

AMERICAN BAPTIST UNITED MISSION
“The Resurrection of Jesus Christ and United Mission”

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

The death of Jesus by crucifixion has been written and preached about by hundreds of thousands of writers and preachers over the past two thousand years. By way of contrast, however, except on Easter the subject of Jesus’ resurrection generally has received far less attention than his death. Yet it is clear that if the early disciples of Jesus had not believed intensely in his resurrection, the Jesus movement would not have continued and the church would never have come into existence. Jesus, at most, would be a minor footnote in the history of Palestine during the time of occupation by the Roman Empire.

Viewed another way, the resurrection of Jesus is the pivotal event that provides access to God’s household of life and escape from the household of death. It is the supreme stewardship event. Redemption will not come by military might or power; it will come as we are faithful stewards of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul described the resurrection in these words: “. . . if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:14). The resurrection of Jesus was pivotal for the early church. The church—the household of God—is built on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

What are some of the implications of the resurrection of Jesus being the pivotal event? Certainly one is that the church will have the courage and the ability to do the unexpected, even the outrageous.

Howard Gordon wrote about Mr. Pollock, who had been a young banker in the coalfields of West Virginia (“Lifting the Right Leg,” *Journal for Preachers*, Easter 1995, pp. 37-38). Gordon recounted that as Mr. Pollock and his wife got older, Mrs. Pollock developed trouble with her right leg. He recounted:

Mr. Pollock was a true gentleman. After he had opened the door of the car for his wife he would bend down and lift her leg into the car.

One day after Mrs. Pollock had had tea for her now very old friends, Mr. Pollock offered to drive one of them home. He opened the car door for his

wife's friend and then, being very polite, bent down and lifted her leg into the car.

He added, "the world has a lot of trouble in its right leg." He was right—and in more than its right leg. In Japan, we have observed the horrific effects of an earthquake, a tsunami, and the breakdown of several nuclear facilities. In Libya, a no-fly zone with all its implications has been approved by the United Nations Security Council and implemented. In the United States, class warfare has emerged in several states. Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq continue. To many persons, it sounds and feels more like crucifixion and death than it does resurrection and life. So which is it?

Is there a solution? Gordon wrote, "None of the high-powered technology and economic schemes is going to do it. The solution is in clerics who are just a little bit out of it, who embarrass themselves and the world by being gentle and doing the culturally inappropriate things of sacraments, preaching, and worship."

I would go a step farther. More than clerics need to be a little bit out of it. The whole church--made up of congregations with an amazing diversity of pastors and people--needs to be a little bit out of it. Indeed, from the point of view of the culture of modernity, a congregation that is becoming a household of God will be a little bit out of it--or more.

We have come full circle. A congregation that has forgotten who and whose it is and has become a slave to the conventions of its culture *is* a household of amnesia. God calls the church of Jesus Christ to become a household of God.

To be even more specific, I think that the part of the church known as American Baptists--made up of congregations with an amazing diversity of pastors and people--needs to be a bit out of it. Indeed, from the point of view of the culture of modernity, a congregation that is becoming a household of God *will* be a little bit out of it—or more. Can we be enough out of it to support the *whole* of what God calls us to be and to do as American Baptists, that is, support American Baptist United Mission? That takes courage, and even risk taking. As an ambassador for United Mission, I believe that this is part of God's call to us.

- 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.

A special note

Reports of giving to United Mission Basics for ABC/USA for the months of January and February 2011 show that giving totaled \$1,442,429, an increase of \$5,588 (0.4%) from the same period last year. I personally am delighted that nationally our giving is slightly ahead. Through United Mission, we support all parts of God's mission carried out through American Baptists.

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.