



**BOARD OF GENERAL MINISTRIES
KING OF PRUSSIA, PA
NOVEMBER 4-6, 2022
MINUTES**

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

Officers: Jim Wolfe, President
Michelle Nickens, Vice President
Paul Higgins, Budget Review Officer
Jeff Woods, General Secretary

Parliamentarian: Bill Frederickson **BGM Chaplain:** Cedric Jones

Friday, November 4, 2022, 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.; Plenary; Independence North

BGM 584 CALL TO ORDER

American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA) President Jim Wolfe welcomed all of the Board of General Ministries (BGM) directors and staff, calling the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. Jim gave a special welcome to those directors attending their first board meeting, Valui Wung and Matt Toupin. He expressed appreciation to Angela Russell and Kurt Kaufman for agreeing to serve as tellers and to Marijane Kiley for sharing her gift of music during the meetings. Jim continued with regrets from BGM directors not able to attend, Emmett Dunn, Christopher Hamilton, Clifford Matthews, and Lillian Ramos; followed by announcements.

BGM 585 WORSHIP

Chaplain Cedric Jones lit the Christ Candle in recognition of Christ's presence and led a devotion based on the "40 day Journey with Howard Thurman."

Throughout the meeting, the board's "Becoming a Beloved Committee" Action Group brought the board together in times of reflection, learning and prayer. During its Saturday session, the board gathered in small groups to spend time in prayer for the General Secretary Search Committee members; as well as, ABC Officers and staff members.

BGM 586 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 587 PRESENTATION FROM CHURCH MUTUAL

Brandon Smith of Church Mutual and Jeff Dromeshauser of Sovereign expressed their appreciation to the American Baptist churches for working with Church Mutual and Sovereign Insurance Group as an insurance provider, and shared about Church Mutual and Sovereign Insurance Group's commitment to houses of worship and to American Baptist churches.

BGM 588 CONSENT AGENDA

Marilyn Malone made a motion and seconded by Laura Austin to approve the General Consent Agenda: written reports posted prior to the meeting and the Proposed Agenda and Minutes of the BGM June 13-15, 2022 meeting held in Green Lake, WI.

No objections, motion approved.

BGM 589 REPORT FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

General Secretary Jeff Woods shared how the Office of the General Secretary (OGS) carries out three important functions for the American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA): (1) gathering the denomination, (2) supporting congregations, regions, and national organizations, and (3) creating space for local and global issues. Whenever ABCUSA hosts an event, an evaluation follows to see how it reflects the values of OGS, which includes: Integrity, Altruism, Interconnectedness, Achievement, Passion and Creativity. Jeff gave a challenge to the board and all American Baptists to live out the Gospel mandate to love one another. He noted that a recent USA Today Poll indicated that 81% of people agree that disagreeing is harming us in our news media and social media, between politicians, and among ordinary Americans.

A quote from Jeff Woods...

"My hope for ordinary American Baptists is that we would first be Christians; that we would commit to what Jesus said, did, cried about, and preached about; and my hope for American Baptists is that the world would know that we are American Baptist by our care and respect for one another and for the world. Too often the world has known that we are Baptist by our chaos and conflicts rather than our care and compassion...Our belief in soul freedom and our commitment to autonomy and interdependence uniquely position us to demonstrate Christ's love, not only to one another, but also to the world. Given our composition and our commitments, I believe that American Baptists have a responsibility to love one another and to act on that love for a world in need. 'By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, by your love for one another' (John 13:35)."

More details from Jeff's report are in the "Report from the General Secretary."

BGM 590 REPORT FROM THE ABCUSA NOMINATING COMMITTEE

By voice vote Bruce Van Der Beek was elected BGM Special Director to IM, the appointment of Susan Rice by International Ministries to the World Relief Committee was affirmed, and the President's appointment of Michelle Nickens as Chair of the Credentials and Caucus Committee was confirmed.

By voice vote the following slate of ABC Officers for the 2024-2025 biennium that will be forwarded to the 2023 Biennial Delegates for vote at the next Biennial Mission Summit in San Juan, Puerto Rico:

President, Nikita McCalister
Vice President, Thomas Ross, Jr.
Budget Review Officer, Paul Higgins

BGM 591 2023 BIENNIAL MISSION SUMMIT, SAN JUAN, PR UPDATE

ABCUSA Biennial Coordinator, Tina Kiernan, invited the board directors to stay in San Juan following the June Board meetings to attend the 2023 Biennial Mission Summit June 23-25. Some reasons for directors to stay and attend the Biennial Mission Summit:

- Learning, fellowship and worship
- BGM directors are recognized as voting delegates (the voice for their region)
- Airfare is covered
- Registration fee is covered
- An added incentive, lodging for Thursday, June 22 is also covered

Tina went on to share “what is new” to the Biennial, which includes:

- On arrival self check-in Kiosk
- QR code on name badge for entry to meals and workshops
- Program books online

Tina asked for the directors to help by praying for those involved in the planning, encouraging churches to share the bulletin inserts, sharing updates from the ABCUSA Facebook page, and inviting a friend.

Tina also mentioned that volunteers are needed on-site Wednesday to help prepare the welcome bags and also staff the ABCUSA booth on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. As an incentive for assisting four hours in the ABCUSA booth, directors will receive a free ABCUSA polo shirt.

BGM 592 ENGAGE 2023!

Engage 2023!, formerly OTABL reflects its new name as its approach to engaging new pastors and seminary students. Engage 2023! is interactive with a library of resources of 20-30 minute video presentations prior to a cohort group arriving a day early for the Biennial Mission Summit to engage one another in learning and fellowship.

BGM 593 REPORT FROM THE ABCUSA PRESIDENT

ABCUSA President Jim Wolfe referenced his report and added that he visited the American Baptist Churches of the Great Rivers Region Annual Meeting and extended greetings to the American Baptist Men gathered there. Highlights of the report can be found in the “Report of the ABCUSA President.”

BGM 594 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 5, 2022, 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 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. At 7:30 a.m. the BGM Finance Committee met for a breakfast meeting in the Devon Room. The Christian Unity & Interfaith Relations met for a breakfast meeting in the Radnor Room.

BGM 595 RECONVENING/WORSHIP

Chaplain Cedric Jones lit the Christ Candle in recognition of Christ's presence and led a devotion based on the "40 day Journey with Howard Thurman."

BGM 596 RECESS BGM/CONVENE AMERICAN BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ABCUSA President Jim Wolfe recessed the meeting of the Board of General Ministries and called the annual corporate meeting of American Baptist Historical Society (ABHS) to order.

By voice vote, the minutes of the last meeting of American Baptist Historical Society in November 2021 were approved.

Priscilla Eppinger, Executive Director of the American Baptist Historical Society shared the current archival projects including the digitization of audio tapes from the American Baptist Conventions 1958-1973. ABHS has begun a collaborative project with Ancestry.com in June when Ancestry moved scanning equipment to ABHS offices. More details can be found in the ABHS Report.

BGM 597 BOARDING SCHOOLS IN ALASKA

The board heard a presentation from Benjamin Jacuk, the Unguwat Program Manager and Indigenous Researcher at the Alaska Native Heritage Center in Anchorage, Alaska. Jacuk recently became the first Alaska native from the *Dena'ina Athabascan* and *Sugpiaq* Indigenous people's groups to speak at a World Council of Churches Assembly – he spoke at the recent 2022 Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany. Jacuk's main focus in his current work is research into boarding schools in Alaska.

Jacuk shared with the Board a presentation about the history of the boarding schools in Alaska and the lower 48 states, including sharing a map with denominational involvement of protestant churches with schools and regions of Alaska. In meeting with American Baptist Churches USA, Jacuk shared that he believed this "is the first step in bringing healing to not only my people, me, and those who come after me, but to my very own family who went and came back, or never came back at all [from the boarding schools]." He shared hopes for future work and learning together with American Baptist Churches USA.

Rothang Chhangte attended as an invited guest from ABHMS for this portion of the meeting.

LUNCH/ANNOUNCEMENTS

The meeting resumed following lunch and group pictures.

BGM 598 ANTI-RACISM CONVENING TABLE UPDATE

ABCUSA Past President Karen Podsiadly gave some history perspective about how the work came about from the Task Force coming together and finding that there needed to be more input from the wider staff and others before proceeding further, thus creating the Convening Table. Presently, the BGM Executive Committee is committed to praying, reflecting, and reading texts related to anti-racism. The next step then

is working on exploring ways to model and lead the BGM to do the same work. The Anti-Racism Convening Table made the following recommendations to the board:

1. Engage in the important steps in coming to a clearly articulated and authentic commitment to the work of anti-racism within the purpose, priority, persons and practices of BGM and OGS. We recognize this would:
 - a) Require additional time commitment from Board members.
 - b) Call on the particular skills/experience of existing Board members who can shepherd this next phase (see Skills section).
 - c) Potentially necessitate education and/or consultation for the Board itself.
2. Identify other existing resources/entities/persons who can help reach objectives and offer the skills named in the previous two sections.
3. Identify what is requested of ABC partners to work alongside BGM in reaching objectives

BGM 599 BYLAW CHANGE BIENNIAL DELEGATE COUNT

The BGM Executive Committee recommended to the Board of General Ministries a Bylaw change in article IV section 3 paragraph b of the Bylaws by decreasing the number of cooperating churches for purposes of determining a quorum.

The current wording of the ABCUSA Bylaws, Article IV, Section 3, Paragraph b action by Delegates, states:

(b) Action by Delegates. At each Biennial Meeting, one-third (1/3) of the Delegates registered with the General Secretary prior to convening the Delegates for the first order of business of the Biennial Meeting, present in person, shall constitute a quorum, provided that at least one Delegate is registered from each of at least two hundred (200) Cooperating Churches which are located within the areas of at least ten (10) Regional Organizations. Attendance by proxy will not be permitted. If at any Biennial Meeting there shall be no quorum present, the Delegates present shall have power to adjourn the Meeting from time to time until a quorum is present and no notice of any such adjourned Meeting need be given. At all Biennial Meetings each Delegate shall be entitled to one (1) vote. Except as otherwise provided by applicable law or in Article XIX, a majority of the votes cast by the Delegates present, as provided in Article XVIII, Section 9, shall determine the vote of the Delegates.

The following wording is proposed as change to this section...

Due to the concern for establishing a quorum for the Biennial Business Session, the request was made for the consideration of decreasing the number of cooperating churches from 200 to 160 for purposes of determining a quorum.

The revised wording of the ABCUSA Bylaws, Article IV, Section 3, Paragraph b action by Delegates would read,

(b) Action by Delegates. At each Biennial Meeting, one-third (1/3) of the Delegates registered with the General Secretary prior to convening the Delegates for the first order of business of the Biennial Meeting, present in person, shall constitute a

quorum, provided that at least one Delegate is registered from each of at least one hundred sixty (160) Cooperating Churches which are located within the areas of at least ten (10) Regional Organizations. Attendance by proxy will not be permitted. If at any Biennial Meeting there shall be no quorum present, the Delegates present shall have power to adjourn the Meeting from time to time until a quorum is present and no notice of any such adjourned Meeting need be given. At all Biennial Meetings each Delegate shall be entitled to one (1) vote. Except as otherwise provided by applicable law or in Article XIX, a majority of the votes cast by the Delegates present, as provided in Article XVIII, Section 9, shall determine the vote of the Delegates.

Hand count was taken to accept the recommended Bylaw change, which will be voted on at the 2023 Biennial Business Session:

33 yes, 0 no

Motion passed.

BGM 600 REPORT OF THE BUDGET REVIEW OFFICER

Budget Review Officer Paul Higgins shared a PowerPoint presentation on the year-to-date financials and the 2023 proposed budget. The year-to-date financials show a surplus of \$656,000. Revenue and expenses are based on the financials excluding the Biennial. Net revenue compared to last year is up \$360,000. Revenue is up primarily due to the difference in the Payroll Protection Program (PPP) loans from last year to this year. Expenses as compared to last year are higher by \$427,000. This is primarily due to NetSuite implementation, Travel costs for the General Secretary, staff, and Representative Process, Transitional Ministries, and Women in Ministry RRR Event. ABCUSA received an additional PPP Loan in 2021 in the amount of \$744,802. This loan had been forgiven and the funds were moved to an income account in 2022. Total United Mission is \$4,174,782. This is a decrease of \$355,062 from the prior year. This represents a decrease of 7.84%. 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.

The BGM Finance Committee met to review the budget prepared by the ABCUSA staff. This is the first time that a budget was presented that does not balance with a deficit of \$557,000. The cause of the budget deficit for the 2023 fiscal year includes: (1) A decrease in United Mission from the past year. (2) Reserves included in the prior year to balance the budget. (3) Reduction in income from endowment from the prior year. (4) Additional costs for implementation of NetSuite. (5) Impact from 3% increase in payroll costs and related benefits. (6) Contribution to the Biennial Mission Summit from the operating budget. (6) Representative process contribution to the Mission Table.

By voice vote the Board of General Ministries approved the recommendation of the ABCUSA Finance Committee of the proposed United Mission distribution for 2023 reflecting an expected 3.22% decrease in United Mission giving.

Hand count was taken to approve the BGM Finance Committee recommendation to the Board of General Ministries to adopt the proposed 2023 American Baptist Mission Support Estimated Income and ABCUSA budget as presented.

31 yes, 2 no

Motion passed.

BGM 601 BGM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE UPDATE

ABCUSA Vice-President Michelle Nickens shared updates from the September meeting in Charlotte, NC. Michelle also informed the board that she was feeling God calling her to something new and after deep discernment has decided she would not be seeking the position of ABCUSA president and would be stepping aside after this Biennium, expressing her support to the next president.

BGM 602 GENERAL SECRETARY SEARCH COMMITTEE UPDATE

Jim Wolfe referred to the update recently posted on the ABCUSA Website. A position description will be posted in the beginning of the new year. Jim Wolfe asked for continued prayers for the search committee.

BGM 603 BGM OFFERING

Cedric announced the board offering being collected during the evening vespers service would be designated to assist First Baptist Church – West in Charlotte, NC in their ministries. The BGM Executive Committee visited First Baptist Church – West while in Charlotte for the September BGM Executive Committee Meeting and learned of the ministries the church is doing to serve the local community.

BGM 604 MISSION RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Robin Stoops was introduced as the Interim Associate General Secretary for Mission Resource Development. Robin spoke about “God’s hand in making change.”

BGM 605 WORLD RELIEF COMMITTEE UPDATE

Janice Fletcher gave an update on the current Ukrainian disaster relief funds. Janice also commented that the benefit of serving on the World Relief Committee is the understanding of the depth and breathe of the mission of the American Baptists.

BGM 606 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.

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 Cedric Jones led the board in a time of evening prayer and meditation during the vespers service.

Sunday, November 6, 2022, 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 607 RECONVENING/WORSHIP

Chaplain Cedric Jones lit the Christ Candle in recognition of Christ’s presence and led a devotion based on the “40 day Journey with Howard Thurman.”

BGM 608 REGIONAL MINISTRIES UPDATE

Soozi Whitten Ford shared an update on the regions and the transitions that are currently in progress; as well as, shared an update on her current work for ABCUSA, saying, “It is a privilege to serve in this role.”

Harry Riggs brought greetings on behalf of the REMC and REMC President Cheryl Dudley. Sharing about the work in ABC of Connecticut Harry said, “We are one big family in our unity and diversity,” and continued to say he was looking forward to seeing everyone in San Juan, PR.

BGM 609 CREDENTIALS & CAUCUS COMMITTEE

Michelle Nickens, Chair shared figures from the *Report of Changed Relationships*.

By voice vote, the Report of Changed Relationships of Local Churches (1205.1:11/22) dated through November 6, 2022 was accepted.

BGM 610 RECOGNITION OF RETIRING BGM DIRECTORS

Retiring Board Directors were recognized. Stephanie Commandest and Marijane Kiley were each presented with the book, *Baptist Roots: A Reader in the Theology of a Christian People* by Freeman, McClendon and DaSilva.

BGM 611 ACTION GROUP REPORTS

BGM Finance Committee:

Paul Higgins gave updates from the BGM Finance Committee meetings:

- 1) Received report on legacy gifts from May 2022 to September 2022. ABCUSA received \$105,204.57.
- 2) The Committee examined the impact of the forgiveness of the 2021 Paycheck Protection Program loan. The increased income for Transition Ministries was also noted. The current deficit in WIM should be covered by year-end with a distribution from a designated fund, based on the final accounting for the “Radical. Redeemed. Ready” conference last June.
- 3) The committee met with Chris Roush and Linda Cassel from the American Baptist Foundation (along with their investment advisers at Bank of America Merrill Lynch) 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.
- 4) Voted to again retain Tait Weller to perform the 2022 financial audit, contingent upon the audit fee increasing no more than 6%.
- 5) Received an offer from Brandywine Realty Trust to purchase the 25 acres Brandywine leases surrounding the site of the former Mission Center property. The Executive Committee considered the offer on October 1 at their meeting in Charlotte, NC. The offer was found to be undervalued and the consensus was to allow the offer to expire without a response.
- 6) On October 18, 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 2023 distribution for the national portion of United Mission and recommended that distribution’s adoption by BGM.

Committee on Christian Unity and Interfaith Relations (CCUIR):

- 1) Raimundo Barreto shared a slide presentation on the work of the committee and ecumenically. Jeff Woods continues to be involved in aggressive advocacy efforts for Myanmar. Raimundo sent letters to Senators Grassley and Ernst in advance of the delegation meetings in June. ABCUSA

served as a co-sponsor of the International Religious Freedom Summit in June and the workshop was very well received. Dr. Robin Stoops represented ABCUSA at this meeting and indicated that our workshop was very well received. He reported news of a devastating air strike last week, which reportedly killed over 60 people celebrating the Kachin Independence Organization's anniversary (KIO) on September 23, 2022. Advocacy efforts include correspondences and meetings some senators. The Burma Advocacy Group has launched a second signature campaign to promote the Burma Act Bill. Advocates are also promoting a Congressional Hearing, United Nations actions, and the possibility of attaching the Burma Act Bill to another Bill in the Senate.

- 2) Raimundo shared highlights of the World Council of Churches, which he attended with Jeff, and Jim.
- 3) Rev. Dr. Chaks Zadda reported to the committee on his participation on behalf of the ABCUSA in Sikh-Christian, Buddhist-Christian, and Hindu-Christian dialogues. His report on the Hindu-Christian dialogue was extensively discussed in one of our sessions. Concerns with Hindu Nationalism were raised for advocacy purposes. We are beginning conversation with the General Secretary and our advocacy partners to find meaningful ways to act in response to that report.
- 4) Laura Austin will serve as the ABCUSA representative for the NCCC Jewish Christian Dialogue.
- 5) After discussion and deliberation, the committee has chosen Dr. Luis Rivera-Pagan, a member of Primera Iglesia Bautista Piedra Río Piedras, Puerto Rico, as its 2023 Luke Mowbray Ecumenical Award recipient. Preparations are underway for the special dinner when he will receive the award during the Biennial.

Beloved Community Action Group:

Marijane Kiley shared that the Beloved Community Action Group met to continue their work in Becoming a Beloved Community and sharing in times throughout the board meeting to bring about prayer and fellowship with one another.

Action item: we would like to continue to engage the BGM in activities such as these for the June Agenda; we agree that one question per activity. One Activity on the first day and two on the second day.

Communicating ABC Identity:

Bonnie Higgins shared that the group worked to "narrow down" a job description of the committee. Robin Stoops joined the committee and gave a new understanding and thinking of the work in the regions. The action group continues to identify the identity of ABC and to share it with others.

BGM 612 CLOSING WORSHIP

Cedric Jones led a closing worship with communion. The Board's worshipful work ended with the singing of "Blest be the Tie That Binds."

Submitted by,



Dr. C. Jeff Woods
General Secretary

CJW/kj

Documents attached

BGM Proposed Agenda (1102:11/22)

Integrated Schedule- Nov 2022

BGM Minutes – June 2022 (1001:06/22)

BGM Executive Committee Minutes: September 2022 (1002:09/22)

BGM Executive Committee Minutes: June 2022 (1002:06/22)

Reports from ABCUSA OGS and AMOs

Report from Special Director to American Baptist Home Mission Societies

Report from Special Director to MMBB

Professional Ministries Team Report

Burma Refugee Commission Report

Report from the General Secretary Nov. 2022

Report of the Nominating Committee

BGM Item 8 Biennial Sponsor & Exhibitor Prospectus

BGM Item 8 2023 Biennial Mission Summit Update

Report from the ABCUSA President Nov. 2022

ABC Interpreting the Impact of COVID 19 on Congregations Task Force

Proposed Bylaw Change to Biennial Delegate Process

ABCUSA Financial Report as of Sept. 30, 2022

ABCUSA 2023 Budget Highlights

General Secretary Search Committee Update

Report of Changed Relationships of Local Churches Nov. 2022

World Relief Committee Report to the BGM

BGM Action Groups – November 2022

American Baptist Historical Society Report

Bio of Benjamin Jacuk