

# NEW Harvest

~ Equipping mission planters to multiply the harvest ~

Center for U. S. Missions

March 2005

published quarterly Vol. 5, No. 1

## *Lutheran Missionary Schools—Is This Possible?* by Paul Mueller

What can Lutheran schools do to reach children and adults for Christ? That question assumes that a primary function of a Lutheran school is to be missionary. While most people would agree that sharing Jesus with lost people is a primary role of the church, most would not list Lutheran schools as a tool for that primary purpose. Schools identify their main goal as introducing Jesus to children and nurturing that faith while educating children in a Christian context. To burden them with missionary work seems unreasonable.

Can Lutheran schools be Christian missionary outposts which teach students to share Christ and which reach into the community not only to find more students, but to find unchurched families, too? The following 7 strategies might help a Lutheran school become a missionary force in God's mission "to seek and to save the lost."

**1) Teach the school – students, teachers, staff – to accept and serve unchurched people as a primary "customer" of the school.** A school will not intentionally reach out to the lost unless it sees its primary job as missionary. Without this passion, the school will simply serve its own.

**2) Reevaluate admission and tuition policies.** Which students are admitted into the school first? Outreach schools place the unchurched as the primary customers of the school.

What term is used for students or families who are not members in the host church? Non-member children/families? If labels are used, keep them positive. No one wants to be a "non" anything.



Eliminate tuition breaks based on church membership. If leaders fear that many will leave the church if no tuition break is offered for membership, a different problem needs to be addressed. Give one year tuition vouchers for no or significantly reduced tuition to unchurched families interested in, or skeptical of, sending their children to your school. After that year, if they continue, the tuition

is the same as that for all students.

**3) Train teachers and students to share Christ.** Teachers should learn the basic skills for sharing their faith with adults as well as with children. As they visit homes, they should inquire about the family's spiritual life and confidently share their own faith. If teachers are not equipped to share their faith, they should be required to attend a personal witnessing course.

Teachers need to prepare students to share Jesus with their own playmates and friends. Schools cannot simply tell children to share Jesus with their friends; they need the tools to do it!

**4) Celebrate and practice mission in the school.** Create a school climate where outreach is a common occurrence, not a special event. Fill weekly chapels with outreach people, missionaries, and mission festivities. Pray daily for missionaries, mission work, and friends of students and teachers who don't know Christ as their Savior. Celebrate baptismal birthdays of the students. Support mission work and adopt missionaries in other countries. Get students involved in hands-on mission work.

*Continued on page 2*

## *Lutheran Missionary Schools, from page one*

Take field trips to homeless shelters, food shelves, and meal centers.

**5) Create multiple entry points into the school.** Involve students in the Sunday worship service, weekly school chapels, and daily devotions. Have them sing as a choir, play handbells, or present dramas. Unchurched parents will come to watch their children. Require parents who are not members in the church to come to an evening meeting where they learn the religious education taught in the school.

Accommodate visitors in a warm and welcoming way. Make certain church worship orders are easy to follow, the words used are understood, signs in the church and school are visible and clear, and familiar teachers and staff greet the families. Assimilate unchurched people into ministry through leadership roles in the PTL, church choirs, ushering, working in the nursery, serving in the school office, or helping in the classroom. Allow the use of the facility for community recreation or support groups without a "landlord" mentality (i.e., we simply rent out the space).

### **6) Communicate effectively with**

**the school families and community.** Create a professional school newsletter with relevant news items. Be certain that all school families receive the congregation's newsletter. Remember for whom the newsletters are being written – not only church members, but others associated with the congregation only through the school. On your voice mail system, include an option with information about the church. Have a quality website and publicize it. Regularly invite the local newspapers and television stations to school events and advertise the school in the local papers, yellow and white pages, community magazines, and signage.

**7) Know the neighborhood and be involved in the community.** Have the staff occasionally visit community centers where children, adults, and families gather for activities. If the community is ethnically diverse, celebrate the diversity. Initiate cultural awareness themes in the school, hold ethnic food potlucks, hang the flags of the community's countries in the school, and offer language learning units taught by local community leaders. Provide English as a Second Language courses, job training, or job finding services.

*New Harvest* is published four times a year to provide information and encouragement for sharing 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:john.dostal@ cui.edu .

Mike Ruhl, Executive Director; Ken Behnken, Director of Training; John Dostal, Coordinator; Karen Kogler, New Harvest editor.

The Center, a partnership of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) 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.

## *Links*

<http://www.churchplants.com/>  
Outreach tools and resources for church planters.

<http://www.plantingministries.org/>  
This site offers you free church growth articles, a free monthly journal, church planting schools (even an Internet school), support groups, coaching by experienced church planters and much more.

## *Quotes*

The difficulty in church planting is that it is not like it is in an existing church. In an existing church 85% of what you do has a precedent from previous history -- often last year. In church starting it is all new. There was no last year! What is more, people expect you to come up with what I call a "full service dealership" right out of the box. They have no idea how hard that is. I know. I had to find a way to design all this church stuff from scratch. —Gary V Carter, Church Planting Specialist  
<http://www.churchplants.com/documents/MissionalChurch1.pdf>

... in a culture that thrives on diversity and disdains uniformity, there is no *right* way to plant a postmodern church. There is no single answer to reaching postmoderns because there is no one, stereotypical, North American postmodern.

Postmoderns do not fit into a nice little cultural box, but all people with a postmodern mind-set have this in common: They need to be reached with the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the current pattern of "church" isn't reaching them. —For the complete article *Culturally Relevant Ministry in a Postmodern World* by Ed Stetzer go to: [http://www.lifeway.com/lwc/article\\_main\\_page/0,1703,A=153590&M=50004,00.html](http://www.lifeway.com/lwc/article_main_page/0,1703,A=153590&M=50004,00.html). ■

## Ministry on Purpose by Karen Kogler

How much planning goes on in the church? Quite a lot, it would seem. Committees plan events and programs for the upcoming year. Teachers plan the Christmas program. Musicians plan their music.

But who plans the *mission* of each local congregation? Is there an overall plan to carry out what God is calling that church to do in their community?

Certainly God's plan is clear. He foretold it in the Old Testament, and accomplished it in the death and resurrection of Jesus. He commissioned His disciples—us—to share His rescue plan with the whole world. And certainly God has a plan for each local gathering of disciples to carry the Word to those around them who are not in God's family.

Yet God leaves many aspects of our participation in our hands, including the details above. If these plans for *aspects* of our ministry are valuable, how much more valuable is an *overall* plan for the ministry of the whole church.

Planning has proven effective in the planting of new churches. Each year, 20 to 30 mission planters attend Mission Planters Institute (MPI), a week-long training put on by the Center for U.S. Missions. The bulk of their time is spent on a "mission initiation plan"—writing a mission statement, values, vision, goals and strategies for their plant. They take their efforts home and refine it with others involved in planting the new congregation. But before they build, and before they begin worship, they have a plan.

Several church planters talked to *New Harvest* recently about how their plan influenced their first years of ministry. Their experiences also demon-

strate different ways of carrying out such a plan. (Several sample mission plans are on the Center's website, [www.centerforusmissions.org](http://www.centerforusmissions.org). See the link on the home page.)

In the fall of 2000, Bill Beyer arrived in Clayton, North Carolina. He wrote his plan early in 2001 and began worship at the local roller skating rink a month later. The mission, Holy Cross, now has 300 baptized members, about 70% of whom were unchurched. Bill has continually used the mission plan he wrote at MPI, especially the mission statement—"Sharing God's Word, Living His Love"—that appears on all their materials and is well known by all the people. This mission statement defines them and is behind all their decisions. "This is who we are," he says. "If people don't like it, they move on to another church."

Mission planter Galen Grulke says, "Planning is a pain to do and it takes a lot of time." Despite those disadvantages, he feels it is valuable. The plan he created for his new congregation, Heart of the Shepherd in Howell, Michigan, has been helpful from its start two and a half years ago. Now worshipping close to 200 on a weekend, planning is still important. Leaders gather for planning in regular "charges" (rather than "retreats") to prepare action plans for the coming year.

Phil Talley is at Point of Grace in Huntersville, North Carolina. The mission began worship 10 months ago and now has 75-100 in worship. Phil "followed the map," as he says, using the MPI plan to develop his action steps. He especially appreciated that

MPI "gave us permission to take time before launching worship." Taking extra time allowed the group to develop a vision and common values, laying a good foundation. "We now have a clarity of vision and purpose that sets us apart," he says. As people



came on board, "it gave us a common goal we were working on together. If people came with different expectations, they figured out early on that this wasn't the place for them." The plan helped the church stay healthy and remain focused.

Mission plans aren't just for new missions. Established churches experience renewed health and sharpened focus when they create a "mission assertion plan." Such a plan encourages a mission mindset, and works against the natural, but deadly, slide into a maintenance mode. The detailed planning of the various events and programs of the church are directed by the overall plan. Activities are evaluated as to whether or not they help achieve the mission. When all efforts focus on a common direction, results are multiplied.

The creation of a mission plan is a spiritual exercise. Bathed in prayer, it opens leaders to what God is doing and how he wants each group of believers to join in His work. Rather than asking God to "bless what we're doing," we ask God to "help us do what You are ready to bless." Plans are a guide, not a taskmaster. They are flexible, not unyielding.

*Continued, pg 4, col 1*

*On Purpose, from page 3*

Dan Flynn knows these truths. He planted Living Water Church, Whitmore Lake, Michigan, the north campus of St. Luke Lutheran Church, Ann Arbor. The new campus worships 100-115 weekly.

Even though Dan says, "I'm not a vision person," he continually holds up to his people the values from the plan he created in the summer of 2003, before he began any work at the mission. As for the specifics of carrying out these values, Dan says, "We have to be fluid. If something is not working, we put it aside for something else." He is not tied to particular strategies, but looks to see where the Spirit is working. "Where the wind blows, that's where we go." ■

{A tool for creating a mission plan is on our website at [http://www.centerforusmissions.org/centerforusmissions/malphurs\\_behnken](http://www.centerforusmissions.org/centerforusmissions/malphurs_behnken).}

*Research:*

*Lessons from church planting*

Ten universal elements—that's what David Garrison found while doing research for his booklet *Church Planting Movements*. After surveying church planting movements (CPM's) around the world, he found these 10 elements in every one of them. Those who want to start a CPM would probably want to figure out how to implement these 10 practices:

- Prayer
- Abundant gospel sowing
- Intentional church planting
- Scriptural authority
- Local leadership
- Lay leadership
- Cell or house churches
- Churches planting churches
- Rapid reproduction
- Healthy churches

<http://www.missionresources.com/churchplanting.html>

*Igniting Congregations*

Four Igniting Congregations events are part of LCMS President Kieschnick's *Ablaze!* emphasis. Content is the same at all four events.

- Sept. 16-17, 2005 in Detroit**
- Nov. 4-5, 2005 in Orlando**
- Feb. 17-18, 2006 in San Diego**
- April 28-29, 2006 in Houston**

Cost is \$65/person for 1-3 people from a congregation; \$55/person for each additional person.

Igniting Congregations events focus on active mission mobilization and increasing weekly worship service attendance. The event is designed for healthy congregations willing to grow, but uncertain about what that means or how to get started.

For more information, or to register, call 949-854-8002 x1780 or visit our website, [www.centerforusmissions.com](http://www.centerforusmissions.com).

Non-Profit Org. U. S. Postage PAID Permit #949
---

Center for U. S. Missions  
 Concordia University  
 1530 Concordia West  
 Irvine, California 92612-3203