

## **Board of General Ministries Reports: ABCUSA/Office of the General Secretary and Associated Ministry Organizations**

**TREASURER'S OFFICE:** Highlights of Treasurer's Office, Accounting, American Baptist Churches Information System, Building Management, Traffic, AMOs -- June 2018 – November 2018

### **ABCUSA**

- Prepared 2019 Budget for Board approval at November meeting
- Preparing for 2018 year-end closing
- Annual insurance reviews/renewals
- Prepared and presented Analyses and Financial Statements to BGM/ABCUSA Finance Committees, BGM and BGM EC; staffed meetings
- Oversaw work of legal counsel in several areas
- Personnel supervision for Accounting, ABCIS, Building Management and Warehousing
- Dissolved traffic department due to outsourcing of Judson services and relocation from the Mission Center
- Represented NEC at ABHS Board meeting in Atlanta
- Planned office relocation to new facility
- Worked on purchase of new office and construction plans
- Ongoing ABCIS functions:
  - User Support:* Added new *Church in Changed Relationships* reports/processes specifically for the BGM Directors; worked with ABHMS, IM and Regional staff on export/import needs.
  - Policies:* Completed *ABCIS Data Matrix*.
  - System Upgrade:* Completed some hardware server updates; in Jan. 2019, will begin replacing older computer codes with newer code, and give users opportunity to test/comment.

#### Regions:

- Conferred with Regions and churches on financial and administrative issues
- Ongoing collecting agency responsibilities for 13 regions
- Continuing to perform accounting services for PBA
- Finalized agreement and began accounting services for Cleveland Baptist Association

### **ASSOCIATED MINISTRY ORGANIZATIONS**

(AB Historical Society, AB Women's Ministries, Ministers Council, AB Computer Center)

- Finalized dissolution of ABCC; integrated ABCC as new IT Department in OGS.
- Accounting functions, ongoing consultations, insurance reviews, leasing renewals, quarterly meetings with AMO executives re: financial and operational matters

### **588 ASSOCIATES**

- Continuing to work extensively with Mission Center consultants and legal counsel on sale plans
- 2017 Tax Returns; accounting functions
- Leasing and building management; updated internal ABC leases
- Insurance reviews/renewals
- Supervision of building administrative staff and day-to-day operations

-- Alan Musoke, Associate General Secretary for Finance/CFO/Treasurer

## Regional Ministries Report June thru November, 2018

Since the Board of General Ministries Meeting in mid-June, I have held 11 on-site meetings with 5 different regional executive minister search committees, helping 4 of these search committees (New Jersey, Central, Mid-America, and Rochester) draw their work toward a conclusion by recommending a full-consensus candidate. ABC of the Central Region called Gregg Hemmen to serve as their executive minister. ABC Mid-America called Jackie Saxon. Sandra Hasenauer was called to serve in the Rochester/Genessee Region and news of the New Jersey decision should be public very soon. Additionally, the regional board of ABC of Ohio has called Mark Click to serve as executive minister during a transitional phase.

As new executive ministers are called, I schedule on site face to face orientations with each executive. It was my pleasure to recently provide such orientations for Edgardo Caraballo in Puerto Rico and Mike Sisson in West Virginia. Orientations for Sandra Hasenauer, Jackie Saxon, and Greg Hemmen will also take place before the end of the year. Search processes often necessitate consultations with potential interviewees as well as interviewees not called to serve as was the case this year. Even these conversations are part of the overall discernment process as persons work on desired skill sets and continue to converse with God about what may in store for them in the future.

In addition to working with regional search committees, I was able to respond to several other regional invitations to provide resourcing for them. Summer on-site regional visits included a training event in Cleveland, a meeting with the Ohio interim, and a 3 day continuing education event with 25 region staff from 10 different regions in late summer. Fall speaking engagements included an envisioning retreat for the ABC of Rhode Island, a regional board training seminar for the ABC of Massachusetts, a leadership workshop for the ABC of RGR along with a message to retiring executive minister Alan Newton, a keynote at an association gathering for ABCOPAD, and a message to the Ministers Council of Mid-America along with an installation charge to Jackie Saxon.

It was a joy to finalize a clergy bibliography for the Professional Ministries Team and to provide assistance in drafting an upcoming longitudinal survey for the Faith Communities Today (FACT) group that distributes and analyzes the largest survey of congregations in the U.S. I also facilitated two online conversations with an executive ministers group that I started several years ago that meets regularly to discuss innovative regional ministry practices, distributed my monthly columns to the REMC, and encouraged and supported the launch of a new Central Sectional Region Staff online conversation and network. This is a follow-up to the Central Sectional Event that was held at Franklin College in August.

Fulfilling the additional duties of Acting General Secretary has made my schedule quite busy lately. A report of those activities is included in the staff reports section. It is always a pleasure to serve the ABC in whatever capacity is requested.

Dr. C. Jeff Woods  
Associate General Secretary  
Regional Ministries, ABCUSA

Board of General Ministries Update  
Missional Initiatives & Partnerships  
November, 2018

### EcoAmerica / Blessed Tomorrow

We are working to bridge the relationship between the ABC Creation Justice Network and Blessed Tomorrow. Tom Carr represented ABCUSA at the Blessed Tomorrow Leadership Circle Meeting which is a gathering of denominational faith leaders from across the country to address climate issues. We are one of the supporters of the American Climate Leadership Summit, taking place May, 2019. This will be a gathering of over 500 leaders and advocates on climate issues in Washington DC.

We continue to work with the Blessed Tomorrow leadership team on developing the 3-5minute Creation Justice video for ABCUSA. The theme is “Choice.” As Baptist we chose to accept Christ and to be baptized; now we are asking our churches and congregations to choose to care for God’s creation as we have been instructed to in Genesis 1. First Baptist of Hightstown, NJ will be featured in the video because of their ongoing commitment to climate mitigation. The goal is to have the video completed and shared at the Biennial.

Blessed Tomorrow has also been instrumental in helping us to launch the Creation Justice portal on our website where clergy and others can receive valuable information on creation care issues to share with their congregations and read about what others are doing across the country to address this critical issue. A great resource for clergy to share with their congregations is the “Let’s Talk Faith and Climate” guide. We are also providing monthly articles and updates from Blessed Tomorrow Resources and the ABC Creation Justice Network to inspire our congregations.

Blessed Tomorrow will partner with the ABCCJN on the Creation Justice Track presentations for the Biennial.

### Creation Justice Network

I met with the Steering Committee for the ABC Creation Justice Network (ABCCJN) in Flint, Michigan in September. An important voice within the denomination, the challenge is to sustain the work ABCCJN is doing beyond the initial grant cycle. This was a major portion of our discussions. We applied for the ABF Palmer grant for Transformational and Formational Ministries.

Following the Steering Committee meeting, ABCCJN partnered with the ecumenical group Creation Justice Ministries to lead a Healing Waters Retreat for frontline workers in the Water Crisis. This began with a Listening Tour led by ABC Pastor, Rev. Deb Conrad, followed by dinner with community leaders. Members of the steering committee were shocked by the plethora of issues the people of Flint and Detroit still face in regard to access to clean water. The following day was spent in workshops with leaders and frontline workers focused on what it means for the faith community to be allies in the work of the water justice workers. The overwhelming message from the frontline workers was “help us to continue to tell our stories.” ABCCJN will explore ways to get the message out and to encourage those Churches in the Michigan region to stay involved with the water justice workers within the Flint and Detroit communities.

Tom Carr represented ABC at “Towards a Greener Attica: Preserving the Planet and Protecting its People” June 5<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> in Athens and the Saronic Islands, Greece. This was an international symposium focused on climate change, environmental degradation, poverty and the refugee crisis,

organized by His All Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I. Rev. Tom Carr presented a letter of greeting and the Pastoral Letter on Eco-Justice from Dr. Spitzer, to His All Holiness, the Ecumenical Patriarch.

### NICD

We continue to share information with those Regional Executives interested in civil discourse. We are happy to welcome Dr. Lukensmeyer to our board meeting. Hopefully this will inspire more regions to get involved with the Initiative to Revive Civility.

I have been working with the leadership team in the Central Region to plan the civil discourse conference for their pastors and other clergy which will take place February 16-17 in Kansas.

Immediately following the election, we will invite regions and churches to participate in a Nation Call for Reflection, Prayer and Reconciliation. This is a call for all participating organizations in the Initiative to Revive Civility to engage in a time of reflection, prayer and intentional relationship building between Nov. 7 and January 3<sup>rd</sup>, when the new congressional leadership will take office.

### Other Activities

July I represented ABCUSA at the **Kachin American Baptist Association Annual Meeting** in Colorado. I delivered the keynote address for the general assembly and facilitated a workshop for the 65+ youth in attendance. The leadership of KABA has now raised questions in regard to their status with ABC. We recognize there has been attempts at unifying this group with the AMO, Kachin Baptist Churches USA, in the past. We are now in conversations with KABA and persons at ABHMS who have been involved with these groups in prior years to determine the best course of action.

In July I was joined by youth from Berean Baptist Church on a missions trip to Puerto Rico. In addition to participating in ABHMS' Rebuilding, Restoring, Renewing hurricane relief effort, we held a service and community activities for children and their parents in the Farralon community and visited the sick and shut-in. Rev. Felipe Candelaria took the group to visit other churches and communities that were severely damaged where we prayed for those congregations. One of the highlights of the trip was the relationship building that began with the youth from Rev. Candelaria's church and the youth from Berean.

I represented ABCUSA at the Hampton Minister's Conference in June and the Progressive National Baptist Conference in August, where Dr. Spitzer addressed the assembly.

From October 7<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup> I served as the Guest Preacher for the Anniversary week for Primera Iglesias Bautista de Carolina. I preached for ten services and provided a workshop for pastors from the church and the region on Healing in Community.

I attended the Central Pacific Annual Meeting where I brought greetings and shared the keynote address with Laura Ng from ABHMS. In October I also represented OGS at the New Baptist Covenant Journey to Justice Summit in Atlanta. I will facilitate a panel discussion, Transformed by Mission with a focus on Puerto Rico at the ABCMNY Annual Meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Marsha Scipio

## AMERICAN BAPTIST WOMEN IN MINISTRY & TRANSITION MINISTRIES

### ABWIM

**Vision:** ABWIM seeks the full participation and 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.

#### **Some Highlights:**

- **Intercultural Ethnic Women's conference** – partnered with ABHMS and AB Women's Ministries to bring together women of diverse culture, race, and ethnicity to learn from each other and engage in cultural competency training.
- **National Conference for Women – “Fully Exploring and Engaging in God's Love”** – partnered with AB Women's ministries in bringing women together for relationship building, learning, and equipping opportunities.
- **40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of ABWIM – June 16-19, 2020. Save the date!**  
Partnering with AB Women's Ministries to celebrate the rich legacy of women in ministry. The Conceptualizing Team met earlier this year, resulting in the theme of “*Celebrating Ministering Women: Radical. Redeemed. Ready.*” Moving forward, the first meeting of the Planning Team will take place Nov. 29-30. Co-chairing the Planning Team are Rev. Soozie Ford, Executive Minister of Indiana/Kentucky, and Rev. Tom Wiles, Executive Minister of Rhode Island.
- **Sacred Safe Space** - This emerging new denomination-wide initiative will educate, empower and equip pastors, church leaders and laity to respond to acts of violence, abuse and exploitation, and to implement policies and procedures to insure that our sacred spaces are also safe spaces.

### TRANSITION MINISTRIES

**The goal** 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.

**Our mission** is to provide intentional interim ministers who are adept and experienced in leading churches through transitions. These interim pastors guide the congregation on a journey which involves celebrating their history, clarifying their identity, articulating their mission, and moving into a fruitful future.

As this ministry grows, a well-attended introductory training event was held in Rhode Island. The outgrowth of this is a pilot project involving ABC of Rhode Island and Connecticut in developing a training track. The first segment is scheduled for April 8-10. If your region would like to host a training event, please contact me.

In both of these ministry resource areas –ABWIM and Transition Ministries—I am thankful for the wisdom, guidance and support of General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Lee Spitzer, the ABCUSA Leadership Team, the ABWIM Advisory Team and the Board of General Ministries—without whom none of this could happen. Thank-you!

*Patricia P. Hernandez, Associate General Secretary, ABWIM and Transition Ministries*

## **BGM Report**

by Rev. Dr. Kevin A. Walden

Associate General Secretary for Congregational and Pastoral Effectiveness

In the last six months I have been working on keeping the connections between our sister churches in Puerto Rico and on the mainland. This, at times, has been challenging, but IBPR (Puerto Rico region) has been very helpful in making sure that we work to resolve concerns.

Several of our regions have continued to build excitement for our collaboration with Fresh Expressions. Rev. Robin Stoops in ABCNebraska has received some special training to encourage Fresh Expressions of ministry. Robin is working with ABCDakotas and ABC of the Central Region (Kansas, Oklahoma and Arkansas) to encourage Fresh Expressions of ministry. ABC Mission Northwest has just signed on as a partner organization with Fresh Expressions US. ABC of Vermont/New Hampshire has begun a support group for their Fresh Expressions pioneers (leaders). The most exciting story from VT/NH came as one of the new expressions is taking place in a local auto repair shop. The owner, employees and customers have been meeting to study the bible. There have been confessions of faith and even baptisms.

In Lee's absence, I've added some of his speaking and teaching engagements so that OGS can continue to be represented in the regions we serve. The timing of this has been beneficial for me being able to meet new ministers in the various regions in preparation of my work with the Orientation to American Baptist Life (OTABL). The most recent highlight of the region visits was to the Central Region where I started ministry, went to college and seminary. I was honored to help install their new Executive Minister, Rev. Dr. Gregg Hemmen.

I continue to learn about our processes around the office, but it is a joy to work with this staff.

Kevin Walden  
October 25, 2018

**Report to the Board of General Ministries  
Tina Turner, United Mission Coordinator**

**November 2018**

**United Mission Emphasis**

**Display Update**

The ABCUSA display was sent to 16 different region and events this Fall. At several region meetings the local BGM Director provided support and helped to set up, staff and pack up the display. Special thanks to Tasha Wilson, Cecelia Dachtler, Ken Atchison, June Totten, Nancy O'Neill, Kelly Legg, Manuel Magana, Tom Roberts, and Thomas Ross for their help. In addition to sharing information about the ministries of the Office of the General Secretary, the display was used to invite people to the 2019 Biennial Mission Summit in Virginia Beach.

***What is United Mission? Brochure***

With help from Leonardo Morales, Baptist Churches of Puerto Rico Associate Executive Minister, the *What is United Mission?* brochure was translated into Spanish. Josue Gomez Menendez provided assistance with translating letters that will be sent along with a Spanish copy of the brochure to all Hispanic and Multi-Ethnic congregations. One letter thanks churches who support United Mission, the other asks the pastor and congregation to consider adding United Mission to the church's budget.

**Bulletin Inserts**

A bulletin insert was developed for the American Baptist Churches of Rhode Island. An insert was developed and included on the ABCUSA display with information about the Missional Initiatives and Partnerships that Marsha Scipio is developing.

**Upcoming Promotional Items**

The revised United Mission video will be shown during the Board of General Ministries meeting. This 5-minute video is in its final stage of development, a little polishing still needs to be done with some transition timings. I hope to have the region offices help to promote the video and plan to send a postcard to churches to promote it. I am not sure if we will be able to make it available for download or if it will only be available to stream from our YouTube channel.

I am continuing to work on a mailer which will feature several churches' answers to the question "Why does your church support United Mission?" and hope to have this completed before the end of the month.

**ABCUSA Matthew 25 Grant**

The Discernment Team met in September to review the 47 applications we received. Forty-one churches received grants ranging from \$500 to \$3,000. These grants were awarded to ministries which work to address homelessness and disadvantaged adults through weekly lunches, personal hygiene bags, laundry cards, bus passes, food pantries, and counseling and job search programs. Several other ministries that received funding help support children in marginalized neighborhoods through gift cards for new shoes program, winter boots, gloves and coats giveaways, after school programs where tutoring and computer access is available, camp scholarships, school supplies and clothing closets for elementary school children. One of the more common ministries we received requests to fund are called weekend backpack programs. There is a great need in many communities to feed children when schools are not in session. In some areas, a large percentage of elementary school children receive free breakfast and lunch at school. On the weekends and when school is closed for the holidays, these children typically go hungry. Churches have been providing backpacks of food for children every weekend throughout the school year so the kids can eat when the school meal programs are not available to them. Every application we receive for these programs is lifted up in prayer and funded as generously as possible.

It is possible that we may only have funding for one more Matthew 25 Grant cycle as we have not received gifts from the anonymous donor since November 2017. Letters of thanks and reports from the funded ministries continue to be sent to the donor via email, all appear to be delivered but I have not received any return correspondence.

## Missional Communications

ABCUSA Core continues in the development process by the ABCUSA IT staff team. Core is a new database-driven web application which reimagines, reengineers and modernizes the critical data systems used by the American Baptist Churches denomination. Core will facilitate better communication, and will also offer features of social media, contact management, tracking and reporting of ABC Leadership, online training, virtual support groups, educational possibilities, and more, all geared towards the needs of American Baptists. Projected phases of development include Alpha testing beginning in January 2019, with Beta testing beginning in April 2019.

The ABCUSA website redesign is underway, with an expected roll-out date in early 2019.

Submitted by  
Bridget Lipin

## **2018 OTCP Meetings**

(In addition to booking meetings, contracts, direct billing apps, tax exempt forms, mtg details, final billing is reviewed and any discrepancies are disputed prior to payment being made.)

### **January**

MMBB Cabinet Meeting  
ABCUSA Officers Meeting  
MMBB Strategic Pastoral Excellence Program - Part 1  
MMBB Strategic Pastoral Excellence Program - Part 2  
MMBB Colloquium  
ABHMS Staff Meetings  
OGS Wisdom Conversations  
IM Finance Meeting

### **February**

IM Board Orientation & Board Mtg  
MMBB AALC  
Ministers Council Board of Governors  
MMBB Heritage of Sharing  
MMBB Senior Managers  
ABWIM 2020 Planning Team

### **March**

BMSPT / BGM Exec Committee  
MMBB Annuitant Luncheon / Penney Farms  
MMBB Annuitant Luncheon / Clearwater  
MMBB Annuitant Luncheon / Springfield  
MMBB Senior Management Mtg  
IM / PSM Task Force  
ABHMS / Glendale, CA

### **April**

NLC / Green Lake  
AB Foundation Board Meeting  
ABHMS Staff Summit (rooms Radisson VF)  
ABCUSA DCA Rally (Bus)  
ABHMS / Worcester, MA  
MMBB Women Pastors' Colloquium

## **May**

MMBB Board of Managers Mtg  
MMBB Annuitant Luncheon / Valley Forge  
MMBB Annuitant Luncheon / Atherton, CA  
ABHMS Leadership Team Retreat / NJ  
Burma Refugees Comm / Mission Center

## **June**

McKee Consultation / Alaska  
Board of General Ministries / Green Lake  
ABHMS Board of Directors / Valley Forge  
World Relief Committee / Valley Forge  
ABHMS Connect 2018 / Chicago

## **July**

## **August**

BMS Planning Team, Valley Forge  
IM Finance Meeting / St. Louis, MO  
MMBB Strategic Pastoral Excellence Program / Orlando, FL

## **September**

*Early Sept. Annie was told to remain fulltime while Lee was on medical leave so she could keep Biennial moving along.*

BGM Executive Committee Meeting / Burlington, VT  
IM Board of Directors Meeting / Valley Forge  
ABHMS Staff Summit (rooms Radisson VF)  
MMBB Annuitant Luncheon / Portland, OR  
MMBB Annuitant Luncheon / Bellevue, WA  
DCA Seminar for Lee - Cancelled  
MMBB Cabinet Meeting / Philadelphia

## **October**

MMBB Strategic Pastoral Excellence Program / Orlando, FL  
MMBB Annuitant Luncheon / Frankenmuth, MI  
MMBB Annuitant Luncheon / Norton, MA  
ABHMS / Barnabas Group / Oakland, CA  
Professional Ministries Team / Mission Center

Ecumenical OGHS / Radisson VF & IM Offices  
UM Task Force Mtg / Mission Center  
MMBB Board of Directors Mtg / New York  
AB Foundation Board Meeting / Valley Forge

### **November**

ABHMS Iglesias Bautistas de Puerto Rico Pastors Retreat / SJU  
ABHMS Board Retreat / SJU  
Board of General Ministries Mtg / Valley Forge  
Space for Grace 2018 / Philadelphia  
IM Executive Committee Mtg / Valley Forge  
2020 Planning Team Meeting / Orlando

### **December**

OGS Christmas Party / Valley Forge  
ABHMS Staff Summit / Valley Forge  
MMBB MBDS Meeting / New York

**OTCP is swamped and apologize for the brief report.**

In addition to all of the above meetings listed, progress continues on a daily basis in planning the Biennial Mission Summit.

NOVEMBER 2018



*A mission-focused, value-driven strategic Human Resource Management service made available from The American Baptist Home Mission Societies for American Baptist regional and national organizations. We are committed to deliver excellent HR services*

*grounded in American Baptist values and mission.*

Since the last report, we continued to provide ongoing HR services to employees by supporting their salary and benefits needs. These past months have been heavily focused on a variety of staff transitions and all of the detailed work with the brokers and agencies involved in ensuring ABCUSA/OGS employees have their healthcare benefits in place.

In collaboration with the General Secretary, we have updated the ABCUSA/OGS Employee Handbook. After meetings with the Executive Committee, we have a handbook that reflects the values of ABCUSA/OGS and is more consistent with best practices in areas of workforce management. ABCUSA/OGS continues to be an employer of choice providing generous benefits which include:

- Retirement benefits – 13% of salary into fully vested 403b, administered by MMBB
- Paid Vacation Days *and* Paid Sick Days
- Generous Short and Long-Term disability benefits
- Paid FMLA and Maternity/Paternity leaves (of course some restrictions apply)
- And many more!

The process of reviewing and updating position descriptions has been more ‘organic’ than formal. In other words, position descriptions are being updated/reviewed on a case by case basis and as the need arises. For example, as the ABC Computer Center staff transitioned to ABCUSA/OGS, a consultation with the team and the General Secretary was held to address functions and begin process of full alignment and integration.

Finally, we continue to provide guidance and support to the Officers and key leadership staff during the period of transition related to the General Secretary’s medical leave. This primarily involves a series of confidential conversations ‘behind the scenes’ but the time and effort involved is important to provide support to the organization.

As we approach the end of the year, there are numerous compliance and regulatory tasks to manage. In addition, collaboration with the office of the Treasurer and the acting General Secretary will ensure that ABCUSA/OGS employees receive a fair increase to their compensation for 2019.

At the request of the General Secretary, a survey of HR functions was conducted. The summary findings of the survey will be shared with Executive Committee.

More could be said to support the rationale for this service, but time and space limit the outlining of all of the details and day-to-day activities.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Miraz, Ph.D., SPHR, SHRM-CSP  
Human Resources Executive

Report prepared for: Board of General Ministries/OGS

Submitted by: Rev. Gina Jacobs-Strain, Exec. Director, American Baptist Women's Ministries (ABWM)

Date: 10/26/18

*It is the vocation of the prophet to keep alive the ministry of imagination, to keep on conjuring and proposing futures alternative to the single one the king wants to urge as the only thinkable one."*

— **Walter Brueggemann, The Prophetic Imagination**

As I prepare this update American Baptist Women's Ministries (ABWM) is in the midst of moving. We are leaving the mission center with mixed feelings as we are mindful of the many prayers that were prayed, friendships started and visionary ministries that began with these walls. Yet we are taking with us the rich legacy of these experiences, persistent hope and the *ministry of imagination*. We look forward to continued healthy partnerships with our denominational partners and other likeminded organizations. We recently became a supporting partner of the NJ Coalition Against Human Trafficking and our mission focus for 2019 is Domestic Violence; this new partnership and 2019 mission focus will enable ABWM to work more closely with our regions and churches. ABWM is looking forward to being fully integrated into the 2019 Biennial, Summit by the Sea, along with the other NEC partners. It is an honor to staff the academy track for church leaders and congregations, to lead a worship service and to enhance the diversity of presenters and voices represented at the Biennial. ABWM is also excited about the pre-Biennial Women's Day program.

Recent and future events:

ABWM's annual conference, "FEEL, Fully Exploring and Engaging in God's Love" and "Transitions," national gathering for girls (ages 12-18) was held in July. Our focus was multiculturalism and was collaboration with ABHMS and ABWIM. Multiculturalism was experienced through workshops, Bible study, fellowship and table conversations.

The Harvesting Shalom Wellness Retreat, 9/28-9/30, at Canonicus Camp and Conference Center in Rhode Island provided fellowship and tools for soul-care, renewal and Sabbath. We continue to participate in the planning for the 2019 Biennial and 2020/Ministering Women's Conference.



November 1, 2018

Dear Members of the Board of General Ministries,

The national Ministers Council recently distributed proposed Bylaws changes that will support volunteer leadership. Decisions on these and other major changes in the national structure will be made at our Annual Meeting November 12-14 in Philadelphia, PA. We are considering biennial meetings instead of annual ones, sending national MC leaders “into the field” on alternate years, and appointing an ambassador to champion the perspective of ministerial leaders at denominational events and meetings.

Since May, the current Board and Local Chapter Representatives have:

- Resumed monthly newsletters and moved toward a monthly webinar series, “MC Live.”
- Launched a new and improved website at <http://www.ministerscouncil.com>
- Offered small grants in support of existing Together in Ministry groups, drawn from the Together in Ministry Capital Campaign undertaken a few years ago. A larger pool of grant monies will be available in 2019.
- Brought together an ad hoc group to cast a vision for the realistic impact the Ministers Council can have, in partnership with the denominational family and other entities, on affordable and accessible health care coverage for ministers and families.

We value our continued partnership with you and branches of the ABC family.

Blessings on all you undertake,

Darla Turlington

Darla (“Dee Dee”) Turlington, President  
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## **AMERICAN BAPTIST MEN-USA**

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### **AMERICAN BAPTIST MEN-USA LAYMEN'S MINISTRY REPORT 2018**

As we move into the "Holiday Season" for 2018, we have much to report and many blessings to talk about. ABMEN ministry members and others were very busy this year. It began with teams of volunteers going to Puerto Rico to join with American Baptist Home Mission Societies and others to participate in the "Rebuilding, Restoring and Renewing" Puerto Rico program. ABMEN USA teams began the year working in PR from February 2 -23. Many churches were destroyed and many more damaged. The effort is to be an ongoing service to the churches in PR for many years.

The ABMEN USA Board met at Camp Moses Merrill in Linwood, Nebraska March 21-24 in conjunction with the ABMEN USA Disaster Relief Biennial Conference.

The "Spring Work Party" at Green Lake was well attended and many projects were completed April 2-7.

ABMEN Executive Director Kenna "Lucky" Ray attended the National Leadership Council (NLC) meeting also Green Lake in April. A great gathering of leaders dedicated their time and energy discussing the various activities, current conditions and needs of the various Regions. We also spent time working on special policy and organizational issues.

ABMEN President Bob Slechta and Vice President Bill Morningstar met with the men and provided a workshop on the topic of "Are You a Nehemiah?" during the ABC of the Big Sky Gathering in Great Falls, MT April 26-29.

June 1-3 Lucky Ray and Bob Slechta were the keynote speakers joining with the great men of North Dakota. The theme of the weekend was "How to Have an Effective Men's Ministry". Many exciting missional opportunities were discussed and the men seemed very organized and energized to be involved in discipleship.

Lucky Ray and Jack Cobb, National Disaster Relief Coordinator were able to visit with the ABMEN of Illinois in Bloomington, IL in June. The group also heard reports from Larry Stanton, IM Missionary to Hungary. There were many tears of joy and admiration for what is taking place there along with some great needs.

Bob Slechta represented the men's ministry at the ABMEN of Nebraska annual meeting in July and Lucky Ray did the same at the ABMEN's Camp in West Virginia in August.

In August, Lucky Ray, Jack Cobb, representing ABMEN USA and George Bradury, representing ABMEN WV, traveled to Sellers, SC following up on additional flooding issues. The group presented Mayor Barbara Hopkins with over 50 large bags of clothes and \$900 in cash which was received within a few days after the "call" went out. They were very appreciative of our continuing efforts to help this community. We were blessed with a report about a young man we had earlier mentored who has totally turned his life around. Praise God!



## **AMERICAN BAPTIST MEN-USA**

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September was a very busy month. First, the ABMEN National Board met at Green Lake September 5-7 in advance of the ABMEN USA Annual National Conference also held at Green Lake the weekend of September 7-9. At this meeting ABMEN USA formally voted to create a new District within their National Men's Ministry by recognizing Puerto Rico as District #14 and Felipe Candelaria as President of ABMEN of Puerto Rico and Julio Quiros as District Representative to the ABMEN USA National Board.

The meeting theme was ***"HOW to be the Hands and Feet of Christ"*** and the men were blessed to have Dr. Jerry Cain, Past President of Judson University was the keynote speaker. Rev. Dr. Kevin Walden, Associate General Secretary of Congregational and Pastoral Effectiveness, spoke to the men in place of ABC USA General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Lee Spitzer, who experienced a medical emergency and was unavailable. And Pastor Larry Dale of WV spoke on Sunday to the men, explaining that Jesus uses "Crippled Hands and Dirty Feet". The "Fall Work Party" at Green Lake began shortly after the National Conference and lasted for a week. Finally, a group of ABMEN from Janesville Baptist Church in Janesville, WI returned to work along side Green Lake staff to restore the "Hopevale Monument", in memory of the missionaries martyred for Christ in the Philippines.

During the weekend of September 27-29, Lucky Ray and Bob Slechta participated in the *"Safe and Healthy Churches Training: Ending Family Violence"* program held in San Diego, CA along with others ABC leaders and those from different denominations. ABMEN USA is proud to be a member of a "Task Force" assigned with duties of providing future policies and procedures for our ABC churches to help identify and prevent Pastoral, Congregational and Family Abuse.

ABMEN districts also coordinated disaster relief teams in October responding to the devastation in North Carolina following Hurricane Florence in September. The ministry will also continue to coordinate volunteer efforts in Puerto Rico which will be a long term opportunity for Ministry.

The ABMEN USA Executive Committee will meet at Bethel Baptist Church in Charleston, WV on October 30 - November 1 planning for our Ministry Activities for 2019 and beyond. The Executive Committee will work to finish the roll out plan for its new organizational ministry teams as approved at the National Conference in September.

Previously planned "work party" missions to Bacone College and Nicaragua were postponed due to various circumstances and will be planned for later dates in 2019.

Now 96 years strong, ABMEN USA continues today as a primarily self-funded ministry through its Key Contributor support of men who believe in its mission and God's call to serve as the Hands and Feet of Christ.

Kenna "Lucky" Ray  
Executive Director