

Mission Table 2020 Overview

Purpose and Membership

The Mission Table concept emerged as part of a set of restructuring efforts recommended by the former General Executive Council of the ABC, comprised of key regional and national staff. The purpose of the Mission Table, as outlined in our ABCUSA Bylaws is, “. . . to further refine and pursue areas of common mission emphases articulated by their respective constituencies and the Mission Summit, making recommendations for, and committing to, areas of action. The Mission Table’s sole focus will be the furtherance of God’s mission through American Baptists, not the institutional life of the Denomination, so that staff of the mission partners and congregations can effectively network around shared responsibilities and priorities. (Bylaws: Article VII – Mission Table Section 3 – Mission).

The membership (107) of the Mission Table consists of 1 church participant from each region, the president and vice-president of ABCUSA, The General Secretary and 3 additional staff from OGS, the president and executive director and two additional staff from IM & ABHMS, 33 executive ministers, a representative from each ABCUSA caucus, the president and executive directors of ABHS, ABWMI, and the Ministers Council, one representative each from ABA, ABF, ABHCA, ABM, the president of ABEC, 3 representatives from AB Seminaries, and 3 representatives from AB colleges.

Unless otherwise outlined, participating organizations are asked to select their own representatives to the Mission Table. The process for selecting local church representatives is similar to the selection of Board of General Ministries members in which each region is asked to submit three potential names to the ABCUSA nominating committee who then selects a participant from the list of three in order to build diversity and balance among the participants. Sample invitation letters are available. Because regions differ in how they determine their three names, the process of receiving those names from the regions can extend beyond six months. Thus, some lead time is needed to plan for a Mission Table event.

The First Two Mission Table Events

The first Mission Table was held November 11-13, 2013. Judy Allbee, Perry Hopper, Dwight Stinnett, Marilyn Turner, Ruth Clark, and Jeff Woods served as planning team members. A total of 91 persons attended the Mission Table event, including 31 regional representatives, 5 ABC caucus leaders, 2 ABC officers, 2 seminary and college representatives, 24 national staff persons, and 27 regional staff. The Mission Table surfaced a set of ten recommended priorities for the ABC from an original list of 32 topics that surfaced via grass roots efforts and were discussed at the Mission Summit earlier that year.

The second Mission Table was held November 9-11, 2015. Virginia Holmstrom, Perry Hopper, Kenneth Kho, Marcia Patton, Don Ng, and Jeff Woods served as planning team members. A total of 95 persons attended the Mission Table event, including 30 regional representatives, 5 ABC caucus leaders, 2 ABCUSA officers, 6 seminary and college representatives, 25 national staff persons, and 27 executive ministers.

The second Mission Table turned 21 grass roots topics into the 7 ABC priorities listed below. This Table stressed the importance of developing “advocates” for each of the priorities and produced case statements for the 7 priorities. Detailed evaluation reports of the first two Mission Tables are available.

1. Next Generation of Leaders
2. Violence
3. Discipleship
4. Poverty
5. Gospel in a Rapidly Changing Society
6. Women in Ministry
7. Innovative Models of Pastoral Ministry

At the most recent round of Mission Summit Conversations at the 2019, BMS participants were given the opportunity to engage in conversations around these seven priorities that more specifically addressed aspects of each topic.

The Next Mission Table Event

The adopted theme for the next Mission Table is, “United in Christ, Together in Mission,” a phrase that emerged from the United Mission Task Force.

The major planning steps for a Mission Table event are listed below.

1. Set date for the Mission Table
2. Secure a site for the Mission Table
3. Recruit the planning team
4. Invite the participating organizations to select their participants
5. Develop a vision and shared experiences with the planning team
6. Create a workbook for the event
7. Finalize logistics for the event
8. Host the event

I served as facilitator for the first two Mission Table events and am happy to facilitate the development process for the next Mission Table. The first step is to set a date and secure a site for the Mission Table event.

Sincerely,

Dr. C. Jeff Woods