

Here's a few key pieces of information that will inform the discussion

- 1) The BGM executive committee approves the policy of the WRC. This is stated in Section 14.7.2 of the ABCUSA Standing Rules:

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

- (a) establishing policy, subject to the approval of the Board of General Ministries, 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 Board of General Ministries;**
- (b) determining the allocations to be sent to cooperative bodies such as Church World Service and Baptist World Aid; and**
- (c) granting to National Program Boards and to Region Boards the administration of funds within the policies adopted by the Committee and approved by the Board of General Ministries.**

- 2) Section 14.7.1 of the ABCUSA Standing Rules establishes the membership of the World Relief Committee. So while the World Relief Committee can discuss its membership and make a recommendation to the BGM executive committee, it is the BGM leadership that can change the Standing Rules and thereby the composition of the committee.

Here is what that states:

**14.7.1 Membership. There shall; be a World Relief Committee consisting of ten (10) members including:**

- (a) seven (7) voting members to be elected by the Board of General Ministries:**
  - (1) two (2) persons nominated by the Board of Directors of ABFMS from among its membership;**
  - (2) two (2) persons nominated by the Board of Directors of ABHMS from among its membership;**
  - (3) two (2) persons nominated by the ABCUSA President from among Board of General Ministries membership, with one of those persons to be appointed chair of the Committee by the ABCUSA President; and**
  - (4) one (1) person nominated from the American Baptist Women's Ministries Executive Committee from among that Committee's membership.**
- (b) three (3) non-voting members, one (1) each from the staffs of ABCUSA, ABFMS and ABHMS appointed by the General Secretary in consultation with the appropriate respective ABCUSA National Secretary from ABFMS and ABHMS.**
- (c) The World Relief Officer shall staff the Committee.**
- (d) Any vacancy shall be filled by nomination and election or appointment as aforesaid.**

- 3) The Policy of the World Relief Committee includes a section about the Principle Channels. I'll include that below. That's what has shaped the composition of the Committee—both in terms of voting members and in terms of staff that participate.

**6.5 PRINCIPLE CHANNELS. The principle channels for programmatic work of "supporting, enabling and encouraging emergency relief, ministry to displaced persons, and development assistance," are:**

- the Board of International Ministries (IM);
- the Board of National Ministries (d.b.a. as "American Baptist Home Mission Societies"(ABHMS));
- the ABC/USA Regions;
- Baptist World Aid (BWAid);
- Church World Service (CWS); and
- the World Council of Churches (WCC).

**In addition, the General Secretary of ABCUSA is a principal channel for pastoral support in response to times of crisis brought about by natural or human made disasters.**

**In using the ecumenical channels (BWAid, CWS and the WCC), while the World Relief Committee is committed to working with these ecumenical partners, it does so only in accordance with the philosophy and practice of mission of IM, ABHMS or ABCUSA. If, for any given project, there are competing philosophies or practices of mission, then the philosophy and practice of mission that takes precedence is that of either IM, the ABHMS or ABCUSA, whichever is responsible for the geographical location or area where the project will be implemented.**

- 4) So, the composition has been based on the Principle Channels. In the General Board restructure, I remember there was conversation about whether or not the World Relief Committee should remain a committee of the General Board/BGM. Because there were so many other moving parts at that time, as BGM, IM and ABHMS were all doing the necessary work to establish the Board structure they wanted into the future, where one committee fell never rose to the attention of the decision making process. So the World Relief Committee remained under BGM. And that's how we moved forward.

One piece of history I don't know is this: Prior to the General Board restructure, 2 representatives from ABWM attended the World Relief Committee in a "voice but no vote" capacity. I don't know if this relationship was tied to another dynamic of the General Board meetings and they expressed interest in the committee or how that came to be. What I do know is that the World Relief Committee Chair at the time of the General Board restructure was Shirley Fair. Shirley was very active in ABWM. She felt—and I agreed---that having ABWM present with voice but no vote was not a good way to move forward. It felt like something was given, but something larger was being withheld. I'm sure that wasn't the intention, but we didn't know the history of why this was the relationship. So Shirley advocated for one rep from ABWM to be a full voting member going forward. That was granted in the ABCUSA Standing Rules.

- 5) **The reason for the staff representation on the Committee is as follows: One staff member from ABCUSA because the committee is a committee of the BGM. One staff member each from ABFMS and ABHMS because those staff members present the development projects that are considered by the committee. ABHMS presents domestic projects from ABHMS and the Regions. ABFMS presents international projects. The staff have no vote. They attend solely to present the development projects that are considered by the Committee. That is why ABWM does not currently have a staff representative.** They are not a Principle Channel for OGHS funds so they aren't allocated funds in the OGHS budget and therefore don't present development projects to the Committee. They are welcome to submit a domestic project through ABHMS or an international project through ABFMS---but because ABHMS is charged with the domestic program of ABC as it relates to the foci of OGHS (disaster, development and refugee and immigration), and ABFMS charged with this foci outside of the US and PR, they are the Principle Channels.
- 6) Could ABWM be added as a Principle Channel? Sure. That's entirely within the purview of BGM. I will say that along with the other ABC annual offerings, the undesignated funds available through OGHS continue to

decline. OGHS has experienced less of a decline than the other annual offerings, but it still is a decline. To add another Principle Channel at this point would further divide an already shrinking pie---and because of COVID, I expect that pie will shrink significantly in the next 1-2 years. It would represent no additional funds within the system, just a reallocation of what has been.

- 7) And this is one last small detail, all staff attend at the cost of their own Board. IM pays the cost of the ABFMS staff representative. ABHMS pays the cost of their staff representative. OGS does the same. ABWM would do so also.

Blessings,  
Lisa