



**BOARD OF GENERAL MINISTRIES
KING OF PRUSSIA, PA
NOVEMBER 3-5, 2023
MINUTES**

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

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

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

Prior to the start of the November 2023 Board of General Ministries Meeting, an appreciation celebration was held on November 3, honoring Dr. C. Jeff Woods for his ministry and service as the American Baptist Churches USA General Secretary.

Throughout the meetings of the Board of General Ministries, Chaplain Cedric Jones lit the candle representing Christ's presence while leading devotions and worship. Special music was provided by guitarists Matt Toupin, and Kurt Kaufman and accompanied by singers from the board.

BGM 627 CALL TO ORDER

American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA) President Jim Wolfe welcomed all of the Board of General Ministries (BGM) directors and staff, calling the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m. on Saturday, November 4, 2023.

BGM 628 CONSENT AGENDA

By voice vote, the BGM approved by general consent the Minutes of the Board of General Ministries June 20-22, 2023 in San Juan, PR and to receive the designated reports on the agenda.

Reports from this meeting are included with the filing of the minutes. Not all items from the agenda are listed here in the minutes. Motions and additional notes not included in the reports are noted in these minutes.

BGM 629 RECESS BGM/CONVENE AMERICAN BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

By voice vote, the BGM approved the minutes of the last meeting of the American Baptist Historical Society in June 2023.

By voice vote, the BGM approved to elect the following nominated to the Board of Managers of the American Baptist Historical Society class of 2027 as recommended by the Board of Managers of the American Baptist Historical Society: Bill Frederickson (3rd term), Josué Gómez-Menéndez (2nd term), Dennis Johnson (2nd term), Jim Napolitan (2nd term), Laura Austin (1st term), Douglas Hill (1st term), and Jeff Jones (1st term).

By voice vote, the BGM approved to elect the following names to the voting membership of the American Baptist Historical Society as recommended by the ABHS Nominating Committee

2024-2025 Officers

Richard Swindle - President

Felipe Candelaria - Vice President

Mitch Homma - Secretary

Melva Gray - Treasurer

BGM 630 EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Board of General Ministries met in Executive Session and voted to elect Rev. Dr. Gina Jacobs-Strain as ABCUSA General Secretary. Minutes, including actions during this session, are sealed in a confidential envelope, and attached to the official copy of the minutes filed in the General Secretary's office.

BGM 631 REPORT FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

General Secretary Jeff Woods gave an update since the last board meeting in June 2023. Jeff reflected on his years of service, saying in his report, "American Baptists have had many adventurous leaders. It is time for the next one. John Naisbitt once wrote that 'followers create leaders,' rather than leaders creating followers. I happen to think that it is both. Followers are necessary to great leaders. Soon I will be one of those followers as the next General Secretary is called. I hope that you will join me in doing our part to follow the next great ABC adventurer." More details from Jeff's report are in the "Report from the General Secretary."

BGM 632 REPORT FROM THE ABCUSA NOMINATING COMMITTEE

By voice vote Rev. Suleima Rosario-Diaz was elected as an At-Large Director for ABC of New Jersey (first term 2024-2027) as recommended by the ABCUSA Nominating Committee.

By voice vote Rev. Abraham Gross was elected as an At-Large Director for ABC of Vermont (first term 2025-2028) as recommended by the ABCUSA Nominating Committee.

BGM 633 REPORT FROM THE ABCUSA PRESIDENT

ABCUSA President Jim Wolfe referenced his report which can be found in the “Report of the ABCUSA President.” Jim thanked the General Secretary Search Committee for their hard work.

BGM 634 AMERICAN BAPTIST WOMEN’S MINISTRIES

In November 2022, American Baptist Women’s Ministries (ABWM) presented a proposal to ABCUSA to become a principal channel for distribution of One Great Hour of Sharing Funds through the ABCUSA World Relief Committee. A copy of this request is included in the reports. In March of 2023 the BGM Executive Committee met with ABWM Executive Gina Jacobs-Strain and ABWM President Chris Smith and during this conversation it became apparent that ABWM had larger concerns regarding the future role of ABWM in the denomination. From the conversation, the BGM Executive Committee decided to recommend to the BGM that ABWM become a national board.

According to the current ABCUSA bylaws, there are three national boards and two of these national boards are program boards. This proposal to the BGM recommends that ABWM and MMBB become national boards along with ABHMS and IM and recommends abolishing the distinction of a national program board, recognizing that all four of these boards are engaged in national programming among the American Baptist constituency.

In order for the BGM to have input and prepare for a vote on this decision, the BGM Executive Committee is proposing that a BGM working group be formed to discuss the relevant ideas and implications related to this decision. During the BGM meeting, BGM directors formed table groups to share their hopes, concerns, and questions regarding the proposed action of ABWM becoming an ABCUSA national board. The notes taken in the groups will be shared at the June 2024 BGM meeting.

BGM 635 REPORT OF THE BUDGET REVIEW OFFICER

Budget Review Officer Paul Higgins referred to the financial report prepared by Alan Musoke, highlighted in the year-to-date financial report as of September 30, 2023 and included in the written report prepared by Alan Musoke, Associate General Secretary for Finance/CFO/Treasurer.

By voice vote, the Board of General Ministries approved the recommendation of the ABCUSA Finance Committee of the proposed United Mission distribution for 2024 reflecting a 4.5% decrease in United Mission giving.

Paul went on to share the proposed 2024 ABCUSA Budget.

By voice vote, the Board of General Ministries approved the recommendation of the BGM Finance Committee to adopt the proposed 2024 American Baptist Mission Support Estimated Income and ABCUSA budget as presented.

The proposed 2024 budget and the financial report are both included with the minutes.

BGM 636 CREDENTIALS & CAUCUS COMMITTEE

Michelle Nickens, Chair, shared figures from the *Report of Changed Relationships of Local Churches*. By voice vote, the Report of Changed Relationships of Local Churches (1205.1:11/23) was accepted as recommended by the Credentials and Caucus Committee.

BGM 637 PRESIDENT’S NOMINATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS: 2024-2025

Presidential Nominations:

President Jim Wolfe, following prior consultation with President-Elect Nikita McCalister, presented to the BGM for action the 2024-2025 Presidential Nominations.

- By voice vote, the BGM approved to elect Tamara Scott and Cedric Jones to serve as members on the BGM Executive Committee.
- By voice vote, the BGM approved to elect Chakravarthy Zadda to serve as Chair of the Committee on Christian Unity and Interfaith Relations.
- By voice vote, the BGM approved to elect Katherine Hsiao to serve on the Standing Rules Committee.
- By voice vote, the BGM approved to elect Kathryn Ray as BGM Special Director to the ABHMS Board.
- By voice vote, the BGM approved to elect Bruce Van Der Beek as BGM Special Director to the IM Board.
- By voice vote, the BGM approved to elect Matt Toupin as BGM Special Director to the MMBB Board.

Presidential Appointments

President Jim Wolfe, in consultation with President-Elect Nikita McCalister, presented to BGM for action the 2024-2025 Presidential Appointments.

- By voice vote, the BGM confirmed the appointments of Kathryn Ray, Emmett Dunn, Daryl Ward, Noemi-Nunez-Sanchez, Shawna Simmons, and Kurt Kaufman to serve on the ABCUSA Nominating Committee.
- By voice vote, the BGM confirmed the appointments of Orin Clinger, Cedric Jones, Thomas Gilmore, Noemi Nunez Sanchez, and Tom Ross to serve on the Finance Committee.
- By voice vote, the BGM confirmed the appointments of John Campbell (Chair) and Merle McJunkin (Vice Chair) of the Biennial Mission Summit Planning Team.
- By voice vote, the BGM confirmed the appointment of Tom Ross as Chair of the Credentials and Caucus Committee.

BGM 638 MISSION RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (MRD)

Robin Stoops gave an update on MRD saying that “Mission is at the heart of what we do,” which will be the theme of the new “ABCUSA Sundays” emphasis. Robin also talked about the new “UM Matters” quarterly newsletter on discipleship and giving with articles from region ministers. For more information on MRD, see Robin Stoops update included with the reports.

BGM 639 RECOGNITION OF RETIRING DIRECTORS

ABCUSA President Jim Wolfe and ABCUSA General Secretary Jeff Woods recognized Raimundo Barreto, Michelle Nickens, and Karen Podsiadly by presenting each a certificate and book.

BGM 640 SPECIAL GUEST KATHRYN CHOY-WONG

The BGM Executive Committee is committed to praying, reflecting, and reading texts related to anti-racism. As part of the next steps in working on exploring ways to model and lead the BGM to do the same work, Kathryn Choy-Wong was invited again to help the board begin with that journey. Kathryn Choy-Wong is a consultant, trainer, and writer in Intercultural Ministries. In her presentation, Kathryn

referenced her recently published book for Judson Press, “Building Lasting Bridges: An Updated Handbook for Intercultural Ministries” and an online workbook to accompany the handbook.

BGM 641 ACTION GROUP REPORTS

The BGM Finance Committee, Becoming a Beloved Community, Christian Unity & Interfaith Relations, and the Communicating ABC Identity Actions Groups all met and shared updates. The Becoming a Beloved Community Action Group made the following requests for the June Board meeting in Green Lake:

1. At the start of the board meetings, have new people introduced and then have planned exercises to meet others 15-20 minutes in the beginning of the sessions.
2. Include the Becoming a Beloved Community in the new members orientation to do a “spot.”
3. Connect the mentors sooner with the new director before the meetings.
4. Give guidance for the mentors to make the experience better.
5. Cut out a block of time for opportunity to do some fun activities while at Green Lake.

BGM 642 CLOSING WORSHIP AND ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned and Cedric Jones led a closing worship with communion.

Submitted by,



Dr. C. Jeff Woods
General Secretary

CJW/kj

Documents attached

BGM Minutes – June 2023 (1001:06/23)
BGM Proposed Agenda (1102:11/23)
Integrated Schedule- November 2023
BGM Executive Committee Minutes: September 2023 (1002:09/23)
BGM Executive Committee Minutes: June 2023 (1002:06/23)
Reports from ABCUSA OGS and AMOs
Burma Refugee Commission Report
Report from Special Director to MMBB
Report from Special Director to American Baptist Home Mission Societies
Report from Special Director to International Ministries
Report from the General Secretary November 2023
Report from the ABCUSA President November 2023
ABCUSA Financial Report as of September 30, 2023
ABCUSA Proposed 2024 Budget
Report of Changed Relationships of Local Churches November 2023
World Relief Committee Report to the BGM
BGM Action Groups – November 2023
American Baptist Historical Society Update
ABWM Proposal to BGM
2023 Biennial Mission Summit Survey