

## **Three-Pronged Strategy for BGM Consideration**

### **1. Discerning God's Activities in a New Landscape**

- Extend a nationwide invitation to ABC congregations, pastors, lay leaders, and Regional Executives to begin a formal process of discernment together in order to discover and name the new thing God is doing in this new landscape.
  - This will be a critical leadership challenge for the BGM and the new General Secretary over the next one to two years; to lead the denomination in this discernment process.
- Since the ABC has always moved out on bold adventures in response to the Spirit's leadership, we must acknowledge that in this new day and new territory, we must engage as many American Baptists in discerning God's call together for our mission forward today.
- Through the Executive Committee of the BGM and in partnership with the Regional Executive Ministers, we must develop and implement a process of discernment that involves as many people as possible.

### **2. Continuing United Mission in the Interim (next 5 years)**

- Recognizing that United Mission, as currently configured, continues to have incredible value, we must develop ways to support and sustain it over the next five years. We recommend the following actions be immediately taken by the BGM:
  - Retain a fundraising firm to work alongside a Blue Ribbon Panel of noted American Baptists to undertake a comprehensive fundraising strategy beginning in 2015 and continuing through the 2017 Mission Summit gathering.
  - Assess the staffing level required in the Office of the General Secretary (Resource Development Office) to resource the fundraising strategy named above.
  - Assess and provide the necessary communications and marketing staff in the Office of the General Secretary to design and execute a comprehensive communications and marketing strategy focused on ABC identity and leadership across all constituencies.

### **3. Define Identity in Partnership with Regions and Congregations**

- Going forward, ABCUSA must undertake the adaptive work of discerning and proclaiming a new identity and imagining a compelling story for our future. This will require the following:
  - Moving away from a "corporate hub-spoke model" to a "distributive communities of learning model" that involves mission with local congregations
  - Reimagining the mission and role of national leadership, including the BGM
  - Redirecting our mission strategies and momentum from the local to the regional to the national
- Hold a BGM planning and design retreat (in February or March 2015) to engage the proposed adaptive challenges within the context of Transformed by the Spirit in order to have (by June 2015) a clearly framed planning strategy for addressing the challenges of Identity and Leadership with Regional Leaders and congregations.
- On the basis of this planning strategy, design and initiate a series of reporting and listening activities, such as:
  - Send BGM members to meet with their Regional Executives to share this report and invite conversation and data. Have these conversations take place before a BGM and REMC summit.
  - Send BGM members for listing, conversation, and engagement with their local churches.
  - Have the General Secretary Search Committee engage with these adaptive challenges and incorporate them in their work.
  - Hold a "summit" with BGM and REMC to discuss and engage these UM Adaptive Challenges (September – October 2015).
  - On the basis of this summit, propose and continue the design for an expanding engagement around Identity and Leadership (for Office of ABCUSA/General Secretary and Regions).
  - By January 2016, have ready a comprehensive plan based on the above work.

**Adaptive Challenge Team: United Mission**  
**Adaptive Challenge Statements**

**Adaptive Challenge Statement #1**

The identity of ABCUSA as the “face of the denomination” is no longer sufficient to address the anxiety, detachment, fragmentation, and confusion of its congregations. ABCUSA has not been able to address the challenge of reimagining its identity in partnership with congregations in mission in their contexts.

*Summary Rationale:*

A clearly identified, focused, well told, and compelling mission story is urgently needed. We no longer live in a culture of joiners. There is no longer any such thing as institutional loyalty. When people change towns, they don’t go looking for the American Baptist Church – they go looking for the church they like and that meets their needs. ABCUSA must tell a compelling story around a focused, crystal clear vision that people can buy into. What is our American Baptist DNA? What pieces of our rich and wonderful story do we capitalize upon to tell our future story?

**Adaptive Challenge Statement #2**

While ABCUSA is engaged in numerous valuable projects and ministries, leadership is urgently needed to bring laser-like focus on cultivating a reimagined, unified sense of identity, mission, and energy at the regional and congregational level.

*Summary Rationale:*

The leadership of ABCUSA will not be able to be all things to all people. What one thing will be so compelling that it will cause all the rest of us to rally around it? In times of crisis, a very narrow focus on a very narrow vision is required. We must be willing to search for the one thing that will draw us together as churches and as a family, and we must be willing to let other things go.