

Mission Moments – April 20, 2007
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Following Jesus into the U.S. Mission Field
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In, Up and Out by Glenn Lucas

In, up and out. That's the process Cross of Christ Lutheran Church in Anthem, Arizona, uses to move people to a greater level of maturity in the faith. The goal is first to get people into a relationship with the faith community at Cross of Christ. Once people are *in*, the goal then is to grow them *up* in the faith as disciples of Jesus. Leaders at Cross of Christ anticipate that maturing believers in Christ will then move *out* into ministry. It is an intentionally simple process but it is not simplistic.

The ministry team at Cross of Christ designs its ministry around this process of moving people in, up and out. Each program or ministry must fit into one of the areas of movement. The beauty of such a process is that it focuses the ministry and it forces the ministry to clarify what Andy Stanley calls "The Win" in his book *7 Practices of Effective Ministry*. The process is also measurable all along the way. Leaders can measure how successful the ministry is in getting people "in" and then moving them "up" and then "out." If they discover that they are successful in getting people "in" and "up" but not "out," they can evaluate the ministries designed to move people "out" and make adjustments as needed. The process allows for flexibility, while maintaining the overall focus on making mature disciples.

The process Cross of Christ uses is consistent with processes Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger describe in their book *Simple Church*. Rainer and Geiger studied more than 400 evangelical churches to see what made some successful in reaching and maturing people in the faith, while others struggled and saw little or no growth. They discovered that the more successful churches had developed simple processes to make disciples. The struggling churches had no process, or had complicated processes, to make disciples.

Rainer and Geiger provide an expanded definition of a simple church:

A simple church is designed around a straightforward and strategic process that moves people through the stages of spiritual growth. The leadership and the church are clear about the process (clarity) and are committed to executing it. The process flows logically (movement) and is implemented in each area of the church (alignment). The church abandons everything that is not in the process (focus).

Note the four elements in this definition: clarity, movement, alignment and focus. All four are necessary in a simple church and they have a simple flow.

Clarity → Movement → Alignment → Focus

Too many churches have too many programs cluttering up their ministry. They lack clarity, movement, alignment and focus. The sought-after outcomes are unclear, so no adequate measure can be applied to their success or failure. The result is often a frenetic and competitive ministry team defining success solely on the basis of how much of the church's budget they have procured for their ministry area or how many bodies they get through the door in their ministry area. In a simple church, there is no clutter of programming. Each ministry area clearly fits into a process that moves people along a logical series of steps. Each step builds on the previous step and leads to the next. As the definition says, anything that does not fit into the process is abandoned.

We live in a complex society and people long for things that are simple. The church that is able to embrace and execute a simple process, in which the Holy Spirit can work through the means of grace, to make mature disciples of Jesus will experience health and vibrancy in its ministry.

Moment Extras

Questions for Reflection

1. What process does your congregation use to reach people with the gospel and help those who believe to mature in the faith?
2. As you look at the ministries/programs in your church, what outcome does each strive to meet? Is there clutter in your church's programming?
3. How close is your church to being a simple church?
4. If your congregation does not meet the definition of a simple church, where in the progression described (clarity, movement, alignment, focus) does it stumble?
5. What steps can you take to help your church become or continue to be a simple church?

Links

Cross of Christ Lutheran Church, Anthem, Arizona
<http://www.anthemcross.org/index.htm>

Visit Cross of Christ's website to see how they have taken their grasp of the simple church concept even to the design of the site. Note how the site does not overload the viewer with more information than needed. Explore the site and see the simple, straight-forward approach to ministry Cross of Christ takes.

North Point Community Church
<http://www.northpoint.org/>

North Point Community Church is another simple church. Once again note the simple design of the website. North Point uses a `home` metaphor as its process`` to make disciples. They envision moving people from the Foyer to the Living Room to the Kitchen. Explore the various pages to see how North Point has shaped its ministry.

Books

Simple Church by Thom S. Rainer & Eric Geiger

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

News from the Center

New Missional Bible Study: "Growing and Going: A Look at the Heart of God" by Claire Partlow is the newest addition to the missional Bible studies available on our website (www.centerforusmissions.org > Resources > Bible Studies). A six-week study of the book of Philippians designed for small groups, it offers an opportunity to establish a Biblical basis for corporately growing in our faith and for thinking through values, vision, and mission as we begin to reach out to others who do not currently belong to a Christian church.

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/onthededge/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

Coming up soon!

- LINC Summit on urban ministry networks, Wed-Fri May 16-18, 2007, Houston, Texas

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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