

AMERICAN BAPTIST UNITED MISSION

“Turn the Music Down!” and United Mission

Rev. Dr. Ron Vallet, Ambassador for United Mission

January 2012

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

The Youth Say, "Turn the Music Down!" So wrote Jim Kelsey in his report last month on his work in Italy as an American Baptist International Ministries missionary. Jim reported:

I was talking with the pastor of one of our African churches as I waited for the train home. I had just finished presenting to his church leaders a course on worship and how to shape it in a way that will meet the needs of the congregation and connect with the reality of their lives. The pastor shared that the youth of his church had come to him recently with a request. They wanted to invite their friends to the church’s annual evening of Christmas music. They asked, however, that on this one occasion they please *turn the music down and shorten the service!* They said that their friends would not enjoy a 3-hour service with blaring guitars and booming drums. “Just this once,” they pleaded, “turn the volume down a bit.”

Kelsey’s words describe a clash of cultures. The youth of this African church in Italy wanted a shorter worship service and the music volume turned down. The culture of the elders supported a longer service and louder music. The elders prevailed in this instance.

The youth’s request surprises us in the United States. We are probably accustomed to clashes between elders and youth over issues of music, but most times the youth’s request is to turn the volume up.

Of course, we regularly observe cultural clashes over more issues than music and along more gulfs than those of age. In the American culture, for example, there are cultural divisions related to ethnicity, economic status, educational achievement, religious affiliation and theology, language, and gender. Even within our American Baptist family, we find cultural divisions. The question is: How do we view cultural differences? Are they always bad? Are they always good?

My view is that cultural differences provide important diversity and are usually helpful, when the persons involved treat one another with mutual love and respect. We

are a diverse denomination. One of the great things about being an American Baptist is that we can provide needed financial support to all dimensions of our ministries together in our country and around the globe we call Earth through United Mission.

Take a look at the list of ministries.

- 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.