

Mission Table 2015: Case Statement on the Next Generation of Leaders

There is urgency in the air and on the ground! At the 2015 Mission Table, an intersection of all ABC life, the number one priority identified among a broad and deeply caring representation of American Baptists is the commitment to the next generation of leaders. The time is now for a concerted denomination-wide commitment to recruit, equip, develop, and support great leaders who are and will be in place to strengthen our American Baptist witness in the 21st century.

American Baptists have a rich heritage of church planting, congregational support, domestic and international mission, and the education of and ministry among all ages and various people groups. Specifically, strong camping ministries and youth conferences on the regional and national level nurtured the youngest among us. Intentional partnerships with historical American Baptist colleges and universities, historical Black colleges and universities, and with college ministries on a myriad of campuses allowed for continued connection with young adults. Communication with and support for American Baptist seminaries fostered an expectation for educated well-trained ministerial leaders. Consequently, the commitment to education became ABC's reputation and strength, attracting individuals and churches from other denominations.

Despite this heritage, due to factors including but not limited to finances and cultural shifts, the ABCUSA on the local, regional and national levels acknowledge and contribute to the trends of aging congregations and leaders and the diminishing numbers of younger generations. We have endured through the folding of the national board of Educational Ministries (EM), the divestment of camps, diminishing programs for youth, a growing disconnect with educational institutions, and leaking pipelines from local churches. Efforts to nurture those who are called to ministry are disjointed. Opportunities for continuing education are scattered. Clear paths for leaders are harder to find, harder to access, and harder to navigate.

We are not without hope. Many good efforts are happening throughout the ABC. With transitioning leadership in the national and regional entities the grounds are already shifting. With burning conversations at the Mission Summit and Mission Table, individuals are feeling the urgency and recognizing their role in the solutions.

Who is at risk if we miss this pregnant opportunity to seriously consider a new way to nurture our current and next generational of leaders? Local congregants, camps, colleges, universities, seminaries, regions, national boards and staff, lay leaders, networks of clergy, all expressions of our ABC family, and most certainly the communities in which we live and society-at-large all have a stake in this call.

ABC must intentionally reach into the well of experience, knowledge, and wisdom of all the stakeholders to collaboratively create a 21st century leadership model suited for our denominational family, for our communities, for this time. There are resources all around us, for we serve a God of abundance. Let us not squander God's gifts but be faithful in this divine call to leadership in, for, and through Christ.

If you would like more information and/or are ready to commit yourself and/or your organization to this priority in 2016-2017, please contact: Erika Van Brakle | ericavanbrakle@gmail.com | 708.352.2740

Appendices: A. Reflection Questions B. Current Efforts C. Ideas for Implementation
D. List of Potential Resources E. List of People from this Mission Table Group

APPENDIX A

Reflection questions to help you brainstorm how you/your church/your organization can participate in this priority:

1. What is the nature/culture of call within your church? Are children taught to be sensitive to calling?
2. Who do you identify as “leaders”? How do you identify, nurture, and support such individuals? Be concrete in your answers. How can you expand these efforts?
3. What path(s) toward leadership have you experienced or have seen others experience? What worked well and what can you do to duplicate/improve/expand those successes?
4. What are these leaders being call to?
5. How do you see churches and seminaries working with each other in this priority? How can you more intentionally and effectively do this?
6. Are the leadership models accessible to and formative for these leaders preparing them for current and emerging landscapes for ministry? Are the models relevant?
7. What experiences, knowledge and/or wisdom exist in your organization that can be shared with others to create synergy and progress around this priority?
8. What spheres of influence do you have and how can you implement something related to this priority in your own context?
9. Where is the Wind of the Spirit – in any denomination? How do we partner with those communities that are experiencing excitement in the training up of new leaders?
10. In what instances have I/my organization knowingly chose to do something on our own rather than seek collaboration with other ABC partners? What drove these decisions? Who/what did these decisions ultimately benefit and ultimately harm? Is there something beyond ourselves that we are *now* being called to do for a greater impact and a greater good?

APPENDIX B. List of Current Efforts (these lists are not exhaustive):

Within one ABC entity or network

1. ABCUSA Clergy Network – grassroots
2. Emerging Leaders Clergy Network (ABHMS)
3. Faith-based Leadership Institute – Leadership Training (Homes & Caring Ministries)
4. Emerging Theologians Task Force (ABCUSA)
5. AB GIRLS (led by girls, space for Jr. & Sr. High Schoolers) – claim giftedness, use gifts, become young leaders, become familiar with ABC and mission
6. Young Adult Women’s Ministry (started by Young Adults for Young Adults)
7. National & Regional Youth Gatherings/Baptist Youth Fellowship
8. Xtreme Team/Ignite/Immerse – YA mission experiences that nurture leadership (ABFMS)
9. Quest’s camping program for campers and staff (American Baptist Assembly/Green Lake Conference Center)
10. Scholarship support – various organizations
11. Various racial/ethnic caucuses have internal efforts to raise up new leaders/mentorship (i.e. Alliance of Asian American Baptist Churches (Asian Caucus)—Intergenerational Covenant Circles)
12. AB Adult Curriculum – Journeys (ABHMS)
13. Individual church models for nurturing leaders – some African American churches have great models (every ministry leader expected to have a younger mentee working with him/her)
14. Call retreats (ABFMS)

Partnerships among ABC entities and/or with non-ABC entities:

1. Academy of Preachers/Festival of Young Preachers
2. ABC Orientation Conference – strong connection for seminarians/new pastors to ABC – in transition
3. New Experiments such as ABC Metro Chicago with ABWIM events for women – with no particular expectation
4. Sisters of Scripture Essay contest (Judson Press and ABWM)
5. Palmer Grant Cycle on Young Adult Discipleship (ABHMS/AB Foundation)
6. Children’s Curriculum (ABHMS? partnership with others)
7. Central Seminary (KS) – changing system to bring theological education to where people are
8. Education about student debt/economics of ministry (Lily Foundation & ABHMS; Central Seminary/MMBB/Lily Foundation)

APPENDIX C. Ideas for Implementation

1. Provide for leadership – make opportunities for new leaders to emerge in the local church (might include supporting them through school).
2. Develop video teaching/curriculum materials related to this priority (similar to Willow Creek’s Leadership summit, but ABC’s can be accessible 24/7, year-round)
3. Provide continual training opportunities, even after seminary. Make positions in which ministers can gain experience.
4. Recognize the appropriate time and process for the transition of leadership; we need models for orderly transition; we need ethical and graceful partnership between leaders who are stepping down and those called to step up.
5. Intentional communication plans and implementation of plan to bridge the isolated efforts in the various ABC entities. COMMUNICATION, COMMUNICATION, COMMUNICATION!
6. Build partnerships with vibrant ministries.
7. Communicate why ministry vocations are compelling to attract potential leaders.
8. There is a need for long-term apprenticeships.
9. Colleges and Seminaries working together for accelerated MDiv. Can Green Lake and other partners help with this?
10. We need tools to measure and assess any new model of training that can be collaboratively developed.
11. There is a need for dedicated denominational staff who can bring partners together in this effort.

APPENDIX D. List of Potential Resources

1. Technology as a tool for connecting and communicating
2. Vital importance of stories to champion the work that has been done—locally, regionally and with the wider ABC Family.
3. Casting a net to tap resources outside of ABC, but also seek to discover the untapped resources (known and unknown) that are within ABC.
4. There are congregations/regions/national bodies that have significant resources for the development of leaders, and we need to discover and leverage these resources for the good of the whole.
5. Chaplains, pastoral counselors, spiritual directors, coaches as well as clergy have leadership training expertise that have not been tapped to the degree that it should.
6. National Leadership Council/REMC and staff of the program boards collaborate together to form mentoring relationships, sharing knowledge/skills and abilities (for clergy and lay leadership development).
7. University Press
8. Lily Foundation
9. Foundations who would support mentorship programs
10. Preparations must include training in Entrepreneurial Servant Leadership

APPENDIX E. List of People from this Mission Table Working Group

Name	Organization
1. Angela Sudermann	International Ministries
2. Atula Jamir Lowell, MA	The American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts/Calvary Baptist,
3. Bob Duffett	Eastern University/Palmer Seminary
4. Clem Winbush	Black Caucus
5. Derick Brennan	Philadelphia Baptist Association/Canaan Baptist Church
6. Dieudonne Merinvil	Haitian Caucus
7. Erica Van Brakle Grange, IL	American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago/First Baptist Church of La
8. Frank Frischkorn	American Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania/Delaware
9. Garth E. Brokaw	American Baptist Homes & Caring Ministries
10. James Harrison	American Baptist Churches of the South
11. Kenneth Kho	ABCUSA Intercaucus
12. Laura Miraz	American Baptist Home Mission Societies
13. Lucky Ray	ABMEN
14. Marie Onwubuariri	American Baptist Churches of Wisconsin
15. Mark Benedetto Falls	American Baptist related Colleges and Universities/University of Sioux
16. Paul Martin	American Baptist Seminary of the West
17. Pete Shaw	Growing Healthy Churches/Crosswalk Community Church, Napa, CA
18. Virginia Holmstrom	American Baptist Women's Ministries