

Mission Moments – June 15, 2007
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From the Center for U.S. Missions
Following Jesus into the U.S. Mission Field
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Today's *Mission Moments* is a republication of a relevant article from 2004.

Working for Excellence by Ken Behnken

In Colossians 3:23, the apostle Paul wrote "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men."

It is so easy to get caught up in trying to please people rather than God. The demands, commands, directions, and suggestions drip on our heads like water from a leaky roof. Everyone has a different idea of what can make this church better.

As pastors and congregational leaders, we must constantly be in prayer, seeking God's direction and His will for our ministry. At the same time, it is good to look around and ask, "What are the needs of the people I am called to serve?" What do the Scriptures say about "serving" rather than "running" a congregation? It is also helpful to see what other congregations, ones who are effectively reaching God's people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, are doing.

The U.S. Congregational Life Survey, the largest and most representative profile of worshipers and their congregations ever developed in the United States, includes the LCMS and 50 other denominations. Their findings are published in a book entitled *Beyond the Ordinary: 10 Strengths of U.S. Congregations*. They found these 10 strengths in congregations that excel and go beyond the ordinary.

1. **Growing Spirituality** – They help their worshipers grow in their faith.
2. **Meaningful Worship** – They provide worship services that meet the needs of their worshipers.
3. **Participation** – These congregations are places where worshipers are involved in many of the activities of the congregation.
4. **Having a Sense of Belonging** – They provide people with a sense of fellowship with others.
5. **Caring for Young People** – They ensure that the children and youth in the congregation are nurtured in the faith.
6. **Focusing on the Community** – They reach out to and serve those outside their doors.
7. **Sharing their Faith** – They help their worshipers feel comfortable sharing their faith with others.
8. **Welcoming New People** – They ensure that new people become a part of their faith community.
9. **Empowering Leadership** – They help worshipers to share in the
1. leadership of the congregation.

10. Looking to the Future – They focus on a positive future.

These are good measuring sticks for congregation ministry. In all we do, we should seek to be "beyond the ordinary." Our God has given us a solid doctrinal foundation on which to stand. He also gives us creative minds, visionary desires, exceptional spiritual gifts, and quality lay people who have the gifts we lack. To be in ministry is to always do our best and to always seek better and more effective ways to reach the unchurched with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Remember, we are working for the Lord, not for ourselves or for men. Our Lord has given us the tools to go "beyond the ordinary" to be the church He wants us to be. To God be the glory—great things he has done and is doing!

Moment Extras

Questions for Reflection

A. How would you rate the 10 Strengths in your congregation with 4 being the highest and 1 being the lowest? (Answers can be submitted via a form on the website version of this June 15, 2007 newsletter at www.centerforusmissions.com – Newsletters.)

1. Growing Spirituality	4	3	2	1
2. Meaningful Worship	4	3	2	1
3. Participation	4	3	2	1
4. Having a Sense of Belonging	4	3	2	1
5. Caring for Young People	4	3	2	1
6. Focusing on the Community	4	3	2	1
7. Sharing their Faith	4	3	2	1
8. Welcoming New People	4	3	2	1
9. Empowering Leadership	4	3	2	1
10. Looking to the Future	4	3	2	1

B. Choose one of the items above that you rated less than 4 that you would enjoy growing forward in your church. What will you do to grow this item forward?

Quote

“It’s not what leaders know that is important; it’s what leaders know is not important.”
Bill Easum, from *Leadership on the Other Side: No Rules, Just Clues*

Books

Beyond the Ordinary: Ten Strengths of U.S. Congregations
by Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce

Small, Strong Congregations: Creating Strengths and Health for Your Congregation
by Kennon L. Callahan

News from the Center

Designing Worship to Engage the Culture is a new seminar added to the Center's July **On the Edge: Training for Missional Leaders** week. Offered Friday, July 27, 7:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. in Irvine, California, it can be taken as a stand-alone seminar for \$95 per person (\$250 for up to 5 people from the same congregation). It is also available FREE to registrants of Advanced Mission Planter Training, Mission Coach Certification Training and Behavioral Interviewing Training.

We clearly have some choices when it comes to culture. We can retreat from it, ignore it, judge it, preserve it or engage it. Luther clearly engaged the culture of his day in worship with music, messages, language, art and expressions designed to connect with average persons in very relevant ways. Dare we do anything less today when heaven and hell are in the balance in our crazy culture? Live, downloadable, web-based resources will be shown that even a small church can utilize with minimal cost. Presenter: Rev. Michael Zehnder. For complete information, follow links at www.centerforusmissions.org/ontheedge/.

On-time registration ends July 2nd for all the On the Edge: Training for Missional Leaders seminars. See <http://www.centerforusmissions.org/ontheedge/index.html> for details:

- Basic Mission Planters Training, July 23-27, the Center's long-standing, highly-regarded seminar
- Advanced Mission Planters Training, July 23-27, newly-added for planters in years 2-10 of their plant
- Facilitating Church Planting Movements, July 25-26; Dr. Ed Stetzer leads two days of training in how to facilitate church planting movements in your sphere of influence.
- Mission Coach Certification Training, July 23-24, comprehensive training to be a coach who empowers people for mission
- Behavioral Interviewing Training, July 23-24, practical skills for anyone who selects people for positions

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@cu.edu
Glenn Lucas, Director of Training; glenn.lucas@cu.edu
Mike Zehnder, National Worship Consultant; rmike.zehnder@cu.edu
Michelle Connor, Coordinator; michelle.connor@cu.edu
Karen Kogler, Mission Moments editor; karen.kogler@sbcglobal.net

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