

Mission Moments – April 4, 2007
Printer-friendly version
From the Center for U.S. Missions
Following Jesus into the U.S. Mission Field
Browser version at www.centerforusmissions.com – Newsletter

Energizing for Evangelism by Michelle Connor

Unless ideas are massaged into reality, they evaporate. –George Nelson

A huge gap can exist between vision and reality. The above quote, hanging on my office door, reminds me and those I work with of that fact. Our goal is not to let the ideas or vision we have for missions evaporate, but to make them a reality.

Visions also evaporate when we leap into the latest and greatest program for outreach without building a foundation and insuring our follow through. A session at a recent evangelism conference outlined the following stages, helpful for any congregation considering launching a new outreach program.

Stage 1: Own and Model

Before the rest of our congregation can catch our vision for outreach, it must first be modeled in our own lives. Examples for modeling:

- a. Prayer: Ask God to use you for His mission of evangelism.
- b. Scripture: Meditate on passages in scripture that spark a fire in you for evangelism. For me, this is Romans 10:12-15. What passage gets you excited for evangelism?
- c. Partner: Find someone that shares your passion for the lost with whom you can share prayer and support.
- d. People: Develop relationships with non-believers. Then create the opportunities to engage them in spiritual conversations.

Stage 2: Instill the Values

Whatever your platform or circle of influence in your church, use it to influence others. Regularly remind people that evangelism is the mission of the church.

Stage 3: Empower a Point Leader

Identify a leader with an evangelistic passion. This point leader will partner with the senior pastor and develop the strategic plan to carry out the vision.

Stage 4: Liberate and Equip

The point leader needs to tear down evangelism stereotypes of evangelism, such as the belief that only those with the spiritual gift of evangelism can do evangelism. God calls all of us to do His work. Jesus' Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) is for all believers. Because many people feel ill equipped for evangelism, give them tools to share their faith boldly, including personal evangelism training.

Stage 5: Build a Team

Lone rangers have a lower success rate and tend to burn out quickly. The point leader needs others to support him/her. Gather a team of people gifted for evangelism to help carry out the strategic plan.

Stage 6: Outreach

Now it is time to start your programs. From the many good programs and tools available, select what will work best for your congregation. Here are some resources to add to your tool box:

- Outreach Magazine (<http://www.outreach.com/>) - Ideas, insights and stories for the Outreach-oriented Church leader
- Salt Shaker Ministries (<http://www.saltshaker.org/>) - personal and small group evangelism training
- Alpha Course (<http://alpha.org/>) - A program for introducing the basics of Christianity to those interested
- Friendship Ablaze (<http://www.friendshipablaze.com/>) - tools for Christian churches to help members invite their friends to know Jesus
- *Seeker Small Groups: Engaging Spiritual Seekers in Life-Changing Discussions* by Gary Poole (available at willowcreek.com)
- *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism* by Mark Mittelberg (available at amazon.com)
- Groups Ablaze (<http://www.groupsablaze.com/>) - a dynamic process designed to help local congregations reach out to their unchurched neighbors through small groups

This process involves risk, but it is worth it! Evangelism is one of the highest values in the church and it is one of the least practiced. Let us be the ones to change that reality. Be encouraged and motivated by Paul's words in Romans 10: 14-15: "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'"

Michelle Connor serves as the Center's Coordinator.

Moment Extras

Questions for Reflection

1. How do you "own and model" outreach in your congregation?
2. Where do you interact with and make contact with non-believers on a regular basis?
3. Who is one non-believer for whom you can pray?
4. Who is the "Point Person" for evangelism in your congregation? How can you support him or her?
5. What strategy does your congregation have for equipping participants to share their faith?
6. What will you do to help your congregation become more intentional about outreach and equipping the saints for evangelism?

Research on the Web

100 Million Unchurched in the United States

A new survey released by The Barna Group, which has been tracking America's religious behavior and beliefs since 1984, reveals that one out of every three adults (33%) is classified as unchurched - meaning they have not attended a religious service of any type during the past six months.

An estimated 73 million adults are presently unchurched. When teens and children are added, the total swells to roughly 100 million Americans.

Source: The Barna Group
www.barna.org; Barna update March 19, 2007

Audio on the Web

Flawed Evangelism Attempts (requires RealAudio Player)
<http://www.off-the-map.org/media/otmpa-2.ram>

Jim Henderson and others share embarrassing attempts to convert others and a road forward.

Books

Jim and Casper Go to Church: Frank conversation about faith, churches, and well-meaning Christians by Jim Henderson & Matt Casper. Available at amazon.com

Henderson and Casper share experiences as a believer, Henderson, and an atheist, Casper, as they visit churches. It particularly focuses on what the atheist sees and experiences. You can preview it at <http://files.tyndale.com/thpdata/FirstChapters/978-1-4143-1331-3.pdf>

Surprising Insights from the Unchurched and Proven Ways to Reach Them by Thom S. Rainer. Available at amazon.com

Rainer provides insights into what unchurched people think and believe about life and the church. He includes ways to reach unchurched people.

News from the Center

New! On the Edge: Training for Missional Leaders is an exciting week (July 23-27) with five trainings offered on the campus of Concordia University, Irvine, California. See <http://www.centerforusmissions.org/ontheedge/index.html> for details on each of the trainings:

- Basic Mission Planters Training--the Center's long-standing, highly-regarded seminar

- Advanced Mission Planters Training--newly-added for planters in years 2-10 of their plant
- Facilitating Church Planting Movements--Dr. Ed Stetzer leads two days of training in how to facilitate church planting movements in your sphere of influence.
- Mission Coach Certification Training--comprehensive training to be a coach who empowers people for mission
- Behavioral Interviewing Training--practical skills for anyone who selects people for positions

Seminars coming up soon!

- LINC Summit on urban ministry networks, Wed-Fri May 16-18, 2007, Houston, Texas
- Urban Church Planter Institute - Basic; Mon-Wed June 11-13, 2007, Southeast District

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.

www.centerforusmissions.org
 Contact us at office@centerforusmissions.org
 1530 Concordia West; Irvine, CA 92612-3299;
 949-854-8002 x1780; fax 949-854-6854
 Michael Ruhl, Executive Director, mike.ruhl@cui.edu
 Glenn Lucas, Director of Training; glenn.lucas@cui.edu
 Mike Zehnder, National Worship Consultant; rmike.zehnder@cui.edu
 Michelle Connor, Coordinator; michelle.connor@cui.edu
 Karen Kogler, Mission Moments editor; karen.kogler@sbcglobal.net

To subscribe to the email version of this newsletter, go to www.centerforusmissions.com. - Newsletters