

American Baptist Churches USA
Board of General Ministries
Mission Resource Development Response Group Meeting
Thursday, November 14 – 4:00pm to 5:30pm
Valley Forge, Pennsylvania

Meeting Notes

Attendees:

Frank Christine
Robin Crouch
Dennis Johnson
Vivan Martindale
Alan Rudnick
Elmore Warren

Staff Members:

Beth Fogg
Bridget Holmstrom
Leo Thorne



1. Opening Meditation was given by Robin Crouch.
 - “Lord, let me be a fruit loop in a bowl of Cheerios – so that the world will know I’m for you and not for it.”

2. Report on Matthew 25 Grant
 - Beth distributed a status report on the Matthew 25 Grant Program.
 - The grant gives help to feeding, housing, health and education needs.
 - Distributions to date:
 - \$110,170 distributed to 53 churches in Spring 2013
 - \$93,092 distributed to 38 churches in Fall 2013
 - We received a letter and returned check from a church in Atlanta. The individual who applied did not have the authority to apply, and we cannot use this as originally intended. We are placing this money back into the funds.
 - Beth shared her enjoyment in being involved with this grant, and learning stories of grant recipients.
 - Robin shared that his church was able to share with another church the learnings that his church found, and help the church to grow its own weekend feeding program for local children.
 - The discernment group is very careful about who receives funding. We need to responsibly work to disseminate God’s money.
 - The donor is asking for details about recipients of the funding. We should send the donor projections for what we see in the future as far as disseminating gifts to different programs.

3. United Mission – Follow-up to conference call

- We've begun to work with our consultant (Alan Roxburgh), to be engaged in an adaptive process to address the UM challenge.
 - Following our previous meeting, the ABCUSA President, Vice President and General Secretary were consulted along with the consultant, and they will be meeting in January to discuss this adaptive process further concerning United Mission.
- We are still dealing with the percentage of UM giving going to International Ministries, and the issue of donor intent and ensuring money is given to the designations as it is requested.
 - We reflected on donor intent and legal concerns. People give to designations that they respect, admire, etc. We need to change the narrative, tell people where money is going.
 - We need to make a parallel effort. While we are working with the consultants on the adaptive challenge, we can still try to figure out what it is to indicate to potential donors how we can share the United Mission Story and tell where funding is going.
 - Letters soliciting money all the time come in. We should use names at the start of the letters.
 - Regional Executives like to know when their churches are being contacted.
 - We should use words and phrases and narratives that enhance our needs, not impede them.
- United Mission Talking Points, United Mission Action Points, and the United Mission letter sent in September 2013 were distributed to the group. Discussion:
 - The United Mission letter went to BGM members, pastors that have already given. We don't want them to think that we forgot that they have given.
 - The letter does include the emphasis to encourage higher giving.
 - If you can go in and select people who have already given, the system should send a thank you letter. Perhaps we can send one letter to people who have not given, and send another letter to people who have already given.
 - What is written in the UM letter tells what is not happening, and what is wrong. Some of this does not need to be included.
 - The talking points document is a draft, and can be updated.
 - It is much easier to critique than it is to create. You can always find a way to improve what you do.
 - UM unites our family. UM brings us together and supports the ministry of American Baptist Churches USA. Ruth says this in the letter.
 - All regions, partners, should be communicating this together. Regions, national partners, etc.
 - Part of the adaptive challenge should involve a way for all the partners to sit down together and make a common commitment to United Mission, all using the same words and descriptions. This is based on trust.
 - All MRD Response Group members are encouraged to email Beth Fogg or Bridget Holmstrom with feedback, ideas.
 - Robin and Vivan noted that they would be interested in reviewing publications/letters prior to disseminations, and would be happy to offer feedback.

- The UM Talking Points could be distributed to BGM members in June so that they can give reports to their region. We need to frame this as “for your eyes only” or “background information” to include in region reports.
 - Perhaps we should train and update our board members on how to communicate UM.
 - Region Execs should also be given the main message, so that we all have a core language.

Submitted by Bridget Holmstrom
November 25, 2013