



AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES USA

Office of the General Secretary

BOARD OF GENERAL MINISTRIES | COMMISSIONS

GUIDELINES FOR ESTABLISHING A COMMISSION

1. GENERAL GUIDELINES

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 timeframe 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. Any group may appeal directly to the BGM Executive Committee to become a commission.

2. PROPOSAL PHASE

An American Baptist Commission may be established by a proper vote (see appendix) of the Board of General Ministries with the prior approval of the BGM Executive Committee.

This process is initiated with a proposal, and if passed, an establishment period will begin during which the Office of the General Secretary will provide both staffing assistance and seed money to launch the commission. The General Secretary will determine the appropriate staffing assistance, and the BGM will approve an appropriate funding amount.

A proposal phase for the establishment of a commission process is as follows:

- A. Interested persons are to submit a draft proposal for the establishment of a commission to the BGM Executive Committee to include minimally:
 - i. Rationale for becoming a commission
 - ii. Goals and activities for the commission
 - iii. Structure of commission (how often they would meet, what platform(s))
 - iv. Support they anticipate is needed for the commission during the establishment phase (first 12 months)
 - v. Recommendations of categories/qualifications of persons who would serve on the commission
 - vi. List of individuals who are interested in taking leadership during the establishment phase should the proposal be accepted, what each person brings to the endeavor, and their contact information.
- B. Exec. Committee receives and reviews the draft proposal and determines whether to advance it to the full Board, with ability to revise the proposal.
- C. The BGM will review proposals presented and vote at an official Board meeting. If the proposal passes, the establishment phase begins.
 - a. The Board approves the amount of the seed money for the establishment phase.
 - b. The Board approves the person(s) that will chair the process during the establishment phase.
 - c. The General Secretary assigns a staff liaison and any other staff support, if applicable.



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Any proposal that does not advance through any of these stages can be revised; the President, with the General Secretary, determines whether a proposal will be reconsidered at any point during the proposal phase.

3. ESTABLISHMENT PHASE OF A COMMISSION

The establishment phase can be up to 12 months, during which a commission will provide a written quarterly report to the BGM Executive Committee that summarizes the progress of the commission. The Executive Committee will assess the commission on its alignment with the intended purpose and its capacity building.

In the establishment phase, a commission, with the guidance of the staff liaison, is strongly encouraged to address the following clarifying-purpose and capacity-building markers and report on the progress regularly:

- A. Short-term goals and measurement plans (1-3 years)
- B. A plan for the commission membership, including skills, expertise, representation, etc. and recruitment strategy
 - i. According to SR 11.1.4.1 a commission must include three or more BGM members nominated by the President in consultation with the General Secretary and elected by the Board of General Ministries. The commission may also include persons who are not members of the board, but all commission members must be voted upon by the BGM.
 - ii. According to SR 11.1.1 the chairperson of each committee or commission of the Board of General Ministries shall be appointed from the membership of the respective committee or commission by the President in consultation with the General Secretary and shall serve until the expiration of the term of the appointing President.
 - iii. Upon approval of the plan for membership by the Executive Committee, the commission shall recruit and develop a slate of commission members.
- C. Parameters of convening and decision-making.
 - i. Refer to SR 11.1.1, 11.1.2, and 11.1.3
- D. Funding needs and strategy, if the commission is in need of funds for its ongoing work and/or intends to raise funds for their work. These steps must be determined in consultation with a member of the ABCUSA Mission Resource Development department.
- E. Details concerning any other items considered core to the purpose and impact of the commission.

The Executive Committee will respond to the quarterly reports and provide additional guidance as appropriate throughout the establishment phase. When the Executive Committee assesses that the commission has adequately clarified its purpose and built capacity for the goals, membership composition, and functionality or at the 12-month marker, whichever comes first, it shall advance a motion to the BGM for the next step. The options for this motion can include: 1. advance the commission from establishment phase to on-going phase, accompanied with a slate of commission members to be confirmed; 2.) extend the establishment phase for a specific amount of time; 3.) cease the establishment of the commission; or 4.) other appropriate motion based on the Executive Committee's assessment.

The Board will then vote on the motion presented by the Executive Committee and set in motion any resulting action items.



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4. ONGOING WORK OF A COMMISSION

The BGM may also assign functions to the commission from time to time (SR 11.1.7.1). Beyond the establishment phase, a commission shall provide a written annual report to the BGM throughout its existence as a commission.

A commission must be reviewed and re-approved by the Board of General Ministries every three years in order to maintain their status as a commission. The commission will submit a brief report detailing accomplishments and future goals for re-approval consideration.

1.1 APPENDIX

ABCUSA BYLAWS

Article XI. Section 4. Board of General Ministries Commissions. The Board of General Ministries may create Board of General Ministries commissions to report to it on matters assigned by the Board. Each Board commission may consist of members of the Board of General Ministries, members of the staff of the ABCUSA or of a National or Regional Board, or other persons. Procedures for the appointment and organization of Board commissions and their powers and functions may be stated in the Standing Rules.

ABCUSA STANDING RULES

Rule 11.1 General Rules

- 11.1.1 Procedures. Each committee or commission of the Board of General Ministries shall fix its own rules of procedure, provided they are consistent with the Bylaws and these Standing Rules.
- 11.1.2 Meetings. Generally the meetings of Committees and Commissions shall be held at the time of the Board of General Ministries sessions. Additional meetings may be held at such other times as each chairperson in consultation with the General Secretary shall determine. Members may participate in any meeting by means of conference telephone or similar equipment by means of which all persons participating in the meeting can hear each other at the same time, and such participation shall constitute presence in person at the meeting.
- 11.1.3 Action Without a Meeting. Any action required or permitted to be taken by any Board of General Ministries committee or commission may be taken without a meeting if all members of the committee or commission consent in writing to the adoption of a resolution authorizing the action. The resolution and the written consents thereto shall be filed with the minutes of the proceedings of the Board of General Ministries committee or commission.
- 11.1.4 Membership.
 - 11.1.4.1 Unless otherwise provided in the Bylaws or these Standing Rules,



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each committee or commission of the Board of General Ministries shall have three or more members nominated by the President in consultation with the General Secretary and elected by the Board of General Ministries. Upon election, each committee or commission member shall serve during her or his current term as a Director.

11.1.4.2 Unless otherwise provided in the Bylaws or these Standing Rules, a vacancy in the membership of any committee or commission of the Board of General Ministries shall be filled by a majority vote of the Board of General Ministries at any meeting on nomination of the President in consultation with the General Secretary.

11.1.4.3 As provided in Article XV, Sections 2 and 3 of the Bylaws, the President and Vice-President, ex officio, shall be members of all committees and commissions of the Board of General Ministries.

11.1.5 Chair. Except where otherwise provided by the Bylaws or these Standing Rules, the chairperson of each committee or commission of the Board of General Ministries shall be appointed from the membership of the respective committee or commission by the President in consultation with the General Secretary and shall serve until the expiration of the term of the appointing President. When the chairperson is not present, the committee shall elect an acting chairperson for that meeting to serve until the chairperson arrives.

11.1.6 Staffing. The General Secretary shall be responsible for arranging staff support for all committees and commissions of the Board of General Ministries.

11.1.7 Functions.

11.1.7.1 Each committee or commission of the Board of General Ministries shall perform such functions as the Board of General Ministries, the Bylaws, or the Standing Rules may from time to time specify.

Except where otherwise provided by the Bylaws or these Standing Rules, each committee or commission of the Board of General Ministries shall report in writing to the Board of General Ministries at least annually.