

February, 2007

Dear Partners In Christ,

We Baptists are an independent lot, nurtured down through our history in the firm commitment to being governed only by Jesus Christ our Lord as He is revealed to each of us through His Holy Spirit; yet united as one in our faithfulness to: *"one Lord, one faith, one baptism."* (Ephesians 4:5) It is this spirit of unity in Christ that draws us together in family lived out in our individual churches and in our wider family known as the American Baptist Churches of Michigan (ABC-MI). This spirit of family affords us the benefit and expectation of deepening our spiritual growth and being equipped: *"to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ..."* (Hebrews 13:21). This spirit of the family of God was a driving force in the life of the early Christian Church as related in the book of Acts. Luke describes a "family" of believers who were *"together, and had all things in common;"* a family of believers who *"were of one heart and soul."* (Acts 2:44,4:32). Truly this is also the model for God's people to follow as we enter the 21st century; working together, sharing together, supporting one another in our work for the Kingdom.

In his Christmas letter to the churches of our ABC-MI family Dr. Michael Williams, our Executive Minister, described the numerous ways our Baptist family benefits in working together. The mission theme of **Growing Healthy Churches** becomes a blessed reality when together we support one-another's efforts in the local church, and support our ABC-MI efforts in partnership with our local churches. Your giving to United Mission and specific gifts directed to our ABC-MI empowers Ministry Leadership Groups that enable pastors to more effectively lead their congregations and provides training opportunities for lay leaders to help lead congregations into a deeper spiritual life. Churches experiencing transition in pastoral leadership and new directions for church life are assisted by ABC-MI staff support and consultation. Youth ministry--a very challenging effort in our time—is supported through the region's Youth Leadership Core, camps, and other youth events. Our Region Board and Ministry Teams are focused upon serving our family of churches so together we are about **Growing Healthy Churches**. In essence it is each church supporting one another for the health of all.

As we enter 2007, we see the landscape of our world as Jesus described, *"White for harvest"* (John 4:35). It is His challenge to the family of believers to labor together to gather *"fruit for eternal life"*(John 4:36). Supporting one another in **Growing Healthy Churches** is our faithful and obedient response to our Lord who calls us to "be one" in Him, *"that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me"*(John 17:21). Please prayerfully consider your 2007 gifts through United Missions and specific gifts to our ABC-MI family.

Your Partner in Growing Healthy Churches,

Thomas S. Case, president
The American Baptist Churches of Michigan