

2023 SUNDAY-MONDAY MEETING SUMMARY

Messengers began arriving towards the end of the second week of June at the Davenport Grand Hotel in Spokane, Washington in preparations to attend the 97th Annual Messenger Meeting of the American Baptist Association.

Host Church, Valley Landmark Missionary Baptist Church invited the early arrivals to attend the morning services on Sunday, June 18, 2023. With over 300 present and the facilities at capacity, the church presented special music followed by Bro. Neal Clark of Arkansas preaching a message from Psalm 157 titled, "I Will Remember." The church hosted a catered lunch for those in attendance as well as provided transportation to and from the hotel. Many messengers returned for the evening service and heard Bro. Kevin Hutchinson of Louisiana preach, "He's Still Working on Me" from Mark 6.

On Monday, June 19, 2023, the messengers enjoyed Welcome Reception at the Spokane Convention Center sponsored by Missionary Baptist Seminary of Little Rock, Arkansas. Approximately 400 were served the evening refreshments along with beverages.

The Missionary Share Time started in the Centennial Ballroom at 7:00 p.m. with a crowd of 313 in attendance and sixty-nine missionaries and ministry leaders shared their burdens. Given two minutes each, each missionary and minister were able to share the highlights of their field of labor along with their needs.

At 7:30 p.m., the ABA Theological Schools meeting convened. With an attendance of thirty-three, seminaries sponsored by churches fellowshiping the American Baptist Association were represented. Each school was offered an opportunity to report on their work.

Throughout Monday, messengers enjoyed the downtown atmosphere and nearby restaurants. A popular attraction for food and shopping was the River Park Square Mall. All in attendance enjoyed the renewed fellowship.

2023 TUESDAY MEETING SUMMARY

The 97th Annual Messenger Meeting of the churches of the American Baptist Association convened Tuesday afternoon, June 20, 2023, in the Spokane Convention Center in Spokane, Washington. Following an instrumental prelude, the ABA Worship Choir led by Bro. Brad Rountree sang “The Majesty and Glory of Your Name.” Bro. Josh Luellen of Arkansas read from Romans 11:36 and opened the assembly in prayer.

President Eric Sutton called the meeting to order and recognized Bro. Neal Sutton, Director of Meeting Arrangements to present the proposed agenda. Bro. Caleb Wood, pastor of Valley Landmark MBC of Spokane, Washington welcomed the messengers and guests to Spokane. Bro. RL Clark of Oklahoma offered the response. Bro. Wayne Hunter led in the posing of the colors, and, after the pledge of allegiance, the National Anthem was played by trumpet players Jackson Heflin and Andrew Murphy, both of Arkansas.

The ABA Worship Team led the congregation in singing “This Is My Father’s World.” Bro. Neal Clark of Arkansas introduced President Sutton to deliver the President’s Address followed by a special by David and Sarah Wiersema. President Sutton delivered his address titled, “Show Me Thy Glory” from Exodus 33:18.

President Sutton recognized Bro. Neal Sutton to present Hot Springs, Arkansas as the invitation for 2026. President Sutton appointed the following committees: Enrollment and Finance, Resolution, Memorials, and Tellers. After closing announcements, Bro. Zack Stringer of West Virginia led the congregation in Scripture reading and prayer and the afternoon session was dismissed.

At 7:00 p.m., the messengers gathered once again for the evening session. Bro. Devin Wood of Washington opened the assembly with Scripture and prayer followed by special music by the ABA Worship Team and Choir. Bro. Steve Spyres of Oklahoma introduced Bro. Caleb Wood of Washington to preach the annual message titled, “Now Therefore Go” from Exodus 4:10-12.

President Sutton called for nominations for Secretary/Treasurer of Missions. The messengers nominated Bro. Justin Coburn of Texas to be voted on during the Wednesday morning session. Bro. Don Vestal of Uzbekistan closed the meeting with Scripture and prayer.

2023 WEDNESDAY MORNING MEETING SUMMARY

The messengers of the churches of the American Baptist Association gathered on Wednesday morning, June 21, 2023, at the Spokane Convention Center to consider the recommendations of missionaries and mission helpers and ministers for the next associational year. Bro. Young Bae Kim of Virginia opened the assembly with Scripture reading and prayer followed by a congregational hymn of “Blessed Assurance.”

Vice-President Todd Dornan recognized Standing Missionary Committee Chairman Bro. Ed Button of Florida to begin the business of the mission portion of the meeting. Bro. Justin Coburn, Administrator, brought the annual report of the office of Secretary-Treasurer of Missions. Bro. Coburn reported 5,350 professions of faith from the missionaries and approximately \$2.3 million being given through the office for the past year. Following the Missionary Committee report read by Bro. Jim Nixon of Texas, 147 missionaries and mission helpers and ministry leaders were approved by the messengers for the upcoming year.

The messengers elected Bro. Justin Coburn as Secretary-Treasurer of Missions. Members of the Standing Missionary Committee were reelected with Bro. Wayne Stringer of Texas voted to serve in Bro. Coburn’s place. Vice-President Dornan called for Bro. Scott Bourland of Indiana to come forward and pray for Bro. Coburn and the missionaries sent by the churches of the American Baptist Association.

President Sutton opened the floor for nominations for the speakers for the annual sermon and mission sermon for 2023. These nominations will be considered for a vote Thursday morning.

Vice President Bryan Sellers called for the report of the Camp Trustees. Speaking to the report was Bro. John Jacks of Arkansas as the new camp manager of Bogg Springs. The following trustees were elected to serve: Doug Gregg, John Bryant, Doug Goodman, Tony Harp, and Michael Reese.

Vice President Sellers then called for the Chaplaincy Committee report. Bro. Brad Rountree and the ABA Worship Team and Choir sang a patriotic medley, “Salute to the Armed Forces” recognizing each branch of the Armed Forces of the United States of America. Vice President Sellers then called on Bro. Peyton Hebert of Louisiana for the National Youth Fellowship report. The report was approved and included new bylaws governing their fellowship.

President Sutton called for miscellaneous business. Following announcements, Bro. Jerry Riggs of Georgia closed the morning meeting with Scripture reading and prayer.

2023 WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON AND EVENING MEETING SUMMARY

The messengers of the churches of the American Baptist Association reconvened following lunch on Wednesday afternoon, June 21, 2023, in the Spokane Convention Center to attend the World Mission Focus in the main meeting hall. Following a video introduction, Bro. Chase Reynolds of Texas introduced Bro. David Smith, Bro. Josh Edwards, and Bro. John Mix who spoke with a focus on reaching foreign-born people with the gospel in our local areas. At the conclusion of the service, those in attendance came forward to pray for opportunities to reach the immigrant populations in America.

Bro. Mark Clements, Editor-in-Chief welcomed the congregation to the National Bible Challenge Competition. With three students competing in their categories, students showed their Bible knowledge by sharing memory verses and locating the books of the Bible along with doctrinal passages. Those competing were Althea Tabler, Mallory Hays, and SchuylerAnn Branscum.

Following an afternoon break, the messengers gathered for the Wednesday evening service focusing on Missions. Bro. Marque Black of Arkansas opened the evening worship service with singing, "An Audience of One" followed by Bro. Jason Hebert of Louisiana reading Scripture and prayer. The ABA Worship Choir led by Bro. Brad Rountree of Texas sang as the missionaries were recognized. The messengers were then called upon to pray for the missionaries and their families. An offering of \$6,610.00 was collected for the missionaries endorsed through the Missions Office of the American Baptist Association.

Bro. Dennis Richey of North Carolina introduced Bro. Mike Jones of North Carolina to bring the evening message. Sis. Jena Jones brought a special in music called "Thank You Jesus." Bro. Jones preached a message titled "The Game Plan" from 2 Timothy 4:1-7. President Eric Sutton offered an invitation for a response to the message as the ABA Worship Team sang "Come Just as You Are."

Bro. Mark Clements, Editor-in-Chief presented the VBS theme for 2024 called, "Shine" along with a promotional video. President Sutton then called for the vote on the meeting place for 2026. The messengers voted to select Hot Springs, Arkansas as the meeting place for 2026 which will also be the association's centennial. Afterward, the Memorials Committee presented their report of the servants who went to be with the Lord during the past year followed by prayer.

Bro. Shinji Amari of Japan closed the assembly with Scripture reading and prayer. Bro. Amari read from Philippians 1:27-28. The services ended with a song of celebration, "Praise Him, Praise Him," led by the ABA Worship Team. The messengers dismissed for the evening.

2023 THURSDAY MEETING SUMMARY

The messengers of the churches of the American Baptist Association returned to the Spokane Convention Center on Thursday, June 22, 2023, to begin deliberations at 9:15 a.m. The ABA Worship Team opened the Thursday morning messenger meeting with leading the congregation in singing a “Sunday School Spectacular” medley, and Bro. Justin Gatlin of Texas came to the podium for Scripture reading and prayer.

Vice President Micah Carter took the podium to recognize Bro. David Butimore, Chairman of the Baptist Sunday School Committee for their report. Bro. Jim Crain gave the Report of the Business Manager and Bro. Mark Clements gave the Report of the Editor-in-Chief. Both were elected to serve in their respective positions. Vice President Bryan Sellers called for the election of the Baptist Sunday School Committee with Bro. Roger Copeland of Arkansas replacing Bro. Richard Merritt of Arkansas and all other committeemen being reelected.

Vice President Sellers called for the reports of other committees and organizations. Reports were given for the History and Archives Committee, the Law Enforcement Chaplains, the Security Committee, the Enrollment and Finance, the Resolutions Committee, Missionary Baptist Student Fellowship, the Nation Women’s Conference, the Good Fight Ladies’ Conference, and the Choral Music Workshop. All reports were passed as read.

President Sutton resumed the chair for the election of speakers for 2024 from the nominees in the Wednesday morning session. Bro. Nathan Luellen of Louisiana was elected to preach the annual message with Bro. Steve Merritt of Alabama as the alternate. Bro. Brant Lane of Kentucky was elected to preach the mission message and Bro. Alan Schoeff of Virginia as the alternate.

Officers elected to serve for the upcoming year are President, Bryan Sellers of Arkansas; Vice Presidents: Caleb Wood of Washington, Micah Carter of Arkansas, and Todd Dornan of Arkansas; Recording Secretaries, Mike Yoho of Maryland, and Nathan Luellen of Louisiana; Parliamentarian, David Butimore of California; Assistant Parliamentarian, Terry Parrish of Arkansas; Music Directors, David Wiersema of Florida, Brad Rountree of Texas, and Steven Ridings of Texas; Director of Meeting Arrangements, Bro. Neal Sutton of Arkansas.

President Sutton called newly elected President Bryan Sellers to the podium for the passing of the gavel. All new and reelected officers expressed their appreciation for the privilege to serve the churches of the American Baptist Association. President Sellers called on Bro. Matt Gholson of Texas to close the messenger assembly in prayer and Scripture reading. The ABA Worship team led in a closing song, “For All That You Have Done” and the 97th messenger assembly dismissed.

The 98th messenger assembly of the American Baptist Association is scheduled to be held in Springfield, Illinois on June 18-20, 2024.