

## ENGAGE 2023 report

### ENGAGE 2023! Final report

Submitted by Rev. Judy Fackenthal

*Thank you:* A huge expression of gratitude from Judy and Zina! We are deeply appreciative of General Secretary, Jeff Woods and ABCUSA President, Jim Wolfe, for their support and encouragement to dream big! We also are grateful to Interim Associate General Secretary, Soozie Ford, for connecting the Co-Facilitators with the REMC as names of potential participants were sought. ENGAGE 2023! would not be possible without the support of our partners: Office of General Secretary, Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board, International Ministries, and the American Baptist Home Mission Societies! The funding and the people resourcing of the partners make ENGAGE possible! We were overwhelmed by the support and participation of many regional executive ministers! They submitted potential names and then served as facilitators during the sessions in Puerto Rico. Lastly, we are so very thankful for the ENGAGE 2023! Planning Team: Doug Avilesbernal (REMC), Mark Click (REMC), Sandra Hasenauer (REMC), Lisa Harris-Lee (ABHMS), Marc Kirchoff (IM), and Ania Norori (MMBB). Their commitment of time, energy, strategy, and creativity made ENGAGE what it was! It was our humble honor and deep joy to serve together as facilitators for ENGAGE 2023! To God be the glory!

#### *A View from Above:*

- ❖ Planning began early winter 2022 using insights from 2021 Virtual OTABL
- ❖ Co-Facilitators met bi-weekly/monthly. Planning team met monthly from early 2022 to May 2023.
- ❖ *Event name change* from Orientation to American Baptist Life (OTABL) to ENGAGE 2023! Purpose of name change-reflect a relational component; participants connecting with the broader family, denominational/partner leaders, and each other; while having an informative component through partner videos and sessions.
- ❖ *Three Word Emphasis:*
  1. *Connect- (see above)*
  2. *Equip-discovering the many ways our denomination resources ministers and local congregations. Side emphasis: ENGAGE participants have gifts and skills to share that equip and resource others within the denomination. (Mutuality is key to treating participants respectfully)*
- ❖ *Belong-through partner videos and in-person sessions, participants will begin to discern if they “belong”-feel at home-within ABCUSA.* Partner Videos-each partner was asked to provide a 15–30-minute video highlighting their organization’s mission and ministry. The following videos were provided: Office of the General Secretary, American Baptist Women’s Ministry, American Baptist Home Mission Societies, International Ministries, MMBB, and REMC. For tracking purposes, ENGAGE participants signed in for each video

viewed. Statistics reveal a *high percentage of viewership of all videos!* IM-80%, MMBB 70%, ABHMS 85%, OGS 100%, REMC 56%, ABWM (percentage not available)

❖ *In-Person Sessions:*

1. First session on Thursday, June 22 built around “connecting”-including words of welcome from President Jim Wolfe, GS-Jeff Woods, IM-Sharon Koh, ABWM-Wendy Clemmer, and MMBB-Louis Barbarin. \*\*Session included Dinner
2. Second Session on Friday, June 23 built around equipping the participants through the partners. Panel of representatives from MMBB, REMC, IM, and ABHMS. Word of welcome from Jeff Haggray-ABHMS. \*\*Session included Dinner
3. Third session on Saturday, June 24 focused on what it means to “belong” within ABCUSA. Q/A time followed. Also emphasized the role of the regions.

❖ *Partner Luncheons:*

ENGAGE participants had the opportunity to register for MMBB, IM, and ABHMS luncheons through a specific link within ENGAGE registration. This was done to assure intentionality to attend luncheons. Reminder to attend luncheons were in all communications and all sessions. Luncheon registration totals were: MMBB-53; IM-41; ABHMS-39. As of 8-2-23 luncheon report is pending.

❖ *Lodging:*

Participants were offered 4 nights free lodging *if* they shared a room with another participant; 2 nights free lodging if they selected a single room or shared with friend/spouse. All participants were responsible for lodging costs beyond what was offered.

❖ *Meals/Travel reimbursement:*

Participants received a \$90 per diem for 4 days. Current seminarians received a \$200 flight off-set refund.

NOTE: all reimbursements were dispensed following the ENGAGE event (many were requested prior to coming to ENGAGE). 45 reimbursement vouchers have been approved as of 8-2-23.

*Invitation/Registration Process:*

- ❖ Three invitation emails were sent. First in early February as biennial registration opened; a second invitation in mid-March; and a final invitation sent late April. The first invitation brought few results as the Cvent email often landed in Spam mail. The second and third invitations were sent via Bridget Lipin or Kathy Jachowski which brought many more results.

NOTE: many registrants were confused by the Cvent registration process. Some stopped because the registration page indicated no more hotel rooms. Some missed the ENGAGE registration link embedded in the invitation email; they registered for the biennial thinking they had registered for ENGAGE. \*\*Perhaps a tutorial on registration would be helpful as many of the participants seemed never to have attended an event like this.

*Suggestions for future ENGAGE/OTABL:*

- ❖ Internally, contain all ENGAGE registration/event info in one document. This document would be available to all (including ENGAGE Coordinator/Facilitator) within the abc network. Document could include: name/address/church/*region*/designate seminarians/lodging choice-including check-in and out dates/meal choices/flight info/etc..
- ❖ Adding REGION to the registration is important. Many regional execs inquired about who registered from their regions. We did not have access to this specification.
- ❖ Provide partners with 6-12 months' notice for videos.
- ❖ Pursue a streamlined version of the invitation:
  1. Send multiple times, each time highlighting a different aspect of what to expect, i.e., lodging accommodations (emphasis on cost of non-shared room); partner meal registration and attendance; reimbursement process for flight stipend (seminarians only) and meal per diem (perhaps incentivize expense voucher return, also note there are no reimbursements until post-event); viewing partner videos.
  2. Set expectation for meals and video views; perhaps incentivize financially?
  3. Tina Kiernan suggested adding a document much like a medical consent form-*Check that you have read: hotel roommate assignment, partner meal registration, viewed partner videos, meal per diem process.*
  4. Add option for spouses/partners to attend ENGAGE meals.
- ❖ Discern need for language interpretation and secure early; include in 2025 budget!
- ❖ Pre-event Zoom call setting expectations-explaining what ENGAGE is about and some of the above-mentioned items. NOTE: we did this with fair attendance. Perhaps require and provide multiple time options.
- ❖ Do a **one-day** ENGAGE event during the week prior to the biennial. This would require commitment from partners and REMC to be present for a portion of the day. A one-day event provides more relational time, does not compete with biennial programming (as our Saturday morning session did), and would allow for deeper conversations and more Q/A.
- ❖ Begin ENGAGE (also do in Zoom call) with *Grounding Principles for Conversation-based on Shurden's **Four Fragile Freedoms or Respectful Guidelines***.
- ❖ **Invite ENGAGE Coordinator onto Biennial Planning Team**-this increases awareness of ENGAGE and where schedule blips might occur. ENGAGE was a highly significant part of the 2023 biennial gathering. Having the Coordinator present on the planning process would be helpful to all.
- ❖ Pursue AMOs and Caucuses in participating with ENGAGE. This would be easier (depending on scheduling) if ENGAGE was a one-day event.
- ❖ Caucuses could also be a resource for potential participant names; filtering such names through REMs so they are aware of their region's participants.
- ❖ ALWAYS remind REMC how vital their role is in the success of any event of this kind. They are the link for names and the link for follow-up. Of the survey comments, ENGAGE

participants were grateful for REMs in the room who answered questions and provided support.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to lead ENGAGE 2023! I (Judy) am ready to hand this off to another very capable person. I would be willing to serve as a consultant for 2025.

I conclude with my observation that the ENGAGE 2023! participants demonstrated tremendous wisdom, enthusiasm, and commitment to ABCUSA! They are leaders now and for our future. I believe they will lead as the hands and feet of Christ with the creativity and vision that is needed to share holy love, hope, and just possibilities in the now and future circumstances of God's realm on earth.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Judy Fackenthal, Co-Facilitator ENGAGE 2023!