



# imagine

**American Baptist Churches USA**  
**BIENNIAL MISSION SUMMIT**

An Online Experience | June 24-26, 2021

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## 2021 BIENNIAL MISSION SUMMIT MINUTES

**Imagine**

**June 24-26, 2021**

**An Online Experience**

### **Thursday Evening Gathering, June 24, 2021**

**Worship 7:00-8:00 PM**

**Imagine Unity**

1. In the afternoon a “Welcome Session” opened with videos of greetings from American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA) pastors and congregations, followed by a silent prayer to remember all of the lives lost and those adversely impacted in this past year by COVID-19 and race-based violence. The “Welcome Session” provided an overview of the online experience for the 2021 Biennial Mission Summit.
2. At 7:00 PM, Thursday, June 24, 2021 Karen Podsiadly, President of American Baptist Churches USA, called to order the 2021 Biennial Mission Summit. Karen Podsiadly announced that as of 5:00 PM today 463 participants registered and 445 delegates registered, setting the quorum for conduct of business at 148. While only delegates may vote on motions, all attendees are welcome to attend the business session on Friday.
3. Karen Podsiadly announced that the information shared throughout our time together, especially during the Sunday afternoon business session, will constitute the information related to the ABCUSA budget and actions of the Board of General Ministries.
4. Felipe Candelaria, Chair of the 2021 Biennial Mission Summit Planning Team, was recognized to make a motion. He moved to adopt the Rules of Procedure for the conduct of business at the 2021 Biennial Mission Summit meeting of delegates. (This document was posted on the ABC website prior to the Biennial and on the Virtual Attendee Hub.) There was no discussion, and the motion was adopted.

5. Felipe Candelaria, Biennial Mission Summit Planning Team Chair, made a motion to adopt the provisional program, subject to any further changes the Biennial Mission Summit Planning Team, acting as the Committee on the Order of Business, might recommend and to designate the Biennial Mission Summit planning as the Committee on the Order of Business. There was no discussion and the motion was adopted.
6. Karen Podsiadly introduced ABCUSA Parliamentarian Bill Frederickson, appointed by the ABCUSA President in consultation with the Biennial Mission Summit Planning Team to serve as Biennial Parliamentarian.
7. Karen Podsiadly welcomed everyone to the 2021 Biennial Mission Summit.
8. The opening worship service focused on imagining unity, based on Galatians 3:26-29, as we celebrate coming together as an American Baptist family, as the Body of Christ. This service included upbeat and diverse worship from across the country, including Puerto Rico, moments of prayer and response, and a celebration of the Lord's Supper. Communion was led by Rev. Dr. C. Jeff Woods, Interim General Secretary; Karen Podsiadly, ABCUSA President; and Rev. Dr. Marie Onwubuariri, Associate General Secretary for Mission Resource Development. (See appendix 1; Imagine Unity, Order of Worship, Thursday, June 24, 2021.)
9. The National Executive Council (NEC) challenged one another to identify "silver linings" in their respective organizations. Each of the NEC shared "silver linings" that came out of this time of the global pandemic that caused hardship for so many, lifting up the ways in which they were able to continue in their work and maintaining connections with one another. The NEC consists of:  
 Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Haggray, Executive Director, American Baptist Home Mission Societies and Judson Press  
 Rev. Dr. Gina Jacobs-Strain, Executive Director, American Baptist Women's Ministries  
 Rev. Sharon T. Koh, Executive Director, International Ministries  
 Dr. Louis P. Barbarin, Chief Executive Officer, MMBB Financial Services  
 Dr. C. Jeff Woods, Interim General Secretary, American Baptist Churches USA
10. The offering this evening went to support the humanitarian work of the Burma Refugee Commission for the people of Burma. The Burma Refugee Commission is a joint effort of the Office of the General Secretary, American Baptist Home Mission Societies, and International Ministries; as well as, the respective conventions and associations represented by the Burmese, Chin, Kachin, and Karin. The Commission is responding to the current humanitarian crisis in Burma created by the military coup.

## **Friday Business Session, June 25, 2021**

**5:00 – 6:00 PM**

11. Karen Podsiadly welcomed Biennial Mission Summit delegates, called the meeting to order, and led in prayer.
12. Jim Wolfe, Vice President of ABCUSA, moved the adoption of the minutes of the business session of the 2019 Biennial. A vote was taken and the minutes were adopted.

13. Josué Gómez-Menéndez, member of the ABCUSA Nominating Committee, brought the report of the 2022-2023 officers and moved their election

President – Two year term, ending December 31, 2023

Rev. Dr. James Wolfe, First Baptist Church, Pontiac, IL

Vice President – Two-year term, ending December 31, 2023

Rev. Michelle Nickens, Washington Plaza Baptist Church, Reston, VA

Budget Review Officer – Two-year term, ending December 31, 2023

Mr. Paul Higgins, Bethany Baptist Church, Clarkdale, AZ

14. Karen Podsiadly called for a delegate vote, and the officers were elected.
15. Josué Gómez-Menéndez referred the delegates to the nominees for At-Large Directors of the Board of General Ministries, listed on the ABCUSA Website and on the Virtual Attendee Hub.
16. Karen Podsiadly called for a delegate vote, and the slate of At-Large members were elected.
17. Jim Wolfe, President-Elect, was invited to share a few words.
18. Paul Higgins, budget review officer, presented the Auditor’s Report on the 2020, ABCUSA Audited Financial Statements for the years ending December 31, 2020 and 2019, ABCUSA received from Tait, Weller, and Baker LLP, public accountants. For a complete audit report, visit ABC website at [www.abc-usa.org](http://www.abc-usa.org) or call the Treasurer’s office for a copy.
19. Karen Podsiadly adjourned the business session.
20. In a pre-recorded video, Karen Podsiadly signed the Bible presented by the American Baptist Historical Society Executive Director Rev. Dr. Priscilla E. Eppinger.
21. Also in a pre-recorded video, Karen Podsiadly presented the Cora and John Sparrowk President’s Award to Rev. Dr. Al Brinson.

## **Friday Evening Gathering, June 25, 2021**

**Worship 7:00-8:00 PM**

**Imagine Healing**

22. This year in particular, we recognize the need for healing in our churches, communities, nation, and the world. The worship for Friday evening came with the invitation to imagine and experience God’s healing spirit in our lives with the theme “Imagine Healing,” focusing on the scripture read from Jeremiah 8:18-22. Through virtual dance, and a time for prayers of the people, the service served to acknowledge the hurt in our midst and celebrate the balm that heals us all. (See appendix 2; Imagine Healing, Order of Worship, Friday, June 25, 2021.)

23. Rev. Dr. Winterbourne Harrison-Jones preached on the theme of healing. Dr. Harrison-Jones is the esteemed Senior Pastor of the historic Witherspoon Presbyterian Church of Indianapolis, Indiana.
24. The offering this evening went to support anti-racism work impacting the individual, congregational, and instructional levels of the American Baptist Churches USA.

## **Saturday Evening Gathering, June 26, 2021**

**Worship 7:00-8:00 PM**

### **Imagine Hope**

25. We are a people of hope and a Body of Christ who celebrate what God can do through us and in our midst. The closing worship imagined hope through children and youth leading portions of the worship, through a virtual choir inviting us into a time of praise, and through prayer of thanksgiving for the imaginative hope that we feel. (See appendix 3; Imagine Hope, Order of Worship, Saturday June 26, 2021.)
26. Rev. Dr. Brianna Parker preached on the theme of imagine hope based on the scripture from Ephesians 3:20-21. Dr. Parker is the Founding Curator of the Black Millennial Café which is a resource for persons and institutions interested in authentic millennials engagement.
27. The offering this evening was collected in memory of Helen Barrett-Montgomery, who became the first woman President of our denomination, 100 years ago. Funds collected this evening will support women in ministry by providing scholarships to the “Celebrating Ministering Women: Radical. Redeemed. Ready.” conference held next summer in Green Lake, Wisconsin.
28. The service ended with the announcement of the 2023 Biennial Mission Summit to be held in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

*This is a draft of the minutes from the 2021 Biennial Mission Summit Online Experience. These minutes are not official until voted on at the 2023 Biennial Mission Summit.*

# Imagine Unity

**Order of Worship  
Biennial Mission Summit  
Thursday, June 24, 2021  
7:00 PM (ET)**

## **Official Biennial Opening**

**Prelude** – “I Can Only Imagine”

Recorded by Puerto Rico’s Biennial Worship Band

## **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

Rev. Dr. Khalia J. Williams

## **Call to Worship**

Led by:

Becca Martin, Marshall University

John Stice, Japanese Baptist Church, Seattle, WA

Karen Podsiadly, ABCUSA President

O God, you are the gathering one  
who calls us into community  
with each other  
to love and work,  
to support and heal.

You are the gathering one  
who calls us into community  
with all people;  
to bring justice and hope,  
freedom and truth.

You are the gathering one  
who calls us into community  
with the whole creation;  
to live in harmony,  
to cherish and renew.

Let us worship the God  
who makes us one.

## **Opening Prayer**

Karen Podsiadly, ABCUSA President

## **Opening Hymn/Song**

“Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing”

Washington Ensemble, Antioch Baptist Church of Corona Queens, NY

**Scripture Reading: Galatians 3:26-29**

Sarah Chambers, Marshall University

**Choral Selection**

“In Remembrance”

Seattle First Baptist Church, Seattle, WA

**Prayer of Confession**

Rev. Dr. Marie Onwubuariri, ABCUSA Associate General Secretary for Mission Resource Development

***Prayer of Confession***

God of mercy,  
we come celebrating our unity,  
but we confess the many ways  
that we are divided.  
Our nationality, ethnic origin, economic status,  
gender, age, and musical preferences  
all too often obscure the common calling  
we share in Christ’s name.  
May our common identity as your children  
and our communal witness to Christ  
bind us together in your name.  
Forgive our tendency toward separation and division,  
and remind us that we are your Easter people.

***Assurance***

When we walk in the light of Christ,  
we have fellowship with one another.  
When we confess our sins,  
the One who is faithful and just forgives our sins  
and cleanses us from all unrighteousness.  
For in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ,  
God has showered mercy upon the entire world. Amen.

**Silver Linings from the National Executive Council**

Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Haggray, Executive Director, American Baptist Home Mission Societies and Judson Press

Rev. Dr. Gina Jacobs-Strain, Executive Director, American Baptist Women’s Ministries

Rev. Sharon T. Koh, Executive Director, International Ministries

Mr. Louis P. Barbarin, Chief Executive Officer, MMBB Financial Services

Dr. C. Jeff Woods, Interim General Secretary, American Baptist Churches USA

**Communion**

Led by

Dr. C. Jeff Woods, ABCUSA Interim General Secretary

Karen Podsiadly, ABCUSA President

Rev. Dr. Marie Onwubuariri, ABCUSA Associate General Secretary for Mission Resource Development

## **Offering Appeal**

Rev. Dr. Saw Ler Htoo, Pastor, Calvary Burmese Church, Washington, DC, and General Secretary, Karen Baptist Churches USA

Rev. Florence Li, National Coordinator of Asian Ministries, American Baptist Home Mission Societies

The Burma Refugee Commission is a joint effort of the Office of the General Secretary, American Baptist Home Mission Societies, and International Ministries, as well as the respective conventions and associations represented by the Burmese, Chin, Kachin, and Karin. The Commission is responding to the current humanitarian crisis in Burma created by the military coup. The offering this evening will support the humanitarian work of the Commission for the people of Burma.

(You may [click this link](#) to access the ABCUSA My Offering page where you can select the appropriate Sub Fund for tonight's offering.)

## **Closing Prayer**

Rev. Douglas Avilesbernal, Executive Minister, Evergreen Association of American Baptist Churches

## **Closing Song**

Evergreen Baptist Church, Los Angeles, CA

## **Benediction**

Rev. Dr. Khalia J. Williams

## **Postlude**

“They’ll Know We Are Christians By Our Love”

Recorded by Puerto Rico’s Biennial Worship Band

# Imagine Healing

**Order of Worship**  
**Biennial Mission Summit**  
**Friday, June 25, 2021**  
**7:00 PM ET**

## **Welcome**

Rev. Dr. Khalia J. Williams

## **Musical and Visual Prelude**

Piano and vocal prelude composed by Rev. Kimberly Salico-Diehl

## **Centering Moment**

Read by Rev. Dr. Zina Jacque, Community Church of Barrington

“We Lay Bare all that We Are” (from Howard Thurman’s *Meditations of the Heart*)

Our God, we turn to Thee in the quietness of this meditation period. It is but natural that we expose to Thee the things in us that seem most worthy and good that we may delight Thy Spirit and joy Thy Heart. The unworthy and the ugly things in us we almost instinctively seek to hide, to cover up, that we may seem pleasing in Thy Sight. But deep within us we know that this is not enough. We know that somehow we must be totally exposed to Thee, holding back nothing, seeking refuge behind no protecting screen or darkening shadows. We do not keep back the unsightly from Thee because we cannot trust Thee, dare not run the risk, but because we cannot deny the urge to offer in prayer the best that is in us. Teach us to know that Thy love is so whole and so healing that nothing less than all of us can rise to meet Thine all-encompassing care. Teach us to share with Thee the good and the bad in us, the ugly and the beautiful, the clean and the sordid, the success and the failure — all, everything complete in every part. With penitence for fumbings, failures, ignorances and sins; with thanksgiving for directness, successes, knowledge and rightness, we lay bare all that we are to Thy love and Thy understanding, O God our Creator.

## **Opening Hymn**

“Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah / Hold On”

Recorded by the Candler Singers, Emory University

## **Visual Art**

Darci Jaret, Park Avenue Baptist Church

## **Scripture reading: Jeremiah 8:18-22**

Rev. Brian Henderson, First Baptist Church of Denver, CO

## **Anthem/Centering**

“Balm in Gilead”

Choral recording and dancers from Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church, Philadelphia, PA

## **Speaker**

Rev. Winterbourne Harrison-Jones

## **Prayers of the People**

Biak Tha Hlawn  
Carson Chin Baptist Church

Rev. Justin Thornburgh  
ABCUSA Anti-Racism Task Force

Priscila Saviani  
National Portugese Speaking Caucus of American Baptist Churches

Dr. David Wheeler  
ABC Creation Justice Task Force

Rev. Dr. Mar Imsong  
Executive Director, Massachusetts Baptist Multicultural Ministries Inc.

## **Offering Appeal**

Rev. Rodney Lynch, Baptist Student Foundation, Purdue University. ABCUSA Anti-Racism Task Force Member  
Rev. Abner Cotto-Bonilla, Misión Bautista Hispana de Westchester, ABCUSA Anti-Racism Task Force Member

This evening's offering is designated to support anti-racism work impacting the individual, congregational, and institutional levels of the American Baptist Churches USA.

(You may [click this link](#) to access the ABCUSA My Offering page where you can select the appropriate Sub Fund for tonight's offering.)

## **Closing Song**

“Balm in Gilead”

Recorded by Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church, Philadelphia, PA

## **Benediction**

Rev. Dr. Khalia J. Williams

with scripture reading by

Isaac and Lydia Hensen, Sioux Falls, SD

# Imagine Hope

**Order of Worship  
Biennial Mission Summit  
Saturday, June 26, 2021  
7:00 PM ET**

## **Musical Prelude**

“Homeward” by Samuel Kim

## **Welcome**

Rev. Dr. Khalia J. Williams

## **Call to Worship**

Led by:

Jaden and Azriel McAlister

Covenant Baptist Church, West Bloomfield Township, MI

On this new morning and in every moment of our lives, gracious God,  
**from generation to generation, we praise your holy name.**

Like our ancestors before us, we proclaim your greatness to our children,  
**for we have seen your deeds of power and witnessed your goodness in our lives.**

As you have opened your hand to all, satisfying the desire of every living thing  
**open our hearts so that we might share the gifts we have received from you.  
Let us worship God in gratitude and joy!**

## **Opening Prayer**

Shileah Huggins, 2019-2020 National Leadership Team of AB Girls

## **Opening Hymns**

Medley from Tabernacle Baptist Church Children’s Choir, Utica, NY

“Christ Be All Around Me”

Recorded by the Witmer Family, International Ministries Global Servants to Thailand

## **Scripture reading: Ephesians 3:20-21**

Sage Kushner, Marin Covenant Church

## **Anthem**

“Total Praise”

Recorded by Japanese Baptist Church, Mount Zion Baptist Church, and Seattle First Baptist Church Joint Gospel Choir

## **Speaker**

Rev. Dr. Brianna Parker

## **Litany of Thanksgiving**

Led by:

Carol Quintanilha, First Brazilian Baptist Church of Los Angeles, CA

Corinne Beltrame, First Baptist of Greater Des Moines, IA

Rev. Francine White, Third Baptist Church of Chicago, IL

God Most High,

Before your son fed the multitudes, he first gave thanks. Before he raised his friend Lazarus, he first gave thanks, that all might know your glory. And so, as we are blessed to do your works in the world, that all might know your glory, we give you thanks and praise.

For the vision of this community gathered virtually for our Biennial, and for the commitment and dedication of all who have served, led, preached, and worshipped together,  
**We give you thanks and praise, O Lord.**

For the ways in which we care for one another, support one another on the journey of life, give strength to one another, and live in the tensions of community with one another,  
**We give you thanks and praise, O Lord.**

For the opportunity and desire to worship you faithfully and vibrantly, hearing your Word, singing your praise, and seeking your strength,  
**We give you thanks and praise, O Lord.**

For a commitment to remain true to your Word in a world of confusing and conflicting voices,  
**We give you thanks and praise, O Lord.**

For hope in the midst of global reckonings like we've never seen before, for healing, for the strength of your Spirit and your sustaining and nurturing presence,  
**We give you thanks and praise, O Lord.**

For the grace to serve in the model of Christ: feeding the poor, healing the sick, lifting the broken, aiding the endangered, and fighting for justice on behalf of the marginalized and vulnerable,  
**We give you thanks and praise, O Lord.**

**Holy One,  
God of unlimited possibilities,  
open us to your work anew,  
fill us with your imagination  
and breathe into us the breath of life.  
In Christ we pray. Amen**

## **Offering Appeal**

Tasha Wilson, Biennial Mission Summit Planning Team Vice-Chair

The offering this evening will be collected in memory of Helen Barrett-Montgomery, who became the first woman President of our denomination, 100 years ago. Funds collected tonight will support

women in ministry by providing scholarships to the "Radical. Redeemed. Ready: Celebrating Ministering Women" conference held next summer in Green Lake, WI.

(You may [click this link](#) to access the ABCUSA My Offering page where you can select the appropriate Sub Fund for tonight's offering.)

**Announcement of 2023 Biennial Mission Summit in San Juan, Puerto Rico**

Felipe Candelaria, Biennial Mission Summit Planning Team Chair

Rev. Edgardo Caraballo, Executive Minister, Iglesia Bautista de Puerto Rico

**Closing Song**

“Nuestro Dios”

Recorded by Puerto Rico's Biennial Worship Band

**Benediction**

Rev. Dr. Khalia J. Williams