

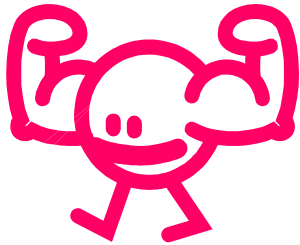


Mission Enhancement

by Mike Ruhl

There is quite a bit of *buzz* these days about *enhancement*.

Dietary supplements, we are told, can *enhance* the health and vitality of our bodies. Exercise regimens can *enhance* strength, endurance, appearance, and self-esteem. Learning disciplines can *enhance* expertise, creativity and productivity. Providing people with *enhancement tools* has become nothing less than a *big business*.



And in the church, the Body of Christ, it is no secret that it is all too easy for *mission* to be displaced by *maintenance*—for the making of more and better disciples of Jesus Christ to yield to issues of organizational survival. Hence the perpetual search for *mission enhancement* prescriptions and tools. Yet changing structure and adding copied programs seldom, if ever, result in *mission renewal and enhancement*.

So what is the problem? Mission is not carnal or organizational. Mission is spiritual.

Both historical and contemporary evidence supports the following thesis: *A greater evangelistic emphasis and higher evangelistic priority will enhance ALL the missions and ministries of the church.*

One study documented that when well-known evangelists held to a priority of winning people to faith in Jesus Christ,

A greater evangelistic emphasis and higher evangelistic priority will enhance ALL the missions and ministries of the church.

they were also instrumental in initiating massive social reforms. And another major study in the 1960's concluded that when the modern evangelical movement held a priority of evangelism, at the same time it maintained a strong social conscience.

As we head into the 21st century, the identical dynamic is evident: *Churches that emphasize evangelism tend to have a greater awareness of and effectiveness in both discipleship and social needs.*

With the Pentecost Sunday Scripture lessons still ringing in our ears, can we recapture the key to the health and growth of the Body of Christ? To put it simply: the Holy Spirit working through the Word of God to ignite human hearts with a burning passion to embrace community and world with the good news of the Crucified and Risen Christ.

That spiritual passion is what *enhances the mission* ...keeping the congregation ever vibrant, renewed and relevant in the mission field. ■



Executive Director Installed

The Center for U.S. Missions has a new leader. Rev. Michael R. Ruhl was installed Friday, April 30, 2004, as the Center's Executive Director.

The installation was performed by Dr. J.A.O. Preus III, President of Concordia University, Irvine, California, during the university's morning chapel service. President Preus was assisted by Dr. Robert Scudieri, Associate Executive Director, LCMS World Mission North America, and Rev. Dwayne Lueck, chair of North America Mission Executives (NAME) of the LCMS. The Center is a partnership of the three organizations represented by these men.

A native of Ontario, Canada, Mike grew up in Michigan and pastored congregations in Minnesota and Michigan. He then served for 16 years as director of missions in the Michigan District office before accepting



Pastor Mike Ruhl and his wife Carolyn.

the call to the Center.

Pastor Ruhl comments, "There is no greater joy than seeing the Holy Spirit bring pre-Christian, diverse people into saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Planting new mission congregations is also a great joy. As the United States emerges as the third largest mission field in the world, what a privilege it is to bring advocacy, training and resources to both of those endeavors!"

Rev. Ruhl is stepping into the position held by Dr. Ken Behnken, who has served as Executive Director since the Center was founded four years ago and is now retiring. ■

Research

The following research findings were recorded in *Permission Evangelism* by Michael L. Simpson; Nexgen, 2003.

Median church size adult attendance (100 people) dropped 10 percent from 1997-1999

People in their thirties are now 35% less likely to attend church as those in their forties.

Of those claiming to be Christian, teens are half as likely as adults to claim to be "absolutely committed to the Christian faith."

62 percent of people who have not attended church in over six months claim to be Christian.

Seven out of ten adults have no clue what "John 3:16" means.

Probability of claiming Christ as your Savior between the ages of:

5-13 is 32%

14-18 is 4%

Over 18 years of age is just 6%

Single people are 37% less likely to attend church than married people.

Baby Busters are least likely to attend church in a typical weekend (only 28%) versus Baby Boomers (43%), Builders (50%) and Seniors (52%). (These are figures from the year 2000.)

"The percentage of people who practice their spiritual gift to help their churches is 31% in churches with less than 100 in attendance; while in churches over 1,000 in attendance, the average falls to 17%." —Christian Swartz in a Christianity Today interview, 2004

New Harvest is published four times a year to provide information and encouragement for the sharing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the United States.

Center for U.S. Missions, 1530 Concordia West, Irvine, CA 92612-3203; 949-854-8002 x1780; fax 949-854-6854; email:karen.kogler@cui.edu . Mike Ruhl, Executive Director; Ken Behnken, Director of Training; Karen Kogler, coordinator and New Harvest editor.

The Center, a partnership of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Mission Services, Concordia University, Irvine, California, and the LCMS North America Mission Executives, exists to provide research and training for mission work among unevangelized people in the U.S.

Developing a Roadmap

by Ken Behnken

When you take a road trip, you first gather maps and choose a route to your destination. Although this step takes some extra time up front, it saves a lot of time on the road.

Since your route is mapped, you do not need to stop along the way and ask, "Could you tell us where we are and how we can get to a road that will take us where we want to go?" You won't be going in circles because your map will give you direction and focus

Your congregation is also on a journey—a journey through your community to share the Gospel with as many people as will listen. In order to journey efficiently, doesn't it make sense to prepare a roadmap, one that will help you know your community and discover which roads will be most effective for reaching the most peo-

ple? Such a road map will give your members a direction, a focus, and purpose for their journey together.

A roadmap is important at a church's birth. Twice a year the Center for U.S. Missions provides training for those who have been called to plant a new mission. One of the primary outcomes at this training is a tool which will allow each participant, with his core group, to develop a roadmap—a mission plan—for his new congregation. The sessions work on discovering the values, mission, purpose, vision, demographics, and strategy for this new church plant. With a mission plan, the members can work together with a common vision and focus to reach the unchurched in their community.

But it's not just new mission congregations that need a mission plan. Every congregation needs such a plan to keep them focused on their journey. If you are taking your journey one day at a time, with no roadmap, you probably feel as if you are going in circles. Your people may wonder, "Why are we doing this?" Perhaps volunteers are getting "burned out" because they don't feel that the time and work they dedicate is accomplishing anything. Proverbs tells us, "Without a vision, people perish." (Proverbs 29:18). If your congregation has lost its vision and is looking for a new direction, this is a good time to develop a new mission plan.

For several years our training seminars have used *Advanced Strategic Planning*, an excellent book in which author Aubrey Malphurs describes mission plan development step by step. With Malphur's approval and encouragement, I have recently finished writing an accompanying workbook to assist congregations construct a mission plan for their ministry. The workbook is *Developing a Mission Plan for your Ministry*. When your planning team has, step by step, worked through this workbook, it will have a completed mission plan. Watch the excitement and energy rise as your congregation focuses on a united plan for ministry and outreach in your community.

Aubrey Malphur's book and the workbook are available as a set from the Center for U.S. Missions for \$35 plus \$10 shipping and handling. They can be ordered by calling our office (949-854-8002 x1780) or on our website at www.centerforusmissions.com. ■



At an April 28th banquet at the North America Mission Executives (NAME) conference in San Diego, Rev. Ken Behnken for his many years of ministry in the Pacific Southwest (PSW) District and for his service as Executive Director of the Center for U.S. Missions since it was formed four years ago. Rev. Behnken and his wife Mil are seated. Standing are Mrs. — and Dr. —, former PSW District president; Dick Gabl, Ohio District Mission Executive; Bob Scudieri of LCMS North America missions department; Mrs. Eldrid Hinton, Ken's administrative assistant in both the District and at the Center, and Mrs. — and Mr. Cal Fiege, formerly of the District staff. Rev. Behnken retires later this year.

News at the Center for U.S. Missions

Upcoming Seminars

Groups Ablaze! (aka SG²) —small group ministry for outreach
 Presenter: Dwight Marable
 Aug. 20-21, Concordia University, Irvine, CA; Sept. 10-11, Crowne Plaza, St. Louis, MO; Oct. 1-2, CNH District office, Livermore, California; Oct. 22-23, Prince of Peace Lutheran, Springfield, VA

Behavioral Interviewing — Finding the right person for the ministry job. Sept. 15-17, Livermore, California. Presenter: Dr. Charles Ridley.

More information on both seminars is on our website, www.centerforusmissions.com, or call us at 949-854-8002 x1780. ■

Email Newsletter

Are you receiving our email newsletter, *Mission Moments*, every other Friday? Each issue contains a lead article on outreach, plus research, quotes, or helpful links. “Helpful tidbits of info to think about,” one reader said of it.

Past issues are posted on the website. Topics recently covered include, “Mission Enhancement;” the value of job descriptions to mission; “Ways to Reach the Spiritually Lost.”

To subscribe, go to “newsletters” on our website, www.centerforusmissions.org. A “text only” version is available for those who prefer fewer MB’s in their mailbox. ■

Coming soon—Webcasts

The Center is working with Leadership Advancement Process to provide easier access to our seminars in various web formats.

The Groups Ablaze seminars listed at left are available to be sent live via video over the internet and audio over a phone line to other sites.

This arrangement is ideal for allowing congregations at a distance to bring the training to a large number of people without the cost of travel and lodging. More information on this option, along with cost information and technology requirements, is available on our website under “webcasts” in the navigation bar. ■

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