

## News From the Center

### Strategic Growth Through Small Groups—(SG)<sup>2</sup>

The (SG)<sup>2</sup> seminars, on how small groups can be deliberate, effective outreach tools, are up and running! One group met in early September in St. Louis, and others are scheduled for Oct. 1-2 in Livermore, CA, and for Nov. 5-6 in Austin, TX.

Any congregation or district can host a training in their region. See [http://www.centerforusmissions.com/centerforusmissions/sg2\\_hosting](http://www.centerforusmissions.com/centerforusmissions/sg2_hosting) for details.

Also called “Groups Ablaze,” since the training fits the LCMS effort to present the Gospel to 100 million people by 2017, the informative and experiential seminar helps people comfortably share the Gospel with unchurched friends.

### On our Website [www.centerforusmissions.org](http://www.centerforusmissions.org)

- A new PowerPoint slide show with sound introduces you to the need for missions in the United States and the resources provided by the Center. Click on “Introduction to the Center” in the first paragraph on the home page.
- Read about our seminars. Click on Calendar in the left-hand column or scroll down the home page.
- Click on “Newsletters,” also on the left, for copies of both our print and our electronic publications.

### Coming in 2005: Igniter Events

As part of its *Ablaze!* emphasis, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is creating up opportunities to learn from pastors of growing congregations. How do their churches reach the unchurched? How do they plan and carry out effective ministry? Come and find out!

The dates (all in 2005) and locations:

March 4-5, Houston  
April 7-8, Las Vegas  
Sept. 16-17, Detroit  
Nov. 4-5, Orlando

The Center will be there with resources for all churches. Watch for more information.



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## Don't Just Shake My Hand ... Hold It! Encouraging the Healthy Pastor

by Mike Ruhl

I was touched deeply by an article in the Winter 2004 issue of *Leadership Journal*. Pastor Craig Barnes wrote about his “ascendancy” from serving as a parish pastor to his new role of professor of leadership and ministry at a seminary in Pittsburgh. As guest pastor, Craig had just finished preaching a stirring sermon in one of the many constituent congregations which pray for and support the seminary.

After the worship service, Craig was greeting the saints of the congregation as they exited the sanctuary. The host pastor was present for the entire service and now stood inconspicuously in one corner of the church entry. And it was just then that Craig thought to himself: “All these polite people are coming up to me to say something nice about the sermon. But all the people who love and need their pastor are lined up in front of ‘the other guy.’ Some just want to hold his hand for a few seconds.” And it was at that moment that the reality thundered home to Craig: “I am *not* their pastor.”

When the previous week had been spent visiting the sick child in the hospital, wrestling with a distracti-

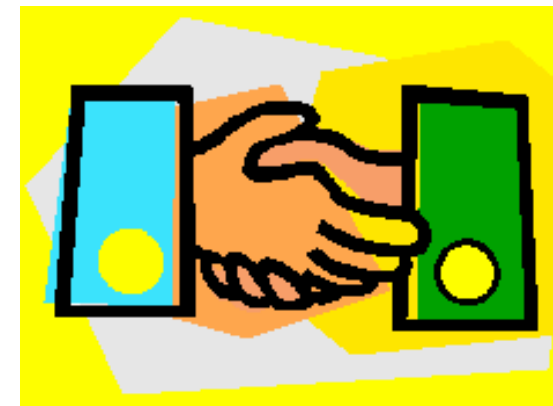
ble confirmation class, burying the dead husband, praying with the single mother who had just lost her job, unpacking the doctrine of the Real Presence in Holy Communion to an adult inquirers class, begging the Lord for a clearer vision of mission and writing a sermon from his heart that was already filled to the brim with all of this pathos ... well, it was no wonder at all that people

cation and Stewardship Executives, Mission and Ministry Facilitators, District Presidents and various synodical officials. And surely these are significant and strategic ministries in the Church of Jesus Christ!

And what crucial importance is embedded in that blessed ministry of encouraging, bolstering, affirming and resourcing the pastors of the congregations being served.

So do be encouraged, then, to care for those pastors. Encourage those pastors. Pray with those pastors. Bolster those pastors and congregations. Because, in case you have not noticed, *that is precisely where the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ unfolds--in the local congregation.* And healthy churches are led by healthy pastors, surrounded by healthy people and staff, all living out healthy spiritual and missional relationships.

And so after the guest preaching, the special training and facilitated planning, remember that while many people in the congregation may shake your hand ... it is *the pastor's hand that people want to hold.* And be assured that it is *grace* that those people are reaching for. ■



line up after worship *just to hold his hand!* Because it wasn't really his hand that they were holding. **It's grace that they are reaching for.** And only a parish pastor knows that.

Some who read these words are former parish pastors, now serving parish pastors as Mission Executives, Evangelism Executives, Edu-

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## Healthy Pastors Make Healthy Leaders

2 Timothy 2:15: “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

When the Apostle Paul wrote Timothy, he encouraged him to take care of his spiritual life. When the Lord called us into ministry, he called us to be spiritual leaders. The clamor and allure of the world, and our fleshly desire for excitement, satisfaction, and acknowledgement, continually challenge our intent to be a pastor who preaches, walks, and talks the Gospel from the pulpit and in everyday life.

A 1990 statistic from a Southern Baptist executive asserted that for every 20 men who enter the ministry, only one will still be in the ministry by the time they all reach age 65. I think that statistic is a little low for most denominations, yet it speaks the reality that many who commit time, money, and schooling to the office of the ministry will leave their call. Some will leave for health issues, some due to personal problems. Stress will overwhelm others, and some will be forced out by their churches. A number will walk out because of sheer frustration or a sense of failure. I recently read, “If you haven’t given serious thought to

leaving the ministry, you haven’t been in it very long.”

When Dr. Don Whitney gave a commencement address at Midwestern Baptist Seminary, he warned these young graduates of temptations which befall pastors. They are not new. Paul warns Timothy against these same temptations. Dr. Whitney shared five temptations of which every pastor, young or old, must be aware.

**MONEY:** Paul reminds us in 1 Timothy 6:9, “People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap, and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.” Money,



both the desire for it and the lack of it, takes our focus off our ministry and places it on worldly desires.

**SEX:** Easy access to sexually explicit material has given Satan a field day. The preoccupation with sex, pornography, and inappropriate sexual behavior which is so prevalent in our society can absorb our attention, tempt our base desires, and eventually ruin our ministry. A recent study states that “25-35 percent of ordained clergy are involved

with inappropriate sexual behavior at some level.”

**POWER:** A desire to control everything is a powerful emotion that needs to be curbed. The move toward authoritarian leadership can happen gradually to the extent that we don’t even realize we are making demands that feed our own egos rather than people’s souls.

**PRIDE:** The heart of sin is our pride. The much used phrase of Prov. 16:18, “Pride goes before the fall,” holds true. We can also say pride was the result of the Fall. The Psalmist warns in Psalms 10:4: “In his pride, the wicked does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.” The greater influence God gives us, the easier it is to think of ourselves as important.



**CYNICISM:** Ministers work daily with people who claim to be Christians but don’t act like it. When those who are supposed to be God’s people mistreat you and when you see little apparent fruit in the lives of those for whom you’ve given your life, it’s easy to become cynical. No one’s testimony thrills you anymore. No book motivates you. No sermon moves you.

**SUCCESS:** It is more appealing to be a CEO than a shepherd, a manager than a minister. Success is interpreted through business eyes, with a focus on buildings, parking, land, customers and crowds rather than through farming eyes with the emphasis on sheep, fruit, and growing people.

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*by Ken Behnken*

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Paul encourages Timothy and us: “Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in **these things**, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear.” (1Tim 4:16) What are “these things” Paul is encouraging us to persevere in? There is no ministry apart from the Scriptures. If we don’t take time to absorb Scripture and allow Scripture to be absorbed in us, there will be no opportunity to hear from Jesus. There will be no power to focus on the spiritual rather than the mundane. Don Whitney reminded the seminary graduates: “Don’t let the ministry keep you from Jesus!”

His continued warning rings in our ears. “If you wake up one day to realize that you are busier than you’ve ever been, but no deeper in the things of God than you were years ago; if you’ve become a religious professional, a minister who knows more about denominational politics than doctrine, who knows more about church growth pragmatism than prayer, and that you have become the kind of minister you once prayed you would never become...” then get on your knees and seek God’s forgiveness and power. True repentance and the gift of forgiveness in Christ puts our ministry in the right perspective..

Take time to be a healthy leader. Be in God’s Word. Don’t only administer the sacraments; let the sacraments and God’s love minister to you.

“But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” (1Tim. 6:11-12) ■

## Research

Earth has 6,396,137,090 people in 237 countries speaking 6,528 languages! Half have never heard the truth of Jesus.

- 12,000 people groups have never heard the Gospel!
- Unless someone goes to them, 1.1 billion people have little chance of hearing the Gospel!
- In Hinduism, 33 million gods are worshipped, and 200 million cows are considered holy.
- One-third of the earth’s population is under the age of 15.
- It is estimated that 120 million people are presented with the Gospel for the first time each year.
- Over 1.1 billion people live on less than 1 US dollar per day.
- There are at least 2,000 languages that still need the Bible translated.
- 230 million people identify themselves as atheists.
- In the 10/40 Window (the area of Africa and Asia between 10 and 40 degrees north of the equator—the least evangelized part of the world) there are 34 Muslim countries, 7 Buddhist nations, 3 Marxist nations, and 2 Hindu countries.
- Christians are sending only 1.2% of their mission funding and their foreign missionaries to the 1.1 billion people who live in the unevangelized world.



Source: Unhindered.org Christian Resources

## Links

<http://unhindered.org/missions/stats.html> Watch statistics of world missions change in real time.

<http://ecunet.org/> The oldest (15 years) Christian Online chat room

<http://www.iclnet.org/> Internet Christian Library. A wealth of Christian literature from the patristic area to the present. Bible studies, devotional, books, newsletters and much more.

## Quotes

“I think that I’m more gifted in rationalization than I am in evangelization. The challenge that we face is to overcome our fears and rebuke our excuses.”

“Maybe we need to realize that ‘instant’ evangelism is no longer possible (if it ever was). Developing a heart for lost people means entering their lives and getting involved – even in their messes. Again, people will believe that God loves them because we’ve loved them.

—Paul Borthwick, *Stop Witnessing and Start Loving*, NavPress, 2003, p.90

“Devoting a little of yourself to everything means committing a great deal of yourself to nothing.”

“There is no necessary correlation between how busy you are and how productive you are. Increase the proportion of your time on the few things that produce the most benefit.” (Andy Stanley, *The Next Generation Leader*, Multnomah Publishers, 2003, 161 pp)

*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.

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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.