



American Baptist Churches USA

Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley
General Secretary Emeritus

October 20, 2020

Board of General Ministries and
CCU/IR

REPORT OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY EMERITUS

Dear Friends:

This is my report of my involvement on behalf of ABCUSA in ecumenical, interfaith, and Myanmar issues.

Friendship Press: I continue to serve as president of Friendship Press, the publishing arm of the National Council of Churches, US. We continue work on three main projects:

1. Updating the NRSV. It has been over 30 years since the NRSV was issued. Friendship Press together with the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) has been engaged in a 3-year process of updating the NRSV where new textual discoveries or changes in English language usage have warranted modification. The SBL will hand over its final suggested revisions the end of this year. After an intense period of review in 2021, we hope to hand over the final text to publishers. This version will be called the NRSV Updated Edition (NRSVUE).
2. The launch of Word@Hand and Word@Hand Journeys. This is a mobile Bible app which features the NRSV and later the NRSVue. In addition, we are issuing, devotional material called Journeys which are designed to engage both mature and new Christians with the Bible as they “Read, Think, Pray, and Act.” Friendship Press is grateful to Dr. Jeff Woods for the introduction of Word@Hand and Word@Hand Journeys on the ABC website. If you are interested in this resource, you can find www.friendshippress.org
3. Managing the Bible properties of the NCC. The NCC holds the copyrights to the RSV and NRSV editions of the Bible. Consequently, Friendship Press manages on behalf of the NCC licenses and permissions with publishers and authors around the globe as they utilize them in Bible products like curriculum, commentaries or devotionals, or quote significant sections of them in literature they are creating.

As an American Baptist, it has been a joy to serve as president of FP which is devoted to stewarding the gift of the RSV and NRSV for the life of the church and all who seek God.

National Council of Churches, US: We now have two American Baptists serving on the core staff of the NCC. The Rev. Aundrea Alexander (who served with ABHMS) serves as Associate General Secretary for Action and Advocacy for Justice and Peace. More recently, the Rev. Dr. Leslie Copeland Tune (who served with DCBC) has come on board as Chief Operating officer. The NCC continues its focus on racial justice and reconciliation. Its 2020 annual Christian Unity Gathering – “Breathing Life into Our Nation”, which was a virtual event, focused on “Repentance, Re-formation, and Reparation.” Its panels were exceptional on the three topics and are available on YouTube (search, National Council of Churches).

In addition, the NCC has continued its four interfaith dialogues: Christian-Jewish, Christian-Muslim, Christian-Hindu, and Christian-Buddhist. American Baptists have nominated participants for the latter two dialogues: Rev.

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Dr. Chaks (Chakravarthy) Zada, Sr. Pastor, First Baptist Church of Waukesha, WI for the NCC Christian-Hindu and Rev. Dr. Shane Kinnison, Pastor of First Baptist Church of Glendale, CA for the Christian-Buddhist Dialogue.

The work of Christian unity continues as well with the Faith and Order table of the NCC. The member bodies of the NCC are joined by Roman Catholic participants as church leaders and scholars continue to explore ways to address those issues that continue to divide the churches. We are represented in this work by Rev. Dr. Loida Martell.

Baptist World Alliance: Due to the world-wide novel coronavirus pandemic, the BWA postponed its every five-year global gathering – the BWA Congress, which was to be held in Rio de Janeiro in July, and the Congress will now be a virtual gathering July 7-10, 2021. In the past year, the biggest shift in the BWA came with the vote of the Executive Committee to take under the umbrella of the BWA the “21 Wilberforce” organization whose focus is the promotion and protection of religious liberty. During the pandemic, Baptist World Aid has been active in responding to the global crisis through grants to member conventions and unions for relief efforts. A search will soon be underway for a director of Baptist World Aid. The BWA has a new website, www.baptistworld.org.

The BWA elected new officers and various other positions for its 5-year cycle of programming. The new president of the BWA is the Rev. Dr. Tomás Mackey of Argentina. American Baptists were elected to serve on various commissions (see separate attachment). In addition, I continue to serve on the executive committee through 2022.

Burma/Myanmar: I have continued to participate in conferences with US State Department and other government officials concerning the ongoing plight of our Baptist brothers and sisters from Myanmar who fled to Malaysia and India where they live with few protections. The latest of these conferences was held on October 7. In that meeting we presented to US officials a research paper authored by Dr. Zo Tum Hmung of the Chin Association of Maryland which describes the most recent findings regarding the Chin people who are refugees or IDP's. The changes in immigration policies over the past four years, authored in large part by Stephen Miller who serves as a senior advisor to the President, have reduced the number of refugees and immigrants to be resettled by the US to the lowest numbers in modern history. This, plus the effects of the global pandemic, means that our brothers and sisters remain in their perilous plight. We continue to press for humanitarian aid, a return to higher refugee quotas, and for our government in cooperation with the UNHCR to work with Malaysia and India to secure the human rights of refugees within their borders.

Interfaith Relations: I was recently interviewed for a book on interfaith relations that will highlight the positions of various evangelical denominations on interfaith dialogue. The author was particularly interested as to why ABC had been the leading Baptist body in such efforts over the past several years.

This concludes my report.

Respectfully submitted,

Roy