



CONGREGATIONAL LIFE TASK FORCE

1. RATIONALE

The COVID-19 global pandemic continues to influence the everyday lives of the global population as well as the lives of congregations. In response to this global pandemic, the Office of the General Secretary has provided numerous resources, conducted surveys, hosted conversations, and participated in widespread initiatives. As congregations continue to adjust to new patterns of worship, discipleship, outreach, and community ministry, it is apparent that ABC congregations would welcome and benefit from sharing their learnings with one another. Our biggest adjustments and challenges may be yet to come.

During the recent Biennial Mission Summit, over 650 American Baptists participated in the Mission Summit Conversations with 180 persons choosing to dialogue about the topic of "Congregational Life – What changes might be made to the ways that we worship, disciple, and engage in mission, in light of lessons learned from the global pandemic?" Reports from these conversations were rich with insights and recommendations for how to live into new forms and patterns of congregational life. Additionally, American Baptists recently accepted an invitation to participate in a 5.3 million dollar study assessing the impact of the pandemic on congregations in the U.S. Conversations among local church pastors, chaplains, regional staff, and other leaders continue to focus upon the need for congregations to live into a new reality.

In response to the interest of ABC congregations to continue to explore the impact of the global pandemic on congregational life, the Office of the General Secretary and Board of General Ministries is establishing a task force to focus upon congregational life.

2. PURPOSE OF THE CONGREGATIONAL LIFE TASK FORCE

The purpose of the Congregational Life Task Force is to gather and share information regarding ways that ABC congregations can adjust to new realities created by the global pandemic so that they can become all that God intends them to be.

3. CRITERIA FOR MEMBERSHIP

The Office of the General Secretary is seeking volunteers to serve on the task force who meet the following criteria:

- a. Special knowledge that can be shared with ABC congregations regarding how to adjust to new realities created by the global pandemic.
- b. A commitment to follow Jesus and participate in Christ's mission through congregational life.
- c. A commitment to the ministry and mission of American Baptist Churches USA and a desire to assist ABC congregations.
- d. Experience in serving on diverse and inclusive task forces and ad hoc groups.
- e. Knowledge of (and perhaps experience with) change processes that help congregations or institutions develop new habits and practices.

Persons interested in serving on the ABC Congregational Life Task Force should complete an application form posted on the ABCUSA website (Link:) by (date)

4. ADDITIONAL DETAILS

Meetings of the Congregational Life Task Force will take place online every four to six weeks. The goal is for the task force to begin sharing information for the benefit of congregations within the first six months of its existence and to continue disseminating its insights and learnings throughout its existence. Such learnings may be shared in the form of reports, online dialogues, and online webinars. The work of the task force will be evaluated after one year.

The following information is contained in the document, Guidelines for Establishing a Commission...According to Article XI. Section 4 of the ABCUSA Bylaws, the Board of General Ministries (BGM) may establish BGM Commissions. Commissions are designed to address long-term issues with the denomination of one to three years or longer in duration. Issues that can be addressed in a shorter time-frame should be established as a task force rather than a commission. A group originally established as a task force may appeal to the Board of General Ministries to become a Commission. The issue being addressed by the commission should be applicable to the entire denomination.

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