

American Baptist Churches USA 2023 Biennial Mission Summit Overview Summary

Registration numbers

The total number of registrants at the end of the event was 1,359.

Of these, 171 were Local Arrangements Committee volunteers, 32 band and choir members, and 13 Liturgical Team/Tech Team members.

30 persons had cancelled their registration prior to the event.

105 persons registered onsite during the event.

Scheduled sessions at the Puerto Rico Convention Center

Thursday – 9 sessions; typically 7 of these occur every event

Friday – 18 sessions; MMBB Luncheon and a mix of Caucus meetings, recurring dinners and plenary sessions

Saturday – 28 sessions; IM Luncheon, 14 workshops offered, recurring breakfasts & dinners and plenary sessions, ABWIM After Party

Sunday – 14 sessions; ABHMS Luncheon, Morning Communion Worship Service, 6 workshops, Business Session and plenary sessions.

Convention Center Space

25 Meeting rooms were used for the various meal events, meetings, workshops, child care, staff offices, prayer room and meeting/meal space for the tech team and band.

We used the largest Ballroom for 10 plenary sessions.

The smaller Ballroom was used for the 3 Engage sessions and once for Mission Summit Conversations. Two exhibit halls were used, Hall C was set for 500 participants for the Luncheons and Hall A was used for exhibits.

Hotel Room Nights

- The Board of General Ministries and International Ministries held their board meetings prior to the biennial (Tuesday through Thursday, BGM Executive Committee began Monday evening). Hotel rooms and meeting space is needed for these events.
- Six hotels were used for the event to house attendees and staff. Two hotels were across the street from the Puerto Rico Convention Center, two hotels were 3 blocks away. The other two hotels required transportation. No transportation was provided this year to/from airport/hotels nor hotels/convention center.
- Total Hotel rooms (not including ABHMS' contracts at the Marriott or Sheraton):
 - 498 rooms, 2,421 room nights
 - Sheraton Puerto Rico Hotel & Casino – 365 rooms, 1801 room nights
 - Location of the BGM Meetings, IM Board Meetings, and Mission Table event
 - Primary hotel for the event and staff from ABCUSA and IM
 - Aloft Hotel – 58 rooms, 274 room nights
 - 17 rooms used by ABHMS, 5 rooms for IM & BGM Directors
 - Caribe Hilton – 25 rooms, 96 room nights
 - Primary hotel for MMBB staff
 - Hyatt House and Hyatt Place properties – 50 rooms, 250 room nights
 - Contract was negotiated in May after all contracted rooms were filled at the event hotels. Engage participants, ABCUSA and Event Staff were housed at this hotel.

- ABHMS secured their own contract for staff at the Marriott Hotel. They also secured a room block at the Sheraton Puerto Rico Hotel, and used 17 rooms out of our room block at the Aloft.

Event Summary

American Baptist Churches USA 2023 Biennial Mission Summit took place at the Puerto Rico Convention Center in San Juan, Puerto Rico, June 22-25, 2023. We were fortunate enough to be able to use the entire Convention Center space for our event which limited the amount of room resets required throughout. This also provided us with the opportunity to set up our signage and Hospitality area wherever we preferred, not limited by another group's contracted space.

- Four Worship services were held:
Friday Evening Worship featured speaker Rev. Dr. Frederick Douglass Haynes, III;
Saturday Evening Worship featured Rev. Miriam Méndez;
Sunday Morning Worship with Communion featured Rev. Laura I. Ayala-Álvarez; and
Sunday Evening Worship featured Rev. Joy Martinez-Marshall
- Twenty workshops were held during the biennial with seven on Saturday, June 24 at 9:00 AM, seven on Saturday at 10:30 AM, and six on Sunday, June 25 at 4:00 PM. Out of the 20 workshops, 8 were presented in English, 6 were presented in Spanish, and 6 were presented in both English and Spanish. One presenter decided not to attend the event due to the possible severe weather forecasted. We were able to configure the meeting room to enable her to join the two scheduled workshops virtually. Her executive minister provided in-the-room assistance for both workshops.
- Most of the Caucuses held meetings/sessions/meal events. These included the Alliance of Asian American Baptist Churches/Asian Caucus (meeting and dinner), American Baptist Hispanic Caucus (meeting and shared dinner with ABHS), American Baptist Indian Caucus (meeting), American Baptist National Black Caucus (worship, forum and banquet), American Baptist National Portuguese-Speaking Caucus (meeting with breakfast) and the Young Adult Caucus (evening social). The Women's Caucus has never had an event but always had a presence in the exhibit hall. The Haitian Caucus cancelled their session this year.
- Our national partners held their luncheons again this year with MMBB on Friday, International Ministries on Saturday, and ABHMS on Sunday. Both MMBB and IM purchased 500 lunches, ABHMS purchased 368.
- Several groups, both ABC Related and Guest Organizations held meal events throughout the weekend. These meal events also help to satisfy our food & beverage minimum at the Convention Center. Friday - ABHMS breakfast, Berkeley School of Theology dinner, CCUIR dinner, Luther Rice Society dinner, and Women in Ministry After Party. Saturday - AWAB breakfast, BWA breakfast, ABHS/Hispanic Caucus dinner, Andover Newton Seminary dinner, Roger Williams Fellowship dinner, and the Young Adult Caucus Social. Sunday - Palmer Theological Seminary breakfast.
- Once again the Orientation to American Baptist Life program, this year called Engage 2023, ran concurrent with the Biennial Mission Summit. This included 77 participants and provided time for them to connect during three scheduled sessions during the event. Two of these sessions included dinner.

Registrations

1,359 total registrations were recorded for the 2023 Biennial Mission Summit

- 1,221 persons checked in to the event. This includes onsite participants and online participants.
- Approximately 100 persons registered onsite during the event.

- A total of 424 Delegates were registered for the biennial.
- Several persons switched their registration from a Participant to a Delegate onsite. A few persons changed from a Participant to an Engage Participant onsite as well.
- 172 Local Arrangements Committee volunteers registered to provide assistance throughout the event. This is the largest group of volunteers in recent events.
- Jeremy Fackenthal brought in 5 persons to serve as the onsite Tech Team and Stage Crew.
- There were 31 persons who registered as Worship Band or Choir members.
- ABHMS registered 49 Board/Staff and 13 Invited Guests.
- ABWM had 3 registrants.
- IM had 43 personnel register.
- MMBB registered 30 Board/Staff and 1 Invited Guest.
- There were 77 Engage registrations at the conclusion of the event.
- Event participants registered 147 Guests for the biennial. These Guests were able to attend Worship, purchase meal tickets, and visit the Exhibit Hall but could not participate in workshops or select/attend any of the session which occurred on Thursday or Friday prior to the Welcome Session.
- At the conclusion of the event there were 80 persons from Puerto Rico registered as full event Participants or Delegates, and 29 one day registrations.
- 28 persons registered as Online Participants.
- ABCUSA had two staff working at the Registration counters in addition to 6-8 Local Arrangement volunteers throughout the event.

See 2023 Registration data_Final.pdf, attached to this summary, for the totals of each Registration Type.

Business Session – Delegate Information

- As noted above, there were 424 Delegates registered for the event.
- These Delegates represented 231 Cooperating Churches as recorded by the Church PIN numbers entered during the registration process.
- 27 Regions sent Delegate representatives to the biennial; 23 Regional Executive Ministers registered for the event.
- The Cvent Events App Polling feature was used to vote on each of the motions presented during the Business elements. Back up voting cards were distributed to all Delegates in the event the platform was not working. If the Cvent App is used in the future for the voting process, adjustments need to be made to the script to provide more instructions for those using the voting cards instead of the App to include time for those voting in favor and against the motion.
- Poll results for the motions are:
 - Friday Evening Worship session: Poll #1 – Yes: 205; No: 2
 - Poll #2 – Yes: 184; No: 1
 - Business Session: Poll #1 – Yes: 218; No: 25
 - Poll #2 – Yes: 223; No: 4
 - Poll #3 – Yes: 214; No: 5
 - Poll #4 – Yes: 229; No: 13
 - Poll #5 – Yes: 203; No: 1

New Features/Options and Observations

Several new features and ideas were added this year.

- For the first time we offered a few meal options for attendees that did not include programming. Grab & Go breakfasts were made available to attendees Friday through Sunday morning, along with a Sunday night dinner on the terrace. These helped provide

\$40,000+ in F&B for the event and offered different options for attendees. All were well received with 200-250 breakfasts purchased each day and capacity reached of 350 for the Sunday dinner.

- I suggest we consider doing this each year when there aren't affordable options at the event hotels or in the local area. This added significantly to our F&B minimum as well. We were fortunate to have the Outdoor Terrace available to us for the entire event which offered a pleasant location and view.
- We used the Cvent On Arrival platform which allowed attendees to check-in using an iPad on site. This expedited the process at the registration counters allowing us to use less volunteers and provide quicker service. When attendees checked in using a kiosk, their name badge printed and featured a QR code as well as a list of all sessions/meals purchased. The QR code served as attendee's meal tickets for the event.
 - This was very well received by attendees. It was a significant improvement in the check-in and onsite registration processes. Reducing the number of volunteers needed also helped to reduce the amount of training needed each day as there was less rotation of volunteer staff.
 - Including an onsite Cvent staff person in the agreement was a huge benefit. Having staff available to troubleshoot issues, correct problems and manage the equipment is highly recommended if we use the equipment again.
 - In the past we produced paper meal tickets for each meal for every person. Utilizing the QR code saved several days of staff time which would have been spent producing meal tickets, sorting and creating a packet for every individual.
- Session Scanners were part of the On Arrival contract. These were used to scan the QR code on the name badge to permit entry into the meal events. The QR code automatically updated if a person added a meal to their registration at any time during the event. Scanners were also able to add a meal to a person's registration at the door allowing entry and the ability for us to charge them later for the meal ticket price.
 - These scanners provided us with real-time data on the number of persons present.
 - The technology gave meal event sponsors the ability to offer Complimentary Codes to persons allowing them to sign up for meals before the event without being charged.
 - Unfortunately, there were several issues using this technology that provided the following learnings:
 - It would be very helpful to have all scanning volunteers trained at the same time providing instructions and answering questions.
 - Scanners should be in place 30 minutes prior to the start of a session. Some volunteers did not begin scanning until roughly 10 minutes before the meal event which meant there were already a number of persons seated at tables who did not have their badge scanned. This provided us with unreliable attendance data.
 - The scanners were also used for workshop sessions. Some volunteers would not permit anyone who was not previously registered to enter the workshop room. If used in the future, instructions need to be clear for volunteers. They should also be given information about the number of available seats in the meeting room for each session so they know the minimum number of unregistered persons who can enter before asking persons to stand in a waiting queue.
- Another new Cvent option we used this year was the Cvent Events App. Due to limited staff time, we were not able to fully configure the Events App. There are a few additional features and data that could be enabled if this is used again in the future. The Cvent Events App was downloaded 725 times. 25.2% of attendees logged in to the Cvent Events App.

- Attendees like the new technology and would have appreciated having room locations available on the app.
- If we were completely familiar with the features and functionality of the Events App when the build process began, we may have configured things a little differently so the App could be used to the fullest. This includes what sessions are listed for individuals – based on agenda or registration type, and whether we permit attendees to add sessions onsite.
- Voting by Delegates was done online again this year. Only Delegates had access to the Poll questions through either the Attendee Hub on Cvent Events App. Even though this was used for the 2021 Online Experience through the Attendee Hub, we had not previously used the Events App for this purpose.
 - Several persons had difficulty accessing the software. Others did not have the Polls visible to them. Many of the issues were user-related, a few who could not access the Polls were because they initially did not register as a Delegate and onsite their registration was not properly changed to Delegate through the software.
 - If this is used in the future, Delegates should have their own Wireless Access password to ensure enough bandwidth for the App to function properly and for results to generate quicker. There was a 30+ second delay between the time I launched the polls from my phone and when the first responses were received.
 - I would further recommend that Tech Support hours be planned with limited hours at the very beginning of the event and one hour prior to the start of the sessions where voting will occur. It would also be helpful to have the Tech Support person located near Registration.

A suggestion I had for Cvent was to bring all Project Managers on board at the very beginning of the build process to discuss the event and how each platform will be used. This is to ensure the event is built in such a way that it works best with the On Arrival 360 equipment including the kiosks and badges, the Events App, and the Attendee Hub. I also suggested that Cvent provide more thorough information prior to beginning a build process on the number of hours included in each agreement, how our decisions affect the process and timeline, and ensure each team member has the same understanding of this information.

Sponsors and Partnerships

This year I tried a new approach to seeking financial support from the NEC partners. Rather than ask for financial support and/or have each organization pay for their exhibit space, luncheon a/v and other items they typically purchase for the event, we offered them a Partnership Proposal that included exhibit space, audio/visual needs for the luncheons, Program Book ad space, as well as a specified number of registrations. This seemed confusing to several organizations and created questions and additional expectations from some of the partners.

Each of the Partners agreed and contributed the following amounts:

ABHMS - \$30,000

ABWM - \$4,000

IM - \$20,000

MMBB - \$30,000

- ABCUSA lost money through this Partnership Proposal as most partners received more “benefits” at this set fee than the monetary equivalent.
- More equipment was ordered for the Luncheons than in previous years.

- Several times emails were received from an ABHMS representative who wanted to know “why isn’t xxxx included with our \$30K sponsorship.” They also expected to be able to register as many persons as they wanted since they didn’t use all 30 exhibit booth spaces.

Event Sponsors include:

Iglesias Bautistas de Puerto Rico - \$20,000 event sponsor
 American Baptist Extension Corporation – \$10,000 Registration and Welcome Bag Sponsor
 American Baptist Foundation - \$5,000 Name Badge and Lanyard Sponsor
 Palmer Theological Seminary - \$5,000 Child Care and Youth Program Sponsor
 Church Mutual/Sovereign Insurance - \$5,000 Worship Sponsor
 American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago - \$2,000 Communion Sponsor

Exhibit Hall

- There were 41 exhibitors in the Exhibit Hall.
- ABHMS, MMBB and IM were each located in one of the corners of the exhibit hall.
- ABCUSA had a presence near the entrance of the exhibit hall as part of the ABCUSA Pavilion. The Pavilion included ABCUSA Office of the General Secretary along with Engage 2023, Creation Justice Network, Burma Refugee Commission, Committee on Christian Unity and Interfaith Relations, World Relief Committee and the Caucuses. The intention of having all of these ABCUSA-related and BGM-related groups together in the Pavilion was to help attendees better understand the connection between ABCUSA and these entities.
- Preferred placement was given to the other event sponsors listed above.
 - If the number of exhibitors continues to decline, the amount of space reserved for the exhibit hall should be reduced. This year there was too much blank space in the hall. Aisle widths should have been reduced and booths rearranged to reduce the overall space which would have made the space not only feel fuller, but also would reduce the carpeting cost.
 - I was disappointed that our booth was not fully staffed at all times. Several times persons approached me at the registration counter and mentioned that no one was in our booth so they could not get their biennial ribbons. Since our booth was located right inside the entrance, it was noticeable that we were not fully staffed.

Financial

This event was the first in-person biennial since the pandemic. The most noticeable changes are significant increases in costs for audio/visual equipment and staff, food and beverage charges at the convention center, and decorating costs. Through conversations we heard from each of these vendors that costs had increased 25% or more since the pandemic.

It was unfortunate that ABCUSA is not tax exempt in Puerto Rico. Their tax rate of 11.5% increased costs overall.

Through Annie Marcucci’s work with Discover Puerto Rico, ABCUSA received a \$64,500 refund from the city. This refund was based on the total number of contracted room nights used for the event. This was the maximum refund we were able to receive even though we sold more room nights than contracted.

Honorariums and stipends were given to the four Speakers, 19 workshop leaders, 9 techs and liturgical team members, and 15 band members. Travel costs and hotel accommodations were covered for the Speakers, tech and liturgical team members. Lunch and dinner were also provided for the techs, band and choir members. Parking passes were paid for volunteers, band

and choir members. Meal vouchers, in the amount of \$10, were provided to volunteers who served more than 6 hours each day. Some of these expectations were not clear at the outset. In the future I would suggest making sure everyone understands what expectations are especially with the band, choir and volunteers.

Kathy Young and I are in the final stages of preparing the invoices for all of the organizations involved in the event, and will begin to bill out these costs. A preliminary final budget will be provided as soon as this task is complete.

Respectfully submitted by Tina Kiernan, August 28, 2023.

2023 Biennial Mission Summit Registration Data

Reg Type	7/5/2023	6/17/2023	5/15/2023	4/17/2023	3/23/2023
PR Residents - Friday	10	5	5	1	1
PR Residents - Saturday	10	9	3	1	1
PR Residents - Sunday	9	3	3	0	0
Participant Online Attendee	28	28	21	Opens May 1, 2023	
Guest of	147	122	110	101	77
ABHMS & BGM Delegate guest	22	21	18	16	9
Exhibitor	57	57	49	37	26
PR Participants	40	39	20	4	2
PR Delegates	40	38	27	2	1
Participants	189	183	157	144	99
MMBB	26	26	26	17	12
MMBB Guest	1	1	1	1	1
MMBB Delegate	4	4	3	3	2
Engage Participant	51	55	49	36	22
Engage Delegate	26	19	16	13	9
IM	43	43	43	42	40
ABWM	3	3	2	1	0
ABHMS Delegate	9	8	8	8	8
ABHMS Board/Staff	40	42	40	40	39
ABHMS Invited Guest	13	13	12	10	8
ABCUSA Staff & Invited Guest	31	28	26	25	25
Event Staff	215	189	19	15	10
BGM Delegate	34	33	30	26	19
Delegates	311	287	266	230	172
TOTAL Number of Registrations	1359	1256	954	773	583
Total # Paid Registrations w/Guests	952	878	756	595	429
Total # Paid Registrations w/o Guests	805	756	646	494	352
Total # of Full Event Attendees & Staff	1162	1085	805	656	497
(Delegate)#Churches represented		238		153	
Total Delegates Registered	424	389	350	282	211
Participants registered	323	308			
PR Registrations	109	94	58	8	5
LAC Volunteers	171	158			