

NEW Harvest

~ Equipping mission planters to multiply the harvest ~

Center for U. S. Missions

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Lutheran Schools: Mission Imperative by Rachel Klitzing

Growing up, one of my favorite TV shows was *Mission: Impossible*. The challenges and opportunities were intriguing, as week after week Jim Phelps was assigned a new “mission” – a villain to defeat, a global problem to solve, or a world leader to rescue – should he choose to accept. Jim always accepted the mission!

We’ve been given a mission! Each day in our Lutheran schools around the country and throughout the world, the Good News of Jesus, the living and reigning Savior, must be shared in word and in action. Each day in our Lutheran schools, educators, pastors, secretaries, and other leaders all have the tremendous opportunity to share the precious Gospel with children and families. This mission is not impossible. This mission is imperative!

In Matthew 28, 18-20, Jesus’ words to the eleven disciples, and to us, leave us with a clear mission – the Great **Commission**: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore GO and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach-

ing them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

In Lutheran schools, the mission is being carried out by passionate and dedicated “mission agents” – educators who, by God’s grace, understand their roles as missionaries in the classroom, on the



playground, in the office, and in the community. As missionaries, they work together to share the love of Jesus with a school population that is increasingly unchurched and de-churched.

To be effective in mission work, missionaries must understand the culture of their communities. This is as true of missionaries in Egypt or New Guinea as it is in communities in southern California or Michigan. Understanding the cul-

ture of our communities includes understanding the changing “face” of families and the differences in generations, among other things.

Parents and guardians choose our Lutheran schools for many reasons: for their safe and nurturing environments, for academic excellence, to escape pressures in public schools, for good morals and values. Many of these families have no church home or have never heard about the love of Jesus. What an opportunity! *Mission: Imperative!*

Here are some ways that Lutheran schools *in mission* reach out to families who do not yet have a living faith in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

» Teachers make home visits before school starts. They build relationships with families and discuss spiritual growth at parent/teacher conferences.

» Teachers teach children songs about Jesus, prayers, and Bible stories. Children repeat these at home. Questions about our faith are welcomed and encouraged!

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One for the Thumb

by Bruce Braun

In the following article, Bruce Braun uses the example of one school to demonstrate how a school's involvement in their community is a credible witness for the Gospel. —editor

Since their team had previously won four Super Bowl rings, “one for the thumb” was the Pittsburgh Steelers’ rallying cry in the recent Super Bowl. “One for the thumb” is also our focus as we look at a school in ministry.



People from the mitten-shaped lower half of the state of Michigan often show other Michiganders where they live by holding up their right hand and pointing to a place on their palm or fingers. The tip of the thumb is where people from Sebawaing, Michigan, point.

In this small rural town, where a plant processes sugar from beets grown in the Saginaw Valley, is one campus of Christ the King Lutheran School. Students in the lower grades meet at Unionville, six miles south.

This school of 177 students in the Michigan thumb has done a great

job of going and telling their community about the greatest love story ever written, the story of God’s unchanging love for His wandering children, you and I.

Their gospel outreach happens both near and far and involves a number of different people. During the annual Sugar Festival Parade, students and

parents walk behind their religious-themed float, distributing water bottles that remind others of the “Living Water” found in scripture. The school purchases Bibles for distribution at a family event, and Bibles are taken to homes of people who cannot attend this event.

School chapel offerings benefit local, national and international ministries, such as the local Ronald McDonald House and a local family with a child suffering from leukemia. Food was collected for the community food pantry. This year’s “Hearts for Jesus” offering assists children in Guatemala’s garbage dumps through Servant’s Heart Ministry.

The giving of the students at Christ the King Lutheran School is the living embodiment of Paul’s words in Galatians 6:2, “Carry each other’s burdens and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

School children were recently involved in “Operation Christmas Love,” reaching out to families devastated by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Christ the King spearheaded the efforts of several Lutheran Schools to collect gifts, wrapping paper and baking supplies for families that lost everything in these natural disasters. A local trucking company donated a 17-foot truck which was driven to New Orleans with about 200 baking kits and 1,500 unwrapped toys. Parents in New Orleans were invited to pick out two gifts and then wrap them as presents to their children. Mothers were encouraged to take a baking kit so they could share special treats.

All of this happened because children at Christ the King sensed an opportunity in 1 Corinthians 12:26, “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it.”

Christ the King Lutheran School teaches children to see the world through clear glass, not stained glass windows. While stained glass is beautiful, it shuts us off from seeing the world around us. Clear glass allows us to see the needs of the world and allows the world to see how the church loves others and lives out our mission. ■

Bruce Braun is Superintendent of Schools for the Michigan District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

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:michelle.connor@cui.edu. Mike Ruhl, Executive Director; Glenn Lucas, Director of Training; Michelle Connor, Coordinator; Karen Kogler, New Harvest editor.

The Center, a partnership of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod World Missions, 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 United States.

Mission: Imperative — continued from page 1

- » The pastor meets with new non-Lutheran and un-churched parents at the beginning of each school year and talks about what Lutheran Christians believe and teach – a Gospel presentation.
- » All staff members are intentional in witnessing to newly enrolled families, letting them know that they view their role as partners in nourishing their children's faith.
- » Students are involved in the regular worship services as readers, instrumentalists, ushers, greeters, parking lot attendants, and singers. This gets parents through the doors of the church on a regular basis.
- » On the school enrollment application, there is a place that indicates if parents would like to be

contacted by one of the pastors. Many indicate that they would. Follow-up by the pastors is prompt and timely.

» JOYning together Sundays are planned specifically to invite school families to worship and Bible studies.

» Families of the congregation are recruited and selected to be “mentors” for un-churched families of the school. They invite them to worship and Bible studies as well as social gatherings.

» Pastors greet children at the drop-off location each day before school starts, welcoming the families. Pastors or School Chaplain “hang out” at recess and lunch with the children.

» A Good Neighbor potluck, pic-



nic or meal is shared after a worship service. All “missionary staff” is available, welcoming and building relationships with the families.

Creating a culture of peace and care invites people in. As they realize there is something special and different here, the door is open for the message of the love of Jesus. Our Mission: ***Imperative!*** ■

Rachel Klitzing is Executive Director of School Ministries for the Pacific Southwest District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

—Advertisement—

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801 Seminary Place

St. Louis, MO 63105-3199

E-mail: allan.buckman@lcms.org (Executive Director)

Web site: www.lsfmissiology.org

News from the Center

Upcoming Seminars

Igniting Congregations, April 28-29, Houston. Last of a series of four events planned by LCMS President Gerald B. Kieschnick’s office for healthy congregations who wish to grow, but are not sure how. The three prior events have been very well received.

Daughter Church Planting, May 12-13, Yorkville, IL

Basic Mission Planter Training, July 24-28, Irvine, California. Due to increased costs, the registration fee for partner districts is now \$200 per person.

Resources Available

At www.centerforusmissions.org, click on “Resources” for the following, and more:

- **Book Reviews** — Summaries of 7 current books on mission
- **Links** to over 50 informative and helpful websites, organized by topic
- **Articles**: a library of articles, organized by topic and available in easy-to-print PDF form for use in congregational leadership training, group discussion, etc.

FYI

1. The Center for US Missions is adding a new staff member, a **National Worship Consultant**. This person will come alongside congregations, districts and mission movements, providing guidance and resources for the responsible expression of missional and diverse worship forms. A divine call will be extended for this position this spring.

2. The Center is working with the LCMS New Church Development Task Force to **identify and train 400 LCMS congregations** who will “covenant” to plant up to four new congregations by 2017

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