

· **Highlights from Board of General Ministries meeting: June 16-18, 2016**

Retreat: Board retreat led by Erin Hawkins, General Secretary of the Commission on Religion and Race for the United Methodist Church and our Beloved Community Action Group. The board spent its first day in small groups sharing occasions when they experienced joy, grief, hope, and commitment in their experience with ABCUSA. The second day led us into a deeper conversation around race and gender issues that impact us as a board and impact our denomination. The work of the retreat will continue in future meetings.

Kachin Baptist Churches USA-named Associated Ministry Organization (AMO)-on Saturday, June 18 the board welcomed representatives from KBCUSA as well as Kachin representatives from Myanmar/Burma for the signing of the covenant agreement as an Associated Ministry Organization of ABCUSA. It was a grand celebration lifting up the rich history of American Baptist mission service in Burma. Now the Kachin have come to the United States to live and worship in the homeland of the men and women who first showed them the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Interim General Secretary-This was the first board meeting for Susan Gillies, our Interim General Secretary of ABCUSA. Susan spoke to the board about the role of General Secretary to serve as the “harmonizer” of the denomination. The term “harmonizer” was recently rediscovered by Susan as she read our Baptist history of one of our earliest leaders in the Northern Baptist Convention. We welcome Susan and are grateful for the work she does.

Board picks up Mission Table focus topic: The Gospel in a Rapidly Changing Society- Following the November 2015 Mission Table it was decided the BGM would take up the topic of the Gospel in a Rapidly Changing Society-one of the seven identified priorities. At our upcoming meetings we will hear from a variety of leaders involved in proclaiming the gospel in the midst of change. The speakers will be engaging BGM in discussions that offer us a new sense of the many non-traditional ways God is at work in the world.

Along with this decision we brought closure to the Renewing Congregations Action Group. We noted there are multiple places in our denomination where congregational renewal is being addressed and encouraged. We noted too, that we continue to have many churches in decline and we believe studying and addressing the gospel in a rapidly changing society will help address this issue.

Finance Report-The annual audit report was shared. It was noted that United Mission support has decreased once again, but the decrease was not as high as last year’s decrease. *United Mission is the Vehicle* emphasis has been sent to every region. This resource offers congregations a quick glimpse into the value of United Mission giving-that we are able to do far more together than we can do individually.

Celebrations-The Board honored Deborah Van Broekhoven and Leo Thorne as they approach their retirements. The plaque on Memory Lane, naming women presidents of ABCUSA, was updated and celebrated.

Closing Worship-Board Chaplain, Rev. Kay Farley, led the board in prayer circles with the General Secretary Search Committee in the center of the circles. The prayer dedicated the committee to its task and sought God's wisdom and guidance as they prepare to meet in August.