



PASTOR TO PASTOR

Heart To Heart

Winter 2005

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Ministry

Since becoming General Secretary—Pastor to the denomination—I have felt a driving need to be in more direct relationship with you. I hope that, with a communication like this, we can talk *Pastor to Pastor* and heart to heart. I want to encourage you to seek me out when I am in your area. I love to hear how God is at work in your ministry.

What is burning in my heart is the blessing of God upon our work to clarify and identify our vision so that we can move toward it together. I have always loved the image of the beckoning Christ—standing before us and calling us to follow. I believe Christ is calling us as American Baptists right now.

While the national program boards have great mission priorities for *Go Global* and *NEW LIFE 2010*, I have always felt the need for a clear, galvanized vision statement for the American Baptist Churches USA. In the *Seek It!* process, over 4,000 American Baptists provided information, and over 100 colleagues gathered to prayerfully discern the meaning of the responses and develop a mission and vision statement. Members of the General Board are refining the motto, core values and key ministry areas. *Seek It!* has been a real joy for me.

In my ministry with you, I have been focused on *Centered In Christ* with the driving text in Colossians 1:28: "In Christ all things consist." I see vision as "Christological." It is a venture into the very heart and mind of Jesus to discover and then to dare to do his will. We plan to use our resources in a focused way to move us towards

our common understanding of God's will for us. Habakkuk wrote, *Write the vision, make it plain.* And we are!

In this newsletter you will find the new ABCUSA mission statement. We hope you will help us launch it nationwide on Pentecost Sunday under the theme, *Catch the Vision*. We are suggesting the first three Sundays of May, culminating on Pentecost. It will be a vision in itself—American Baptists wearing red, and celebrating renewal and revitalization on the birthday of the Church!

As I read the mission statement I find scripture coming to mind, verse after verse. I also find the great themes of our historic witness: evangelism, discipleship, leadership, cooperation, stewardship, justice, and compassion—all this in a community rooted in the gospel and open to the world. God is not done with us yet!

A father came to his kitchen table, early in the morning, and discovered his young son at the breakfast table all alone. "What are you doing here alone this early?" he asked with concern. The boy looked up and said, "Dad, I ran out of dreams!"

Praise God that American Baptists are not running out of dreams!

A. Roy Medley
General Secretary



On Your Mark...

“...I carry the marks of Jesus on my body.”
(Galatians 6:17)

Suggestions for Sunday 1:

- Ask everyone to wear a cross.
- Divide your congregation into four groups. Read the litany below.
 - Using the story of the little boy who ran out of dreams (letter on page 1), and talk about vision for our denomination and the Church.
 - Conduct interviews around the communion table with members portraying Adoniram Judson, Martin Luther King, Jr., Walter Rauschenbaugh, Jitsuo Morikawa, Joanna P. Moore, etc. Ask them about their lives, ministries and American Baptist connections. Call Judson Press at 800-4JUDSON for a free copy of *Pilgrimage of Faith*, a timeline that provides information about these historical figures.
 - Conduct interviews around the communion table with members of the community who represent those you seek to serve, such as a member of an AA group that meets in your church, the parents of a child in your church’s day care, a representative from a food pantry, etc.

Possible texts:

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8)

“Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses....” (Hebrews 12:1)

“I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death....” (Philippians 3:10)



Litany: “Following Jesus with Prayer, Purpose and Passion”

Leader: 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.

■ **Group 1:** ...and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

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

■ **Group 2:** ...You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself. (Luke 10:27)

Leader: 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.

■ **Group 3:** Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ...And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:4-7; 13)

Leader: 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 trust, humility, love, and giving that the gospel might be preached and lived in all the world.

■ **Group 4:** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:19-20)

The Communion Word

Jesus Christ is the same...

Yesterday	Forever	Today
Past	Future	Present
Historical	Eschatological	Existential
God in the beginning	God in the end	God now
Where we have been	Where we are going	Where we are now
Has been	Not yet	At hand

Begin with the Past—Remember above all Christ is here.

Move to the Future—Remember Christ is there.

Focus on the Present—Remember Christ is everywhere.

This mission statement is about what God is calling us to today. Pick out your phrase and expand on it.



Get Set...

"I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth." (Genesis 9:13)

Suggestions for Sunday 2:

- Ask each member to bring a flower to worship to remember the mothers in your congregation.
- Have fun with the children's story. Ask people to share with others the name their mothers used when they scolded them, followed by a "pet" name their mothers used to make them feel special and loved. Include in the bulletin four phrases that mothers use to encourage their children. Divide your congregation into four groups and ask each group to recite one of the phrases, such as:
 - "Jesus loves you, and so do I!"
 - "You can do it!"
 - "I had faith that you could do it!"
 - "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again!"
 - "Hang in there!"
 - "Thank you for a great job, well done!"
 - "I couldn't have done it better myself!"



Sermon Idea:

Read John 19:26-27: "When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home."

Ponder the theme of Mary, the mother of Jesus, at the cross, that shows Jesus' love for his mother, Mary's love for Jesus, and Jesus' love for John.

Consider the possibility that this is the prefiguring of the Church—a family not held together by flesh and blood, but a new common relationship with the crucified and risen Christ.

Note the language of the mission statement: "...we are in the forefront of creating a diverse community of faith where people of every race, nationality and culture gather as one in worship, witness and work."



Go...

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...." (Matthew 28:19)

Suggestions for Sunday 3:

- Ask everyone to wear red. Explain the "flame of fire" of Pentecost to the congregation.
- Divide your congregation into four groups. Read the litany below as it relates to Pentecost Sunday.
 - Have a fashion show or parade of red during the children's sermon. Blow up red balloons and ask children to distribute them at the end of the worship service.
 - Have a birthday celebration for the Church with cake for everyone! Sing a birthday tune.



Litany: "Following Jesus with Prayer, Purpose and Passion"

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Group 1: Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ...in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine." (Acts 2:5-13)

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

Group 2: When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the

Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. (Acts 2:1-4)

Leader: 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.

■ **Group 3:** You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know—this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. (Acts 2:22-24)

Leader: 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 trust, humility, love, and giving that the gospel might be preached and lived in all the world.

■ **Group 4:** Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified. Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?” Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.” (Acts 2:36-39)

Sermon Idea:

Focus on three, five, ten or all of the following scripture verses in Acts 2 related to words and phrases in the mission statement. Remember to choose, adapt and personalize material that will work in your sermon, and preach the Word!

- Christ-centered (2:36)
- Ethnically diverse (2:1, 5-11)
- Nurture authentic relationships (2:1, 12)
- Build healthy churches (2:1, 41-47)
- Transform our community (2:42-47)

- Engage in hands-on ministry (2:4, 38-47)
- Speak the prophetic word (2:4, 14-36, 38-40)
- People of prayer (2:42)
- People of purpose (2:1, 42-47)
- People of passion (2:2-4, 38-47)
- Diverse community (2:1, 5-11, 44)
- Gather as one in worship (2:46-47)
- Witness (2:36, 38-40)
- Work (2:42-47)
- Heart of the gospel is God’s redemptive love (2:22-24, 32, 36, 39)
- In our life together see the power of forgiveness (2:21, 38, 40)
- Overcome alienation (38-39, 44, 47)
- Love to transform hate (2:21, 39)
- Grace breaking bonds of guilt (2:38-39)
- Hope over despair (2:21, 26, 39)
- Victory of faith over doubt (2:21, 28, 38, 39)
- Through the cross we embrace the world (2:44, 45, 47)
- Ministries of evangelism (2:43, 47)
- Discipleship (2:42-47)
- New church development (2:41-47)
- Social justice (2:44-45)
- Healing (2:43)
- Peacemaking (2:42-47)
- Economic development (2:45)
- Education (2:42)
- Empowered by the Holy Spirit (2:4, 17-18, 33, 38)
- Work together in trust (2:42-47)
- Humility (2:44-45)
- Giving (2:45)
- Gospel might be preached and lived in all the world (2:39, 47)

Remember... On Pentecost Sunday, all American Baptist churches are encouraged to receive their first annual Securing the Center offering for the ministry of the Office of the General Secretary. Watch your mail for details.

If you are unable to designate three Sundays to **Catch the Vision...**

- Adapt segments of each Sunday service.
- Celebrate it on Pentecost Sunday—or any Sunday during the year.

Remember...

- A People of Prayer—Jesus in Gethsemane
- A People of Purpose—Jesus on the way to the cross
- A People of Passion—Jesus on the cross

PARSING THE MISSION:

• Look at the **ACTIONS:**

Propel
Embrace
Engage
Empower
Nurture
Build
Transform
Speak
Worship
Witness
Work
Overcome
Break the bond
Energize
Give

• Look at the **DESCRIPTIONS**

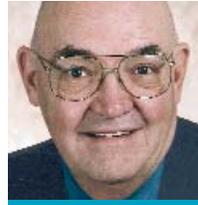
Christ-centered
Biblically grounded
Ethnically diverse
Hands-on ministries
Prophetic word
Diverse community of faith

• Look at the **OUTCOME:**

Radical discipleship
Building healthy churches
Transforming our communities
Transforming our nations
Transforming our world
Overcoming alienation

• Look at the **MINISTRIES:**

Evangelism
Discipleship
Leadership
New church development
Social justice
Healing
Peacemaking
Development
Education



ROBERTS' REFLECTIONS

Dr. Robert H. Roberts, Interim Associate General Secretary for World Mission Support



Why do we have a hard time asking for financial support? Dr. Larry Johnston, our highly respected consultant and friend, has stated that American Baptists “have a pathological fear of talking about money.” We try to be people of God’s Word, and “ask” is an important biblical word.

- The word “ask” is mentioned 157 times in scripture.
- 57 of those times relate to help in ministry.
- We ask God. God asks us. We ask others. Others ask us. As a result, people give to ministry.

Consider the following scripture verses:

- Moses asked. (Exodus 36)
- David asked. (1 Chronicles 29)
- Ezra asked. (Ezra 8:28)
- Malachi asked. (Malachi 3:3)
- Jesus asked. (Luke 6:38)
- Paul asked. (2 Corinthians 8-9)

Could it be any clearer?

- “Ask and it will be given you.” (Matthew 7:7)
- “You do not have because you do not ask.” (James 4:2)
- “Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more and abundantly than all that we ask or think...” (Ephesians 3:20)

If God loves a cheerful giver, God must take special delight in a cheerful asker!

For a downloadable copy of

“10 Biblical Visions”

by Dr. Robert H. Roberts,
produced by World Mission Support

go to www.abcusamissions.org

Visionaries in our Lifetime:

John F. Kennedy:

“...a man on the moon by the end of the decade.”

Walt Disney:

“...a place for people to find happiness and knowledge.”

Bill Gates:

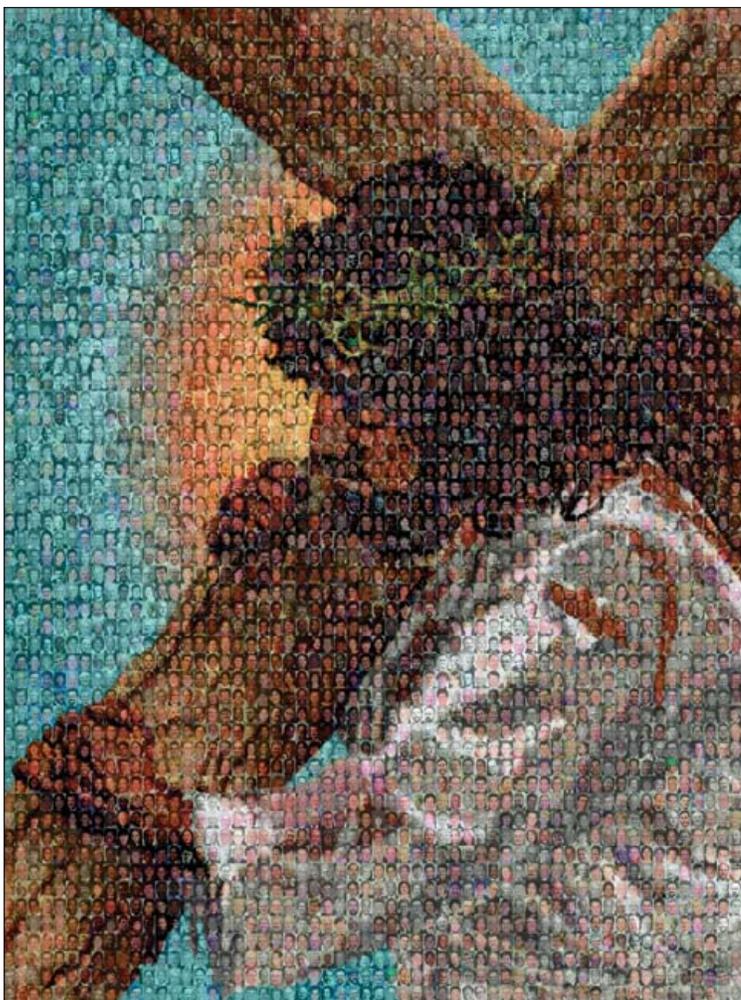
“...a personal computer in every home that everyone can use.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.:

“...I have a dream...”

Mother Teresa:

“...Love the unlovable.”

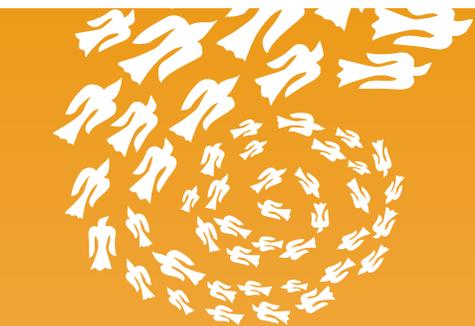


American Baptists...

a people of prayer —
that the world will see the power of
forgiveness.

a people of purpose —
that the gospel might be preached in
all the world.

a people of passion —
our commitment to Jesus propels us.



PRAYER REQUESTS

Please pray...

...for the strengthening of our congregations
as “incubators” for disciples.

...for the encouragement of all American
Baptists serving in ordained ministry, that they
might find joy in their service.

...for the 2006 Wait Upon the Lord ministers
conference.

...for our growth in mission across America
and around the globe.

ABC MISSION STATEMENT

Following Jesus with Prayer, Purpose and Passion

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.

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JEFF'S JOTTINGS

Dr. C. Jeff Woods
Associate General Secretary for
Regional Ministries

Signs of a Christ-centered people flicker across the United States...

- We pray: 63% of all worshipers in America report spending time in private devotions at least a few days a week and 45% report doing so every day.
- With purpose: 56% of worshipers in America participate in some form of small group activity every week.
- And passion: One-half of all worshipers in America say they experienced much growth in their faith during the last year in worship.

Yet, to fully embrace the world as neighbor, we must bear the cross of Jesus.

- Only 12% of clergy in America are female.
- 95% of Euro-Americans attend predominately white congregations.
- Members of a typical congregation in the United States are more educated, better employed, older, and more likely to be married and female than the general population.
- While 48% of people attending church for the first time do so because someone they knew invited them...
- Only 16% of worshipers in America report seeking out opportunities to talk about their faith with others.
- Because less than 1% of worshipers attend church in response to an invitation from a stranger...we must embrace the world as neighbor.

God is calling us to do more.

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CHERYL'S CHAT

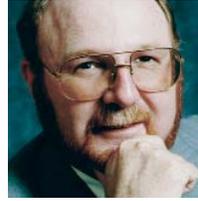
*Dr. Cheryl H. Wade, Associate
General Secretary and Treasurer*

A Matter of Finance—7 Things Pastors Should Know About April 15

1. Timely acknowledgement of all gifts is crucial.
2. Gifts in excess of \$250 must be acknowledged by the church.
3. Gifts under \$250 must also be acknowledged when the church's regular process provides a record of gifts.
4. The receipt must include:
 - Type of gift (cash, stock, property, etc.)
 - Date (postmark)
 - Stipulation that "no goods or services other than intangible religious belief were received in exchange for the gift."
5. A gift made directly to a foreign church or ministry is not tax deductible in the United States.
6. Honoraria, birthday gifts, anniversary gifts, etc., are not tax deductible.
7. "Strings attached" gifts out of the full control of the church are not tax deductible.

"Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and unto God what is God's." Sounds easy—but it gets a little more complicated with our tax system.

For additional information, go to
www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p526.pdf.



MEDLEY'S MUSINGS

Dr. A. Roy Medley, General Secretary

Seek It! Offering

During the *Seek It!* process, small groups were formed to work on key ministry areas. After making its presentation, the stewardship task force announced that an offering would be receiving since one had not been taken during worship the previous day. After the plates were dutifully passed and offerings placed within, the stewardship team announced the results. It didn't take advanced math skills to figure out that we had given an average of \$2–\$3 per person. Standing up and noting the per person average gift we had received, I said, "In some traditions pastors would say, 'Let's round up this offering.'" The plates were passed a second time. We all waited excitedly for the tally. The second offering was considerably more than the first! Joy began to show on the faces of the participants. Seeing this, our consultants made a challenge: If we gave at least \$1,000, they would match it and anything above. There was cheering! As the plates began to pass the third time within 30 minutes, Baptists started flying out of the room—to get their checkbooks! When we counted the third offering, it was almost as much as the first two combined! And we had beaten the consultants' challenge. What rejoicing broke out as we celebrated God's spirit of generosity flowing and working through us!



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