

Press Release 09/15/22

The American Baptist Foundation establishes Mission-Supporting Endowment with Midwestern Couple.

For Perry and Dona Laten of Fremont, Nebraska, being involved in American Baptist mission was their priority. Throughout their more than 50 years of marriage the focus of their energy, as well as their financial support, was evangelistic work in the U.S. and abroad and ministries with children and youth. That is why in 2006 they had a personal meeting in their living room with the founding president of the **American Baptist Foundation (ABF)**, John Jacobs, and their ABF representative, Paul Weers.

Jacobs recalls helping them create their estate plan, saying: *“The Latens were salt-of-the-earth people, who lived in a modest home. But their passion to share the Good News of Christ by supporting outreach was certainly anything but modest. It truly provides a commendable example to all of us, no matter what amount of resources we have.”*

The Latens were a couple that worked together beyond making their estate plans. For instance, as members of the First Baptist Church of Fremont, Perry taught Sunday School—first for the youth and later for adults—while Dona was the Sunday School Superintendent. Moreover, when Dona attended the Women’s Mission Conference at Green Lake, Wisconsin, Perry accompanied her and remained on the grounds to use his building skills, doing any needed repairs.

Perry’s gentle and humble character combined with his being a thoughtful and careful listener led the American Baptist Men of Nebraska to name him their “Layman of the Year” in 1997. Those who knew him best have described him as “the godliest man” they ever met.

Debra Peterson, a member of their congregation, was like an adopted daughter to them, and describes the Latens’ faith journey: *“Everything they did was based on their knowledge of what Jesus would want them to do. And when they gave financially, they did so quietly, following Jesus’ words in Matthew 6:3, not letting the left hand know what the right hand was doing. They were private people in what they did for the Lord. They didn’t look for recognition; their giving was done because they loved the Lord. And though we can celebrate the endowment they created, they would want others to remember the work for Christ being supported rather than the couple who was helping to make that work possible.”*

The Latens’ giving will continue for decades to come through their ABF endowment, which was made possible in part by Perry’s employment for many years as a hog buyer with Hormel and by his regular purchases in their stock. Perry and Dona carefully decided that establishing an endowment would be the best way for ministries and mission to be accomplished by such organizations as the **American Baptist Home Mission Societies, American Baptist International Ministries, and American Baptist Churches of Nebraska**. Their pastor, the Rev. Richard Crooks observes: *“Perry and Dona were the kind of Christians who believed the Gospel message of salvation is the message our world desperately needs. With that as their purpose, they always sought to make sure Christ was the focus and the message was biblical. They devoted their time, energy, and resources toward that end, and were such encouragement for others who were likeminded.”*

Further inspirational details about this dedicated couple will be available in the upcoming issue of the Foundation’s newsletter, [Legacy](#).