

“Words and Deeds” and United Mission

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

I am a child of the depression—the Great Depression that began with the crash of the stock market in October 1929, the month in which I was born. Growing up in the city where I was born, my parents and I had enough, but not an abundance of material things.

During Easter time, in the spring after my fifth birthday, my mother took me to an Easter egg hunt at the church near where we lived. The church building was set on the tip of a hill, with some 20 cement steps leading up to the front door. While my mother waited on the porch at the tip of those steps, I searched the outside grounds of the church looking for the brightly colored hard-boiled Easter eggs. In fairly short time, both of my hands were filled with Easter eggs. I raced back to the front of the church and began running up the steps to show them to my mother. Just before I reached the top, I tripped and began falling forward. Instead of turning my palms downward to help break the fall, I kept my hands closed on the eggs. The eggs were safe and undamaged. But my mouth hit one of the steps, knocking out a front baby tooth and cracking my lip. I got up, walked to my mother, and managed to say, “Look what I found.” I had not thought of what might happen when I fell. It was all too quick. But my instincts protected what seemed most precious to me during that split second—the Easter eggs.

Now into my 83rd year of life, my priorities have changed. Colored Easter eggs no longer hold an appeal for me. But something else is a greater treasure—the gospel of Jesus Christ. And it is a treasure we are called to share. Recall these words found in Acts 1:8:

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Our witness begins in the city where we live, extends across the nation where we live, and to the ends of the earth.

The third chapter of John, in verse 16, contains the familiar words that begin, “For God so loved the world...” The same chapter also includes this thought in verses 20-21: *Those in the darkness do evil deeds; those in the light perform deeds done in God.* Tom Are, Jr, wrote: “...belief and deeds are joined at the hip in this text.” Belief is deeper than simply accepting an intellectual truth. The root meaning of belief, *pisteuo* in Greek, is “to trust.” It is not only in our thoughts; it is how we live.

Do we just *think* the words of Acts 1:8, or do we try to *live* them? Not all of us can serve as pastor of a congregation or go out as a missionary in the United States or to some other country. But we can pray for those who do, and give generously to provide the financial resources needed for their ministries to carry out God's mission.

For me the allure of brightly colored Easter eggs is over. My focus is on the gospel of Jesus Christ—in thinking and living, in words and deeds.

As American Baptists we can support all of our missionaries and the ministries of our Region through **United Mission**. Our gifts to United Mission support our Region, American Baptist International Ministries, the American Baptist Home Mission Societies, and many other ABC ministries. Help ABC ministries come alive with your support of United Mission.

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.