

Connecting

with local churches



Connecting is a ministry of ABCUSA's Board of General Ministries



ABCUSA is renewing its covenant with more than 5,200 American Baptist local churches across the United States and Puerto Rico. With the support of the ABCUSA Office of the General Secretary, Board of General Ministries, and the wider American Baptist family, we are committed to walking hand in hand with our local churches — serving together as the hands

and feet of Christ in spreading the gospel around the world.

American Baptist Churches is one of the most diverse Christian denominations today. We are excited to embrace the future by serving in mission and ministry with our local churches and to continue to celebrate our rich heritage.

In *Connecting*, you will be amazed to learn more about the breadth of all those who make up our American Baptist DNA. Thousands of partners, associates and local churches are interconnected and woven into one another, creating our American Baptist tapestry. This edition of *Connecting* is just a glimpse of all that defines who we are as the American Baptist denomination.

Join us today in an exciting journey as we run towards the mark together in mission and ministry of proclaiming the 'good news' of Christ in our own communities and throughout the world. You, the local church, friends and family of ABCUSA, can connect into the work of God's Ministry through ABCUSA. Visit our website at www.abc-usa.org and strengthen your connection with us today!



AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES

Focus Statement:

American Baptist Churches are missional congregations that nurture devoted disciples of Jesus Christ who live their lives in mission and ministry for the healing of the world through the love of God.

ABCUSA MISSION STATEMENT

Covenant

American Baptists are a Christ-centered, biblically 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.

Write the vision, make it plain...

Habakkuk 2:2

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, peacemaking, 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. ■

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 membership.
- 10 American Baptists heed the biblical call to renewal and the need for a vital witness in a new millennium. ■

2 www.abc-usa.org

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?"

Groups related to *Transformed by the Spirit* are meeting across the country and are working on a number of challenges related to mission and ministry today.

The fact is, every institution is facing unprecedented challenges that come with unrelenting change. American Baptist churches are not immune. But we do have a call and access to resources that secular organizations do not. *Transformed by the Spirit* is not a static program to be completed but a dynamic, disciplined process by which we discern how God's Spirit is already at work and invites us to join. *Transformed by the Spirit* invites American Baptists to name and address challenges in changing environments. We need to make "adaptive changes," changes that are in response to a changed environment, changes that unleash our Baptist DNA for innovation. We must make changes that embrace the transformative work of the Spirit in the life of the church. Visit www.abc-usa.org/transformed-by-the-spirit to learn more!



Mission Summit Conversations occur at the 2013 Biennial Mission Summit, where attendees consider how their local churches can be *Transformed by the Spirit*.

ABC Regions & Local Churches

33 Regions representing over 5,200 Churches (Designates church representation)

- ABC of the Central Pacific Coast (72)
- ABC of the Central Region (220)
- Cleveland Baptist Association (38)
- ABC of Connecticut (120)
- ABC of the Dakotas (47)
- District of Columbia Baptist Convention (139)
- Evergreen Association of ABC (51)
- ABC of Greater Indianapolis (36)
- ABC of the Great Rivers Region (235)
- Growing Healthy Churches (133)
- ABC of Indiana & Kentucky (312)
- ABC of Los Angeles, Southwest & Hawaii (282)
- ABC of Maine (139)
- ABC of Massachusetts (263)
- ABC of Metro Chicago (62)
- ABC of Metro New York (191)
- ABC of Michigan (144)
- Mid-American Baptist Churches (133)
- ABC of Nebraska (59)
- ABC of New Jersey (282)
- ABC of New York State (293)
- ABC of the Northwest (140)
- ABC of Ohio (239)
- ABC of Pennsylvania & Delaware (298)
- Philadelphia Baptist Association (121)
- ABC of Puerto Rico (123)
- ABC of the Rochester/Genesee Region (47)
- ABC of the Rocky Mountain Region (80)
- ABC of Rhode Island (71)
- ABC of the South (288)
- ABC of Vermont & New Hampshire (143)
- West Virginia Baptist Convention (425)
- ABC of Wisconsin (62)

Alaska also includes 5 missions

ABCUSA Office of the General Secretary

- Accounting (800) 222-2332
- AB Churches Information Systems (800) 222-2027
- Development (800) 222-2108
- General Secretary (800) 222-2273
- Human Resources (800) 222-2230
- Mission Resource Development (800) 222-2322
- Regional Ministries (800) 222-2292
- Transition Ministries (800) 222-2070
- Travel & Conferences (800) 222-2233
- Women in Ministry (800) 222-2070

Why do you support United Mission?

Some pastors from top-giving churches talk on why this commitment is important to their congregations:



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

"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

"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



Douglas Harris, Pastor, pictured above with the Pastoral Team
North Shore Baptist Church, Chicago, IL

"Nuestra aportación al Fondo Unido responde a nuestro compromiso con la extensión del Reino de Dios en la tierra. 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



congregación hemos sentido el llamado a compartir el mensaje de 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 to share the message of abundant life that we will all fully enjoy in eternity."

Carmen C. Adames-Vazquez, Pastora

Primera Iglesia Bautista de Carolina, Carolina, PR

Ways to Give

Make a gift online using your credit card or checking account: www.abc-usa.org and click on **GIVE ONLINE**.

Make a gift by phone: Using your credit card, please call 1-800-ABC-3USA (222-3872) x2145.

Make a gift by mail: Please send your donation information to: ABCUSA Accounting / MRD
PO Box 851
Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851

Information about Wills & Estate Plans: Visit the American Baptist Foundation website: abcofgiving.org
Utilize sound and healthy Stewardship to fund ministry, increase faithfulness in giving, and impact your congregation's financial health.

Thank you for your commitment to United Mission, America for Christ, One Great Hour of Sharing, Retired Ministers & Missionaries Offering, and World Mission Offering.



Adkins



Adkins

United Mission

American Baptists have always been a people of Mission. Mission is in our DNA.

*United Mission (UM) is YOU,
UM is YOU and your local congregation!*

As American Baptists, we are in covenant with each other to minister both to and with each other. UM is the bedrock, the bread and butter, of our joint American Baptist witness. Through it we support our work as the hands and feet and voice of Jesus regionally, nationally, and internationally. Think how much more we can accomplish if all American Baptist congregations commit to faithfully and generously support UM through their budgets. Our strength is in our numbers when we all work together!

We also encourage ABC congregations to fully engage in the four quarterly offerings, first to educate their members about the work being done in our name across the country and around the world, and then to allow individual members to financially support those components of our common mission and ministry about which they feel most passionate.

UM is the way that congregations can support American Baptist work beyond the walls of their church; the quarterly offerings are designed to allow individual American Baptists to personally support those specific ministries that resonate with them.

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.

In addition to the Regional Offering, the other four special American Baptist Mission Support Offerings that nurture the good work of specific ministry partners around the world, are:

- America For Christ
- World Mission Offering
- Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering
- One Great Hour of Sharing

Fuller Theological Seminary student Dan Brockway participates in American Baptist conversation event.



American Baptist Home Mission Societies



American Baptist International Ministries

American Baptist volunteers work on a building project.



American Baptist Women's Ministries

AB GIRLS pose together at a National Gathering for Girls.



American Baptist Home Mission Societies

Local church group travels to New Orleans and pitches in to help to paint homes damaged in the flood after Hurricane Katrina.



ABCUSA CONNECTING with Local Churches is made possible by your gifts to United Mission. UM is essential to many of our ministries. Your gifts make a huge difference for the denomination. Be sure that United Mission, the ABCUSA family offering, is included in your church budget. For details about how funds are used or information about how to contribute, please visit the website (below) or contact bridget.lipin@abc-usa.org.



American Baptist Churches USA
walking side by side as the hands and feet of Christ with thousands of partners and associates to spread the gospel throughout our local communities and around the world. We are here for YOU, our local congregations!



Dr. Medley addresses the Baptist World Alliance Executive Committee at the Mission Center in Valley Forge.

Ecumenical and Interfaith Ministries

ABCUSA is involved with many Ecumenical and Interfaith ministries and organizations. Listed here are just a few. Visit our website www.abc-usa.org for more information on our activities with these ministries:

- **Baptist World Alliance** is a fellowship of 231 Baptist bodies and unions in 121 countries and territories comprised of 42 million members in 177,000 churches. Baptist World Alliance is committed to:
 - Promoting worship, fellowship and unity
 - Nurturing the passion for mission and evangelism
 - Responding to human need through relief and sustainable community development
 - Defending human rights and justice
 - Promoting relevant theological reflection
- **Baptist World Aid** provides aid and relief for all who are in need, regardless of race or religion. BWAid collects information from around the world and shares 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 a group of Baptist organizations of the

various North American Baptist Conventions. It has supported the New Baptist Covenant and the Baptist Muslim Dialogue.

- **Christian Churches Together** is a new and broad ecumenical table in the United States with two major emphases: poverty and evangelism. Its purpose 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** is a chief development, relief and refugee resettlement arm of the churches related to the National Council of Churches.
- **Churches for Middle East Peace** is an ecumenical advocacy group that focuses on resolving the issues between Israel and Palestinians. Its mission is to encourage U.S. policies that actively promote a just, lasting, and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- **National Council of Churches of Christ**, founded in 1950, 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, celebrating the diverse and unique gifts that each church brings to ecumenical life and together they study issues

that divide the churches. 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, and poverty.

- **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, Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist and Reformed churches, as well as many United and Independent churches. Today the WCC focuses its work in three program areas: Unity, Mission and Ecumenical Relations, Public Witness and Diakonia and Ecumenical Formation.
- **New Baptist Covenant** The inaugural celebration of a New Baptist Covenant in January of 2008 brought together more than 15,000 people representing over 30 Baptist organizations. This movement marks a major turning point in the life of Baptists, as all across the country, Baptists from different racial, theological, and geographic backgrounds have gathered to work side by side to care for the world that God so loved.

Other Efforts



- **Baptist Muslim Dialogue** is comprised of five Baptist bodies, including ABCUSA, and the Islamic Society of North America. The goal is to achieve mutual respect 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





ADVOCACY



Refugees waiting to hear about resettlement plans in the U.S. (top). Meeting of Baptist leaders (below) with the U.S. State Department on resettlement for Burmese refugees.

communities to consider how we together might work for peace and justice.

- **Consultation on Common Texts** is 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. It 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.
- **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 inter-faith organization dedicated to ending anti-Muslim sentiment by strengthening the voice of freedom and peace.

American Baptists have always been passionately involved with matters of immigration, from all the way back to Ellis Island to today's newest immigrants with participation in Immigration Reform Advocacy. Some examples include:

- Writing letters to various U.S. government officials, including the President, Secretary of State, and Ambassador at Large for Religious Freedom
- Enacting policy statements
- Making Peace and Justice Mission Trips to various regions of the globe
- Lobbying the U.S. Government around various bills being considered by Congress
- Meeting with United Nations officials
- Meeting with US State Department
- Calling Denominational Task Forces for various topics, such as a Burma Refugee Task Force and an Immigration Task Force.



A recent mission group travelled to Burma for advocacy work and there met with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, a Burmese opposition politician and chairperson of the National League for Democracy (NLD) in Burma and Nobel Peace Prize winner in 1991.



American Baptist Women in Ministry

Our ministry is grounded in the gift-giving of God.

We are each created in the image of God. God gives generously, pouring out gifts on both men and women. God gifts and calls both women and men for ministry.

Unfortunately, there are many barriers preventing women from being able to utilize their gifts and fulfill their call. Our ministry at ABWIM is to break down barriers that prevent the utilization of those gifts, build bridges that advance opportunities for women in ministry, and bring people together in a way that allows us to be the body of Christ in which all God's gifts given to all God's people are able to be fully used and fully lived out. We do that by:

- A**dvocating for women,
- C**ultivating their call,
- C**elebrating their gifts,
- E**ducating congregations about the biblical basis for women in ministry and
- S**hining a
- S**potlight on women in ministry.

ACCESS! It's about access: Accessing our gifts and gaining access to the world for the good of all and the glory of God! We work towards the vision of the complete participation and partnership of men and women in ministry in which all are able to fully utilize their God-given gifts and fully live out their God-given call.

We serve as the hands and feet of Christ when we recognize and receive all the gifts God has given to all God's people, opening doors and allowing access to all.



American Baptist Home Mission Societies

Connecting
with local churches
American Baptist Churches USA
P. O. Box 851
Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851

Nonprofit Org.
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Southeastern, PA

Home missionaries Mark Machusak and Chris Wolvin do emergency response construction work in an Atlantic City home following hurricane Sandy.



American Baptist Women's Ministries

A National Gathering of Girls participant volunteers at the Judson Retirement Village.

American Baptist International Ministries



International Ministries missionary Rita Chapman serves local people at the Women's School of the Kikongo Pastor's Institute in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

American Baptist International Ministries



American Baptist mission work in Nicaragua



American Baptist Women's Ministries

Mary Burnett and Kaitlin Ellis, AB GIRLS National Leadership Team (NLT) members, at a team meeting in Shawnee, KS.



American Baptist Home Mission Societies

American Baptists serve food to people in need.