



AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES USA

Rev. Dr. C. Jeff Woods
General Secretary

Dear:

On behalf of our nearly 5,000 American Baptist congregations, welcome to the American Baptist family! My name is Jeff Woods, and as General Secretary of American Baptist Churches USA, I lead a team of staff that serves our entire denomination.

As a people of prayer, purpose, and passion, our commitment to Jesus propels us to serve in a manner that nurtures authentic relationships, builds healthy churches, and transforms our world for Christ. We bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the world, accepting the mantle to guide, unify, encourage, and assist American Baptists in preparing congregants for the work of ministry.

Our denomination has a rich history that includes Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Walter Rauschenbusch, Yosh Nakagawa, Ann and Adoniram Judson, and along with countless influential leaders and missionaries. American Baptists have consistently come alongside those who are hurting and marginalized, whether they be persons on the trail of tears, persons in internment camps, or persons experiencing racial injustice. We continue to believe in the growth of this movement and the need to serve our common interests in response to the cries of the world. We are delighted that you have chosen to become a part of this great tradition. Our ABC family is the most ethnically diverse denomination in the U.S., and there is evidence to suggest that we are also the most politically diverse as well.

Amidst our rich diversity, we are committed to biblical authority, believer's baptism, and the priesthood of all believers. We also embrace both the autonomy and interdependence of the local church. While every pastor and local congregation is free to interpret and act on scripture as God leads them, we choose to work together to accomplish the mission that God has set before us. We acknowledge that God's will is manifested in movements outside the formal structures of Christ's church, and that, therefore, we must seek out and respond faithfully to opportunities for mission and ministry in our neighborhoods, communities, and around the world. Our role is to model servant leadership in enabling and empowering the entire family to work responsibly to carry out the common task of mission and ministry in our time.

To carry out God's mission, the ABCUSA Office of the General Secretary carries out three important functions for American Baptist Churches USA: gathering the denomination; supporting congregations, regions, and national organizations; and creating space for local and global issues. Each of these functions is described in greater detail below.

With input from leaders throughout the denomination, we plan the American Baptist Biennial Mission Summit. The next gathering will be held June 23-25, 2023, hosted by the American Baptist region of Puerto Rico, and we hope that you will make plans now to join us.

ABCUSA supports local ABC congregations in a variety of ways both directly and indirectly. One of these ways is through managing the American Baptist Churches Group Tax Exemption plan. While contributions to congregations that operate solely for religious and educational purposes are tax deductible, verification of such status is often required by municipalities, grant making organizations, and donors. We also provide accounting services for all American Baptist dollars raised, offer leadership development opportunities for regional and national staff, and maintain a database for all ABC leaders.

Committees, commissions, and networks are formed to place action with hope. Some of our current work involves advocating for peace in Burma, engaging in anti-racism work, promoting creation justice, and studying the impact of the global pandemic on local congregations. You can find information about each of these issues on our ABCUSA website, www.abc-usa.org.

Every movement needs institutions that gather the whole, and the ABCUSA Office of the General Secretary seeks to fill this role by providing a bowl that holds together the ministries of ABC through its services of gathering, supporting, and creating space. In addition, movements need institutions that carry out more focused ministries, and we are extremely indebted to the regional and national boards who provide specific and specialized ministry programs and resources for local churches, leaders, and other partners organizations. I hope you will draw on the rich resources of our whole denomination as you discern your role in the movements of Christ's mission.

Grace and Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dr. C. Jeff Woods". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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