



**BOARD OF GENERAL MINISTRIES  
VIRTUAL MEETING  
NOVEMBER 13-14, 2020  
MINUTES**

**Officers:** Karen Podsiadly, President  
Jim Wolfe, Vice President  
Josué Gómez-Menéndez, Past President  
Paul Higgins, Budget Review Officer  
Jeff Woods, Interim General Secretary

**Parliamentarian:** Bill Frederickson      **BGM Chaplain:** Zina Jacque

*Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, precautions were taken to hold the November meeting of the Board of General Ministries Executive Committee via virtual platform instead of in person.*

**Friday, November 13, 2020. 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.;**

**BGM 503      CALL TO ORDER**

American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA) President Karen Podsiadly welcomed all of the Board of General Ministries (BGM) directors and staff and then called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

**BGM 504      WORSHIP**

BGM Chaplain Zina Jacque lit the Christ Candle in recognition of Christ's presence. Zina led a devotion.

**BGM 505      ABCUSA FOCUS STATEMENT**

The ABCUSA Focus Statement was shared in unison.

*American Baptist Churches are missional congregations that nurture devoted disciples of Jesus Christ who live their lives in mission and ministry for the healing of the world through the love of God.*

**BGM 506      CONSENT AGENDA**

*Judith Christiansen made a motion to approve the General Consent Agenda: written reports posted prior to the meeting and the Proposed Agenda and Minutes of the BGM's November 8-11, 2019 meeting held in King of Prussia.*

**No objections, motion approved.**

**BGM 507 BGM OFFERING**

Zina Jacque announced that the BGM Offering will be given to the One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) COVID response which is a two-part appeal: one part for relief across the United States and Puerto Rico; the second part for international relief. More information is available on the [ABCUSA Website](#).

**BGM 508 REPORT OF THE INTERIM GENERAL SECRETARY**

Interim General Secretary Jeff Woods began his report by asking to hold all those affected by COVID-19 in prayer. Jeff Woods shared that a portion of his focus over the last five months has been the continuing impact of COVID-19 on regions and congregations and the ABCUSA response to the need for racial justice. Jeff highlighted these and other activities in his report.

Jeff talked about the mission of the Office of the General Secretary and the partner ministries being one of “unity.” We serve the “whole,” that is why the board represents every region. Therefore, Jeff’s report reflects the “Unity of the Whole.”

Jeff and ABCUSA President Karen Podsiadly designed a “Call to Prayer” event that included over 145 online participants. The Anti-Racism Task Force is meeting and working on developing guidelines and definitions; along with, identifying resources.

After becoming aware that several leaders and pastors associated with the Burmese Diaspora were confused over the status and meaning of the Associated Ministry Organizations (AMOs) that many are a part of as well as ordination procedures for clergy, Jeff drafted a clarification document that the Professional Ministries Team (PMT) approved. The document was then shared with the Burma Refugee Commission and the Regional Executive Ministers Council (REMC) to illuminate current practices and explore future adaptations that might benefit all persons involved.

Jeff announced that Rev. Dr. Marie Onwubuariri, has been called to serve as the Associate General Secretary for Mission Resource Development. Marie will be leaving her current position as Executive Minister of ABC of Wisconsin. Her primary responsibilities include the promotion of giving to UM on behalf of the denomination and the oversight of Mission Resource Development for the Office of the General Secretary.

ABCUSA Congregational surveys regarding the impact of COVID-19 on regional activity were distributed and discussed among the REMC; as well as, two ABCUSA congregational surveys were distributed and analyzed, and are included in the BGM documents.

Jeff concluded his report by stating, “We always hope in the Lord as Christians.”

**BGM 509 REPORT OF THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

Slate of ABCUSA Officers for the 2022-2023 Biennium

President Karen Podsiadly announced the following slate of ABCUSA Officers for the 2022-2023 Biennium to be forwarded to the 2021 Biennial Mission Summit delegates for vote at the 2021 Biennial Mission Summit.

ABCUSA President: James Wolfe  
ABCUSA Vice President: Michelle Nickens  
Budget Review Officer: Paul Higgins

The Nominating Committee will meet again in January to fill a few director positions still open.

Karen Podsiadly appointed Thomas Gilmore for service on the BGM and ABC Finance Committees.

**MOTION:** *Kathryn Ray made a motion and seconded by Ralph Marks to confirm the appointment of Thomas Gilmore on the BGM and ABC Finance Committees.*

**No objections, motion approved.**

### **BGM 510 REPORT OF THE BUDGET REVIEW OFFICER**

Paul Higgins referred to the financial report prepared by Alan Musoke, highlighted in the year-to-date through September 2020 a net gain of \$152,000 with the Biennial. There was little activity in the Biennial account so the difference with the Biennial is minor.

The following activity is based on the financials excluding the Biennial. There was a Biennial last year and there is no Biennial this year.

New revenue compared to last year is down \$574,000. Expenses as compared to last year are lower by \$1,277,000. Some of the factors for the decrease in expense and revenue are:

- Elimination of intercompany charges in 2020 of \$409,125 (YTD Sept.)
- Reduction of personnel expenses, including the following
  - Two Associate General Secretaries (Paid through April 2020)
  - Regional Ministries vacancy
  - Director of Development
  - Director of Office of Travel and Conference Planning (OTCP)
- Reduction of \$126,000 in expense for Representative Process due to the elimination of meeting expenses.
- There was \$208,000 of income and expense generated in Denominational Emphasis for a one-time transaction in 2019.
- ABCUSA received \$620,000 from the Payroll Protection Program shown as a liability. Once forgiven, it will be recognized as income.

Total United Mission (UM) is \$4,361,377. This is a decrease of \$592,620 from the prior year. This represents a reduction of 11.96%

**MOTION:** *Bonnie Higgins made a motion and seconded by Judith Christiansen to adopt the 2021 distribution of the national portion of United Mission as recommended by the ABCUSA Finance Committee.*

**No objections, motion approved.**

*ABCUSA 2021 Budget Highlights include:*

On average UM has been declining annually by 5.41% over the last five years from 2015 to 2019. The 2021 UM shows a decline of 12%. This is a result of using the budgeted amounts instead of the actual UM numbers.

The Budget for 2021 is based on the 2021 UM distribution recommended by the ABCUSA Finance Committee. UM provides approximately 43% of the ABCUSA Budget. A 5% draw from the Building Proceeds Quasi-Endowment provides another 33% of the budget.

The Budget for 2021:

- Includes payroll expense increases of 1%
- Increase in medical costs of 8.4%
- Budget is balanced by one-time use of \$319,000 in Paycheck Protection Program Loan forgiveness.
- Assumes full meeting budget for BGM

**MOTION:** *Bruce Van Der Beek made a motion and seconded by Raimundo Barreto to adopt the 2021 Estimated Income Tax and the proposed 2021 ABCUSA Budget as recommended by the BGM Finance Committee.*

**No objections, motion approved.**

#### **BGM 511 REPORT OF THE ABCUSA PRESIDENT**

Karen Podsiadly shared with the Board her excitement in serving as President. She never imagined that being President would be as it is now during the pandemic. She expressed her gratitude for the Executive Committee and staff for their support in the year.

#### **BGM 512 CREDENTIALS & CAUCUS COMMITTEE**

Josué Gómez-Menéndez Chair shared that there are now 5003 ABCUSA churches, down from 5029.

*Kurt Kaufman made a motion and seconded by Ralph Marks to accept the Report of Changed Relationships of Local Churches (1205.1:11/20) dated November 2019-2020.*

**No objections, motions approved.**

#### **BGM 513 REGION UPDATES**

Yvonne Carter Executive Minister of the Cleveland Baptist Association (CBA) expressed her gratitude for her being at the board meeting on behalf of the REMC. Yvonne shared that like other regions are experiencing, CBA was challenged with the pandemic situation. Churches were being challenged by technology, the economic situation, and not being able to have in-person fellowship. The Cleveland Foundation gave a grant to the CLE Baptist Foundation to assure churches that the CBA was there to assist with resources to safely re-open churches.

#### **BGM 514 2021 BIENNIAL MISSION SUMMIT**

Jeff Woods gave an update on the 2021 Biennial Mission Summit which will be held online due to the pandemic. The theme for the 2021 Biennial Mission Summit is “Imagine.” The 2023 Biennial Mission Summit will be held in Puerto Rico since it could not be held there in-person in 2021. Tina Kiernan is serving as the Biennial Program Coordinator.

Some events will be live on the stage at a location close to the Roblee Building in King of Prussia, PA and others will be pre-recorded. Following the theme of Imagine, the speakers for each night are as follows:

Thursday Evening – “Imagine Unity”

Friday Evening – “Imagine Healing” keynote speaker Rev. Dr. Winterborne LaPucelle Harrison-Jones

Saturday Evening – “Imagine Hope” keynote speaker Rev. Dr. Brianna Parker

For guests who want more content beyond the evening, there will be awards presentations, bible studies, and workshops. The Exhibit Hall will include a virtual showcase and the ability to schedule an appointment to interact with a person in the hall.

#### **BGM 515 RECESS BGM/CONVENE AMERICAN BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

ABCUSA President Karen Podsiadly recessed the meeting of the Board of General Ministries. Rev. Jonathan Malone, President of the American Baptist Historical Society (ABHS), called the annual corporate meeting of ABHS to order.

***MOTION:** Janice Fletcher made a motion and seconded by Judith Christiansen to approve the minutes of the last meeting of ABHS in November 2019.*

**No objections, motion approved.**

ABHS Executive Director, Rev. Dr. Priscilla Eppinger shared that 2020 was a “year like no other” and congregations changed how they did ministry. The Historical Society was asked about how churches responded to the flu pandemic of 1918, but little was found in the archives. ABHS is encouraging churches to keep records during the pandemic for future generations to share their stories of worshiping during the pandemic.

There have not been any researchers at their office for at least six months due to the pandemic. Much of the significant historical library is now available on-line. Priscilla expressed her gratitude for the prayers and financial support as they look forward to the strategic plans for the future. Jonathon Malone closed by giving an overview of the various technology formats.

***MOTION:** Kathryn Ray made a motion and seconded by Judith Christiansen to adjourn the meeting of the American Baptist Historical Society.*

**No objections, motion approved.**

#### **BGM 516 RECONVENING/WORLD RELIEF COMMITTEE REPORT**

Zina Jacque shared that like virtually all ministries across the United States and Puerto Rico, One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) has been impacted by COVID-19. Here are the ways:

The monies with which the World Relief Committee makes grants are the dollars that are received as OGHS without any specific disaster response designation. Through September 2020, those dollars are 29% behind where they were a year prior. Year-to-date giving for 2020 is \$569,862 vs. year-to-date giving for 2019 that was \$797,994. Unfortunately, the beginning of the OGHS promotional period coincided directly with the COVID-19 restrictions that changed the way in which many churches were meeting. A decline in giving was anticipated, but this magnitude of decline has changed the timing of the work of the World Relief Committee.

The World Relief Committee has not met to conduct its normal business since November 2019. The June 2020 meeting was postponed due to COVID-19. The November 2020 meeting has also been postponed until December 2020 so that the Committee has the most up-to-date annual giving information from which it will decide which grants it can make this year.

Of interest this year, giving to date designated for Domestic US/PR COVID-19 response is \$116,603 and International COVID response is \$58,612. Those monies have been supplemented by additional OGHS funds and to date ABHMS has made \$171,441 in domestic COVID-19 relief grants and International Ministries

#### **BGM 517 ACTION GROUP REPORTS**

Action Groups met prior to the board meeting and their reports were posted ahead of the meeting. Three motions from the Committee on Christian Unity and Interfaith Relations (CCUIR) were brought to the board for vote.

***MOTION:** Kurt Kauffman made a motion and seconded by Patrick Embly to accept the invitation to join the Churches Witnessing with Migrants as recommended by CCUIR.*

**No objections, motion approved.**

***MOTION:** Raimundo Barreto made a motion and seconded by Patrick Embly for Annie Svitavsky to serve on the NCCC Joint Action and Advocacy Table as recommended by CCUIR.*

**No objections, motion approved.**

***MOTION:** Patrick Embly made a motion and seconded by Stephanie Commandest for Trisha Manarin, Executive Minister, DC Baptist Convention, to serve as ABCUSA's representative with the Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) as recommended by CCUIR.*

**No objections, motion approved.**

#### **BGM 518 RECOGNITION OF RETIRING BGM DIRECTORS**

Retiring Board Directors were recognized. Joyce Blandon, Cecilia Dachtler, Kelly Legg, and Jose Manuel Magana were all sent the book, *Baptist Roots: A Reader in the Theology of a Christian People* by Freeman, McClendon and DaSilva and a certificate of appreciation..

#### **BGM 519 EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Before adjourning the meeting, the Board of General Ministries met the next morning in Executive Session. Actions taken during this meeting will be placed in a sealed envelope and filed with the official minutes in the General Secretary's office.

Submitted by,



Dr. C. Jeff Woods

Interim General Secretary

CJW/kj

Documents attached

*BGM Proposed Agenda (1102:11/20)*

*BGM Minutes – November 2019 (1001:11/19)*

*BGM Executive Committee Minutes: September 2020 (1002:09/20)*

*BGM Executive Committee Minutes: June 2020 (1002:06/20)*

*Financials YTD through September 2020*

*2021 Budget Highlights*

*Reports from Directors to Other Boards*

*Reports of ABCUSA OGS Staff and AMOs*

*Burma Refugee Commission Report*

*Professional Ministries Report*

*ABC President's Report (1201:11/20)*

*Report of the Interim General Secretary*

*Action Groups Assignments Nov. 2020*

*Report of Changed Relationships (1205.1:11/20)*

*AMO Status and Burmese Diaspora*

*Report of Actions of the BGM Executive Committee*

*Communicating ABC Identity Action Group Report to BGM*

*Beloved Community Action Group Report to BGM*

*CCUIR Report to BGM*

*BGM Finance Committee Report to BGM*

*IGS Report COVID – 19 Congregational Study*

*American Baptist Historical Society Report*

*BGM Virtual Meeting Resource Sheet*