



May 7, 2009



Dear ABC/Ohio Pastors, Mission Committees, and Church Leaders:

Over the past few weeks many of you have received letters or personal contacts from Dr. Reid Trulson, Executive Director of International Ministries, ABC missionaries, and various Missionary Partnership Teams regarding the current funding crisis facing BIM and ABC missionaries.

Due to decreases in giving to United Mission, the World Mission Offering, and income from investment funds, IM has responded in two specific ways that affect us all. First, BIM made a decision to reduce its' home office staff. A number of positions were eliminated to reduce administrative expenses. Second, IM has pushed forward the time schedule for Missionary Partnership Teams and missionaries to secure 100% of their support goal by September 2009 rather than the end of 2010 as originally planned. This is necessary for current ABC missionaries to continue their valuable ministries throughout the world.

As you can imagine, these decisions, that seem drastic and abrupt, have resulted in various levels of concern, confusion, and deep soul-searching. Many of you have asked what does this mean and what can or should our church do? The concern that many of you have expressed is that your church is already supporting ABC missions through giving to UM, WMO, and specific missionaries, and your budget is stretched to its maximum. So in light of these challenges and your desire to keep our beloved missionaries on the field, what can you do?

The purpose of this letter is to communicate three specific things that provide an answer to your questions. First is to emphasize ABC/Ohio's partnership and support for IM, ABC missionaries, and their Missionary Partnership Teams. Second is to suggest ways your church can respond to the current crisis. And third, to clarify the specific ways ABC/Ohio can help your church support our missionaries.

The first thing to remember is that ABC/Ohio is a supporting partner of IM, ABC missionaries and their Missionary Partnership Teams. This partnership is an historic part of ABC/Ohio that is core to the Region's identity. ABC/Ohio was recently recognized by ABC/USA as the sixth top mission giving Region to American Baptist Mission support in 2008. ABC/Ohio gave **\$1,939,155** to various American Baptist mission causes. This is a relationship that we value and will continue to develop. I am working directly with Dr. Trulson to strengthen this needed partnership.

The second thing to recognize is that there is something your church can do to keep our missionaries on the field. There are ways that your church can truly make a difference. Let me suggest but a few:

- Pray for IM, ABC missionaries and their Missionary Partnership Teams.
- Sustain your current levels of financial support to ABC missions through UM, WMO, and MPT support.
- Consider ways to increase your current giving if at all possible.
- Adopt a new missionary and provide new money for their support. Possibly a Sunday school class, ABW circle, or other group could support a new missionary.
- Invite an ABC missionary that you don't support to speak and consider what your church might do to provide support.
- Encourage individuals to provide support for individual missionaries.
- Take advantage of the Luther Rice Society Matching Grant Fund that matches new donor gifts to missionaries from \$200 - \$2,000 if given between March 1 and June 30.

ABC/Ohio is blessed to be in partnership with seven missionaries that we call our own. They are:

- Chuck and Ruth Fox (Thailand)
- Dwight and Kari Davidson (Japan)
- Duane and Marcia Binkley (Burmese ethnic Karen and Chin refugees)
- Kit Ripley (Thailand)
- Kim Brown (Thailand)
- Annie and Jeff Dieselberg (Thailand)
- Jim and Debbie Kelsey (Italy)

Churches in ABC/Ohio also support a number of other ABC missionaries with time, talent, and treasure.

The third thing to remember is that ABC/Ohio is here to help you in your efforts to support ABC missionaries. The Region staff is always willing to provide help to your church. When you have questions always call your Minister of Congregational Development, Mrs. Leslie Hoskinson at the office, or me. Leslie is the primary staff person who makes sure your mission dollar gets where you designate it. She assists in scheduling missionary visits to churches, and is eager to help in any way possible. Before you act, simply call 740-587-0804 and ask for Leslie. Also, check the ABC/Ohio website, [www.abc-ohio.org](http://www.abc-ohio.org) for links to ABC/Ohio based missionaries.

As I close, I know this has been a long letter. But I want to thank you for your generous support of American Baptist ministries & missionaries, which also includes ABC/Ohio. We are all living in the mist of this great financial challenge. It is affecting us all. Yet we serve a generous God who desires that we be people of extreme generosity. I prayerfully urge you to trust the Lord with all your heart and release all you have so God can use you for His Kingdom purposes.

In Christ,

Rev. Dr. Lawrence O. Swain  
Executive Minister

