

BGM Item

Board of General Ministries Reports: Special Directors

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Special Directors**

**Regional Ministries Report to the BGM from Jeff Woods
Activity Highlights from July 1 to November 15, 2024**

Search Committees and Orientations for New Executive Ministers

- ABC of Vermont-New Hampshire completed its search process and is in the process of presenting their Executive Minister candidate to the board.
- ABC Mission Northwest is in the early stages of their search process following the retirement of Rev. Charles Revis.
- The Philadelphia Baptist Association is designing the Interim Executive Minister job description following the retirement announcement of Dr. James McJunkin.
- ABC of New York State has formed their search committee and is conducting listening sessions for their Executive Minister search following the retirement announcement of Dr. James Kelsey.
- I conducted exit interviews with Dr. James McJunkin and Dr. James Kelsey.
- I provided the charge to the region for the installation of Rev. Dr. TaNikka Sheppard.

Regional Consultations and Events

- I led a region board retreat for the ABC of Greater Indianapolis.
- I preached and led workshops at the GRR Annual Meeting.
- I participated in the Cleveland Baptist Association Annual Meeting.
- I participated in the IN-KY Annual Meeting.
- I met with the Executive Committee for PBA and the Executive Committee for NYS.
- I co-hosted 10 sessions of listening opportunities with the incoming REMC officers interviewing current Executive Ministers regarding their hopes and struggles.
- I assisted the REMC Planning Team with their continuing education event scheduled for December 10-13 in Phoenix called “Streams in the Desert.”
- I shared the results of the REMC survey looking at continuing education needs, trends, and tasks with the REMC and other groups.
- I led a seminar for region officers and leaders highlighting findings from the REMC survey.
- I held several Executive Minister consultations.

REMC Calls - Highlights of recent REMC calls include:

- A presentation from Dr. Earl Thorpe on the new “MMBB Cares Program.”
- A presentation from ABHMS Chaplaincy Director Pat Murphy regarding the newly developed 3 pathways to ABC chaplaincy endorsement.
- A presentation from ABHMS Lisa Harris-Lee and Rothangliani Chhangte on OGHS funds.
- A presentation from Jeff Woods highlighting findings from the REMC survey.
- A presentation and conversation with the ABC Ministers Council.
- A presentation on Community Health Resources from... Merle McJunkin, Suleima Rosario-Diaz, and Scott Pegues.

Professional Ministries Team

- I facilitated a meeting of the Professional Ministries Team as they explored recommended skill sets for pastors and discussed findings from the recent REMC survey.

Other Activities

- I presented professional papers at the Religious Research Association Annual Meeting and attended several helpful sessions containing new information on congregational research and trends.
- I delivered a presentation on “The 7 Elements of Harmony” during an Everyday ABC Conversation.
- I assisted Pat Hernandez with the scheduling of webinars in October.
- I participated in all 7 National Leadership Council Mission Table Conversations offering insights and research updates as well as follow-up assistance.
- I participated in a meeting with “Faith Communities Today” (FACT) to plan the distribution of a large “church attender” survey as a part of the “Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations” (EPIC) study. This is the largest national survey of congregations since the year 2000.
- I have continued to assist with ABCUSA legal issues.

Mission Resource Development (MRD) Report
By Wendy Clemmer, Director of Mission Resources Development
July-October 2024

The Office of Mission Resource Development has undergone **several transitions in 2024**:

- Rev. Dr. Robin Stoops retired as Associate General Secretary in July and now serves as Mission Resource Coordinator.
- Wendy Clemmer joined ABCUSA as the Director of MRD in mid-August.
- Sydney Foster joined the team as Social Media Ambassador in July.
- Rev. Stacy Emerson stepped down as the Stewardship Consultant to ABCUSA in September, having been involved with The Generosity Project.
- Tina M. Kiernan has taken on the role of Development Coordinator.
- Bridget Lipin is now Associate Director of Communications.
- We are currently in the process of hiring a Director of Communications, expected to be finalized in late fall.

We are strengthening our communications and outreach:

- We now have a **social media presence**! We invite you to connect with us on platforms like Facebook and Instagram. Your engagement—liking our page and posts, and sharing our content—helps us reach a wider audience and spread our message further.
 - <https://www.facebook.com/AmericanBaptistChurchesUSA>
 - <https://www.instagram.com/americanbaptist/>
- We're increasing our **email communications** to keep you informed about upcoming events and provide reminders to register.
- We're sharing inspiring stories! Visit our social media sites to watch **videos** showcasing why American Baptists support ABCUSA and United Mission.

The MRD has played a key role in the **October Webinar Series**, produced by American Baptist Women in Ministry, as well as the **Everyday ABC Conversations** focusing on Harmony. Our team has provided technology support and communications for both events. Join us for the next ABC Everyday Conversations:

- Thursday, December 5, 2024, with presenters Rev. Dr. Valerie Andrews and Rev. Dr. Jeremy Myers
- Thursday, March 20, 2025, with presenters Rev. Katherine Farley and Rev. Michelle Turek

Register now at www.abc-usa.org/events.

We continue to plan the **Biennial Mission Summit**, July 3-6, 2025, in Omaha, Nebraska! The MRD team along with the Office of Travel and Conference Planning Team have been working diligently to get registration open by November 1, 2025! Registration is now open at www.americanbaptists2025.com. Some Biennial Mission Summit highlights include:

- This year's theme, "Come Seek Living Water," promises to empower attendees to engage deeply with their faith.
- The four distinguished keynote speakers are:
 - **Rev. Dr. Gina Jacobs-Strain**, general secretary of American Baptist Churches USA
 - **Rev. Dr. TaNikka Sheppard**, regional executive minister of the Cleveland Baptist Association and general secretary for the North American Baptist Fellowship

- **Rev. Dr. Greg Mamula**, executive minister and region missionary of American Baptist Churches of Nebraska
- **Rev. Dr. Zau Sam Lahtaw**, senior pastor of the First Kachin Baptist Church of America in Omaha, Nebraska
- a vibrant "family reunion," focusing on creating meaningful connections across the generations of attendees
- engaging activities for all ages, including many activities for children, alongside workshops and discussions that inspire fellowship and spiritual growth
 - Our nursery area is specially set up for infants and toddlers up to age three, creating a fun and safe space where your little explorers can dive into a world of playful activities, laughter, and discovery.
 - Children 4-13 years old will have the opportunity to learn about God, sing together, make new friends, see the community aspect of the ABCUSA coming together, and serve others through missions.
 - A cohort-based learning community designed for middle and high school youth will emphasize learning Baptist distinctives, addressing critical faith and life topics, and building lasting relationships with fellow American Baptist youth. This will be achieved through intergenerational workshops, worship services, and shared meals.
- celebrate the July Fourth holiday with afternoon worship and a family picnic before families enjoy the spectacular Omaha Fireworks display,

In consultation with Rev. Dr. Gina Jacobs Strain, General Secretary, we submitted seven nominations for American Baptists to serve on the Trustee Committee, Members Committee, and Commissions of the **Baptist World Alliance**.

Bridget Lipin and Wendy Clemmer represented ABC's staff at the **World Relief Committee** meeting in October 2024. The Committee approved \$10,000 for the General Secretary's Pastoral Support Initiatives for fall 2024. Additionally, the Committee will vote in November for potential extra funds for 2025. American Baptist Churches requested a policy change to the World Relief Committee Manual, stipulating that all **One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) funds** be processed through American Baptist Churches, as OGHS is an ABCUSA fund. The current policy manual states:

11.0 FINANCIAL PROCEDURES

11.1 RECEIPT OF FUNDS. All undesignated One Great Hour of Sharing offerings should be sent through normal American Baptist Mission giving channels. Those funds are received by the Office of the General Secretary's Treasurer's Office and held in an account there. **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.** When there is a disaster within a specific Region, the Region is permitted to receipt and retain funds designated for that specific disaster that come from churches/individuals within their Region. The funds must be recorded as OGSH when received.

The exception was established in 2013 to allow ABHMS and IM to process OGHS donations through their websites and by check for designated projects. ABHMS has been providing details on OGHS donors to American Baptist Churches as requested. However, International Ministries shares only some donor information and is unwilling to disclose all details, which is detrimental to ABCUSA. The committee agreed that they could not vote on a policy change without knowing the legal ownership of the donor information.

American Baptist Women In Ministry (ABWIM) And Transition Ministries

Submitted by Pat Hernandez

ABWIM

Vision: ABWIM seeks the full partnership of men and women in ministry in which both women and men are able to fully utilize their God-given gifts and fully live out their God-given call.

Mission: ACCESS!

- Advocate for women in ministry
- Celebrate their gifts
- Cultivate their calls
- Educate about the biblical basis
- Share their history
- Spotlight women in ministry

Transition Ministries ABCUSA

The vision of Transition Ministries ABCUSA is to partner with regions in resourcing churches during times of transition in a way which enhances their ministry and empowers them to journey into the future as vibrant missional congregations.

Navigating through covid has presented many challenges, impacting the number of intentional interims available to serve in a variety of locations as well as the number of churches able to call full-time intentional interims. Nevertheless, we continue to live out our mission of recommending intentional interim ministers who are adept and experienced in leading churches through times of transition. These interim pastors guide the congregation on a journey that involves celebrating their history, clarifying their identity, articulating their mission, and moving into a fruitful future.

Training – Given the positive responses to an on-line training we conducted, we've been exploring further on-line as well as in-person trainings, as we continue to partner with regions in recommending intentional interim to congregations in need.

American Baptist Spiritual Direction and Formation

During Covid, we re-ignited an initiative that was begun about ten years ago as part of the Transformed by the Spirit movement. This initiative is a way for those who are involved in the ministry of spiritual direction to resource, connect and network with each other as well as to invite people into practices that ground us in God, strengthen our interconnectedness, undergird our life together and deepen our faith. The Spiritual Direction Team of Rev. Betty Wright-Riggins, Rev. Judy Fackenthal, Rev. Brad Berglund and I as staff liaison are all certified Spiritual Directors.

As part of this initiative, we are continuing to renew and refresh a website that will include resources for those seeking to deepen spiritual practices as well as for certified Spiritual Directors to connect: www.abspiritualformation.com.

Some Highlights:

- **Baptist World Alliance (BWA)** – serving on the **Commission on Racial, Gender, and Economic Justice** helped to plan two sessions and served on a panel for **Gender**

Justice: Ordination and Women exploring the theological, missional, and structural obstacles women ministers face in Baptist Life

- **North American Baptist Fellowship (NABF)** – as part of the Executive Team, planned a leaders retreat to Dialogue, Discover, Dream, and Discern the future of NABF. During the business session I was elected one of the two Vice-Presidents.
- **Church World Service (CWS)** – attended the annual meeting at which a vote was taken to change the way CWS operates to a model of “Covenant Members” to enhance engagement and increase participation
- **October Webinar series** – in honor of Domestic Violence Awareness month and Clergy Appreciation month, helped to plan a series of three webinars, two on Domestic Violence and one on Mental Health and Well-being.
- **Ministers Council** – as part of the leadership team helped to plan the Biennial meeting, “A New Thing: Our Stories, God’s Power!”
- **ABWIM Advisory Team** – We welcomed two new members this year:
Rev. Joy Martinez-Marshall, pastor of First Baptist Church of Lincoln, Nebraska, Associate Region Minister for American Baptist Churches of Nebraska, and a BGM Director!
Rev. Kwee T.L. Say, Command Chaplain in the US Navy, the first Burmese Karen to serve in this role!

In all of these ministry areas—ABWIM, Transition Ministries, and Spiritual Direction and Formation—I am thankful for the wisdom, grace, guidance, and support of our new General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Gina Jacobs-Strain, the ABCUSA Leadership Team, the ABWIM Advisory Team, and the Board of General Ministries without whom none of this could happen.

Thank-you!

**Rev. Dr. Patricia P. Hernandez, Associate General Secretary
ABWIM & Transition Ministries ABCUSA**

