



# The Value of Your Region

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## American Baptist Churches of New Jersey

The American Baptist Churches of New Jersey American (ABCNJ) is an active link in living out the Associational Principle among American Baptists. This means that local American Baptist churches, although autonomous in their governance, choose to be in an active relationship, or connected with churches that are similar to each other in polity, legacy, tradition, and mission commitments. Churches in any association, including ABCNJ, vary in size, composition, theology, geographic location, and experience. Yet we share a common history, esteem Baptist principles, practices, and have a similar understanding of the nature of our triune God.

Your American Baptist Region helps to connect your local church to American Baptist mission and witness and cooperative work in the world. Your Region is the closest and most direct American Baptist resource and a relationship we hope local congregations' value as they look beyond their church walls and surrounding communities to see further, more deeply and clearly, and to respectfully acknowledge and accept our differences as opportunities for collective discipleship and mission. ABCNJ helps churches stay connected with one another and embrace a common mission with other American Baptists churches, that we pray, impact the Region - a primary mission field, the US, and the globe.

The Region works to safeguard the integrity of ministry through its related churches and encourage mutual respect and collaboration in mission and healthy relationships.

The ABCNJ region is often the initial contact for American Baptist churches and persons to help them navigate their relationship to ABCUSA.

*Here are some examples of what your Region provides:*

### **Clergy Support**

- Provides retreats for pastors and other ministerial leaders
- Provides spiritual nurture and confidential support and coaching when needed, for pastoral leaders
- Accompanies and resources churches in times of conflict
- Provides a preparation and examination process for persons seeking ordination credentials for Christian ministry in the American Baptist tradition
- Provides referrals and assistance to clergy who are in discernment processes to the Center for Career Development and Ministry
- Provides opportunities for clergy not serving in pastoral roles to preach in local congregations through pulpit supply assignments
- Provides specific learning experiences for clergy through the ABCNJ Academy

- Provides nominations to special programs offered by mission partners, such as the MMBB Strategic Pastoral Excellence Program, applications for grants from ABC partners where churches in good standing strengthen their opportunities for additional resources
- Provides scholarships for emerging scholars and seminarians

### **Congregational Support**

- Maintains pastoral excellence by resourcing search committees in congregations during times of pastoral transitions, to assist them in identifying their next pastor
- Responds to allegations of clergy misconduct or abuse when surfaced by a congregation
- Offers mediation, resources, or referrals for churches in times of congregational conflict
- Helps identify practical sources of support for congregations in times of emergency
- Provides laity training (i.e., deacon, trustee, board)
- Provides referrals to legal and property services
- Teach, preach, and share resources for Christian Education/discipleship, stewardship development, and ministry funding
- Orients and receives new congregations into the Region that have expressed interest in ABC membership
- Provides scholarships and opportunities for youth and children to attend Camp Lebanon summer camp and retreats.
- Provides tax and legal protections for churches that do not have their own 501(c)(3) standing through ABCUSA's group tax exemption

### **Regional Connection**

- Provides opportunities for fellowship and collegiality among churches
- Offers a connection to the larger ABC mission family
- Provides opportunities for congregations and persons to increase authentic intercultural relationships
- Represents our American Baptist witness, values, and traditions in ecumenical and interfaith settings
- Provides specialized support to ethnic and different language congregations for their greater inclusion and integration into the fullness of the ABC family
- Provides pastoral letters and/or statements to the membership as well as the public that represent the heart of our ABCNJ values that are of concern to our people related to current challenges in communal and public life
- Helps recognize and respond to God's presence in the world and amplify American Baptist participation and witness in alleviating suffering, expressing compassion, and working for justice

### **Connections with our National Partners**

- Encourages enrollment and participation of clergy and other professional staff in the Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board (MMBB)
- Makes churches aware of investment opportunities through the American Baptist Foundation and the Common Investment Fund of the American Baptist Home Mission Societies
- Promotes mission and learning opportunities offered by American Baptist partners.
- Provides avenues and connections to the American Baptist Women's Ministries

- Connects ministers as needed with the Center for Career Development and Ministry as a resource for clergy health and support
- Connects needs for facilities and property planning with the American Baptist Extension Corporation (ABEC) for loan considerations, and investments
- Promotes opportunities for cross-denominational, ecumenical and inter-religious mission, advocacy, and public witness