



AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES USA

UNITED MISSION MATTERS

SUMMER 2026

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Mission Matters: The Kansas Plan: Partnership and Purpose in United Mission

WRITTEN BY REV. DR. GREGG L.J. HEMMEN
EXECUTIVE MINISTER, AMERICAN BAPTIST
CHURCHES OF THE CENTRAL REGION

One of the unique ways that United Mission works in the Central Region is through the Kansas Plan. The Kansas Plan was created in 1936 in the midst of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl calamity. At this time, institutions in the Central Region were often getting the leftover donations, if any at all, and were suffering. American Baptists in the Central Region were not willing to see these ministries fail and addressed the problem by creating the Kansas Plan.

Since 1936, a portion of every United Mission dollar has gone to support six institutions in the Central Region: Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Homestead Healthcare, Murrow Indian Children's Home, Ottawa University, Prairie Homestead Retirement Community, and Sunset Homes Retirement Community. These are our partners in ministry and quite often are ministering to under-served demographics of our population

The Kansas Plan representatives meet quarterly through the year to share updates on their ministries, voice prayer requests for the challenges they face, and provide opportunities for collaboration when it makes sense. While the Kansas Plan provides only a portion of the support each institution receives, American Baptists in the Central Region have been steady and faithful through this United Mission vehicle for support. This is one important way that United Mission works in the Central Region.



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“IN THIS GREAT CITY, HOPE IN THE HARDEST TIMES”

WRITTEN BY REV. DR. TANIKA SHEPPARD
EXECUTIVE MINISTER,
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“There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God... God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns.” (Psalm 46:4–5)

These are the hardest of times and still the holiest of times. In the great city of Cleveland, we are witnessing the light of Christ shine through Cleveland Baptist Association (CBA) congregations, not because the road we tread is easy, but because the love we share is daily becoming more tangible for our neighbors who feel forgotten and too often live in harm's way.

I am profoundly thankful for the generosity demonstrated through United Mission giving, which is a wonderful opportunity to invest in impactful endeavors that are larger than any one congregation can do alone. It is through this cooperative and collaborative spirit that we recently launched our **2026-2028 CBA Strategic Vision** with great expectation and hope.

In the last two years, nearly one-third of our churches have navigated pastoral transitions. While we honor the leaders who built what we stand on, we also welcome emerging leadership that is asking brave questions and bringing fresh energy to Greater Cleveland. Together, we are listening, praying, and refusing to be hindered by traditions and practices that were once innovative but are no longer necessary.

This work matters tremendously in Cleveland, a city that has continuously ranked highest among large U.S. cities for child poverty, and that was named the worst place in America for Black women based on outcomes and livability measures. We also face widening economic and educational disparities, and persistent inequities that impact poor families and people of color. Yet these realities do not cause us to despair. They actually fuel our collective determination.



(continued from page 2, Sheppard)

United Mission dollars are steadily at work in the CBA. We are nurturing healthier churches by strengthening youth through enrichment and certifications, developing leaders through cohorts, coaching, and education, expanding region-wide training and congregational support, creating pastoral retreats for renewal, and forging advocacy-minded partnerships that advance equity, hope, and justice.

The CBA is not pursuing notoriety or success. We are following the Holy Spirit, trusting God's river to keep flowing through this city until righteous justice and real joy are experienced on every street.



**United in Christ
Together in Mission**



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The Generosity Project

Discover a Fresh Approach to Stewardship with The Generosity Project

Talking about money in the church can be challenging—but it doesn't have to be! **The Generosity Project** is designed to help pastors reframe the conversation around stewardship, making it more about joy, gratitude, and faith rather than obligation or stress.

This program brings together **cohorts of pastors** to learn, share, and grow in their leadership around generosity. Whether you're leading a small rural church, a thriving urban congregation, or something in between, this experience will give you tools to **cultivate a culture of generosity**—one that can transform both your ministry and your church's financial well-being.

What Pastors Are Saying:

"For years, I struggled with how to talk about stewardship in a way that didn't feel like a 'necessary evil.' The Generosity Project helped me shift the focus to gratitude, faith, and mission—without guilt or pressure."

"This project has changed the way I think about giving. My congregation is experiencing a greater sense of joy and purpose in generosity, and I've seen a real shift in our approach to stewardship."

"I love that this program keeps generosity in front of me all year long, not just at budget time!"

Who Can Join?

We're inviting **pastors, church leaders, and stewardship teams** to be part of this journey. Each region can form its own **cohort of pastors**, meeting **online once a month** for guided discussions, practical learning, and resource sharing. If you don't have enough participants locally, we can connect you with a wider group of pastors from other regions.



How It Works:

- **6 Monthly Virtual Gatherings** – No travel required! Meet with fellow pastors in **flexible, supportive online settings** led by a trained facilitator.
- **Practical Tools & Resources** – Participants receive **free books, articles, and learning materials** to help them lead conversations about generosity with confidence.
- **Encouragement & Accountability** – Stay engaged with **ongoing support** from your cohort as you try out new ideas in your church.
- **Expert Insights** – Once a quarter, enjoy a live **webinar with national leaders** in stewardship and church leadership.

Topics We Cover:

- Moving from scarcity thinking to **a culture of abundance**
- Leading stewardship conversations with **confidence and authenticity**
- Shaping a **joyful and mission-driven approach** to giving

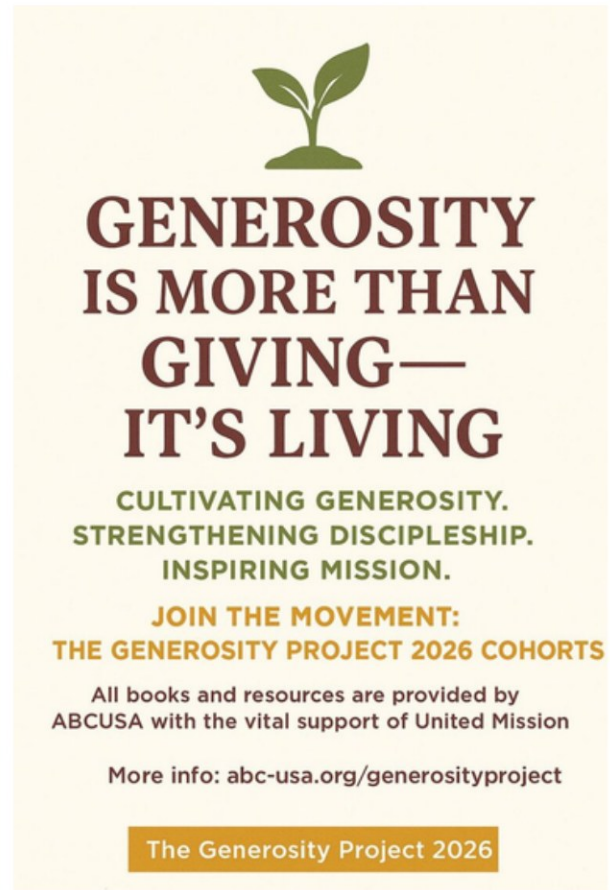
Apply Now:

The next cohort of the Generosity Project will begin in July 2026. Applications for January 2027, can be submitted in the Fall.

Have questions about the program or the application?

Contact GenerosityProject@abc-usa.org to learn more.

The Generosity Project is a collaborative effort between ABCUSA, regions, and local congregations. The Generosity Project aims to help pastors re-frame the conversation around stewardship and generosity in their congregations. Bi-monthly blogs help support new growth and understanding as we deepen our ministry and discipleship.



How to Participate in United Mission:

United Mission 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.

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

Whether congregations and individuals give to United Mission via regularly scheduled contributions throughout the year or annual one-time gifts, through church budgets or special offerings, your faithfulness shows your commitment to being United in Christ, Together in Mission as an entire American Baptist denominational family.

Explore the Resources at the Lake Institute

We have had several of our Regional Executive Ministers as well as pastors and leaders attend the Religious Fund Raising cohort. Check out what resources they offer. (used with permission from The Lake Institute)

<https://lakeinstitute.org/>



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Upcoming Events

