

LIVING THE MISSION

January 2009
Volume 2, Issue 1



A quarterly newsletter from the Mission Department of the Michigan District - LCMS

From the Director's Desk: Evangelizing in the 21st Century

Rev. Roosevelt Gray, Jr.—Director of Mission Services

The word evangelism comes from the words *euangelion* [good news, gospel] and *euangelizomai* [to proclaim good news]. The Good News is the news of and about Christ, God's one and only Son and Savior of the world. This news was proclaimed by God throughout the ages and brought to reality in the Incarnation of Christ 2,000 years ago. This Good News came to people who had real personal needs; "felt needs" as we would say in today's vernacular.

Jesus identified with those needs as he went out and met people where they lived. Consider how Christ met the needs of the wedding party at Cana, the woman at the well, blind Bartimaeus, the Centurion's son, the paralytic man, and many more. That was 1st century evangelism, serving the specific needs of people where he found them. He shared God's love and grace in specific ways to meet the needs of people and communities as he went about his evangelistic missions. (Matthew 9:35-38)

Through ministering to them, he taught them to have faith in God's grace and mercy. Meeting their needs didn't bring salvation, but they were grace-filled moments or random acts of kindness that gave people an understanding of a God who was not just somewhere in heaven, but who was here on earth and cared about their daily lives.

Perhaps 21st century evangelism should mimic 1st century evangelism; engaging people where we find them, sharing with them God's means of grace, and identifying with them according to their needs.

A resource called *Engaging Evangelism*, part of the *Building Church Leaders* materials published by Leadership Resources, gives an in-depth look at the nuts and bolts of evangelizing people today. Among other topics including *4 Myths about Evangelism* and *How to Share Your Faith*, is one entitled *Marks of an Evangelistic Church*.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| From the Director's Desk | 1 |
| Ministry Spotlight | 2 |
| Did You Know? | 2 |
| Mission Resources | 2 |

This article identifies five qualities against which your church can measure to see how focused you are on evangelism. They are:

1. Salvation of lost people is the church's top priority;
2. Leaders lead;
3. Evangelists are identified and unleashed;
4. Every believer is coached in sharing his or her faith;
5. The church members get frequent reminders of the importance of sharing their faith.

Once again, the questions we must ask are:

- What are the specific needs of the community we serve?
- What resources are needed to meet these specific needs and how do we get them?
- What agencies can be accessed for help in meeting those needs?
- How do we empower the people in using those resources?
- What effect does this empowerment have on the community?

There are no magical tools that make evangelism effective. Fifty years ago effective evangelism centered on the extended family with worship, Christian education, and family fellowship as key components. Perhaps some of those ingredients are the same today, but no matter whether our evangelism uses repeating ideas or tries something new, may we always seek to be faithful in living and sharing the Good News of Christ to the world.

Resource:
Building Church Leaders (Leadership Resources and Christianity Today, Intl, 2000). www.BuildingChurchLeaders.com

Ministry Spotlight: Journey of Faith, Byron Center

Rev. Robert Barber

"We exist to help people take their next step in their relationship with Jesus." This is Journey of Faith's mission and we have a program in place to help us accomplish this mission. It's called C3, which stands for Care, Compassion, and Community.

In Matthew 9:36-38 we read, "*When he (Jesus) saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless... He said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'*"

Jesus showed compassion on the people. He cared for them and instructed His disciples to pray that others would do the same. He calls us to have compassion on the people around us by caring for all their needs; physical, emotional, and spiritual. Each month, Journey sets out to do just that!

As part of the C3 program, on the Saturday before Christmas, with temperatures in the teens, over 60 volunteers headed to downtown Grand Rapids to share "*A Touch of Warmth*" with people who live on the streets. Carrying coats, gloves, socks, sweaters, cinnamon rolls, hot chocolate, and more with us, we set out to bring physical warmth to the people living

Did You Know?

The term **Hmong** refers to an Asian ethnic group in the mountainous regions of southeast Asia. Many Hmong refugees resettled in the United States after the Vietnam War. Today, approximately 270,000 Hmong people reside in the US. Rev. Lang Yang, himself of Hmong ancestry, ministers to this ethnic group here in Michigan. With Hmong ministries happening at Our Savior, Lansing and St. Michael, Richville, Pastor Yang



An old Flowery Hmong version of the Bible.

has the wonderful opportunity to share the love of Christ with this ethnic population. We thank God for Pastor Yang and pray that his ministry to the Hmong will continue to be blessed.

To see where other ethnic ministries are taking place, visit www.michigandistrict.org/d5.html.

"(Jesus) calls us to have compassion on the people around us by caring for all their needs; physical, emotional, and spiritual."

in the frigid cold. But the real touch of warmth was the conversation and prayer we shared with those we were privileged to serve. We wanted the people we met to know they were not alone, that there were people who cared, and most important that the miracle of Christmas wasn't just an event that happened 2000 years ago, but that Jesus could be born anew in their hearts this Christmas.

We are heading back soon to serve lunch at one of the homeless shelters. We hope this visit will give us even more opportunities to help others take that next step in their relationship with Jesus.

To find out more about C3, check out Journey's website at www.journeywired.org.

Mission Resources

Ablaze! Covenant Congregations Update
www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=12773

A bi-monthly newsletter from LCMS World Mission. It informs and encourages LCMS pastors, missionaries, and laypeople who are working in church planting.

Mission Education Handbook
<http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=2444>

This handbook helps congregation and leaders find ways to involve all congregation members in God's mission. Filled with practical ideas and tips, it is organized around the seven mission responses of learning, praying, giving, telling, sending, going, and celebrating God's mission.

Equipping to Share Workshops
<http://www.lhm.org/equipping/workshops.asp>

Are you ready for "mission moments," those moments God gives you to share the truth and love of Jesus Christ with unbelieving family and friends? **Equipping to Share** workshops from Lutheran Hour Ministries are designed to strengthen and encourage believers for outreach. Visit LHM's website to consider attending or hosting one of these events.

Michigan District, LCMS



3773 Geddes Road ♦ Ann Arbor, MI 48105

Phone: 734.665.3791 ♦ Fax: 734.665.0255 ♦ Website: www.michigandistrict.org