

Mission Moments – February 9, 2007  
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From the Center for U.S. Missions  
Following Jesus into the U.S. Mission Field  
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"Memorable Mission"  
by Mike Ruhl

Forgetfulness can be so irritating.

It irritates me when I forget where I buried a file in "My Documents," or when I forget the birthday or anniversary of a loved one. Most of us experience the irritation of forgetfulness..

Some people experience more serious kinds of forgetfulness. A person with amnesia loses a great deal of memory. Most serious of all, Alzheimer's disease slowly removes memory both of how to function and of basic identity.

Unfortunately, the church of Jesus Christ can suffer in much the same way. She sometimes no longer remembers the basic truths about her own identity. The church also can be deluded into assuming that "all is well", when indeed, she may be deathly ill. And when this happens, the church loses its rightful personality and forgets who her first love truly is. Jesus declared to the ancient church in Ephesus: *Yet I hold this against you: you have forsaken your first love* (Revelation 2:4).

Forgetfulness is irritating. But self-deception is insidious. People who are self-deceived do not realize that they are deceived. If you knew that you were wearing one brown shoe and one black shoe, you would fix the situation. People do not normally chose to wear one brown shoe and one black shoe; they do so only because they are unaware. When they become aware, they remedy the problem quickly.

Well, if the shoe fits, let's lace it up and wear it! What is the "mission climate" in our congregation? Someone said a long time ago, "We are fishers of men and women, not keepers of an aquarium!" Is our congregation struggling to remember the mission of going and making disciples? Has the Great Commission become the Great Omission? Are we in need of repentance and return to our *first love* ... the *Missio Dei*?

Little wonder, then, that our Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is actively engaged in the development of a new ministry called *Mission Revitalization*. It is a helpful process which creates a setting for congregations to remember who they are--and whose they are--and what they have been called to do. In fact, the *Ablaze!* initiative has set a goal of seeing 2,000 of our congregations in the USA recover from "spiritual memory loss" and be revitalized through the Word (written, spoken and visible) and the Holy Spirit.

I would invite all pastors and congregation leaders who read these words to reflect on the crucial question: How is our mission memory?

Remember too that the Holy Spirit is called both Comforter and Counselor in the Holy Scriptures. Surely he will comfort us in that self-evaluation, and also counsel us toward vibrant missional memory.

## **Moment Extras**

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. What is the “mission climate” in our congregation?
2. What does your congregation love? How do you know? Hint: Take a look at the church budget and where resources are being invested including dollars, staff and volunteer time.
3. What is your congregation doing to making disciples? Does it involve the whole church, a small group or committee or is it just the pastor’s job? How did your church arrive at its strategy to make disciples?
4. Who in your church records your missional history?
5. What is one thing you can do to help your congregation be effective in making disciples and nurturing them?

### **Books & Resources**

*Shaped By God’s Heart: The Passion and Practices of Missional Churches* by Milfred Minatrea

*Seven Practices of Effective Ministry* by Andy Stanley, Lane Jones, Reggie Joiner

These two books are available through Amazon.com.

50 Days Ablaze! - Mission Outreach Journey

<http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=9374>

LCMS World Mission - Mission Education Handbook

<http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=2444>

### **News from the Center**

- Today marks the conclusion of the Winter Basic Mission Planters Training. Join us in praying that the Lord would bless the ministries of the 14 church planters who attended, that His kingdom may grow.
- Three new missional Bible studies recently posted at [www.centerforusmissions.org](http://www.centerforusmissions.org) – Resources – Bible studies:
  - "Missional Churches are Sending Churches" by Kevin Wilson
  - "Three Keys for Sharing Christ with Others" and
  - "Lutheran Distinctives in Evangelism" by Jerry Kosberg

- Upcoming Training Events. See our website or contact our office for more information.
  - Feb 14-15: Ablaze! Covenant Congregation Orientation for Districts
  - March 16-18: Worship in the Urban Context; Milwaukee, WI
  - April 13-14: Sharing Christ in the City; Gary, IN

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*Mission Moments*, a biweekly electronic newsletter from the Center for U.S. Missions, brings information and encouragement to all who desire to share the God's great love in Jesus Christ with others. The Center for U.S. Missions provides research and training for mission work among unevangelized people in the United States. A partnership of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod World Missions, Concordia University in Irvine, California, and the North America Mission Executives of the LCMS, the Center serves all Christian denominations.

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