



## **American Baptist News Service**

*American Baptist Churches USA / Mission Resource Development*

*P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851*

*Bridget Lipin, Director of Communications*

*Contact: [abns@abc-usa.org](mailto:abns@abc-usa.org) | (610) 768-2159*

### **American Baptist Mission Table Meets in San Juan, Puerto Rico**

**VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 7/5/23)**—On June 26, 2023, seventy-five persons gathered for the American Baptist Mission Table event in Puerto Rico. The event immediately followed the American Baptist Churches Biennial Mission Summit. Invitees included local church representatives, regional executive ministers, national staff and national board presidents, college and seminary leaders, the president of ABCUSA and Office of the General Secretary staff. General Secretary Dr. C. Jeff Woods facilitated the meeting.

In addition to several rounds of small group work, the day included a presentation on the “Changing Church Landscape” by Rev. Dr. Chris Roush, director of the American Baptist Foundation, and a presentation on the “Changing ABC Landscape” by Rev. Dr. Perry J. Hopper, the associate executive director and Chief Client Services Officer at MMBB.

An “Act of Discernment” produced the following list of priorities:

- Empowering Young Adults and Youth
- Peacemaking in a Culture of Violence
- Mental Health
- Creation Care
- Building the Beloved Community through Collaboration
- Discipleship and Disciple Making
- Claim, Distinguish, and Proclaim the Markers of American Baptists

Mission Table participants were asked to pay attention to several criteria when surfacing a longer list of potential topics that were then narrowed to the list above via an online survey. The suggested criteria the participants were asked to consider included:

- Unifying effect – A topic that every ABC congregation would like to engage in.
- Urgency – A topic that needs to be addressed now.
- Passionate engagement – something that we all can really get excited about.
- Uniqueness – A topic that will show our ABC distinctiveness
- Witness – A topic that will demonstrate our commitment to Christ.

The priorities serve as ministry topics for American Baptists to consider on a voluntary basis. In addition to the multitude of ministries that American Baptists engage in on a daily basis, these priorities provide an opportunity for American Baptist churches and agencies to work together on matters of mission urgency. Local congregations, regions, and national agencies are invited to engage in one or more of the 2023 Mission Table priorities that surfaced from the work of the Mission Table.

“While every American Baptist local church, regional office, and national office is autonomous, this is an opportunity to demonstrate that our interdependence overshadows our independence by engaging in common mission priorities,” said Woods who added, “American Baptists have always been and will always be “United in Christ and Together in Mission.”

The purpose of the Mission Table, as outlined in the ABCUSA Bylaws is “. . . to further refine and pursue areas of common mission emphases articulated by their respective constituencies and the Mission Summit, making recommendations for, and committing to, areas of action. The Mission Table’s sole focus will be the furtherance of God’s mission through American Baptists, not the institutional life of the Denomination, so that staff of the mission partners and congregations can effectively network around shared responsibilities and priorities.” (Bylaws: Article VII – Mission Table Section 3 – Mission).

*American Baptist Churches USA is one of the most diverse Christian denominations today, with approximately 5,000 congregations comprised of 1.3 million members, across the United States and Puerto Rico, all engaged in God’s mission around the world.*