See Rule 11.2.3).

11.2.3 Policy Making and Resolution. In the areas of policy making and

resolutions the powers of the Executive Committee shall be limited as follows:

- (a) Policies: The Committee shall develop policy only when there is urgency for the ABC/USA to have a policy, when there is no

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existing policy, and when the adopting of a policy cannot reasonably be deferred until the next meeting of the General Board.

- (b) Resolutions: The Executive Committee shall issue Resolutions concerning pending church, national, or international issues or problems only when (i) a Policy Statement of the ABC/USA is in existence and (ii) the timing is such that a delay until the next meeting of the General Board would weaken the effectiveness of the ABC/USA's witness on the issue or problem.

11.2.4 Meetings. The Committee shall meet at regular intervals as specified by the General Board. In addition, special meetings of the Committee may be called by the President and shall be called when one-third (1/3) of the Committee members so request in writing. Special meetings shall be called on not less than three (3) days' notice. The President shall be the Chair of the Committee.

11.2.5 Action by Executive Committee. A majority of the members of the Executive Committee shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at its meetings. When a quorum is once present to organize a meeting, it shall not be broken by the subsequent absence of any members of the Committee. At all meetings of the Committee each member thereof shall be entitled to one (1) vote. Except as otherwise provided in the Bylaws or the Standing Rules, a majority of the votes cast by the members of the Committee present, as provided in ABC/USA Bylaws Section XVIII.9, shall determine the vote of the Committee. The Committee shall maintain a record of all of its acts and proceedings which shall be made available to the General Board.

11.2.6 Other Functions. The Committee:

- (a) shall recommend policies for planning and coordination within the Denomination;
- (b) shall coordinate the work of the General, National, and Regional Boards;
- (c) shall evaluate the work of, and recommend program functions for, each corporation managed by a National Board, Regional Organizations, and committees and commissions of the ABC/USA and the General Board;
- (d) shall determine the time and procedure for regular General Board assessment of the structure and process of the ABC/USA;
- (e) may determine whether a proposed resolution is based upon and is consistent with an American Baptist Policy Statement, both in

accordance with Section XII.3 of the ABC/USA Bylaws and with Rule 12.3.2.3.3.2;

- (f) may recommend any Standing Rule or amendment or repeal thereof, pursuant to Article XIX of the Bylaws; and

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- (g) may participate in an Adjudication as the Adjudicator, in accordance with Rule 18.11.

11.2.7 Membership. The membership of the Executive Committee is specified in Article XI, Section 3 of the Bylaws.

### **Rule 11.3**

#### **Subcommittees of the Executive Committee**

- 11.3.1 Creation of Subcommittees. The Executive Committee shall, from time to time, create such subcommittees as may be necessary to enable it to fulfill its responsibilities described in the By-laws and Standing Rules.
- 11.3.2 Membership. Members of subcommittees of the Executive Committee shall be elected from among its members by the Executive Committee upon nomination by the President in consultation with the General Secretary.
- 11.3.3 Chairpersons. Chairpersons of subcommittees of the Executive Committee shall be elected by the Executive Committee upon nomination by the President in consultation with the General Secretary.
- 11.3.4 Terms. The terms of chairpersons and the terms of members of subcommittees of the Executive Committee shall be the same as the term of the nominating President.
- 11.3.5 Vacancies. Vacancies on subcommittees of the Executive Committee shall be filled for the duration of any unexpired term through election by the Executive Committee upon nomination of the President in consultation with the General Secretary.

### **Rule 11.4**

#### **General Board Commissions**

- 11.4.1 Procedures for Appointing Commissions.

[Reserved]

- 11.4.2 Headquarters Management Commission.

[Standing Rule retired 6/3090; cf. June 1990  
G/B Minutes, page 27, re Doc. 1212:6/90.]

**Rule 11.5 ABC/USA Nominating Committee**

- 11.5.1 Membership. The ABC/USA Nominating Committee shall consist of the following members:
- (a) fifteen (15) members elected by the General Board from among its number; in order to secure proportionate representation on the Committee from each of three geographic sections of the denomination defined in Rule 18.1, the General Board shall divide itself into three (3) groups, each consisting of the Representatives from one (1) such section; the groups shall caucus and each shall elect five (5) members to the Committee;
  - (b) one (1) member elected by each of the National Boards from among its number; and
  - (c) one (1) member with voice but without vote elected by each Caucus of the ABC/USA recognized pursuant to Rule 14.4, from among its membership.
- Members of the Committee shall be elected or appointed, in accord with the above, during the year of each Biennial Meeting of Delegates for a term of two years commencing on January 1 next following the date of their election or appointment. A vacancy in the membership of the Committee shall be filled by the General Board for the remainder of the term vacated.
- 11.5.2 Chair. The Chair of the Committee shall be elected biennially by members of the Committee from among their number.
- 11.5.3 Meetings. The ABC/USA Nominating Committee shall meet each year in conjunction with the General Board meetings. Additional meetings may be called at the request of the Chair in consultation with the General Secretary.
- 11.5.4 Functions. The functions of the ABC/USA Nominating Committee shall include:
- (a) as called for in Section XV.1 of the Bylaws, submitting to the Biennial Meeting of Delegates a slate of nominees for the positions of President, Vice-President, and Budget Review Officer of the ABC/USA;
  - (b) submitting to Regions for action at annual or biennial meetings or to the General Board, as provided in Rule 3.3.3, nominees for election as Representatives as provided in Section 111.3 of the Bylaws, to provide the necessary balance in respect of racial/ethnic inclusiveness, geographic areas, age, gender, and desirable skills;
  - (c) submitting to the Biennial Meeting of Delegates a slate of nominees for membership on the Statements of Concern Committee.

- (d) submitting to the General Board a slate of nominees for membership on The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board of American Baptist Churches as provided in Section XIII.2 of the Bylaws;
- (e) submitting to the membership of each corporation managed by a National Program Board a slate of nominees chosen from among the Representatives (the General Board membership) for membership on each of the National Program Boards as provided in Section XIII.2 of the Bylaws;
- (f) submitting to the General Board from among its number a nominee for election by such Board pursuant to Bylaws Section XV.I to fill a vacancy in the office of Vice-President of the ABC/USA;
- (g) submitting to the General Board a nominee for its election to fill a vacancy in the membership of The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board of American Baptist Churches, where such position is filled by the General Board pursuant to Section XIII.3 of the Bylaws;
- (h) submitting to the General Board a nominee for election as a Representative to fill any vacancy referred to in Rule 3.5.2 and in the By-Laws, Section XIII.3;
- (i) as requested by the American Baptist Historical Society (ABHS) Constitution, submitting to the ABHS corporate membership a slate of nominees for election as ABC Managers of the ABHS and submitting to the ABHS Board of Managers nominees to fill vacancies among ABC Managers so as (1) to maintain the number of such ABHS Managers specified pursuant to the ABHS Constitution, and (2) to assure that no fewer than one-fifth (1/5) of the ABC Managers of ABHS shall be ABC/USA Representatives;
- (j) submitting to the General Board a slate of nominees for election to the Budget Review Committee; and
- (k) the performance of such other functions as the General Board, the Bylaws, or the Standing Rules may from time to time specify, including:
  - (1) submitting to the General Board a slate of nominees for election as members of the Governing Board of the National Council of Churches of Christ;
  - (2) submitting to the General Board a slate of nominees and alternates for election as delegates and alternates to the Assembly of the World Council of Churches;
  - (3) submitting to the General Board a slate of nominees for election as nominees for service on the Baptist World

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- (4) submitting to the General Board a slate of nominees for election as members of the Committee on Christian Unity;
- (5) submitting to the General Board a slate of nominees for election as members of the World Relief Committee; and
- (6) submitting to the General Board a slate of nominees for election as members of the Committee on Denominational Inclusiveness.

#### **Rule 11.6**

#### **Budget Review Committee**

- 11.6.1 Membership. Six (6) members of the Budget Review Committee shall be elected by the General Board from among its membership on nomination of the ABC/USA Nominating Committee. At least three (3) of the six (6) members shall be Representatives elected by Regional Organizations. The ABC/USA's Budget Review Officer chairs this Committee and is a seventh member. A vacancy in the membership of the Committee shall be filled by the General Board on nomination of the ABC/USA Nominating Committee.
- 11.6.2 Functions. The functions of the Budget Review Committee shall be to:
- (a) review income forecasts as developed by staff;
  - (b) review the American Baptist Mission Budget allocation as prepared by staff, and recommend the allocations to the General Board for adoption;
  - (c) recommend to the General Board policy guidelines for debt financing, gift annuity agreements, and other long-term financial commitments for all National Boards and Regional Boards who participate in the ABC/USA budget covenant; and recommend policy guidelines for debt financing, gift annuity agreements, and other long-term financial commitments to the Region administrative units;
  - (d) report to the General Board for its affirmation the Committee's stewardship in administering the Uncommitted Fund on behalf of the General Board;
  - (e) present for approval of the General Board the recommended distribution of any restricted funds held by American Baptist Churches in the USA ("ABC/USA");
  - (f) report to the General Board any bequests of which the ABC/USA is a beneficiary;
  - (g) review periodically American Baptist Mission Budget participation agreements with National Boards and Region administrative units,



as well as changes requested by the participants, and recommend to the General Board such changes as may seem desirable in light of current circumstances;

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- (h) instruct ABC/USA National Boards, Committees, Commissions, and Councils with respect to accounting systems and financial reports required;
- (i) instruct Region Boards regarding financial reports necessary to carry out their functions;
- (j) recommend accounting systems and procedures to Region Boards to promote uniformity in matters of accounting and reporting;
- (k) review financial reports and conducts such hearings as may be necessary to ascertain how funds have been used by budget participants; and
- (l) recommend to the General Board and to the National Boards a firm of Certified Public Accountants to audit the accounts of the ABC/USA, the National Boards, the Committees, the Commissions, and the Councils of the ABC/USA that receive ABC/USA budget allocations.

#### **Rule 11.7**

#### **Credentials and Caucus Committee**

- 11.7.1 Membership. Eight (8) members of the Credentials and Caucus Committee shall be elected. Each recognized Caucus of the ABC/USA shall be entitled to appoint one (1) non-voting person to serve with the Committee.
- 11.7.2 Functions. The functions of the Credentials and Caucus Committee shall be to:
  - (a) review each Region's plan for Regionally Nominated Representatives (RNR) submitted pursuant to Rule 3.2.3 for consistency with the criteria in Rule 3.2.2 and Rule 3.2.3 and either approve or return the plan;
  - (b) consult and negotiate with Regions concerning the beginning points and order of their racial/ethnic and ministerial leader/lay, age, and gender rotations so as to improve the overall inter-Region balance of RNRs on the General Board as a whole;
  - (c) monitor the implementation of Region plans and the representation of Regions on the General Board and make recommendations to the Regions, which will assure full compliance with Region plans approved pursuant to Rule 3.2.3.1;
  - (d) review the representation on the General Board and make recommendations to the ABC/USA Nominating Committee which will assure proportionate racial/ethnic representation of the constituency;

- (e) develop criteria for recognizing a Caucus and recommend such criteria to the General Board;

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- (f) receive applications from groups wishing to be recognized as a Caucus of the ABC/USA, and make appropriate recommendations to the General Board for the purpose of aiding the General Board in certifying and terminating the Caucus status of such groups;
- (g) determine procedures by which ABC/USA groups with grievances regarding representation may appear before the Committee;
- (h) call to the attention of the General Board inadequacies in representation at any place within the structure of the ABC/USA or the National Boards;
- (i) review guidelines for Caucus funding and make appropriate recommendations to the General Secretary relative to requests for Administrative funding of Caucuses by the ABC/USA; and
- (j) report semi-annually to the General Board Executive Committee.

**Rule 11.8      Planning & Evaluation Committee**

[Reserved]

**Rule 11.9      Reference Committee**

11.9.1 Membership. There shall be a Reference Committee of the General Board chaired by the Vice President and consisting of four (4) additional members including:

- (a) the Vice Presidents of the National Program Boards;  
and
- (b) two (2) elected members.

The terms of all members shall be no more than two (2) years, with the terms of the General Board members ending in even years and the terms of each of the National Program Board Vice-Presidents ending with the conclusion of service as Program Board Vice President.

11.9.2 Functions. The functions of the Reference Committee shall include:

- (a) Determining the disposition of all non-agenda items proposed at the time of the General Board meetings:
  - (1) to add an item to the current General Board agenda;

- (2) to add an item to a future General Board agenda;
- (3) to refer an item to a National Board or Regional Board, a committee, a commission, a council, or the General Secretary; or

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- (4) to return an item to the initiator.

- (b) Such actions shall constitute the committee's reports.

#### **Rule 11.10 World Relief Committee**

11.10.1 Membership. There shall be a World Relief Committee consisting of eight (8) members including:

- (a) six (6) voting members to be elected by the General Board:
  - (1) two (2) persons nominated by the Board of International Ministries from among its membership;
  - (2) two (2) persons nominated by the Board of National Ministries from among its membership; and
  - (3) two (2) persons nominated by the ABC/USA Nominating Committee from among General Board membership;
- (b) two (2) non-voting members, one (1) each from the staffs of International Ministries and National Ministries appointed by the General Secretary in consultation with the appropriate ABC/USA National Secretary

The World Relief Officer shall staff the Committee. Any vacancy shall be filled by nomination and election or appointment as aforesaid.

11.10.2 Functions. The functions of the World Relief Committee shall include:

- (a) establishing policy with respect to the distribution of funds received from the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering, including the funding of the World Relief Office subject to budgetary provisions voted by the General Board Executive Committee;
- (b) determining the allocations to be sent to cooperative bodies such as Church World Service and the Baptist World Aid; and
- (c) delegating to National Program Boards and to Region Boards the administration of funds within the policies adopted by the Committee.

#### **Rule 11.11 Committee on Christian Unity**

11.11.1 Membership. There shall be an American Baptist Committee on Christian Unity having at all times six (6) members nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected by the General Board. The Chairperson of the Committee shall be nominated by the President in consultation with the General Secretary and elected by the General Board.

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Committee members shall be representative of the various points of view within the denomination and shall be persons who are open to considering the issues involved in Christian unity and who are competent in either or both of the following areas:

- (a) theology and history of the Church; and
- (b) the nature of denominational administration, organizational relationships and the implications these have for our ecumenical work.

The membership of the Committee shall include clergy, laymen, and laywomen.

11.11.2 Functions. The functions of the Committee on Christian Unity shall include:

- (a) helping American Baptists achieve a wider understanding of the meaning of Christian unity;
- (b) holding conversations with other Christian bodies in the interest of Christian unity, on authorization of the General Board;
- (c) exploring what may be involved in a plan of union or federation with one or more other denominations on authorization of the General Board and presenting any such plans to the General Board for action; and
- (d) developing plans to underwrite ABC/USA membership in various ecumenical bodies and recommending the plans for consideration by the Budget Review Committee.

## **Rule 11.12      Committee on Standing Rules**

(See Addendum 1.)

11.12.1 Membership. Four (4) members of the Standing Rules Committee shall be elected.

11.12.2 Functions. The Standing Rules Committee shall:

11.12.2.1      Regarding Standing Rules

- (a) act in an advisory capacity to the General Board Executive Committee;

- (b) propose to the General Board Executive Committee additions to, deletions from, and modifications of the Standing Rules;
- (c) receive assignments from the General Board Executive Committee for modifications to the Standing Rules;

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- (d) receive referrals from units holding membership in the General Executive Council regarding modifications to the Standing Rules; and
- (e) periodically review all Standing Rules and recommend to the General Board Executive Committee procedures to provide updated documentation on Standing Rules to ABC/USA directors, officers, and their staffs.

#### 11.12.2.2 Regarding Bylaws

- (a) act in an advisory capacity to the General Board Executive Committee;
- (b) assist the Executive Committee in processing all requested or suggested Bylaw changes for General Board recommendation to ABC/USA Biennial Meeting Delegates; and
- (c) receive assignments from the Executive Committee regarding publishing and distributing ABC/USA Bylaws.

### **Rule 11.13 Committee on American Baptist Policy Statements and Resolutions**

(See Addendum 1.)

11.13.1 Membership The Committee on American Baptist Policy Statements and Resolutions shall have six (6) elected members.

11.13.2 Functions. The Committee shall:

#### 11.13.2.1 Regarding American Baptist Policy Statements

- (a) act in an advisory capacity and report to the General Board Executive Committee;
- (b) compile all American Baptist Policy Statements into one set;

- (c) review the set and recommend for each Policy Statement whether it should be continued as is, modified, or retired from the set;
- (d) in consultation with the sponsor of any proposed Policy Statement, ensure that proposed amendments thereto are in proper wording and form and in appropriate order for consideration; and
- (e) serve as a reference group for persons using Policy Statements or working to draft proposed Policy Statements.

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#### 11.13.2.2 Regarding American Baptist Resolutions

- (a) act in an advisory capacity and report to the General Board Executive Committee;
- (b) compile all American Baptist Resolutions into one set;
- (c) review the set and recommend for each Resolution whether it should be continued as is, modified, or retired from the set;
- (d) in consultation with the sponsor of any proposed Resolution, ensure that proposed amendments thereto are in proper wording and form and in appropriate order for consideration; and
- (e) serve as a reference group for persons using Resolutions or working to draft proposed Resolutions.

#### 11.13.2.3 Regarding Counciliar Resolutions

- (a) review resolutions from the National Council of Churches of Christ to determine if they are in accord with General Board Policy Statements and Resolutions; and
- (b) review resolutions from the World Council of Churches to determine if they are in accord with General Board Policy Statements and Resolutions.

### 11.14 **Committee on Mission Resource Development**

11.14.1 Membership. There will be a Committee on Mission Resource Development with eight (8) members elected, including at least one (1) member from each geographic section as defined in Rule 18.1.

11.14.2 Functions. The functions of the Committee on Mission Resource Development shall include:

- (a) Assist the Associate General Secretary for Mission Resource Development to develop a comprehensive plan of communication and fundraising for the Office of the General Secretary and the denomination;

- (b) Act as liaison between the Associate General Secretary for Mission Resource Development and the General Board so that the General Board will be knowledgeable of and be able to provide helpful critique to the communication and fundraising efforts;
- (c) Assist in the negotiations with the National Boards and Regions for the development of a strong communication program that will support the ongoing mission of ABC/USA;

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- (d) Monitor and analyze reports on American Baptist Mission Support giving; and
- (e) Lead the General Board in the promotion of giving to American Baptist Mission Support by encouraging congregational support as well as gifts from individual donors.

11.14.3 Reports. The Committee shall report to the General Board at every General Board meeting.

## **Rule 11.15 Committee on Denominational Inclusiveness**

11.15.1 Membership. There shall be an American Baptist Committee on Denominational Inclusiveness having at all times a total of seven (7) members nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected by the General Board. The membership shall include at least one from each National Board and shall tend to reflect the racial/ethnic, age, and gender mix of American Baptists.

11.15.2 Functions. The Committee on Denominational Inclusiveness shall:

- (a) recommend and oversee the implementation of policies, such as the Policy Statement on Denominational Inclusiveness (GB2465), which declares American Baptist intentionality to affirm commitments to become in Jesus Christ a microcosm of the New Humanity while celebrating the richness of our racial/ethnic diversity [Commission on Life and Theology, RAGS III, 9/28/86]; and
- (b) establish and maintain a network of interfaces among the other committees of the General Board, the committees of the corporation, the inter-Caucus Steering Committee and its member participants, and any committees, commissions, task forces, and other bodies working to help carry out the ministries of the denomination.

11.15.3 Reports. The Committee shall report at least annually to the General Board Executive Committee and upon request to the General Board.

**Rule 11.16 Affirmative Action Committee**

11.16.1 Membership There shall be an Affirmative Action Committee consisting of five (5) members. Each national program board shall appoint two (2) persons from its membership to serve on the ABC Affirmative Action Committee. The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board of the American Baptist Churches shall appoint one (1) person from its membership to serve on the ABC Affirmative Action Committee.

11.16.2 Functions. The functions of the Affirmative Action Committee shall be:

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- (a) to coordinate and monitor the affirmative action efforts of the denomination;
- (b) to review the affirmative action policies and reports from the ABCUSA and the four national boards relative to affirmative action goals and target dates;
- (c) to share the Affirmative Action reports it has examined with the Executive Committee and provide interpretation of such reports, when requested;
- (d) to ask any national board committee to answer questions, clarify its procedures and provide information related to its overall progress in affirmative action efforts;
- (e) to study demographics and make recommendations to the Executive Committee which are consistent with related denominational policies; and
- (f) to serve as the Affirmative Action Committee for the Office of the General Secretary.

**Rule 11.17 Board Member Effectiveness**

11.17.1 Membership. There shall be a Committee on Board Member Effectiveness consisting of seven (7) members elected from the membership of the General Board, as follows:

- (a) one (1) member nominated by each of the National Program Boards with advice and counsel of the ABC/USA President and General Secretary;
- (b) two (2) members nominated by the ABC Nominating Committee;
- (c) three (3) members nominated from the General Board Executive Committee by the ABC/USA President in consultation with the General Secretary; and
- (d) one (1) chairperson who will be selected from the membership of the committee.

11.17.2 Chair. The chair of the Committee shall be appointed by the



ABC/USA President in consultation with the General Secretary.

11.17.3 Functions. The functions of the Committee on Board Member Effectiveness shall include:

- (a) Plan New General Board Orientation and mentoring of new General Board members;
- (b) Monitor General Board compliance regarding required information forms, disclosure of confidentiality, and attendance;
- (c) Provide ongoing training and General Board member education; and

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- (d) Provide for General Board and individual member evaluation.

11.17.4 Reports. The Committee on Board Member Effectiveness shall report at least annually to the General Board Executive Committee.

**RULE 12**

**LEGISLATIVE BOARDS:  
AMERICAN BAPTIST POLICY STATEMENTS AND RESOLUTIONS**

**Rule 12.1      Legislative Boards**

[Reserved]

**Rule 12.2      American Baptist Policy Statements**

12.2.1 Definition. Policy statements set forth the views, aims, and aspirations of a deliberative assembly, in the ABC/USA a Policy Statement presents a basic position of the ABC/USA General Board on a broad principle of general concern.

An ABC/USA Policy Statement declares an American Baptist value based on biblical authority and theological insight emerging from Christian and Baptist tradition. (See Rule 18.12.7.)

An ABC/USA Policy Statement is consistent with the Act of incorporation and Statement of Purpose of the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A

12.2.2 Form. Policy statements being recommended to the General Board, generally, should take the form of having:

- (a) a preamble presenting a theological basis for the policy and an analysis of the situation which it is to address,
- (b) a body stating the ABC/USA general Board's consequent attitude or position, and
- (c) the name of the sponsoring group

A possible format for Policy Statements may be found in the ABC/USA's Official Rules of Order. (See *Robert's Rules of Order*, Newly Revised, Section #58.)

12.2.3 Legislative Procedures.

12.2.3.1.1 Only the General Board may adopt or rescind an American Baptist Policy Statement

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12.2.3.2 Any of the following may develop and recommend to the General Board a statement for adoption as an American Baptist Policy Statement:

- 12.2.3.2.1 National Boards
- 12.2.3.2.2 Regional Boards
- 12.2.3.2.3 General Board
- 12.2.3.2.4 Executive Committee

12.2.3.3 The General Board shall receive each recommended policy statement and; in accord with the Bylaws of the ABC/USA, may adopt it with or without amendments in accord with Rule 12.5.2, or return it, with or without suggestions, to the recommending body for study.

12.2.3.3.1 The General Board may, if it wishes, use procedure of First and Second Readings (See Rule 10,4.3) when considering a recommended policy statement.

12.2.3.3.2 The General Board may schedule hearings during its agenda to consider all aspects of the proposed policy statement.

12.2.3.3.3 The General Board, upon request of the recommending group, may, as a part of returning the policy statement to the group, schedule some plenary time during which the General Board will detail its objections and suggestions regarding the policy statement as recommended,

12.2.3.3.4 The group recommending a policy statement, which has been returned by the General Board, may, in accord with the ABC/USA's official rules of order (See Rule 18.15.1), resubmit the policy statement at a subsequent General Board Meeting.

- 12.2.4 Force of Vote. A recommended policy statement shall become an American Baptist Policy Statement only with the approval of three quarters (3/4) of the votes cast thereon.
- 12.2.5 Recording and Publishing Votes. Adopt/return/abstain counts of General Board votes on proposed American Baptist policy statements shall be publicized with any communications about them.

**Rule 12.3 American Baptist Resolutions**  
(Also see Rule 11.2.6.)

- 12.3.1 Extraordinary circumstances. The "extraordinary circumstances" referred to in Rule 12.3.2.3.3.2 and in the ABC/USA Bylaws are those

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circumstances catalogued in the New York State Defense Emergency Act to which the Bylaws refer in Section XVIII.5.

12.3.2 American Baptist Resolutions

- 12.3.2.1 Definition. A resolution expresses a formal decision by a deliberative assembly regarding action on a single matter. In the ABC/USA a Resolution calls for "specific action based on an approved ABC/USA Policy Statement."

An ABC/USA Resolution may authorize or instruct Denominational staff to engage in a certain activity or may urge members of other groups to speak or act in a certain way.

Every American Baptist Resolution shall be based on and be consistent with an American Baptist Policy Statement.

An ABC/USA Resolution is appropriate when the duration of the action(s) called for is expected to be one year or longer. Need for action(s) of shorter duration should be addressed by a Declaration on an Issue of Importance.

- 12.3.2.2 Form. The form of an American Baptist Resolution shall be designed to promote clarity and effectiveness and shall contain the following:

- 12.3.2.2.1 a concise situation analysis; and
- 12.3.2.2.2 a brief statement of the biblical/theological foundation for the proposed action; and
- 12.3.2.2.3 mandate(s) for specific action(s) on the part of denominational staff; and/or
- 12.3.2.2.4 urging of specific action(s) on the part of ABC/USA Cooperating Churches and/or Regions and/or other persons or bodies; and

12.3.2.2.5 as an appendix, citation(s) to the American Baptist Policy Statement(s) on which the Resolution is based.

12.3.2.3 Legislative Procedure.

12.3.2.3.1 Only the General Board may adopt or rescind an American Baptist Resolution, except as indicated in Rule 12.3.2.3.3.2, below.

12.3.2.3.2 Any of the following, acting independently or on the request of the General Board or its

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Executive Committee may recommend a resolution for adoption by the General Board as an American Baptist Resolution.

12.3.2.3.2.1 General Board

12.3.2.3.2.2 National Boards

12.3.2.3.2.2.1 A National Board may recommend to the General Board only resolutions on which the National Board has not already taken approval action as a National Board resolution.

Whenever a National Board recommends to the General Board a resolution for approval as an American Baptist Resolution, such submission shall be deemed to be an undertaking by the National Board that, if the recommendation is not approved as an ABC/USA Resolution, the National Board will not publicize it as an official position of either the recommending Board or of the ABC/USA.

Nothing contained herein limits in any way the authority of a National Board to adopt and publicize a resolution of its own without submission to the General Board for adoption as an American Baptist Resolution.

- 12.3.2.3.2.3 Regional Boards
- 12.3.2.3.2.4 General Executive Council
- 12.3.2.3.2.5 Boards of Administratively Related Organizations
- 12.3.2.3.2.6 An ABC/USA Caucus
- 12.3.2.3.2.7 General Board Committees
- 12.3.2.3.2.8 General Board Commissions

12.3.2.3.3 The General Board shall receive all recommended resolutions through the Executive Committee.

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12.3.2.3.3.1 The Executive Committee, or the General Board, shall determine:

- (1) whether a resolution is the most appropriate form for the General Board action(s) desired,
- (2) whether the proposed resolution conforms to the specifications in Rule 12.3.2.2, and
- (3) whether a recommended resolution is based upon and is consistent with an American Baptist Policy Statement.

12.3.2.3.3.2 Under the conditions described in Rule 11.2.3 the Executive Committee may, on behalf of the General Board, adopt a resolution recommended by any of the groups named in Rule 12.3.2.3.2, above, as an ABC/USA Resolution. In extraordinary circumstances as stated in Rule 12.3.1, the Executive Committee may, on behalf of the General Board, adopt such a resolution referred by a National or Regional Board or the General Executive Council and report the same to the General Board as an American Baptist Resolution. In the absence of such circumstances, whenever the Executive Committee does not adopt the referred resolution on behalf of the General Board, the Executive Committee shall refer the resolution to the General Board for action.

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- 12.3.2.3.3 In the absence of the condition described in Rule 12.9.2, and whenever the Executive Committee does not adopt a referred resolution on behalf of the General Board, the Executive Committee shall refer the resolution to the General Board for action.
- 12.3.2.3.4 The General Board may adopt a proposed resolution, or may adopt it with amendment in accordance with Rule 12.5.2, or return it with or without suggestions for study by the recommending body.
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- 12.3.2.3.4.1 The General Board may, if it wishes, consider a recommended resolution using its procedure of First and Second Readings, (See Rule 10.4.3.)
- 12.3.2.3.4.2 The General Board may schedule hearings during its agenda to consider all aspects of a recommended resolution prior to the session at which voting will take place.
- 12.3.2.3.4.3 The General Board, upon the request of the recommending group, may, as a part of its returning the resolution to the group, schedule a period of plenary time during which the General Board will detail its objections and suggestions regarding the resolution as recommended.
- 12.3.2.3.4.4 The sponsors of a resolution, which has been returned by the General Board, may, in accord with the ABC/USA's official rules of order (See Rule 18.15.1 ), resubmit its resolution at a subsequent General Board Meeting.
- 12.3.2.4 Force of Vote. A recommended resolution shall become an American Baptist Resolution only with the approval of two thirds (2/3) of the votes cast thereon.
- 12.3.2.5 Recording and Publishing Votes. Adopt/return/abstain counts of General Board votes on proposed American Baptist resolutions shall be publicized with any Communications about them.

**Rule 12.4      Requests**

[Reserved]

**Rule 12.5      Procedures**

12.5.1    Sponsor. The sponsor of a policy statement resolution is required to give advance notice to the General Board Executive Committee as provided in Rule 12.9.

12.5.2    Process for Amendment.

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12.5.2.1      Policy statements and resolution shall be amendable on Second Reading, after notice as provided hereinafter.  
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12.5.2.2      After First Reading of any policy statement or resolution, any Representative may present notice of intent to propose an amendment prior to an announced deadline. Such notice shall be addressed to the Committee on American Baptist Policy Statements and Resolutions, with a copy to the sponsor. The sponsor shall present its modifications, if any, to the First Reading Document to the same committee prior to an announced deadline. The Committee shall be responsible, in consultation with the sponsor that the amendments are in appropriate wording and form and in appropriate order for consideration. Thereafter the Second Reading document and the proposed amendments shall be distributed to all Representatives.

12.5.2.3      If the policy statement or resolution is scheduled for Second Reading during the same meeting, the deadline for notice of intent to propose an amendment and for the sponsor's modification(s) shall not be earlier than the beginning of the roaming session of the day after First Reading, and the proposed amendments shall be distributed as soon as possible. Otherwise the deadline for notice of intent to propose an amendment (other than from the sponsor) shall be sixty (60) days after the First Reading, and the deadline for sponsor modification(s) and/or amendments shall be ninety (90) days after the First Reading, and the Second Reading document with the proposed amendment(s) shall be distributed with the proposed agenda of the meeting when Second Reading is scheduled. In either case an amendment, which is moved, shall be acted upon as part of the Second Reading.

12.5.2.4      Any notice of intent to propose an amendment shall include the name, address, and telephone number of its proponent and the text of the proposed amendment. The Policy Statement or Resolution as amended must comply in form with the requirements of Rule 12.2.2 or Rule 12.3.2.2 (as the case may be) and must be within the intended scope and focus of the First Reading document. Any proposed amendment or modification not conforming to such requirements shall be



referred back to the proponent by the Policy Statements and Resolutions Committee.

**Rule 12.6 Call for Continuing Dialogue**

12.6.1 Call for Continuing Dialogue. A Call for Continuing Dialogue presents an important issue concerning which the General Board is not then in a position to declare policy or take other action.

12.6.2 Format. The format of a recommended Call for Continuing Dialogue shall generally include the following:

12.6.2.1 background and definition of the issue;

12.6.2.2 the reason(s) why achieving consensus on the issue then appears impossible, impracticable, or inappropriate;

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12.6.2.3 recommendations of resources for study of the issue and of processes for use of those resources;

12.6.2.4 a time line and anticipated duration (subject to extension) for dialogue; and

12.6.2.5 as an appendix, citation(s) to any American Baptist Policy Statement, Resolution, or other denominational action relevant to the issue.

12.6.3 Process. Only the General Board may adopt or rescind a Call for Continuing Dialogue.

12.6.4 Recommendations. Calls for Continuing Dialogue may be recommended to the General Board by (a) National Boards, (b) Region Boards, (c) the General Executive Council, or (d) the General Board or its Executive Committee. The General Board shall receive all recommended calls for continuing dialogue through its Executive Committee.

**Rule 12.7 Declaration on an Issue of Importance**

12.7.1 Definition. An "issue of importance" is a current event of compelling urgency, which, if not immediately addressed, would lead to some loss of the General Board's focus on ministry and capacity to act in a timely fashion.

A Declaration on an Issue of Importance is appropriate when the need for action(s) is expected to be of short duration, less than one year. If action continuing over a longer period is proposed, the originating body should propose a Resolution instead. A Declaration on an Issue of Importance is not a substitute, even for a short term, or an intended Resolution.

12.7.2 Form. A Declaration on an Issue of Importance shall not normally be more than one page in length and shall include the following:

12.7.2.1 a statement of the issue being addressed including facts which demonstrate its urgency and its expected short term duration; and

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12.7.2.2 call(s) for action(s) by American Baptist individuals or groups in response to the issue; and

12.7.2.3 as an appendix, citation(s) to the American Baptist Policy Statement(s) on which the Declaration is based.

12.7.3 Procedure 1.

12.7.3.1 Any Declaration on an Issue of Importance proposed by a Legislative Board of the denomination (See ABC/USA Bylaws, Section XIII.I.) shall be submitted to the General Board through its Executive Committee.

12.7.3.2 Any American Baptist Representative or group of Representatives (other than a Legislative Board) may submit a proposed Declaration to the General Board Executive Committee:

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| 12.7.3.2.1 | via the President prior to formal adoption of the agenda for the General Board meeting at which the Board is being asked to consider the Declaration, or  |
| 12.7.3.2.2 | after formal adoption of a General Board agenda, via the Reference Committee, which has discretion as to the time of such submissions, i.e., whether to ask the President to convene an immediate session of the Executive Committee or to wait until its next scheduled meeting. |

12.7.4 Conformance to Criteria. In addition to the matters specified in Rule 12.8.3, the Executive Committee, or the General Board, shall determine (1) whether the proposed document conforms to the criteria stated in Rule 12.7.1 and Rule 12.7.2, and (2) whether a recommended Declaration on an Issue of Importance is based upon and is consistent with an American Baptist Policy Statement.

12.7.5 Procedure. Procedure for General Board Consideration of a Proposed Declaration on an Issue of Importance:

The General Board shall, at the agenda time scheduled, consider any proposed Declaration on an Issue of Importance as a main motion made by direction of a board or committee, i.e., requires no second, is debatable, is amendable, requires majority vote for adoption, and can be reconsidered.

12.7.6 Recording and Publishing Votes. Affirmative/negative/abstain counts of General Board votes on proposed American Baptist Declarations on Issues of Importance shall be publicized with any communications about them.

**Rule 12.8            Origination of Legislation by Cooperating Churches**

12.8.1 Petition of Region Board. in addition to other channels, constituent churches will be entitled to petition their Region Board to present to the General Board a proposed Policy Statement, Resolution, Call for Continuing Dialogue, or Declaration on an Issue of Importance.

- 12.8.2 Sponsoring proposed legislation. If such a petition is endorsed by a minimum of ten per cent (10%) of the churches of the Region, the Region Board shall within six (6) months after receiving the petition consider sponsoring the proposed legislative action in the General Board. The action proposed by the petition shall conform to the format specified in Rule 12.2, Rule 12.3, Rule 12.6, or Rule 12.7, whichever is applicable.
- 12.8.3 Amending Petition. Upon considering a petition, the Region Board shall have the power to amend the language of the proposed legislation and/or to substitute one form of action for another (e.g., to substitute a Call for Continuing Dialogue for a proposed Resolution).

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- 12.8.4 Affirmation of Region Board. To be submitted for General Board consideration, the proposed action must receive affirmation by a majority vote of the Region Board.

## **Rule 12.9**

### **Executive Committee Counsel Concerning Proposed General Board Legislation**

- 12.9.1 Process. The originator of any Policy Statement, Call for Continuing Dialogue, Resolution, or Declaration on an Issue of Importance shall obtain early determination of the appropriate vehicle or format and of the relative priority of the concern being addressed.
- 12.9.2 Sharing with General Board Executive Committee. Any individual or body wishing General Board consideration of a Policy Statement, Call for Continuing Dialogue, Resolution, or Declaration on an Issue of Importance shall share the substance of the matter to be addressed, in one written paragraph, with the General Board Executive Committee. Such sharing shall occur as early as possible in the preparation and processing of the proposed action and, except in the event of an unforeseeable emergency, not later than the March meeting of the Committee for matters to be considered at the June General Board meeting or the September Committee meeting for matters to be considered at the November/December General Board meeting.
- 12.9.3 Recommendation of General Board Executive Committee. The General Board Executive Committee shall advise the originator as to the most appropriate form in which the stated concern should be addressed (Policy Statement, Call for Dialogue, Resolution or Declaration) and as to the perceived priority of that concern in relation to the other matters likely to come before the General Board at that meeting. After considering all of the matters expected to be brought to a particular General Board meeting, the Executive Committee may, in light of its sense of priorities for the General Board, request any originator to defer consideration of a concern or may recommend that a concern be dealt with in another Legislative Board without being brought to the General Board.
- 12.9.4 If the General Board Executive Committee recommends that a matter be addressed in the form of a Policy Statement or Resolution, the originator may at

its discretion, chose from the form of a Call for Continuing Dialogue instead. If any such change is made, the originator shall inform the executive Committee in writing before the Call is submitted for presentation to the General Board.

- 12.9.5 Format compliance. Whenever a proposed Policy Statement, Call for Continuing Dialogue, Resolution or Declaration on an Issue of Importance is presented for General Board consideration, the General Board Executive Committee shall consider whether its format complies with Rule 12.2.2, Rule 12.3.2.2 or Rule 12.7.2 (as the case may be) and shall counsel with the originator and advise the General Board with respect to any noncompliance.

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## **Rule 12.10 Referendum of Constituencies**

- 12.10.1 Referendum process. A referendum process, a guarantee of "freedom of dissent," is the ultimate channel of expression available to constituents (Regions and Cooperating Churches) when the ABC/USA's regular channels of representation through the General Board have not produced results which a significant portion of the constituents are willing to accept. However, because denominational decision-making should be by achieving consensus whenever possible, and because a referendum process can be costly both financially and in divisiveness, it is available only in extraordinary cases.

- 12.10.2 Referendum. After a proposed Policy Statement, Resolution, Call for Continuing Dialogue, or Declaration on an Issue of Importance has been properly presented to and acted upon by the General Board, it may be the subject of a referendum of Cooperating Churches and Regions.

- 12.10.2.1 What is submitted to referendum must be the same text as considered and approved or voted down by the General Board.

- 12.10.2.2 Such a referendum shall be conducted by the Office of the General Secretary ("OGS") upon request jointly by a minimum of twenty-five per cent (25%) of the Regions, including Regions in (or responsible for states in) at least two (2) of the three (3) ABC/USA geographic sections (as defined in Rule 18.1 ), expressed through a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of each such Region Board approving the request for referendum, provided that the request is received by OGS within one (1) year after the General Board vote.

- 12.10.3 Mailing of referendum. The referendum shall be conducted by OGS by a mailing to each Region and each Cooperating Church within three (3) months after receipt of the request.

- 12.10.3.1 Together with the text adopted or rejected by the General Board, the ballot, instructions for voting, and other materials (including return envelopes), OGS shall mail two (2) brief position papers, not to exceed two (2) pages each - one (1) prepared by the requesters of the referendum (collectively) and one (1) prepared by a committee, task force or other person or persons designated by the General Board.
- 12.10.3.2 The ballots shall be returned to and counted under the auspices of OGS. No ballot postmarked more than six (6) months after the mailing by OGS (see Rule 12.10.3.1) shall be counted.
- 12.10.3.3 The cost of conducting a referendum shall be underwritten as a legitimate priority claim against the Uncommitted Fund.

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12.10.4 Vote count. The votes of Cooperating Churches on a referendum shall be weighted in proportion to the number of Delegates each may send to a Biennial Meeting, but each Region shall have only one equal vote. As used herein, "votes cast" means votes for or against the proposed action, but no action shall be adopted unless at least fifty-one per cent (51%) of the Cooperating Churches (counted without weighting) and fifty-one per cent (51%) of the Regions cast such votes.

- 12.10.4.1 To be adopted or amended by referendum, a Policy Statement must receive a three-fourths (3/4) majority of the votes cast by Cooperating Churches (weighted) and three-fourths (3/4) of the votes cast by Regions.
- 12.10.4.2 To be adopted or amended by referendum, any other action must receive a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the votes cast by Cooperating Churches (weighted) and two-thirds (2/3) of the votes cast by Regions.
- 12.10.4.3 For any action approved by the General Board to be rescinded by referendum requires a majority of the votes cast by Cooperating Churches (weighted) and a majority of the votes cast by Regions.
- 12.10.4.4 If neither the constituency of Cooperating Churches nor the constituency of Regions gives the required majority vote in the referendum or if either half of the Cooperating Churches (counted without weighting) or half of the Regions fail to vote for or against the proposed action, the original decision of the General Board stands.
- 12.10.4.5 If at least fifty-one per cent (51%) of both constituencies cast votes but there is a split in the votes (i.e., the required majority of churches but not of Regions votes for the action, or vice versa), it shall be recognized that discernment of the mind of

Christ has not been achieved. Automatically there shall be a moratorium on voting regarding the subject of the referendum for not less than four (4) years, during which time prayer and dialogue will be encouraged among the Cooperating Churches, Region Boards, and Representatives.

12.10.5 Amendments to Policy Statements and Resolutions due to legislative action. Any legislative action adopted by a successful referendum shall be referred to the General Board's Committee on Policy Statements and Resolutions with the request that the Committee propose to the General Board Executive Committee amendments, if any, appropriate to bring the existing set of Policy Statements and Resolutions into conformity with the new legislative action.

12.10.6 Review of Policy Statements and Resolutions. Any Policy Statement or Resolution adopted by referendum will after six (6) years, be subject to the standard review/revision process of the General Board.

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## **RULE 13**

### **NATIONAL BOARDS**

#### **Rule 13.1 General**

The maximum number of National Program Board Executive Committee members whose expenses will be paid by the Representative Process budget shall be eight (8).

#### **Rule 13.2 Corporate Membership and Directors**

[Reserved]

#### **Rule 13.3 Vacancies**

[Reserved]

#### **Rule 13.4 Officers**

13.4.1 National Board Presidents. Presidents of National Boards shall upon nomination by their respective nominating committees, be elected (1) for the Program Boards, by ABC/USA Representatives when convened as the members of each such corporation; and, (2) for the Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board, by its Managers elected by ABC/USA Representatives when convened as either members of the General Board or of one of the Program Boards.

#### **Rule 13.5 Evaluation of Executive Director**

[Reserved]

#### **Rule 13.6 Functions**

[Reserved]

**Rule 13.7      Participation in Meetings**

[Reserved]

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**RULE 14**

**COMMITTEES AND GROUPS OF THE ABC/USA**

**Rule 14.1      Committees, Commissions, and Councils**

[Reserved]

**Rule 14.2      Statements of Concern Committee**

14.2.1    Membership. There shall be a Statements of Concern Committee of the ABC/USA [a committee of the corporation] consisting of not more than sixteen (16) persons until June 2007 and thereafter twelve (12), ten (10) of whom shall be members of Cooperating Churches, including clergy, laymen, laywomen, youth, and representatives of ethnic end language groups in the ABC/USA.

The Committee shall be elected by the Delegates at their Biennial Meeting upon nomination by the ABC/USA Nominating Committee.

The fifteenth and sixteenth members of the Committee (until June 2007) and thereafter the eleventh and twelfth members of the Committee shall be the President and Vice-President serving ex-officio.

14.2.2    Terms of Service. The elected members of the Committee shall serve for a term of four (4) years commencing immediately following the adjournment of the Biennial Meeting at which they were elected and shall be divided into two classes of not less than five (5) members each with a term of one class of members ending at the conclusion of the next Biennial Meeting of Delegates and the term of the other class ending at the conclusion of the next following Biennial Meeting of Delegates, provided that their successors have been elected.

No elected member of the Committee shall be eligible for reelection to the Committee until two (2) years after the termination of his or her term as an elected member of the Committee.

- 14.2.3 Chairperson. The Committee's Chairperson shall be elected biennially by members of the Committee from among their number.
- 14.2.4 Vacancy. A vacancy in the membership of the Committee shall be filled (with consideration to preserving the balance of the Committee) until the next Biennial Meeting of Delegates upon appointment by the President and approval by the General Board or its Executive Committee pursuant to Rule 11.2.2.
- 14.2.5 Functions. The functions of the Committee shall be defined by the General Board and shall include: (i) the preparation of statements for consideration and action by the Delegates at their Biennial Meeting on issues of concern to the denomination; and (ii) the preparation of appropriate background materials related to these issues of concern.

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Additional responsibilities include:

- (a) preparing appropriate themes for study by the churches during the biennium;
- (b) receiving and processing prospective Statements prior to and during the Biennial Meeting for consideration by the Delegates; and
- (c) performing such other functions as the General Board, the Bylaws, or the Standing Rules may from time to time specify.

### **Rule 14.3      Biennial Program Committee of the ABC/USA**

- 14.3.1 Responsibilities. The Biennial Program Committee [a committee of the corporation], which has the responsibility to determine policy for the program of the ABC/USA Biennial Meeting, is accountable to the General Board and shall report to the General Board at each General Board meeting held in even numbered years and to the General Board Executive Committee upon request, shall consist of twelve (12) persons, ten (10) of whom shall be appointed by the President in consultation with the General Secretary.
- 14.3.2 Membership. The President shall appoint at least five (5) members of the Biennial Program Committee of the ABC/USA, at least three (3) of whom shall be members of the General Board at the time of their appointment and up to two (2) of whom may be persons from ABC/USA Cooperating Churches who, at the time of their appointment, are not members of the General Board.
- 14.3.3 Role of officers and General Secretary. The President and Vice President shall be ex-officio members of the Biennial Program Committee. The General Secretary shall be a non-voting member of the Committee, and staff support to the Biennial Program Committee shall be provided by the Office of the General Secretary.
- 14.3.4 Regional representation. The Biennial Program Committee of the ABC/USA shall invite the Regional Secretary of the host Region for the Biennial Meeting



(or his or her representative) and may invite other staff or consultants to serve as nonvoting members of the Committee.

- 14.3.5 Membership terms. Members of the Committee shall be appointed for a term of four (4) years commencing on January 1 next following the date of their appointment and shall be divided into two (2) classes of six (6) members each, with a term of one (1) class of members terminating on December 31 of each year in which a Biennial Meeting of Delegates is held, providing their successors have been appointed. The chairperson of the Committee shall be appointed by the President in consultation with the General Secretary and shall serve until the expiration of the term of the appointing President. A vacancy in the membership of the Committee shall be filled by the President for the remainder of the term vacated.

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- 14.3.6 Functions. The functions of the Biennial Program Committee shall include planning the content and agenda of the Biennial Meeting of Delegates, designating the leadership for such meeting, budgeting the expenses of the meeting in consultation with the treasurer, within the budget therefore determined by the General Board, publicizing such meeting, and preparing appropriate materials for delegates and visitors. The General Board may from time to time assign such other functions to the Committee as it deems appropriate. In consultation with the Treasurer and the General Board, the Committee shall propose a Biennial Meeting budget to the Executive Committee for its consideration and determination not later than the Executive Committee meeting held in March of the year of the Biennial Meeting for which the budget is proposed.

#### **Rule 14.4**

#### **Caucus**

- 14.4.1 Definition. A Caucus, within American Baptist Churches, USA, is any group of persons joined with one another in recognition of a common cause and shared characteristic, which meets criteria (See Rule 14.4.2), and is recognized by the General Board on recommendation of the Credentials and Caucus Committee.

- 14.4.2 Criteria. The criteria shall be as follows:

- (1) being national in scope or at least having constituency from more than one Region;
- (2) having a clearly identifiable constituency, which has provided a process for identification of its leadership;
- (3) having overall agreement with the Purpose Statement and related goals of the ABC/USA and not advocating radical change in the polity, practices, or beliefs of the ABC/USA;
- (4) having an interest and/or constituency, which are restrictive as to one or more objectively recognizable characteristics such as age, gender, race/ethnicity, or disability;

- (5) having concerns within the responsibility of the General Board;
- (6) without any unit in the ABC/USA representative process advocating those concerns; and
- (7) such other criteria as the General Board, upon recommendation of the Credentials and Caucus Committee may from time to time specify.

14.4.3 Recognition. Upon application of a group claiming to be a caucus, the Credentials and Caucus Committee shall determine whether the group meets the criteria stated in Rule 14.4.2 and recommend appropriate action to the General Board. Upon approval of such Board, the group shall become a recognized Caucus of the ABC/USA.

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14.4.4 Termination of Recognition. The recognition of any group as a Caucus of the ABC/USA may be terminated by the General Board when the Board has determined upon recommendation of the Credentials and Caucus Committee (after the Committee has given notice and afforded a hearing to the Caucus) that the group no longer meets the criteria stated in Rule 14.4.2. Such termination shall be effective at the expiration of six (6) months following such determination by the Board.

14.4.5 Representation. The General Secretary, in agreement with each recognized Caucus, shall assign one of the members of the General Executive Council to represent the respective interests of that Caucus See also Rule 11.5.1(c) and Rule 11.7.1.

14.4.6 Funding. Any Caucus may request funding by application to the Credentials and Caucus Committee in such form as the Committee may prescribe. After review of the application, the Committee will make a recommendation to the General Secretary regarding the request.

## **Rule 14.5**

### **Rules of Procedure**

Each committee or commission of the ABC/USA and each recognized Caucus of the ABC/USA shall fix its own rules of procedure.

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## **RULE 15**

### **OFFICERS**

#### **Rule 15.1**

#### **General**

##### **15.1.1 Associate General Secretary.**

15.1.1.1 In addition to the officers of ABC/USA provided for in Section XV. 1 of the Bylaws, there shall be an Associate General Secretary and Treasurer of ABC/USA. There also may be one or more Assistant Treasurers. Subject to the approval of the Executive Committee, the General Secretary shall appoint the Associate General Secretary and Treasurer. The Associate General Secretary and Treasurer may appoint an Assistant Treasurer or Assistant Treasurers, as required.

15.1.1.2 The Associate General Secretary and Treasurer shall have the powers and perform the duties of the General Secretary (i) in the absence of the General Secretary and (ii) until such time as the General Board shall act with respect thereto, in the event of the disability of the General Secretary or of a vacancy in the office of the General Secretary. The Associate General Secretary and Treasurer shall perform such other duties as from time to time may be assigned by the General Board, the Executive Committee, or the General Secretary.

15.1.1.3 In addition to the duties prescribed in Rule 15.1.1.2, the Associate General Secretary and Treasurer shall in general have the power of and be responsible for the performance of all the fiscal duties incident to an office of treasurer: shall be responsible for the custody of the funds and securities of ABC/USA; shall be in charge of the disbursement of its money; shall cause full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements to be kept in books and records belonging to ABC/USA; shall cause such books of accounts and records to be exhibited at the office of ABC/USA to any of the members of the General Board at any time upon request and shall cause a detailed statement to be rendered to the General Board as often as the General Board shall require it; shall cause the funds of ABC/USA to be deposited in such banks or trust

companies as may from time to time be designated by the General Board; and shall cause any securities of ABC/USA to be deposited with such banks or trust companies or in such vault or vaults as may from time to time be designated by the General Board. The associate General Secretary and Treasurer shall perform such other fiscal duties as from time to time may be assigned by the General Board, the Executive Committee, or the General Secretary. In the absence or disability of the Associate General Secretary and Treasurer, or in any period when the Associate General Secretary and Treasurer performs the duties of the General Secretary, any Assistant Treasurer shall have the fiscal powers and perform the fiscal duties of the Associate General Secretary and Treasurer as set forth in this Rule 15.1.1.3.

15.1.1.4 The Associate General Secretary and Treasurer, and any Assistant Treasurer, shall give a bond for the faithful exercise of such officer's duties in such sum, and with such surety, as the Executive Committee of the General Board shall require. The cost of such bond shall be paid by ABC/USA.

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**Rule 15.2      President**

[Reserved]

**Rule 15.3      Vice-President**

[Reserved]

**Rule 15.4      Budget Review Officer**

[Reserved]

**Rule 15.5      General Secretary**

15.5.1 Duties. The General Secretary, in addition to duties in the Bylaws (Section XV.5) shall (a) organize the office of the General Secretary in consultation with the Executive Committee and supervise the work of its staff, which shall report to the General Board through the General Secretary; and (b) have power, subject to the approval of the General Board, to execute on behalf of the ABC/USA legal instruments of any nature whatsoever.

15.5.2 Distribution of documents. The General Secretary, before distributing documents recommended to the General Board for deliberation or action shall (in consultation with the sponsor) make, or cause to be made, such changes as may be necessary for the documents to express clearly what the General Board is being asked to consider. If the sponsor will not accept the amended document, the document shall be distributed in its original form.

**Rule 15.6      National Secretaries**

15.6.1 Associate National Secretaries. National Secretaries shall make appointments of Associate National Secretaries to serve on the General Executive Council with special reference to the representation of women on that council.

**Rule 15.7      Removal of Officers**

[Reserved]

**Rule 15.8      Bond**

If required to do so by the General Board, any elected or appointed officer shall give a bond for the faithful discharge of such officer's duties in such sum, and with such surety, as the General Board shall require. The cost of any such bond shall be paid by the ABC/USA.

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**RULE 16**

**DENOMINATIONAL SECRETARIES; STAFF COUNCILS**

**Rule 16.1      Denominational Secretaries**

[Reserved]

**Rule 16.2      Staff Councils of the Denomination**

[Reserved]

**Rule 16.3      National Executive Council**

The National Executive Council of the ABC/USA shall consist of the General Secretary and the National Secretaries, all members having equal vote. The National Executive Council will deal with broad and far-reaching issues and policies and shall provide support for the General Secretary, facilitate and coordinate the planning and implementing work of the staffs of the General and National Boards, and shall perform such other duties as the General Board may assign to it. The National Executive Council shall report to the General Board through the General Secretary and may consult with the General Executive Council on any matter.

**Rule 16.4      Regional Executive Ministers Council**

The Regional Executive Ministers Council of the Denomination shall consist of the General Secretary and the Executive Minister of each Regional Organization. The Regional Executive Ministers Council shall coordinate the work of the staffs of the General and Regional Boards and shall perform such other duties as the General Board may assign to it. The Council shall report to the General Board through the General Secretary and may consult with the General Executive Council on any matter.

**Rule 16.5      General Executive Council**

- 16.5.1 Membership. The General Executive Council of the Denomination shall consist of (i) the members of the National Executive Council, (ii) the members of the Regional Executive Ministers Council, (iii) the Associate National Secretaries, if any, and (iv) the senior salaried executives of American Baptist Assembly, American Baptist Historical Society, American Baptist Women's Ministries, and The Ministers Council of the ABC/USA. The General Secretary shall chair the Council. On recommendation of the General Secretary, the General Executive Council may appoint any other person to serve as an Official Observer to the Council.

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- 16.5.2 Council Functions. The General Executive Council shall be the principal body within the Denomination responsible for the implementation of the policies determined by the General Board. The Council:
- (1) shall recommend statements and resolutions for adoption by the General Board as American Baptist Policy Statements and Resolutions;
  - (2) shall recommend policy decisions and goals to the General Board;
  - (3) may recommend to any National or Regional Board administrative policies and procedures for implementing General Board policy decisions or Denominational functions determined by the General Board;
  - (4) may recommend any Standing Rule or amendment or repeal thereof, pursuant to Article XIX of the Bylaws;
  - (5) may recommend to any Denominational Secretary a specific public statement based on American Baptist Policy Statements or Resolutions or General Board policy decisions;
  - (6) shall recommend to the General Board program emphases and procedures to coordinate staff actions;
  - (7) shall participate in the budgeting process stated in the Common Budget Covenant;
  - (8) shall receive assignments from the General Board;
  - (9) shall provide for staff training and orientation; and
  - (10) shall perform such other functions as may be provided in the Standing Rules or by the General Board.

16.5.3 Members' Functions. Individually or in groups, the members of the General Executive Council may:

- (1) attend meetings of the General Board and National Program Boards and, by invitation, attend meetings of Region boards; only the chief executive officers of the General Board, the National Boards, the Regions, and Administratively-related Organizations shall have the right to speak;
- (2) on the invitation of the General Secretary, participate in an Adjudication in accordance with Section XVIII.6 of the Bylaws; and
- (3) perform such other functions as may be provided in the Standing Rules or by the General Board.

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16.5.3.1 Attendance at Meetings of National Program Boards and Regional Boards

[Reserved]

16.5.3.2 Participation in Adjudication

[Reserved]

16.5.3.3 Other Functions

16.5.3.3.1 Public Statements by Staff. General Executive Council members (and, where appropriate, their staff) shall issue public statements based on ABC/USA Policy Statements, on ABC/USA Resolutions, or on Policy Decisions or Resolutions of their own boards.

ABC/USA Staff shall report to their board or executive committee all public statements issued since the last board or committee meeting, describing their authority for each statement made.

American Baptist persons or groups who object to a public statement made by an American Baptist staff person may register their objections directly with the staff person who issued the statement. If the objection is not withdrawn, the staff person shall refer the objection to the appropriate board or executive committee for final action. The board or committee shall communicate its action to the persons or groups who registered the objection.

**RULE 17****ASSOCIATED MINISTRY ORGANIZATIONS****Rule 17.1 Qualifications**

An Associated Ministry Organization (AMO) must be a national or sectional American Baptist or other religious organization that indicates its willingness: to support the statement of purpose in the Bylaws of the ABCUSA, to cooperate wholeheartedly in such relationships and projects at all levels of denominational life which seem advisable, and to be identified as an organization related to and participating in the life of the ABCUSA by use of name and/or logo.

The AMO will provide reports periodically as requested by the General Board which the ABCUSA may use in communicating the organization's ministries and activities to the denomination's constituencies.

**Rule 17.2 Process**

Any organization which meets the qualification of Standing Rule 17.1 may seek to become an Associated Ministry Organization of the ABCUSA by (i) filing an application with the General Board, (ii) receiving from the General Board an invitation to become an Associated Ministry Organization, (iii) voting to accept such invitation, such acceptance to be given in writing to the General Secretary, and (iv) entering into a covenant with the ABCUSA describing its relationship and defining the mutual expectations of each party. Such a covenant will be reviewed and reaffirmed at five-year intervals.

**Rule 17.3 Legal Status**

An Associated Ministry Organization shall be incorporated; must have its own governing board, a substantial portion of whose members are active members of American Baptist churches; define its own ministry; engage staff persons who are accountable to its governing board and insure its own financial solvency. An Associated Ministry Organization shall hold itself out as a separate entity from ABCUSA. ABCUSA will not be liable or otherwise responsible for the debts, obligations, or liabilities of an Associated Ministry Organization and an Associated Ministry Organization will not be liable or



otherwise responsible for the debts, obligations or liabilities of ABCUSA or any other Associated Ministry Organization.

**Rule 17.4 Relationships**

An Associated Ministry Organization will not be a party to the Covenant of Relationships or its Statements of Agreement entered into by Regional and National ABC organizations. An Associated Ministry Organization shall relate to the Office of the General Secretary to foster recognition, communication, assistance and support, and may purchase services or space from the Office of the General Secretary as defined in individual agreements.

**Rule 17.5 Termination**

The relationship between the ABCUSA and any Associated Ministry Organization may be terminated by either the General Board or such organization as of December 31 of any year, by giving at least six (6) months prior written notice to the other party of its intention to do so, provided that either party initiating the termination shall not act without giving the other party a reasonable opportunity to present its point of view concerning the proposed termination to the governing board of the initiating party.

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**RULE 18**

**MISCELLANEOUS**

**Rule 18.1 Geographic Sections**

- 18.1.1 Three geographical sections. For the purpose of representations on boards, committees or commissions for which representation shall be according to geographic area as required by the Bylaws or by the Standing Rules, the territory of the denomination shall be divided into three (3) geographical sections.
- 18.1.2 Eastern Geographic Section. This section shall consist of: Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.
- 18.1.3 Central Geographic Section. This section shall consist of: Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin.
- 18.1.4 Western Geographic Section. This section shall consist of: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

**Rule 18.2 Instruments**

All checks, drafts, orders, notes, deeds, security instruments, powers, and other legal instruments shall be executed on behalf of the ABC/USA by such person or persons and in such manner as the General Board may direct.

**Rule 18.3****Seal**

The corporate seal of the ABC/USA shall be in such form as may be determined by the General Board.

**Rule 18.4****Notices**

[Reserved]

**Rule 18.5****Fiscal Year**

[Reserved]

**Rule 18.6****Investments**

The General Board shall have power to invest and reinvest and otherwise manage, dispose of, and control the assets of the ABC/USA, and may from time to time direct the sale or other disposition of any part of the securities of the ABC/USA or any rights or privileges pertaining thereto.

1005:1/98

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The General Board may from time to time authorize such committees or persons as the Board may designate (i) to invest and reinvest the funds of the ABC/USA subject to such guidelines as the General Board may specify, or to formulate and recommend to the General Board investment policies, and (ii) to execute and deliver on behalf of the ABC/USA proxies in respect of securities owned by the ABC/USA, appointing persons to represent and vote such securities at any meeting of the holders thereof, with full power of substitution, and to alter and rescind such appointments.

**Rule 18.7****Compensation**

No Representative, member of the General Board, or officer of the ABC/USA elected by Delegates to an ABC/USA Biennial Meeting shall receive, directly or indirectly, any salary, compensation, or emolument from the ABC/USA except (i) for services rendered as such Representative, member of the General Board, or officer and (ii) for professional and other services performed in any other capacity, and, in each case, only upon action taken by the Executive Committee at any meeting at which a quorum is present. Any member of the General Board whose compensation is under consideration at any such meeting of the Executive Committee shall not be counted toward such quorum nor shall such member vote upon any such action regarding such compensation. Notwithstanding the foregoing, payment may be made by the ABC/USA to a Representative, a member of the General Board, or officer of the ABC/USA as reimbursement for reasonable expenses incurred in such person's capacity as a Representative, member of the General Board, or officer.

Any employee elected an officer of ABC/USA by the General Board or appointed an officer subject to the approval of its Executive Committee shall be remunerated in accord with the General Board Executive Compensation Policy (GB Doc. 7504:4/79) as implemented by the Appraisal Committee and the Executive Compensation Committee of the General Board Executive Committee.

**Rule 18.8 Prohibition Against Sharing in Corporate Earnings**

[Reserved]

**Rule 18.9 Emergency Bylaws**

[Reserved]

**Rule 18.10 Indemnification**

(Also see Addendum 1.)

By resolution of the General Board adopted pursuant to this Standing Rule, the ABC/USA may, to the fullest extent permitted by law, indemnify and advance expenses to each individual made, or threatened to be made, a party to any action by reason of the fact that such individual is or was a Representative, member of the General Board, officer, or employee of the ABC/USA, or such individual, while serving as a Representative, member of the General Board, officer or employee of the ABC/USA, served any other corporation or entity in any capacity at the request of the ABC/USA.

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**Rule 18.11 Adjudication**

18.11.1 Process. Whenever two (2) or more of the National Boards, the Regional Boards, and the General Board differ on any matter, one shall send a written statement of the difference to the other(s) and the Boards shall try to resolve the differences among themselves. The Common Ground process, available from the General Secretary, is recommended for resolving any difference. If the parties are unable to resolve their difference(s), any of the boards may initiate Adjudication by sending a written request thereof to the General Secretary.

18.11.2 Nomination of Adjudicator. The General Secretary shall nominate to the differing parties an Adjudicator, usually the General Board Executive Committee. If the General Board is one of the differing parties, the General Executive Council Executive Committee shall serve as or nominate an Adjudicator.

18.11.3 Statement of nature of differences. When the differing boards have agreed to an Adjudicator they shall each slate the nature of the difference in writing to the adjudicator and shall appoint one (1) person to participate with the Adjudicator in the Adjudication process, without vote.

18.11.4 Role of General Secretary. The General Secretary shall participate in the Adjudication, without vote.

18.11.5 Role of Adjudicator. The Adjudicator, as deemed necessary by the circumstances, shall:

- (l) meet individually with each of the differing boards in any one or combination of modes; the Adjudicator may meet with:
  - (a) the chief executive officer;
  - (b) the chief executive officer and the Executive Committee;

- (c) the President;
  - (d) the President and the Executive Committee;
- (2) meet jointly with the differing boards, in any one or combination of modes; the Adjudicator may meet with:
    - (a) the chief executive officers;
    - (b) the Presidents;
    - (c) the chief executive officers and Presidents together;
    - (d) the chief executive officers, Presidents, and up to three (3) lay members from each of their Executive Committees;
  - (3) fairly and impartially hear all relevant evidence from all parties, following standard conflict resolution procedures, and reach a determination which is intended to be conciliatory and just; and
  - (4) report in writing to all of the differing boards and to the General Secretary the adjudicated conclusion reached in "(3)," above.

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18.11.6 Final decision. The decision of the Adjudicator shall be final.

## **Rule 18.12 Definitions**

18.12.1 "United States". The term "United States," as used in the Bylaws and in the Standing Rules, shall mean and include all of the states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, territories, dependencies, and protectorates of the United States, and any other area where the United States has sovereignty. The words "state" or "states" as used in these Bylaws shall mean and include each and all of the foregoing.

18.12.2 "American Baptist Region".

[Reserved]

18.12.3 "Clergy".

[Reserved for input from the American Baptist Ministers Council.]

18.12.4 "Administratively Related".

[Reserved for input from the National Executive Council]

18.12.5 "Function". The normal course or characteristic action of a corporation or board; a special duty or performance required of a person or an organization in the course of work or activity.

18.12.6 "Policy Decision". A determination made by a board in the fulfillment of a function of that board; a policy decision is the sole responsibility of the board concerned.

18.12.7 "Statement of Concern". A public statement of the Delegates in attendance at any session of a Biennial Meeting of the American Baptist Churches; it seeks to express the position of such Delegates on moral, spiritual, political, economic, social, denominational, and ecumenical matters to American Baptists and to the rest of society.

**Rule 18.13      Captions**

[Reserved]

**Rule 18.14      Action by Vote**

[Reserved]

**Rule 18.15      Parliamentary Practice**

18.15.1 *Robert's Rules of Order*. (Newly Revised) shall be the manual to guide the ABC/USA in all matters of parliamentary practice not prescribed in the ABC/USA Bylaws or Standing Rules.

1005:6/05

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**RULE 19**

**AMENDMENTS**

**Rule 19.1      Bylaws**

[Reserved]

**Rule 19.2      Standing Rules**

[Reserved]

1005:11/98

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ADDENDUM #1

General Board Resolutions  
Affecting  
Standing Rules

1604:12/9/82  
December 7, 1982

**TO:** General Board

**FROM:** Executive Committee

**SUBJECT:** Making Two Committees on Policy into Standing Committees of the General Board

Counsel has advised, in light of the New York Statutes governing not-for-profit corporations, that two Committees on Policy (recognized under the statute as “committees of the corporation”) are now and have, for some time, been functioning as Standing Committees (or, “committees of the board”).

Since it is anticipated that the functions carried by these two committees will continue indefinitely, Counsel advises our taking steps to place them in the proper category for their work.

Accordingly, the Executive Committee recommends that the General Board give the attached resolution its First Reading in December 1982 and its Second Reading in June 1983.

The use of a resolution in this matter is specified by Section 712(a) of the New York Not-for-Profit Corporation Law.

Enc. 1

AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES IN THE U.S.A.

Resolution Proposed to be Adopted by the General Board  
to Make Two Committees on Policy  
into Standing Committees of the General Board

WHEREAS, the Executive Committee of the General Board created the Committee on Policy on Standing Rules (EC505 Dec. '77) ; and the Committee on Policy on American Baptist Policy Statements and Resolutions (EC507 Dec. '77); and

WHEREAS, these two Committees on Policy have continued to function from their creation to the present, and the Committee on Policy on Standing Rules believes that the need for both will continue indefinitely; and

WHEREAS, legal counsel have advised that, since these two Committees on Policy have, by assignment, developed continuing functions, they now appear to have taken on the attributes of standing committees within the meaning of Section 712 of the New York Not-for-Profit Corporation Law, and, if the General Board believes these functions should be assigned to committees indefinitely, the General Board should provide formally for the appointment of standing committees of the General Board to carry out these functions, and

WHEREAS, the nature and function of every other Standing Committee of the General Board are described in the ABC/USA Bylaws or ABC/USA Standing Rules;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT VOTED THAT:

- (a) the functions of these two Committees on Policy be assigned to Standing Committees of this Board;
- (b) appropriate new Standing Rules be presented to this Board to create a Standing Committee to carry on the functions of each of these Committees on Policy, and
- (c) each of these committees on Policy continue to function until such time as the new Standing Rule creating its successor shall become effective.

(Voted by General Board 6/12/83. GB1211)



AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES IN THE U.S.A.

Resolution Adopted by the General Board to Establish  
this Communication Stand Committee

(I) RESOLUTION T O ESTABLISH A STANDING COMMITTEE  
ON THE ABC COMMUNICATION FUNCTION

- WHEREAS,
- (1) the General Board uses permanent standing committees to oversee denominational functions for which it carries specific accountability (e.g. Budget Review Committee, Credentials and Caucus Committee, Planning and Evaluation Committee, Committee on Christian Unity, etc.); and,
  - (2) the General Board voted, in December 1988, (GB1844) to designate the American Baptist communication function to the Office of the General Secretary as a specific accountability of the ABC/USA; and ,
  - (3) it is facilitative and appropriate to establish such a General Board standing committee on communication, define its commission, and name its membership;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT VOTED to provide for such a Standing Committee on Communication within the Standing Rules including the following provisions:

- a. the communication committee shall be a standing committee of the General Board,
- b. this new committee shall have a membership of 8 to 10 persons representative of the National Boards and of communications expertise resident within the body of ABC Representatives,
- c. the committee shall advise the General Board Executive Committee regarding the denominational communication function,
- d. the committee shall be responsible for policies in the area of communication, following recommendations from the General Board, the Communication Council, and/or the Communication Advisory Group,
- e. committee staff shall be the ABC Director of Communication, ABC.

(Voted By General Board 6/19/89, GB1936)

Sara-Alyce Wright, on behalf of the Executive Committee, presented the Resolution on Indemnification (1604.15:6/90) for Second Reading. (See GB2059 for First Reading.) This resolution will make operational Standing Rule 18.10, Indemnification.

Upon recommendation of the Executive committee, it was

VOTED: To approve the Resolution on Indemnification:

WHEREAS:

1. The General Board, on advice of counsel, recommended and the ABC Delegates to the 1989 Biennial Meeting voted to amend the ABC By-laws by deleting Section 10 of Article XVIII, Indemnification , and
2. In anticipation of this action, the General Board voted a new Standing Rule 18.10, contingent on passage in the 1989 Biennial Meeting of the notion to amend by deletion of Article XVIII, Section 10, and
3. Standing Rule 18.10, Indemnification, provides that “By resolution of the General Board ... the ABC by ... indemnify and advance expenses to ... a Representative, member of the General Board, officer or employee of the ABC ...”, and
4. Such actions were not intended to eliminate or restrict indemnification, but rather to enhance the General Board’s power to grant indemnification in appropriate cases; and
5. Persons serving the denomination expect and are entitled to indemnification with respect to their actions in good faith;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

that American Baptist Churches in the USA (ABC/USA) shall indemnify, insofar as permitted by law, any person made or threatened to be made a party to any action or proceeding, criminal, civil or administrative, by reason of the fact that such person or such person’s testator or intestate was a Representative, member of the General Board or officer or employee of the ABC/USA or, at the request of the ABC/USA, served some other corporation or trust or in a partnership or joint venture if such person or such person’s testate or intestate (as the case may be) is found by a court of competent jurisdiction of, in the absence of a court finding, by a disinterested majority of the General Board to have acted in good faith for a purpose reasonably believed to be in the best interests of the ABC/USA and without reasonable cause to believe that such action was unlawful. Such indemnity shall include judgments, fines, amounts paid in settlement, and expense reasonably incurred, including

attorneys' fees, in defense of such action or proceeding or for any appeal therein; and, in case of financial need during the pendency of the action or proceeding, the General Board or the Executive Committee between meetings of the General Board may, after making such a finding of good faith, advance sums to pay such expenses subject to recapture if no such finding of good faith is made at the conclusion of the action or proceeding.

## **ADDENDUM #2**

Texts Removed from ABC Bylaws  
For Which Cognates Exist  
In the American Baptist  
“Covenant of Relationships”

ADDENDUM #2 TO ABC STANDING RULES (September 1990)

TEXT TRANSFERRED FROM ABC BY-LAWS IN LIGHT OF COGNATE  
TEXTS IN THE AMERICAN BAPTIST  
COVENANT OF RELATIONSHIPS AND STATEMENTS OF AGREEMENT  
(C.O.R.)

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Former Article III, Section 2 of the By-laws; cf. C.O.R.  
PAGES 10-11 (Adjudication) AND 16 (Election District)

(Any difference or disagreement between the General Board and a Regional Board with respect to the boundaries of, or the assignment of Cooperating Churches to, any Election District within the area of a Regional Organization shall be resolved by Adjudication in accordance with Article XVIII, Section 6 (11) of these By-laws.)

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Former Article III, Section 2 of the By-laws, cf. C.O.R. page 16

(The by-laws of every Regional Organization shall provide that each Election District Representative elected from an Election District within the area of that Regional organization who is not a member of its Regional Board shall, upon election and for the duration of service as such Representative, be designated a voting member of such Regional Board, or an Official Observer thereto with the right to be heard but not to vote.)

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Former Article VI, Section 3 of the By-laws; cf. C.O.R. pages 13 and 17

(Each Regional Organization, under the general direction and supervision of its Regional Board, shall implement those functions in accordance with Denominational planning policy and the General Board's state expectations, and in a manner consonant with these By-laws and the Standing Rules. Within those functions, each Regional Organization shall implement American Baptist Policy Statements and Resolutions, subject to General Board review. Each Regional Organization shall design, carry out and report to the General Board on programs and projects to implement its Denominational functions.)

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Former Article VIII, Section 3 of the By-laws; cf. C.O.R. page 36

(The Covenant of Relationships and Statements of Agreement may be amended, and any other covenant or agreement authorized by this Article VIII may be amended or terminated, in accordance with procedures state therein or in the Standing Rules.)

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Former Article X, Section 4 of the By-laws; cf. C.O.R. page 30

RE: Functions of the General Board:

[(k) set policies and criteria in consultation with the National and Regional Boards for evaluating the work of the Denominational Secretaries;)]

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Former Article X, Section 6 of the By-laws; cf. C.O.R. page 12

(The General Board at its discretion may submit any other proposed General Board action to ratification by the Regional Boards in accordance with this Section 6.)

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Former Article XII, Section 4 of the By-laws; cf. C.O.R. page 15

(Section 4. National Board Executive Committee Action. The by-laws of each corporation managed by a National Board may provide that, in extraordinary circumstances as stated consistently with the statement thereof in the Standing Rules as provided in Section 3 of this Article XII, such National Board's executive committee may adopt a resolution and may recommend such resolution to the General Board for adoption by the General Board as an American Baptist Resolution.)

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Former Article XVI, Section 2 of the By-laws; cf. C.O.R. pages 22-23 and 25-26

(Section 2. Regional Secretaries of the Denomination. The by-laws of each Regional Organization shall provide that the chief executive officer of such corporation shall be chosen in consultation with the General Secretary and shall be designated the Executive Minister of that Organization. While serving as Executive Minister, each such officer shall also serve as a Regional Secretary of the Denomination. Within the areas of their respective Regional Organizations, Regional Secretaries shall be responsible for implementing the Denominational functions determined for their Regional Organizations by the General Board. American Baptist Policy Statements and Resolutions, and the Regional Resolutions, policy statements and functions of their respective Regional Boards. Regional Secretaries shall provide staff services for and administer, as appropriate, the Assemblies of Election Districts located within the areas of their respective Region Organizations and shall provide consultation and support to the Election District Representatives.

In consultation with the General Secretary, each Regional Board shall evaluate the work of its Executive Minister at least every four (4) years. The processes for selection and evaluation of each Executive Minister shall be embodied in a Statement of Agreement.)

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Former Article XVIII, Section 6 of the By-laws; cf. C.O.R. pages 10-11

Section 6. (10.) Adjudication. (When two or more Legislative Boards shall differ over any matter, including a determination or assignment of a Denominational function by the General Board, and shall be unable to resolve their differences through discussion, any one of the Boards involved may initiate an Adjudication by sending a written request therefor to the General Secretary. The differing legislative Boards and the General Secretary shall agree to an Adjudicator of the dispute which shall be the General Board Executive Committee or may be another American Baptist person or group. Each of the differing Legislative Boards shall state the difference in writing to the Adjudicator and appoint one person to participate with the Adjudicator in the Adjudication, without vote. The General Secretary and any member of the General Executive Council invited by the General Secretary may, with the consent of the adjudicating parties and the Adjudicator, also participate in the Adjudication, without vote. The decision of the Adjudicator shall be final.)

OTHER TRANSFERS

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Former Article XVI, Section 1 of the By-laws; superceded by By-laws Proposal # 1g of the General Board as voted by Delegates to the 1989 Biennial Meeting

(The Denominational Secretaries, individually or as a group, shall report to the General Board through the General Secretary.)

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(Disc 9-17-90:cormatl)



**ADDENDUM #3**

"Autonomy and Interdependence within the  
American Baptist Denomination: A Declaration"

(Adopted by the General Board of the American Baptist Churches, U.S.A,  
December 1983)

Reprint from The American Baptist, June 1983

# **AUTONOMY<sup>1</sup> AND INTERDEPENDENCE<sup>2</sup> WITHIN THE AMERICAN BAPTIST DENOMINATION: A DECLARATION**

[Dec. 1983; GB1279]

## **Introduction and Historical Background**

The Church of Jesus Christ must remain free to define its own mission and structure. In this declaration we, as American Baptists, under what we believe to be the prompting of God's Spirit, offer our own understanding and self-definition of the nature and intentionality of autonomy<sup>1</sup> and interdependence<sup>2</sup> within the American Baptist denomination.

Baptist history in the United States, from the founding of the First Baptist Church in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1639 until the present, reveals that Baptists have emphasized the autonomy of both local congregations and Baptist organizations. At the same time history records the cooperation and interdependence between and among congregations and a wide variety of Baptist organizations.

While autonomy has characterized Baptist life from its beginning in America, the creation of the Philadelphia Baptist Association in 1707 signaled a common desire for cooperation and mutual counsel regarding a range of issues which affected more than a single church.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the founding of additional opportunities for cooperative Baptist undertakings. In keeping with this recognition of the interdependence of Baptists in witness and mission, Massachusetts Baptists formed the first Baptist state organization or society for mission in 1802. Thereafter, other state organizations were organized in later years, and three national societies were created respectively, for foreign missionary outreach (1814), for publication of Christian books and Sunday School materials (1824), and for home missions (1832). The painful Baptist separation prior to the Civil War resulted in two Baptist groupings, both of which have continued the dual emphasis upon autonomy and interdependence to the current time.

The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century provided the occasion for increased cooperation and interdependence, but autonomy continued as a predominant mark of American Baptist life. When the Northern Baptist Convention was formed in 1907, very limited responsibility was assigned to the convention. The churches agreed to a single meeting time and place for general oversight of the various national societies founded and recognized by Northern Baptists. This limited step toward coordination and interdependence was advanced by the reorganizations in 1950 (when the name of the Northern Baptist Convention was changed to the American Baptist Convention) and 1961, without challenge to the autonomy of the organizations created by Baptist congregations, or to the autonomy of the congregations themselves.

Following the recommendations of the Study Commission on Denominational Structure, or SCODS, the restructuring of the national Baptist organizations in 1972 intentionally limited the autonomy of the national societies, while respecting their separate corporate identities, to facilitate greater cooperation and coordination in national expressions of Baptist life and witness. No modification of the appropriate autonomy of local congregations, associations/areas, or region/state/city organizations was implied or

intended in that 1972 restructuring. At that time the Convention's name was changed to American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.

In 1977 the scope of interdependence was broadened when the organization of American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. was modified to provide representation in the general denominational structures for the 37 region/state/city organizations. However, this outcome, recommended by the Study Commission on Relationships (SCOR) in its report "Together in Mission," in no manner altered the legal autonomy of the 37 region/state/city organizations. Even though the opportunities for coordination and interdependence were increased, neither by intention nor by new bylaw provisions were the appropriate autonomies of covenanting or affiliating organizations changed. Rather, these modifications recognized and clarified the nature of the relationships of the 42 cooperating American Baptist organizations (1 General, 4 National and 37 Regional or affiliating Organizations). The creation of a basic Covenant of Relationships and a series of Statements of Agreements underlines that fact. No single, all-inclusive denominational entity emerged as the "American Baptist Church."

The period from 1639 (the founding of the First Baptist Church in America) to 1977 (the voting of the SCOR recommendations for restructuring) demonstrates the basic Baptist attempt to balance two desirable values: autonomy and interdependence. Neither has overcome the other in either theory or practice in the history of the American Baptist denomination. Both values continue to inform and guide Baptist life to this day. American Baptists have not compromised either element of this polarity. American Baptists continue to affirm these two complementary and sometimes competing values, insisting that each pole of the polarity is a necessary corrective to the other.

### **Balancing Freedom and Order**

The Statement of Purpose of American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. contains the following declarations: "In every area of their common life American Baptists, acknowledging the importance of *creative diversity*, seek such a *balance of freedom and order* as will keep all parts of American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and at the same time enable them to work responsibly under God for maintaining its life of worship, witness, and ministry."

That desired balance of freedom and order was modified toward greater interdependence in the reorganizations of 1972 (SCODS) and 1977 (SCOR) without, however, creating any centralized authority for all decision-making within the denomination. The areas of life and mission which were to be coordinated were described by a voluntary Covenant of Relationships and its related Statements of Agreement.

Neither the design nor the language of those documents was cast in legal terminology. Indeed, even to attempt to apply the legal concept of contract would be to demonstrate a misunderstanding of those documents because any one of the covenanting bodies may unilaterally withdraw from the Covenant of Relationships or Statements of Agreement without any sanctions stated or implied. Most significantly, the role and appropriate authority of each of the denomination's 42 organizations and their boards of directors were recognized; for example, by affirming in the Bylaws of the ABC/USA that "Each Regional Organization shall determine its own corporate structure and decision-

making procedures” (p.12), and confirming the continuing corporate status of the denomination’s four national societies or boards (p.19).

A variety of American Baptist-related institutions have defined their separate relationships to various American Baptist organizations by means of particular covenants. These related institutions include schools, national training center, colleges, universities, campus ministries, seminaries, retirement homes, hospitals, nursing homes and children’s homes. Each of these institutions is governed by an autonomous board. This declaration, however, deals with the Covenant of Relationships and its related Statements of Agreement, not those particular covenants.

The movement from less to greater interdependence has been evident in the denomination’s history in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It would be a misunderstanding, however, to interpret that movement as a rejection of the Baptist value of autonomy. Rather, American Baptists have taken several steps toward modification of a *balance* of freedom and order. Given American Baptist history and diversity, the definition of the proper “balance” could shift again in the future in response to needs and new understandings of the gospel. But while the balancing point may move back and forth - and even be perceived differently by various covenanting parties at any given time in history - the prevailing movement of Baptist history and intention includes both autonomy and interdependence, without the one overcoming the other.

### **Covenant of Relationships, Mission Funds Staff Council, and Boards**

The biblical concept of a covenant is that it is a way of relating whole persons or communities to God and to each other. It is not a legal contract to define or limit obligations or claims which contracting parties may have toward each other. A covenant creates a flexible relationship marked by trust and faithfulness to God and to each other both in action and expression. A covenant expresses a bond of brotherhood and sisterhood in Christ made possible by the Holy Spirit.

This biblical understanding of covenant informs our theological understanding of the Covenant of Relationships we American Baptists have freely created.

We here state the nature and extent of our covenants and the relationships reflected in them.

#### **A. Definition of the Covenant of Relationships**

The Covenant of Relationships is a solemn endeavor under God, among the organizations which are parties to it, to cooperate in mission in a spirit of Christian unity and love. The Covenant of Relationships is a temporal and provisional statement of the balance of freedom and order which many American Baptist organizations freely choose for working together to carry out the task of Christian mission and ministry.

Any of the 42 eligible American Baptist organizations, seeking to order its life in accordance with the Scriptures under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is free to enter and affirm the Covenant of Relationships or free not to enter into the Covenant of Relationships. Any American Baptist organization which has entered the Covenant of Relationships is free to seek to amend it or to withdraw from it at any time.

The Covenant of Relationships is not a legally binding instrument; it creates no legal rights or legal obligations between and among the organizations which enter in or for non-parties to it. The parties to the Covenant of Relationships disclaim any intent to form a legal joint venture or association. No party to the Covenant of Relationships has any power or authority over, or any legal responsibility for, the beliefs, persons or property of any American Baptist or any other organization or its governing board or property; nor does the Covenant of Relationships create or establish any organization which has such power, authority, or responsibility.

The Covenant of Relationships is a statement of shared understandings of the appropriate relationships for American Baptist organizations as they cooperate under the Lordship of Christ in support of common mission goals and objectives.

### **B. Statement of Agreement on the American Baptist Mission Fund**

The Statement of Agreement on the American Baptist Mission Fund sets forth the principles for cooperation in raising and allocating the mission monies which constitute the American Baptist Mission Fund. That Statement of Agreement creates no legally binding rights or obligations among the parties to it or for any non-parties.

The American Baptist Mission Fund is constituted by the voluntary gifts of American Baptist congregations to support the mission and ministry of various denominational organizations. In the statement of agreement on this Mission Fund provisions are made whereby contributions may be shared with all mission participants or may be restricted to a few or even one mission participant. The parties to the Agreement have a sacred duty and are accountable to the whole denomination to see that all monies in the Fund are used for the purposes for which they are given.

### **C. The General Staff Council**

The General Staff Council is a non-legislative assembly of professional staff members (primarily chief executive officers) of covenanting and of affiliating organizations which are parties to the Covenant of Relationships and/or the Statement of Agreement of the American Baptist Mission Fund. The General Staff Council provides a forum for the discussion by its members of matters of concern to American Baptists, fosters collegiality and accountability among its members, and nurtures a spirit of unity and cooperation. Actions and statements of the General Staff Council are advisory in nature, and when duly adopted, they express the mind of the General Staff Council.

### **D. American Baptist Organizations**

Each American Baptist organization is autonomous, and the board of directors of each has legally defined powers and responsibilities with respect to the management of its affairs and property, none of which is altered by the Covenant of Relationships.

When the covenanting bodies cooperate under the Covenant of Relationships, their responsibilities are defined by that Covenant. The governing boards of these bodies have no power or authority under the Covenant of Relationships over the beliefs, actions or property of any individual American Baptist or any other American Baptist organization or its governing board. No governing board has authority to give directions or orders to any individual American Baptist, to any local congregation, or to any other American Baptist organization.

American Baptist boards in inter-board relationships have no power to legislate in the legal sense. When, under the Covenant of Relationships, these boards enact Policy Statements and Resolutions, they have only the power and the responsibility to express the sense of their members, duly elected and duly delegated pursuant to the Covenant of Relationships, on matters of concern and importance to American Baptists. When Policy Statements and Resolutions are adopted by a board, they express the mind of that board, and the covenanting parties agree to give them due respect and weight and be guided by them in a spirit of unity and cooperation under the Lordship of Christ.

Staff members of American Baptist mission bodies are accountable under law to the governing boards of the organizations which employ them. The Covenanting parties (but not the affiliating organizations) affirm that their respective staffs are also expected to act under the Covenant of Relationships in a spirit of cooperation. However, no board has authority to hold accountable or to give directions or orders to any staff member employed by another organization.

### **American Baptist Covenants and Baptist Freedom**

The history of the United States clearly demonstrates the leadership of Baptists in the establishment and preservation of the separation of church and state. Baptist life and thought recognize the right of each religious group within our nation to determine its own faith, polity, life, and lines of authority.

The creation of understandings among American Baptists regarding the degree of autonomy and interdependence between and among American Baptist organizations is, essentially, a theological undertaking. Only American Baptists have the right or the power to interpret or to alter those understandings contained within American Baptist Covenants, Statements of Agreement, and corporate documents. The First Amendment to the United States Constitution prohibits government from deciding for any religious body that body's beliefs, mission, or organization. Therefore, we as American Baptists declare that government agencies and others external to American Baptist life and mission have no authority or competence to interpret or change the self-understanding of American Baptists or the documents and statements in which we have set forth that understanding.

### **Conclusion and Commitment**

Recent American Baptist reorganizations, continuing discussion of our denominational relationships, and the on-going debate regarding separation of church and state have combined to call for this statement. Our Baptist successors will have the liberty to modify, in light of the Scriptures and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, each and every American Baptist document - including this declaration - as may be deemed helpful to American Baptist life and mission.

Accordingly, in this year of our Lord 1983 the undersigned organizations do hereby affirm and declare this brief declaration to be consistent with each organization's understanding of the nature of American Baptist autonomy and interdependence, and each directs that the date of its affirming action be affixed hereto.

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1<sup>1</sup> *Autonomy*- in the Baptist (free church) tradition, is the unencumbered capacity of each local congregation and of each organization created by local congregations and/or their members to exercise full rights of self-government in all matters of faith and practice.

2 *Interdependence* in the Baptist (free church) tradition in exercising self-government in matters of faith and practice, is reckoning confidently upon one another; relying on one another: as individual believers, as local congregations, as organizations created by local congregations and/or their members; and laboring together for the well being and general good of Christ's Body, the Church, as members one of another.

Reprinted from **THE AMERICAN BAPTIST** June 1983

#### **ADDENDUM #4**

"Qualifications, Functions, and Commitments of Representatives"

[Appendix IV.C of Doc. #1414.4.:6/93 (and #414.4A:6/93)  
Voted by the General Board, June 1993 (GB2480)]



**QUALIFICATIONS, FUNCTIONS AND  
COMMITMENTS OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**QUALIFICATIONS:**

1. Commitment to Jesus Christ and the whole mission of the church to evangelize, educate and encourage.
2. Understanding of and respect for the purpose, history, diversity and tradition of the ABC/USA and its ministries.
3. Active membership in a contributing ABC/USA church and Region and demonstration of individual commitment to support its missions financially.
4. Regular participation and involvement in board and committee meetings and willingness to contribute your unique skills and abilities.
5. The ability to listen, negotiate and reconcile while seeking to discern the mind of Christ and to build up this community of faith.
6. The ability to lead as well as serve, to envision the future as well as plan for it.
7. The desire to study and grow in your Christian faith and your understanding of the work of Christ in our world today.
8. The ability to communicate to others the goals, programs and ministries of the ABC/USA.

**TIME COMMITMENT:** You should plan to spend at least

-two and one half days plus travel time for initial orientation (late March or early April of first year)

-five days twice per year plus travel and preparation time for meetings (Mid-June and late November or early December)

- two to three days per year for communication, interpretation and advocacy in your Region

- quarterly meetings of your Region Board and annual or biennial Region meetings

- other time as is mutually agreed on for extra committee, commission or task force meetings.

## FUNCTIONS:

1. Active learning and Policymaking. You will receive reports from staff, proposals for budgets, readings for policy statements and resolutions and letters from your constituency. It is vital that you take responsibility for your own education on these matters so that the decisions we make are responsible and informed. The General Board is the primary policy making body of the ABC/USA. This includes electing persons to offices and committees, voting on budgets and policies and program direction.

2. Evaluation and oversight. Representatives are responsible for holding denominational staff accountable to our policies and program direction. All evaluation should be done candidly, constructively and directly.

3. Affirmation and encouragement. Staff members and missionaries work on behalf of all of us. It is our role to encourage and pray for each of these, including the work of the local church. Words of appreciation, questions for clarification, suggestions and resources are all appropriate ways to fulfill this function. Your active participation in committee meetings will also provide encouragement.

4. Envisioning and creative input. We are a "think tank" to envision the future God has planned for us. We are more than the sum of our parts as we energize each other with ideas, reflections and visions. In this way, the Holy Spirit can work through our diversity to bring a unity of mission. This in turn determines the direction of our denomination and each of its ministries.

5. Communication and constituency relations. We are also channels for two-way communication between our constituencies and denominational leadership. It is our task to be interpreters of the actions of the General Board and advocates for the work of our denomination as a whole. Each of us has particular spheres of activity (church, Region and other bodies) in which we can exercise this role; we represent the denomination in those spheres. Acting as a messenger from constituents involves an exercise of judgment: it is important that widely held views and other significant elements of opinion be reported; but every individual letter a Representative receives cannot be afforded General Board time.

6. Financial stewardship. Each Representative has a responsibility to contribute personally and to aid in the task of raising mission dollars. Such a responsibility comes with membership on any board of any organization. It is denominational policy to expect that we tithe and promote tithing in our churches.

FSS818

4/28/93

**ADDENDUM #5**

**“WE ARE AMERICAN BAPTISTS”**

**(REVISED November 2005)**

“We Are American Baptists”  
(revised November 2005)

**American Baptists worship the triune God of the Bible, who is eternally one God in three persons. This one, true God is most clearly revealed to us in the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.**

American Baptists proclaim the Good News of the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, knowing that salvation (forgiveness of sins, release from guilt and condemnation, reconciliation with God) and eternal life are granted in grace to all who trust Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. This Gospel is the central message of the Bible.

American Baptists believe that the Bible, composed of the Old and New Testaments, is the divinely inspired Word of God, the final written authority and trustworthy for faith and practice. It is to be interpreted responsibly under the guidance of the Holy Spirit within the community of faith. The primary purpose of the Bible is to point to Jesus Christ, the living Lord of the Church.

Although Baptists have produced numerous confessions to express our common understandings of Christian faith, we hold the Scriptures, the Old and New Testaments, as our final authority. We accept no humanly devised confession or creed as binding.

American Baptists affirm that God is sovereign over all and that this sovereignty is expressed and realized through Jesus Christ. Therefore, we affirm the Lordship of Christ over the world and the church. We joyously confess that Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord.

We are called in loyalty to Jesus Christ to proclaim the power of the Holy Spirit, the Good News of God’s reconciling grace, and to declare the saving power of the Gospel to every human being and to every human institution. We celebrate Christ’s charge to “make disciples of all nations” and to bear witness to God’s redeeming reign in human affairs.

American Baptists are summoned to this mission in common with all Christians. With the whole body of Christ, we also believe that God has been revealed in Jesus Christ as in no other, and that “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself” (II Corinthians 5:18). We anticipate the day when every creature and all creation, on earth and beyond, will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:10-11).

God has given this particular community of believers called Baptists a distinctive history and experience. As we share in common with Christians everywhere, so Baptists everywhere celebrate a common heritage.

## THEREFORE

With Baptist brothers and sisters around the world, we believe:

That the Bible is the final authority and trustworthy for faith and practice. It is to be interpreted responsibly under the guidance of God's Holy Spirit within the community of faith;

That the Church is a gathered fellowship of regenerated believers, a sign of the coming universal reign of God;

That the freedom to respond to the Lordship of Christ in all circumstances is fundamental to the Christian gospel and to human dignity; and

That witness to Christ is the ongoing task of every Christian and of every church.

Within the larger Baptist family, American Baptists emphasize convictions which direct our special task and ministry.

We affirm that God through Jesus Christ calls us to be:

### A Redeemed People

:who claim a personal relationship to God through Jesus Christ;  
:who follow the Lord in believer's baptism;  
:who gather as a believer's church;  
:who share in the meal of the kingdom known as the Lord's Supper;  
:who honor the priesthood of all believers; and  
:who live their faith as visible saints.

### A Biblical People

:who affirm the centrality of Scripture in our lives;  
:who pursue the study of God's inspired Word as a mandate for faith and practice;  
:who seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the understanding of Scripture, while respecting the common interpretation of Scripture within the community of believers; and  
:who submit to the teaching of Scripture that God's design for sexual intimacy places it within the context of marriage between one man and one woman, and acknowledge that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Biblical teaching.

#### A Worshiping People

- :who gather regularly to praise God;
- :who receive nourishment by communion with the Risen Christ;
- :who share an open and public confession of faith; and
- :who believe that personal devotion brings vitality to corporate celebration.

#### A Mission People

- :who strive to fulfill the Great Commission to make disciples;
- :who invite persons to receive salvation and follow Christ;
- :who engage in educational, social, and health ministries;
- :who seek justice for all persons; and
- :who provide prayer and financial support to sustain a worldwide mission outreach.

#### An Interdependent People

- :who affirm the Church's unity as given in Jesus Christ;
- :who gladly embody in our practice the ministry of the whole people of God;
- :who recognize God's gifts for ministry and honor all offices of pastoral ministry;
- :who live and work together "in association;" and
- :who bring the free church tradition to cooperative and ecumenical Christianity.

#### A Caring People

- :who care for the needy, the weak, and the oppressed;
- :who care for the earth and for all its creatures;

#### An Inclusive People

- :who, gifted by a variety of backgrounds, find unity in diversity and diversity in unity;
- :who embrace a pluralism of race, ethnicity, and gender; and
- :who acknowledge that there are individual differences of conviction and theology.

#### A Contemporary People

- :who have a remembrance for the past and a vision for the future;
- :who are committed to religious liberty and to the separation of church and state;
- :who call our present world to make Jesus Christ Lord of all life; and
- :who trust the Holy Spirit for insight and power to live in the present age.

#### We further believe

- :That God has called us forth to such an hour as this;
- :That we live with a realizable hope;
- :That all things are held together in Christ;

- :That all creation will find its ultimate fulfillment in God;
- :That we shall see the One whose we are; and
- :That Jesus shall reign for ever and ever.