



Connections

CONNECTIONS is a ministry of ABCUSA. Email the editor at: communications@abc-usa.org

You're Invited to the Online Biennial Mission Summit!

Join us Thursday–Saturday, June 24–26, 2021

“Plan now to experience the vitality of our American Baptist family together during our first-ever online Biennial Mission Summit!”

The 2021 online Biennial Mission Summit will feature scheduled programming on each of the three event days, Thursday–Saturday, June 24–26, 2021. A sampling of event offerings include: eight workshops on unique topics, opportunities to join together with American Baptist Caucuses, hear ministry and mission stories from some of our national partners, a selection of Mission Summit Conversations, a comedy presentation, and three evening worship sessions designed to bring together one body of American Baptists as we Imagine Unity, Imagine Healing, Imagine Hope. *Learn more about all of these things inside this issue of CONNECTIONS!*

Plan now to come together with other American Baptists, where you will have access to numerous online resources and recorded workshops through our On-Demand Library. In addition, all registrants will have access to

the Library for 90 days after the event. Each of the evening worship sessions, along with eight live workshop sessions on Friday and Saturday afternoons, will be recorded and available for viewing for 90 days.

Registration Options

Register as a Delegate if you have been selected by your local church or region to represent them. Delegates will vote in the Business Session on Friday, June 25 at 5:00 PM ET. (Make sure you have your Church ID# or Region ID# when beginning registration—these were sent to each ABC Church and Region in early March. Churches, if you have not yet received this information, please contact your region office.)

Or, select Participant/Household of Two to attend and participate in all other Biennial Mission Summit events! We also offer a Watch Party registration for small groups that plan to attend in community together.

Delegate: \$125

Participant/Household of Two: \$125

Watch Party, 6 or fewer persons: \$399



American Baptist Churches USA
BIENNIAL MISSION SUMMIT

An Online Experience | June 24–26, 2021

Visit www.americanbaptists2021.com to register today!

Plan now to experience the vitality of our American Baptist family together with other American Baptists from all corners of the United States and the world during our first ever denomination-wide online Biennial Mission Summit!

New to online Biennial Mission Summits?

You are not alone – we ALL are!

**Join us for our first session, the live
Welcome Session on Thursday, June
24 at 4:00pm, where we will kick off
your Biennial Mission Summit weekend.
Hear more about what you can expect,
how to navigate the event, new addi-
tions to the schedule, and how to make
the most of all the interactive experi-
ences we have lined up for you!**

Reconnecting with Friends and Making New Connections!

Through the Cvent Virtual Attendee Hub, attendees will have the ability to connect with other attendees as they would at an in-person Biennial Mission Summit event! We know attendees highly value catching up with friends and colleagues at the event every two years, and also having meaningful conversations in the exhibit area. The Cvent platform allows us the capability to do all of this! Using the integrated appointments feature, attendees will be able to connect with staff, exhibitors, and other attendees one-on-one! Easily schedule individual video calls and appointments with exhibitors, staff, and event attendees beginning Monday, June 21 and throughout the event ending on June 26. Catch up with friends you may only see once every two years! ■

Mission Summit Conversations

Be a part of conversations happening about key issues of importance to the American Baptist Churches USA denomination!



ABCUSA CONNECTIONS is made possible by your gifts to United Mission, which is essential to many of our ministries. Be sure that United Mission is included in your church budget. For details about how funds are used or information about how to contribute, or with story ideas for future issues of ABCUSA CONNECTIONS, please visit our website at www.abc-usa.org or contact communications@abc-usa.org.

Mission Summit Conversations are an opportunity for anyone registered for the 2021 Biennial Mission Summit to engage in meaningful dialogue about a relevant ministry topic. Since 2013, these conversations have allowed our American Baptist family to listen to a variety of perspectives on timely topics as well as share their own thoughts with others. Previous participants have expressed deep gratitude for the insights received, camaraderie experienced, and respectful dialogue.

As always, we encourage participants to practice the following behavioral guidelines:

1. Respect one another's views and perspectives
2. Share "air" or talk time among participants
3. Seek to understand before responding

Participants will select one of the following Mission Summit Conversations to attend:

Conversation on Anti-Racism

What has been your journey and/or your needs for your personal acknowledgment and development of a commitment to being an active and engaged truth-teller and justice seeker?

Conversation on Congregational Life

What changes might be made to the ways that we worship, disciple, and engage in mission in light of lessons learned from the global pandemic?

Conversation on Unity

How can we as Christians demonstrate our love to the world regardless of whether we live in a "blue" or "red" state and regardless of which political candidates we might have voted for? ■

A word from the ABCUSA President

“As we know, the past year has been nothing less than ‘different’. It has been a great honor to sit with other members of the planning team to *Imagine* the ways in which we can bring the family together online. I am beyond excited for what is in store for us as a family. I am confident that you will be pleased with the ways in which the format of the Biennial Mission Summit will provide a much broader cross-section of our family access to this gathering time. Can’t wait to experience it with each of you.”

—ABCUSA President Karen Podsiadly



Biennial Mission Summit promotional resources are available on the ABCUSA website. Promotional videos, flyers, logos, and more can be found here: www.abc-usa.org/imagine2021. Additional information for participants will be added to this page.

My Tenth

By Marie Onwubuariri

One of the things my teenage daughter will miss this coming June is donning her “Fifth Biennial” nametag ribbon in Puerto Rico. Truth be told, many of us will be missing a variety of things we would have experienced if the 2021 Biennial Mission Summit went forward as planned, but as our local churches and rest of the world have pivoted, so must we.

As the newly called associate general secretary for Mission Resource Development for ABCUSA, I am energized to join the team that has undertaken the challenge to shift what has been our largest recurring in-person gathering to an online platform and consider fresh ways American Baptists can:

- encourage and equip one another for changing ministries;
- lift up localized learnings and skills developed over the past two years for the benefit of the whole;

- discern new and relevant ways of engaging Christ-centered mission;
- laugh, honor, meet, and reconnect;
- and worship, through petitions and praises, our faithful God.

It is tempting to focus on the potential limitations of an online platform, but I am eager to work with ABC ministry partners and those in our broader network who are interested in contributing their presence, services, and support as exhibitors, sponsors, and boosters for this year’s first-ever online Biennial Mission Summit.

This will be my tenth biennial, missing only one since my first in Rhode Island in 2001. I am honored to serve as your event host, extending hospitality on behalf of all our contributing partners at this year’s online experience. ■



Onwubuariri joined ABCUSA in January 2021 and may be contacted by emailing Marie.Onwubuariri@abc-usa.org.



Registration for Church Delegates and Participants is open.

Visit www.americanbaptists2021.com
to view the entire schedule and register.

Highlights you won't want to miss:

(times listed are Eastern Daylight Time)

THURSDAY JUNE 24, 2021

- 4:00 pm Welcome Session—
Learn more about the
online platform, schedule,
and special events.
- 5:00 pm American Baptist
Caucus Sessions
- 7:00 pm Worship—*Imagine Unity*
Join with other members
of the American Baptist
family for this
Communion service.

FRIDAY JUNE 25, 2021

- 3:00 pm An Address to
MMBB Members
- 4:00 pm A selection of workshops
- 5:00 pm Business Session—
***Churches, please select
delegates to represent your
church at this session.***
- 6:30 pm Highlighting International
Ministries
- 7:00 pm Worship—*Imagine Healing*
Featuring Keynote Speaker
Rev. Dr. Winterbourne
LaPucelle Harrison Jones
- 8:15 pm Comedy (half) Hour

SATURDAY JUNE 26, 2021

- 4:00 pm A selection of workshops
- 5:00 pm Mission Summit
Conversations
- 6:30 pm Highlighting American
Baptist Home Mission
Societies
- 7:00 pm Worship—*Imagine Hope*
Featuring Keynote Speaker
Rev. Dr. Brianna Parker

And more...

- Visit with American Baptist Partners and related organizations in the Virtual Exhibit Hall
- View the On-Demand Library of resources and recordings at your leisure before, during, and after the event
- Connect with other attendees around areas of interest to you

Imagine what God has in store this June 2021.

Presented by



In partnership with



Worship Sessions

7:00 pm ET

Thursday, June 24 *Imagine Unity*

The opening worship service will focus on imagining unity as we celebrate coming together as an American Baptist family, as the Body of Christ. We invite you to join us for upbeat and diverse worship with music from across the country, including Puerto Rico, moments of prayer and response, and a celebration of the Lord's Supper. Communion will be led by Rev. Dr. C. Jeff Woods (Interim General Secretary), Karen Podsiadly (ABCUSA President), and Rev. Dr. Marie Onwubuariri (Associate General Secretary for Mission Resource Development).

Friday, June 25 *Imagine Healing*

This year in particular, we recognize the need for healing in our churches, communities, nation, and the world. On Friday evening we will invite you to imagine and experience God's healing spirit in our lives. Through a virtual choir, liturgical dance, and a time for prayers of the people, we will acknowledge the hurt in our midst and celebrate the balm that heals us all. Our preacher for the evening will be the Rev. Dr. Winterbourne LaPucelle Harrison-Jones.

Saturday, June 26 *Imagine Hope*

We are a people of hope and a Body of Christ who celebrates what God can do through us and in our midst. In our closing worship we will imagine hope through the children and youth leading portions of our worship, through a virtual choir inviting us into a time of praise, and through a prayer of thanksgiving for the imaginative hope that we feel. Our preacher for this worship service will be the Rev. Dr. Brianna Parker. We will end with the announcement of our 2023 Biennial Mission Summit to be held in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Looking for something different?

Come to "Laugh Your Way to Grace," a comedy (half) hour presented by Rev. Susan Sparks.

Laughter is one of God's most powerful, yet under-appreciated gifts. It can reduce stress, improve health, defuse conflict, empower creative thinking, build bridges, and inspire hope. Bottom line: If you can laugh at yourself, you can forgive yourself. And if you can forgive yourself, you can forgive others. Join us for this half-hour of laughter where you will lighten your perspective, focus your energies, and reclaim your innate sense of holy joy!

As a trial lawyer turned standup comedian and Baptist minister, Rev. Susan Sparks is America's only female comedian with a pul-

pit. The twenty-year senior pastor of the historic Madison Avenue Baptist Church in New York City (and the first woman pastor in its 170-year history), Sparks's work with humor, healing, and spirituality has been featured in O (The Oprah) Magazine, the New York Times, and on such networks as ABC, CNN, CBS, and the History Channel. A featured TEDx speaker and a professional comedian, Sparks tours nationally with a stand-up Rabbi and a Muslim comic in the Laugh in Peace Tour. Join us for a laugh on Friday evening, June 25, 8:15 pm ET! ■

We invite you to bring your communion elements to worship service on Thursday, as we join in unity at the Lord's Table.





Workshops

View presenter bios on our website at www.americanbaptists2021.com!

Friday Afternoon Workshops—June 25, 2021 – 4:00 pm ET

Living the Gospel in the United States and Puerto Rico

Connect with four American Baptist ministry leaders—a hospital chaplain, community ministry leader, church pastor, and college president—who will share their experiences of leading through our current realities and how these realities are shaping their leadership for the future. Listen to the lessons they have learned about living and leading through change, as we continue to partner with one another promoting Christian faith, developing and strengthening Christ-centered leaders and disciples, and bringing God’s transformative love to communities across the United States and Puerto Rico.

This workshop is hosted by the American Baptist Home Mission Societies. ABHMS will provide three resources to support continuing skill strengthening beyond the workshop along with links connecting participants with mission opportunities across the United States and Puerto Rico.

Presenters: Christian Esteban, Rev. Dr. Luz Celeniar (Lucy) Tirado, Dr. Reggie Wenyika, and Rev. Ashlee Wiest-Laird

MMBB: Financial Wellness in the New Normal

Times may change but the principles for building your family’s financial security are timeless. Join us as we explore what it means to build a foundation for financial wellness in uncertain times. We will review the important areas of financial planning for each stage of

life and how they work together to help you achieve your goals and provide security.

Presenter: James R. Cook, RICP®, CFP® professional

Radical. Redeemed. Ready: Imagining New Possibilities for Women in Ministry

Who would ever have imagined 2021 would be the year of our nation’s first woman vice president?

This has been a year of women moving into many new roles, including throughout ABCUSA.

American Baptist churches have been ordaining women to ministry for over 100 years. While there have been many “firsts,” challenges continue to exist. Rather than being defeated by such challenges, women have continued to respond to God’s call, blazing new trails, exploring new pathways, and imagining new possibilities for ministry and leadership. Come, hear from key leaders about the innovative ways women are ministering! Join us in imagining the future! What do YOU imagine?

Presenters: Rev. Dr. Patricia Hernandez will be joined by the American Baptist Women In Ministry (ABWIM) Advisory Team, which is composed of professional church leaders who represent diverse cultural, racial, ethnic, and theological perspectives and who work together to carry out the mission and vision of ABWIM, and key leaders Rev. Adalia Gutiérrez Lee, MD, Rev. Dr. Zina Jacque, Rev. Dr. Trinette V. McCray, and Rev. Lauren Lisa Ng.



The Problem with Normal

Healing requires a recognized injury, pain, hurt. It also requires a safe space and competent loving care. But how can healing take place when the basis of our reality is designed to deny the existence of the injury? We will

explore how our understanding of “normal” has been carefully designed to preserve an oppressive hierarchy, and how that oppression prevents healing.

Presenter: Rev. Douglas Avilesbernal

Saturday Afternoon Workshops—June 26, 2021 – 4:00 pm ET

International Ministries in Focus: the Caribbean and the Philippines

God continues to work around the world! From the streets of Manila to the settlements of the Dominican Republic, experience God’s mission through your IM global servants. We’ll also listen to the stories of those starting their journey overseas as God’s hands and feet.

Presenter: Rev. Sharon Koh

Reset and Reimagine: Challenges, Triumphs, and New Possibilities

This workshop will use diverse case studies that will highlight challenges, triumphs, and new possibilities in various ministry settings. Participants will have an opportunity to present ministry dilemmas and receive advice from peers.

Presenters: Rev. Dr. Gina Jacobs-Strain and Rev. LaThelma Yenn-Batah

Rethinking Bi-vocational Ministry

Bi-vocational Ministry is often seen by both pastor and church as a last resort option. This workshop challenges us to see bi-vocational ministry as a model that God calls pastors and churches to and a model that offers multiple advantages besides the obvious economic benefit. The workshop will be held in the format of a moderated panel discussion.

Presenters: Rev. Gary Martin, Rev. Dr. James Mitchell Harrison and moderated by Rev. Dr. Steve Van Ostran

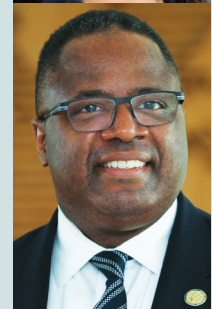
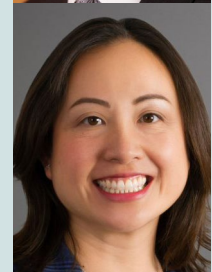
The Foolishness of God

The imaginative work of God often seems foolish to even the most committed disciple. We sing about God’s reckless love, so let us now look at God’s Holy work that we may often think is foolish. This “foolish” work accomplishes God’s purposes and invites us to grow in faith and deepen our discipleship. In this workshop, we will look at some of the principles of God’s imaginative work so that we may not miss the invitation to thrive in times of uncertainty.

Presenter: Rev. Mark Thompson

Hear from Executive

Directors: Louis Barbarin, MMBB Member Address, Friday, June 25 at 3:00 pm; Sharon Koh, Highlighting International Ministries on Friday, June 25 at 6:30 pm; and Jeffrey Haggray, Highlighting American Baptist Home Mission Societies, Saturday, June 26 at 6:30 pm.





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American Baptist Churches USA
BIENNIAL MISSION SUMMIT

An Online Experience | June 24-26, 2021

Experience *everything* the Biennial Mission Summit has to offer!

In this online format, you will be able to experience every worship and workshop, view every resource, and take advantage of every opportunity to connect with American Baptist partners, exhibitors, and other attendees.

ALL Delegates and Participants will have access to the online content for 90 days!

Hear from Keynote Speakers



Rev. Dr. Winterbourne
Harrison-Jones

Friday Evening
Keynote Speaker



Rev. Dr. Brianna Parker
Saturday Evening
Keynote Speaker

Register now at www.americanbaptists2021.com