

Report of the General Secretary – June 2024

On February 1, I began to serve as the General Secretary of American Baptist Churches USA. The ABCUSA staff greeted me warmly and planned a wonderful reception for my first day in the office. I have also received welcoming notes and flowers from regional, national and ecumenical partners. I am gaining a deeper understanding of the staff as I met with all staff members individually, enabling them to share the specifics of their day-to-day responsibilities, likes and dislikes, growth interest, their impact on ABCUSA's mission and purposefulness in their contributions, and lastly desired professional development. I completed these conversations in April. I continue to review the budget with Alan Musoke to gain insight into the budget process and the assumptions used to build the annual budget.

Staff Development:

- Met with ABCUSA staff; beginning to find common threads and themes that undergird success, as well as areas that need improvement. Looking to enhance the application of corporate values. It was wonderful to have this 1-1 time with staff, with each meeting lasting 2-3 hours. Also assessing need for new staff.
- Implementing professional development for staff that have assumed increased responsibilities and needed to enhance their skills to be effective with new responsibilities.
- Held Employee Appreciation Day, ABCUSA staff (2/29)
- Held Staff Professional Development event, Guest speaker Rebecca Irwin-Diehl, PhD. Director, ABHMS Continuous Learning Center (3/4)
- Hired new staff, with the support of staff committees. (5/24)
- Created an onboarding process for new staff and existing staff as well as a buddy system for new staff (5/24).
- Working with HR-director and managers to update job descriptions, performance reviews and vacation schedules.
- Staff recognition (6/24)
- Leadership Retreat (9/24)

Biennial/Omaha Nebraska 2025:

- ❖ Continuing Biennial meetings and discussed successful implementation, timeframes, partner input, site visits and communication. We have established regular meetings for all committees. We have also included Alan Musoke in the budget process for both the Biennial and Engage.
- ❖ Collaborated with Mission Resource Development staff and Biennial planning team to determine the Biennial logo.
- ❖ Modifying reporting lines to improve operational and administrative efficiencies.

- ❖ Developed and implemented Young Adult Team which expanded the planning team ideas, speakers and workshop options. This initiative supports our Mission Table Priority, *Empowering Young Adults and Youth* and strengthens and enhances our relationship with our National Executive Council (NEC) partners.
- ❖ Hosted a two-day hybrid Biennial planning team meeting at ABHMS headquarters, the Leadership and Mission Building (L.A.M.B.) at no cost to ABCUSA. ABHMS provided IT as well as other staff, equipment, and space. This collaboration increased participation options and reduced costs.

New Opportunities to Deepen and Initiate Relationships and Fellowship:

- ❖ Co-hosted a CFO gathering with MMBB on 5/20, attended by CFOs from IM, MMBB, ABHMS, ABWM, ABF and OGS. ABHS and ABEC were unable to attend. CFOs are collaborating on next meeting.
- ❖ Everyday Conversations with a modified format and tenure will resume with added resources. The Theme is Harmony.
- ❖ Continuing conversations after the National Leadership Council on Mission Table Priorities. Regional Executive Ministers and national partners are invited to participate in these conversations with ABCUSA staff, 6/4-6/6.
 - Tuesday, June 4 – 11:00am-12:30pm ET – Empowering Young Adults and Youth
 - Tuesday, June 4 – 1:00pm-2:30pm ET – Peacemaking in a Culture of Violence
 - Tuesday, June 4 – 3:00pm-4:30pm ET – Mental Health
 - Wednesday, June 5 – 11:00am-12:30pm ET – Creation Care
 - Wednesday, June 5 – 2:00pm-3:30pm ET – Building the Beloved Community through Collaboration
 - Thursday, June 6 – 11:00am-12:30pm ET – Discipleship and Disciple-Making
 - Thursday, June 6 – 2:00pm-3:30pm ET – Claim, Distinguish, and Proclaim the Markers of American Baptists

Financial Condition Considerations:

- Reviewing One Great Hour of Sharing fundraising and collection process and its impact on ABCUSA financial condition and our relationship with regions, donors and NEC partners.
- Implementing new donor communication and prospect development.
- Increased donor communication from an annual “ask” to 4 communications. 2 of 5 communications executed.
- CFO & Treasurer has oversight for budget process for both the Biennial and Engage.

Fellowship and representing ABCUSA on Boards:

- 5/8-5/11 - Green Lake Board Meeting, *Wisconsin*
- 4/30 & 5/7 - ABF Board Meeting, *Virtual*
- 5/15-5/17 – National Council of Churches (NCC) Board Meeting, *Washington DC*

Discipleship and Fellowship:

- 1/25, As General Secretary-Elect, shared a video with St. Luke Missionary Baptist Church to celebrate ABCUSA Sunday; Pastor is Rev. Dr. Clifford Matthews Jr. (**BGM Director**)
- 1/25, As GS-Elect, shared a prayer with the Burma Refugee Commission and Burma Advocacy Group as these two groups worked together with the Burmese Diaspora to hold a prayer service and protest in Washington D.C. on February 3 at Calvary Burmese Church, *Virtual* 1/25, As GS-Elect, participated in the Cleveland Baptist Association's Ministers Council, celebrating women in leadership within ABCUSA, *Virtual*
- 1/24, As GS-Elect, completed an Interview with Rev. Dr. Anna Piela for The Christian Citizen
- 1/26, Met with Kathy Jachowski for lunch. I expressed my gratitude for her years of service to ABCUSA, her support as I prepared to assume the role of GS, and wished her well in her new venture, *Pennsylvania*
- 2/8, Burma Advocacy Meeting; shared GS update and greeting, *Virtual*
- 2/25-3/1, Attended and presented at the MMBB Pastor Colloquium, *Florida*
- 2/8, Burma Advocacy Meeting, shared a GS update and greeting, *Virtual*
- 3/7-3/10, BGM Executive Committee Meeting, *California*
- 3/11-3/14, National Leadership Council meeting, *Florida*
- 4/4, ABCUSA Open House/American Baptist Family Reunion was well attended by all national partners, several regional and ecumenical partners. Hosted at ABCUSA headquarters, *Pennsylvania*
- Small group and one to one meeting with caucus groups, regional executive ministers and partners, mostly Pa.
- 5/5-5/6, Installation of Rev. Michael Friday, *Indiana*
- 6/11-6/15 BGM meeting, *Wisconsin*
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Collaboration with National and Regional Partners:

- ❖ 3/10-3/11, Shared a greeting & GS update at MMBB Financial Conference, *Pennsylvania*
- ❖ 3/18-3/20, Preached at Prairie Clergy Conference, *Nebraska*
- ❖ 3/18, Visited ABC -Nebraska regional office, *Nebraska*
- ❖ 3/19, Shared greetings and ABCUSA update at the WIM event, *Nebraska*
- ❖ 3/25, hosted NEC meeting and luncheon, ABCUSA headquarters, *Pennsylvania*
- ❖ 4/9-4/11, Preached at Space for Grace, American Baptist Home Mission Societies Conference (ABHMS), *Pennsylvania*
- ❖ 4/10, Informal Asian Caucus ordination celebration
- ❖ 4/11, Attended and shared greetings at the Asian Caucus Fellowship, *Pennsylvania*
- ❖ 5/1-5/2, Preached and served as a panelist, American Baptist Churches of the South Annual Meeting, *Virginia*
- ❖ 5/30, hosted NEC meeting, *Virtual*

Future Discipleship and Fellowship:

- ◇ 6/1, Journey to Wellness, Hosted by Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and Shiloh Baptist Church, *New Jersey*
- ◇ 7/7-/7-12, Baptist World Alliance Annual Gathering, *Lagos, Nigeria*
- ◇ 7/19-7/21, ABWM Women's Conference, *Virginia*
- ◇ 8/14-8/16, Asian Pastor Colloquium, hosted by MMBB, *Georgia*
- ◇ 8/18- 8/21, Latinx Pastor Colloquium, hosted by MMBB, *Georgia*
- ◇ 8/29-31, Mission Day, Iglesias Bautistas de Puerto Rico region, *-Puerto Rico*
- ◇ 9/8, Mt Calvary Baptist Church, *Maryland*
- ◇ 9/26-9/27, Massachusetts Baptist Multicultural Ministries, Thriving Pastoral Ministry Program, *Massachusetts*
- ◇ 10/7-10/10, NCC meeting, *Tennessee*
- ◇ 10/10-10/12, ABC of Wisconsin Annual Meeting, 180th Anniversary, *Wisconsin*
- ◇ 10/13, Mt. Zion Baptist Church, *Wisconsin*
- ◇ 10/18, ABCNJ Annual Meeting, *New Jersey*
- ◇ 10/21-24, American Baptist Foundation Board Meeting, *Pennsylvania*
- ◇ 10/24-26, Green Lake Board Meeting, *Wisconsin*
- ◇ 10/27, Bethlehem Baptist Church Anniversary, *Pennsylvania*
- ◇ November (date tbd) Hale Conference, *Georgia*

Upcoming Fellowship and representing ABCUSA on Boards:

9/9 NEC

10/5-10/11 NUG and NCC, Annual Board Meeting, *Tennessee*

10/21-10/23, ABF, *Pa.*

10/24-10/26 Green Lake Board Meeting

Professional Development

I am reading *In Defense of Kindness, Why It Matters, How It changes Our Loves and How It Can Save the World*, written by Bruce Reyes-Cho. Each chapter concludes with an exercise, reflection and addresses the importance of kindness and hospitality as an intentional act and asset in building genuine relationships. I will share some of the exercises with the staff over the next few months.