
PRIVILEGED AND CONFIDENTIAL
ATTORNEY-CLIENT MEMORANDUM

TO: The Rev. Dr. Gina Jacobs-Strain, General Secretary, ABCUSA
The Rev. Nikita McCalister, President, ABCUSA
FROM: David T. Ball, Esq.
SUBJECT: One Great Hour of Sharing Policy and Practice
DATE: November 1, 2024

Section 11 of the World Relief Committee's Policy Manual sets forth the Financial Procedures applicable to receipt of One Great Hour of Sharing offerings. Section 11.1 establishes the general rule: "All undesignated One Great Hour of Sharing offerings should be sent through normal American Baptist Mission giving channels." Section 11.1 then specifies what "normal American Baptist Mission giving channels" are: "Those funds are received by the Office of the General Secretary's Treasurer's Office and held in an account there."

Section 11.1 does contain an exception: "When there is a disaster of special concern to either IM or ABHMS, the relevant Board will be permitted to have funds designated for that specific disaster relief sent directly to them, as long as those funds are recorded as OGHS when received." Section 11.1 also contains an exception for Regions: "When there is a disaster within a specific Region, the Region is permitted to receipt and retain funds designated for that specific region that come from churches/individuals within their Region. The funds must be recorded as OGHS when received."

The structure of the policy is that OGHS are generally received by the OGS Treasurer's office, unless (1) "there is a disaster [singular] of special concern to either IM or ABHMS" and (2) offerings are "designated for that specific disaster relief."

It is my understanding that the current practice is out of alignment with this policy as set forth in Section 11.1. Instead of OGHS offerings occasionally being received by IM or ABHMS, OGHS offerings outside the May-June OGHS promotional window are now generally received by either IM or ABHMS, not OGS. The policy set forth in Section 11.1 has effectively been turned on its head.

Commented [DB1]: Gina and Nikita: have I described this accurately?

It appears that a misinterpretation of the policy for "Specific Designations" in WRC Policy Manual Section 11.4 has come to replace Section 11.1's provision that OGHS offerings generally are received by OGS. WRC Policy Manual Section 11.4.3 states the following with respect to OGHS offerings that are designated for a specific relief project: "Money designated for purposes within the US/Puerto Rico will be distributed to the ABHMS. Monies designated for international purposes will be distributed to IM." Section 11.4.3 does not, however, state that OGHS offerings designated for specific purposes will be received by ABHMS or IM. Rather, it allocates how such funds are to be distributed: to either ABHMS or IM, depending on whether the purpose is domestic or international. In other words, it clarifies that OGHS offerings designated for an international purpose should not be distributed to ABHMS – and vice versa. Such offerings should still be received by OGS in compliance with Section 11.1 before being distributed by OGS to either ABHMS or IM. And again, this process would only apply to offerings that are designated for a specific relief project.

As a result of this inversion of Section 11.1, OGS does not directly receive donor information for those offerings received by IM or ABHMS. This is not a problem with respect to ABHMS because it routinely shares that information with OGS. IM, however, has not been sharing that information.

The Common Budget Covenant provides, “The sharing of donor names is encouraged.” (Section VI.D). That section provides further, “Partners to the Budget Covenant and others in the denomination involved in fund raising for mission will come together periodically to discuss potential donors, the discipline of cultivating contacts, how to best enhance relationships and how to coordinate fund raising efforts.”

The current practices with respect to receipt of OGHS offerings are out of alignment with the World Relief Committee Policy Manual and at odds with Section VI.D of the Common Budget Covenant. My recommendation is for the current practice to be reformed to align with the WRC Policy Manual. OGHS offerings would generally be received by OGS rather than IM or ABHMS, with the result that lack of donor sharing around OGHS will be far less of a concern. On occasion (not generally), (1) “when there is a disaster of special concern to either IM or ABHMS,” and (2) when funds are “designated for that specific disaster relief,” those funds will be sent directly to IM or ABHMS. Otherwise, as Section 11.4.3 provides, even when OGHS offerings are designated for specific relief projects, generally OGS should first receive those offerings and then distribute the funds to IM or ABHMS. Finally, even in the occasional instances when OGHS offerings “are of special concern to either IM or ABHMS,” and those boards receive the donations directly,

the donor information should be shared by IM and ABHMS with OGS in conformity with
Common Budget Covenant Section VI.D.

Respectfully submitted,

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