



THE CHANGING FACE OF ABC/USA AND ITS IMPACT ON ABCOTS AND COOPERATING CONGREGATIONS

Comments and concerns voiced in focus groups and at other times:

1. Name changes have resulted in changes in services to churches and pastors.
 - M&M to MMBB – redirected focus to new members. Present members must contact New York for a customer service representative rather than having a field representative available.
 - Board of National Ministries – change back to American Baptist Home Missions.
 - Ministers Council, (Jerusalem Council hearing on homosexuality in 2005), hearings. Pastors are confused on ordination standards. When questions of compliance are raised, the ABCOTS office is blamed, rather than holding the regional Ministers Council accountable.
2. General Board representative process is not working as a policy-making entity; neither is it relational among many African American pastors.
3. Sale of the National headquarters in Valley Forge is confusing to local church leaders/members. Status should be communicated periodically.
4. The ABC/USA Ministers Council needs to work more effectively with pastors.
 - Be more intentional about providing orientation and mentoring to clergy new to ABC/USA and regions.
 - Periodically provide nurturing to committed pastors so they and their congregations will grow in strength and loyalty to ABC/USA.
5. National partners, in cooperation with region staff, General Board members, and region board members, should focus more on explaining such essentials as “the common criteria for a cooperating church” and the value of annual reports along with denominational issues.
6. Many national programs and ministries have little impact on local churches because they are too disconnected from the present and emerging needs of churches. Live staff in the field working to empower workers and creative use of technology can be instrumental in growing healthy churches. National staff should partner with regions to provide such vital services. **In 2005 the ABC United Mission budget was \$21,722,297 and in 2010 it has dropped to \$11,064,402.**
7. Mutual accountability among national/regional leaders is essential to fostering a **sense of cooperation rather than a sense of enforcement (gatekeeper).**
8. In many instances, region members who serve on boards of national auxiliaries (men, women, ministers) and on the General Board shift **allegiance to “their board/group” instead of serving as an “advocate for the region which elected them as their representative.”**
9. **THERE IS A NEED TO SHIFT FROM “MEMBERSHIP TO DISCIPLESHIP.”**