

# Highlights of the New Structure

*Effective January 2012*

*“This proposed new structure is the best way for us to cooperate together as covenanting partners in the American Baptist family.”*

- The Board of General Ministries, while smaller in makeup than the General Board, will reflect every region in our denomination.
- A smaller governing board will enable greater participation by its board members.
- The federation model for program boards that will be a non-interlocking board structure will ease conflicts that sometimes arise with board members serving on more than one board.
- The Mission Summit will surface mission needs and will facilitate greater awareness and understanding of our opportunities to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world.
- The Mission Table will streamline response to mission needs.
- The leadership pool will enable recruitment of leaders in the denomination in a way that maintains the diversity of the denomination that we value so highly.
- The local church will have great opportunity to give input in to shaping denominational initiatives and direction and will keep us relevant.
- Public Witness Statements will give voice to denominational concerns, but the high bar for approval will prevent a seemingly divided voice.
- Colleges and seminaries will again have a voice in our leadership through their participation at the Mission Table.
- Ethnic caucuses have the opportunity to become a stronger voice in the new structure.

All of this is more efficient, effective and creative. The new representative structure is not without components yet to be tweaked as well as some issues needing additional monitoring. Local churches will need to be vigilant in continually supplying people for the leadership pool. Both the National Nominating Committee and the Joined Review Committee on Nominations most work diligently to reflect

geographic, ethnic and cultural diversity, they must listen carefully to the local church. Given the non-interlocking board structure, the four national boards will need to be very intentional maintaining relationships as denominational partners. Collaboration and communications. Will be an even greater need we must maintain accountability, working hard to not let good ideas and initiatives get lost in the movement from local church to various board. Funding the new representative structure will save money, yet in difficult economic times, funding will continue to be a high priority.

There are those who say denominations are a thing of the past and that they have outlived their usefulness. The work of restructuring with which we have been engaged, responds to needed cultural change and yet challenges that assumption. Churches are better together. We are stronger and more able to make a difference in the world... together. We can leverage love into change more effectively... together. In the midst of challenging times, I believe God is guiding us. I believe we have sought to discern how we can best serve as the hands and feet of Christ. I believe we are been faithful steward of the resources with which we have been entrusted. I believe we are moving forward with promise and opportunity. Difficult and challenging times are pregnant with possibilities. They call for our best. This is such a time.

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*American Baptist Quarterly XXVII (Winter 2008), pp. 389-391; excerpt of a longer article “Re-Structuring the American Baptist Churches.”*