

AMERICAN BAPTIST UNITED MISSION

“Saying ‘Yes’ to United Mission”

Rev. Dr. Ron Vallet, Ambassador for United Mission from ABC/NYS
July 2011

When we are united in God’s mission, our United Mission will grow.

A key point in being a steward of the gospel of Jesus Christ is to have a clear sense of God's purpose. Without purpose, there is confusion and despair. With purpose, there is direction and hope. Jesus' parable of the children at play (Matthew 11:16-19; see below) describes children who cannot agree with one another about what game to play. They argue and complain, with no clear sense of purpose. "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance."

"I want to watch television." "I want to play the Wii." "We always do what you want. For once, why can't we do what I want?" Who among us has not heard these or similar words and arguments from two or more children? Wouldn't it be great if this style of "dialogue" stopped when human beings mature and leave "childish things" behind?

Unfortunately, we cannot make an assumption that adults escape engaging in such behavior. Even in the church, disputes expressing narrow self interests can be heard on many occasions. The discussion may center on the use of the church's building by groups from outside the church. Or the order of worship. Or how loud the organ should be played. Or the amount of the pastor's salary for the coming year. Or how much money the church should give to missions. Or The list goes on and on. You surely have your own examples.

Our relationship with God is a paradox. God offers us unconditional love. God demands that we share God's love and grace with others. Yes, it is a paradox—illustrated by Jesus' words found in Matthew 11:16-19:

16“But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, 17‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.’ 18For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; 19the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”

Some parts of God's mission are glamorous; some parts are not glamorous. We should not choose one over the other. God calls us to say, “Yes!” to all parts of God's mission.

“Wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.” Emilie M. Towner wrote, “...we are called to live out of possibilities and not our shortcomings by answering, ‘Yes!’ to God’s ‘What if?’”

I believe that we, as American Baptist Christians can say “Yes!” to God’s “What if?” by our regular and faithful giving to American Baptist United Mission.

- Your church’s United Mission giving supports your local region, which makes it possible for the region to provide more effective support for your church and others. In fact, most of the income for each of our regions comes from **gifts to United Mission**. Our giving to UM pays the major parts of the salaries of our region’s staff who provide: • staff service for search committees; • assistance resolving church conflicts; • area ministers to maintain contact with individual pastors and with associations and small groups of churches; • camping ministry; • resources to assist your church in growth and spiritual health; and • education and training of pastors, youth, and lay leaders in congregational empowerment.
- UM giving also supports: • The Office of the General Secretary • American Baptist Men • American Baptist Women’s Ministries (through the Love Gift) • ABC Information Services • American Baptist Home Mission Societies • International Ministries • Colleges, Seminaries, Homes Hospitals, etc. • Career Centers • Mission Resource Development • American Baptist Historical Society • American Baptist Personnel Services • Orientation to ABC Life
Reminder: If you need a remittance form with your church’s name, address, and PIN number, please contact your regional office.

THANK YOU for your support of American Baptist United Mission!

Ron

P.S. I encourage you to share this letter electronically or in print with others in your church.