

## **The Pastor and United Mission**

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

One of the most important decisions an American Baptist congregation can make comes when the pulpit is vacant and the church is deciding whom it will elect as its next pastor. What are the criteria to be considered? Who can help the congregation in the search process? For each congregation, its American Baptist Region is the first resource at this time. Regions provide help in the search process and also provide help and support in many other areas of the life and ministry of congregations as well. The largest amount of financial support for Regions comes from giving to American Baptist **United Mission**.

Twenty-nine of my years in ministry have been in pastoral ministry. I have loved being a pastor. A few years ago, I mused about what it would mean to be a pastor again. At age 83, I know that this is not going to happen. Nevertheless, I share my vision about what I hope the church would strive to be "If I Were a Pastor Again":

- 1. We would view ourselves as a household of God, seeking to remember who we are and whose we are. We would seek to be a vital, faithful church.**
- 2. We would be faithful to God's call for the church to be a steward of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The church is *ekklesia*, those who are "called out" by God for a purpose.**
- 3. We would have a sense of joy as we participate in God's mission and would be open to change.**
- 4. The church would be based and built on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Mission—outreach—would be the heartbeat of the church.**
- 5. The worship of God would be central and would convey to all who participate the purpose of the church. Participants in worship would sense mystery in the wonders of God.**
- 6. The pastor would be seen by him/herself and the congregation**

**primarily as a *theologian in residence*. Lay members of the church would be seen as full members of the church, not second-class citizens**

- 7. Giving to and participation in mission outreach would be generous.**
- 8. Theological labels would not be emphasized. Rather, they would be seen as relatively meaningless and inadequate, fastened on persons that do more to divide people of faith than to solve real problems.**
- 9. We would not present the Christian faith as easy and painless.**
- 10. Our life together would encompass a life style that includes Bible study, theological reflection, and prayer.**

It is customary in church circles to talk and ask about the mission of the church, to say that the church has a mission. It is more accurate and faithful to say that **God's mission has a church**. This simple thought could revolutionize the way that the church views itself and how it prepares and engages leaders for the church. It could lead to a clearer understanding that we (individual Christians, congregations, and denominations) are stewards of the gospel—not containers only but actively interacting with God and God's creation.

And, a reminder: our gifts to United Mission provide financial support for American Baptist International Ministries and the American Baptist Home Mission Societies, as well as to American Baptist Regions.

Help all ABC ministries in the United States and around the globe come alive with your support of United Mission.

**THANK YOU for your support of American Baptist United Mission!**

*Ron*