

# LOVE GIFT IS 85!

Love Gift, an initiative of women across American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA) to help support the full range of American Baptist Mission, turns **85** this year. Love Gift is a gift to United Mission and supports American Baptist mission and ministry. American Baptist Women's Ministries receives United Mission dollars equivalent to 15 percent of Love Gift.

In 1932, American Baptist Churches faced a \$500,000 deficit, and it was feared the financial crisis would limit God's work in the denomination. American Baptist Churches asked individuals to give financial contributions in excess of their tithes and pledges. Women, specifically, were challenged to raise \$150,000 to help meet the crisis. Receiving the challenge, women began the over-and-above contribution called Love Gift.

"It is astonishing how 85 years of faithful support from American Baptist women putting coins and dollars into Love Gift boxes has surpassed \$57 million in extra support for ABC mission," says Virginia Holmstrom, executive director of American Baptist Women's Ministries. "These are women who support United Mission through their church offerings and, because of their thankfulness to God, they give an extra gift of love through their Love Gift offering. The Love Gift initiative begun in 1932 outlived the Great Depression and continues today to bless the breadth of American Baptist ministry and mission happening in regions, the U.S. and around the world."

The first Love Gift boxes were called Silver Boxes, illustrating that beneath every cloud there exists a silver lining. The silver placed in these boxes would help dispel the clouds of financial difficulty overshadowing the mission. Printed on these boxes were the words: "If we know we pray; if we pray we give." The 1941 theme was "love," leading to the idea of "Love Gift" boxes.

After 85 years, the work of Love Gift remains unfinished.

