

BGM Item 3a:

Board of General Ministries Reports: ABCUSA/OGS and Associated Ministry Organizations

Board of General Ministries Reports:
ABCUSA-Office of the General Secretary and Associated Ministry Organizations

TREASURER'S OFFICE – June 2023 to November 2023:

Highlights of Treasurer's Office, Accounting, American Baptist Churches Information Systems (ABCIS), Office of Travel and Conference Planning (OTCP), Associated Ministry Organizations (AMOs), and Building

ABCUSA:

- Prepared proposed 2024 Budget
- Common Budget Covenant Review Committee:
Convened the Committee to review the request from the Regional Executive Ministers Council "to remove the requirement of an annual audit as an additional report that Receiving Units provide annually to the Finance Committee of the Board of General Ministries."
- Annual insurance reviews/renewals
- Prepared and presented Analyses and Financial Statements to BGM/ABCUSA Finance Committees, BGM and BGM EC; staffed meetings, including meetings with ABHMS and ABF to review investments.
- Oversaw work of legal counsel in several areas including several recent lawsuits
- Personnel supervision for Accounting, ABCIS, Office of Travel and Conference Planning, and Building

ABCIS/NETSUITE:

The focus during the last few months has been to ensure that all data has been migrated into NetSuite. Many of the reports available in the old ABCIS system are being recreated in NetSuite.

The church annual report is in the process of being created so it can be completed online directly by the churches, which will save the regional offices time by not having to input the annual reports manually for all of their churches.

OFFICE OF TRAVEL & CONFERENCE PLANNING:

The Office of Travel & Conference Planning continues to support MMBB and International Ministries, as well as meetings sponsored by ABCUSA, the Office of the General Secretary.

In addition to planning, attending and finalizing the final billing for the 2023 Biennial Mission Summit, the OTCP has secured many hotel contracts for 2024 for our Partners and those sponsored by ABCUSA, the Office of the General Secretary. Planning has begun for the 2025 Biennial Mission Summit in Omaha, NE.

The Office of Travel & Conference Planning plans to hire for full-time opening which will include coordinating and facilitating the various on-line and in-person events.

REGIONS:

- Conferred with Regions and churches on financial and administrative issues
- Ongoing Receiving Units (collecting agency) responsibilities for 13 regions
- Providing Accounting Services for Phila. Baptist Association and Cleveland Baptist Association

ASSOCIATED MINISTRY ORGANIZATIONS (AMOs):

(AB Historical Society, AB Women's Ministries)

- Accounting functions, ongoing consultations, insurance reviews, renewals re: financial and operational matters
- Represented ABCUSA/OGS and NEC at ABHS Board of Managers meetings

-- Alan Musoke, Associate General Secretary for Finance/CFO/Treasurer

October 2023

Report to the Board of General Ministries ABCUSA

Interim Associate General Secretary for Regional Ministries

Status of Searches for Regional Executive Ministers:

Greater Indianapolis: A unanimous call to serve as Executive Minister was extended to Dr. Michael Friday by the board of ABC of Greater Indianapolis in mid-June, and he began serving in that role on August 23rd.

ABCOPAD: Since mid-June, I have met regularly (via Zoom) with the Search Team. They have worked through our suggested process at a steady pace and will officially post the position and begin receiving applications around November 1. They expect to conduct interviews after the Christmas holidays.

Vermont/New Hampshire: The Search Committee has chosen to conduct their search process independently. We hope to be invited to participate in the interview process.

Nebraska: I have worked with the Search Team since early January, both virtually and in person. In late September, they conducted interviews and unanimously selected a candidate to recommend to their regional Leadership Team.

Cleveland Baptist Association: They have identified a candidate. Jeff Woods continues to work with this search team.

Other Related Responsibilities:

I have participated in ABC Leadership Team meetings, including staff workshops and the September Leadership Team 2-day retreat.

Dr. Aaron Kilbourn (Dakotas) began his role on June 1st. I met with him in Sioux Falls in August, and with Dr. Michael Friday (Greater Indianapolis) in September, for the purpose of orientation and acquainting them with their roles. In addition, I attended one of the welcome receptions planned for Dr. Friday to meet with pastors.

I preached for Rev. Patty King Bilyeu (Great Rivers) installation service, hosted by Central Baptist Church in Saint Louis MO, on October 14th.

Monthly Zoom calls, offered for executive ministers, continued at a slower pace during the summer months.

- Recent topics have included a discussion of our understanding of the clause "churches in good standing," from the "Five Common Criteria" found in the Standing Rules; and a presentation of IM's Short-Term Mission resources and support, by Rev. Sandra Dorsainvil.
- Future topics scheduled include: Adaptive Change for Regions (Jeff Woods); a conversation regarding alternatives to audits that will engender transparency (Allen Musoke and Paul Higgins); and a discussion regarding creative approaches for using, sharing, or disposing of aging church facilities.

To the extent that I have been able to do so remotely, I have provided pastoral care to REMs. Issues have included deaths within their extended families; serious medical concerns; and family members visiting, or living, in Israel as the war broke out in October. In addition, I have provided professional consultation and a listening ear to several REMs.

On a somewhat related note, in mid-September I concluded my volunteer "gig" as Special Assistant to Dr. Sharon Koh and Chaplain to International Ministries.

As I look toward concluding this phase of my "retirement ministry" at the end of the year, I remain profoundly grateful for the opportunity to serve the wider ABC family in this transitional season.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Soozie Whitten Ford
Interim Associate General Secretary for Regional Ministries.

American Baptist Churches USA 2023 Biennial Mission Summit Overview Summary



Registration numbers

The total number of registrants at the end of the event was 1,359.

Of these, 171 were Local Arrangements Committee volunteers, 32 band and choir members, and 13 Liturgical Team/Tech Team members.

30 persons had cancelled their registration prior to the event.

105 persons registered onsite during the event.

Scheduled sessions at the Puerto Rico Convention Center

Thursday – 9 sessions; 7 sessions typically happen at each event

Friday – 18 sessions; MMBB Luncheon and a mix of Caucus meetings, recurring dinners and plenary sessions; ABWIM After Party

Saturday – 28 sessions; IM Luncheon, 14 workshops offered, recurring breakfasts & dinners and plenary sessions, and Young Adult Caucus Social.

Sunday – 14 sessions; ABHMS Luncheon, Morning Communion Worship Service, 6 workshops, Business Session and plenary sessions.

Convention Center Space

25 Meeting rooms were used for the various meal events, meetings, workshops, child care, staff offices, prayer room and meeting/meal space for the tech team and band.

We used the largest Ballroom for 10 plenary sessions.

The smaller Ballroom was used for the 3 Engage sessions and once for Mission Summit Conversations. Two exhibit halls were used, Hall C was set for 500 participants for the Luncheons and Hall A was used for exhibits.

Event Summary

American Baptist Churches USA 2023 Biennial Mission Summit took place at the Puerto Rico Convention Center in San Juan, Puerto Rico, June 22-25, 2023. We were fortunate enough to be able to use the entire Convention Center space for our event which limited the amount of room resets required throughout. This also provided us with the opportunity to set up our signage and Hospitality area wherever we preferred, not limited by another group's contracted space.

- Four Worship services were held:
Friday Evening Worship featured speaker Rev. Dr. Frederick Douglass Haynes, III;
Saturday Evening Worship featured Rev. Miriam Méndez;
Sunday Morning Worship with Communion featured Rev. Laura I. Ayala-Álvarez; and Sunday Evening Worship featured Rev. Joy Martinez-Marshall
- Twenty workshops were held during the biennial with seven on Saturday, June 24 at 9:00 AM, seven on Saturday at 10:30 AM, and six on Sunday, June 25 at 4:00 PM. Out of the 20 workshops, 8 were presented in English, 6 were presented in Spanish, and 6 were presented in both English and Spanish. One presenter decided not to attend the event due to the possible severe weather forecasted. We were able to configure the meeting room to enable her to join the two scheduled workshops virtually. Her executive minister provided in-the-room assistance for both workshops.
- Most of the Caucuses held meetings/sessions/meal events. These included the Alliance of Asian American Baptist Churches/Asian Caucus (meeting and dinner), American Baptist Hispanic Caucus (meeting and shared dinner with ABHS), American Baptist Indian Caucus (meeting), American Baptist National Black Caucus (worship, forum and banquet), American Baptist National Portuguese-Speaking Caucus (meeting with breakfast) and the Young Adult Caucus (evening social). The Women's Caucus has never had an event but always had a presence in the exhibit hall. The Haitian Caucus cancelled their session this year.
- Our national partners held their luncheons again this year with MMBB on Friday, International Ministries on Saturday, and ABHMS on Sunday. Both MMBB and IM purchased 500 lunches, ABHMS purchased 368.
- Several groups, both ABC Related and Guest Organizations held meal events throughout the weekend. These meal events also help to satisfy our food & beverage minimum at the Convention Center. Friday - ABHMS

breakfast, Berkeley School of Theology dinner, CCUIR dinner, Luther Rice Society dinner, and Women in Ministry After Party. Saturday - AWAB breakfast, BWA breakfast, ABHS/Hispanic Caucus dinner, Andover Newton Seminary dinner, Roger Williams Fellowship dinner, and the Young Adult Caucus Social. Sunday - Palmer Theological Seminary breakfast.

- Once again the Orientation to American Baptist Life program, this year called Engage 2023, ran concurrent with the Biennial Mission Summit. This included 77 participants and provided time for them to connect during three scheduled sessions during the event. Two of these sessions included dinner.

Registrations

1,359 total registrations were recorded for the 2023 Biennial Mission Summit

- 1,221 persons checked in to the event. This includes onsite participants and staff, and online participants.
- Approximately 100 persons registered onsite during the event.
- A total of 424 Delegates were registered for the biennial.
- Several persons switched their registration from a Participant to a Delegate onsite. A few persons changed from a Participant to an Engage Participant onsite as well.
- 172 Local Arrangements Committee volunteers registered to provide assistance throughout the event. This is the largest group of volunteers in recent events.
- Jeremy Fackenthal brought in 5 persons to serve as the onsite Tech Team and Stage Crew.
- There were 31 persons who registered as Worship Band or Choir members.
- There were 77 Engage registrations at the conclusion of the event.
- Event participants registered 147 Guests for the biennial. These Guests were able to attend Worship, purchase meal tickets, and visit the Exhibit Hall, but could not participate in workshops or select/attend any of the session which occurred on Thursday or Friday prior to the Welcome Session.
- At the conclusion of the event there were 80 persons from Puerto Rico registered as full event Participants or Delegates, and 29 one day registrations.
- 28 persons registered as Online Participants.
- ABCUSA had two staff working at the Registration counters in addition to 6-8 Local Arrangement volunteers throughout the event.

Business Session – Delegate Information

- As noted above, there were 424 Delegates registered for the event.
- These Delegates represented 231 Cooperating Churches as recorded by the Church PIN numbers entered during the registration process.
- 27 Regions sent Delegate representatives to the biennial; 23 Regional Executive Ministers registered for the event.
- The Cvent Events App Polling feature was used to vote on each of the motions presented during the Business elements. Back up voting cards were distributed to all Delegates in the event the platform was not working. If the Cvent App is used in the future for the voting process, adjustments need to be made to the script to provide more instructions for those using the voting cards instead of the App to include time for those voting in favor and against the motion.

New Features/Options and Observations

Several new features and ideas were added this year.

- For the first time we offered a few meal options for attendees that did not include programming. Grab & Go breakfasts were made available to attendees Friday through Sunday morning, along with a Sunday night dinner on the terrace. These helped provide \$40,000+ in F&B for the event and offered different options for attendees. All were well received with 200-250 breakfasts purchased each day and capacity reached of 350 for the Sunday dinner.
 - I suggest we consider doing this each year when there aren't affordable options at the event hotels or in the local area. This added significantly to our F&B minimum as well. We were fortunate to have the Outdoor Terrace available to us for the entire event which offered a pleasant location and view.

- We used the Cvent On Arrival platform which allowed attendees to check-in using an iPad on site. This expedited the process at the registration counters allowing us to use less volunteers and provide quicker service. When attendees checked in using a kiosk, their name badge printed and featured a QR code as well as a list of all sessions/meals purchased. The QR code served as attendee's meal tickets for the event.
 - This was very well received by attendees. It was a significant improvement in the check-in and onsite registration processes. Reducing the number of volunteers needed also helped to reduce the amount of training needed each day as there was less rotation of volunteer staff.
 - Including an onsite Cvent staff person in the agreement was a huge benefit. Having staff available to troubleshoot issues, correct problems and manage the equipment is highly recommended if we use the equipment again.
 - In the past we produced paper meal tickets for each meal for every person. Utilizing the QR code saved approximately two weeks of staff time which would have been spent producing meal tickets, sorting and creating a packet for every individual.
- Session Scanners were part of the On Arrival contract. These were used to scan the QR code on the name badge to permit entry into the meal events. The QR code automatically updated if a person added a meal to their registration at any time during the event. Scanners were also able to add a meal to a person's registration at the door allowing entry and the ability for us to charge them later for the meal ticket price.
 - These scanners provided us with real-time data on the number of persons present.
 - The technology gave meal event sponsors the ability to offer Complimentary Codes to persons allowing them to sign up for meals before the event without being charged.
 - Unfortunately, there were several issues using this technology that provided the following learnings:
 - It would be very helpful to have all scanning volunteers trained at the same time providing instructions and answering questions.
 - Scanners should be in place 30 minutes prior to the start of a session. Some volunteers did not begin scanning until roughly 10 minutes before the meal event which meant there were already a number of persons seated at tables who did not have their badge scanned. This provided us with unreliable attendance data.
 - The scanners were also used for workshop sessions. Some volunteers would not permit anyone who was not previously registered to enter the workshop room. If used in the future, instructions need to be clear for volunteers. They should also be given information about the number of available seats in the meeting room for each session so they know the minimum number of unregistered persons who can enter before asking persons to stand in a waiting queue.
- Another new Cvent option we used this year was the Cvent Events App. Due to limited staff time, we were not able to fully configure the Events App. There are a few additional features and data that could be enabled if this is used again in the future. The Cvent Events App was downloaded 725 times. 25.2% of attendees logged in to the App.
- Voting by Delegates was done online again this year. Only Delegates had access to the Poll questions through either the Attendee Hub on Cvent Events App. Even though this was used for the 2021 Online Experience through the Attendee Hub, we had not previously used the Events App for this purpose.
 - Several persons had difficulty accessing the software. Others did not have the Polls visible to them. Many of the issues were user-related, a few who could not access the Polls were because they initially did not register as a Delegate and onsite their registration was not properly changed to Delegate through the software.
 - If this is used in the future, Delegates should have their own Wireless Access password to ensure enough bandwidth for the App to function properly and for results to generate quicker. There was a 30+ second delay between the time I launched the polls from my phone and when the first responses were received.
 - I would further recommend that Tech Support hours be planned with limited hours at the very beginning of the event and one hour prior to the start of the sessions where voting will occur. It would also be helpful to have the Tech Support person located near Registration.

Sponsors and Partnerships

This year I tried a new approach to seeking financial support from the NEC partners. Rather than ask for financial support and/or have each organization pay for their exhibit space, luncheon a/v and other items they typically purchase for the event, we offered them a Partnership Proposal that included exhibit space, audio/visual needs for the luncheons, Program Book ad space, as well as a specified number of registrations. ABCUSA lost money through this Partnership Proposal as most partners received more “benefits” at this set fee than the monetary equivalent this year.

Event Sponsors included:

Iglesias Bautistas de Puerto Rico - \$20,000 event sponsor
American Baptist Extension Corporation – \$10,000 Registration and Welcome Bag Sponsor
American Baptist Foundation - \$5,000 Name Badge and Lanyard Sponsor
Palmer Theological Seminary - \$5,000 Child Care and Youth Program Sponsor
Church Mutual/Sovereign Insurance - \$5,000 Worship Sponsor
American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago - \$2,000 Communion Sponsor

Exhibit Hall

- There were 41 exhibitors in the Exhibit Hall. Preferred placement was given to the other event sponsors listed above.
- ABHMS, MMBB and IM were each located in one of the corners of the exhibit hall.
- ABCUSA had a presence near the entrance of the exhibit hall as part of the ABCUSA Pavilion. The Pavilion included ABCUSA Office of the General Secretary along with Engage 2023, Creation Justice Network, Burma Refugee Commission, Committee on Christian Unity and Interfaith Relations, World Relief Committee and the Caucuses. The intention of having all of these ABCUSA-related and BGM-related groups together in the Pavilion was to help attendees better understand the connection between these organizations.

Financial

This event was the first in-person biennial since the pandemic. The most noticeable changes are significant increases in costs for audio/visual equipment and staff, food and beverage charges at the convention center, and decorating costs. It was unfortunate that ABCUSA is not tax exempt in Puerto Rico. Their tax rate of 11.5% increased costs overall.

Through Discover Puerto Rico, ABCUSA received a \$64,500 refund from the city. This refund was based on the total number of contracted room nights used for the event. This was the maximum refund we were able to receive even though we sold more room nights than contracted.

Honorariums and stipends were given to the four Speakers, 19 workshop leaders, 9 techs and liturgical team members, and 15 band members. Travel costs and hotel accommodations were covered for the Speakers, tech and liturgical team members. Lunch and dinner were also provided for the techs, band and choir members. Parking passes were paid for volunteers, band and choir members. Meal vouchers, in the amount of \$10, were provided to volunteers who served more than 6 hours each day. Some of these expectations were not clear at the outset. In the future I would suggest making sure everyone understands what expectations are especially with the band, choir and volunteers.

Respectfully submitted by Tina Kiernan, October 12, 2023.

Report to the Board of General Ministries from Mission Resource Development

Rev. Dr. Robin D. Stoops

Interim Associate General Secretary for Mission Resource Development

November 2023

Mission Resource Development

The Mission Resource Development team worked hard on the Biennial Mission Summit in Puerto Rico. We asked those with whom we partner for support and sponsorship, this included individuals, companies, education institutions and more. We also worked on recruiting exhibitors as well as hosting a large booth in the exhibition hall on behalf of ABCUSA. Awards were given to our top ten United Mission giving congregations and we debuted our new United Mission video.

We have over the last several months created and finished the Mission Impact Summary for 2022, This has been published online, sent out to churches in our enewsletter and is available as a PDF and on our website.

In September we completed and sent out a new direct mail campaign on behalf of United Mission to all five thousand of our churches. Two differing direct mail cards were created. The first was a “thank you” card to our churches who have faithfully supported United Mission. The second was an invitation to include United Mission in the 2024 budgets of churches not currently giving. The card invited use of other creative ways to support the work we do together in United Mission. The campaign included email and social media encouragement to participate in the ongoing support of ABCUSA through Untied Mission.

In late October we began sending out a new quarterly email newsletter, “United Mission Matters,” using materials from the United Mission toolkit as well as other resources from our Executive Ministers to highlight United Mission and share what is happening in our regions in mission and ministry as it relates to discipleship, evangelism, and stewardship.

Also, in the month of October, I attended four regional conventions and two association meetings. We displayed information, showed videos, and shared about the work of ABCUSA and United Mission. I was a plenary speaker at the ABC of the Central Pacific Coast event.

We are working on two separate videos to add to our video library, one is tentatively entitled “The Journey of Your Generous Dollar” the other is a discipleship-based video highlighting giving as an ongoing part of discipleship, entitled, “The Way You Live.”

We have been working and will be taking promoting “Giving Tuesday” in late November. The funds from this promotion will go to a new grant ministry called “The Least of These.” ABCUSA churches will be able to apply for grants for new ministries in their communities caring for those who are enduring various hardships.

An end of year appeal for Untied Mission is being created and will be going out via all of our media outlets in mid-November/December.

We are planning an ABCUSA Sunday for February 11, 2024. This will include support materials to highlight the past/present/future of our work together as churches and national partners.

In all things we are working to build support for United Mission as well as exploring new ways for congregations to journey with us as we seek to join God's mission in our communities.

Burma Refugee Commission

Another of my responsibilities is the Burma Refugee Commission and ongoing advocacy for our sisters and brothers in Christ who are a part of the Burmese diaspora.

Since our June meeting I have visited Washington DC to moderate a Senate briefing on the persecution of Christians in Burm. The event was primarily sponsored by the Chin Association of Maryland.

I have also had a meeting with contacts from the Conference of Catholic Bishops, who are working on the new Welcome Corps initiative to make it easier for small groups of Americans to sponsor refugees coming to this country.

My time always includes meeting with representatives from our government, asking for them to remember and care for those who are displaced in Burma because of the coup. Along with the Burma Advocacy Group we are always working to help provide aid to those who are suffering because of the war crimes being committed by the military in Burma.

The International Religious Freedom Summit is also a place I spend some time. I have sat on the steering committee for the summit for the last two years. This group gathers over a thousand people in Washington DC to advocate for religious freedom for everyone, everywhere, right now. This is currently an arduous task with all the turmoil in our world, much of it based on religious intolerance. The summit will occur in January of 2024 in Washington DC. There will be over forty religious faith groups represented with speakers from around the world. Religious freedom has been a part of our faith practices from the beginning and working with this bi-partisan group is always a powerful time.



United in Christ Together in Mission



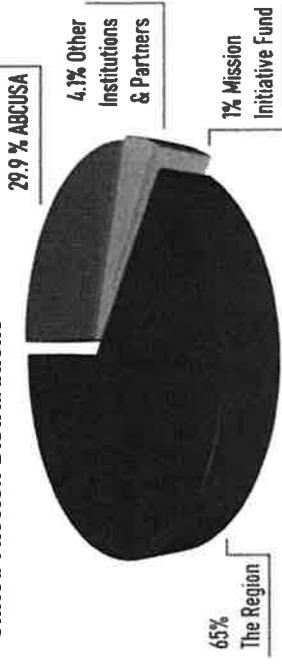
Scan this QR code to access the United Mission Toolkit which is available on our website. Watch the new United Mission video and find additional resources available to add to your ministry toolkit.

www.abc-usa.org/united-mission-toolkit

It's time to work on budgets!

We invite you to consider becoming a part of a meaningful partnership. Prayerfully consider including **United Mission** in your annual budget. Your giving to United Mission can ensure a lasting impact on your local region and community. By joining hands and hearts, we strengthen our connection through the Office of the General Secretary, a hub for valuable resources and conversations that address the challenges we share. Your participation adds a vital thread to the tapestry of our collective mission. We invite you to be a part of this shared journey, where each contribution helps to shape us as followers of Christ.

United Mission Distributions



American Baptist Women In Ministry (ABWIM) And Transition Ministries

ABWIM

Vision: ABWIM seeks the full partnership of men and women in ministry in which both women and men are able to fully utilize their God-given gifts and fully live out their God-given call.

Some Highlights:

- **“After Party”** at the Biennial – celebration featuring music from a local church band and celebrating our Puerto Rican sisters in ministry.
- **Commission on Racial, Gender, and Economic Justice** (Baptist World Alliance) – helped to plan programming on Calling and Gifting for the Annual Gathering
- **Women in Ministry retreat** – presentation and presence at gathering of women pastors in Puerto Rico
- **BWIM 40th Anniversary** – panelist giving voice to the context of ABWIM
- **ABWM/ ABC-MI “Fall Fling”** – presented on the landscape of Women in Ministry
- **WHRAT** – nominated to participate in the **Women’s Human Rights Advocacy Training** and gathering of global leaders for advocacy resourcing and training, hosted by the World Council of Churches

Transition Ministries ABCUSA

The vision of Transition Ministries ABCUSA is to partner with regions in resourcing churches during times of transition in a way which enhances their ministry and empowers them to journey into the future as vibrant missional congregations.

Training – Rev. Dr. William Tatum, Transition Ministries Training Coordinator, led an online training event for intentional interim ministry last year. Given the positive responses, we’ve been exploring further on-line as well as in-person trainings, as we continue to partner with regions in recommending intentional interim to congregations in need.

American Baptist Spiritual Direction and Formation

We have been renewing and refreshing a website (www.abspiritualformation.com) that includes resources for those seeking to deepen spiritual practices as well as a way for certified Spiritual Directors to connect. A link to it is located on the ABCUSA home website. New next year is a pilgrimage is planned in April on the Camino de Santiago, known as “the Way of Saint James” as a way of exploring the ancient practice of pilgrimage and deepening spiritual life.

In all of these ministry areas—ABWIM, Transition Ministries, and Spiritual Direction and Formation—I am thankful for the wisdom, grace, guidance, and support of General Secretary Rev. Dr. Jeff Woods, the ABCUSA Leadership Team, the ABWIM Advisory Team, and the Board of General Ministries without whom none of this could happen. **Thank-you!**

Rev. Dr. Patricia P. Hernandez, AGS ABWIM & Transition Ministries ABCUSA

American Baptist Women's Ministries Update

ABCUSA General Board Meeting Oct. 2023

ABWM Events

- *Shalom Retreat:* (October 2023) Women and girls gathered from Ohio, California, New York, New Jersey, Virginia, and Pennsylvania to enjoy fellowship, Bible study and workshops that focused on soul-care, financial, and mental wellness. AB GIRLS studied God's Word, painted, and learned how to turn their entrepreneurial dreams into businesses. Our host was Restoration Ministries of Greater Cleveland, Rev. Dr. Christine Smith, senior pastor and also serves as ABWM's board president.
- *2023 Fall Webinar Series:* Be Strong Be Courageous Webinar Series in underway. (October 2023)

ABCUSA events

- *Biennial 2023:* ABWM's staff, represented by Wendy Clemmer, was active in both the design and implementation of the workshops and programs connected to the 2023 Biennial. Rev. Dr. Gina Jacobs-Strain shared a workshop, participated in a panel discussion and communion.
- *Executive Committee:* Rev. Dr. Christine Smith, ABWM Board President and Rev. Dr. Gina Jacobs-Strain, presented a rationale to the executive committee-OGS for ABWM to be recognized as a national partner.
- *Everyday Conversations:* Rev. Dr. Gina Jacobs-Strain and Driana Arceneaux (ABWM, Young Adult Women's Ministry Advisory Team) led a discussion focused on Passing the Peace.

ABC Regions:

- Rev. Dr. Gina Jacobs-Strain represented ABWM at both the Prairie Clergy Conference and ABC- Rocky Mountains annual conference.
- ABWM staff, Cassandra Foster-Social Media Content Creator, represented ABWM at ABCNJ annual conference.

Submitted by Rev. Dr. Gina Jacobs-Strain, executive director, ABWM



In 2023, ABMen USA, thankfully, have not been called upon to respond to a natural disaster since the time of our last report. This has enabled ABMen, with close collaboration with the American Baptist Home Mission Societies, to focus solely on two long-term work project ministries. Below is a summary of ministry activity since our last report.

While reported as completed in our previous year's report, there was additional work identified that needed completed within the parsonage of Crow Community Baptist Church. Painting of the parsonage interior could not be completed during the initial phases of this project. Work crews from First Baptist Church in Billings, Montana volunteered to complete this rather expansive task. The painting of the parsonage interior began in late July and has been recently completed. There remains some general clean-up to be completed and repair of some roof leakage issues to be addressed.

Work crews from ABMen of the Central Region have been completing extensive maintenance and facility repair at the Murrow Indian Children's Home in Muskogee, Oklahoma. While completing an extensive worklist prepared by leadership of this facility, ABMen have had the opportunity and privilege to work with and mentor several work teams from other areas of the country, as well as from local churches. While these individuals have been able to assist in the working needing to be accomplished, it is more important to note that ABMen work team leadership have been able to train individuals from local churches in techniques to complete ongoing maintenance and repair of facilities. It is hoped that this will enable the Murrow Indian Children's Home to avoid deferral of needed maintenance in the future, thereby lessening the degree of major repair to facilities on an ongoing basis. Due to the extensive nature of the projects to be completed, it is anticipated that this work project will continue into 2024.

Striving to be the hands and feet of Jesus,

Bill Morningstar
President
American Baptist Men USA

RAINBOW ACRES - ANNUAL MINISTRY REPORT- 2023

We have tremendous gratitude for your support. On behalf of Team Rainbow, **thank you** for your prayers, financial support, fellowship, friendship, and worship. Together, we strengthen our faith and the community at large.

This past year has been a whirlwind of learning, challenges, and many blessings. As the leader of this organization, I am working toward greater levels of continuity and accountability. Organizational maturity fosters success. My reflections on this year bring some common thoughts to mind. I do not know why God put me here. More baffling, I have no idea why God prepared me for this season of serving on Team Rainbow. Somehow, I am worthy of these blessings. Learning from our beloved Ranchers, their families, and our fantastic team fills my cup. Knowing that I can help them learn and grow stirs my soul.



As of today, our Census includes 86 Ranchers. Nineteen (19) have joined us in the last 12 months. The Adopt-A-Rancher program continues to support Ranchers with financial needs. Recently, one guardian contacted me to discuss their ability to continue their tuition commitment for two more years. After a joyfully tearful discussion, Rainbow Acres confirmed that this Rancher has a home regardless of their ability to pay. Your support allows us to fulfill this commitment.



I want to tell you about one Rancher who joined us last year. Accepting one's disability can be a challenge for our young Ranchers. A faithful American family adopted one Rancher from a foreign land. This Rancher feels rescued and saved. After their first few months on the Ranch, this person felt closer to God due to participating in a faithful community. Recently, they expressed a sense of purpose and meaning by knowing that God created them and that God has a reason and a purpose for their life. To quote this Rancher, "God is here whether you believe it or not." Statistically, 100% of new Ranchers increase their faith and connect more with their divine nature. Let us feel gratitude knowing we are supporting a community supporting positive change in the lives of vulnerable and fragile people.

For 2023, we adjusted the Rainbow Academy semester. We introduced Wednesday activities and more weekend activities in addition to the 35 different classes that we offer. The purpose of all activities is threefold. To foster collaboration between caregivers and education staff, invite the community to join us on the ranch and integrate our Ranchers into community events and activities. Ranchers regularly serve at "Bread of Life," A local food bank. They visit our local assisted living facilities, participate in cultural events, and support community activities and initiatives. Church attendance is higher than ever at our local churches. Community-based activities increase Rancher's dignity and purpose and magnify our impact.



Mission Teams have been working hard on the Ranch, sharing their time and talents. They've built a new roof on the structure at the top of "Glory Hill" and hardscaped the Memory Walk area below. Teams that join us lead Prayer Circle each morning and put their many skills to work doing various projects (landscaping, painting, electrical, carpentry), joining the Ranchers for meals, renewing old friendships, and creating new ones.



Mark Showers, our founder, had a dream that started with our incorporation back in 1973. Rainbow Acres opened their doors in 1974. Rainbow Acres is celebrating our 50th Anniversary with the Inaugural Verde Valley Glow event on October 28th, 2023. This event will include a balloon glow that will be visible across the Verde Valley. We will host hot air balloon rides, delicious local foods, crafts, live music and more. Our hope is to establish a valley-wide community event that invites hundreds to visit and learn about our unique community. I believe the community benefits by interacting with our staff and Ranchers.

We are blessed by the support we receive from ABCUSA and American Baptist Congregations across the USA.

