

ABWE Missionary Handbook

ABWE, Inc.



Multiplying Leaders, Churches, and Mission Movements

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ABWE, Inc.
P.O. Box 8585
Harrisburg, PA 17105-8585

www.abwe.org
central.abwe.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1: Identity	4
1. History: When and how were we founded?	
2. Identity: Who are we today?	
3. Foundations: What do we believe?	
4. Positions: How do our beliefs affect our life and work?	
CHAPTER 2: Vision & Values	10
1. What is our vision?	
2. What do we value?	
CHAPTER 3: Organization	13
1. The Boards	
2. The President	
3. The Administration	
4. The Global Operations Team	
CHAPTER 4: Principles	15
1. Timeless Truths of Missions	
2. Proven Practices to Which We Aspire	
CHAPTER 5: Policy Summaries	17
1. Foundational Entrance Requirements	
2. Missionary Lifestyle and Holiness	
3. Family	
4. Field Ministry	
5. Administration	
6. Grievance	
7. Missionary Finance	

INTRODUCTION

ABWE has a vision to fulfill the Great Commission by multiplying leaders, churches, and mission movements among every people. This handbook is designed to provide a broad framework within which all of our missionary personnel are free to carry out their ministry and use their gifts and abilities for the glory of God.

In 1936, the ABWE Board determined that a set of policies governing the administration of the mission and its personnel was needed. The current handbook supersedes all prior editions and copies of the Principles & Practices. All statements of policy in this document are intended by the President and Board to be consistent with the Word of God, the Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws of Association of Baptists for World Evangelism (ABWE) as well as federal, state, local, and international laws. This document, prepared by the ABWE administration, has been approved by the ABWE Board. Every Board member, administrative leader, and missionary must abide by this handbook.

CHAPTER 1: Identity

History: When and how were we founded?

The Association of Baptists for World Evangelism (ABWE) was founded in Watch Hill, Rhode Island, in 1927 as a ministry dedicated to fulfilling the command of Christ by sending our missionaries to take the good news of salvation to the ends of the Earth.

Dr. Raphael Thomas, a graduate of Harvard Medical College, heard D.L. Moody challenge students to obey the command of Christ to take the gospel to every ethnic group. He committed his life to that cause and enrolled in Newton Seminary to prepare himself, not only to treat medical conditions, but also to preach and teach the Bible to address spiritual ailments in the souls of people. He became ABWE's first missionary.

Originally, Dr. Thomas had joined a large denominational Baptist mission in Chicago and served as a medical missionary in Iloilo City, Philippines. Later, that organization began to change its focus and sought to restrict Dr. Thomas's activities to merely running the hospital. When his appeals went unheeded, he resigned to seek a new mission under which he might fulfill his passion for evangelism. Thus, ABWE was born as an independent faith mission to send out Dr. Thomas and those who followed him to serve in the Philippines.

Through the years, ABWE has grown to over 1,000 missionaries influencing and serving more than 75 nations around the world. This large missionary family is supported by a network of over 4,000 partner churches throughout the United States and Canada. Our International Administration and Training Center is located near Harrisburg, PA.

Identity: Who are we today?

ABWE is a spiritual and functional alliance of New Testament churches and their missionaries bound together by a common commitment to:

- A. The foundational truths of the Christian faith explicitly taught in the Bible
- B. Historic baptistic distinctives
- C. The proclamation of the gospel to those who have not heard

ABWE Ministries is the common name collectively used for a group of non-profit corporations organized for religious and charitable purposes that focuses on evangelism, discipleship, church planting, and leadership training, and also operates numerous ministries of compassion such as hospitals, schools, orphanages, and ministries to street children, youth, and homeless refugees due to catastrophe, disease, war, and other global problems.

ABWE is not owned or controlled by any outside religious denomination but operates under the sole authority and discretion of its corporate boards (see Chapter 3) who oversee the ministry on behalf of the churches and donors who support it, the missionaries who give their lives in the service of Christ, and the peoples of the world for whom this ministry exists.

Foundations: What do we believe?

Authority

The ABWE statement of doctrine is based on the supreme authority and explicit teaching of the Bible which cannot be altered by men. There is no more sure or unchangeable foundation than the Word of God, our final standard for all faith and practice.

Doctrinal Statement

The word doctrine simply means “teaching” and as used historically refers to the body of teaching in the Bible regarding any given area of the Christian faith. Thus, the ABWE doctrinal statement is an expression of what we believe the Bible teaches about following important topics.

The following statement of doctrine was formulated by the ABWE Board and must be affirmed by every ABWE administrator, missionary, and staff member. This statement serves as the standard of belief for churches and missionaries who wish to join with ABWE.

1. Concerning the Scriptures

We believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as originally written were God-breathed, both verbally and in every part. We believe God communicated through Spirit-controlled men so that the Scriptures are without error, authoritative, and complete. We believe the Bible is the supreme revelation of God’s will for mankind and constitutes the only infallible guide for faith and life.

Psalm 119:128; Matthew 5:18; 2 Peter 1:19-21; John 17:17; Revelation 22:18-19; John 10:34-35; 2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 4:12

2. Concerning the True God

We believe in the one eternal God, the Creator of all things; that in the unity of the Godhead there are three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, identical in essence and equal in power and glory.

Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 46:9; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Exodus 20:2-3; Matthew 3:16-17; Deuteronomy 4:35, 6:4; John 1:1-3; Hebrews 1:8

3. Concerning God the Father

We believe that God the Father is holy and loving. Unlimited in time, space, knowledge, and power, the Father has planned for His glory all that comes to pass and purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself. In His sovereignty, He is neither author nor approver of sin, nor does He negate the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures. Although distinct from His creation, He is immanently at work in it, intervening as He chooses.

Psalm 103:19; Ephesians 1:4; James 1:13; Habakkuk 1:12-13; John 8:38, 47; 1 Peter 1:17; Psalm 139: 1-16; 1 Corinthians 8:6; John 5:17

4. Concerning the Lord Jesus Christ

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. Conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, He became “God manifest in the flesh.” As fully God and fully man He lived an absolutely sinless life. He voluntarily died to make a full and vicarious atonement for our sins. He arose from the dead on the third day and ascended bodily into heaven.

Isaiah 7:14; 1 Peter 2:22; 3:18; 2 Corinthians 5:22; Matthew 1:18-25; 28:6; John 1:1

5. Concerning the Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit is the promised Comforter sent by the Father and the Son, possessing full personality and deity. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He is the agent of the new birth, at which time He baptizes believers into the body of Christ, and His work among believers is that He seals, indwells, fills, guides, and teaches. The sign gifts of prophecy, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, miracles and healing, were powerful indicators in New Testament times whereby the authenticity of the gospel was established on Earth but these gifts are not normative for today.

John 7:39; 14:16-17, 26; 16:7-11; 1 Corinthians 12:8-13, 28-31; 13:8-12; Hebrews 2:1-4, 9:14; Acts 1:4-5; Revelation 22:18-19; Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 1:13-14, 4:7-11

6. Concerning Mankind

We believe the Scriptures teach that men and women are created in God's image. Adam was created by a direct act of God as described in Genesis 1 and not from any previously existing form of life. By voluntary transgression he fell from his state of innocence, in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners by nature and by choice, and therefore under just condemnation to everlasting, conscious punishment, separated from God.

Genesis 1:27; Romans 3:23, 5:12-19; Isaiah 53:6; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9

7. Concerning Salvation

We believe the Scriptures teach that the salvation of sinners is initiated by a loving God, wholly of grace, and accomplished only through the mediating work of the Son of God. It is upon the sole condition of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The sinner must be born again, being regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit thereby receiving a new nature. The believer who has exercised personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is justified and in possession of a salvation which is eternally secure. A result of salvation is a life of obedience to God producing good works.

John 3:3-6, 16; 10:28, 29; 2 Corinthians 7:9, 10; Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:8; Acts 13:39, Ephesians 2:8-10, 1 Peter 1:18-23, Romans 5:1,9; Romans 2:4, Romans 8:16, 28-29; 1 Timothy 2:5, 6; 2 Peter 1:4

8. Concerning the Church

We believe the Scriptures teach that the Church of Jesus Christ, distinct from Israel in the Old Testament, was inaugurated at Pentecost and must be considered in two aspects: the local church and "the church which is His body." This "body" is the entire company of believers in Christ. A local church is an organized assembly of baptized believers, associated by a commitment to the faith, fellowship, and proclamation of the gospel, and observing the ordinances of believer's baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper. The Scripture identifies two offices in local churches. The terms overseer, elder, and pastor or shepherd all refer to the same office. The other is the office of deacon. The New Testament specifically assigns headship and authority in the local church to men.

Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Titus 1:5-9; Philippians 1:1; Acts 1:5; 2:1-4; 10:44-45; 11:15-16; Ephesians 1:22-23; Hebrews 12:23; 1 Timothy 2:11-14; 3:1-13

9. Concerning Baptism and the Lord's Supper

We believe the Scriptures teach that baptism is the immersion of a believer in water, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, representing the believer's death to sin and his resurrection to a new life.

We believe that the Lord's Supper is a commemoration of Christ's death to be observed by believers until His return and should be preceded by honest self-examination.

Matthew 28:19, 20; Acts 2:41-47; 8:36-39; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 11:23-28

10. Concerning Angels

We believe that God created sinless, spirit beings called angels to worship and serve Him. Satan and some of the angels became proud and rebelled and were judged by God. Satan now rules these fallen angels, also called demons. They seek continually to frustrate the purposes of God and to cause mankind to sin against Him. These were conquered by Christ on the cross and are condemned to a future everlasting punishment.

2 Corinthians 4:4; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; Ephesians 2:2; Revelation 12:9; Hebrews 1:14; 2:14; 12:22; Ezekiel 28:11-19; 2 Kings 6:16-17; Isaiah 14:12-17; Colossians 2:15

11. Concerning Future Events

We believe in the coming of Christ in the air to take His saints to be with Him. This imminent event will be followed by the tribulation which will conclude with our Lord's second coming to the Earth to establish His glorious millennial kingdom. Satan, after leading a final rebellion, will be cast into the lake of fire, along with death, hell, and the unrighteous dead.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Zechariah 14:4-11; Revelation 20:1-15; 21:1

12. Concerning the Eternal State

We believe the Scriptures teach the bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust. The just, those who have been redeemed, will spend eternity in full enjoyment of God's presence. The unjust, those who through impenitence and unbelief refuse to accept God's offer of mercy, will spend eternity in everlasting, conscious punishment.

Psalms 16:11, Daniel 12:2-3; 1 Corinthians 15:50-56; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:14-15; Matthew 25:46

The ABWE statement of doctrine above may be changed by a two-thirds majority of the Board of ABWE, Inc.

Positions: How do our beliefs affect our life and work?

A. The Gospel

The gospel is the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised so that through Him we have forgiveness of sins and eternal life. The gospel comes from God, is the power of God unto salvation, is a mystery, and is the source of hope, faith, life and peace to everyone who believes, without distinction. To proclaim the gospel everywhere is the privilege and obligation of all followers of Christ.

B. Fellowship of Believers

The very essence of Christianity is fellowship with God Himself through the redeeming sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Out of that comes the added blessing of fellowship within the community of believers. It is difficult and not the norm for a follower of Christ who is isolated from other believers to grow and develop into maturity without the ongoing help of other members of the body of Christ. Jesus declared that the identifying mark of authentic disciples would be the love displayed for one another. Such love is powerfully attractive to the world of unbelievers.

C. Biblical Separation

ABWE believes that biblical separation is the Bible's teaching that true believers must not fellowship with those who oppose the gospel and biblical truth, drawing others into disobedience, sinful lifestyles, and doctrinal error. Yet, such convictions must always be practiced with Christ-like attitudes.

CHAPTER 2: Vision & Values

What is our Vision?

Our vision is to fulfill the Great Commission by multiplying leaders, churches, and mission movements among every people.

A. Great Commission

We seek to communicate the gospel in worldview and culturally relevant ways. Ministries involving medicine, sports, ESL, literature production, and compassion endeavors toward the hurting and needy of the world are viewed as effective tools for evangelism.

B. Multiplying Leaders

Because godly leaders are critically important to every part of our vision, we prioritize their growth and multiplication at all stages of service within church and sending ministries. This development includes but is not limited to addressing each individual and taking into account their gifts and God given ability. This happens along a spectrum of initial follow-up, discipleship, preparation for church ministries, mentorship, and theological education.

C. National Church-Planting Movements

ABWE teams prioritize evangelism, discipleship, and leadership training for the purpose of planting local churches that reproduce themselves. A movement occurs when the Holy Spirit chooses to bless church reproduction beyond man's ability to plan or control.

D. Mission Movements

A mission movement is an extension of a national church-planting movement across cultural or geographic boundaries. Our work is building the global dimensions of making disciples into the DNA of the churches we facilitate and influence.

What do we value?

A: Organizational Values

1. Integrity

ABWE is committed to biblical integrity. It will govern every facet of our ministry. We will encourage one another to accurate and open communication, a holy lifestyle, responsible fiscal stewardship, and avoidance of exaggeration, misrepresentation, deception, or breach of ethics.

2. Excellence

ABWE is committed to rise above mediocrity and pursue excellence by individual and corporately improving our skills in order to enhance mission morale, maintain the respect of our constituency, and enlist quality personnel.

3. Compassion

ABWE is committed to ministries of compassion in evangelism and church planting, using methods which are culturally appropriate and effective. These ministries may include medicine, education, and disaster relief, but the primary goal is the spiritual welfare of the people through the local church.

4. Accountability

ABWE is committed to requiring accountability by consistently evaluating attitudes, relationships, and the effective performance of goals.

B: Relational Values

1. We value each person as made in God's image and worth the great price of redemption. We value every believer in the family of God as a believer-priest with individual soul liberty.
2. We value marriage and the family because the family was the first institution created and blessed by God.
3. We value teamwork because the body of Christ was designed to be an interdependent body with complementary spiritual gifts.
4. We value diversity because the body of Christ is comprised of every ethnic origin, gender, and social class.
5. We value partnership with the church of Jesus Christ among the nations.

C: Aspirational Values

1. To promote Gospel partnerships with missionaries, churches and ministry organizations that affirm the doctrinal statement of the Mission. (Mission is referring to ABWE)
2. To build teams which value each member, but who also recognize the incredible wisdom and power of the whole.
3. To prioritize the reproduction of churches which will fulfill our end vision of sending.

CHAPTER 3: Organization

A. The Boards

ABWE is governed by an independent board of trustees. The ABWE board of trustees shall be charged with the responsibility to ensure the continuation of the biblical position and practice outlined in ABWE's official documents. The members of the ABWE board shall be elected from the constituency who have an expressed interest in the aggressive evangelist thrust of ABWE and are in complete agreement with its theological position, core values, and ministry vision.

B. The President

The President is designated by the Bylaws of ABWE to serve as the chief executive officer of the mission. The Board of ABWE holds the president accountable for the accomplishment of organizational goals. The Board delegates authority to the president to oversee the administration, staff, and missionaries. Executive limitations of the president is delineated in the Board Policy Manual.

C. The Administration

Presently, the executive administrative team shall carry out the following major categories of functions:

1. Global Operations

This division shall administrate the global missionary family. All missionaries shall be treated in a respectful way with thoughtful attention to the placement and development of each missionary for maximum effectiveness in achieving the ABWE vision and strategy.

2. Church and Donor Relations

This division shall serve the sending and supporting churches of ABWE and its missionaries by informing them of how effectively ABWE is accomplishing its stated vision and strategy. The Church and Donor Relations division shall also serve to educate and equip pastors and local church mission leadership to more effectively partner with its missionaries and ABWE's international partners

3. Training and Resources

This division shall ensure that adequate training is available to all ABWE missionaries and staff to accomplish its vision and strategy in the most effective way.

4. International Headquarters Services

This division shall carry out the function of managing all corporate communications, information technology and human resources in a prudent, ethic, and efficient manner that brings about the accomplishment of corporate goals.

5. Financial Services

This division shall carry out the function of overseeing all corporate personnel policies, facilities, finances, and services in a prudent, ethical, and efficient manner that brings about the accomplishment of corporate goals. This division also reports into the Finance & Audit Board Subcommittee for appropriate governance and financial reporting regarding financial integrity, accountability, and stewardship.

D. The Global Operations Team

The Global Operations Team consists of the Vice President of Global Operations and seven continental Executive Directors. This team is composed of experienced missionary leaders who are based at our International Headquarters. They exist to develop and implement global strategy, formulate missionary policy, promote leadership development, encourage mobilization, and work with the ABWE Board.

Each Executive Director leads a team of Regional Directors. The Regional Directors lead a team of Field Team Leaders. The Field Team Leaders, under the leadership of the Regional Directors, are responsible to build teams, lead planning, implement strategy, pursue problem resolution, and provide care.

CHAPTER 4: Principles

A. Timeless Truths of Missions

1. God has chosen to use men and women to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. The command to make disciples of all nations is directed to all believers.
3. The power of the Holy Spirit is necessary for missionary effectiveness.
4. The church is central for accomplishing the Great Commission.
5. Love and compassion expressed through practical help for human need is a powerful picture of God's love for lost mankind.
6. Prayer expresses our utter dependence on God and is indispensable for both the missionary and his or her support team.

B. Proven Practices to Which We Aspire

Missionary Personal Life

1. **Christ-likeness:** A humble Christ-like attitude and an obedient Spirit-filled life honor the Lord resulting in harmony with coworkers and productivity in service.
2. **Spiritual Disciplines:** A close relationship to the Lord through the Word of God, prayer, and fellowship.
3. **Life witness:** A life like Jesus validates the message of the gospel.
4. **Balanced Life:** A proper balance of work, rest, and family.
5. **Life-long learning:** A life of continued personal and professional growth.

Missionary Ministry

1. **Prayer:** Individual and corporate, as well as, the communication of prayer needs is vital to the missionary's ministry.
2. **Language and culture:** Acquisition of the culture and language is essential.
3. **Evangelism and discipleship:** Making disciples is the central focus of ministry.

4. **Leadership development:** The need to train leaders who train others is paramount to any ongoing ministry.
5. **Teamwork:** Functional teamwork demonstrates unity of purpose while utilizing differing ministry roles and gifts.
6. **Partnerships:** Identify and develop compatible partners where the church already exists
7. **Planting churches:** Culturally authentic churches should be locally governed and reproducing.
8. **Handling opposition and suffering:** A missionary should face difficult times with courage, faith, and meekness.

C. ABWE's Leadership Commitments to Our Missionaries

1. Timely communication of important issues
2. Regular prayer for missionaries and their work
3. Financial integrity
4. Openness and accessibility
5. Investment in their personal growth and development

D. ABWE's Core Services to Our Missionaries

1. Financial and Donor Services
2. Leadership, Strategy, and Legal Compliance
3. Insurance, Global Support, and Member Care
4. Coaching and Training
5. Mobilization, Church Relations, and Communications

CHAPTER 5: Policy Summaries

For a complete statement of ABWE's policies, please see the "ABWE Policy Manual."

A. Foundational Entrance Requirements

Every missionary with ABWE must be a citizen of the USA or Canada and/or the spouse of a citizen and a member of a local church that affirms our doctrinal statement. They must also pass a background check from their country of origin, where available.

B. Missionary Lifestyle and Holiness

ABWE expects its missionaries to walk in Christian love and holiness in accordance with the ABWE's doctrinal statement and core values. To that end, all ABWE missionaries must annually sign a certification that they agree to abide by ABWE's Missionary Handbook and Policy Manual.

C. Family

ABWE respects the unique and valuable roles of the husband, wife, and single adult. While ABWE greatly appreciates our missionary families and children, parents are responsible to raise their children with discipline, care, love, and education.

D. Field Ministry

- 1. Prayer:** Our global team is committed to personal and corporate prayer.
- 2. Language and Culture:** Language learning, and cultural awareness and respect are fundamental for effective ministry.
- 3. Evangelism and Discipleship:** The full intent of the Great Commission includes sowing, watering, reaping, and continuing development.
- 4. Church Planting and Mission Movements:** The ABWE global vision shall guide all church planting ministries and our efforts to promote mission movements.

5. **Ministry Partnerships:** Our global team promotes intercultural partnerships believing they are critical for accomplishing the Great Commission.
6. **Leadership Development:** Biblical training takes into account both leadership qualifications and the need for leadership on multiple levels.
7. **Team Dynamics:** Unity of purpose, transparency, and mutual accountability are essential for good team dynamics.
8. **Role of Women:** Women, like men, may exercise their full giftedness within the guidelines of biblical leadership.
9. **Communication and Reporting:** Open, regular communication and reporting, promotes accountability and ministry focus.

E. Administration

1. Field Governance

The governance of ABWE missionaries is structured through the Global Operations Team, Regional Director, and Field Team Leaders. ABWE Field Teams operate in a variety of organizational structures under the leadership of a Regional Director.

2. Field Team Leaders

Field Team Leaders provide leadership, strategic planning, consensus building, and ministry development. They are also responsible for such things as mobilizing new team members, transfers, furloughs, leave of absence, travel, and crisis events. These items are done under the guidance of their Regional Director.

F. Grievance

An ABWE missionary has the right to file a written grievance with the office of the Vice President of Global Operations if he or she has a complaint that cannot be resolved within the normal administrative structure.

G. Missionary Finance

1. Ministry

Every missionary has the right and responsibility to raise funds in order to accomplish the Great Commission within the direction and guidelines of the mission.

2. Personal

Every missionary is expected to live a lifestyle of moderation and to exercise good judgement in financial stewardship.

E. Training

The training program at ABWE is based upon the conviction that an organization that values excellence will value training.

This manual is intended to be periodically reviewed and refined as deemed necessary by the ABWE Board, President, and Administration. The organization of the mission is the responsibility of the President who answers to the Board for his leadership and the structure of the Administration. A review shall be conducted at least every five years with involvement by the Administration, a representative group of missionaries, and representatives of the Board. Any missionary, administrator, or Board member may propose a change to the manual which shall be considered at the next review.

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