



## American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago Region Profile

**Who We Are:** The American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago (ABCMC) is one of the 33 regions of the American Baptist Churches, U.S.A. This Region is comprised of approximately 65 congregations. These churches are organized into four ethnic Collaboratives: 23 churches are in the African-American Collaborative; 25 in the Euro/Multicultural Collaborative; 9 in the Hispanic Collaborative; and 6 in the Asian Collaborative. Our churches are all in urban neighborhoods or suburban communities. Two member churches are located outside of our geographical area in Flint, Michigan and Des Moines, Iowa.

Ever since it was established in 1834 as the Chicago Baptist Association, this family of American Baptist Churches has been committed to living out the Good News in the context of this large, vibrant, and ever-changing metropolitan area. After a decade of operating without a physical office, we have recently established centrally-located office space in the building shared by two of our member churches.

**Mission Statement:** We are a family of American Baptist Churches united in Jesus Christ to serve God through mission and celebration in our metropolitan setting with a global vision. (1991)

**Governance:** ABCMC is officially led by the Family Council. Made up of two delegates from each member congregation, the Council meets four times per year and has the authority to make major decisions such as acquiring or selling property and calling an Executive Minister. The Family Cabinet, whose 12 members meet monthly, set the vision and goals for the region and oversees their implementation on a regular basis. The officers of the Cabinet make up the Executive Committee, which serves as the Personnel Committee for the Executive Minister, consulting regularly concerning the day-to-day operation of the region.

**Committees:** Additional work of the region is carried out by volunteers serving on four standing committees: Finance and Property, Development, Nominating, and Ministry. A 12-member Ordination Commission guides and examines persons seeking ordination through our member churches. We also recently established a Camping and Outdoor Ministry Task Force to re-envision those ministries. This was done following the sale of Camp Grow, our camp property in Green Lake, Wisconsin.

**Staff:** The Executive Minister for ABCMC carries the responsibility for guiding implementation of the vision and priorities of the Council and the Cabinet, overseeing the finances of the region, supervising all staff, and serving as the region's representative to ABCUSA and in the ecumenical and interfaith communities in Chicago.

The Executive Minister is also responsible for consulting with churches and pastors, assisting congregational search committees, providing pastoral care to pastors and their

families, assisting in congregational conflict, celebrating key moments with congregations, and welcoming new congregations into the region. The Executive Minister works in conjunction with a team with four part-time Associate Regional Ministers (ARMS). The ARMS assist the Executive in providing support to churches and pastors in culturally meaningful ways. The ARMS receive a stipend in exchange for their part time work as a resource to the Executive Minister and the region in bridging cultural boundaries.

The region also employs a Bookkeeper, Office Administrator, and a Transitional Camping Coordinator, all on a part-time basis.

**Gatherings:** In recent years the primary gathering of the region has been the Annual Meeting, which includes worship, fellowship, training, and a banquet celebration of our most faithful volunteers. The ARMS also facilitate some gatherings, especially for pastors, within their Collaboratives throughout the year. We are planning additional gatherings for 2018-2019, particularly a region-wide clergy retreat.

***New Paths for a New Day:*** ABCMC has just completed a yearlong discernment and planning process with the assistance of outside consultants. This process included an online survey for all clergy and lay leaders. Following the collection of data, six Listening Sessions were conducted, one for each ethnic collaborative, as well as for other key constituencies. Subsequent to the Listening Sessions, a Task Force was formed to craft priorities and key goals for 2018 based on the results of the data gathering.

This has been a transformative process for the region, deepening trust and strengthening relationships and inclusion. The three priorities developed in the process are: Equipping Leaders, Deepening Collaboration, and Improving Communication. The region's leaders see this work as guiding the region's life during the time of leadership transition and beyond.

**Unity in Diversity:** Our diversity is clear in that the churches of ABCMC possess a wide diversity in language, ethnicity, theology, worship style, and missional vision. Though our churches hold a variety of theological positions regarding human sexuality, ABCMC as a region, lives out the gospel of inclusion and empowerment for all.

The foundation of our shared life together—our unity, is found in our commitment to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. Our life as Beloved Community is a joyful witness to Jesus and his loving Reign.

The glue that holds us together is a commitment to the Baptist principles of soul freedom, congregational autonomy, and the importance of association. While we disagree on some things, we are Baptist enough to respect each other, stay together, and work together.