

BGM EXECUTIVE REPORT MARCH 2022

BGMEC Report January to March of 2022

We continue to make progress along the directions outlined in the “Intentional Interim Strategic Plan” and the “Role of the Office of the General Secretary” documents adopted by our Board of General Ministries in November of 2021. Here a few highlights of our work since the November 2021 BGM meeting.

Myanmar

On December 15, 2021, the U.S. Senate voted to include an amendment to the Burma Act Bill that requires senior Administration officials to present to Congress within 60 days a strategy to impose costs on the military junta, legitimize representative organizations like the National Unity Government, restore democratic governance, and foster national reconciliation. McConnell was quoted, “Restoring Burma’s democratic development will require the United States to pursue a comprehensive and coordinated strategy to keep meaningful pressure on the junta and secure international recognition for Burma’s true, democratically-elected government. This amendment will ensure our Administration articulates and then advances a real strategy to hold the regime accountable and support democratic actors like the National Unity Government.” Members of an American Baptist movement to advocate for peace in Myanmar had previously met with Senator McConnell as well as other key leaders related to this bill. General Secretary Emeritus Roy Medley has met with several members of the Burmese Diaspora to seek consensus on additional amendments so that we may speak with one voice on amendments to this bill. On February 1, 2022, we hosted an hour-long prayer service for the people of Myanmar on the one year anniversary of the military coup.

Anti-Racism Emphasis

During the December meeting of the National Executive Council, I asked each NEC member to appoint a staff person and/or board member to a convening table to explore next steps in this important anti-racism work. I am happy to report that all five organizations, plus the Regional Executive Ministers Council, named appointees to this convening table. Our representatives to this group are Marie Onwubuariri and Kathryn Ray. They held their first meeting on February 25, facilitated by Marie Onwubuariri.

New Task Force: Interpreting the Impact of COVID-19 on Congregations

On January 10, ABCUSA released the following press release, “In response to the interest of ABC congregations to continue to explore the impact of the global pandemic on congregational life, the ABCUSA Office of the General Secretary and Board of General Ministries is establishing a new task force entitled, ‘Interpreting the Impact of COVID-19 on Congregations.’ Former Executive Minister of the American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania and Delaware, Rev. Dr. Frank Frischkorn, has agreed to serve as chair of this task force. Dr. Frischkorn and I reviewed the 14 applications that include Executive Ministers, National staff, local church pastors, and laity from diverse backgrounds and ethnicities. The goal is to select 10 persons from this list and hold the first meeting this month in March of 2022. I continue to receive updates from the Community Corps regarding ways to promote vaccinations against COVID-19. On January 17, I distributed an announcement to members of the REMC and NEC regarding early access for vulnerable communities to receive at-home testing kits.

National Executive Council

As the members logged onto their December meeting, they began to call one another by their “storybook names” as evidence of a dream that became a reality as the members of the National Executive Council released a copy of the first ever NEC Children’s Storybook video, based upon the book, “You are Special.” Members of the NEC enjoyed participating in this project to promote unity and to bring joy to young children. The NEC addressed several other issues during the meeting which included time to reflect and give hope for the coming year’s events.

In January, members of the NEC were invited (for the first time) to participate directly in the Biennial Mission Summit Planning Team meeting for the 2023 Biennial event. Their participation enhanced the meeting and led to the development of a Biennial 2023 survey that will be distributed to congregations seeking input on workshops, topics, and logistics. Members of the NEC also shared dates with one another and extended invitations to participate in one another’s 2022 events.

Orientation to American Baptist Life

Zina Jacque and Judy Fackenthal have agreed to serve once again as co-chairs for the Orientation to American Baptist Life event in 2023. Members of the National Leadership Council were invited to provide input into the next event. The January 18 meeting had a robust attendance and surfaced many innovative ideas to consider for the next event.

Everyday ABC Conversation

The most recent Everyday ABC Conversation was held on March 8 on the topic of, “Creation Justice and International Women’s Day.” The conversation was led by our Creation Justice Network and included information and ways to promote Arbor Day on April 29, 2022. Dr. Alan R. Wedgewood and Rev. Rebecca Driscoll were the presenters.

Biennial Mission Summit

A planning meeting for the 2023 Biennial Mission Summit was held on January 4. Tasha Wilson, chair of the planning team, led the event with input from Tina Kiernan, Biennial Mission Summit Coordinator. The planning team suggested possible speakers and workshop leaders for the event, discussed the schedule and the possibility of expanding some of the event offerings, and adopted the following theme for the event: “For Such a Time as This.” They also surfaced the idea of surveying our ABC constituents in order to gather further input for the event. ABCUSA has also received two letters of invitation for the 2025 and 2027 Biennial events.

Intentional Interim Strategic Plan

The following items listed below, as excerpted from the “Intentional Interim Strategic Plan” have been addressed during the last three months and are either still in process or have been completed.

- Clarify the values that drive Office of the General Secretary procedures. {In process}
- Design, distribute, collect, and analyze a survey regarding the role of ABCUSA. {In process}
- Expand the opportunities for Mission Summit Conversation activities through Everyday ABC Conversations. {In process}
- Expand opportunities for feedback regarding the Biennial, National Leadership Council, Orientation to ABC Life and other key events. {In process}
- Craft a policy book that includes an emergency plan and operating procedures. {Completed}
- Successfully migrate 25 years of data from our internal ABCIS software system to the Oracle NetSuite platform. {In process}
- Provide training and development for Office of the General Secretary staff: {In process}

- Develop a new template for staff appraisals. {Completed}
- Broaden the planning team for the National Leadership Council to include REMC Officers and NEC members. {Completed}
- Strengthen relationships with regional and national partners. {In process}
- Increase the opportunities for interaction among the members of the National Leadership Council. {In process}
- Encourage each ABCUSA committee to clarify the responsibilities and benefits of serving on their respective committees. {In process}
- Host a successful virtual Biennial Mission Summit and build upon its momentum. {In process}
- Host an ABCUSA Christmas Concert. {Completed}
- Send a welcome letter to all new ABC congregations {In process}

Regional Ministry

- Rev. Mark Thompson began serving as Executive Minister for the ABC of IN-KY region on January 1, 2022. Rev. Gregg Hemmen, Executive Minister for the Central Region, will serve as Mark's mentor. I held an orientation for Mark in January.
- Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell began serving as Executive Minister for the ABC of Wisconsin region on March 1, 2022. Rev. Sandra Hasenauer, Executive Minister for the Rochester Genesee Region, will serve as Mindi's mentor.
- Rev. Courtney Davis-Olds will begin service as Executive Minister for the ABC of Rhode Island on April 4.
- The ABC of the Great Rivers Region continues their search for their next Executive Minister. They are in the process of building their profile and position announcement.
- The regions of ABCOPAD and the Cleveland Baptist Association are in the early stages of their search for an Executive Minister.
- I have continued to hold bi-weekly calls with the Executive Ministers and the group continues to engage as a learning community during these calls.

Other Activities

- The members of the **Emerging Theologians Commission** met on January 14 with the ABCUSA president and vice-president to discuss their current status and explore future possibilities.
- We are in the process of conducting **ABCUSA staff** performance appraisals. The process asks staff to highlight contributions to the "Intentional Interim Strategic Plan." I also led a training session for all staff regarding "Using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator to enhance staff relationships."
- I drafted a **welcome letter** to new ABC congregations from ABCUSA.
- The "**Role of ABCUSA survey**" has been revised based upon feedback from the BGMEC and BGM and has been disseminated.
- Members of the **National Leadership Council** have been participating in monthly times of prayer, led by a planning team of Miriam Mendez – New Jersey EM (chair), Valoria Cheek – ABEC, Cheryl Dudley – Metro NY, Gregg Hemmen – Central Region, and Randolph Miller – Ministers Council.
- Registration is underway for the "Celebrating Ministering Women: Radical. Redeemed. Ready" event June 15-18, 2022, at the Green Lake Conference Center in Green Lake, Wisconsin following the June 2022 Board of General Ministries Meeting.

Attachments:

- Welcome letter to ABC congregations
- Invitation letters for future Biennials in 2025 and 2027

Respectfully Submitted

Dr. C. Jeff Woods

General Secretary

American Baptist Churches USA