

## **President's Report-March 2016:**

I find my heart humbly grateful as I enter into my first ABCUSA President's report. In early February, our Interim General Secretary, Susan Gillies, and I had an email exchange. In it I articulated my goals as your president in this biennium.

First-To lead us through the search process for a new General Secretary with grace and a heart open to discern the leading of God's Spirit among us. I daily find myself in prayer for this process. I trust that the Spirit's movement was present this past biennium and I truly believe the Spirit is with us now.

Second-To continue to renew and strengthen relationships within our American Baptist family. With three retirements completed and others on the horizon, we stand in a holy moment for our denomination. The time is ripe for rich conversations that will open pathways for new vision and movement in our mission and ministries. Strengthening relationships is the vital to how we listen to God's heartbeat within the American Baptist family.

Third-To raise up the significance of discipleship and spirituality. We are only able to listen to God's Spirit and be the hands and feet of Christ when we have a growing deepening practice of engaging God in daily life. Rhythms of the Spirit continues to be a priority for me. In June, my daughter, Kathryn, and I will travel to Taize, France as part of this year's Rhythms ministry. At the 2015 Mission Table I volunteered to champion the role of discipleship in our churches. These two aspects of our faith journey set us on a course with Christ that open us to grace, hope, and endless possibilities.

The UM AD team met in a not-so-warm Orlando in early January. There we brainstormed possibilities for a new emphasis to strengthen United Mission support. We also affirmed the pilot emphasis, **UM is the Vehicle**, and will launch it nationally in April.

With thanks to American Baptists connecting with other American Baptists, we will be voting in Zina Jacque and Tom Ross as General Directors on BGM. Zina will serve on the Executive Committee and Tom on the Nominating Committee. This completes the required number of persons in those positions. I worked with Tom Ross on the American Baptist Foundation Board and have experienced Zina's leadership. They both bring tremendous gifts and insight into their role on BGM.

In the past two months, Susan Gillies and I have been connecting via email and phone conversations. I'm so very grateful for Susan's leadership as our Interim General Secretary. I find in her a woman of faith who is grounded in reality and centered in Christ. Her wisdom has already blessed us greatly.

It is an exciting time for us. May we listen to God's leading and continue as people of faith committed to sharing the love of Christ and bringing justice, mercy, and hope to all people.

Respectfully submitted-Judy Fackenthal, ABC President 2016-2017