

EXCERPT

Legacy

“Listen to counsel...
that you may manage
your life wisely.”
Proverbs 19:20

Charitable Estate Planning
Ideas and Stories of our
American Baptist Family
Autumn 2005

Volume 21, Number 2



Witnessing for Christ – Throughout a Lifetime and Beyond!

Have you ever wondered what people will say about you and your Christian witness after your life is over? Perhaps they will talk about your years of sharing your faith in your neighborhood, or maybe they will focus on how you witnessed where you worked, or maybe they will share with others how you lived after you retired. This third possibility applies to Maybeth Buermann.

Maybeth moved to Green Bay, Wisconsin in 1953, after her husband died and she retired from being a teacher in New Jersey. She became active in the First Baptist Church there. Today, parishioners don't know of her New Jersey days, but they certainly know about her years in Wisconsin.

Maybeth moved to Green Bay because her sister and brother-in-law lived there, and she wanted to be close to her family. Yet soon after her arrival to the Midwest, she felt the call to use

her skills in overseas mission.

Her "retirement" included going to Taiwan where she taught English as a second language for a year. She also traveled with American Baptist missionary Edna Smith and personally sewed 1,000 dresses for children in orphanages in Taiwan and Hong Kong.

In her later years in Green Bay, Maybeth was confined to a wheelchair, and she became a resident of a nursing home. She could have become bitter about her declining health, which took away much of her mobility, but that is not what happened. Her pastor, the Rev. Steven B. Hartman, tells a story that reveals the power of her witness for Christ in the midst of difficulty.

One day Pastor Hartman received a phone call from an attendant at Maybeth's nursing home. This caregiver had seen the pastor's business card on Maybeth's dresser and said, "There's just *(continued on page 2)*

If your congregation has a church building, then your church has been endowed. Those who have gone before you invested their tithes and offerings to buy land and construct a meeting place for the congregation. Some churches have been endowed beyond their property to include financial assets. Such an endowment by definition is "a permanent fund established to bestow a steady stream of income for a valuable cause."

There is no more valuable cause than the cause of Christ. So, if you – or your church – are considering establishing an endowment fund, you will find this issue of Legacy to be beneficial. It contains examples that demonstrate the advantages of an endowment and some suggestions for the next steps on your stewardship journey.

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Pastor Hartman regularly visited Maybeth Buermann at a nursing home and appreciatively greeted her whenever she was able to attend First Baptist worship services.

A Catalyst for Christian Unity

Jesus once illustrated the power of a small catalyst when he spoke of the “yeast of the Pharisees” (Matthew 16:6). The Pharisees’ catalyst was negative – the leaven of legalism. But anyone who has had warm, homemade bread knows that the stimulative power of yeast can also lead to positive results! This is what has occurred through a relatively small group of missionaries – American Baptists, who have modeled Christ and served his church internationally.

One of the most well-known characteristics of American Baptist mission overseas has been, and continues to be, the manner in which our missionaries relate to indigenous peoples. Mission personnel of International Ministries enter a country only at the request of the Christian leaders of that country. Once there, our missionaries become partners in ministry with those who invited them. This is the complete opposite of the paternalistic portrayals of missionaries in books and films like *Hawaii*.

This attribute of American Baptist outreach is important to remember as you consider creating estate plans that will bear fruit beyond your lifetime. None of us wants to support mission endeavors that will last only as long as our missionaries do. Instead, we seek to invest in those ministries that are the result of collaboration – efforts that are “owned” by those who live in other countries where missionaries

now serve. This approach is illustrated by our work in the Central American country of Costa Rica.

During the 1980s and ‘90s, there were two Baptist denominations in Costa Rica – the Baptist Convention and the Baptist



Union. The Convention was a self-sustained group that invited American Baptist missionaries in 1982 to serve with them. The Union already had mission personnel from another American organization,

(continued from page 1) something very special about Maybeth, and whatever she has, I’d like to get some of that!”

This special woman, who lived to be 99, still witnesses through her church since she left a portion of her estate to the congregation. In honor of her life-long support for mission outreach, 10% of that bequest was given to the American Baptist Foundation in 1997 to establish an endowment for use by the mission board. The letter of intent sent by the church clerk states, “The Board shall distribute the income as follows:

1. Fifty percent or more shall be directed to the Annual Offerings of ABC/USA (*i.e.*, America for Christ, One Great Hour of Sharing, World Mission Offering, and Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering); and
2. The remainder shall be used for regional and local projects consistent with the mission objectives of American Baptists and the church.”

Maybeth’s witness for Christ continues beyond her lifetime since the annual offerings directly support American Baptist regional, national, and international ministry and mission. “The remainder” has helped to fund a homeless shelter, the Milwaukee Christian Center, Habitat for Humanity, the state’s Baptist camp, and other endeavors.

If you would like your witness and generosity to outlive you, you may want to consider establishing an endowment. For information on this type of planned gift and others, please contact us. The ministry goal of the Foundation is to help you expand your witness for Christ. Our services are provided at no cost or obligation. ■