

Role of the American Baptist Churches, USA

Our Legacy and Our Future

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. The Office of the General Secretary is an institution that creates space for people to build upon the rich legacy of previous generations of American Baptists. The office maintains an infrastructure for American Baptists to network and do ministry with one another. We believe that our greatest days are ahead of us because we are “United in Christ and Together in Ministry,” and possess an adventurous history.

ABCUSA Mission Statement

American Baptists are a Christ-centered, biblically grounded, ethnically diverse people called to radical personal discipleship in Christ Jesus. Our commitment to Jesus propels us to nurture authentic relationships with one another; build healthy churches; transform our communities, our nations and our world; engage every member in hands-on ministry; and speak the prophetic word in love.

As a people of prayer, purpose, and passion, we are in the forefront of creating a community of faith where people of every race, nationality and culture gather as one in worship, service and work.

The heart of the gospel is God’s redemptive love. In our life together, the world will see the power of forgiveness to overcome alienation, the strength of love to transform hate, the power of grace to break the bonds of guilt, the triumph of hope over despair, and the victory of faith over doubt.

Through the cross of Christ we embrace the world as neighbor. Our vision for mission energizes a multitude of servant ministries of evangelism, discipleship, leadership, new church development, social justice, healing, peacemaking, economic development and education. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we work together in mutual submission, humility, love, and giving that the gospel might be preached and lived in all the world.

Role of the Office of the General Secretary

The role of the Office of the General Secretary is defined by our missional priorities and shaped by our values. Our missional priorities are to (1) support and nurture the American Baptist family, (2) Strengthen our Regions, and (3) Bring together American Baptists. Our primary values of generality, harmony, humility, and respect, along with our Baptist distinctives and commitment to scripture shape our support of these agencies as manifested in the following ways...

Governance

Our governing board is comprised of members from every region as well as at-large members. The Board of General Ministries performs its fiduciary, strategic, and generative functions in a manner that supports the whole of ABC. American Policies and Resolutions provide the parameters for public statements and signatory documents.

Constituency

Our primary constituency consists of American Baptist Regions, National Program Boards, Associated Ministry Organizations, and the ABC Caucuses. We also interact with ecumenical partners and interfaith groups on behalf of the denomination.

Gatherings

The Office of the General Secretary carries the planning and leadership responsibility for the Biennial Mission Summit, the National Leadership Council, the National Executive Council, and the Mission Table. These events are planned for and by the entire ABC family. We also create and convene commissions and committees that engage in cross-organizational mission and ministry.

Administrative Functions

Each of our administrative functions listed below performs its service as the hands and feet of Christ. These groups, teams, and committees provide support for a full range of American Baptist ministries.

- A. AB Historical Society
- B. Accounting and Administration Services for some of the Associated Ministry Organizations and some Regions
- C. Accounting for American Baptist Churches USA and Mission Support
- D. American Baptist Churches Information System (ABCIS)
- E. American Baptist Women in Ministry
- F. Committee on Christian Unity and Interfaith Relationships
- G. Conference planning for family events
- H. Joint Review Committee on Nominations
- I. Managing American Baptist Churches Group Exemption
- J. Mission Resource Development
- K. Professional Ministries Team
- L. Regional Ministries
- M. Transition Ministries
- N. World Relief Committee

The Office of the General Secretary also oversees and provides staffing for a variety of task force groups, committees, and commissions as noted below:

- Burma Refugee Commission
- Anti-racism task force
- Creation Justice Network

A Metaphor for the Office of the General Secretary

There is a tasty rice dish in every culture, such as jambalaya, paella, gumbo, jollof rice, risotto, biryani, bibimbap, etc., comprised of rice and local ingredients. The Office of the General Secretary is the bowl that holds these ingredients. Like rice, our OGS staff serve to bring everyone together, and our interdependent relationships with our missional partners serve to add key elements of mission and ministry to the dish.