

Mission Moments – August 24, 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

Leveraging Lutheran Schools for Outreach
by Donna M. Lucas

Our Lutheran Schools are often an untapped mission field. Their many unchurched families afford churches a wonderful opportunity to reach out with the message of salvation that changes lives forever! But how does a church and school ministry become intentional about reaching families and actually doing kingdom building?

Our experience at Zion Lutheran in Glendale, California, has taught us several things. First, intentional school outreach begins with a joint mission statement for the church and school clearly and intentionally focused on reaching school families. The mission is then articulated at every church and school event and meeting, and posted in every room and entry. Every member is able to state it and explain it, and they buy into it and support it. In short, a person cannot come onto the property without being engaged by the mission and vision of the church and school.

We also learned that church and school leadership must make school outreach a priority, beginning with pastor and principal working as a strong, united team. The pastor and principal should meet together weekly to discuss and pray for the mission. They should set goals together and work toward those goals on a united front, with agreement in public and any disagreement expressed in private. The school needs to be a priority of the pastor and the mission of the church needs to be a priority of the principal. Church and school cannot go in different directions.

It is imperative that the pastor and church leadership are visible in the school. The pastor must be seen in classrooms and when the parents pick up and drop off children. During arrival and departure time, relationships can be built with school families.

The pastor cannot be the only church presence in the school. The involvement of church members is key to school outreach, so that school families see familiar and friendly faces when they come to Sunday morning worship. The church must also ensure that the worship experience is child friendly.

A school has many opportunities for day to day involvement of church members. They can be mentors, tutors, playground supervisors, parking lot attendants, and receptionists. They can attend, and serve as hosts for, school events. In our common ministry, church members join the pastor for home visits with all school families. Our church's adopt-a-school-family program is also helpful.

Follow-up and prayer are very important. The church needs a plan to identify families that show interest in church membership and to follow up with them. A church should also plan to have elders or deacons visit families in crisis and ensure that such visitations take place. All these

ministry efforts should be surrounded with prayer. A prayer team for the outreach ministry is imperative.

A church can create opportunities to involve school families in church activities, such as children singing or performing dramas in worship services, and joint service projects and work days. Celebrations for both church and school, such as special worship services, picnics, game nights and dinners, can be planned. The list of possible activities is only limited by the congregation's imagination. These events create opportunities to build relationships and develop encouragement and acceptance.

A school has families in their midst for a number of years. No other church ministry provides so much time to share the gospel with people. But that time can be lost if churches and schools are not focused and intentional about their outreach.

Churches with schools need a plan to touch the lives of all families, but especially those of the unchurched. They need to implement the plan consistently and intentionally. A change in the culture of both the church and school may be required. Most churches with schools say their schools are their missions, but their claim is not born out in practice. As church and school begin to change their culture to truly make the school the focal point of their outreach ministry, they can expect resistance at first. But God will bless the ministry. Our church baptized thirteen adults and children from school families in the last year and a half. What a fantastic blessing!

Donna Lucas is principal and teacher at Zion Lutheran Church and School in Glendale, California.

Moment Extras

Links

Friendship Ablaze!

www.friendshipablaze.com > Schools

The Friendship Ablaze! material includes numerous resources for both Christian and public schools.

Lutheran Schools: Mission Imperative by Rachel Klitzing

www.centerforusmissions.org > Newsletters > archived New Harvest newsletters > March 2006

Rachel Klitzing, in an article from the Center's March 2006 *New Harvest*, writes that Lutheran schools have a biblical imperative to share Jesus. She includes several ways schools are effectively carrying out that mission. In the same publication, an article by Bruce Braun highlights one school presenting a credible witness in its community.

Strengthening Schools and Congregations

www.lcms.org > Children, Family, School ... (from the drop-down Ministry Area menu) > School Ministry > Strengthening Schools and Congregations

The "Strengthening Schools and Congregations" (SSAC) project aims to strengthen and re-vitalize Lutheran elementary schools that are experiencing problems, so that they can more effectively accomplish their mission of sharing the caring Christ.

LCMS School Ministry Statistical Information

Statistical Summary for 2003-04:

Number of Lutheran Schools

- Early Childhood Centers 1368
- Elementary Schools 1018
- High Schools 102

Where do the children who attend Lutheran elementary schools go to church?

- 39% are members of the LCMS congregation which operates the school
- 5% are members of other LCMS congregations
- 3% are members of other Lutheran denominations
- 36% are members of other Christian churches
- 17% claim no church membership

Do any of the unchurched children or their families ever join the Lutheran church?

- 3,910 children were reported baptized as a direct result of their attending a Lutheran elementary or secondary school.
- 3,232 adults were reported being baptized or confirmed as a result of their children attending a Lutheran elementary or secondary school.

How many children attend our Lutheran schools?

- 131,225 attend Early Childhood Full Day, PreK
- 130,395 attend Elementary Schools
- 18,806 attend High Schools
- 280,426 Total Students
- 50,627 Students in Before/After School Care

Source: www.lcms.org > Children, Family, School ... (from the drop-down Ministry Area menu) > School Ministry > School Ministry Information. Under "Lutheran Schools Information and Statistics," "click here to go to the Lutheran Schools Statistical Information page."

News from the Center

Church Planter Assessment Center

All applications, references and assessment tools must be completed and submitted by September 3, 2007, for the Sept. 24-27, 2007 event in Chicago, Illinois.

The Church Planter Assessment Center (CPAC) is a 4-day experience to help potential church planters verify if God has given them the necessary gifts and character to be a lead church planter. Endorsed and encouraged by LCMS World Mission, CPAC uses a variety of tools, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, to prayerfully evaluate candidates. CPAC is a key strategy for supporting the goal of 2000 new congregations in the USA by 2017, part of the *Ablaze!* initiative. For full information, and to register, visit www.centerforusmissions.com and click on this event in the “Currently-scheduled Seminars” listing.

Two opportunities -- Daughter Church Planting Seminar

1. Friday/Saturday September 14-15, 2007, Woodbury, MN OR

2. Friday/Saturday October 5-6, Fond du Lac, WI

Church consultants tell us that the best way to reach the unchurched is by planting new churches. Congregations of all sizes will benefit from this refreshing and hope-filled seminar that approaches churches planting churches from a Biblical and practical point of view. Explore planting strategies, the advantage of planting, when to plant, the process of daughtering, mother-daughter relationships and more! Pastors, congregation leaders, mission executives and district presidents who have taken this seminar have developed a contagious spirit and become advocates for churches planting churches. For more information, and to register, visit www.centerforusmissions.com and click on the event in the “Currently-scheduled Seminars” listing on the home page.

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