

February 12, 2010

Dear Partners in Ministry,

Greetings in the LORD!

As I write this, many of us around the region are digging out from what some have called the 'Storm of the Century'. In the midst of the storm, life changed didn't it? Plans were scuttled. Simple questions like, "Do we have kerosene for the heater?" and, "Is the car filled with gas?" took on new meaning. Interstate highways were closed to traffic, and even the ever-faithful mail carrier wasn't faithful as postal routes were suspended due to the challenges of the storm. Life changed for a time.

The skies have cleared now, and the clean up continues and finally glimpses of macadam are peaking through the roadway as the sun begins to melt the 3+ feet of snow that fell on many of us over the last few days.

As a region, we've encountered a 'storm' as well. The economic crisis that has struck our nation has taken its toll on an already fragile Mission Support system, where United Mission, the chief support for our regional ministry, has seen a steep reduction of \$100,000 in the last year, with a decade of decreases before that. While our Partners in Ministry emphasis has helped to offset this drop in United Mission, and while we have turned to investment income and principal to balance the budget, we are now to a place where we have to take a serious look at how we do ministry together if we are to 'weather the storm'. Without a significant turnaround in mission support, we cannot continue our ministry together as we've done it in the past, and alternative models need to be put into place.

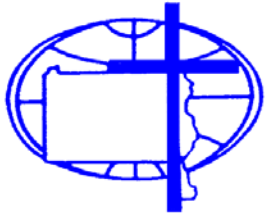
To address the challenge of this current year, our Regional Board took some bold and necessary steps, slashing the budget by over \$150,000. This was done, in part, through a rollback of staff salaries to 2008 levels, as well as requiring staff to pay a portion of their health care costs, in addition to other budgetary decisions. The budget for 2010 still makes use of investment principal, but that resource also draws to a close this year, as we have expended all of the non-restricted funds from our endowment. As a result, additional steps need to be taken to reduce our budget for the coming years. A key component of this is the work of a Staff Alignment Task Force, called upon to look at our staffing configurations in light of our vision, and to make recommendations back to the Regional Board at their spring, 2010 meeting (this group will be meeting in the coming weeks, so I would ask that you keep them in prayer).

Enclosed with this letter you will find a five-page report from our late-November Regional Board meeting. The report, prepared by Cory Hartman for use by Association Board representatives, is such a helpful piece that I wanted each of you to receive a copy so you could see some of the specifics of our discussions.

If you have further questions, please don't hesitate to contact me, our Treasurer Caryl Casey or your Area Minister. If you would like one of us to come and speak to your church board or a group from your Association, we would welcome that opportunity. As we move forward, please know how much we value your prayer support and your ongoing financial support of our ministry together. God has given us a vision to build healthy, vital partnerships with local congregations, pastoral leaders and our wider ABC Family, and we believe He has a plan and the resources to help us obediently move into His preferred future for us.

Trusting in the One who provides,

Frank



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