



BOARD OF GENERAL MINISTRIES

GREEN LAKE, WI

JUNE 12-14, 2024

FINAL MINUTES

CONFIDENTIAL

Meeting Site: Green Lake Conference Center
W2511 State Rd. 23
Green Lake, WI 54941
Ph: 920-294-3323

Officers: Nikita McCalister, President
Paul Higgins, Budget Review Officer
Gina Jacobs-Strain, General Secretary

Parliamentarian: Bill Frederickson **BGM Chaplain:** Doug Scalise

Wednesday, June 12, 2024, 2:00 pm – 3:30 pm

BGM 643 WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA) President Nikita McCalister welcomed all of the Board of General Ministries (BGM) directors, staff, and first-time directors Joy Martinez-Marshall and Suleima Rosario-Diaz, calling the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 12, 2024.

Regrets from Directors who could not attend: Annie Field (VNH), Damaris Santiago-Lebron (PR), Shawna Simmons (INS), Wungreiso Valui (GHC), and Chakravarthy (Chaks) Zadda (General Director).

Thanks to directors Dwayne Williams and Marilyn Malone for agreeing to serve as tellers for this meeting and guitarist Matt Toupin for his gift of providing music accompanied by worship singers from the Board during our time of reverence. President Nitika McCalister announced that all Board Directors were invited and welcomed to attend the New Board Director Orientation from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. It was announced that this orientation would be helpful and serve as a refresher for all directors.

BGM 644**OPENING WORSHIP/LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE**

Devotion was on Ephesians 2:1-10 – God’s Grace.

BGM 645**SHARING THE ABCUSA FOCUS STATEMENT**

The statement was read in unison: *“American Baptist churches are missional congregations that nurture devoted disciples of Jesus Christ who live their lives in mission and ministry for the healing of the world through the love of God.”*

BGM 646**BELOVED COMMUNITY ACTIVITY**

All BGM Directors participated in the Beloved Community Activities.

Exercise 1 - The group was asked to stand and try to connect with someone in the room. This community activity aims to connect by eye contact to let that person know that you recognize them, see them, and are honored to be seen by them.

Exercise 2 – Find Yourself in the Picture

BGM 647**GENERAL CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS**

Written Reports Posted Prior to the Meeting:

- a. Reports from ABCUSA & AMOs
- b. Special Directors to Other Boards
- c. Standing Rules Committee

Proposed Action: To approve by general consent the Minutes of the Board of General Ministries Meeting of November 3-5, 2023, and to receive the designated written reports identified on the agenda.

By voice vote, the BGM approved by general consent the Minutes of the Board of General Ministries November 3-5, 2023, in King of Prussia, PA, and the designated reports on the agenda.

Reports from this meeting are included with the filing of the minutes. Not all items from the agenda are listed here in the minutes. These minutes note the motions and additional notes not included in the reports.

BGM 648**REPORT FROM THE ABCUSA GENERAL SECRETARY**

Rev. Dr. Gina C. Jacobs-Strain said serving as General Secretary is an incredible joy. “I am meeting with our regions and clergy to celebrate our denomination. We now have a new onboarding and orientation process for newly hired staff. We want staff to feel welcome. New staff and those that share common interests review the partner videos, and take a tour of the partners’ facilities in King of Prussia. The new staff also have buddies. We implemented a second round for the Mission Table Priority discussions with the NLC to determine next steps before the next NLC meeting in 2025. The Biennial team intentionally included a Young Adult Advisory Team. Also, we ran a campaign for a group of people under thirty-five to share and develop a theme topic. The new campaign theme for the 2025 Biennial Mission Summit is “Come Seek Living Water” is the result.

We are looking into to rebrand and update One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) communications. This idea was shared with NEC and they were delighted to have the Office of the General Secretary spearhead this endeavor and take a more active role in OGHS. We are working more intently on donor development by increased donor communication.

BGM 649 REPORT FROM THE ABCUSA NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Thomas Ross has resigned as Vice President of American Baptist Churches USA.

According to our Bylaws, "When a vacancy occurs in the office of the Vice President, the Board of General Ministries shall, upon nomination by the ABCUSA Nominating Committee, elect from among its At-Large Directors a Vice President to serve for the remainder of the term so vacated."

The Nominating Committee met in late May 2024 to discuss the vacancy of Vice President of American Baptist Churches USA.

Proposed Action: To elect the nominee of the Nominating Committee as Vice President of American Baptist Churches USA: Bill Poland.

By voice vote, the Board approved the motion (one opposed.)

The ABCUSA President, in consultation with the General Secretary, shall nominate not more than three members of the Board of General Ministries for election by the BGM to serve as members of the BGM Executive Committee. There is currently one vacancy.

Proposed Action: To elect Joy Martinez-Marshall, the President's nominee, as a member of the BGM Executive Committee.

Proposed Action: To elect Brandon Bouldin, the President's nominee, as a member of the BGM Finance Committee and ABCUSA Finance Committee.

By voice vote, the Board approved the motion.

BGM 650 AMERICAN BAPTIST WOMEN'S MINISTRIES (ABWM)

In March 2022, the BGM Executive Committee formed a task force to look at recognizing ABWM as a national partner. ABCUSA Bylaws language needs to be reviewed and rewritten. Bylaw **changes will require** a delegate vote at the 2025 Biennial Mission Summit.

Motion:

Jim Wolfe, Past-President, presented a motion on behalf of the BGM Executive Committee that American Baptist Women's Ministries be recognized as a national board, resulting in changes in Bylaws and Standing Rules to follow.

Discussion:

- ABWM is at risk. ABWM should not be compared to other AMOs. ABWM has been doing the same thing as IM and ABHMS for over 20 years and is a program board.
- ABWM has always been at the forefront of serving and supporting the denomination.
- **When ABWM became part of the NEC, they gained responsibility without the same influence and position as the members of the NEC. It took the last four** years just to have an ABWM staff member join the World Relief Committee Meetings. All NEC members have staff that attend the WRC meetings.

- No one opposes the concept of ABWM as a national board, a Board Member from the task force stated. The definition of a national board in ABCUSA Bylaws is weak. There needs to be a clearer distinction between what it means to be an AMO and a National Board.

The Task Force did not put forth a recommendation.

- **Motion submitted to BGM a second time:**

Jim Wolfe restated the motion on behalf of the BGM Executive Committee that American Baptist Women's Ministries be recognized as a National Board, resulting in changes in Bylaws and Standing Rules to follow.

The Board took a written vote. The motion passed.

BGM 651 REPORT FROM THE ABCUSA PRESIDENT

President Nikita McCalister reported that it is an honor and a privilege to be amongst everyone. What excites her is being in places where she can hear other people's God stories. President McCalister stated she would continue to make herself available to engage, introduce, and reintroduce American Baptist Churches to individuals and congregations in every way. The President's written report is attached.

Proposed Action: Motion to receive the President's report.

By voice vote, the motion was approved.

BGM 652 ACTION GROUP REPORTS

The Action Groups gave verbal reports following their meetings, with written reports to follow.

BGM Finance Committee

Christian Unity & Interfaith Relations

Becoming a Beloved Community

Communicating ABC Identity

BGM 653 NEW BGM DIRECTOR ORIENTATION

The Officers and Directors welcomed the new BGM Directors. They were given encouraging words, insight, and instruction regarding their role as Directors. All BGM Directors and staff attending the orientation introduced themselves and shared something about themselves.

Thursday, June 13, 2024, 9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

BGM 654 LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE / PRAYER

Devotion was on Ephesians 2:11-22 – The Unity of the Church.

BGM 655 REPORT OF ACTIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Board had no action at this time.

BGM 656 REPORT OF THE BUDGET REVIEW OFFICER

Budget Review Officer Paul Higgins gave an overview of the 2023 Audited Financial Statement of the independent certified public accountants, Tait, Weller & Baker LLP.

1. Paul Higgins reviewed the financial reports prepared by Alan Musoke, Associate General Secretary for Finance/CFO/Treasurer, including:
 - a. Year to Date Financials through April 30, 2024
 - b. End of Year Financial Report December 31, 2023
2. The minutes include the reports of the independent certified public accountants Tait, Weller & Baker and the financial reports.

BGM 657 REPORT OF AMERICAN BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Board took no action at this time. Dr. Priscilla Eppinger could not be present due to a family death. The BGM was asked to keep Dr. Eppinger and her family in prayer.

BGM 658 REPORT ON REGIONAL MINISTRIES

Dr. C. Jeff Woods, Associate General Secretary for Regional Ministries, reported on regional ministries, including projects with short-term, intermediate-term, and long-term impacts. Dr. Woods meets with the newly appointed Executive Ministers in the first month. He meets with them by having group orientation or group cohort to discuss and share information within the group.

Dr. Woods introduced Dr. Harry Riggs, Region Executive Minister of ABC of Connecticut, who serves as the REMC Representative to the Board of General Ministries and asked him to share an update from the REMC.

BGM 659 REPORT OF MISSION RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Rev. Dr. Robin Stoops, Associate General Secretary for Mission Resource Development, spoke about United Mission and the “United Mission Matters” quarterly newsletter. The newsletter includes articles about giving, stewardship, and discipleship, and there has been positive feedback. When someone gives to missions, they will receive a letter from the General Secretary. Dr. Stoops also reported on his meetings with Regional Executives and Boards, updating the donor list, One Great Hour of Sharing, which is an ABCUSA Offering. He continues to serve on the Burma Advocacy Commission.

Save the date for the Biennial Mission Summit, July 3 – July 6. “Come Seek Living Water.” The planning committee was expanded to include young adults. The focus is on families.

BGM 660 ABC MISSION TABLE PRIORITIES

The Board Directors were asked to choose a mission table priority topic they are most passionate about and share ideas on how they can impact the Regional Executives at the Board level.

BGM 661 BGM GROUP PHOTO

The BGM Directors gathered for a group photo.

Friday, June 14, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

BGM 662 LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE/PRAAYER

Devotion was in Ephesians 3:14, Power to Pray.

BGM 663 ACTIVITY OF BELOVED COMMUNITY BGM BINGO

All BGM Directors participated in the Beloved Community Activities.

BGM 664 BGM ACTION GROUPS/PROPOSALS

BGM Finance Committee:

Budget Review Officer Paul Higgins reported on the BGM Finance Committee and the ABCUSA Finance Committee.

The BGM Finance Committee met with the auditors on 5/30/24 and reviewed the Audited Financial Statements.

Alan Musoke, ABCUSA Treasurer, met with the BGM Finance Committee. There will be a 2-year ABCUSA Budget for 2025 and 2026.

Paul also reviewed the results of the internal audits for Mission Receipts. The audits are to ensure that the entire Mission Receipt process works correctly, from when the churches receive the funds and remit them to when they are recorded and distributed by the ABCUSA Treasurer's Office.

Paul reported that ABCUSA is responsible for the following endowments to benefit other ABCUSA organizations:

The Roblee Fund proceeds are distributed to International Ministries (IM).

The Roberts Fund proceeds are split between International Ministries and American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS).

For 2025, the draw from the Roblee Fund will be \$59,302 (4.5% of the 12-quarter rolling average of the market value of the fund) and will be distributed to International Ministries.

For 2025, the draw from the Roberts Fund will be \$4,977 (also 4.5% of the 12-quarter rolling average) to be split evenly between International Ministries and the American Baptist Home Mission Societies.

Paul also reviewed the status of regional audits and changes in audit requirements for regions Receiving Units. Please refer to the attached BGM Finance Committee Report.

Motion from the BGM Finance Committee: The Operating Guidelines for the Common Budget Covenant state that "all national corporations, all Associated Ministry Organizations receiving American Baptist Mission Support, and all regions must prepare financial reports in such form as the Board of General Ministries may request."

Proposed Motion: Financial Reports submitted for compliance with the Common Budget Covenant and its Operating Guidelines shall:

- 1) be for the end of the organization's fiscal year
 - a. year-end reports.
- 2) consist of a statement of activities and a statement of financial position
 - a. profit & loss statement
 - b. balance sheet

Proposed Action: To approve the motion from the BGM Finance Committee.

By voice vote, the Board approved the motion.

The ABCUSA Finance Committee met on May 30, 2024:

1. The Committee recommended forwarding the 2025 United Mission Budget to the Board for approval.
2. The Committee denied a grant request for the Mission Initiative Fund.

The report is attached.

Committee on Christian Unity & Interfaith Relations (CCUIR):

The Committee met, although there was no quorum (2 members were present). They mentioned reports received from different denomination members at Interfaith dialogues and groups. A verbal report on Jewish Christian dialogues was delivered to the group. The Committee on Christian Unity & Interfaith Relations met with Rev. Nikita McCalister and Rev. Dr. Gina Jacobs-Strain in conversation about the members who represent the group. Dr. Jacobs-Strain recommended, and the group affirmed Rev. Dr. Patricia Hernandez as the representative to “Shoulder to Shoulder,” an organization that addresses issues related to Muslim and Christian dialogues.

Job descriptions will be created for Ambassadors when they represent ABCUSA with ecumenical organizations.

Becoming a Beloved Community:

This group will continue to ask for time in the board meeting to continue to build relationships. The goal mentioned was “We are a Beloved Community that God will bring everyone together in love and we will do His work.” The group spoke about learning how to have a healthy conflict in dialogue and the need for opportunities to come together, e.g., via Zoom, and build a community between the BGM meetings.

Communicating ABC Identity:

Bonnie Higgins spoke on United Mission and the videos that ABCUSA shared. The group received a summary of American Baptist History from the Communications Director. A copy of the written Minutes is attached.

BGM 665 CONTINUING AND ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS

Additional words were shared from Romans 5:8. President Nikita McCalister shared that this is amazing, overwhelming, and unconditional love. We are each called to have this type of love for our brothers and sisters because we are part of the same family. We are called to have a visible faith and a tangible love.

In the spirit of remembrance, we are called together as the Body of Christ for God’s purpose. We should lean into love, love through our differences, live and love, and risk love because love never fails. Laws can be broken but love never fails because we are *“American Baptists United in Christ, Together in Mission”*.

BGM 666 CLOSING WORSHIP, COMMUNION, PRAYER, AND ADJOURNMENT

Chaplain Doug Scalise led the Closing Worship with Communion. President Nikita McCalister sang the Lord’s Prayer, and the BGM served each other the Lord’s Supper by pairing up. The BGM closed the meeting by reading the version of the Lord’s Prayer written by Dallas Williard and prepared by Brewster Baptist Church, Brewster, MA.

The meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by,

Rev. Dr. Gina C. Jacobs-Strain

Rev. Dr. Gina C. Jacobs-Strain
General Secretary

GJS/vg

Documents attached

BGM Minutes – November 2023 (1001:11/23)

BGM Proposed Agenda (1102:6/24)

Integrated Schedule- June 2024

Reports from ABCUSA OGS and AMOs

Report from Special Director to MMBB

Report from Special Director to American Baptist Home Mission Societies

Report from Special Director to International Ministries

Report from the General Secretary June 2024

Report from the ABCUSA President June 2024

Financial Statements and Reports of the Independent CPAs Dec. 31, 2023, and 2022

ABCUSA Financial Report as of April 30, 3024

ABCUSA Financial Report as of December 31, 2023

ABCUSA Proposed 2025 Budget

BGM Action Groups – June 2024

Board of General Ministries Meetings:

November 15-17, 2024, Alloy Hotel, King of Prussia, PA

July 1-3, 2025, CHI Health Center Arena and Convention Center, Omaha, NE

BGM Executive Committee Meetings:

September 5-7, 2024, Hilton, Omaha, NE lunch with local clergy

November 14-15, 2024, Alloy Hotel, King of Prussia, PA

March 13-15, 2025, Los Angeles, CA

June 30-July 1, 2025, CHI Health Center Arena and Convention Center, Omaha, NE

September 11-13, 2025 (Location TBD)