

## Support for Missions – then and now!

Missionary work is commonplace in churches today. Many Christians have gone on “short term” mission trips of a week or two. This is possible for one reason: the low cost of travel, both domestic and international. If you think about it, you can really go just about anywhere in the world within, say, 48 hours if you really need to and have the money. You just catch a plane to that part of the world, and then rent a smaller plane or helicopter to drop you off at the spot.

But things have not always been so. **Fifty years ago**, overseas mission work meant that you were going to be gone for at least several months. **A hundred years ago**, overseas mission work meant that you were going to be gone for at least several years. And **200 years ago**, overseas mission work meant that you stood a good chance of never coming back, yes, you would probably die and be buried wherever you did your mission work

On February 18, 1812, shortly after Adoniram Judson was ordained as a missionary, he and his new wife, Ann, sailed with four of his missionary friends and became known as America’s first missionaries.

One of those young men was Luther Rice (age 29). They sailed to Calcutta, India as Congregationalist missionaries and met with English Baptist missionary William Carey. However, after both Rice and Judson became Baptists, Rice returned to America to break ties with the Congregationalists and to raise support from the Baptists for Judson’s work in Burma.

Rice worked to unite Baptists in America to support foreign missionaries and organized “The General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States of America, for Foreign Missions”, (also called ‘the Triennial Convention’) in 1814.

He spent the rest of his life garnering support for missionaries and Baptist work, traveling across America by horseback to raise funds and awareness for Baptist missions.

Although his life was not without controversy, Rice’s contribution to the support of missionary work was invaluable in the early years of the Triennial Convention. During Rice’s lifetime, the Triennial Convention’s membership grew from 8,000 to 600,000, and the convention supported 25 missions and 112 missionaries. By the time of his death at the age of 53, fifteen Baptist universities and colleges had been formed. He died on

September 25, 1836, while traveling through the Southern United States raising funds for missions and seminaries that he founded.

American Baptists have always been a people of mission; mission is in our DNA. Our United Mission (UM) contributions give concrete expression to this impulse and help us to be the hands and feet of Christ – from the local congregation to all parts of the world.

It is through UM, our one family offering, that each giver is able to participate in the total ministry of our American Baptist family.

These gifts are distributed on a percentage basis according to the covenant agreement between Region organizations, American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA), American Baptist Home Mission Societies, International Ministries, Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board and career development centers and partner organizations.

These gifts under gird every aspect of our life together as American Baptists, supporting the cutting-edge ministry projects as well as the administrative support necessary to the success of those projects.

Congregations give to United Mission in two ways:

1. **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.
2. **UM Love Gifts** are contributions from American Baptist women in support of American Baptist ministry, given over and above United Mission Basics.

**There are five mission support offerings**—America for Christ, World Mission Offering, Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering, One Great Hour of Sharing, and Regional offering, which supports the good work of specific ministry partners.

Missionaries have always answered God's call to missionary service with the faith that somehow God would provide for their needs. God called Luther Rice to help raise funds for the early missionaries and others have responded since.

For many years our missionaries salaries were paid from funds given to United Mission, but as those contributions decreased it became more difficult to send out missionaries.

A new concept is now being used – Missionary Partnership Networks.

Each missionary establishes a network of people like YOU – individuals, churches and regions who come alongside missionaries to pray for, participate in and financially support their ministry. This is similar to the church in Antioch that set apart Barnabas and Saul for ministry in other lands in Acts 13:1-3. This is a much more personal involvement and with today's technology it is possible to have current information on their activities and prayer concerns. In this way, you can choose the missionary(ies) that you want to financially support on the foreign mission field and become personally involved.

### **Why support missions??**

Although it took Adoniram Judson years to learn the Burmese language and he told them about Jesus all the time, it took six years before one person accepted Jesus as their Savior. The Judsons went through unbelievable hard times including imprisonment during the war with Britain. But when Adoniram Judson died in 1850 after 38 years of faithful service, there were 7,000 baptized believers, 63 Christian congregations and 163 missionaries in Burma. To this day, his Burmese Bible translation is still in use and various ethnic groups from Burma coming to the United States are coming to American Baptist churches as they consider us their 'mothers and fathers'. Their churches here exceed many of us in number and enthusiasm.

**God wants everyone to know the good news of Jesus Christ's offer of salvation. He calls some to go to other lands and some to be witnesses right in their own communities but He expects ALL of us to share the financial blessings that He has given us to support His ministry.**

Current gifts of cash are always needed but there are also ways that you can gift funds for future use. A Charitable Gift Annuity gives you income during your lifetime (up to 9% depending upon your age) and then it goes to support the ministry of your choice when you go to be with your Lord.

Rev. Wilma Engle, Director of Planned Giving for our Kansas Baptist Convention Foundation, would love to discuss various possibilities with you without obligation or cost. Contact her at e-mail: [wilmaengle@juno.com](mailto:wilmaengle@juno.com), phone 316-838-3065, cell 316-644-2069 or 6745 Interurban, Wichita, KS 67204-1323.