**Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies**

**86th Annual Meeting**

**October 20-21, 2020**

Report by GWA Executive Director Ron Duncan

This year’s meeting scheduled to meet in Nashville at the United Methodist Church headquarters was conducted via ZOOM. Each session lasting about three hours had a break included.

The first part of the annual meeting is dedicated to hearing from members concerning new projects and updates from their respective groups. Forty-two persons shared and the following were the major themes: updating processes to collect accurate data; getting the data from churches continues to be a challenge; many new survey requests especially around Covid-19 impacts; how to accurately count on line worship-more discussion on this topic later; downsizing staffs is continuing; going paperless for all reports; and many personnel changes(retirements, change position, etc).

**Yearbook Committee** updated the group on the newYearbook of American and Canadian Churches. Here are the highlights of the report:

-thanks to Lake Institute’s support for new website development;

-name change is being considered from “churches” to “Religious bodies”;

-Groups are organized by RELTRAD classifications;

-data is still being collected and will need updating since the source has been printed yearbooks from the past;

-Dale Jones has digitized the statistical reports from each Yearbook from 1916-2012;

-the yearbook web site which is not publicized is https://www.yearbook of churches.org

If you find corrections that need to be made, then contact Dale Jones([megalodaleia@gmail.com](mailto:megalodaleia@gmail.com)

**Reporting Online Worship Attendance Discussion**

Much discussion centered around this relative new aspect in the life of the local church. One discussion thread was the “how” do you count? Does the online person have to stay on for a specific period of time? How many persons are behind each online contact? How do you place online counts with in person counts? Some groups just don’t use the counts because the platforms(Zoom, Facebook, YouTube, etc) are different.

Another discussion thread was the theological foundation of online worship. How do you engage in community? How do you do the sacraments?

Very few groups have standardized how to count, therefore, the recommendation was made to form a sub committee to study this and bring a report next year.

**U.S. religion Census Update**

ASARB is the sponsor for the U.S. Religion Census. The goal is we want a count of congregations and people in each county of the United States. We(ASARB) have a database of 386 groups. An email was sent to 189 for which we had addresses, only 31 have responded thus far regarding “intent to participate.” Additional contacts with non-denominational Christian churches is also being pursued. The updated website is [www.usreligioncensus.org](http://www.usreligioncensus.org). If you have questions, comments, or suggestions send them to [rhouseal@nazarene.org](mailto:rhouseal@nazarene.org).

Next year’s meeting is to be hosted by Church of the Nazarene on October 19-20, 2021. The ballot for officers was presented and approved. Kris Valerius(Presbyterian Church (USA)will be the president.

Meeting Adjourned