

Learnings from the Alliance of Baptists

Reflections by Marie Onwubuariri from Conversation with Rev. Michael Ray Mathews

Prepared for the Anti-Racism Convening Table and the Board of General Ministries

May 27, 2022

Intro Notes:

- Marie had a zoom meeting on 5/24/22 with Rev. Michael Ray Mathews who recently served as Alliance of Baptist Board President during a time when the Alliance made noticeable progress on anti-racism efforts.
 - Marie's questions were primarily based on the following article and primarily focused on process and decision-making considerations:
<https://allianceofbaptists.org/the-light-was-worth-the-candle/?fbclid=IwAR2P7RSrQ0wtyPd1sVascyt66J714F7IUstry-6yITlueRUd04oYWVd4jv3s>
This would be a good read in order to have a fuller context.
 - There are a few comments recorded from the Convening Table members, after this information was shared with them at the May 27 meeting.
1. AoB had a consistent growing narrative of their racial justice/anti-racist journey and identity as a communion of churches and individuals since at least 2006. Several threads of racial justice work already present in the organization throughout these years (such as Racial Justice Multiculturalism Community).
 2. A key more recent catalyst was a personal conviction of top co-director staff, which then filtered to other staff and merged with already present and growing awareness among Board. Led to Board identifying some steps collectively, including nominations for officers and Board training.
 3. Led to the elected of a particular Board President, the identifying of a training resource for the Board, the development of a Task Group, and ultimately Board reception of the Task Group (over 100) recommendations (***values, practices, and policies***). They utilized expertise already present on the Board, and perhaps some contract work of Alliance members in key places/ways.
 4. While this effort started primarily internal focus with an internal organizational focus (as the Alliance change, this would spill out to impact churches), the Board stayed open to other movements such as Thrive, which led to a program for congregations, and a curriculum on Whiteness, which is being offered to individuals.
 5. Comparisons between ABC and the AoB:
 - a. Ramp up to current efforts is different [AoB – consistent and longer-term ramp up; ABC only since 2020 and disjointed from previous efforts]
 - b. AoB was very much top staff and board driven/owned/engaged vs. ABC's approach of putting much emphasis in the Task Force, in which there was no Board leadership
 - c. AoB has a smaller/less complex and more flexible structure; more homogenous membership
 6. Take-aways
 - a. Importance for key leaders, formal and informal influencers, to drive [and do, appropriately] the work
 - b. Given the whiteness of AoB, the work of white identity is crucial; could be same for ABC
 - c. "BIPOC" leaders being clear about own personal boundaries [Black, Indigenous, People of Color]
 - d. Pay attention to the folks that are not talking/not affirming the direction
 - e. What is our synergy? Whose mandate is to stay consistent in the work, personally, and in leading the organization?

Key Notices from the Convening Table Members:

Possible parallels to Cultural Humility efforts in PBA, maybe a model for us to look at; Star that - Key leader driving it and Board ownership/important to visit this with BGM; Appreciates that recommendations were categorized as "values – practice – policies;" Naming of "White work"—good education for everyone; We have American Baptists that are also active in the Alliance – are they potential resource people?