

Communicating ABC Identity Action Group
May 3, 2021, 11 a.m. – noon (Eastern Time)
Chair: Bonnie Higgins
Staff: Marie Onwubuariri, Bridget Lipin

Notes

Present: Present: Al Marks, Jan Fletcher, Bonnie Higgins, Marie O, Laura Austin, Patrick Embley, Ken Atchinson, Marilyn Malone, Kurt Kaufman.

Absent: John Campbell, Bryan Roberts, Angela Russell, Damaris Santiago-Lebron

1. Welcome
2. Opening Prayer
 - a. Bonnie opened the meeting in prayer.
3. Assign Note taker
 - a. Kurt was assigned note taker.
4. Review March 30, 2021 meeting notes and follow up comments
 - a. No discussion of the previous notes or revisions were presented.
 - b. Marie had some updates:
 - i. Jeff updated the call to prayer for Myanmar, which included some updated information sent out through social media/email
 - ii. Jeff also recommended that regions list their Burmese Diaspora churches in their regional church list, highlighting them specifically.
 - iii. The main map on the ABC website has also not been updated regarding Burmese diaspora churches since 2018, however following the transition to NetSuite, this map should be up to date.
 - iv. Laura inquired of Marie as to how much has been distributed for One Great Hour of Sharing COVID relief specifically.
 1. Jan will inquire about this as well as Marie.
5. Review Action Group Description

Communicating ABC Identity:

Our ABC Identity can be a positive and a negative all at the same time. Unlike other Christian groups that may have a historical figure or a particular practice that defines them, ABC doesn't seem to have such clear distinctives except the strong affirmation of Baptist principles. Joined together by Baptist principles has included many groups from all walks of life in the making of ABC. Against this reality and the increasing moving

away from organized religion in American life, what is “ABC Identity” today? For any group to function effectively, what is needed to communicate ABC identity that would draw us together to do mission and ministry together? This Action Group will continue the ACT on this topic with the hope of identifying findings that would influence the work of BGM such as the national ministers conference and the Orientation to AB Life.

6. Communication needs/ideas:

- a. Bonnie introduced the task: making the identity clear to *all* folks.
 - i. Laura mentioned “Serving as the hands and feet of Christ” as well as focusing on social *action* (as opposed to justice)
 - ii. Bonnie agreed with “Serving as the hands and feet” – but a follow up question was in regards to *what* we’re actually doing.
 - iii. Marilyn noted that the actions that we take depends on **where** we are.
 - iv. Al noted that he rarely has people inquiring about what ABCUSA does – most people only care about what the local church does.
 1. Patrick agreed – noting that several could be confused about the difference between Southern Baptist/American Baptist as opposed to ABCUSA/etc.
 - v. Marilyn noted that people who are attracted to her congregation are people that have been wounded by other faith communities – and these people may visit the regional and denominational website as well.
 1. Jan added that more and more people are going to websites, especially in a time of pandemic, and what we say on these websites is important.
 2. Laura added that a focus on autonomy is important as well.
 - vi. Bonnie noted the differences between her church and the church down the road – both ABC, though dramatically different, and both can work together.
 - vii. Jan noted that the words “autonomy” and “cooperative” stood out to her through our discussion.
 1. Laura added “Christ-centered” as well.
 - viii. Marie added that she feels the local church witness is important, and what happens at the national level may be of little concern to individuals.
 - ix. Marie inquired as to whether or not we are ready for individuals to leave the denomination.
 1. Laura added that ABCUSA is an umbrella, and at the edges we are different.
 - x. Marie asked if we should focus on the center, without saying anything, or perhaps focusing on the edges where transformation happens.
 1. Al noted that conversations about the national level that he has with people inevitably end up focusing on the local level/the spokes of the umbrella.
 - xi. Bonnie noted whether an image of an umbrella would be helpful to communicate ABC identity.

1. Jan added that the images around the edge of the umbrella should be focused on the missions of the local church, connected to ABCUSA through their support.
 2. Laura also noted that this could convey a sense of “shelter from the storm” that ABCUSA helps to provide.
 - b. It was noted that individuals on the Board could fill out this umbrella diagram for their own individual churches at the meeting in November.
 - i. Members of this action group should take some time to perhaps fill this out to test the concept.
 - ii. Patrick added that each church could be some sort of growing plant (a focus on individual qualities) that is rooted in Christ/ABC and has their own fruit that grows.
7. OGS table at the 2021 Biennial – regarding communicating ABC Identity?
- a. Marie suggested that this action group meet at the OGS table in the biennial to gather ideas from individuals that join at the table during the biennial.
 - i. One question that could be asked is “What is ABC Identity today?”
 - ii. Marie and Bonnie will prepare a survey to gather availability to host the OGS booth at the Biennial.
8. **Action Item: OTABL OGS Description & ABC Identity**
- a. Please minimally review the [OGS Handout](#), presented at the OGS session of [Orientation to American Baptist Life](#). Your feedback is welcome as it relates to the question of communicating who ABCUSA is and what we do to support the denominational as a whole.
 - b. Send feedback to Bonnie and/or Marie or we can fold your input into further conversations at a future meeting.
9. Next Steps – Action Items for the year
- a. Bonnie noted that after we figure out who we are, the next step is to get people excited about this.
10. See you at the board meeting June 3-4, 2021
- a. Marilyn closed the meeting in prayer.