

American Baptist Churches USA President and Chair of the General Secretary Search Committee Rev. Dr. James O. Wolfe shares a report of the work of the Search Committee to date:

The General Secretary Search Committee began its work with an in-person meeting in Tampa, Florida, January 27-29, 2022. In preparation for the meeting, committee members read the book “Sacred Decisions” by Marcia Patton and Nora Percival. Marcia Patton consulted at this first meeting and led the committee to determine a process of consensus that has guided the committee in its work.

The committee decided to retain an outside consultant to lead the consensus process. Accordingly, in March 2022 the Rev. Julie Boleyn, Director of Kaleidoscope Institute, was retained to facilitate the group process. Boleyn has continued in that role, meeting with the committee in each of its meetings.

The search committee has met monthly since January. Subsequent meetings have been conducted via Zoom. During six months of Zoom meetings, the committee has been actively engaged in reviewing the results of the Board of General Ministries survey that was made available online in February 2022. The committee was encouraged in that each of the American Baptist regions was represented in the survey.

In an effort to engage the wider denominational family in receiving input, the committee made a presentation to the National Leadership Council (NLC). Among those participating in the NLC are regional executive ministers, executive directors and representatives from our partners, and the executive directors of the American Baptist Historical Society, the American Baptist Foundation, the American Baptist Extension Corporation, American Baptist Women’s Ministries, American Baptist Men, the American Baptist Assembly and the Ministers Council. Through table discussions members of the search committee were pleased to answer questions and receive feedback on the hopes and expectations for our next General Secretary. In June, the Board of General Ministries was presented with a report of the committee’s work. Table conversations were held during the meeting and input solicited from board directors regarding hopes and expectations for the next General Secretary.

In late July and early August, the search committee invited American Baptists from all our regions to participate in online Focus Groups. In addition to the regions American Baptist Caucuses were encouraged to share their thoughts and opinions. The Search Committee met for the second time in person August 17-19 to review all of the valuable data and information shared with the committee through the listening sessions and survey results.

A subcommittee has been tasked with the work of drafting a position description, which will be reviewed by the entire Search Committee in upcoming meetings.