

Report to the Board of General Ministries from the Special Director to International Ministries – November 2023

The Board of International Ministries (IM) has met twice since my last report, in June and September of this year. We met in San Juan, Puerto Rico and also in San Francisco, California.

San Juan:

We congratulated Rev. Dr. Sharon Koh, on completing her doctorate. Also, Sharon will be on sabbatical after the September Board meeting for 3 months – traveling to China with her father for relaxation and renewal. Sharon has been the CEO of International Ministries for 7 years.

David and Joyce Reed blessed the Board by sharing about their ministry journey over the past 24 years, focusing on their current roles as Global Coordinators for Spiritual Care and sharing from 2 Corinthians 4:8-9.

American Baptist Foundation (ABF) Board of Directors Nominee – affirmative action taken to ratify the Executive Committee's June 16, 2023 approval of Rev. Dr. Alan V. Ragland as a nominee for the American Baptist Foundation Board of Directors.

On May 21st Eric & Yuree Lembke were commissioned as IM global servants to work at the Kawthoolei Karen Baptist Bible School & College located in Mae La Refugee Camp near Mae Sot, Thailand.

IM Officers emailed IM Board Directors asking them to engage with American Baptist Women's Ministries (ABWM) due to possible bylaw changes that would directly impact IM. An email was received from ABWM leadership disapproving of IM's email. In response to the emails, the leadership of both IM and ABWM are planning to meet and discuss further.

From San Francisco: A meeting was held with ABWM and IM to discuss concerns. According to IM President Jorge Medero-Roldán, this matter has been settled.

Treasurer's Report - Paul Vick

2022 – 2023 Budget Performance through April 30, 2023

IM's unrestricted operating performance through April 30, 2023 exceeds budget projections by \$279K attributed in large measure by operational expenditures coming in under budget by \$607K while revenue is short of budget projections by \$328K.

Chief Strategy Officer's Report - Katie Boatwright

Katie overviewed the "Blue Ocean Strategy" and "Red Ocean Strategy" as it relates to finding new and adequate funding sources for IM.

Strategies to compete with other organizations, such as IM, leads to many organizations competing for the same resources. Blue Ocean is a concept where an organization identifies

what their strengths and competencies are, as well as what are the problems that we can address and pain points that we can eliminate in a market where no one else is operating. Thereby you create a market where competition for resources is irrelevant.

Red Ocean Symptoms at IM include centralized fundraising model untenable; some global servants experience difficulty with personalized funding model; church closures; ABF partnership challenges; ABWM proposed by-law changes; donations diverted away from IM processes, direct to GS; and churches employing to bi-vocational pastors.

While looking at charting the course ahead and taking into consideration the reality that we have very little / no control over the external factors that impact us, the Blue Ocean concept is how we move forward. The Blue Ocean possibilities for IM are about managing the tension between the current resources and maximizing our effectiveness with our current resources as well as creating new income streams.

Mission Finance Committee (FC) Report - Joe Zepeda

For the first seven months of the year the unrestricted revenue is running behind plan by \$327K – which represents 4% of the YTD revenue budget. The organization has done a masterful job of keeping the lid on the unrestricted expenses which is allowing us to be \$600K under planned budget for this time period. Overall, we are running a \$278K surplus for unrestricted funds for the first seven months of the budget year. We are in a good position, and we should continue to celebrate God's blessings.

Innovative and Strategic Opportunities Committee Report - Ivan Greuter

Ivan shared the ways the US has changed in the past 10 years:

1. Tech use has become the norm, from smartphones to social media.
2. Social media is now a key pathway to news for Americans. In 2018, for the first time, social media sites surpassed print newspapers as a news source for Americans.
3. Millennials have surpassed Generation Xers as the largest generation in the US labor force. This fact is strategically important to IM since this is the growing pool of next-generation philanthropy, with old millennials representing less than 12% of our denominational membership.
4. Non-whites now account for the majority of the nation's newborns, as well as the majority of K-12 students in public schools, while the racial and ethnic composition among members of the American Baptist Churches USA who identify as...non-white was 27% (73% white, non-Hispanic).
5. It's become more common for Americans to attend church a few times a year or less (54%) than monthly or more (45%). Since the COVID pandemic, the rate of decline has continued, with the latest report stating, "The share of US adults who say they generally attend religious services once a month or more has dropped slightly, from 33% in 2019 to 30% in 2022."

And we cannot forget the previously reported transfer of intergenerational assets and charitable estate giving in what the New York Times calls “The Greatest Wealth Transfer in History Is Here...”. These sweeping shifts in our social and religious landscapes, along with the acceleration of artificial intelligence (AI) technology and realignment of creative, collaborative partnerships, present IM with an overwhelming opportunity for optimistic faith and organizational innovation because we serve the Great King of the Universe, whose people confess: “You rule the swelling of the sea; When its waves rise, You still them” (Psalm 88:9).

Global Servants Compensation Working Group had met and worked on these points:

1. Feasibility of ‘continuing to close the gap’ between global servants’ base compensation and median compensation for fulltime American Baptist pastors.
2. Evaluation of whether the reference point for global servant base compensation should be 100% of MMBB median figure for fulltime American Baptist pastors.

A motion was made and seconded – passed by the Board concerning the above:

- IM remain with our current base compensation benchmark until other issues related to the personalized support model (grants, allowances, overall fundraising goals) are addressed. It was recognized that grants/allowances related to US/PR assignment have presented challenges for many global servants.
- IM’s Board President form a committee of the corporation to evaluate the personalized funding model, global servants’ requests for modification, and organizational constraints. It is further recommended that this committee of the corporation report to the Board their recommendations for modifications to the personalized funding model.
- It was recognized that disparities in IM’s current compensation practices, which impact IM’s newest global servants, will continue until a new group is formed to re-evaluate all aspects of the personalized funding model.

San Francisco:

We started the meetings with an inspirational devotion time led by global servants Alise and Mark Juanes who shared some of their profound testimonies experienced at the House of Love in Thailand.

We were also deeply moved by the experiences shared by retired global servants Rita and Glen Chapman and Mike Lowry in their ministries in Democratic Republic of Congo at their retirement dinner the previous evening. I was honored to be able to share in this time with these devoted servants. Thank you, Chapmans and Lowry, for fighting the good fight!

As a Christian mission organization devoted to the vision of life “on earth as it is in heaven,” we are committed to the well-being of children, who Jesus welcomed and received as models of all who would enter His kingdom. To this end, the Board approved a Child Safety Protection Policy. This comprehensive document was the product of many, many hours of work by the IM staff and led by IM Associate Executive Director, Jim Bell.

We also received the final report of Recommendations for the Implementation of the IM Board Resolution on Racial Justice from the Racial Justice Committee, chaired by Chuck Shawver. This is a step toward putting in action the resolution approved in November 2020. Now work on the recommendations will be moving forward in 2023 and beyond. There was discussion on what might be the first steps in this work. I brought to the Board's attention the book the BGM is using *"Building Lasting Bridges – An Updated Handbook for Intercultural Ministries"* and the work Katie Choy-Wong is doing with the BGM. I encouraged those on IM committee to read this book and to reach out to Katie, as appropriate. This could be an opportunity for collaboration between BGM and IM efforts to work toward common goals.

Finally, we approved a balanced budget in our effort to maintain the long-term sustainability of this ministry. These efforts were also complemented by opportunities being considered and evaluated to strengthen IM's sustainability.

This was a very fruitful and valuable meeting to me. I learned *so much* about the work of IM.

Outside of the scheduled board meeting times:

- I was able to make several connections to become much better acquainted with other Board members. I had dinner with Paul Vick, IM Treasurer, Thursday evening prior to the Board meetings. Paul shared with me his faith story and provided me a copy of his book *"Where the Cotton Grows"*. What a legacy! I highly encourage the Board to read this book!
- I was able to discuss a possible mission trip to Nicaragua in early 2025 and have 3 Board members that want to participate. The work would be to assist AMOS Health and Hope.
- I was also able to discuss ways with Katie Boatwright that I could offer my work experience in IT to assist staff efforts for possible new income opportunities (Blue Ocean).

It is an honor and privilege to serve as the BGM representative to the IM Board.

Bruce Van Der Beek
BGM representative to International Ministries