

Special Edition

# C N N E C T I N G

[www.abc-usa.org](http://www.abc-usa.org)

*Defining and Connecting Who We Are*

## A m e r i c a n B a p t i s t C h u r c h e s — U S A

### TRANSFORMED BY THE SPIRIT



Transformed by the Spirit engages local congregations across the denomination in a journey of identifying the significant challenges that face our churches, our regions, and our national bodies in today's culture, and wrestling with the changes that will be required of all American Baptists if we are to seize opportunities to serve as the hands and feet of Christ.

**The question we are asking in this initiative is:** *"What challenges are we facing, for which we do not presently have an answer, but which must be addressed if we are to live into the future God has for us?"*

We are excited about the possibilities and changes occurring across the country as a part of the American Baptist Churches Transformed by the Spirit initiative. We hope you are, too?

**NEW!** Introducing... A 'Ministry Story Opportunity' – To see more, visit our website [www.abc-usa.org](http://www.abc-usa.org)

**American Baptist Churches is one of the most diverse Christian denominations today, with over 5,200 local congregations comprised of 1.3 million members across the United States and Puerto Rico.**

## Mission Statement

American Baptists are a Christ-centered, biblical grounded, ethnically diverse people called to radical personal discipleship in Christ Jesus. Our commitment to Jesus propels us to nurture authentic relationships with one another; build healthy churches; transform our communities, our nations and our world; engage every member in hands-on ministry, and speak the prophetic word in love.

As a people of prayer, purpose, and passion, we are in the forefront of creating a community of faith where people of every race, nationality and culture gather as one in worship, service and work.

The heart of the gospel is God's redemptive love. In our life together, the world will see the power of forgiveness to overcome alienation, the strength of love to transform hate, the power of grace to break the bonds of guilt, the triumph of hope over despair, and the victory of faith over doubt.

Through the Cross of Christ we embrace the world as neighbor. Our vision for mission energizes a multitude of servant ministries of evangelism, discipleship, leadership, new church development, social justice, healing, peace-making, economic development and education. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we work together in mutual submission, humility, love, and giving that the gospel might be preached and lived in all the world.

*"Write the vision, make it plain..." Habakkuk 2:2*



### FOCUS STATEMENT

American Baptist Churches  
are  
Local Mission Churches  
that  
Nurture Devoted Disciples  
Of Jesus Christ  
Who  
Live their Lives  
In  
Mission and Ministry  
In the  
Healing of the World  
Through the  
Love of God

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# Ecumenical and Interfaith Ministries

ABC-USA is involved with many Ecumenical and Interfaith ministries and organizations. Listed below are just a few.

Visit our website [www.abc-usa.org](http://www.abc-usa.org) for more information on our Ecumenical and Interfaith Ministries

## **BAPTIST WORLD ALLIANCE**

**Baptist World Alliance** is a fellowship of 231 conventions and unions in 121 countries and territories comprising of 42 million members in 177,000 churches. Baptist World Alliance is committed to:

- 1) Promoting worship, fellowship and unity
- 2) Nurturing the passion for mission and evangelism
- 3) Responding to human need through relief and sustainable community development
- 4) Defending human rights and justice
- 5) Promoting relevant theological reflection



### **Baptist World Aid**

Provides aid and relief for all who are in need, regardless of race or religion. BWA collects information around the world, sharing these concerns with its member bodies, trying to build a collaborative response to meet the needs so that in His name we might care.

### **North American Baptist Fellowship**

Is the Fellowship of General Secretaries of the various North American Baptist Conventions. It has supported the New Baptist covenant and the Baptist-Muslim dialogue.

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## **CHRISTIAN CHURCHES TOGETHER**

**Christian Churches Together** is the newest and broadest ecumenical table in the United States with two major emphases: Poverty and Evangelism.. The purpose of the Christian Churches Together is to enable churches and national Christian organizations to grow closer together in Christ in order to strengthen our Christian witness in the world.

**Church World Service**—The chief development, relief and refugee resettlement arm of the churches related to the National Council of Churches.



## **CHURCHES FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE**

This ecumenical advocacy group focuses on resolving the issues between Israel and Palestinians. Our mission is to encourage U.S. policies that actively promote a just, lasting, and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, ensuring security, human rights and religious freedom for all the people of the region.

## **NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST**

Founded in 1950, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA has been a leading force for ecumenical cooperation among Christians in the United States. The 37 member communions—from a wide spectrum of Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox, Evangelical, historic African American and Living Peace churches—include 45 million persons in more than 100,000 local congregations in communities across the nation. They work to identify areas of belief they hold in common; they celebrate the diverse and unique gifts that each church brings to ecumenical life and together they study issues that divide the churches. They cooperate in many joint programs of education, advocacy and service that address critically important needs and witness to our common faith in Jesus Christ.

The NCC has long been active in social justice issues, including the Civil Rights Movement, Women's Rights, Peace Initiatives, Anti-apartheid efforts, eco-justice, Poverty.

***For more information on all of our Ecumenical and Interfaith Ministries, visit our website:***

[www.abc-usa.org](http://www.abc-usa.org)



# Ecumenical and Interfaith Ministries

## THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

The World Council of Churches brings together churches, denominations and church fellowships in more than 110 countries and territories throughout the world, representing over 500 million Christians and including most of the world's Orthodox churches, scores of Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist and Reformed churches, as well as many United and Independent churches.

All World Council of Churches programs aim to support the member churches and ecumenical partners to journey together, promoting justice and peace in our world as an expression of faith in the Triune God. Today the WCC focuses its work in three program areas: **Unity, Mission and Ecumenical Relations, Public Witness and *Diakonia* and Ecumenical Formation.**

*For more information on this historic world forum, please visit our website [www.abc-usa.org](http://www.abc-usa.org)*

## OTHER EFFORTS

### Baptist-Muslim Dialogue:

The Baptist-Muslim Dialogue is comprised of five Baptist denominations, including ABCUSA, and the Islamic Society of North America. The goal is to achieve mutual respect and through national, regional and local dialogues between Baptists and Muslims, focusing on helping each community move beyond stereotypes toward greater understanding; developing resources that would be helpful to congregations and mosques; and creating a body of theological dialogue that would help further the ability of both communities to consider how we together might work for peace and justice.

### The Consultation on Common Texts:

An ecumenical consultation of liturgical scholars and denominational representatives from the United States and Canada, who produce liturgical texts for common use by North American Christian churches.

### Creation Justice Ministries:

Educates, equips and mobilizes Christian communions/denominations, congregations and individuals to protect, restore, and rightly share God's Creation. Based on the priorities of its members, with a particular concern for the vulnerable and marginalized, Creation Justice Ministries provides collaborative opportunities to build ecumenical community, guides people of faith and faith communities toward eco-justice transformations, and raises a collective witness in the public arena echoing Christ's call for just relationships among all of Creation.

**The Lausanne Movement (Committee for World Evangelization)** is a global Movement that mobilizes evangelical leaders to collaborate for world evangelization. The stated vision is "the whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world."

**UN Commission on the Status of Women:** Engages in global women's issues through the ecumenical movement. It includes the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls.

**Shoulder-to-Shoulder Campaign:** Is an interfaith organization dedicated to ending anti-Muslim sentiment by strengthening the voice of freedom and peace.

## 10 Facts You Should Know About American Baptists

- 1) American Baptists believe that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior, and that the Bible is the divinely inspired word of God that serves as the final written authority for living out the Christian faith.
- 2) For American Baptists the local church is the fundamental unit of mission in denominational life.
- 3) American Baptists partake of two ordinances: Believers' Baptism and The Lord's Supper.
- 4) American Baptists believe that the committed individual Christian can and should approach God directly, and that individual gifts of ministry should be shared.
- 5) American Baptists take seriously the call to evangelism and missionary work.
- 6) American Baptists support religious freedom and respect the expressions of faith of others.
- 7) American Baptists acknowledge that God's family extends beyond our local churches, and that God calls us to cooperative ministries.
- 8) American Baptists have been called to be Christ's witnesses for justice and wholeness within a broken society.
- 9) American Baptist Churches USA celebrates the racial, cultural and theological diversity witnessed within its member-



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# ADVOCACY

## American Baptists are passionate

ABC USA has been involved in various ways with advocacy work.

Examples include:

- ◆ Writing letters to various USA government officials, including President and Secretary of State.
- ◆ Enacting policy statements
- ◆ Peace and Justice Mission Trips to various regions of the globe
- ◆ Lobbying with US Government around various bills being considered by Congress
- ◆ Meeting with United Nations officials
- ◆ Meeting with US State Department

Visit our website [www.abc-usa.org](http://www.abc-usa.org) to see more detailed information about ABC USA advocacy efforts.

## *Faith In Action – Immigration Reform*

**American Baptists have been involved in assisting immigrants to the United States dating back to Ellis Island.**

American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABHMS) has developed a Refugee Resettlement and Immigration Service. Local churches across the family have partnered with incoming refugees to provide support with the transition. Many times, refugees arriving have recognized themselves as American Baptist from a history of missionaries that were in their countries sharing the message.

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## Baptist-Muslim Dialogue

A historic event that first happened in 2009 at Andover Newton Theological School, which has continued to be a focal point in breaking down barriers, dispelling myths and building bridges. Additional dialogues continued to occur across the family, specifically in 2012 and 2013. For the future, Rev. Alan Newton, Executive Minister from ABC RGE, will be working with ABC USA Committee on Christian Unity to bring the national dialogue to the local level for churches across the family to be involved in the dialogue within their own communities.



For more on this Historical Conference and ongoing efforts with the Baptist-Muslim Dialogue, please visit our website [www.abc-usa.org](http://www.abc-usa.org)

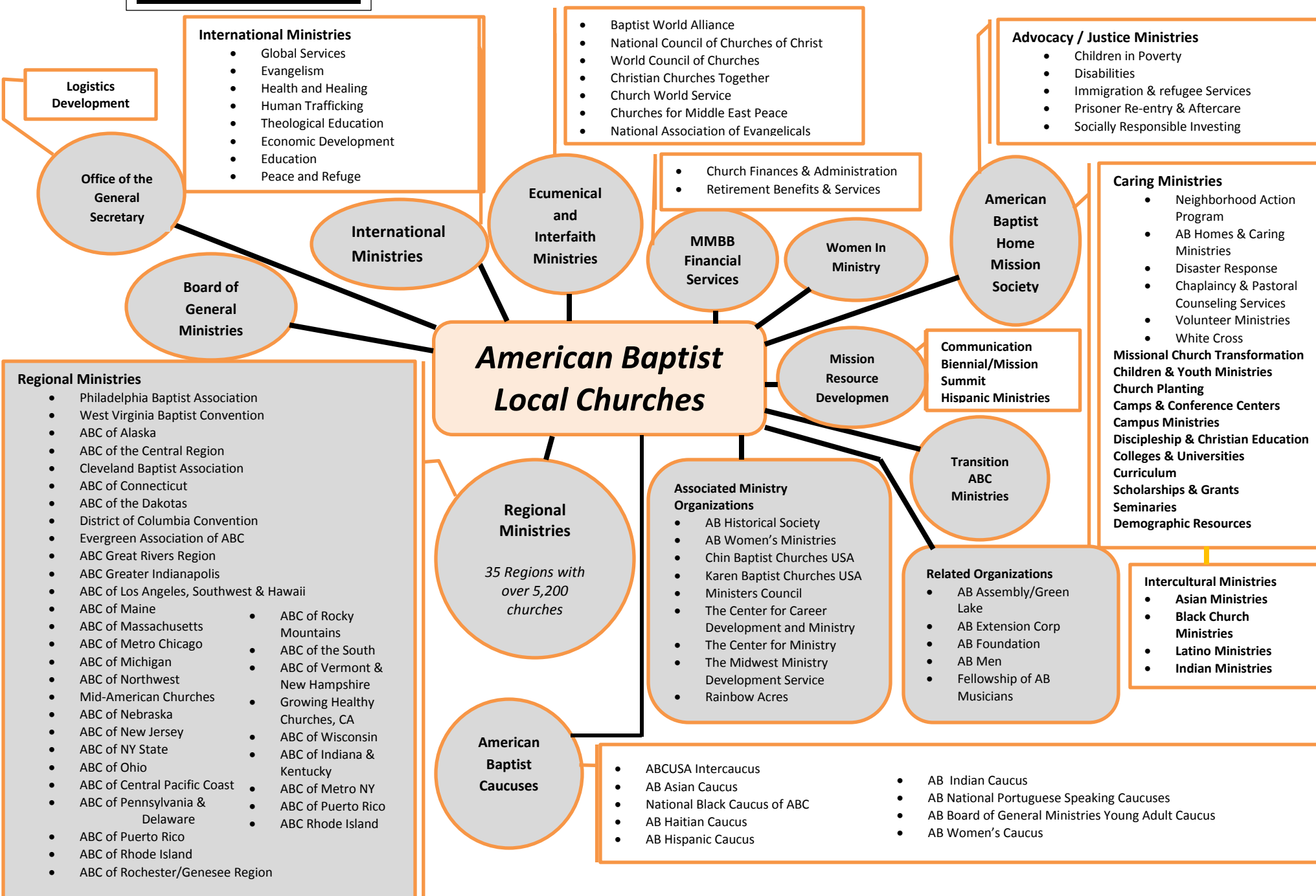


**AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES USA**

*Serving as the hands and feet of Christ*

[www.abc-usa.org](http://www.abc-usa.org)

***Walking side by side as the Hands and Feet of Jesus with thousands of Partners and Associates to spread the gospel of Christ throughout our local communities and around the world***





# OUR ABC-USA FAMILY

## On The Homefront Regions and Churches

Our ABC-USA Regional Family  
35 Regions Representing over 5,200 Local Churches  
(designates church representation)

- Philadelphia Baptist Association (121)
- West Virginia Baptist Convention (425)
- ABC of Alaska (5 Missions)
- ABC of the Central Region (220)
- Cleveland Baptist Association (38)
- ABC of Connecticut (120)
- ABC of the Dakotas (47)
- District of Columbia Convention (139)
- Evergreen Association of ABC (51)
- ABC Great Rivers Region (235)
- ABC Greater Indianapolis (36)
- ABC of Los Angeles, Southwest & Hawaii (282)
- ABC of Maine (139)
- ABC of Massachusetts (263)
- ABC of Metro Chicago (62)
- ABC of Michigan (144)
- ABC of Northwest (140)
- Mid-American Churches (133)
- ABC of Nebraska (59)
- ABC of New Jersey (282)
- ABC of NY State (293)
- ABC of Ohio (239)
- ABC of Central Pacific Coast (72)
- ABC of Pennsylvania & Delaware (298)
- ABC of Rochester/Genesee (47)
- ABC of Rocky Mountains (80)
- ABC of the South (228)
- ABC of Vermont & New Hampshire (143)
- Growing Healthy Churches, CA (133)
- ABC of Wisconsin (62)
- ABC of Indiana & Kentucky (312)
- ABC of Metro NY (191)
- ABC of Puerto Rico (123)
- ABC of Rhode Island (71)



**American Baptists** have always been a people of mission. Mission is in our DNA. Our United Mission (UM) contributions give concrete expression to this impulse and help us to be the hands and feet of Christ – from the local congregation to all parts of the world.

These gifts are distributed on a percentage basis according to the covenant agreement between Region organizations, International Ministries, National Ministries, Ministers & Missionaries Benefit Board, the Office of the General Secretary, and career development centers.

These gifts under gird every aspect of our life together as American Baptists, supporting the cutting-edge ministry projects as well as the administrative support necessary to the success of those projects.

Congregations give to UM in two ways:

**UM Basics** are undesignated contributions from local churches to the vital mission and ministry of American Baptists. Basics provide support for the extensive foundation of American Baptist missions.

**UM Love Gifts** are contributions from American Baptist women in support of American Baptist ministry, given over and above United Mission Basics.

### Other American Baptist Mission Support Offerings

The five special offerings, America For Christ, World Mission Offering, Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering, One Great Hour of Sharing, and Regional Offering, are another way to support the good work of specific ministry partners.



**American Baptist Churches is one of the most diverse Christian denominations today, with over 5,200 local congregations comprised of 1.3 million members across the United States and Puerto Rico.**

**Join us in God's mission around the world.**

**[www.abc-usa.org](http://www.abc-usa.org)**

## Ways to Give

Make a gift **online** using your credit card or checking account

Make a gift by **phone**—using your credit card,  
please call 1-800-ABC-3USA (222-3872) X2145.

Make a gift by **mail** – To send your gift by mail, please send your donation information to:

ABCUSA Accounting  
Mission Resource Development  
PO Box 851  
Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851  
800-222-3872

For information about **Wills & Estate Plans** – Visit the [American Baptist Foundation](http://www.AmericanBaptistFoundation.org) website.

***Utilize sound and healthy Stewardship to fund ministry, increase faithfulness in giving, and impact your congregation's financial health.***

# Why do you support United Mission?

## We asked our top-giving churches why they support United Mission

*"We believe God is pleased when His people send a message of unity to the world. United Mission engages us in ministry with people and purposes of which we would never know if we merely 'shopped around' on our own for good causes. We believe God has goals for us beyond our awareness. United Mission is a healthy way to support the work of the Kingdom."*

Allen Reasons, Pastor  
Fifth Avenue Baptist Church  
Huntington, WV



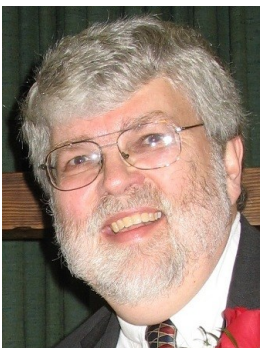
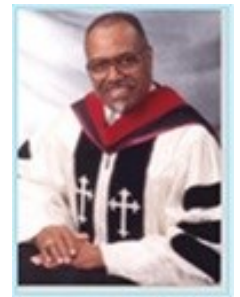
Carmen C. Adames-  
Vazquez  
Pastora Primera Iglesia  
Bautista de Carolina  
Carolina, PR

*"Nuestra aportacion al Fondo Unido responde a nuewestro compromise con la extension del Reino de Dios en el mundo. La Primera Iglesia Bautista de Carolina entiende Su encomienda de proclamar el evangelio que salva y conduce al ser humano a la experiencia del Nuevo nacimiento en Cristo. Como congregacion hemos sentido el llamado a compartir el mensaje de la vida abundante que todos disfrutaremos a plenitud en la eternidad."*

*"Our contribution to United Mission responds to our commitment to the extension of the Kingdom of God in the world. The First Baptist Church of Carolina understands his commandment of proclaiming the Gospel that saves and leads the human being to experience new birth in Christ. As a congregation, we felt called share the message of abundant life that we will all fully enjoy at eternity."*

*"God has more work for us than any one church can do alone. By supporting United Mission, our church knows that we are working together with other churches across the United States to be obedient to Christ's commands. We rejoice that through our giving we are able to touch lives in our region, country and around the world with the love of God."*

Dr. Charles G. Adams, Pastor  
Hartford Memorial Baptist Church  
Detroit, MI



*"Giving to United Mission is the same thing as giving to support the basic work in each local church. While it is more exciting to support the new adventure of a new missionary or new program addressing a specific need. United Mission is what undergirds our life together giving us the ability to have the exciting new missionaries and programs. I encourage us all to do our part in supporting United Mission to strengthen the foundation of our beloved ABCUSA."*

Douglas Harris  
Pastor, North Shore Baptist Church  
Chicago, IL

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