

BGM Item

**Board of General Ministries Reports:
ABCUSA/OGS and
Associated Ministry Organizations**

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Rainbow Acres

Rainbow Acres continues to serve adults with developmental disabilities from our campus in central Arizona, as we have for over fifty years. By the time you read this, we will have completed our 50th Anniversary celebration with our annual Family and Friends Weekend in late October.

At the end of May, the board of our affiliate in Sedona voted to shut down operations in an orderly manner. Unfortunately, their operating model was not sustainable, though they were able to help a few young adults with autism develop their independent living skills. Rainbow Acres was asked to oversee the shutdown, ensuring all legal requirements were met.

In early July, our Board of Trustees asked me to serve as Acting President and CEO. It's been quite the adventure since then, as I juggle my previous roles along with new ones (including fundraising). One of our biggest staffing needs is in fundraising, and we've hired ThinkingAhead to help us in our search for a new Director of Advancement. If you know someone who is passionate about fundraising and would love to live near Sedona, let us know!

We're grateful for the support we continue to receive from American Baptist partners. ABHMS provided us with a grant for our life enrichment academy program. We've welcomed work groups from American Baptist congregations in Grand Junction, CO; Scottsburg, IN; Petersburg, IN; San Francisco, CA; Hanford, CA; Redlands, CA; and West Hartford, CT. We're able to serve mission groups of varying sizes, abilities, and ages. Ask Matt Toupin or Bruce Van Der Beek about their experiences here!

With such support, it was with great joy that we were able to serve our ABC family by participating in a seminar by ABHMS' Center for Continuous Learning. Jen Murphree, our Director of Admissions, presented a webinar on "Faith Formation and Neurodiversity." It's available for replay at the CCL website.

We're excited about our solar electric project. Over a decade of preparation has led to us finally having solar panels on many of our buildings, and we await our electric utility's inspection and approval to start making electricity (and saving money!) It's a large installation, about 10-15 times what a typical church would need, so the engineering and financing were a bit complex. We also had to wait for the right incentives to be in place. We would be happy to share our experiences and show how other ABC organizations and churches can use solar power to save money and help their mission dollars go further. We look forward to a call for proposals for workshops for the next Biennial Mission Summit.

Paul Higgins
Acting President & CEO

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.



November 2024

Executive Report to the Board of General Ministries, sitting as the American Baptist Historical Society
Archives

JACS

The Japanese American Confinement Sites (JACS) project has been the primary focus this year, with Project Archivist Brice Bongiovanni and Digital Collections Specialist Jenny Manasco doing most of the work for the project. The project includes digitizing materials from collections held by ABHS that relate to the experience of Japanese Americans interned during WWII and the work of Northern Baptists with them. These materials belong to the archives of the American Baptist Home Mission Society and the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society, in manuscript collections, and in the archives of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (IM).

In June, Brice and Jenny traveled to Seattle and Los Angeles to scan records for the project. In Seattle, they scanned records held at the University of Washington, including the Emery Andrews Papers and the Betty Fukuyama Papers. Records from Japanese Baptist Church completed the scanning trip to Seattle. In Los Angeles, they spent two days at Atherton Baptist Homes and two days at Gardena Valley Baptist Church scanning church records (Evergreen and GVBC) and collections brought by individuals. These collections included a scrapbook of Roy Ishihara's career as a Baptist Minister. Roy was one of the students that John Thomas' office helped enroll in college and relocate from the internment camp. There was also a scrapbook from a soldier in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, a collection of hand-carved and painted bird pins, and numerous family letters and documents.

The next phase of the JACS project is designing an online exhibit and a traveling exhibit, which will be on display at the Omaha Biennial. This project will conclude in October 2025.

NAGPRA

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) was passed by Congress in 1990. In December 2023, the Department of the Interior announced final implementation rules that went into effect in January 2024. NAGPRA mandates the repatriation of Native American human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony.

Various collections held by ABHS include items that *may* be considered cultural patrimony, most notably several feathered headdresses. Archivist Mariah Hamby has done detailed research on ABHS-held artifacts in order to compile the summary required by NAGPRA. There will be several further steps to comply with the NAGPRA process.

Ancestry.com

Since 2022 ABHS has been engaged in a collaboration with the genealogy company, Ancestry.com. The first set of records digitized, ABFMS missionary biographical files and sailing cards, are now live on the Ancestry.com website. After the agreed-upon exclusion period of three years, ABHS will be allowed to share the Ancestry-produced digital files on the ABHS website. Digitization continues on the second set of records, Original Church Records.

ABHS has received on deposit the archives from Central Baptist Theological Seminary (CBTS) in Kansas City. This represents a new model of partnership in archives preservation, and the beginning of a new revenue stream as laid out in the Strategic Plan.

Funding and Fundraising

Donations

Annual Fund donations through September total \$57,239, putting us on track to meet our year-end goal of

\$75,000. \$26,275 were designated as matching funds for the JACS project. Memorial gifts to the endowment total \$775.

Grants

Funding for the Japanese American Confinement Sites project was provided by the National Park Service.

JACS Grant Program, which required raising matching funds at a ratio of 1:2. We received a grant of

\$119,153 from NPS. In 2023, the Finance Committee designated a portion of an estate gift from Roberta Stevens to go toward the JACS grant matching funds. Added to a donation from the Brokaw Gift Fund and ABHMS, we had \$31,885 of the required \$59,577 in hand by the end of 2023. With a grant from the Wilbur Warner Fund of North Shore Baptist Church in Chicago, a gift from the American Baptist Churches of Los Angeles, the Southwest, and Hawai'i, and a few donations from individuals, ABHS matching funds now total \$67,110.

We did not receive funding on a proposal submitted to the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), "Preparing for Future Accessions by Upgrading and Increasing Collections Storage." ABHS proposed to improve and increase collections storage in our archival vaults by purchasing and installing additional storage systems.

We are revising our application in response to reviewers' comments for submission in the next grant cycle (January).

Outreach

We continue outreach to congregations and regions by means of church anniversary certificates.

Another aspect of outreach is hosting visiting groups. A group from First Baptist Church of Albany, NY, visited in February as part of their Civil Rights Tour. In April we had two groups visit: Northside Drive Baptist Church senior adult group and a group from Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church in Norcross, Georgia, who were taking a class in Baptist history. A group from Georgia Chin Baptist churches visited in May to see the exhibit on the Copes' missionary work. Members of the Board of International Ministries came for a tour of their

archives in June. In August, we welcomed the Asian American Pastors Colloquium to ABHS.

We are working to make stronger connections in the wider Atlanta community. As in recent years, ABHS was a sponsor of the DeKalb County (GA) History Center's luncheon program in honor of Black History month. I attended a retirement banquet for Rev. Dr. Douglas Stowers of Mount Calvary Baptist Church, Atlanta in April, and a presentation by the Atlanta City Council honoring former Associate General Secretary Al Brinson in May.

Administration

Kay Eland has retired after 25 years of service to ABHS. For many years Kay took care of recording donations and making sure bills got paid. In that role, she got to know many ABHS supporters and represented ABHS well. We decided to consolidate staff by moving the Financial Secretary position from King of Prussia to Atlanta. During the transition period, Executive Director Priscilla Eppinger took on bookkeeping responsibilities.

The job posting for the Financial Clerk position yielded several qualified applicants. After careful screening and interviews, we hired Gusmar Chavarría as Financial Clerk. G Chavarría began work with ABHS on September 3, 2024.

It continues to be an honor and a blessing to minister with ABHS. Respectfully submitted,

Priscilla Eppinger
Executive Director

Ministry Report

Ministers Council, ABC-USA

Submitted by Rev. Dr. Matthew Sturtevant, President

Sabbatical Support

We're thrilled to announce that a Palmer Grant has just been awarded for our partnership with New Hope Baptist Church in Denver, CO (Pastor Rev. Dr. Eugene Downing). Together, we have crafted a 2025 initiative to encourage and assist in planning context-appropriate sabbaticals and concrete shifts for "sabbath-minded" ministries. Downing and New Hope will be project leaders. This summer, we held an MC Live webinar on the topic: "God's Invitation: Sabbaticals and Sabbath-Minded Ministries"

Well-Being Hub

Results from a Spring survey told us what we already expected: the pandemic has created a lasting level of burnout, exhaustion, and compassion fatigue amongst our clergy. In an effort to help ministers find the help we need, we are releasing a resource we are calling a "Hub for Clergy Well-Being." Accessed through our website, the Hub will provide assessment tools, as well as a multitude of resources for those seeking well-being in their mental/emotional, physical, financial, or vocational lives (as well as several other dynamics.) We are inviting members to access the Hub as a way to improve their own well-being and/or to become aware of resources for their colleagues in ministry.

Affinity Groups

In our Leadership Team retreats in both 2023 and 2024, we have begun to imagine a new model for collegiality. We are grateful for the models of gathering that we currently use—namely, the large gathering of the Chapter and the small-group collegiality of Together in Ministry groups. But we know that these might yet leave some people out. We are imagining together how we might create and support groups based on *affinity*—retired clergy, clergy couples, single clergypersons, those within the first few years of ministry, or a myriad of other possibilities. We don't want to lessen support for the other two models, but the team has begun to envision new opportunities.

Covenant and Code of Ethics

We continue to encourage the use of the revised version of the Covenant and Code of Ethics, released on February 1, 2023. Jacki Belile and her team are working on a companion Learning Guide to be used in parallel with the document.

National Gatherings

By the time that BGM meets in November, we will have completed our Fall Retreat and Biennial Meeting, held at the Tuscarora Inn and Conference Center in Mt. Bethel, PA. Our speaker was teacher, preacher, and activist Kym McNair, who led us on the theme "A New Thing." Meanwhile, we are preparing to host an event at the 2025 Biennial Mission Summit and are looking forward to returning to gathering with siblings in Christ in Omaha. Of course, we continue to gather virtually every month for our MC Live webinars. Recent topics have been "Self Care, Spirituality, and God's Presence" and "How to Lead through Election Anxiety."

Transitions

At our Fall Biennial meeting (and presuming a positive vote), I will pass the gavel to Rev. Rebecca Driscoll, who will resume duties as President on Jan 1, 2025. The terms of several long-term leadership team members will end with me, and I count myself blessed to be able to serve alongside of such an amazing team these last two years!

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**



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AMERICAN BAPTIST MEN USA LAYMEN'S MINISTRY REPORT 2024

As we move toward that time that we will gather for the 2025 ABC USA Biennial, we are completing our transition from William "Bill" Morningstar administration to the new administration of Vernon A. Clement. We do have much to report and many blessings to thankful for as God continues to find a great purpose in the volunteer ministry and mission of M.E.N. (Mentoring, Evangelism, Nurturing). ABMen's Disaster Ministry was very busy in 2024.

Our year began with a Servant-Leadership Weekend in Richmond, VA at the Second Baptist Church – West End. The new president was installed during this weekend on Sunday, February 18, 2024. Our new president, Vernon A. Clement, attend the 2024 National Leadership Conference in Orlando, FL. At this gathering of ABC-USA national leaders, the needs, current conditions, along with their regional activities were discussed in various meetings. Time was, also, spent working on special policies and organizational issues. Mr. Clement took time to re-introduce ABMen-USA and connect with the regional executive ministries in attendance.

The ABMen USA Executive Committee met via Zoom for Disaster Leadership Training on May 22, 2024. We are looking for ways to get more active with national disaster volunteer agencies while maintaining our strong partnership with ABHMS disaster ministries. We were able to utilize both of our shower trailers during relief efforts for Hurricanes Helene and Milton. ABMen's Disaster Ministries sponsored several mission trips in 2024 to Kentucky, SW Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, and Florida. We are planning for continue mission trips to North Carolina and Florida especially with back-to-back hurricanes hitting almost identical paths. This provided good exposure for ABMen and spark interest from areas needing the services provided. (Showers, Laundry, and Feeding) We are actively seeking funding sources for our shower trailers as maintenance and deployment costs have risen tremendously. More information regarding the use of and needs of ABMen Shower Trailers, please contact Jack Cobb, ABMen Disaster Relief Coordinator, at (304) 206 – 8462 or jdcobb1976@gmail.com.

April through August was busy while various members of the Executive Committee participated in men's retreats, workshops and events nationwide (ABC of the Dakota's Region, Big Sky Region, West Virginia Baptist Convention, American Baptist Churches of the South [ABCOTS] Region).

In June, ABMen National President, Vernon A. Clement, represented ABMen USA by being the guest speaker at Antioch Baptist Church in Shreveport, LA Father's Day Service. Reverend Dr. Bruce C. Carroll is the senior pastor.

In August, Immediate Past President, William 'Bill' Morningstar, was the guest speaker at the ABMen- WV 100th celebration on August 3, 2024.

In October, ABMen Disaster Relief Coordinator, Jack Cobb representing ABMen USA along with ABMen of West Virginia traveled to Bakerville; Green Mountain; Lenoir; Spruce Pine; and Hendersonville, North Carolina following flooding from Hurricane Helene. The men presented these communities with much

needed emergency relief through an immediate “call” of need. The communities were very appreciative of ABMen USA’s continuing efforts of support. We were contacted specifically by a few areas that had families needing emergency assistance in repairing homes, replacing roofs, or clearing large debris from roadways so they could get back their homes for assessment. ABMen National President, Vernon A. Clement, was invited to lead ABCOTS Area III Men’s Auxiliary Meeting at Friendship Baptist Church. The small group was very attentive and energetic with excellent suggestions for them to start reaching male youths and the next generation of ABMen both now and in the future.

ABMen-USA is also happy to report that we reclaim the men of Puerto Rico back. As we had Pastor Wilfredo Mercado, president of ABMen in Puerto Rico and Reverend Dr. Edgardo Caraballo, Executive Minister for Puerto Rico to join our national board meeting in May. Dr. Caraballo and President Clement first met at the 2024 National Leadership Conference in Orlando, Florida.

ABMen USA continues to encourage volunteers to support mission opportunities at the Crow Indian Baptist Church and the Murrow Indian Children Home. These two mission projects have been long-term opportunities for our national men’s ministry in partnership with American Baptist Home Mission Society.

Vernon A. Clement
National President, ABMen USA 2024-2026

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*



Impact Report



2024

American Baptist Women's Ministries (ABWM) 2024

IMPACT SUMMARY

As we reflect on this past year, it is clear that American Baptist Women's Ministries (ABWM) continues to be guided by a legacy of profound impact and transformative change. Despite the financial challenges

we have faced, we have grown stronger and more resilient, deeply rooted in our mission and unwavering in our commitment to being bold and courageous. It is through these trials that our faith is refined, and ABWM stands as a testament to perseverance and hope.

In March, I had the privilege of transitioning from Interim Executive Director to full-time Executive Director in July, and it has been an honor to lead ABWM through this pivotal season of growth and impactful initiatives. During my interview with the ABWM board, I

shared that I lost my mother in January 2017. One of the scriptures she taught me as a young girl was Joshua 1:9, a verse that I even inscribed on my high school class ring in 2009. My mother would have celebrated her 71st birthday on July 7th, and it is especially meaningful that our ministry theme this year is "Be Strong, Be Courageous"—the very scripture that has anchored my life. I come from a long lineage of overcomers. My mother, despite her own struggles with addiction, was the first in our family to attend college, and she instilled in me the values of perseverance, strength, and faith. She will always be my Shero. Even in the face of adversity, she never gave up, and her spirit of determination is what fuels my leadership today. I know she is with me in spirit, and I dedicate this moment to her legacy.

Through her strength and faith in God, I accept this new call as Executive Director of American Baptist Women's Ministries.

Together, as a ministry, we have overcome much, and I believe we are emerging stronger than ever before. Let us continue to draw courage from our faith, just as my mother did, as we press forward—bold, strong, and united in our mission.



Rev. LaThelma Yenn-Batah

OUR VISION AND MISSION



At the heart of ABWM lies a compelling vision: to create a world that is safer, more equal, and just for women and girls. As a Christ-centered ministry, we are committed to encouraging and empowering women and girls to serve God fully and faithfully.

We believe in a future where every girl has the opportunity to grow into a confident, empowered woman, free from fear and inequality. This vision is not merely an aspiration; it is the foundation upon which all our actions and initiatives are built. By empowering women and girls, we also strengthen our churches and communities, make education and justice accessible, and pave the way for a more prosperous society.

Our mission is driven by the belief in the transformative power of faith, love, and unity. We aim to create a safer, more equal world by empowering women and girls, celebrating their contributions, and

advancing beyond the status quo to make a lasting difference. This purpose is the core of who we are as an organization.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

Successful Telethon Fundraiser

In April, our Executive Committee spearheaded a telethon fundraiser that brought in crucial funds and vital support, mobilizing our community and generating essential resources to advance our mission.

Women and Girls Conference – “Be Strong, Be Courageous”

Our Women and Girls Conference in July, themed “Be Strong, Be Courageous”, was a highlight of the year. This empowering event brought together women and girls for a time of spiritual enrichment, leadership development, and community building, reinforcing our commitment to nurturing leaders and fostering a supportive network.

This year, we are proud to have been awarded a record number of scholarships. This milestone reflects our ongoing commitment to supporting the education and development of young women and girls, empowering them

to pursue their dreams and contribute positively to their communities.

Launch of the Rudd Empowerment Center

One of the most transformative developments of 2024 is the launch of the Rudd Empowerment Center. Named in honor of ABWM’s first Executive Director, Ms. Violet E. Rudd, this Center

is envisioned as a dynamic hub for advancing leadership, empowerment, and educational opportunities for women and girls.

Mission and Programs

The Rudd Empowerment Center will build on our existing programs by providing enhanced and targeted support. It will offer leadership

retreats, ministry grants, pastoral care workshops, and mentorship initiatives, focusing on women in ministry and addressing their unique challenges. This specialized support will equip women clergy with the resources and networks needed to excel.

Global and Cross- Denominational Impact

- The Center will extend our reach beyond the American Baptist community by
- fostering cross-denominational and interfaith collaboration. This global focus will position ABW as a leading voice in broader conversations about women's leadership and empowerment, advocating for the full inclusion of women in all levels of leadership.

Professional Development and Advocacy

Through partnerships with academic institutions, the Center will offer advanced training and certificate programs, equipping women with skills to excel in their fields. Its advocacy efforts will ensure women's voices are heard and valued both within and beyond the faith community.

BUILDING ON OUR LEGACY

Despite facing financial challenges, we remain committed to our mission with boldness and courage. Our legacy is built on impactful stories and transformative change, as reflected in the testimonials of those we've supported:

Rev. Mary Bettencourt shares, The ABW has meant so much to me over the years. Here in Massachusetts, I was granted a scholarship for books during my seven(!) years at seminary as a disabled student. I have always supported ABW initiatives... ABW rocks!

Barbara Anderson reflects, ABW mentored me into leadership and showed me that I had a voice and to use that voice for women whose voice could not be heard.

These testimonials embody the impact of our work and the difference we make in the lives of women and girls.

GRATITUDE FOR OUR SUPPORTERS

We are profoundly grateful to the 458 donors who have given to ABW over the past 13 months. Your generosity and support empower us to continue our vital work and drive meaningful change. Your commitment enables us to carry forward our mission and reach even more women and girls, strengthening our collective impact.

In line with our ministry theme, "Be Bold and Courageous" (Joshua 1:9), we are inspired by your faith and generosity. Your support exemplifies the courage and

strength we strive to embody in all our endeavors. We are honored to have you as part of our community, advancing together with faith and determination.

LOOKING AHEAD

We are excited to announce upcoming enhancements, including a new and engaging website and improved programming for young adult women and girls. Our commitment to strengthening regional support through one-on-one ministry coaching will further empower our leaders and communities.

As we embrace the future, we are thrilled to welcome over 100 new supporters to our community! Their involvement signifies a collective belief in our mission and a shared commitment to advancing beyond challenges with faith and courage.

As we look to the future, we embrace our new organizational slogan: **“Faith to Advance Beyond: Women and Girls Making a Difference Together!”** This slogan encapsulates our commitment to advancing beyond the status quo and making a lasting impact through collective action and unwavering faith.

Thank you for your steadfast support as we continue to advance with courage and faith.

2024

To,
Rev. Dr. Gina Jacobs-Strain
General Secretary of ABCUSA

Re: Submitting A Report of Kachin American Baptist Association (KABA).

I'm pleased to submit the report of the Kachin American Baptist Association.

1. We thrill to participate at the Burma Advocacy Group and contributed \$5,000 to BAG.
2. KABA Women Ministry hosted the "Women Conference" in Great Salt Lake, Utah, on July 4-7, 2024. 150 women from our member churches joined together.
3. KABA supervised one Bible Institute called Ola Hanson Bible Institute (OHBI). It is affiliated with Central Baptist Theological Seminary (CBTS) since 2021. The CBTS conferred the certificate of ministry study level I & II and the Diploma in Kachin Christian Formation Degree for our Bible Institute. Sixty-eight students have recently enrolled in the third batch of the Certificate of Ministry Studies Program Level I, and 28 students have enrolled in the first batch of the Diploma Program. The third batch of the Certificate program level II and the second batch of the diploma program started in August 2024. There are 58 students enrolled in the Certificate of Ministry Studies Program Level II, and 32 students enrolled in the Second Batch of Diploma Program.
4. Minister Committee arranged the pulpit exchange program through the churches.
5. As an Executive Minister of KABA, I attended the Mini Mission Workshop led by the Mission Department of International Myanmar Baptist Fellowship held at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, Boston, Massachusetts on August 23, 2024.
6. KABA will hold its 5th Biennial General Assembly and 7th Youth Camp at Camp Copass in Denton, Texas, on December 27-30, 2024. We also will celebrate our association's tenth anniversary during this assembly. Dr. Roy Medley will be the keynote speaker of the Biennial General Assembly and the tenth-anniversary celebration service.

In Christ,


Rev. Dr. Tu Lum Lamung

Executive Minister of KABA

2024

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Executive Minister of KABA2024

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Executive Minister of KABA



Kachin American Baptist Association

American JinghpaW Wunpawng Hkalup Ninghtan Hpung
3264 Townsend Blvd., Jacksonville, FL 32277; (904) 442-5522

Office of the Executive Minister

2024

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