

ABCUSA Theologians Commission

- Summary Overview of Past Work – (notes taken by Marie O.)

Overview of previous work of the commission

- Pre-biennial conferences in 2011 (Puerto Rico) through 2019 (Virginia Beach). Task Force/Commission did lots of prep work: identify theme; call for papers; read and chose papers and planned panel in addition to keynote speakers.
- Often had a speaker at planning meeting in off-Biennial year (e.g. Emilie Townes). (needs funding)
- Incorporated a fellow program: Amy Chilton was first fellow; followed by Dan Brockway.
- AB Historical Society invited conference presenters to submit papers for publication in *American Baptist Quarterly* – this resulted in some papers being published.
- Facebook group created. Amy Chilton and Priscilla Eppinger currently are moderators; not much activity but some share theological work there.
- Discussed an online conference for 2021 but volunteer members' other commitments in the midst of the pandemic ultimately took precedence.

- Significance of Current Work

- Locus for support and denominational connection for academics who are *not* pastors; the denomination offers many structures and programs to support pastors in their ministry, but none for those whose ministry is the academy (the formation of pastors and others)
- Connect theologians, both emerging and seasoned, and pastor-theologians nationally (to each other and to ABC); creating a support system for them
- A resource for theological reflection to contribute to the larger ABC life/witness – *how do ABC leaders envision theologians contributing to the life of the ABC/what do you see are the benefits of being in network with ABC theologians?*
- Conferences provide an entry point for exposure to and to get involved in work of the commission

- Possible online gatherings in between conferences, especially if the ABC president or BGM task the commission with reflection on specific issues or questions
- Connect emerging theologians with seasoned theologians for support/mentorship
- Request for Support from ABC-USA
 - Identify who the ABC PhDs and grad students are, including and especially in non-ABC institutions, and particularly those who desire connection
 - Financial support for a biannual theologians conference: N.B. The conference has been largely self-sufficient but scaled back the past few bienniums.
 - \$1000 for speaker honorarium
 - \$1000 to reinstate the grad student fellowship
 - \$4000 in travel expenses for commission members for theology conference
 - Convention center room for conference
 - Staff support for communication, registration, and creating and maintaining a database of ABC theologians (at ABC and non-ABC universities and seminaries) and ABC grad students in theological fields.
- Requests from Commission
 - Desire for a more integrated relationship between Commission and BGM.
 - How can American Baptist theologians contribute to the current deliberations of the denomination?
 - Examples:
 - What is the new thinking in missiology?
 - “Creation Care”
 - Racism
 - The practice of the ordinances of baptism and communion in a socially-distanced, pandemic-friendly manner