

**HANDBOOK**  
**FOR**  
**DIRECTORS**  
**OF THE**  
**BOARD OF GENERAL MINISTRIES**  
**THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE**  
**AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES USA**  
(“American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., non-profit  
corporation legally organized under the laws of New York”)



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## *I. ABCUSA Mission Statement*

American Baptists are a Christ-centered, biblically grounded, ethnically diverse people called to radical personal discipleship in Christ Jesus. Our commitment to Jesus propels us to nurture authentic relationships with one another, build healthy churches, transform our communities, our nations and our world, engage every member in hands-on ministry, and speak the prophetic word in love.

As a people of prayer, purpose, and passion, we are in the forefront of creating a diverse community of faith where people of every race, nationality and culture gather as one in worship, witness and work.

The heart of the gospel is God's redemptive love. In our life together, the world will see the power of forgiveness to overcome alienation, the strength of love to transform hate, the power of grace to break the bonds of guilt, the triumph of hope over despair, and the victory of faith over doubt.

Through the cross of Christ we embrace the world as neighbor. Our vision for mission energizes a multitude of servant ministries of evangelism, discipleship, leadership, new church development, social justice, healing, peacemaking, economic development and education. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we work together in mutual trust, humility, love, and giving that the gospel might be preached and lived in all the world.

*(Adopted by the General Board, June 2005)*

## **II. Worshipful Work**

Worshipful Work is a movement that gained momentum in the mid-1990's among a number of Protestant denominations. It is a way of envisioning the decision-making processes of national and regional religious bodies, primarily through the lens of spiritual discernment rather than through the commonly used lenses of business practices or parliamentary practices. It is a focus on integrating spirituality and administration in church government. Many denominations from the Church of the Brethren to the Disciples of Christ and the Reformed Church in America use these practices as the primary means for denominational governance.

While Worshipful Work does not require an entity such as the Board of General Ministries to abandon parliamentary procedure, it does weave the two together, and seeks to set the whole session within the context of God's gracious province rather than using prayers or other religious acts as bookends to contain the business of the church.

In Worshipful Work, the spiritual art of discernment is primary, and decisions are sought through the process of dialogue rather than deliberation. In the process, leaders resist the temptation to close on decisions that are not shared, leave room for the full body to weigh all the options, wait for a more consensual agreement to emerge, and focus on prayerful consideration of how well the proposed solution resonates with the members of the group.

In Worshipful Work, certain matters are chosen for discernment while others are determined in a more deliberative style allowing for more time-sensitive decisions to be made. You will see evidence of Worshipful Work in our Board of General Ministries meetings as we increasingly adopt this form of decision-making.

### **III.**

#### **ADDENDUM #2 (Standing Rules)**

##### **BOARD OF GENERAL MINISTRIES QUALIFICATIONS, FUNCTIONS AND COMMITMENTS OF DIRECTORS**

###### **QUALIFICATIONS:**

1. Commitment to Jesus Christ and the whole mission of the church to evangelize, educate and encourage.
2. Understanding of and respect for the purpose, history, diversity and tradition of the ABCUSA and its ministries.
3. Active membership in a contributing ABCUSA church and Region and demonstration of individual commitment to support its missions financially.
4. Regular participation and involvement in board and all assigned sub-group meetings and willingness to contribute your unique skills and abilities.
5. The ability to listen, negotiate and reconcile while seeking to discern the mind of Christ and to build up this community of faith.
6. The ability to lead as well as serve, to envision the future as well as plan for it.
7. The desire to study and grow in your Christian faith and your understanding of the work of Christ in our world today.
8. The ability to communicate to others the goals, programs and ministries of the ABCUSA.

**TIME COMMITMENT:** You should plan to spend at least

3 days twice per year plus travel and preparation time for meetings (Mid-June and early to mid-November)

- two to three days per year for communication, interpretation and advocacy in your Region

- annual or biennial Region meetings (for At-large Directors)

- other time as is mutually agreed on for assigned committee, commission or task force meetings.

**Qualifications, Functions and Commitments of Directors, from Standing Rules: Addendum #2**

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#### **IV. ROLES OF A BOARD OF GENERAL MINISTRIES DIRECTOR**

**1. DETERMINE DENOMINATIONAL MISSION & PURPOSE**

The Board of General Ministries is the policy making body of ABCUSA in the areas of program functions, planning, coordination and evaluation. This includes electing persons to offices and committees, voting on budgets, policies and program direction. Directors will receive reports from staff and proposals for budgets. It is vital that Directors take responsibility for their own education on these matters so that the decisions that are made are responsible and informed.

**2. SELECT & SUPPORT THE GENERAL SECRETARY & ASSESS PERFORMANCE**

The selection of a General Secretary has a great impact on the denomination's development and effectiveness.

Consistent moral and substantive support from the board is very important. While primary responsibility for supporting the General Secretary often falls to the president, it is also a board function. For informal and formal performance reviews, the board and General Secretary should agree on purposes and processes.

**3. ENSURE EFFECTIVE PLANNING**

The Board of General Ministries is a "think tank" to envision the future God has planned for the denomination. We are more than the sum of our parts as we energize each other with ideas, reflections and visions. In this way, the Holy Spirit can work through our diversity to bring a unity of mission, which, in turn, determines the direction of the denomination and each of its ministries.

**4. ENSURE ADEQUATE RESOURCES**

As a member of the Board charged with setting policies for denominational stewardship and fundraising each director has a responsibility to contribute personally through American Baptist Mission Support and to aid in the task of raising mission dollars. Such a responsibility comes with membership on any board of any organization. It is denominational policy to expect that Directors tithe and promote tithing in ABC churches.

**5. MANAGE RESOURCES EFFECTIVELY**

An important part of serving the ABC constituency is protecting accumulated assets and managing current income properly. Accurate and timely financial reports will assist in this responsibility. Annual audits also will be provided for review.

**6. DETERMINE, MONITOR, & STRENGTHEN PROGRAMS**

Determining denominational functions for itself and assigning functions to national program boards, Board of General Ministries Directors are responsible for holding denominational staff accountable for ABCUSA policies and program direction. All evaluation should be done candidly, constructively and directly.

Staff members and missionaries work on behalf of all of the denomination. It is the role of the Board of General Ministries to encourage and pray for each of these persons, as well as the work of the local church. Words of appreciation, questions of clarification, suggestions and resources are all appropriate ways to fulfill this function. Active participation in committee meetings also will provide encouragement.

**7. ENHANCE THE DENOMINATION'S PUBLIC STANDING**

The Director's task is to promote and celebrate the identity of the denomination and to be interpreter and advocate for the work of the denomination as a whole. Directors have particular spheres of activity (church, region and other bodies) in which they can exercise this role by representing the denomination in those spheres. Directors also are channels for communication from their constituencies to denominational leadership. This involves an exercise of judgment. It is important that widely held views and other significant elements of opinion are reported. However, every individual letter a Director receives cannot be afforded Board of General Ministries time.

Directors are encouraged to attend their annual or biennial region meeting, when able. If a Board of General Ministries Director plans to attend, they are asked to volunteer their time to communicate and advocate for the work of the denomination by helping to staff the ABCUSA Office of the General Secretary booth, telling the story of the denomination and sharing about ABC identity. Materials will be provided for volunteering Directors to aid them as they volunteer at the booth.

**8. ENSURE LEGAL & ETHICAL INTEGRITY & MAINTAIN ACCOUNTABILITY**

The board is ultimately responsible for ensuring adherence to legal standards and ethical norms. Fulfilling this responsibility, the board establishes policies to guide its members and staff. Conflict-of-interest policies, for instance, outline acceptable and unacceptable relationships among the denomination, its board directors, and its staff.

The board also is responsible for adhering to provisions of the Bylaws and Standing Rules. A board that acts inconsistently with its own governance documents and adopted policies is very vulnerable to criticism. Some basic responsibilities of the board include:

- > Protecting denominational staff, volunteers and other constituents from harm or injury by ensuring compliance with occupational, safety, health, labor, and related regulations.
- > Developing and maintaining adequate personnel policies and procedures (including grievance mechanisms);
- > Adhering to local, state and federal laws and regulations that apply to religious nonprofit organizations;
- > Adhering to the provisions of ABCUSA Bylaws and Standing Rules and amending them when necessary.



9. **RECRUITMENT FOR THE LEADERSHIP POOL AND ASSESSMENT OF BOARD PERFORMANCE**

Recruitment and development of people to serve the leadership function of the denomination is a basic and essential responsibility of the board. In order to provide leadership that is representative of the whole ABCUSA community of faith, care must be taken to provide a pool of candidates that mirrors the diverse racial, ethnic, gender, language, theological and geographical constituencies that exist.

Regular and objective assessment of board performance is an essential element of continued board effectiveness.

## **V. HELPFUL DEFINITIONS**

*(listed alphabetically)*

### **Action Groups, Board of General Ministries**

Board of General Ministries Directors will serve on Action Groups that meet during Board meetings and in some cases, virtually in between board meetings. As committees of the denomination, two groups: Finance Committee and the Committee on Christian Unity and Interfaith Relations will continue with their members having been elected by BGM.

The Action Groups are:

A. Becoming a Beloved Community

ABC life has welcomed and celebrated the great diversity and gifts that its members bring in the making of the whole. Statistically, ABC is more multi-ethnic than any other Protestant group in the US. While we have affirmed such God-given richness, we still have not attained the spirit of a “beloved community.” What does it mean to be the Body of Christ that values all of its members? How is power shared among its members? The composition of BGM is designed to reflect a “beloved community” in its members but how may we truly function in spirit? This Action Group will continue the ACT on this topic with the hope of identifying findings that would influence the work that BGM does such as the Biennial Mission Summit.

B. Communicating ABC Identity

Our ABC Identity can be a positive and a negative all at the same time. Unlike other Christian groups that may have a historical figure or a particular practice that defines them, ABC doesn’t seem to have such clear distinctives except the strong affirmation of Baptist principles. Joined together by Baptist principles has included many groups from all walks of life in the making of ABC. Against this reality and the increasing moving away from organized religion in American life, what is “ABC Identity” today? For any group to function effectively, what is needed to communicate ABC identity that would draw us together to do mission and ministry together? This Action Group will continue the ACT on this topic with the hope of identifying findings that would influence the work of BGM such as the national ministers conference and the Orientation to AB Life.

C. BGM Finance Committee

The committee oversees all of the fiduciary responsibilities of the denomination: United Mission, OGS, budget covenants.

D. Committee on Christian Unity and Interfaith Relations

The committee acts on behalf of the denomination to engage in Baptist-Muslim dialogues and ecumenical relationships including: NCCC, BWA, WCC, and other efforts to exemplify the oneness in Christ.

## **Agenda, Board of General Ministries**

A proposed agenda is transmitted prior to each Board of General Ministries meeting. The agenda briefly explains issues that will be considered at the upcoming meeting, shows "Proposed" or "Possible" actions which may be taken by the Board of General Ministries and designates documents which are available electronically with the agenda and those which will be distributed during the meeting.

Whenever a vote is expected in a Board of General Ministries meeting, the agenda will carry a "Proposed Action" or a "Possible Action." In the first case, the "Proposed Action" comes as a recommendation from a committee, council, commission or task force to the Board of General Ministries for its consideration. If the agenda reads "Possible Action," the motion has been prepared by staff simply to facilitate the work of the Board. It is not intended to instruct you on what to move or how to vote. You may move the suggested language or any language that seems appropriate to you under the circumstances.

Once the Agenda has been adopted, the Board of General Ministries Executive Committee is the group that decides whether a matter can be added to the Board of General Ministries Agenda.

## **Attendance**

Standing Rule 10.5.2 states, "Attendance. In the interest of effective participation of Board of General Ministries Directors and of faithful stewardship of denominational funds it is expected that all directors will attend all meetings of the Board of General Ministries, Commissions, and Committees to which they may be assigned, unless prevented by unavoidable reasons, and that they will arrive at all meetings on time and remain until the adjournment of each meeting. Authority to grant excuses for absence shall be vested in the General Secretary."

Reason for absence should be communicated by email or in writing to the General Secretary.

## **Attendance Sheets**

Attendance Sheets will be posted near the entrances to the meeting room for the first and last sessions of a Board of General Ministries meeting. Directors are expected to sign the sheets to record their presence at the meeting.

## **Biennial Mission Summit**

The Biennial Mission Summit is the American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA) national gathering held every two years. The ABCUSA Biennial Mission Summit has three main purposes.

The first purpose is the "Mission Summit," which is a unique opportunity to come together, share ideas, and learn from one another what is working in the growth and vitality of our churches today. Second, the Biennial Mission Summit is a time of celebration. We gather to celebrate God's work among us as an ABCUSA family, and this time together serves as a reunion where brothers and sisters in the faith reconnect, worship and learn together. The third purpose is to do the necessary business of our denomination - we elect the denomination's officers (President, Vice President, Budget Review Officer) for the coming Biennium. The Biennial Mission Summit is held in odd-numbered years, usually in June. Members of the Board of General Ministries shall be voting Delegates to the Biennial Meeting. Attendance will not be required. Biennial Mission Summit costs (other than registration) will be at the expense of the Delegates. Of course, your local congregation or Regional Board could send you as a Delegate. The Board of General Ministries meeting has regularly preceded the Biennial Mission Summit in recent years.

## **Board of General Ministries**

The board of directors of the ABCUSA Corporation is the Board of General Ministries and is comprised of persons serving as Directors. For a description of functions of the Board of General Ministries see ABC Bylaws, Article X, Section 4, and ABC Standing Rule 10.6.

The Board of General Ministries is the legislative body of the ABCUSA, a representative group of 45, including 33 At Large Directors, 5 General Directors, 1 Special Director, and 6 Ex Officio Directors. The Board of General Ministries seeks the welfare of the whole Denomination and gives general oversight and direction to the life and mission of the Denomination, sets policy for ABCUSA, determines Denominational functions for itself and for committees, commissions, and councils of ABCUSA, is responsible for assigning specific Denominational functions to the national program boards, and for reviewing and assessing the performance of denominational functions carried out by other entities.

**Cash Advance** - Money issued prior to a meeting to cover anticipated meeting costs. Inasmuch as travel, housing and often many of the meal expenses are charged directly to a master bill there may be no occasion for you to request a cash advance. A per diem check will be issued when many of the meal expenses are not covered by the direct bill. Under special circumstances a Director may request from the Treasurer a cash advance, if the amount needed is in excess of \$100.00. The issuing of an advance does not preclude you from submitting an Expense Voucher later detailing the actual expenses (with receipts) related to your trip. Any advance is applied against actual expenses incurred and reported on your Expense Voucher.

## **Child Care Policy**

The Board of General Ministries approved a Child Care Policy by consensus at its November 2014 meeting:

For directors who are parents, guardians, or significant caregivers of a minor(s), there are three available options that a director may choose from:

1. A director can access up to a \$500 stipend to cover any at-home child care-related costs that may occur from parent/guardian/caregiver being at the meeting.
  - a. The director will need to complete the Child Care Reimbursement form and submit the completed form along with receipt(s) or other proof of payment to the Associate General Secretary/Treasurer.
2. A director may bring the minor(s) to the location along with one other adult to provide supervision.
  - a. ABCUSA will cover the cost of the single room for the director, minor(s) and caregiver during the meeting.
  - b. Cost of meals during the meeting will be covered
    - i. When appropriate, the minor(s) and caregiver will be invited to join the board for those specific meals.
    - ii. Other arrangements can be made with the Office of Conference and Travel Planning if the minor(s) and caregiver are not going to be in Attendance at specific meals.
  - c. Assistance with transportation costs (*i.e.* airfare) for minor(s) and caregiver to travel to the location will be made available up to \$500 per family. The director is responsible for any cost over this amount.
  - d. The director will need to complete the Room Reservation Form (or complete online registration) for the meeting. Only requests submitted in the proper format by the stated deadline will be honored.

3. If neither of the above options will work for the director due to unique circumstances they may talk to staff of the Office of Conference and Travel Planning to discuss alternate options to assist with participation in the meeting.

### **Constituency**

A Director has two (2) types of constituents: 1) cooperating churches and 2) the Regions. An individual member of a cooperating church is not a constituent of a Board of General Ministries Director and does not have the authority to demand any specified action of a Director.

### **Constituency Communications**

Communication is an important responsibility of the Directors as they report regularly to their constituency (the cooperating churches and the Regional organizations, but not individuals) they represent, as well as becoming aware of the attitudes and opinions of the cooperating churches and Regional organizations. Following each Board meeting, Directors should communicate with cooperating churches in their Region, drawing on several resources available: news releases distributed during Board meetings; sample reports which may be compiled and transmitted to each Director soon after the Board meeting; and minutes of the Board of General Ministries meeting.

### **Constituency Concerns**

Cooperating churches may communicate their concerns about issues and these may be responded to directly by the Director. However, there may be an occasion when the Director will wish to share with the Board of General Ministries a concern expressed by cooperating churches and regions. There may be time during a Board meeting for sharing these concerns.

### **Corporate Meetings of the American Baptist Historical Society**

All the Directors, comprise the corporate membership of the American Baptist Historical Society (ABHS). At times designated on the Board of General Ministries Agenda, the ABCUSA presiding officer will announce a recess of the Board of General Ministries to allow for a meeting of the membership of the ABHS corporation. At one of those times, the President of ABHS will call to order a meeting of the corporate membership (the same Directors who also comprise the Board of General Ministries) of that corporation. After completing the business of the ABHS corporation, the president will recess or adjourn the meeting and the ABCUSA presiding officer again will call to order the meeting of the Board of General Ministries.

### **Corporator(s)**

A corporation member, or in "for-profit language," the shareholder(s): one of a group created by a state legislature or state court to act as a single person, having various legal privileges and duties and the capacity of succession or perpetuity (i.e. "not dying"). During their terms, ABCUSA Board of General Ministries Directors are all corporators, because they serve simultaneously as the members of two corporations: American Baptist Historical Society (ABHS), and American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA). (Some ABCUSA Directors also are elected to serve as corporators, or "members," of the Ministers & Missionaries Benefit Board [MMBB]). As corporators, ABCUSA Directors elect officers and directors of each of these corporations and are the ones to whom such directors are accountable.

**Directors** - One of the group of persons elected and entrusted by the corporators with control and direction of a corporate enterprise.

The boards of directors of the two corporations whose members are ABCUSA Directors are: the American Baptist Historical Society Board (ABHS), and the Board of General Ministries.

There are several types of Board of General Ministries Directors: At-large, General, Ex-officio & Special. There is one at-large director from each region. They are selected by the ABC Nominating Committee from a list of names provided by the regions and are presented to the Biennial Mission Summit delegates for election. Vacancies between biennials are filled by election of the BGM of nominees presented by the ABC Nominating Committee.

General Directors are directors selected for their expertise or experience and elected by the BGM. There may be up to five General Directors.

Ex-officio directors are the ABCUSA President, Vice-President, Budget Review Officer, Immediate Past President, General Secretary, and Intercaucus President.

One special director is nominated by the two program boards, ABFMS and ABHMS, and elected by the BGM.

Directors, except for ex-officio, are elected for a term of four years and are eligible for a second term of four years. Directors who have served two terms must be off the Board for at least one year before they are eligible for election.

Concerning Filled Vacancies, when the amended Bylaws became effective on July 1, 2017, the following amendment took effect:

Any vacancy in the Board of General Ministries for an At-Large Director or a General Director arising at any time from any cause, may be filled by a majority vote of the Board of General Ministries on nomination of the ABCUSA Nominating Committee; provided, however, that if the vacancy is for an At-Large Director, the nomination must be for a person from the Region from which the vacating director was elected. **Each director so elected shall hold office for the remainder of the unexpired term for which so elected, and if the unexpired term is less than two years, shall be eligible for reelection to two additional consecutive 4-year terms if nominated.**

## **Documents**

Most documents related to the Agenda are posted on a “BGM Directors” page on the ABCUSA website prior to the meeting. You will be notified when documents are posted. Documents will usually have an agenda item number in the top right corner of the first page. Occasionally, there are circumstances which sometimes make this impossible. The Board of General Ministries may meet after one or more of the committees of the Board of General Ministries. During their meetings such groups may develop policies to propose to the Board of General Ministries. Directors therefore cannot receive some documents until the opening plenary of the Board of General Ministries. These documents will also have an agenda item number. An attempt is always made to provide as much time as possible between the distribution of the document and the scheduled time for its consideration on the Agenda. Whenever a document is modified, the date on the document is changed. This ensures that everyone is working from the same document. Each document distributed to you will be 3-hole punched, so it can be inserted in your notebook.

In the interest of good stewardship you will want to bring all needed documents with you to the Board meeting—either hard copy or soft copy. In a case of emergency, however, there will be a box in the back of the meeting room with files of a limited number of duplicate documents.

## **Expenses**

Director’s travel, housing (based on two Directors per room) and meal expenses to attend the Board of General Ministries meetings are paid by the denomination's Representative Process.

Arrangements are made with the hotel for direct billing to the ABC. When you check out to leave, you should review the charges on your account and sign the form indicating that the charges are appropriate.

The master bill will accept charges for the Director's room and tax only. Incidentals, meal charges on room folios, spousal charges and telephone calls will not be charged to the master bill. These must be paid personally upon check-out. Information regarding the amount representing one-half of the double room rate that you should pay for requesting a single room (other than for serious health reasons) or for your spouse will be provided in the registration information which will be sent to you, or it will be posted on the reservation website.

Travel - see "Travel" on page 15 for basis of reimbursement.

### **Expense Voucher**

An Expense Voucher is included in the Board of General Ministries Packet (to be picked up at the BGM meeting) or on the table next to the Packets. It is generally easier to keep track of expenses if entries are made daily on the Expense Voucher provided and all required receipts are attached. Expense Vouchers may be submitted for reimbursement at the close of the meeting or mailed after you return home.

In general, air travel, housing, and meals will be charged directly to ABCUSA. Therefore, only miscellaneous expenses, such as local fares and parking costs, will need to be reimbursed. Receipts for public transportation and for any expenditures over \$10.00 will be required for reimbursement.

You may secure a cash advance - for information see Cash Advance on page 9.

### **Housing**

Room costs are tempered by sharing rooms; the expectation is that Board of General Ministries directors will share rooms unless health concerns dictate private housing. Otherwise, a Director who selects private housing will also need to be prepared to pay the difference between a single and one-half the cost of a double room.

### **Mailings/e-mail transmissions**

You will receive several communications (almost always electronic) throughout the year related to your work as an ABCUSA Board of General Ministries Director. In preparation for each Board meeting there will be two major types of transmissions: the first (several months before the meeting) will include instructions for registering online and for making flight reservations; the second (occurring several times in the weeks prior to the meeting) will include the Proposed Agenda and related Documents.

You receive a password for access to a website where documents will be posted, and you will be notified when the documents are ready for retrieval.

### **Meeting, In-person or Virtual**

The meeting locations of Committee, Commission and Board meetings are indicated on a Board of General Ministries Schedule that will be included in your Board of General Ministries Packet. In addition, last minute changes will be shown on schedules posted in public areas. In the case of virtual meetings, connection information will be sent in advance of the meeting.

## **Meeting-Related Documents**

Most of the needed documents will be transmitted electronically prior to each meeting of the Board of General Ministries. Directors should either print and bring along the documents related to the Schedule and Proposed Agenda or store the documents in a laptop and bring that to the meetings. Power outlets for laptops will be available at several tables in the plenary space. You will need your voting cards. Your copy of the Standing Rules may be helpful.

We encourage you to access documents electronically, in order to cut down on the use of paper and participate in a more environment-friendly way. However, it is important for you to have adequate information on which to base your decisions. Let the staff know if there is more information that you need.

## **Members**

The membership of American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA) consists of those persons serving as At-Large Directors, General Directors, and Ex Officio Directors on the Board of General Ministries.

All Members present at any meeting are each entitled to one vote and have equal powers and rights.

## **Mentor**

Prior to your first Board of General Ministries meeting, a current Board of General Ministries Director will be invited to serve as your Mentor. They will sit with you at the sessions and guide you through the processes of the Board sessions.

## **Minutes**

Minutes for meetings of the Board of General Ministries and Executive Committee of the Board of General Ministries are prepared and distributed electronically to each ABC Director following each meeting. Items in them are numbered sequentially since 2012.

## **Mission Statement of the American Baptist Churches USA** ***(Adopted by the General Board, June 2005)***

American Baptists are a Christ-centered, biblically grounded, ethnically diverse people called to radical personal discipleship in Christ Jesus. Our commitment to Jesus propels us to nurture authentic relationships with one another, build healthy churches, transform our communities, our nations and our world, engage every member in hands-on ministry, and speak the prophetic word in love.

As a people of prayer, purpose, and passion, we are in the forefront of creating a diverse community of faith where people of every race, nationality and culture gather as one in worship, witness and work.

The heart of the gospel is God's redemptive love. In our life together, the world will see the power of forgiveness to overcome alienation, the strength of love to transform hate, the power of grace to break the bonds of guilt, the triumph of hope over despair, and the victory of faith over doubt.

Through the cross of Christ we embrace the world as neighbor. Our vision for mission energizes a multitude of servant ministries of evangelism, discipleship, leadership, new church development, social justice, healing, peacemaking, economic development and education. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we work together in mutual trust, humility, love, and giving that the gospel might be preached and lived in all the world.



## **Name Badge**

Your name badge will be placed in your packet, which you pick up when you arrive at meetings.

## **Packets**

A Packet is prepared for each Director for Board of General Ministries meetings and may be picked up at the designated area (usually near the hotel registration desk or meeting room) after you have completed your room registration. The Packet contains your name badge and other appropriate materials.

## **Parliamentarian**

The parliamentarian is nominated by the ABC President and elected by the Board of General Ministries for the biennium to rule on questions of parliamentary procedure to ensure that the BGM actions are within the Bylaws and Standing Rules. (SR 10.3.3)

## **Place of Meeting**

In odd-numbered years, the June BGM meeting will be held in conjunction with, and at the site of, the ABC Biennial Mission Summit. All meeting locations and dates will be announced well in advance.

## **Registration for Meetings**

You will be requested to register for Board of General Ministries meetings using the online registration process. Directions for this process will be provided prior to each meeting. Prompt response to the request for registration is essential.

If you are unable to attend a meeting, you will need to inform the Office of Travel and Conference Planning and send a message to the General Secretary outlining the reasons for the absence. Standing Rule 10 states that two unexcused absences during a Director's term "...may be deemed a resignation." (SR 10.3)

## **Schedule**

The Board of General Ministries usually meets twice a year –

### **Typical Schedule:**

<b>1<sup>st</sup> Day -</b>	<b>9:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. BGM Executive Committee</b>
	<b>2:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. BGM</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Day -</b>	<b>9:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. BGM</b>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Day -</b>	<b>9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. BGM</b>

**Committee Schedule may vary**

## **Sharing Your Concerns**

As a Director, you will gather ideas, concerns, suggestions, opinions, and celebrations from your constituency. Sometimes you will want to share such information with the other Directors. During each meeting, there may be a "Communicating Constituency Concerns" time when you may do just that. Occasionally, there is an item on the agenda, "Communicating Concerns and Celebrations of Individual Directors "when you will have

opportunity to share your personal suggestions or concerns. This is an informal event, not a legislative one; no motions are made. If you want more than to be heard, that is, you want some person or group to do something about what you share, you should write a letter to the Board of General Ministries Executive Committee.

### **Speaking at Meetings**

When you wish to speak during a Board of General Ministries Meeting, you should go to a microphone and, when asked by the presiding officer, identify yourself. When you make a motion during a meeting, please first state your name for the secretary's record. When several people wish to speak regarding the same agenda item, they should line up at the microphones.

If you take your voting card with you, the presiding officer can more easily identify persons wishing to speak for or against the matter being discussed.

When you propose a motion that is different from the Proposed Action or Possible Action suggested in the Agenda, you must write out your motion and give it to the presiding officer.

### **Staff**

Several executives of ABCUSA are present during Board of General Ministries meetings. If you have a specific concern, seek them out. They are more than willing to talk with you. Feel free to talk with or write to staff to ask for information, to share information, or to make a suggestion. If you are not sure of the appropriate staff person to write, direct your letter to the General Secretary and she/he will refer it to the one best qualified to answer.

Staff members will be in the room if you have questions related to the meetings, or if you wish to leave a message for a staff member.

### **Travel**

The Board of General Ministries Executive Committee has determined that air travel for all functions related to the Representative Process will be reimbursed **only if** arrangements are made through the ABC-designated travel agent as follows:

Air travel – Call Travel Leaders at (1-800-798-4081).

**Any exceptions to this policy must be cleared in advance** through the Office of Travel & Conference Planning staff at 1-800-ABC-3USA.

The policy determination has been made for several reasons. First, it is more convenient for Board of General Ministries members since tickets arranged through the ABC-designated travel agent will be charged directly; you will not need to apply for a travel advance or charge them to your personal charge card. The process will thus reduce paper work for you.

Second, special complimentary tickets become available to ABCUSA on the basis of the number of tickets sold, and these special tickets are used for travel within the Representative Process, thus decreasing costs.

Third, accounting will be greatly simplified, also reducing overhead.

Fourth, when travel is booked with the ABC agent, our Travel Office receives arrival and departure information, which allows them to make arrangements for shuttles. If shuttles are not available, staff may make additional recommendations for travel. Also, the travel agent monitors schedule changes and notifies the Travel Office when such changes occur. Overall, it is more efficient and cost-effective for all Board of General Ministries travel to be handled through one agent. Please note that travel through the ABC-designated travel agent is the only approved method for reimbursement.

The majority of the airline tickets are non-refundable tickets. Please note the following policies concerning changes to non-refundable tickets.

- Reservations not being used must be cancelled prior to the flight departure time. Once the flight has departed, the ticket will have no value, and you will not be permitted to stand by for an alternate flight.

Changes may be made to non-refundable tickets before your scheduled departure time; however, certain restrictions and fees apply. Please contact Pat or Elysia with any concerns. When changes are made for the director's convenience the director is responsible for the change fee.

Automobile travel - For Directors who drive to Board of General Ministries meetings, the ABC establishes a mileage allowance for reimbursement, using as its guide the current IRS-allowed rate. Such mileage is presently reimbursed at 58.5 cents a mile (in 2022), up to the amount quoted by our travel agent for competitive airfare. If driving results in a mileage charge that exceeds the lowest coach airfare available, the reimbursement will be limited to the airfare, plus mileage to and from the airport plus shuttle transportation. Reasonable expenses on designated days of travel are reimbursable for all travel.

Charges for rental cars will not be reimbursed under the Representative Process. Should you desire to have a rental car available for your use during the Board of General Ministries meetings, you must pay this expense personally.

## **VI. COMMITTEES/COMMISSIONS/COUNCILS**

### **Biennial Mission Summit Planning Team (Biennial Program Committee) of the ABCUSA**

The Biennial Mission Summit Planning Team (also called Biennial Program Committee in the Bylaws), a seven (7) member committee, is a committee of the ABC, which has responsibility to determine the program of the ABCUSA Biennial Mission Summit. The functions of the Biennial Mission Summit Planning Team shall include planning the content and agenda of the Biennial Mission Summit, designating the leadership for such meeting, budgeting and expenses and revenue of the meeting in consultation with the treasurer, publicizing such meeting and preparing appropriate materials for delegates and visitors. (SR 14.3.6)The Board of General Ministries may from time to time request the President to assign such other functions to the Committee as it deems appropriate.

### **BGM Finance Committee**

A six (6) member committee of the Board of General Ministries, the BGM Finance Committee functions include reviewing and consulting with staff regarding the ABC budget proposal; serving as the audit committee; maintaining financial oversight of ABCUSA; maintaining investment oversight of ABCUSA endowment and reserve funds; determining appropriate banking relationships; and receiving and monitoring region financial statements.

### **Christian Unity and Interfaith Relations, Committee On**

The Committee on Christian Unity and Interfaith Relations consists of at least six (6) members elected by the Board of General Ministries. Functions of the committee include: (a) helping American Baptists achieve a wider understanding of the meaning of Christian unity; (b) holding conversations with other Christian bodies in the interest of Christian unity, on authorization of the Board of General Ministries; (c) exploring what may be involved in a plan of union or federation with one or more other denominations on authorization of the Board of General Ministries, presenting any such plans to the BGM for action; (d) developing plans to underwrite ABCUSA membership in various ecumenical bodies, recommending the plans for consideration by the BGM Finance Committee; and (e) submitting to the Board of General Ministries in consultation with the General Secretary slates of nominees for election as members of the governing bodies of the ecumenical interfaith bodies to which the ABCUSA belongs. (SR 14.8)

### **Credentials and Caucus Committee**

The individuals serving as members of the Executive Committee shall also be the members of the Credentials and Caucus Committee.

The functions of the Credentials and Caucus Committee shall be to: (a) review the representation on the Board of General Ministries and note any concerns regarding diversity and reflective representation and make recommendations to the ABCUSA Nominating Committee and the Joint Review Committee on Nominations regarding proportionate racial/ethnic representation of the constituency; (b) develop criteria for recognizing a Caucus and recommend such criteria to the BGM; (c) receive applications from groups wishing to be recognized as a Caucus of ABCUSA; (d) review guidelines for Caucus funding and make appropriate recommendations to the General Secretary relative to administrative funding of Caucuses by ABCUSA; (e) determine procedures by which ABCUSA groups with grievances regarding representation may appear before the Committee; and (f) report semi-annually to the BGM.

### **Executive Committee, Board of General Ministries**

The Board of General Ministries Executive Committee consists of not more than eight (8) members, including the ABC President, Vice President, Budget Review Officer, Immediate Past President, the General Secretary and 3 BGM Directors. The Executive Committee sometimes acts on behalf of the Board of General Ministries. Thus, when the Executive Committee makes its report to the Board, the Board votes to adopt the report (not simply to approve it). In that adoption, the actions of the Executive Committee become the actions of the Board of General Ministries. (Bylaws XI)

### **Finance Committee of the ABCUSA**

The Finance Committee of ABCUSA consists of the members of the BGM Finance Committee plus one member from the Finance Committees of each of the ABFMS and ABHMS. The members from ABFMS and ABHMS shall be nominated by their respective boards of directors to serve on the Finance Committee of ABCUSA and shall be elected by the BGM. The Budget Review Officer will chair the Committee.

### **Joint Review Committee on Nominations**

The Joint Review Committee on Nominations shall consist of the ABCUSA Vice President who shall chair the Committee, the presidents of each of the National Boards, the REMC, the Intercaucus, the Ministers Council of the American Baptist Churches in the USA, the American Baptist Men, and the American Baptist Women's Ministries.

The Committee shall review the composition of the Board of General Ministries and the National Boards, and note any concerns regarding diversity and reflective representation. The Committee shall report any concerns to the ABCUSA Nominating Committee, to the respective nominating committee of the National Boards, and to the National Leadership Council.

### **National Executive Council (NEC)**

The National Executive Council of the ABC is comprised of the General Secretary and the National Secretaries (Executive Directors of American Baptist Home Mission Societies, International Ministries, and MMBB Financial Services), and the Executive Director of American Baptist Women's Ministries, all members having equal vote. The National Executive Council deals with broad and far-reaching issues and policies, provides support for the General Secretary, facilitates and coordinates the planning and implementing work of the staffs of the BGM and National Boards, and performs such other duties as the Board of General Ministries may assign to it. The National Executive Council reports to the BGM through the General Secretary and may consult with the National Leadership Council on any matter.

### **National Leadership Council (NLC)**

The National Leadership Council of the Denomination shall consist of (a) the ABCUSA President, (b) the General Secretary and up to three other staff members from ABCUSA, (c) the Executive Directors and up to 3 other staff from the National Boards (d) the members of the Regional Executive Ministers Council, (e) the Executive Directors of American Baptist Assembly (Green Lake Conference Center), American Baptist Historical Society, American Baptist Women's Ministries, American Baptist Men, the Ministers Council of the ABCUSA, the American Baptist Extension Corporation, and the American Baptist Foundation. The purposes of the NLC include building and fostering authentic relationships within the NLC, participating in continuing education relative to executive roles, facilitating implementation of denominational priorities, conducting trend analysis, suggesting means of improving the functioning of the Denomination, and participating in theological reflection.

The members of the NLC will report the initiatives that are in support of the mission priorities that surface in the Mission Summit and Mission Table.

### **Nominating Committee, ABCUSA**

The ABCUSA Nominating Committee shall consist of twelve (12) members, including the ABCUSA President, the ABCUSA Immediate Past President, 3 persons from the REMC, the Intercaucus President, and 6 BGM directors (three clergy + 3 laity) elected by the Board of General Ministries. The ABCUSA President chairs the committee. The committee submits a slate of nominees to the Biennial Mission Summit Delegates for President, Vice President, Budget Review Officer, and nominees, selected from a slate of names submitted by the regions, for At Large Directors to the BGM. The Committee selects from a list of 3 names of local church representatives submitted by each region a local church representative from each region to be a participant at the Mission Table. The Committee submits to the BGM a slate of nominees for membership on the Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board of ABC. They also submit to the BGM a nominee for the position of General Secretary when a vacancy in that office occurs or a term is about to expire.

When the Nominating Committee is acting to submit a nominee for the position of General Secretary, one additional member selected by the National Secretaries shall be added to the Committee for that specific nomination process.

### **Regional Executive Ministers Council (REMC)**

The Regional Executive Ministers Council of the denomination consists of the General Secretary and the Executive Minister of each Regional Organization. The purpose of the REMC shall be to provide mutual learning, support and networking. The REMC shall report to the BGM through the General Secretary and may consult with the National Leadership Council on any matter.

### **Standing Rules, Committee on**

The Committee on Standing Rules consists of three (3) or four (4) directors elected by the BGM from among its membership.

The functions of the Committee include the following relative to Standing Rules: (a) to act in an advisory capacity to the BGM Executive Committee; (b) to propose to the BGM Executive Committee additions to, deletions from, and modifications to the ABCUSA Standing Rules; and, (c) to periodically review all Standing Rules and to recommend to the BGM Executive Committee procedures to provide updated documentation on Standing Rules to ABCUSA directors, officers, and their staffs.

The functions of the Committee also include the following relative to the Bylaws: (a) to act in an advisory capacity to the BGM Executive Committee; (b) to assist the BGM Executive Committee, if requested, in processing requested or suggested Bylaw changes for BGM recommendation to ABCUSA Biennial Mission Summit Meeting Delegates; and (c) to receive assignments from the BGM Executive Committee regarding publishing and distributing ABCUSA Bylaws.

### **World Relief Committee**

The World Relief Committee consists of eleven (11) members, seven (7) of whom are voting. The voting members consist of two (2) persons nominated by the Board of ABFMS from among its membership; two (2) persons nominated by the Board of ABHMS from among its membership; two (2) persons nominated by the ABCUSA President from among the BGM membership, with one of those persons to be appointed chair of the Committee by the President; and one (1) person nominated from the American Baptist Women's Ministries Executive Committee from among the Committee's membership.

The four (4) non-voting members are one (1) from the staffs of ABCUSA, ABFMS, ABHMS, and American Baptist Women's Ministries (ABWM), appointed by the General Secretary in consultation with the appropriate respective ABCUSA National Secretary from ABFMS and ABHMS. The World Relief Officer shall staff the Committee.

Functions of the committee include: (a) establishing policy, subject to the approval of the BGM, with respect to the distribution of funds received from the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering, including the funding of the World Relief Officer subject to budgetary provisions voted by the Board of General Ministries Executive Committee; (b) determining the allocations to be sent to cooperative bodies such as Church World Service and Baptist World Aid; and, (c) granting to National Program Boards and to Region Boards the administration of funds within the policies adopted by the Committee and approved by the BGM. (SR 14.7)

## **VII. PROCEDURAL TERMS**

### **Bylaws of the ABC**

Bylaws are rules adopted by an organization chiefly for the government of its members and the regulation of its affairs. The Bylaws of the ABCUSA and amendments to them are voted by the Biennial Mission Summit Meeting Delegates in session upon recommendation of the Board of General Ministries. (A copy of the Bylaws of the ABC is made available to each *Director*.)

### **Caucuses**

A caucus within American Baptist Churches USA is any group of persons, who join with one another in recognition of a common cause or shared characteristics (i.e. racial/ethnic background, gender, age, etc.). Current ABC caucuses are: Alliance of Asian American Baptist Churches; National Black Caucus of American Baptist Churches; American Baptist Haitian Caucus; American Baptist Hispanic Caucus; American Baptist Indian Caucus; American Baptist Portuguese Speaking Caucus, American Baptist Women's Caucus; and American Baptist Young Adult Caucus. (SR 14.4)

### **Commission(s)**

A special body created by the Board of General Ministries to report to it on matters assigned by the Board. A commission may consist of members of the BGM, members of the staff of the ABCUSA or other persons. (See Bylaws, Art. XI, Sec. 4.)

### **Committee(s)**

A group of three or more persons, designated from among its membership by an American Baptist corporation or board, to carry specified functions for either a definite or indefinite span. Standing Committees of the Board of General Ministries are provided for in Standing Rule 11 and include, at the current time, the BGM Executive committee, the BGM Finance Committee, the Credentials and Caucus Committee, and the Standing Rules Committee.

Standing committees of ABCUSA include the ABCUSA Nominating Committee, the Biennial Program Committee (Biennial Mission Summit Planning Team), the Joint Review of Nominations Committee, the ABCUSA Finance Committee, the World Relief Committee, and the Committee on Christian Unity and Interfaith Relations.

### **Council(s)**

Organization(s) of executive staff from several American Baptist corporations who come together, within covenant relationships among their respective boards, to work on a designated scope of ministry. These include the National Leadership Council, the National Executive Council, and the Regional Executive Ministers Council.

### **General Secretary**

Subject to the general direction and supervision of the Board of General Ministries, the General Secretary shall fulfill pastoral, ecclesiastical, and prophetic roles, and serve as head of communion, and to those ends shall: (a) be the chief executive officer of the ABCUSA responsible for the day-to-day administration of its affairs; (b) be responsible for implementing all Board of General Ministries policy decisions and for articulating American Baptist Policy Statements, Resolutions and Public Witness Statements; (c) provide staff services for Biennial Meetings, the Mission Table and meetings of Members, for the Board of General Ministries, and for all committees, commissions, and councils of the ABCUSA and of the Board of General Ministries, except as otherwise provided in the Bylaws or the Standing



Rules; (d) convene and chair meetings of the National Leadership Council and the Covenanting Partners under the Covenant of Relationships, and (e) perform the usual duties of a corporate secretary, including the keeping of minutes of meetings of Members, Delegates, the Board of General Ministries, and the Executive Committee; and (f) have such other duties as may be assigned by the Board of General Ministries. Upon nomination by the ABCUSA Nominating Committee, the General Secretary shall be elected by the Board of General Ministries for a term of four (4) years (or such shorter term as the BGM may specify) and may thereafter be reelected to such office by the Board of General Ministries for any number of additional terms. (Bylaws XV)

### **Policy Statements and Resolutions**

An American Baptist Policy Statement or Resolution declares the basic position of the ABCUSA on particular issues of general concern. These Policy Statements and Resolutions have not been, nor will they be, binding on regions or Cooperating Churches unless adopted in separate action by that Region or Cooperating Church.

Until 2011, the ABCUSA General Board had the authority to adopt American Baptist Policy Statements and Resolutions. Such Policy Statements and Resolutions adopted before 2011 remain in effect unless rescinded. No new Policy Statements or Resolutions may be adopted under the current Bylaws.

Policy Statements and Resolutions remaining in effect may be found on the ABCUSA website here: [www.abc-usa.org/policy-statements-and-resolutions](http://www.abc-usa.org/policy-statements-and-resolutions).

### **Standing Rules of ABCUSA**

Standing Rules of ABCUSA make more explicit some provisions of the ABCUSA Bylaws. Standing Rules are voted or rescinded by the Board of General Ministries. Each Standing Rule must be consistent with the Bylaws. (A copy of the Standing Rules is made available to each new Director, and is available on the ABCUSA website.)

## **VIII. GLOSSARY OF TERMS COMMONLY ABBREVIATED**

AA	Affirmative Action
ABA	American Baptist Assembly (aka: Green Lake Conference Center)
ABBEP	American Baptist Board of Education & Publication (BEM)
ABCC	American Baptist Computer Center
ABCIS	American Baptist Churches Information Systems
ABCUSA	American Baptist Churches USA
ABEC	The American Baptist Extension Corporation
ABET	American Baptist Evangelism Team
ABF	American Baptist Foundation
ABFMS	American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (International Ministries/IM)
ABHCM	American Baptist Homes & Caring Ministries
ABHMS	American Baptist Home Mission Societies
ABHS	American Baptist Historical Society
ABM	American Baptist Men
ABMC	American Baptist Ministers Council
ABMS	American Baptist Mission Support
ABNS	American Baptist News Service
ABPS	American Baptist Personnel Services
ABQ	American Baptist Quarterly
ABSCO	American Baptist Service Corporation
ABWIM	American Baptist Women In Ministry
ABWM	American Baptist Women's Ministries
AFC	America For Christ (ABHMS/Regions)
AI	Appreciative Inquiry
AMO	Associated Ministry Organization
BEM	Board of Educational Ministries

BGM	Board of General Ministries
BGMEC	Board of General Ministries Executive Committee
BIM	Board of International Ministries (International Ministries)
BJCPA	Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs
BMSPT	Biennial Mission Summit Planning Team (Biennial Program Committee)
BNM	Board of National Ministries (American Baptist Home Mission Societies)
BPF	Baptist Peace Fellowship
BRC	Budget Review Committee (now BGM Finance Committee)
BRO	Budget Review Officer, ABC
BWA	Baptist World Alliance
CCC	Credentials and Caucus Committee
CCT	Christian Churches Together
CCUIR	Committee on Christian Unity and Interfaith Relations
CICR	Churches in Changed Relationship
COB	Church of the Brethren
CODI	Committee on Denominational Inclusiveness
CODU	Commission on Denominational Unity
COR	Covenant of Relationships
CPS	Congregational Profile System (See ABCIS)
EM	Educational Ministries
GB	General Board (now Board of General Ministries)
GBEC	General Board Executive Committee
GEC	General Executive Council (now the National Leadership Council/NLC)
GECEC	General Executive Council Executive Committee
GLCC	Green Lake Conference Center (aka: American Baptist Assembly/ABA)
IM	International Ministries
JP	Judson Press
MC	Ministers Council

MI	Mission Interpretation
MLC	Ministerial Leadership Commission
MMBB	MMBB Financial Services (The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board)
MRD	Mission Resource Development
MVP	Mission, Vision, Planning Task Force
NAS	Name and Address System
NCCC	National Council of Churches of Christ (also NCC)
NCPVC	New Church Planting Vision Committee
NEC	National Executive Council
NLC	National Leadership Council
NM	National Ministries (now American Baptist Home Mission Societies)
NNR	Nationally Nominated Representative (old Bylaws)
OGHS	One Great Hour of Sharing
OGS	Office of the General Secretary
OTCP	Office of Travel and Conference Planning
PCL	Professional Church Leadership
PMT	Professional Ministry Team
RCDSP	Review Commission on Denominational Structure and Process
REMC	Regional Executive Ministers Council
RMMO	Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering
RNR	Regionally Nominated Representative (old Bylaws)
RPRC	Representative Process Review Commission
SAAR	Study of Administrative Areas & Relationships
SCODS	Study Commission on Denominational Structure
SCOR	Study Commission on Relationships
SLC	Staff Leadership Council
TC	Treasurers' Council
TIM	Together in Ministry

UM	United Mission
WABHMS	Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society
WCC	World Council of Churches
WIM	Women in Ministry
WMO	World Mission Offering
WMS	World Mission Support
WRC	World Relief Committee