



A Love Gift 'Resurrected'

While recently going through some old mementoes, Genevieve E. Peterson of Delaware, Ohio, was surprised to come across a small box marked "Love Gift." In the box were coins totaling \$9.21. The coins had been collected by her mother, Beatrice Amanda MacNeill, before her death at age 88 in December 1990 after a slow decline in health and strength.

The "Love Gift" initiative of American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA) was organized by American Baptist women in 1931 during the Great Depression. Women banded together to start "Love Gift" so that the denomination could continue its crucial ministries during the economic crisis. The initial fundraising goal was \$150,000. More than \$56 million has been donated since!

Love Gift money continues to be raised today in churches by donors who provide "extra" funds in support of the full range of American Baptist mission: American Baptist Regions, American Baptist Women's Ministries (ABWM), the Office of the General Secretary, American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS), International Ministries, and every mission endeavor strengthened by United Mission, the basic funding source for American Baptist mission. Love Gift funding helps create programs for children in poverty, provides elder care, makes available life-skills training to assist people in becoming self-sufficient, supports disaster relief, volunteer mission teams, refugee resettlement, chaplaincies, retirement communities and long-term care and children's homes.

Peterson forwarded her mother's collection to ABCUSA along with a note. "My mother was Beatrice Amanda MacNeill, wife of Vernon Harcourt MacNeill who was an American Baptist minister in Illinois for many years," Peterson wrote. "After his death she was visited yearly by a representative of the Retired Ministers



and Missionaries Benefit Board, and she was supported by Dad's retirement benefits. She appreciated each of these ways in which she was a part of a wider American Baptist church family."

"To the end she remained committed to her responsibilities, and so I know she would be happy for me to send this offering I have (just now) discovered directly to you even though years have passed since she collected these coins," Genevieve Peterson wrote. "It seems more in her tradition to send them in the box in which they were saved rather than to transmit the amount via a check or computer. On the other hand, she would be surprised at the speed and ease of modern technology and supportive of those who use it!"

"Thank you for continuing the emphasis on world issues and how we can impact them with the Love Gift offering." ■

You can give to Love Gift any time through your church by simply marking your offering for "ABWM Love Gift." Your church treasurer will record your gift with the church's report of mission support. You can also give to Love Gift online at www.abc-usa.org, giving credit to your church for your gift. (Click on Give Online.) Use Love Gift boxes at home or at work to prompt spontaneous gifts in thanks for God's blessings in your life. When you give to Love Gift, you are also supporting ABWM, which receives United Mission funding in an amount equal to 15 percent of Love Gift.

Love Gift brochures and coin boxes are available in quantity through the American Baptist Women's Ministries store online at www.abwministries.org or by a calling Judson Press at

1-800-4-JUDSON



Matthew 25 Grant Supports Oregon 'Eco-Explorers'

A \$3,000 Matthew 25 Grant from American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA) supported First Baptist Church in Springfield, Ore., to engage in the practice of geocaching as a summertime "eco-exploring" initiative for at-risk children who attend Dos Rios/Two Rivers Elementary School across the street from the church. During the school year the church offers an after-school initiative with a similar mission.

"We help the children to actively explore the natural and cultural landmarks and then express their learning through the visual and performing arts, technology and service learning," explains Pastor Jeffery L. Savage, who has served at First Baptist for 29 years. The congregation dates to 1865.

"In the summer program we focus on two main areas – life and environmental science and also the visual and performing arts – areas that have significantly diminished in the elementary school curriculum recently," Savage says. "Eco-Explorers connects exploration of the natural world to expressing our learning through the visual and performing arts because of the degree of detail and interdependence often overlooked in the world around us." Savage notes the Dos Rios/Twin Rivers Elementary School serves lower class and lower middle class children with mixed English and Spanish speaking students. Fifty-three percent of the children live below the poverty line. More than 90 percent of the students qualify for the school's free and reduced lunch program.

An equally important emphasis in the project is to build community among everyone who participates – children, their

**Have you heard
of geocaching, a
form of treasure
hunting in the
great outdoors?**

parents, where possible teachers, and the church. "We want the children to be deeply known and valued," Savage says. Another goal for the summer program has been to level the playing field for children who have little or no access to technology to promote learning."

"The generous funding afforded us by the Matthew 25 Grant offered this access, as well as the opportunity to use newer and traditional technologies in the recreational practice of geocaching," Savage adds. "Children worked in teams on all activities involving technology, to prevent the social isolation that often occurs in playing video games or surfing the web."

This summer the congregation is offering Eco-Explorers once more, for the fourth year. The focus this summer is on "Things Unseen...Or Hiding in Plain Sight." The program is free for children aged 5 to 11.

Savage says the grant funds made it possible to purchase technologies for exploring the natural world – Chromebooks for research and GPS locators, digital cameras, compasses and binoculars used in field trips and geocaching. Eighteen children took part in the 10-week program.

"From the church location, we can easily access a wide range of ecosystems," Savage continues. "They

include rivers and watersheds, forests, mountains, marine, meadow, restored wetlands, high desert and deciduous and coniferous forests."

"General knowledge of the world remains the greatest single predictor of learning in the elementary grades," Savage says. That learning can lead to success in the middle and *continued on page 3*

NATUREQUEST Hide 'n' Seek
GEOCACHING: Intersection
of Nature and Technology!

 Eco-Explorers 2015
 Free fun for kids 6-11
 June 16 - Aug 20
 T/W/Th 12 - 4 p.m.
 1st Baptist Church Spfld • 1175 E St • 541-746-6031

**Check out the New Application for our
Matthew 25 Grant, located at:
<http://www.abc-usa.org/matthew25/>**

American Baptist Churches USA's Matthew 25 Grant is designed to channel gifts to help meet the needs of "housing, feeding, education and health with regard to the less fortunate." The Grant was created through the monetary gifts of a generous donor whose primary wish is to help ameliorate poverty. The ABCUSA Matthew 25 Grant fund has been established to respond to this anonymous donor's generosity.

Beginning in the Fall of 2016, all applicants must use this updated grant application. Applications will be received once annually, with a deadline of Sept. 1, with awards distributed Oct. 15.

high school years. "The knowledge is most effective when obtained from first-hand experience, rather than via television or computer," Savage adds. "And the natural world seems to us to be more engaging to children than environments that people create for recreational purposes, such as theme parks, and that is for two reasons. First, the world is constantly and naturally in flux seasonally and over time. The landmarks may be familiar, but all kinds of intriguing changes occur that spark our curiosity. Second, the natural world invites both exploration and solitude, connecting people to the spiritual dimension of their lives."


"Allowing children some latitude off-the-path in the woods or wading in the river creates at once both independent exploration and connection to God," Savage concludes. "We came to learn in our summer journeys that every path is sacred."

The Matthew 25 Grant initiative, sponsored by ABCUSA and the Board of General Ministries, is funded by a generous, anonymous donor whose goal is to help meet

the needs of "housing, feeding, education and health with regard to the less fortunate." In Fall 2015, a total of 69 applicants received funding ranging from \$500 to \$5,000 with a total awarded of \$169,140. Grant applications are welcomed once annually by September 1.

The Matthew 25 Grant process is structured to help small ministries with limited staff time. For more information on the grant and application process visit:

www.abc-usa.org/matthew25/ ■



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THE ROLE AND IMPACT OF UNITED MISSION.**

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Introducing a New Feature: 'My Baptist Life'

American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA) is introducing a new profile-style feature entitled "My Baptist Life." Watch for the first stories to appear in our Enewsletter soon!

In presenting "My Baptist Life" ABCUSA recognizes the important place story-telling has in a tradition that values the contributions American Baptists in various walks of life have made both within our denomination and also to so many other people and causes around the world.

Would you like to nominate someone to be featured in "My Baptist Life"? Simply send a name, the reasons behind your nomination, and contact information to Mark Staples, ABCUSA communications consultant, at Mark.Staples@abc-usa.org. We want to include stories about people from all walks of life in this new feature! ■

**Are you receiving our
monthly newsletter?**

Send an email to
webmaster@abc-usa.org
to sign up now.

ABCUSA NEWS UPDATE

save THE DATE:

You're invited to the 2017 Biennial Mission Summit



WELCOME TO PORTLAND

In Portland, it's easy to find limitless recreation, fabulous dining and flourishing culture. You'll find a great variety of retailers, restaurants and the legendary Powell's City of Books. An efficient light rail system and pedestrian-friendly city blocks make getting around town a breeze.

See for yourself, and come early or stay late to enjoy all that Portland has to offer.

Look for other American Baptist family events occurring all week long leading up to the Biennial Mission Summit!

www.americanBAPTISTS2017.com

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† No points assumes excellent credit score and 80% or less loan-to-value.

For current rate and terms visit myCCCU.com/mortgage

Christian Community Credit Union is privately insured by American Share Insurance up to \$250,000 per account. By members' choice the Credit Union is not federally insured or insured by any state government.



Upcoming Events

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|--------------|---------------------------------------|
| September 5 | Labor Day |
| September 11 | Hispanic Heritage Week begins |
| September 18 | AB Women's Sunday |
| September 20 | International Day of Prayer for Peace |
| September 25 | Christian Education Sunday |

ABCUSA CONNECTIONS is made possible by your gifts to United Mission. UM is essential to many of our ministries. Together your gifts can make a big 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 check out the website at www.abc-usa.org or contact Tina.Turner@abc-usa.org.

