



2023 BIENNIAL MISSION SUMMIT

For Such a Time as This
June 23-25, 2023
San Juan, Puerto Rico

2023 BIENNIAL MISSION SUMMIT OVERVIEW

With the theme “For Such a Time as This,” the 2023 Biennial Mission Summit opened with a “Welcome Session” and “Spotlight on Puerto Rico” on Friday afternoon, June 23. American Baptists have returned to meet in Puerto Rico after many difficult years, including destruction caused by Hurricanes Maria and Fiona, and continue to offer support throughout the region. The Spotlight on Puerto Rico session highlighted work done within the region by American Baptists after the storms, including the Iglesias Bautistas de Puerto Rico and the American Baptist Home Mission Societies.

Prior to worship each evening, International Ministries (IM)-Friday, American Baptist Homes Mission Societies (ABHMS)- Saturday, and American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA) – Sunday, gave a report of “Worshipful Work.” International Ministries’ report was led by Jorge Medero-Roldán, Board President for IM and Rev. Dr. Sharon Koh, Executive Director and CEO of IM. American Baptist Homes Mission Societies’ report – Testify! - was led by Rev. Dr. Jamie Washam, President of ABHMS Board of Directors and Dr. Jeffrey Haggray, Executive Director, ABHMS and CEO, Judson Press. American Baptist Churches USA’s Report was led by ABCUSA General Secretary Dr. C. Jeff Woods and ABCUSA President Rev. Dr. James O. Wolfe, III, added his signature to the Bible signed by all ABCUSA Presidents during a presentation with Rev. Dr. Priscilla Eppinger, Executive Director of the American Baptist Historical Society, the keeper of the Bible.

There were four plenary worship services during the 2023 Biennial Mission Summit.

Friday evening, June 23

Rev. Dr. Frederick Douglass Haynes III preached on the theme of “Awareness of the Brokenness in our World” based on the scripture of Esther 4:1. Dr. Haynes is the Senior Pastor of Friendship – West Baptist Church in Dallas, TX. Worship included prayers from around the world as well as congregational singing with the Puerto Rican worship band. The offering collected was designated for supporting Indigenous Rights.

Saturday evening, June 24

Rev. Miriam Méndez preached on the theme of “Confession and Lament” based on Esther 4:1-3. Rev. Méndez serves as the Executive Minister and Senior Regional Pastor of the American Baptist Churches of New Jersey. Worship included a collective lament, featuring music from Puerto Rico, congregational singing and a time of confession. The offering collected was designated to support anti-racism work within the denomination.

Sunday morning, June 25

Rev. Laura I. Ayala-Álvarez preached on the theme of “Hope” based on Esther 4:14. Rev. Ayala-Álvarez is currently the coordinator of Global Missions for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and candidate for a doctoral degree in Theology (PhD) at the Interamerican University of Puerto Rico. The worship service included passing of the peace, communion, congregational singing, and responsive prayers led by members of the American Baptist family.

Sunday evening, June 25

Rev. Joy Martinez-Marshall preached on the theme of “Action and Sending” based on Esther 4:15-16. Rev. Martinez-Marshall serves as the pastor of First Baptist Church of Lincoln, NE. The worship included a video reflection highlighting where God is at work in the world, a multilingual commissioning, and congregational singing.

Award recognitions included: The Luke Mowbray Ecumenical Award was presented during the Committee on Christian Unity and Interfaith Relations dinner on Friday evening to Dr. Luis N. Rivera-Pagán. The Edwin T Dahlberg Peace and Justice Award was presented during worship on Saturday evening to Rev. Dr. Michael Nabors and Rev. Dr. Michael Woolf. The Cora and John Sparrowk President’s Award was presented to Rev. Kathryn Choy-Wong during the “Worshipful Work” session on Sunday evening.

The 2023 Biennial Mission Summit program book and videos of the worship services are available for viewing at the American Baptist Historical Society.

2023 BIENNIAL MISSION SUMMIT BUSINESS SESSION MINUTES

1. At 8:00 PM on Friday, June 23, 2023, Rev. Dr. James (Jim) Wolfe, President of American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA), called to order the 2023 Biennial Mission Summit, announcing that as of 5:00 PM, 1066 participants had registered and 352 had delegates registered, setting the quorum for the conduct of business at 117.
2. Tasha Wilson, Chair of the 2023 Biennial Mission Summit Planning Team, moved to adopt the Rules of Procedure for the conduct of business at the 2023 Biennial Mission Summit meeting of delegates. (This document was posted on the ABCUSA website prior to the Biennial and on the Virtual Attendee Hub.) There was no discussion, and the motion was adopted.
3. Wilson made a second motion to adopt the provisional program, subject to any further changes that 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 Team as the Committee on the Order of Business. There was no discussion and the motion was adopted.

4. Dr. Wolfe introduced ABCUSA Parliamentarian Rev. Bill Frederickson, who was appointed by the ABCUSA President in consultation with the Biennial Mission Summit Planning Team to serve as Biennial Parliamentarian and went on to welcome everyone to the 2023 Biennial Mission Summit.
5. At 2:30 PM Sunday, June 25, Dr. Wolfe welcomed Biennial Mission Summit delegates and called the meeting to order.
6. Upon the motion by Michelle Nickens, ABCUSA Vice President, the minutes of the business session of the 2021 Biennial were accepted.
7. Karen Podsiadly made a motion on behalf of the ABCUSA Nominating Committee to elect the Officers of ABCUSA and the Officers were elected as follows:

President – Two year term, ending December 31, 2025

Rev. Nikita McCalister, Covenant Baptist Church, West Bloomfield, MI

Vice President – Two-year term, ending December 31, 2025

Thomas C. Ross, Jr., Solid Rock Baptist Church, Brooklyn, NY

Budget Review Officer – Two-year term, ending December 31, 2025

Paul Higgins, Bethany Baptist Church, Clarkdale, AZ

8. Karen Podsiadly made a motion on behalf of the ABCUSA Nominating Committee to elect the slate of At-Large members to serve for the term running from January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2025, and all were elected.
9. Rev. Nikita McCalister, President-Elect, addressed attendees of the business session saying, “I am so ecstatic that my journey has brought me here for such a time as this.” As the Biennial Mission Summit highlighted three keynote speakers that serve in ministry, McCalister went on to say, “I am standing here draped in my American Baptist Women in Ministry stole, because we have always been on the cutting edge. For a hundred and fifty years we have been ordaining women in ministry. We are indeed a denomination that understands the Biblical basis for equal partnership in God’s kingdom. Because we understand that God poured out his spirit on all flesh – all flesh...we are all made in God’s image.
10. Paul Higgins, budget review officer, presented the Auditor’s Report on the 2022 ABCUSA Audited Financial Statements for the years ending December 31, 2022 and December 31, 2021, that ABCUSA received from Tait, Weller, and Baker LLP, public accountants. For a complete audit report, visit the ABCUSA website at www.abc-usa.org or call the Treasurer’s office for a copy.
11. Proposed Bylaw Changes

At the June 2022 and November 2022 meetings of the Board of General Ministries, it was voted to recommend for approval two amendments to the ABCUSA Bylaws to the ABC delegates at the 2023

Biennial Mission Summit. These proposed amendments were posted on the ABUSA website for 90 days prior to the meeting. In addition, a copy of the proposed amendments was provided to delegates in their delegate packets located on the Attendee Hub.

The set of proposed Bylaw changes as recommended by the Board of General Ministries is provided in the addendum.

Michelle Nickens moved the adoption of the proposed amendment to Article 4, Section 3, Paragraph b of the ABCUSA Bylaws as recommended by the Board of General Ministries.

There being no speakers registered to speak to the amendment to Article 4, Section 3, Paragraph b, ABCUSA President Dr. Wolfe called for the vote. The motion received the required 2/3 majority for passage and the proposed amendment to Article 4, Section 3, Paragraph b was approved.

Michelle Nickens moved the adoption of the proposed amendment to Article 5, Section 1 of the ABCUSA Bylaws as recommended by the Board of General Ministries.

There being no speakers registered to speak to the amendment to Article 5, Section 1, ABCUSA President Dr. Wolfe called for the vote. The motion received the required 2/3 majority for passage and the proposed amendment to Article 5, Section 1 was approved.

12. Dr. Wolfe adjourned the business session.

This is a draft of the minutes from the 2023 Biennial Mission Summit held in San Juan, Puerto Rico. These minutes are not official until voted on at the 2025 Biennial Mission Summit.

Addendum: Proposed Bylaw Changes

Proposed Bylaw Change as recommended by the Board of General Ministries

“Affiliated vs Cooperating Congregations”

The current wording of the ABCUSA Bylaws, Article V, Section 1. Qualifications, states:

Section 1. Qualifications. Every Baptist church in the United States (as defined in Article XVIII, Section 7) which cooperates in the work of the Denomination in accordance with the Criteria for Cooperating Churches, as defined in the Standing Rules, may become a Cooperating Church of ABCUSA ("Cooperating Church") for the purposes of these Bylaws. Upon their determination by the Board of General Ministries and the Regional Boards acting jointly, the Criteria for Cooperating Churches shall be incorporated into the Standing Rules by the Board of General Ministries.

The following wording is proposed as an addition to this section...

“Cooperating Churches are not ‘affiliated’ with ABCUSA in the legal sense because being affiliated implies an entity that controls, is controlled by, or is under common control with another entity.”

The revised wording of the ABCUSA Bylaws, Article V, Section 1. Qualifications would read,

Section 1. Qualifications. Every Baptist church in the United States (as defined in Article XVIII, Section 7) which cooperates in the work of the Denomination in accordance with the Criteria for Cooperating Churches, as defined in the Standing Rules, may become a Cooperating Church of ABCUSA ("Cooperating Church") for the purposes of these Bylaws. Upon their determination by the Board of General Ministries and the Regional Boards acting jointly, the Criteria for Cooperating Churches shall be incorporated into the Standing Rules by the Board of General Ministries. Cooperating Churches are not ‘affiliated’ with ABCUSA in the legal sense because being affiliated implies an entity that controls, is controlled by, or is under common control with another entity.

Proposed Bylaw Change as recommended by the Board of General Ministries

Decreasing the number of cooperating churches for purposes of determining a quorum.

The current wording of the ABCUSA Bylaws, Article IV, Section 3, Paragraph b action by Delegates, states:

(b) Action by Delegates. At each Biennial Meeting, one-third (1/3) of the Delegates registered with the General Secretary prior to convening the Delegates for the first order of business of the Biennial Meeting, present in person, shall constitute a quorum, provided that at least one Delegate is registered from each of at least two hundred (200) Cooperating Churches which are located within the areas of at least ten (10) Regional Organizations. Attendance by proxy will not be permitted. If at any Biennial Meeting there shall be no quorum present, the Delegates present shall have power to adjourn the Meeting from time to time until a quorum is present and no notice of any such adjourned Meeting need be given. At all Biennial Meetings each Delegate shall be entitled to one (1) vote. Except as otherwise provided by applicable law or in Article XIX, a majority of the votes cast by the Delegates present, as provided in Article XVIII, Section 9, shall determine the vote of the Delegates.

The following wording is proposed as change to this section...

Due to the concern for establishing a quorum for the Biennial Business Session, the request was made for the consideration of decreasing the number of cooperating churches from 200 to 160 for purposes of determining a quorum.

The revised wording of the ABCUSA Bylaws, Article IV, Section 3, Paragraph b action by Delegates would read,

(b) Action by Delegates. At each Biennial Meeting, one-third (1/3) of the Delegates registered with the General Secretary prior to convening the Delegates for the first order of business of the Biennial Meeting, present in person, shall constitute a quorum, provided that at least one Delegate is registered from each of at least one hundred sixty (160) Cooperating Churches which are located within the areas of at least ten (10) Regional Organizations. Attendance by proxy will not be permitted. If at any Biennial Meeting there shall be no quorum present, the Delegates present shall have power to adjourn the Meeting from time to time until a quorum is present and no notice of any such adjourned Meeting need be given. At all Biennial Meetings each Delegate shall be entitled to one (1) vote. Except as otherwise provided by applicable law or in Article XIX, a majority of the votes cast by the Delegates present, as provided in Article XVIII, Section 9, shall determine the vote of the Delegates.