

BGM Report January to June 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 February 1, 2022, we hosted an hour-long prayer service for the people of Myanmar on the one-year anniversary of the military coup. The theme of the call was "Pray and Act" and we continue to do that through monthly prayer meetings and grassroots efforts. We are pleased to announce that the Burma Act Bill (HR 5497) passed in Congress on April 6, 2022. The next step is Senate approval. Grassroots efforts by Wilberforce 21 and Van Kio have been very instrumental in these results. The Burma Advocacy Group, chaired by General Secretary Emeritus Roy Medley, has met several times to explore new advocacy strategies. We also met with US AID to discuss ways of ensuring that the appropriated Humanitarian Aid is distributed to all affected parts of Burma.

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. Marie Onwubuariri has facilitated two meetings of this group and leads a segment on anti-racism at each OGS Leadership Team meeting. I had the opportunity to attend the Legacy Museum in Montgomery, Alabama and will highlight the visit in my remarks about the Juneteenth Holiday.

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 and extended invitations to ten persons that include Executive Ministers, National staff, local church pastors, and laity from diverse backgrounds and ethnicities. The group has held two meetings this spring.

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 and distribution of a Biennial 2023 survey seeking input on workshops, topics, and logistics. The input has influenced the workshop and speaker invitations. Members of the NEC have also shared dates with one another and extended invitations to participate in one another's 2022 events. In June, they discussed the results of two national surveys on congregational health.

National Leadership Council

Members of the National Leadership Council (NLC) participated 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. The National Leadership Council met at Green Lake May 17-20. The emphasis of this year's gathering was upon team building and deepening relationships. This was the first in-person meeting of this group since the pandemic. Planning teams for worship, connecting, outings, music, retirement parties, and more created lots of space and opportunities for engagement. The NLC is comprised of the Regional Executive Ministers, Directors of the Associated Ministry Organizations, several National Executives from each Program Board, and the president of ABCUSA. Dr. Jim Wolfe led a process for input regarding General Secretary Search Committee.

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

Everyday ABC Conversations were held on March 8 on the topic of, "Creation Justice and International Women's Day" and on June. The conversation was led by our Creation Justice Network and included information and ways to promote Arbor Day on April 29, 2022 with Dr. Alan R. Wedgewood and Rev. Rebecca Driscoll presenting. On June 6, 2022 Rev. Josh Sabo and Jill Scalise will present on "Homelessness and the Housing Crisis."

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 adopted the following theme for the event: "For Such a Time as This." ABCUSA has also received two letters of invitation for the 2025 (in Omaha, Nebraska) and 2027 (in Sacramento) Biennial events and we are exploring both sites.

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 Genessee Region, will serve as Mindi's mentor.
- Rev. Courtney Davis-Olds began her service as Executive Minister for the ABC of Rhode Island on April 4. Rev. Mary Miller, Executive Minister for ABC of Massachusetts will serve as Courtney's mentor.
- The ABC of the Great Rivers Region continues their search for their next Executive Minister. They have begun reviewing the list of applicants.
- The ABC of the Dakotas has begun their search for their next Executive Minister and are reviewing applicants.
- The regions of ABCOPAD and the Cleveland Baptist Association are in the early stages of their search for an Executive Minister.
- I continued to hold bi-weekly calls with the Executive Ministers through May of 2022. Rev. Dr. Soozie Ford will now be hosting these video calls.
- ABCUSA co-hosted with ABHMS a pastors workshop in May entitled, "A Future with Hope." Dr. Jessica Brown was the presenter.

Other Activities

- I participated in a three day event of the Governing Board of the National Council of Churches in Montgomery, Alabama, exploring issues of anti-racism.
- 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 completed ABCUSA staff performance appraisals. The process asked staff to highlight contributions to the “Intentional Interim Strategic Plan.” In February, I led a training session for all staff regarding “Using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator to enhance staff relationships.” We also held “Staff Appreciation Day” in April where we handed out awards, played, jenga, and did team building and hosted a staff picnic in June.
- 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 distributed and analyzed.
- The “Celebrating Ministering Women: Radical. Redeemed. Ready” event will take place June 15-18, 2022, immediately following the Board of General Ministries Meeting.
- I spoke at the Honors Convocation for Alderson-Broadus University in April.
- I shared a presentation on organizational humility with the Valley Forge Ministers Council in March.

Respectfully Submitted
 Dr. C. Jeff Woods
 General Secretary
 American Baptist Churches USA