

In One Sacred Effort

Elements of an American Baptist Missiology

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American Baptist International Ministries was formed over two centuries ago by Baptists in the United States who believed that God was calling them to work together “in one sacred effort” to make disciples of all nations. Organized in 1814, it is the oldest Baptist international mission agency in North America and the second oldest in the world, following the Baptist Missionary Society formed in England in 1792 to send William and Dorothy Carey to India. International Ministries currently serves more than 1,800 short-term and long-term missionaries annually, bringing U.S. and Puerto Rico churches together with partners in 74 countries in ministries that tell the good news of Jesus Christ while meeting human needs. This is a review of the missiology exemplified by American Baptist International Ministries that has both emerged from and helped to shape American Baptist life.

American Baptists are better understood as a movement than an institution. Whether religious or secular, movements tend to be diverse, multi-directional and innovative. To retain their character and remain true to their core purpose beyond their first generation, movements must be able to do two seemingly opposite things. They must adopt dependable procedures while adapting to changing contexts. If they lose the balance between organization and innovation, most movements tend to become rigidly institutionalized or to break apart. Baptists have experienced both.

For four centuries the American Baptist movement has borne its witness within the mosaic of Christianity. Succeeding generations of American Baptists have made changes in their organizational structures, rejoicing when able to unite with others of similar commitment and anguishing when some have chosen to depart from common fellowship. Lacking a single human founder, Baptists have had to discover experientially the core beliefs, purposes and values that hold them together in fellowship. American Baptist life has not been centered in official creeds, uniform cultures or static structures. American Baptists have remained a movement for three reasons. They have sought life centered in Jesus as Lord and Savior. They have believed that Jesus calls them to be part of God's mission in the world. And they have followed the Spirit's leading to work together rather than in separate isolation.

The conviction that Jesus is calling his followers to join him in his ongoing work remains the heart of the American Baptist mission movement. True to the nature of movements, American Baptist missiology has developed out of mission practices that have been diverse, multi-directional and innovative. This is evident from the earliest days.

Origins of American Baptist Mission

Roger Williams and John Clarke were leaders among those who established the Baptist witness in colonial America in the 1630s. While Williams remained a Baptist for only a few months, Clarke maintained a long public ministry of leading a congregation while establishing the "lively experiment" of religious liberty in North America. In 1651 Clarke and Williams sailed to England to protect Rhode Island's religious and political rights. Clarke remained separated from his Newport congregation until he had secured a royal charter establishing the principle of full religious freedom. King Charles II issued the 1663 colonial charter for Rhode Island after Clarke convinced him that religious liberty

would encourage strong ties of loyalty to the crown.

Clarke believed however that religious liberty served a higher purpose than mere social and political stability. During his thirteen year sojourn in England, Clarke wrote, “There can be nothing in this present evil world, so far as I am acquainted with my own heart as it stands to Godward, that is more pleasing and delightful to it, than the manifestation of the enlargement of the Kingdom of His dear son, and that many obedient servants are added to the Lord...” The emerging Baptist movement was committed to the task of making disciples. The early Baptists were marked by zeal to share the good news of salvation in Christ. They planted new churches not only in their local areas but also along and beyond the American frontier.

It is often difficult to identify the precise beginning of a movement. This is true of American Baptist foreign mission. Did it begin when colonial Baptists first shared the gospel among the sovereign Native American nations? Or when Ebenezer Moulton migrated in 1760 from Massachusetts to Nova Scotia and subsequently started the first Baptist church in Canada? Does the definition of foreign mission include the deliberate purpose to enter another culture to make disciples? This was exemplified by George Liele, a former slave who had become the first ordained African-American preacher in America. In 1782 Liele indentured himself to an English colonel to pay for passage to Jamaica on a sailing ship. Surrendering his freedom until he could pay back the debt, Liele fulfilled his vision of planting churches among the Jamaican slaves. Through ingenuity and initiative, George and Hannah Liele became the first Baptist foreign missionaries from the newly formed United States of America, predating the mission of William Carey by a decade.

Baptist mission work in the 1700s grew in a variety of patterns, including initiatives by individuals, congregations and associations. As early as 1791 Vermont’s Woodstock Baptist Association was sending missionaries across the northern tip of Lake Champlain into Canada. The 1793 visit of Woodstock missionaries John Hebbard and Ariel Kendrick led to formation of the first Baptist church in central Canada. In the following years, six associations in the United States sent at least twenty-five missionaries to plant churches in Quebec and Ontario.

The Innovation of Mission Societies

In the late 1700s American Baptist mission was heavily influenced by initiatives arising among British Baptists. William Carey, later called the “father of the modern

mission movement,” was a humble cobbler and Baptist pastor. Burdened in prayer by the vision of a world dying without knowledge of Christ, Carey was driven to scripture. There he came to convictions challenging the idea that God seeks no assistance to bring people to salvation. Carey published his insights in a pamphlet entitled *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen* (1792). Soon after the pamphlet appeared, Carey preached a sermon that would be remembered for its two great appeals, “Expect great things; attempt great things.” Carey’s sermon and pamphlet argued that scripture teaches believers “to use every lawful method” to spread the knowledge of Christ. Contrary to the opinion of some of his fellow Baptists, Carey insisted that Christians are not merely permitted to take initiative in making disciples, but are in fact obligated to do so. Carey proposed that Baptists form a society to send missionaries to remote parts of the world. On October 2, 1792 he, several pastors and a seminarian named William Staughton created the Baptist Missionary Society. In 1793 Staughton immigrated to America after working with the Society to send Carey to India.

Carey’s work in India aroused great interest among Baptists and other evangelical Christians in America who began supporting it with prayer and financial gifts. They also followed Carey’s innovation and created single purpose societies to do mission both within and beyond the United States.

Mission Principles

Early American Baptist foreign mission work bore the marks of an emerging movement. It was a diverse company of people of European, African and Native American descent – women and men, lay and ordained, native born and immigrant, enslaved and free – who took the initiative. Guided by their understandings of scripture and by pragmatism, they sometimes imitated others and at other times launched innovative experiments. Gradually these missionaries and the co-workers that supported them began to exemplify principles that became marks of American Baptist missiology.

In 1999 the International Ministries Board of Directors identified fifteen mission principles that define American Baptist missiology and published them in the document *Go Global: May God’s Glory Fill the Whole Earth*. Those principles are now considered in light of past mission experience.

1. American Baptist mission principle – Prayer

We believe that mission springs from God’s initiative, is guided by God’s Spirit and is

accomplished through God's power. Therefore, we continually seek the Lord in prayer.

The year was 1800. The city was Boston. The person was Mary Webb, a 21 year-old woman living with a disability since the age of five. Unable to move without being carried about in a chair, Mary Webb invited seven Baptist and six Congregationalist friends to her home. In spite of the many restrictions that society placed upon women, Mary Webb and her friends took an initiative that had profound implications. They organized the Boston Female Society for Missionary Purposes, the first women's missionary society in America. The society's purpose was to pray for William Carey's work in India and for evangelization efforts among the Native Americans in North America. Prayer was central to their ministry. Furthermore, the women believed that authentic prayer required a willingness to be part of God's answer to their prayers. So from the start, the women both collected and contributed funds for the work.

Mary Webb's group has been called "the Mother Society" among Baptists for pioneering the creation of special purpose societies. Baptist men followed Mary Webb's lead and two years later formed the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society "to promote the knowledge of evangelistic truth in the new settlements within these United States; or further if circumstances should render it proper." Other local and regional missionary societies were organized, setting the pattern Baptists later followed to organize as a national denomination.

Today International Ministries continues to seek God in prayer, knowing that the Spirit is already at work in the world calling this generation to join Jesus in that work.

2. American Baptist mission principle - Scripture

We believe God has decisively and authoritatively spoken to humanity through Scripture. Therefore, we seek to be grounded in and faithful to Scripture in our understanding and practice of mission.

In 1809 a young Congregationalist seminarian named Adoniram Judson read a sermon about mission in *The Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* that set his heart aflame. Judson later described his initial excitement about mission as romantic scenes, incorrect views and extravagant feelings. Although those first emotions soon passed, Judson remained drawn to the idea. He wrote, "It was during a solitary walk in the woods behind the college, while meditating and praying on the subject, and feeling half inclined to give it up, that the command of Christ, 'Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to

every creature,' was presented to my mind with such clearness and power, that I came to a full decision, and though great difficulties appeared in my way, resolved to obey the command at all events. But, at that period, no provision had been made in America for a foreign mission.....and I thought that I should be under the necessity of going to England and placing myself under foreign patronage.”

The following June, Judson and a colleague urged their fellow Congregationalists to create a mission society, and by September 1810 the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was born. Two years later the newly married Ann and Adoniram Judson sailed for India as missionaries of that society.

Scripture had a central role in the Judsons' call to mission, and scripture translation would be essential for their ministry in Burma. But studying scripture as they sailed to India also brought the Judsons a new understanding of baptism. Their fellow missionary Luther Rice, who followed them several days later on another ship, had a similar experience. Studying the Bible during the voyage, Rice also came to Baptist convictions about the meaning and practice of baptism. After arriving in India, Luther Rice and the Judsons were immersed in believer's baptism by British Baptist missionaries.

International Ministries seeks to be faithful to Scripture in this generation, believing that God through Jesus Christ calls American Baptists to be a Biblical people

who affirm the centrality of Scripture in our lives; who pursue the study of God's inspired Word as a mandate for faith and practice; and who seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the understanding of Scripture, while respecting the common interpretation of Scripture within the community of believers.

Source: *We Are American Baptists*, accessed at <http://www.abc-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/16-ABC-ID-Brochure.W.pdf>

3. American Baptist mission principle - Global Dimension

We believe that God's redeeming and renewing mission is universal in at least two dimensions: mission is to all places and is a work of all members of the Body of Christ. Therefore, we recognize that every place is a field of mission -- including the U.S. and Puerto Rico -- and that all believers are called to play a role in mission, according to the diverse gifts they have received.

No longer Congregationalists, the Judsons needed support from Baptists in

America. Luther Rice returned to the United States to tell the Baptists about the mission in Asia and help them organize for foreign mission. British Baptist missionaries William Carey and William Ward had long been corresponding with William Staughton who was by then a leading pastor in Philadelphia. They urged Staughton to organize a society in America to support the Judsons and to send more missionaries. Invitations from Staughton, Rice and others led thirty-three delegates from eleven states and Washington, D.C. to meet in Philadelphia and organize a plan for “directing the Energies of the whole Denomination in one sacred effort.” On May 21, 1814 they formed The General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States of America for Foreign Missions. The last three words of the name were crucial. Baptists in the United States had birthed a national movement to work together in global mission.

Because it met every three years, the General Missionary Convention soon became known as the “Triennial Convention.” The Convention created a board of managers (the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions) that met monthly to conduct business and oversee the mission on its behalf. William Staughton led the society as its founding Corresponding Secretary, a role now known as Executive Director.

The fluid adaptability of a movement was especially striking in the mission’s early years. At its first triennial gathering (1817) the Convention expanded its purpose to include domestic and educational mission within the United States. At that gathering it appointed its first domestic missionaries to the territory west of the Mississippi River: James A. Ranaldson (for Louisiana), John Mason Peck and James E. Webb (for St. Louis). Later in 1817 the Board appointed its first missionaries to the indigenous nations of America: William Posey to serve at Valley Towns, North Carolina within the Cherokee nation and Isaac McCoy to minister to the Miami and Kickapoo near Fort Wayne, Indiana. In 1820 it symbolized its expanded function by changing its name to “The General Convention of the Baptist denomination in the United States for Foreign Missions, and other important objects relating to the Redeemer’s Kingdom.” The Convention formed Columbian College in Washington, D.C. (1821) that is now George Washington University. By 1822 it had appointed sixteen domestic missionaries. Their fields of service included Missouri, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Ohio, Vermont, Pennsylvania, Virginia, North and South Carolina.

By now it was becoming evident that expansion into “other important objects” was depleting the society’s resources and diminishing its focus on foreign mission. Again, the Society was able to adapt because of its flexibility as a movement. In 1823 it ended its six-year experiment with domestic missionary appointments and increased its appointments for cross-cultural work among indigenous American peoples. In the years that followed, Board-appointed missionaries worked among the Cherokee, Choctaw, Creek, Delaware,

Kickapoo, Miami, Potawatomi, Sandusky, Seneca, Shawanoe, Ojibwa, Omaha, Otoe and Ottawa and Wyandot. In 1826 the Triennial Convention officially returned to foreign mission as its single purpose. Meanwhile, Baptists created additional single purpose societies to address domestic and educational needs. The new organizations included the Baptist General Tract Society (1824) that became the American Baptist Publication Society, the American Baptist Home Mission Society (1832) and the American Baptist Historical Society (1835).

International Ministries recognizes the need for God's grace and transforming power within the United States and Puerto Rico, even as it believes that today's generation of American Baptists is called anew to participate in God's mission to the whole world.

4. American Baptist mission principle - Cooperation

We believe that God has called the church to unity in mission, and that Christ is at work in the world through many different organizations. Therefore, we cooperate with a wide range of agencies (church, non-denominational, secular) to fulfill God's call and our mission. We are particularly committed to an ecumenical stance that encourages fellowship, cooperation, and joint action with other Christian people to whom we are bound by the ties of a common cause and a common Lord. This commitment to cooperation must also -- and especially -- be embodied in our work with American Baptist churches, regions, program agencies and educational institutions.

The adaptability necessary for healthy movements was evident in the Triennial Convention's willingness to cooperate with other religious and secular groups to accomplish mission goals. This was exemplified by the collaborative efforts through which Lott Carey was sent as the first American Baptist missionary to Africa. Carey was a slave who had been hired out to work in a Richmond tobacco warehouse. After Carey became a Christian, he learned to read. Saving and selling tobacco sweepings from the warehouse floor, Carey eventually bought freedom for himself and his children. In 1815, the year of his freedom and one year after the birth of the Triennial Convention, Carey organized the Richmond African Baptist Missionary Society. This society then sent a delegate to the Triennial Convention proposing the start of mission work in Africa. Needing additional finances and willing to cooperate with a secular agency, the two mission societies formed a three-way partnership with the American Colonization Society. This cooperative effort brought together the financial and logistical resources needed to send Lott Carey and Collin Teague to Liberia in 1821 as missionaries. The pioneer ministry of these two former slaves began the American Baptist mission work in Africa.

To sustain and develop the mission, Lott Carey cooperated with governmental and business entities in Liberia and the United States. Carey's life came to a tragic end in 1828 when the mission and colony were threatened by an approaching slave ship. While Carey and others hurriedly made bullets to defend the colony, a lantern in their work area was accidentally knocked over. The exploding gunpowder killed Lott Carey.

International Ministries continues to believe that God is at work in the world through many different organizations and therefore actively cooperates with a wide range of religious and secular agencies to fulfill mission goals.

5. American Baptist mission principle - Flexibility, Creativity and Freedom

We believe that God has shared elements of God's own creativity and freedom with human beings. Therefore, we encourage flexible and creative responses to the leading of God's Spirit. We affirm the freedom of all those with whom we work to respond creatively to the new things God is doing. We are committed to remaining flexible in our structures, methods, and approach as we support those responses and carry out the tasks that God has entrusted to us.

Within its first generation, the multidirectional tendency of movements almost destroyed the Triennial Convention. By the 1820's an anti-mission controversy had emerged among the churches that centered on the interpretation of scripture and whether Christians were free to create societies through which to do mission. Some churches approached scripture from the perspective that all practices were forbidden to Christians unless found "by precept or example" in the Bible. Since missionary societies, Sunday schools and Bible societies are not mentioned in scripture, these churches believed them to be unchristian. They reasoned that such innovations relied for success on human works rather than on the sovereign work of God through the local church.

Others approached scripture from a different perspective. They held that followers of Jesus are allowed and encouraged to use various means to fulfill ministries of evangelism and discipleship. These churches held that Christians are free to be creative and flexible unless a particular practice is forbidden in scripture.

The anti-mission controversy was the first issue to split the newly unified Baptist ranks. Most Baptists, however, remained committed to being a movement unified by mission as its central calling. They continued to embrace the "structural messiness" of freedom and innovation inherent in living movements. They resisted centralization and

control both on the denominational and local church levels. On the other hand, those who separated from the larger Baptist fellowship emphasized theological uniformity and the independence of the local church over the interdependence required by a movement. The separating churches came to be called Primitive, Old School or Hard-shell Baptists.

International Ministries continues to practice a policy of “high sensitivity and low control” among those with whom it partners in mission. It believes that God gives the worldwide Body of Christ creativity, freedom and responsibility to engage in mission.

6. American Baptist mission principle - Christ-like Ministry

We believe that Jesus met human need with a holistic salvation, one that touched all aspects of life. Therefore, our witness to Jesus Christ also integrates verbal proclamation of the gospel with response to human need and care for the creation.

Most Baptists continued to find unity on a national scale by doing mission through the home and foreign mission societies. But what was to be the nature of this mission work? Should it focus exclusively on preaching, baptizing and starting churches? Or did Jesus call Christians to mission that also addresses physical, educational, economic and relational needs?

In 1823 Francis Wayland, a leading pastor, educator and mission leader, preached a sermon entitled “*The Moral Dignity of the Missionary Enterprise.*” The sermon was a strong defense of mission in the face of growing anti-mission sentiment. Several who heard the sermon, urged its publication. The sermon later went through several printings and became widely circulated in the United States and England. Preaching on the text, “The field is the world,” Wayland called for a holistic understanding of mission. “Our design is radically to affect the temporal and eternal interests of the whole race of man,” he said. And when identifying several of those “temporal interests,” he included slavery. For Wayland, the issue was clear. Mission must not confine itself to a narrowly defined evangelism, but must also bear upon social realities such as slavery.

Through the first half of the 1800s the slavery debate had grown ever more intense among the Baptists. Three of the first four Triennial Convention presidents were southern slave owners: Richard Furman (1814-1820), Robert B. Semple (1820-1831) and William B. Johnson (1841-1844). In 1822 after completing six years as the Convention’s first president, Richard Furman wrote the classic Southern biblical defense of slavery. The Convention itself tried to remain neutral, saying that convictions on slavery were matters of

individual conscience. Many Baptists in the north and south, however, felt that neutrality was unacceptable. In 1843 Baptists in the north formed the American Baptist Free Mission Society to do mission on an anti-slavery basis. In 1860 this new group began mission in Japan through Jonathan and Elizabeth Goble. Jonathan would become the reputed inventor of the rickshaw.

The following year Georgia Baptists tested the American Baptist Home Mission Society by recommending James E. Reeves for appointment as a missionary to the Cherokee nation, pointedly noting that he was a slaveholder. The Society refused to appoint him. Several months later the Alabama Baptist Convention asked the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions if slaveholders could be appointed as foreign missionaries. The Board replied with a decision that departed from the Triennial Convention's official neutrality. "If anyone should offer himself as a missionary, having slaves, and should insist on retaining them as his property, we could not appoint him. One thing is certain," wrote the Board's president, "we can never be a party to any arrangement which would imply approbation of slavery." In 1845, Baptists in the South broke fellowship with the churches in the north to create the Southern Baptist Convention with home and foreign mission societies that would appoint slaveholders as missionaries. Following the Southern Baptist withdrawal, the Triennial Convention changed its name to "The American Baptist Missionary Union."

Slavery in the United States was finally brought to an end by the Civil War (1860-65). In 1868 after twenty-two years of separation, the American Baptist Free Mission Society rejoined the American Baptist Missionary Union (ABMU). Southern Baptists and American Baptists have remained organizationally separate to the present day.

International Ministries recognizes that its own history includes times when it has struggled to respond faithfully to God's leading. It acknowledges that both it and the whole world will continue to need the Spirit's work of transformation and reconciliation until the Lord returns. And though not yet fully whole itself, it seeks in Jesus' name to serve the whole person and the whole community through wide-ranging ministries that meet human need and that are fully integrated with the proclamation of the gospel.

7. American Baptist mission principle - Servant Attitude

We believe that in Jesus, God took on human flesh, giving us the model of humbly identifying with those he served. Therefore, we seek to follow this incarnational model, developing ways of living and serving that identify us with the people we serve.

In 1821 Evan and Elizabeth Jones moved from Pennsylvania to the Cherokee nation to serve as volunteer educational missionaries. Several years later the Triennial Convention appointed Jones as a missionary to the Cherokees. One of the primary ways to identify with people and understand their culture is to learn their language. Evan Jones and his son John B. Jones were the only missionaries of any denomination to learn and fluently speak Cherokee. Their deep understanding of Cherokee language and culture enabled them to minister to the “full-blood” majority, unlike the missionaries who worked in English and tended to reach only the assimilated, English-speaking minority. Evan Jones’ identification with the Cherokee gave him profound convictions about their human and civil rights. He became a trusted advisor to the tribal leaders as they sought to protect their land and sovereignty. In 1838 Evan and John B. Jones traveled with the Cherokees and ministered to their needs when the U.S. Army forcibly removed them to the Indian Territory west of the Mississippi River. About one fourth of the Cherokee nation died on that “Trail of Tears.”

Because it is crucial for missionaries to identify with the people among whom they serve, International Ministries mandates that missionaries give their highest priority at the start of their service to language acquisition and building relationships.

8. American Baptist mission principle - The Church

We believe God accomplishes the mission of Jesus Christ in our world primarily through the church. Therefore, in all that we do we seek with our mission partners to build churches that both meet their own needs (for governance, growth, support and theological reflection) and also enter joyfully into Christian mission beyond their own people.

Meanwhile, the mission begun by Adoniram and Ann Judson in Burma continued to expand. In 1837 Rev. Elisha Abbott began ministry in the Bassein District of western Burma to establish churches among the Karen people. The Karen might have appeared to be the least promising of people. Predominantly small farmers and laborers, the Karen were dominated by the Burmese majority who ruled them as serfs. To reinforce their control, the Burmese forbade the Karen to have books or to learn to read. Punishment for disobeying these rules could include beheading or crucifixion. Abbott was therefore surprised to discover Karens who had been converted through reading two small books written in Burmese by Judson. In 1838 Abbott baptized his first convert from Bassein, a young chief named Shway Weing. Six weeks after his baptism, Shway Weing was arrested in Rangoon, beaten and tortured for possessing several books. Despite the persecution, the young chief persisted in sharing the gospel. By 1839 more than 2,000 Karens had come to faith through

his witness.

As the conversions continued, Abbott trained Karens for ministry. In 1843 Abbott began ordaining the assistants he had trained, giving them full leadership responsibility. He believed that the Karen churches would only be strong if they were self-supporting and led by their own people. In this thinking, Abbott was a man ahead of his time. The work of Abbott and his successors in Bassein was the earliest large-scale demonstration that churches that learned early to support their own leaders and ministries tended to exhibit superior health. It would be another century before other mission theorists also began advocating the planting of self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating churches.

International Ministries continues to affirm the central role of the local church. It believes that the local church is the fundamental unit of mission and that God accomplishes the mission of Jesus Christ in the world primarily through the church. International Ministries' core mission is to make disciples who gather together in self-supporting, self-governing, self-propagating and self-theologizing churches. Thus, American Baptists do not have member congregations outside of the United States and Puerto Rico. Instead, churches resulting from the work of International Ministries missionaries are constituent members of local Baptist conventions, unions, or associations in their own country.

9. American Baptist mission principle - Service to “the Least of These”

We believe God takes up the cause of those who are excluded or victimized by human sinfulness. Therefore, we give special attention to the excluded, recognizing that people may be discriminated against for reasons of economic status, gender, age, race, ethnicity or religion.

American Baptist mission has a long heritage of giving particular attention to the poor, the weak and the marginalized of society. That pattern characterized the work of Mary Webb in Boston. After organizing the Boston Female Society for Missionary Purposes, Mary Webb identified needs among the women and children in her city. She then organized new societies to address those needs. Her considerable organizational skills brought into existence at least eight single purpose societies including the Fragment Society (to clothe needy children), the Children's Friend Society (to provide day care for the children of working mothers), and the Penitent Female's Refuge (to work among women in prostitution).

Reaching out to people with leprosy was another example of serving “the least of

these.” Dr. Ellen Mitchell went to Burma in 1879 as the first woman physician appointed by American Baptists. After establishing a hospital for women and children in Moulmein, Dr. Mitchell organized the Moulmein Leper Asylum. By the mid 1920s the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (as the ABMU had come to be named) had established seven centers for ministry to leprosy patients in Africa, India, Burma and China. Evangelism and the organization of churches accompanied the physical care of the leprosy patients. Before the disease was better understood and effective medications were identified for treatment, leprosy patients were often organized into isolated colonies. The Society made those colonies to be largely self-supporting.

Today in much of the world HIV/AIDS holds much of the same stigma previously associated with leprosy. Correspondingly, American Baptist missionaries are involved in ministries to HIV/AIDS patients and their families. Likewise, modern day slavery holds millions of men, women and children in abusive labor while annually trafficking hundreds of thousands of women and children across national borders into forced prostitution. More than ten percent of all International Ministries missionaries now work in ministries that rescue and serve survivors of human trafficking.

10. American Baptist mission principle - Partnership

We believe that God has made all human beings fundamentally equal in creation and redemption. Therefore, we engage in mission in ways that recognize and respect the equality and giftedness of all of our partners both internationally and within the U.S. and Puerto Rico. We also recognize the existence of real inequalities in our relationships. Therefore, we strive to build relationships of mutual giving and receiving, in which vision, initiative, learning, and action are shared by all of those involved. We strive to avoid relationships of paternalism and dependency.

By the mid-1800s American Baptists were in mission in two very different contexts. Missionaries were doing pioneer evangelism in Asia and Africa. Mission in Europe, however, was in lands where the church had been present for centuries. The missiological implications of these divergent contexts were noted in 1865 by the organization’s Corresponding Secretary, John G. Knowles. In cultures where the gospel was first being introduced, he observed, the objective is “.....to *plant* rather than to *perpetuate* Christianity.” And “to plant” meant to establish local churches that could multiply converts, churches, and church leaders without foreign support. Knowles went on to say, “It is not the object of Missions to convert all, or even the larger part of the people of a

country, and carry them forward to a high state of Christian civilization.” The role of the mission organization, he said, is to bring indigenous churches into being. Those churches then take the central role in evangelizing their own country.

In Europe, where the work was among a nominally Christian population, Knowles said the object was not “.....to *plant* but *restore* Christianity to its original simplicity and power.” The role of expatriate missionaries was to work in partnership with Christians already present in those cultures. “The work is theirs, the responsibility is theirs, the burden of care and control is on them,” said Knowles. The proper role of the mission agency in such contexts, he said, is to give “fraternal counsel and encouragement.....You will continue to render much or little assistance, as the finger of Providence shall point out both the kind and measure of duty. It is your chief prerogative to minister encouragement by prayer, by kind words, and by grants in aid.”

American Baptist work in Europe was characterized by partnership from the start. The first American Baptist missionary to Europe was Jean Casimir Rostan, a Frenchman appointed in 1832 for service in his home country of France. When Rostan died the next year from cholera, the Board appointed other missionaries to carry on the work in France. Although the work progressed so that by the 1860s American Baptist missionaries could be withdrawn, a relationship of dependency seemed to mark the French work. By contrast, in 1835 Johann Gerhard Oncken of Hamburg was appointed to be the American Baptist mission agent for work among German speaking peoples. This partnership continued for fifty years before the first American missionary was requested and sent. During that half century, American Baptists supported more than twenty-six European missionaries whose work was administered by the German Baptists.

Today, partnership continues to mark the way that International Ministries does mission. Missionaries are appointed and sent in response to the invitation of a national host partner. While on location, the missionaries are accountable to the local partner. The missionary’s work is evaluated both by International Ministries staff and the host partner. Missionaries are returned to their place of service only with the partner’s positive evaluation and invitation to return. International Ministries staff members make decisions in dialogue with the partners and in light of mutual goals and priorities. One European Baptist leader summarized the nature of American Baptist mission partnership by saying, “You take us seriously.”

11. American Baptist mission principle - Baptist Identity

As Baptists, we will advocate and model the principles of the Lordship of Christ, the authority of Scripture, believer's baptism, the autonomy of the local church, the priesthood of all believers, religious freedom and voluntary cooperation.

The Lordship of Christ, the authority of Scripture, believer's baptism, the autonomy of the local church, the priesthood of all believers, religious freedom and voluntary cooperation. These Baptist principles have been guiding elements in the work of the American Baptist mission movement. Incidents involving the struggle for religious liberty exemplify the movement's commitment to Baptist identity.

As the Baptist movement emerged in colonial America, it was met by stern opposition of the established churches. For refusing to conform to the religious establishment, Baptist Christians were whipped, fined, imprisoned, exiled and deprived of their worldly goods. It was therefore no surprise that Baptists insisted that the United States Constitution should clearly protect religious liberty. The First Amendment was largely the result of Baptist insistence.

When violent opposition broke out against the new Baptist movements in Europe, American Baptists stood in solidarity with those being persecuted. At times, missionaries themselves were the victims of that religious intolerance. In 1841 Rufus Buell, an American Baptist missionary in Greece, was attacked by a mob while he distributed tracts. The mob broke into his home where they destroyed his Bibles, tracts and books. He was rescued only through the intervention of some British soldiers.

At the same time, Baptists in Copenhagen were feeling the wrath of the Danish state church. The Baptist church's pastor and his brother were twice imprisoned and released only upon paying a fine so heavy that all their goods had to be sold. This mistreatment so moved the Baptists in the United States that in 1842 the Triennial Convention sent Professor Horatio B. Hackett of Newton Theological Institution to Copenhagen to intercede with the Danish government. The American and Foreign Bible Society, a Baptist organization, also became involved by sending Professor Thomas J. Conant of Hamilton College to join Hackett on the trip to Denmark. It must be remembered that the struggle for religious freedom had only recently been won in Massachusetts which had amended its state constitution to provide for religious liberty a mere nine years earlier. The intercession by Hackett and Conant did not yield immediate results, for the Copenhagen church's pastor was imprisoned for a third time in December of that year.

International Ministries continues to affirm and be guided by Baptist principles, including advocacy for religious freedom for all people.

12. American Baptist mission principle - Dynamic Tensions

We believe that God calls people to exercise wisdom in a dynamic way as we continually balance competing values. As we move forward in mission, we are committed to hold in creative tension values such as inspired freedom and faithfulness to tradition, partnership and pioneering, cultural identity and adaptation, accountability and creativity.

When movements become more institutionalized, they tend to move toward greater control of their members' actions. Living movements however protect the dynamic tension between the need for dependable procedures and the equally essential need for freedom and innovation. The American Baptist mission movement is continually seeking balance between competing values of partnership and pioneering, accountability and creativity, cultural identity and adaptation. The role of women in mission is an example of this tension within the administration of the mission work.

At the start, most married women serving in mission at home and abroad were not officially appointed. The Board considered them to be missionary "assistants" to their husbands who were the appointed missionaries. Single women seeking missionary appointment likewise faced gender bias. In 1815 The Board had appointed its first woman missionary, a widow named Charlotte H. White, for service in Burma. The following year, however, the Board reversed itself and resolved "it will not be expedient in future, as far as they can now judge, to make appointments of an unmarried female Missionary." Nevertheless, work among the indigenous peoples in North America proved to be an exception. In 1821 the Board appointed its second single woman missionary, Ann Cleaver, to serve among the Cherokee. Lucretia A. Purchase, a Massachusetts Native American woman, was the third single woman missionary. She was appointed in 1826 for service among the Ottawa in the Indiana Territory. During its first fifty years, the Board appointed twenty-seven single women to minister among the Native American nations but only eleven to serve abroad.

In 1860, Ellen Mason, serving in Burma with her husband Dr. Francis Mason, returned to the United States and urged the appointment of single women missionaries. But the American Baptist Missionary Union still resisted sending "unprotected females" as missionaries overseas.

In the tradition of Mary Webb, Ellen Mason took initiative in another direction. In 1861 she led women from several denominations in forming the Woman's Union Missionary Society of America for Heathen Lands. This multi-denominational society had the single purpose of sending unmarried women missionaries to work among women in Asia. As these single women pioneer missionaries demonstrated their abilities in Burma, India and China, opposition to their appointment began to disappear. New calls began to come for young women to do educational, evangelistic and medical work. In 1868 the Congregational women withdrew from the Union Society to form their own woman's society. The Methodist and Presbyterian women followed in 1869 and 1870. In 1871 American Baptist women formed two foreign mission societies, one centered in Boston and the second in Chicago. A Pacific coast society came into existence in 1874. In the years that followed, the quality of work done by single women missionaries spoke for itself and helped to win the day for women and men to be equally appointed.

Today, International Ministries continues to appoint single as well as married people to missionary service. When a married couple is commissioned, the wife and the husband each receive individual appointment and compensation as missionaries.

13. American Baptist mission principle - Care for People

We believe that God, who is love, calls us into relationships of love and mutual support in community. We respond to this call by putting "people over program" and caring for all people with whom we work, both those served and those who offer their lives in service. We are especially committed to ensuring that missionaries and their families have the support that they need.

American Baptist mission became holistic, following Jesus' example of caring for people's needs. This showed itself in medical work, education for girls as well as boys, adult literacy, care for orphans, agricultural and economic development and a host of other ministries including efforts to end slavery, foot-binding, widow burning and head hunting.

But what about the needs of the missionaries and their own families? It is hard to comprehend the personal human costs paid by the first generations of missionaries. This short list is symbolic of many missionary adults and children who came to early deaths.

1819 - Edward Wheelock delirious with fever threw himself from a ship and drowned at sea eleven months after arrival in Burma.

1822 - Mary Price died of fever in Burma one year after arrival.

- 1826 - Calvin Holton died of fever in Liberia two months after arrival.
- 1831 - Eliza Skinner and her two children died of fever in Liberia one month after arrival. Her husband Benjamin died of fever six months later.
- 1831 - Almy Kincaid died of fever in Burma twelve months after arrival. Her one-month old son died eleven days earlier.
- 1834 - Sarah Cummings died of fever in Burma sixteen months after arrival.
- 1835 - Elizabeth Mylne died of fever in Liberia one month after arrival.
- 1840 - Rizpah Warren died of fever in Liberia eleven months after arrival.
- 1841 - Maria and Joseph Fielding died of fever in Liberia one month after arrival.
- 1848 - Anna Johnson died in Hong Kong one year after arrival.

The grief of surviving parents and the struggles of orphaned children highlighted the needs of missionary children. Between 1880 and 1909 American Baptist women established three homes to provide care for missionary children. The first house in Newton Center, Massachusetts was the rented home of Dr. Samuel F. Smith, the author of “My Country, ‘Tis of Thee.” Dr. Smith was a strong supporter of American Baptist mission. Later a new house in Newton Center was built and dedicated. In 1884 when the Newton Center home became overcrowded, the women opened a second home in Morgan Park, Illinois. The third home for missionary children was opened in 1909 in Granville, Ohio. That new building was a gift from Dr. William H. Doane, the composer of the music for Fanny Crosby’s hymns “To God Be the Glory,” “Draw Me Nearer,” “Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross,” and ”Rescue the Perishing.”

The needs of missionary families have dramatically changed over the years. The desire to keep families together, accessibility to better health care, and more options for children’s education make it no longer necessary to maintain U.S. homes for missionary children. In most instances missionary children now live with their parents and are educated at or near their family’s place of ministry. In response to a 1999 request from missionary children and youth, International Ministries appointed a Coordinator for MK Care and Concern to oversee and advocate for the health and general welfare of missionary children and their families.

14. American Baptist mission principle - Qualified Personnel

In order to have the kind of missionary staff that can work in partnership with Christian leaders around the world and give them meaningful assistance, we will continue to maintain high standards in the selection and orientation of missionaries. In addition to a

deep and growing commitment to Christ, desired qualities include professional competence, good health, personal maturity, theological perception, cultural sensitivity and ability to work cooperatively with other members of the team.

Who qualifies for appointment as an American Baptist missionary? The first generation of missionaries included both ordained and lay people and, starting with Lott Carey, Collin Teague and Lucretia Purchase, was multi-racial. The qualifications for appointment were further clarified throughout the 1800s. Slaveholders were rejected, while single women, teachers, printers, doctors, nurses, agricultural and social service workers were approved.

Baptists of other nationalities were also appointed as American Baptist missionaries. In addition to Rostan (French) and Oncken (German), the following individuals were appointed as American Baptist missionaries for work in Europe: Harriet Dickson (Scottish), Demetrius Sakellarios (Greek), Anders Wiberg, Knut Oscar Broady, John Alexis Edgren and Eric Lund (Swedish). In Africa, Jacob and Matilda Vonbrunn (Liberian) were appointed to work among the Bassa people.

Canadian Baptists came under appointment to work in Asia. In 1835 Samuel and Roenna Day became the first American Baptist missionaries appointed to work in India. Samuel was a Canadian who had come to the U.S. as a youth and had become a U.S. citizen. His Canadian Baptist friends and relatives became early supporters of the American Baptist mission to the Telegu. As early as 1814, Baptists in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick had shown keen interest in the work of the Judsons and contributed to their support. By 1845 the Maritime Baptists sent Richard and Laleah Burpee to Burma to serve under the auspices of the American Baptist Missionary Union. The Burpees were Canada's first Protestant foreign missionaries. Canadians Arthur and Laura Crawley (the sister of Laleah Burpee) were appointed in 1853. In 1866 Baptists in Ontario formed the "Canada Auxiliary to the American Baptist Missionary Union" through which Americus V. and Jane Timpany came to be appointed by American Baptists for work in South India. In 1870 more Canadians, John and Mary McLauren, were appointed to this work. In 1874 at American Baptist encouragement, Canadian Baptists formed their own mission agency.

Ecumenical appointments were also made. By the end of the 1800s the Mennonite Brethren in Russia felt called to foreign mission. Because they were too small to start their own mission, they looked for another "Anabaptist-minded" missionary society with which they might be able to work. In 1889 Abraham and Maria Friesen became the first

Mennonite Brethren to be appointed for work in South India by the American Baptist Missionary Union. By 1910 fourteen Mennonite Brethren missionaries had received ABMU appointment to work among the Telegu in South India. Starting in the 1800s, missionaries from more than a dozen denominations would come to serve under America Baptist appointment.

In the first decades of the 1900s, a growing fundamentalism had led to the organization of the Baptist Fundamentalist Fellowship. In 1922 Dr. William Bell Riley of Minneapolis proposed that the denomination adopt the New Hampshire Confession of Faith as its official doctrinal position. Dr. Cornelius Woelfkin, a former president of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, opposed the use of creeds to achieve doctrinal uniformity. By a two to one margin, the delegates to the 1922 annual Convention approved Woelfkin's alternate motion that "the Northern Baptist Convention affirms that the New Testament is the all-sufficient ground of our faith and practice, and we need no other statement."

Because Baptists in America first organized on a national scope for the purpose of foreign mission, it is not surprising that the attempt to establish a creedal position soon began to focus on the qualifications for missionaries. Early in the 1920s a donor offered a sizable financial gift to both the American Baptist Home and Foreign Mission societies if they would adopt a particular creedal position. In 1923 the Foreign Society voted to not accept gifts that came with creedal conditions. In 1924 as some fundamentalists began to challenge the selection of new missionaries and the doctrinal positions of existing missionaries, the Society publicly stated its commitment and practice of only appointing missionaries who are loyal to the gospel. It went on to say, "And by the gospel we mean the good news of the free forgiveness of sin and eternal life (beginning now and going on forever) through a vital union with the crucified and risen Christ, which brings [people] into union and fellowship with God. This salvation is graciously offered on the sole condition of repentance and faith in Christ, and has in it the divine power of regeneration and sanctification through the Spirit. The only reason we have for accepting this gospel is our belief in the deity of Christ in whom we see the Father, a faith founded on the trustworthiness of the Scriptures, and the fact that we have experienced this salvation in our own hearts."

The Society's refusal to compel missionaries to sign creedal statements was called an "inclusive policy." Discontentment with this stance led to the formation in 1928 of "The Association of Baptists for World Evangelism, Inc." which began mission work in Manila.

Missionaries of the ABWE were required to sign a strongly fundamentalist creed and were discouraged from associating with Northern Baptists. About 50 churches that supported the ABWE withdrew from the Northern Baptist Convention in 1933 and formed a new body, the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches. Ten years later another attempt to replace the inclusive policy with a theological test for missionaries failed once again. Subsequently the Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society was formed to be a new and competing missionary agency within the denomination. When the new mission society was refused recognition within the Northern Baptist Convention, it continued its work independently. By 1947 the mission gave birth to the Conservative Baptist Association of America. Several hundred churches left the Convention to join the Association. Subsequently, in the late 1950s about two hundred churches left the Conservative Baptists to join even more fundamentalist circles.

Today the practice continues that American Baptist missionary candidates must provide clear testimony of their conversion, their commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and their call to missionary service. No creedal test is enforced. Missionary appointment is further dependent on finding a match for their skills and receiving an invitation from a national partner. Single people, married couples, women and men receive missionary appointment. International Ministries seeks missionaries from the wide ethnic spectrum of local American Baptist congregations.

15. American Baptist mission principle - Accountability

We believe that God calls people to account for their stewardship of the gifts they have received, and that believers are called to practice mutual encouragement and exhortation. Therefore, International Ministries seeks to be accountable to American Baptists, recognizing that we are an instrument by which American Baptist churches respond to God's call to mission.

International Ministries is accountable to American Baptists through denominational structures which themselves have changed during the last two centuries.

Beginning in 1814, mission work was accountable to the Triennial Convention. This body was composed of representatives from local mission societies and other Baptist bodies that financially supported the mission effort. By the end of the 1800s, however, both the nation and the denomination had undergone dramatic changes. The U.S. population that had grown from 7 million to almost 76 million. The number of states had increased from 18 to 45 and extended from the Atlantic to the Pacific. By 1900, Baptists in the northern states

still related to each other in loosely connected organizational systems and found their common identity largely in their continued sense of call to mission. Though the oldest and largest, the American Baptist Missionary Union was now but one of eight major special purpose societies that served the home and foreign mission visions of American Baptists.

In 1907 the Northern Baptist Convention was formed with its sole object “to give expression to the opinions of its constituency upon moral, religious, and denominational matters, and to promote denominational unity and efficiency in efforts for the evangelization of the world.” In 1908 the American Baptist Missionary Union became a cooperating society of the Northern Baptist Convention and in 1910 renamed itself “The American Baptist Foreign Mission Society” (ABFMS). Cooperation with the Northern Baptist Convention reshaped the way for the Society to coordinate with and be accountable to the constituent churches.

In 1911 the Free Will Baptists merged with the Northern Baptist Convention and the Free Will Baptist Foreign Mission Society became part of the ABFMS. Two years later the women’s societies voted to merge. In 1914 they became the Woman’s American Baptist Foreign Mission Society and, like the ABFMS, became a cooperating society of the Northern Baptist Convention.

In 1950 the Northern Baptist Convention restructured and changed its name to the American Baptist Convention. In 1955 after 84 years of separate organizational life, the Woman’s ABFMS integrated its management and administrative functions into the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society while continuing to appoint missionaries. In 1968 the two legally consolidated into one body under the ABFMS name.

The denomination restructured in 1972 and adopted its current name -- the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. The home and foreign mission societies remained autonomous corporations. ABFMS became also known as the Board of International Ministries (BIM). BIM was now in an “interlocking directorate” in the denomination in which BIM’s directors were elected from among members of the ABC General Board.

Profound post-modern and post-Christendom cultural change starting in the 1960s in the Western world affected broad aspects of American society. One of the unintended consequences of the interlocking directorate experiment was that it restricted the boards’ ability to readily initiate and adapt to these changing realities. In 2011 the ABC dissolved the interlocking directorate and decentralized into a federation of missional agencies.

ABFMS exchanged “aka BIM” for “aka American Baptist International Ministries (IM).” It remains accountable to American Baptists as a separate, autonomous mission agency in voluntary covenant with the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.

The IM Board of Directors selects members who can provide needed commitment, experience, knowledge and skills. God has made American Baptists the most ethnically rich Baptist movement in the United States. It is now a non-majority denomination in which every ethnic group is a minority within the whole. Therefore IM Board members are lay people, clergy, women, men and young adults selected from American Baptist congregations throughout the U.S. and Puerto Rico who exemplify the ethnic diversity of American Baptist life.

The Board of Directors provides governance for IM by setting major policies, approving an overall operational plan and acting on budgetary matters. It elects IM’s Executive Director (formerly Corresponding Secretary) whose staff oversees daily administration of the mission work. The IM staff appoints new missionaries. After pre-field training has been completed and the required financial support has been secured, the Board commissions the new missionaries for their work.

Seeking the Future

Movements often produce documents to describe their beliefs to others. The *Philadelphia Confession of Faith* (1742), the *New Hampshire Confession of Faith* (1833) and *We Are American Baptists* (1998) are examples of American Baptist “beliefs” documents written on the association, state and national levels. Movements also create documents describing their purpose and future operational plans.

The rapidly growing number of new believers resulting from American Baptist mission work in Burma, South India and the Belgian Congo began to place great burdens on the missionary staff. In 1912 therefore, the Society adopted an “intensive policy” to guide its future operations. The Society would work more intensively in the ten areas where it was already active, rather than start work in new areas and risk over-extension. ABFMS observed this policy for some sixty years. However, when the denomination restructured in 1972, mission in Latin America and the Caribbean that had previously been conducted by the Home Mission Society was transferred to International Ministries. That transfer made the “intensive policy” obsolete, creating the necessity for International Ministries to establish new operational guidelines.

1. *Guidelines for Mission* (1974)

In 1974 International Ministries stated its purpose, goals and operational assumptions in the document *Guidelines for Mission*. The document declared that the purpose of mission is “to proclaim and exemplify the gospel of Jesus Christ by word and deed.” Much like Francis Wayland’s sermon of 1823, it affirmed the historic American Baptist belief that Christian mission is to the whole creation. It encompasses “not only the geographical dimension but also all the areas of life upon which the Christian gospel can be brought to bear.” It defined mission in both personal and social dimensions: “....to bring people into a redemptive and transforming relationship with Jesus Christ....[and to bring] the Christian gospel in all its fullness to bear upon every aspect of human life and society.” *Guidelines for Mission* set five primary goals:

- To further evangelism
- To strengthen national churches
- To foster world mission consciousness in USA churches
- To assist in the internationalization of mission
- To meet human need

It then identified nine operational assumptions:

- Christian mission is to the whole creation.
- International Ministries (ABFMS) “is the officially designated agency of the American Baptist Churches for mission efforts outside the USA.”
- Ecumenical Stance – committing to fellowship, cooperation and joint action with other Christians.
- Development of Christian Churches Overseas – the primacy of the local church; the goal of developing self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating churches.
- Cooperative Relationships with Church Bodies Overseas – commitment to partnership.
- Priority of Christian Leadership Development – pastoral and lay leadership.
- High Standards for Missionary Appointment – care and qualities.
- Flexibility in Methods and Approach – openness to new patterns of work and relationships.
- Cooperation with Secular Agencies – willingness to cooperate with public or private agencies where there is common interest and concern.

2. *A Passion for Mission* (1989)

Fifteen years later International Ministries built on the work of *Guidelines for Mission* by stating its mission goals in measurable terms. The Board assigned the task to a committee consisting of American Baptist missionaries, international partners, pastors, lay people, missiologists and staff. Their report, *A Passion for Mission*, was adopted by the Board in 1989 as the operational plan for the 1990s.

A Passion for Mission affirmed that the “the local church is the fundamental unit of mission.” It identified measurable goals under three categories:

- Evangelizing our World
- Expanding Missionary Presence
- Engaging our Churches

A Passion for Mission called for expansion of mission work into additional “unreached people groups” and envisioned a 25 percent increase in missionary personnel.

3. *Go Global: May God’s Glory Fill the Whole Earth* (1999)

A Passion for Mission demonstrated both the benefits and inadequacies of measurable goals in spiritual endeavors. As the decade advanced, the document gave direction for the work of International Ministries missionaries and staff. However, the Society’s organizational structure had not been realigned to its operational plan, financial challenges posed limits and rapid global changes underscored the need to reevaluate mission priorities, goals and structures.

International Ministries continued to deepen its practice of partnership. When the Board approached evaluation and planning in 1997, it launched a process that sought “the broadest possible participation of people involved in the life and work of International Ministries, both across the denomination and around the world.” International partners were invited to participate in the process along with large numbers of American Baptist pastors, lay persons, denominational leaders, International Ministries missionaries, staff and Board members. More than 1,200 people from American Baptist churches and around the world took part. Through “appreciative inquiry” conversations they assessed how God had most significantly used their partnership with International Ministries in the past, and how God might be calling them to work together into the future. A task force summarized and prioritized the responses. Then in January 1999 all International Ministries

missionaries were invited to return to the United States to join the home staff for a first-time, historic gathering at Green Lake, Wisconsin. There they reviewed and further shaped the findings into which they had earlier given crucial input. The resulting document became the International Ministries operational plan for 2000-2010, *Go Global: May God's Glory Fill the Whole Earth*.

Go Global reiterated the single purpose for which the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society exists: "The mission of American Baptist International Ministries is to glorify God in all the earth by crossing cultural boundaries to make disciples of Jesus Christ." *Go Global* examined the existing world context and identified the fifteen mission principles (discussed above) that shape the distinctive American Baptist approach to mission.

Six *Go Global* mission priorities along with measurable goals were chosen for the decade of 2000-2010:

- Evangelism and Discipleship
- Christ-like Mission
- Equipping Leaders
- Mission Education
- Urban Mission
- Mission Explosion

The need to remain in essence a movement rather than an institution was crucial to implementing *Go Global*. Therefore, International Ministries pledged to "redesign its internal structure in order to promote flexibility, creativity and responsiveness, so that initiative and decision-making are located as close as possible to the ministries involved."

4. Responding to the Call (2015)

In 2014 American Baptists celebrated the Society's 200th Anniversary at a massive World Mission Conference at the Green Lake, Wisconsin. One hundred international leaders were invited to Green Lake for an International Partner Consultation in conjunction with the anniversary celebration. For only the second time in two centuries, all IM missionaries along with IM special assistants and domestic staff came together. The gatherings began new global "appreciative inquiry" conversations modeled on the *Go*

Global planning process fifteen years earlier. The conversations again drew insights and vision from American Baptist and international perspectives. Some 2,000 people around the world participated in the two-year spiritual discernment process resulting in *Responding to the Call*, IM's current operational plan.

Responding to the Call displays organic unity with the Society's previous operational plans. It reaffirms IM's singular purpose that "American Baptist International Ministries works cross-culturally to invite people to become disciples of Jesus Christ, and to proclaim – through both word and deed – God's reign of justice, peace and abundant life for all creation." It summarizes the fifteen American Baptist mission principles as IM's core values of faith, service and community. The global conversations reflected on the present context and discerned the call to focus IM's work to increase impact in four areas:

- Inviting People to be Disciples of Jesus Christ (evangelism, discipleship, theological education)
- Proclaiming God's Reign of Justice, Peace and Abundant Life (immigrants and refugees, peace and justice, abolition of trafficking in persons and global slavery, education, economic development, health and wellness)
- Equipping the Body of Christ to Engage in God's Mission (promotion of mission "from everywhere to everyone," short-term mission engagement, youth and young adults, training and capacity building)
- Pursuing Organizational Excellence (financial health, accountability, technological advancement, communication, care for personnel)

The Sacred Effort Continues

Historian Kenneth Scott Latourette noted that the early Christian movement struggled to maintain the balance between innovative adaptability and institutionalized organization. "By the year 500," he observed, "what was called Christianity had acquired a garb which claimed the sanctity of antiquity and of Apostolic endorsement. It had ceased to be fluid, had crystallized, and was not readily remodeled." Organization had helped the Christian movement to survive. "To be sure," he acknowledged, "that organization was far from perfect. Yet for a combination of inclusiveness, strength against attack, and

flexibility, the Christian Churches were without parallel among the religious bodies in the Graeco-Roman world.”

The American Baptist mission movement has likewise struggled to maintain balance. It has sought accountable and reliable procedures while seeking to remain flexible, innovative and adaptable in a world of increasingly rapid change.

In his 1959 book, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, George Eldon Ladd, an American Baptist professor of Biblical Theology observed, “The ultimate meaning of history between the Ascension of our Lord and His return in glory is found in the extension and working of the Gospel in the world.....This is a staggering fact. God has entrusted to people like us, redeemed sinners, the responsibility of carrying out the divine purpose in history..... Here are the facts: God has entrusted to us this mission; and unless we do it, it will not get done.” This conviction about mission brought American Baptists together as a national movement. It continues to hold American Baptists in fellowship with one another today. This call to be an active part of God’s mission in the world carries with it the challenge to remain a living movement, centered in Jesus Christ and open to the leading of the Holy Spirit. It brings with it the encouraging words of Adoniram Judson, “The future is as bright as the promises of God.”

Appendix

An American Baptist International Ministries Organizational Time-Line

1783 George and Hannah Liele sail to Jamaica as self-funded missionaries.

1792 William Staughton helps organize the British Baptist Missionary Society.

1800 Mary Webb forms the Boston Female Society for Missionary Purposes.

1812 Ann and Adoniram Judson, Luther Rice sail for India.

1813 The Judsons and Rice become Baptists. Rice returns to the U.S. to help Baptists organize for mission. The Judsons begin ministry in Burma.

1814 Baptists organize nationally as **The General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States of America for Foreign Missions**. Its twenty-one member **Baptist Board of Foreign Missions** conducts the work between the Convention's triennial meetings. William Staughton becomes its founding Corresponding Secretary.

1814 Adoniram Judson and Luther Rice become the first appointed missionaries. Ann Judson is not appointed but considered an "assistant missionary."

1815 Lott Carey forms the Richmond African Baptist Missionary Society.

1815 Charlotte H. White becomes the first appointed woman missionary.

1817 The Convention expands its purpose to include domestic and educational mission. James A. Ranaldson (for Louisiana), John Mason Peck and James E. Webb (for St. Louis) are appointed as the first domestic missionaries.

1820 The Convention changes its name to reflect its expanded purpose of home and educational mission and becomes **The General Convention of the Baptist denomination in the United States for Foreign Missions, and other important objects relating to the Redeemer's Kingdom**.

1821 Lott Carey & Collin Teague begin American Baptist mission in Africa.

1826 The Convention returns to its original single purpose of foreign mission.

1832 Jean Casimir Rostan begins American Baptist mission in Europe.

1835 William C. Munro is appointed for service in Haiti, although mission in Latin America and the Caribbean that follows is under Home Mission Society auspices.

1837 Eli and Clementine Noyes and Jeremiah and Mary Phillips begin Free Will Baptist mission in India.

1843 Northern anti-slavery Baptists form the American Baptist Free Missionary Society.

1844 The Baptist Board of Foreign Missions refuses to appoint slaveholders as missionaries.

1845 Baptists in the South break fellowship and create the Southern Baptist Convention. The General Convention is renamed the **American Baptist Missionary Union (ABMU)**.

1860 Jonathan and Elizabeth Goble begin American Baptist Free mission in Japan.

1868 The American Baptist Free Missionary Society reunites with the ABMU bringing its mission work in Japan.

1871 Baptist women form the Woman's Baptist Foreign Mission Society of the East (based in Boston) and the Woman's Baptist Foreign Mission Society of the West (based in Chicago) and appoint single women missionaries.

1874 Baptist women in California and the Pacific Northwest form the Woman's Baptist Foreign Mission Society of the Pacific Coast (based in San Francisco).

1907 The Northern Baptist Convention is formed.

1908 The ABMU becomes a cooperating agency of the Northern Baptist Convention.

1910 The ABMU adopts the name **American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (ABFMS)**.

1911 The Free Will Baptist denomination merges with the Northern Baptist Convention and the Free Will Baptist Foreign Mission Society merges with the ABFMS bringing its mission work in Bengal/Orissa/Bihar.

1914 The women's societies merge as the Woman's American Baptist Foreign Mission Society.

1928 Fundamentalists form the Association of Baptists for World Evangelism (ABWE) when the ABFMS refuses to require missionaries to sign a creedal statement.

1933 Some 50 fundamentalist churches that support the ABWE leave the denomination to form the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches.

1943 The Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society is formed when the ABFMS again refuses to adopt a creedal confession of faith for missionaries.

1947 Some 250 churches that support the conservative mission leave the denomination to form the Conservative Baptist Association of America.

1950 The Northern Baptist Convention reorganizes as the American Baptist Convention. The ABFMS becomes a cooperating society with the Convention.

1955 The Woman's American Baptist Foreign Mission Society integrates management and administrative functions into the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society while continuing to appoint missionaries.

1968 The Woman's American Baptist Foreign Mission Society and The American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (ABFMS) consolidate into one body retaining the ABFMS name.

1972 American Baptist Convention becomes American Baptist Churches in the USA. Mission work in Latin America and Caribbean is transferred from the Home Mission Society to ABFMS, aka the **Board of International Ministries (BIM)**.

1974 BIM adopts *Guidelines for Mission* operational plan.

1989 BIM adopts *Passion for Mission* operational plan.

1999 BIM adopts *Go Global* as operational plan.

2011 The American Baptist Churches moves from an interlocking directorate to a federation of missional agencies. ABFMS continues as a separate, autonomous corporation under re-stated Bylaws and becomes also known as **American Baptist International Ministries (IM)**.

2014 ABFMS celebrates its 200th Anniversary and enters its third century of mission.

2016 IM adopts *Responding to the Call* operational plan.

2017 Rev. Sharon Koh becomes the first woman Executive Director of ABFMS.