



**BOARD OF GENERAL MINISTRIES  
KING OF PRUSSIA, PA  
NOVEMBER 5-7, 2021  
MINUTES**

**Meeting Location:** Crowne Plaza  
260 Mall Boulevard  
King of Prussia, PA 19406  
Ph: (610)265-7500

**Officers:** Karen Podsiadly, President  
Jim Wolfe, Vice President  
Paul Higgins, Budget Review Officer  
Jeff Woods, Interim General Secretary

**Parliamentarian:** Bill Frederickson      **BGM Chaplain:** Zina Jacque

**Friday, November 5, 2021, 2:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.; Plenary; Independence North**

**BGM 539      CALL TO ORDER**

American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA) President Karen Podsiadly welcomed all of the Board of General Ministries (BGM) directors and staff, calling the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. Karen gave a special welcome to those attending their first in-person meeting. She expressed appreciation to Stephanie Commandest and Bill Poland for agreeing to serve as tellers and to Marijane Kiley for sharing her gift of music during the meetings. Karen continued with regrets from BGM directors not able to attend and shared announcements.

**BGM 540      BGM OFFERING**

Vice-President Elect, Michelle Nickens announced that the BGM offering will be given in memory of Rev. Charles Mercer, Pat Hernandez's father, going to the Agape Baptist Church in Hakha, Myanmar under the leadership of Pastor Za Khar. Rev. Mercer's passion has always been the Agape Baptist Church ministry which is sister church to Washington Plaza Baptist Church in Reston, VA, where he was a member.

**BGM 541      WORSHIP**

Cedric Jones lit the Christ Candle in recognition of Christ's presence and led a devotion.

**BGM 542      ABCUSA FOCUS STATEMENT**

The ABCUSA Focus Statement was shared in unison.

*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.*

**BGM 543      CONSENT AGENDA**

*Bonnie Higgins made a motion and seconded by Patrick Embley to approve the General Consent Agenda: written reports posted prior to the meeting and the Proposed Agenda and Minutes of the BGM June 3-4, 2021 meeting held virtually.*

**No objections, motion approved.**

**BGM 544      ACTIVITY TO GET TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER**

Since the board has not met in-person for 18 months, the Beloved Community Action Group led an interactive team building activity allowing everyone to get to know one another.

**BGM 545      REPORT OF THE ABCUSA PRESIDENT**

Karen Podsiadly thanked everyone who supported her through all her work as ABCUSA President. Karen referred to her first President's report which focused on three priorities: 1) to stand courageously, 2) to support renewal and strengthening of partnerships in the ABC family, and 3) strengthening BGM and the search committee in the call for a General Secretary. After that first report came the pandemic and protests that completely changed the landscape of what the presidency would be. Karen talked about "preparing the house" as a metaphor for the work she has been doing as President, including the formation of the Anti-racism Task Force bringing about a dialogue on how to become an antiracist denomination. Lastly she talked about how we serve different populations, such as the caucuses, and including them as part of a truly diverse denomination.

**BGM 546      REPORT OF THE INTERIM GENERAL SECRETARY**

Interim General Secretary Jeff Woods thanked Karen Podsiadly for her work as ABCUSA President. Jeff described that when planning a journey you have a portrait of a destination. The vision paves the way to make it easier to picture a journey and makes it more worthwhile. Jeff spoke of the monarch butterfly to describe the destination for migration as the monarch traveling from Canada to Mexico. The monarch does not complete the journey in one generation, taking four generations to complete the journey. Jeff used this analogy of the monarch to describe the board as being on a journey. "We are on this journey because of those who came before us, and we give our best for those who come after us." Jeff's report reflected on the mission of the Office of the General Secretary and three key areas of service: gathering the denomination, supporting congregations, regions, and national organizations; creating space for local and global issues. More details from Jeff's report are in the "Report of the Interim General Secretary."

**BGM 547      EXECUTIVE SESSION**

The Board of General Ministries met in Executive Session and voted unanimously to elect Jeff Woods as General Secretary for a two-year term, January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2023. Minutes, including actions during this session, are sealed in a confidential envelope and attached to the official copy of the minutes filed in the General Secretary's office.

**BGM 548      RECESS OF MEETING FOR BGM ACTION GROUPS**

From 4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m., the BGM convened in the following Action Groups to focus its work in various areas.

*BGM Finance Committee – Devon Room*  
*Christian Unity & Interfaith Relations – Radnor Room*  
*Becoming a Beloved Community – Wayne Room*  
*Communicating ABC Identity – Berwyn Room*

#### **DINNER**

At 6:00 p.m., BGM directors, spouses/families and staff gathered in Independence South for dinner and fellowship.

#### **Saturday, November 6, 2021, 9:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.; Plenary; Independence North**

*At 7:00 a.m., the BGM directors and staff enjoyed breakfast in the Forager Restaurant of the Crowne Plaza. At 7:30 a.m. the BGM Finance Committee met for a breakfast meeting in the Devon Room.*

#### **BGM 549 RECONVENING/WORSHIP**

Kathryn Ray lit the Christ Candle in recognition of Christ's presence and led a devotion with a responsive reading based on 1 Corinthians 12:12-26.

#### **BGM 550 RECESS BGM/CONVENE AMERICAN BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

ABCUSA President Karen Podsiadly recessed the meeting of the Board of General Ministries. Rev. Jonathan Malone, President of the American Baptist Historical Society (ABHS), called the annual corporate meeting of ABHS to order.

***MOTION:** Judith Christiansen made a motion and seconded by Bonnie Higgins to approve the minutes of the last meeting of American Baptist Historical Society in November 2020.*

**No objections, motion approved.**

*The Board of Managers of the American Baptist Historical Society moves the election of the following nominees to the Board of Managers of the American Baptist Historical Society -- class of 2025: Douglass Avilesbernal (2<sup>nd</sup> term), Felipe Candelaria (2<sup>nd</sup> term), Melva Gray (2<sup>nd</sup> term), Mitch Homma (3<sup>rd</sup> term), Don Ng (1<sup>st</sup> term). James Wolfe (2<sup>nd</sup> term).*

**No objections, motion approved.**

*The Board of Managers of the American Baptist Historical Society moves that the following be elected officers of the American Baptist Historical Society:*

*Jonathan Malone - President*

*Felipe Candelaria - Vice President*

*Heidi Holmstrom - Secretary*

*Melva Gray – Treasurer*

**No objections, motion approved.**

Priscilla Eppinger, Executive Director discussed the strategic planning guided by consultant Michael Taylor and using SchellingPoint's alignment cycle process, the ABHS Board of Managers Strategic Planning Task Force identified the primary need over the coming five years to be increased revenue, in order to continue and expand their digitization project; as well as, continuing to preserve and make available historic documents. ABHS staff proffered several suggestions of new fee-based services ABHS could offer toward the end of increasing revenue streams. For more details on Priscilla's report see the

“American Baptist Historical Society Report.” The annual corporate meeting of ABHS was adjourned and the BGM meeting was reconvened.

Following Priscilla’s report, BGM Director Angela Russel shared the inspirational story of Maggie Brass.

### **BGM 551 CELEBRATING MINISTERING WOMEN: RADICAL, REDEEMED, READY**

Pat Hernandez brought attention to the website being available at [radicalredeemedready.com](http://radicalredeemedready.com). The conference dates are June 15-18, 2022. The conference celebrates women ministerial leaders, their myriad journeys into ministry and their many ways of ministering. There is also a celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Women in Ministry Project, now known as American Baptist Women in Ministry (ABWIM), which was fully launched in June 1982 with Rev. Dr. Margaret A. Crowden as the first Project Director. All are welcome!

### **BGM 552 ABCUSA DOCUMENTS**

Jeff Woods led a process with input received from the ABCUSA Office of the General Secretary staff leadership team, Regional Executive Ministers, the National Executive Council, and the Board of General Ministries Executive Committee, which resulted in the development of two documents. The “Intentional Interim Strategic Plan” document, outlines a process for transforming the culture of ABCUSA through changes in the systems, symbols, structures, and capacity of persons (board and ABCUSA Staff). “The Role of the Office of the General Secretary” document clarifies the mission of ABCUSA Office of the General Secretary by categorizing the efforts into three key areas; gathering; supporting congregations, regions, and national organizations; and creating space for local and global issues. This document informs how ABCUSA frames and shares about its mission among and beyond the denominational family.

*The BGM Executive Committee recommends the Board of General Ministries approve the document “Role of the Office of the General Secretary.”*

**No objections, motion approved.**

*The BGM Executive Committee recommends the Board of General Ministries approve the document “ABCUSA Intentional Interim Strategic Plan.”*

**No objections, motion approved.**

### **BGM 553 ANTI-RACISM TASK FORCE/COMMISSION PROPOSAL**

The Anti-Racism Task Force held “The Prophetic Rhythm of Anti-Racism,” a virtual symposium, on Saturday, October 30, 2021. Over 100 participants joined the symposium as participants heard from a keynote speaker, participated in discussion groups, and engaged with a panel of American Baptist leaders who presented from their papers on the topics of anti-racism and reparations. The question of “Where do we go from here?” is the consideration for the next phase of the anti-racism work as found in the proposal that was reviewed by the BGM Executive Committee.

*The BGM Executive Committee recommends to the Board of General Ministries to accept the proposal for the establishment of an Anti-Racism Commission.*

**No objections, motion approved.**

*The BGM Executive Committee recommends to the Board of General Ministries to approve a budget of \$25,000 for the Anti-Racism Commission for the establishment phase.*

**No objections, motion approved.**

**BGM 554 REPORT OF THE BUDGET REVIEW OFFICER**

Key highlights of the financial report for the year ending September 30, 2021 were included in the written report prepared by Alan Musoke, Associate General Secretary for Finance/CFO/Treasurer. Overall the year-to-date financials show a surplus of \$654,000 with the Biennial. The net surplus without the Biennial is \$732,000. The following activity is based on the financials excluding the Biennial. There was no Biennial last year and there is a Biennial this year.

- Net revenue compared to last year is up \$717,000. Revenue is up due to the Payroll Protection Program (PPP) Loan and the NetSuite implementation grant.
- Expenses as compared to last year are higher by \$129,000. This is primarily due to the NetSuite implementation, NetSuite consulting fees, and legal fees.

ABCUSA received an additional Payroll Protection Program (PPP) Loan in 2021 in the amount of \$744,802 from the PPP Loan shown as a liability. The PPP Loan received in 2020 in the amount of 619,000 was forgiven and was moved to income. Total United Mission is \$4,529,844. This is an increase of \$168,467 from the prior year. This represents an increase of 3.86%.

The budget for 2022 includes a payroll expense increase of 2% and an increase in medical costs of 5%. The budget is balanced by the one-time use of \$142,000 PPP loan forgiveness. The budget includes new and ongoing costs of \$184,000 for NetSuite implementation for ABCIS; as well as, \$25,000 for proposed Anti-Racism Commission.

Paul Higgins, Budget Review Officer, noted that targeted giving now far exceeds United Mission giving and that peoples and churches decisions to give to a specific cause are getting more attention and money than the denomination.

*The ABCUSA Finance Committee recommends to the Board of General Ministries to approve the proposed distribution of the national portion of United Mission for 2022.*

**No objections, motion approved.**

*The BGM Finance Committee recommends to the Board of General Ministries to approve the ABCUSA budget proposal for 2022.*

**No objections, motion approved.**

**BGM 555 MISSION RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (MRD) UPDATE**

Marie Onwubuariri, Associate General Secretary for MRD, is developing a manual and style guide for the communications department based on how we communicate about ABCUSA with equity. Since starting in her position, Marie has made improvements to communications to now reach the average person in the pew. Her focus in creating and sustaining an environment of joyful giving, while adding a "cause" related giving into the narrative. Marie asked the board to be the ambassador to their congregations about what ABCUSA is doing and asked if anyone has gifts in communications, she would love to work with them to extend the capacity in communications.

**BGM 556 PRESIDENT'S NOMINATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS: 2022-2023**

President Karen Podsiadly, following prior consultation with President-Elect Jim Wolfe, presented to the BGM for action the 2022-2023 Presidential Nominations.

A motion was made by Patrick Embley, seconded by Kurt Kauffman, and it was  
**VOTED:** To elect the President-Elect Jim Wolfe's Nominations for the 2022-2023 biennium for service on the *BGM Executive Committee*: Cedric Jones, Judith Christiansen, and Raimundo Barreto.

A motion was made by Marilyn Malone, seconded by Raimundo Barreto, and it was  
**VOTED:** To elect the President-Elect Jim Wolfe's Nominations for the 2022-2023 biennium for service on the *World Relief Committee*: Janice Fletcher and Bill Poland.

A motion was made by Marilyn Malone, seconded by Raimundo Barreto, and it was  
**VOTED:** To elect the President-Elect Jim Wolfe's Nominations for the 2022-2023 biennium for service on the *Committee on Christian Unity and Interfaith Relations*: Raimundo Barreto, Annie Field, Christopher Hamilton, Lillian Ramos, Angela Russell and Shawna Simmons.

A motion was made by Marijane Kiley, seconded by Angela Russell, and it was  
**VOTED:** To elect the President-Elect Jim Wolfe's Nominations for the 2022-2023 biennium to serve as *Chair on the Committee on Christian Unity and Interfaith Relations*: Raimundo Barreto.

A motion was made by Bill Poland, seconded by Stephanie Commandest, and it was  
**VOTED:** To elect the President-Elect Jim Wolfe's Nominations for the 2022-2023 biennium to serve as members of the *Standing Rules Committee*: Janice Fletcher, Bill Fredrickson, Tom Ross, Bruce Van Der Beek

### **Presidential Appointments**

President Karen Podsiadly, in consultation with President-Elect Jim Wolfe, presented to BGM for action the 2022-2023 Presidential Appointments.

For service on the *ABCUSA Nominating Committee*: Judith Christiansen (laity), Stephanie Commandest (laity), Emmett Dunn (clergy), Kurt Kaufman (laity), Kathryn Ray (clergy), Daryl Ward (clergy).

For *Chair of the Credentials and Caucus Committee*: Judith Christiansen

For *Chair of the World Relief Committee*: Janice Fletcher

A motion was made by Robert Jemerson, seconded by Dwayne Williams, and it was  
**VOTED:** To receive the following appointments of the President-Elect Jim Wolfe for the 2022 biennium for service on the *BGM Finance Committee*: Thomas Gilmore, Mark Harvey, Cedric Jones, Tom Ross, Noemi Nunez-Sanchez.

A motion was made by Patrick Embley, seconded by Angela Russell, and it was  
**VOTED:** To receive the following appointments of the President-Elect Jim Wolfe for the 2022 biennium for service on the *Biennial Mission Summit Planning Team*: Tasha Wilson (Chair), John Campbell (Vice-Chair), Marilyn Malone

A motion was made by Kurt Kaufman, seconded by Janice Fletcher, and it was  
**VOTED:** To receive the following appointments of the President-Elect Jim Wolfe for the 2022 biennium for service on as *BGM Director to the Other Boards*.  
Kathryn Ray as BGM Director to the ABHMS Board  
Marijane Kiley as BGM Director to the IM Board

Noemi Nunez-Sanchez as BGM Director to MMBB

**BGM 557 BGM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE UPDATE**

Jim Wolfe reported that the BGM Executive Committee met in Fort Worth, Dallas September 4-6. More information about actions from that meeting can be found in the report “Update of the BGM Executive Committee.”

**BGM 558 GENERAL SECRETARY SEARCH PROPOSED PROCESS**

Jim Wolfe asked for prayers for the General Secretary Search Committee that they can be discerning enough to know what God is leading them to do and the patience through the process.

*Marilyn Malone made a motion and seconded by Bonnie Higgins to adopt the proposed process as a guideline for the General Secretary Search Committee.*

**No objections, motion approved.**

**LUNCH/ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The meeting resumed following lunch and group pictures.

**BGM 559 BEST PRACTICES OF NON-PROFIT BOARDS**

In focusing on Board Development, Jeff Woods led the board in an interactive slide presentation during which directors considered their role of service to the whole of ABCUSA.

**BGM 560 ABCUSA SURVEY**

The Board reviewed and gave feedback to the ABCUSA Survey that is included in the current process of clarifying the role of the Office of the General Secretary.

*Bill Poland made a motion and seconded by Bonnie Higgins recommending the BGM Executive Committee take the suggestions given by the board’s feedback*

**One abstention, motion approved.**

**BGM 561 CREDENTIALS & CAUCUS COMMITTEE**

Josué Gómez-Menéndez Chair shared figures from the *Report of Changed Relationships*.

**MOTION:** *A motion was made to accept the Report of Changed Relationships of Local Churches (1205.1:11/21) dated June 4, 2021 to November 4, 2021.*

**No objections, motion approved.**

**BGM 562 WORLD RELIEF COMMITTEE (WRC) REPORT**

Janice Fletcher gave an update on the World Relief Committee receiving a \$500,000 Legacy Grant given from Palo Alto, CA and the WRC was given permission to use as the committee saw fit. The WRC is meeting on Tuesday, Nov. 9 and will review the grant request that have come in since the committee last met.

**BGM 563 RECESS OF MEETING FOR BGM ACTION GROUPS**

From 4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m., the BGM convened in the following Action Groups to focus its work in various areas.

***BGM Finance Committee – Devon Room***

***Christian Unity & Interfaith Relations – Radnor Room***

***Becoming a Beloved Community – Wayne Room***

***Communicating ABC Identity – Berwyn Room***

## **DINNER**

At 6:00 p.m., BGM directors, spouses/families and staff gathered in Independence South for dinner and fellowship. At 7:30 PM Kathryn Ray led the board in a time of evening prayer and meditation during the vespers service.

## **Sunday, November 7, 2021, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.; Plenary; Independence North**

*At 7:00 a.m., the BGM directors and staff enjoyed breakfast in the Forager Restaurant of the Crowne Plaza.*

## **BGM 564 RECONVENING/WORSHIP**

Kathryn Ray lit the Christ Candle in recognition of Christ's presence and led a devotion.

## **BGM 565 ACTION GROUP REPORTS**

### **Beloved Community Action Group:**

Marijane Kiley shared that the Beloved Community Action Group is writing new guidelines for perspective board members. The committee discussed benefits and opportunities of being a BGM Director. The action group requested that the BGM Executive Committee allow time for them to do something on the June BGM Agenda at the beginning of the meeting and on Saturday after lunch. Anyone interested in participating in a board choir should contact Marijane or Judith.

### **Communicating ABC Identity:**

Bonnie Higgins explained that the action group has been meeting virtually prior to these meetings. The focus of their meetings has been on discussing who is ABCUSA and what does ABCUSA do. The goal is to create a ninety-second speech about who we are as ABCUSA.

### **BGM Finance Committee Action Group:**

Paul Higgins gave updates from the BGM Finance Committee Meetings:

- (1) The committee voted to again retain Tait Weller to perform the 2021 financial audit.
- (2) The committee reviewed the Treasurer's report of legacy bequests and gifts that have been received for ABCUSA.
- (3) The committee reviewed the Report of the ABCUSA Treasurer, Alan Musoke, including the Financial Report as of 9/30/2021 and ABMS Report as of 9/30/2021. In particular, the Committee examined the \$78,350 loss associated with the virtual Biennial Mission Summit. A variety of factors contributed to that loss, including the short lead time the Planning Team had to switch to a virtual format, unmet expectations for "watch party" registrations, the cost of facilities and equipment for live broadcast, expenses and deposits incurred for the planned Puerto Rico event which will now apply to the 2023 biennial and hesitancy of sponsors to invest in an untried and uncertain format. (Some of the functionality which contributed to the success of the biennial was still being developed by our event software vendor in the months leading up to the biennial.) Considering the continued string of losses from biennials and the rotation of members of the Biennial Program Committee, we encourage that



committee to seek greater involvement from the Treasurer's Office in the preparation of the biennial mission summit budget.

(4) The committee met with Linda Cassel from the American Baptist Foundation (ABF) to discuss our investments with ABF. Dave Moore and Gina Haas from ABHMS spoke with us regarding our investments in the ABHMS Common Investment Fund.

(5) Alan Musoke told the committee of a request from regions to revise the current requirement for an audit of the mission fund accounts for regions that receive American Baptist Mission Support directly from churches. The committee chose to re-affirm the audit requirement.

(6) On October 25, the committee met to review the proposed 2022 budget for ABCUSA and recommends the budget be adopted by the BGM.

(7) On October 25, the ABCUSA Finance Committee (the BGM Finance Committee and one representative each from ABHMS and International Ministries) met. There were no Mission Initiative Fund grant applications to review. The committee reviewed a proposed 2022 distribution for the national portion of United Mission and recommends that distribution's adoption by BGM.

Committee on Christian Unity and Interfaith Relations (CCUIR):

Lillian Ramos mentioned that the committee wants to explore what it means to be more ecumenical, along with showing how we are an ecumenical body through short stories.

*Patrick Embley made a motion and seconded by Lillian Ramos to accept CCUIR's recommendation for William Young to serve as the representative for Churches for Middle East Peace.*

**No objections, motion approved.**

*Janice Fletcher made a motion and seconded by Raimudo Barreto to accept CCUIR's recommendation for Rothangliani Chhangte to serve as the representative as an additional World Council of Churches Assembly Delegate.*

**No objections, motion approved.**

**BGM 566 RECOGNITION OF RETIRING BGM DIRECTORS**

Retiring Board Directors were recognized. Josué Gómez-Menéndez and Ken Atchison were each presented with the book, *Baptist Roots: A Reader in the Theology of a Christian People* by Freeman, McClendon and DaSilva. Following the recognition of retiring BGM Directors, Karen Podsiadly was recognized for her time serving as ABCUSA President.

**BGM 567 CLOSING WORSHIP**

Kathryn Ray led a closing worship with communion.

Submitted by,



Dr. C. Jeff Woods

Interim General Secretary

CJW/kj

Documents attached

BGM Proposed Agenda (1102:11/21)  
BGM Minutes – June 2021 (1001:06/21)  
BGM Executive Committee Minutes: September 2021 (1002:09/21)  
BGM Executive Committee Minutes: June 2021 (1002:06/21)  
Board Responsibilities ABCUSA  
Anti-Racism Task Force Report and Commission Proposal  
CCUIR Report to BGM  
World Relief Committee Report to the BGM  
Search Committee Checklist  
Job Description for Search Committee Members  
Calling Executive Minister  
Celebrating Ministering Women Radical. Redeemed. Ready  
Role of OGS Survey  
BGM Executive Committee Update  
Role of the Office of the General Secretary  
2021 Nov. BGM Agenda  
BGM Action Groups – November 2021  
Report of Changed Relationship  
YTD Financials Through Sept. 2021  
Professional Ministries Team  
Reports from ABCUSA OGS and AMOs  
Report from Special Director to International Ministries  
Mission Resource Development  
Burma Refugee Commission Report  
President Nominations and Appointments 2022-2023  
ABCUSA 2022 Budget Highlights  
ABCUSA Intentional Interim Strategic Plan D  
ABHS Meeting Call 2021  
Report from Special Director to American Baptist Home Mission Societies  
Integrated Schedule- Nov 2021  
Report of the Interim General Secretary Nov 2021  
American Baptist Historical Society Report