

Report to the Board of General Ministries from the Special Director to International Ministries – November 2024

The Board of International Ministries (IM) of the American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA) met June 21-22, 2024, in Atlanta, Ga. and September 13-14, 2024, in King of Prussia, Pa.

June 2024 meetings:

In June, for 2 days prior to our meeting dates, we had the opportunity to visit the American Baptist Historical Society in Atlanta, Ga. and the Legacy Museum in Montgomery, Al.

On the first day we had a deep dive to our roots where our mission Movement started in 1814. Interestingly, this movement faced opposition even from church members opposed to supporting missionaries taking resources from local churches to support missions. Celebrating IM's 210th anniversary this year constitutes a testimony that God will always continue to lead the Great Commission even when obstacles come within the family.

On the second day prior to the meetings, we visited The Legacy Museum, The National Memorial for Peace and Justice, and The Freedom Monument Sculpture Park. Those visits were a hard, deep and sad look to a past where black people and other people of color suffered death and persecution that stemmed from a flawed "righteous vision" of oppression toward them and a shameful understanding that people are not equal simply because of the color of their skin. Did you know that an estimated 2 million enslaved people died in the Atlantic Ocean while sailing from Africa to the Americas? It was painful and hurtful remembering the Black Americans who were enslaved, terrorized by lynching, humiliated by racial segregation, and presumed guilty and dangerous. The day was tough emotionally but provided an education for all the IM Board to past historical events in the South.

On the first day of the meeting devotions were led by Board director and chair of the Equity and Justice Committee, Dezo Schreiner who challenged us to do the hard work in contrast to the hard work done by the African Americans. On the second day, we were honored participating at devotions led by global servants Amanda and Jon Good with a reflection based on Romans 1 and the relevance of "not [be] ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile." Romans 1:16.

The IM Treasurer's report summary:

IM's current operating budget performance for FY 2023-2024 remains strong with the projection of ending the fiscal year (FY) in a balanced position. The three primary revenue drivers – unrestricted general gifts, PSG income and World Mission Support, appear to be on track to come close to FY year end goals, in large measure due to the work of our Donor Advisors. Potential shortfall in revenue should be more than offset by expenditure less than budgeted.

World Relief Committee Board Report:

June, July and August are the months in which the World Relief Committee receives the donations through the One Great Hour of Sharing offering. In September the Committee will meet to review money received and set a budget. At least \$100K is kept in reserve for emergency needs. In November they meet again to consider

requests and determine disbursements. Development requests for funds come largely through International Ministries Area Directors who present projects submitted by IM Global Servants (our missionaries). Typically, only the top request from each Area Director is granted due to limited funding (currently, there are 5 - IM Area Directors). In addition, monies are also designated directly for emergency relief for responses to war, fire, flooding, earthquakes and other disasters.

This Board meeting approved the following motions:

1. IM Endowment Initiative for the 4th Quarter of Fiscal Year 2024 to provide additional funding for the purpose of maximizing IM's ability to secure endowed gifts to IM.
2. IM Board Resolution on the Retainer Rate for Undesignated Bequests and Estate Gifts to Promote the Sustainable and Responsible Growth of the IM Endowment.
3. Approve contracting Perception Strategies LLC and the required funding required to work as a consulting firm for the implementation of the IM Board Resolution on Racial Justice.

September 2024 IM meetings:

Global Servant Barbara Bolick led us in a devotion about her work using Mark 5:22-42. Barb manages and directs the Talita Cumi Girls' Clubs (TCGC) in Costa Rica focusing her ministry on girls' discipleship and education. She spoke about how her work has changed a dangerous area into a community who trusts and cares about the work she does with girls. TCGC, along with partners in Latin America, provide mentor training, materials, and ongoing support.

The IM All Staff Gathering celebration was held in Denver, CO. on July 8-12, 2024. This event happens every 10 years. The IM staff, Global Servants and a handful of Board directors were gathered at Crossroads Church in Denver, CO. The focus of the gathering was on unity and community, and both were improved upon. The event came in \$80k under budget because of two things: 1) The generosity of many donors who helped make the event possible; and 2) The decision-making on the part of IM staff and the Crossroads' hosts to cut costs and offer various parts of the event up for sponsorship. For example, the ABCRM region hosted the ice cream social evening. It was a joyful time to worship together and see firsthand the Global Servants discussing, from their own perspective, their experiences and vision of the past, present, and future of IM.

IM staff will be reading over the gathered input over the next few months and will be trusting that God's continued guidance for the future steps for IM will emerge from the community's discernment.

The role of the OGHS offering and its significance to the work of International Ministries was discussed. Concern was expressed over possible changes to the historical reason (world relief) for this annual offering.

FY 2024-2025 Budget:

A balanced budget for FY 2024-2025 is being reviewed by the IM Finance committee. To balance the budget, draws on IM assets of \$488,750, in addition to the 4% draw on the average market value of IM' "endowment" over the trailing 60 months, will be required.

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*