

Mission and Migration: Ask Those Who Are Doing It

Robert Scudieri

I had the privilege of preaching at Concordia Seminary a few decades ago. I began by looking at the chapel filled with white Anglo men and said, “You do not look like heaven.” Years later a pastor came up to me and said, “I heard you in chapel tell us we did not look like heaven and I was angry. But today I know what you meant.” He got it!

At Mission Nation Publishing our desire is to produce resources that will inspire and equip churches to reach new ethnic groups. In the eighteen years I spent as head of national missions for the LCMS I met some pastors who had a passion for a church that would “look more like heaven,” a la John’s vision in Revelation 7:9: “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.” There were some churches (and districts) that attempted to reach new immigrants and were wildly successful; others tried and failed because they were not equipped for this work. Unfortunately some just gave up.

Each year more than five hundred thousand immigrants are admitted to the United States. At the same time, the church in America is in decline statistically. With the immigrants, missionaries are now coming to America. Many are Christians “tried by fire” who have suffered for Christ and have come through the fire. They are gifts from God to the churches in America. For the past six years Mission Nation has been privileged to tell their stories and stories of some who have been touched by their ministries.

I was moved by the focus of this issue of Lutheran Mission Matters to share stories of some who are doing this and who got it right. For many it took several attempts, but they saw the importance of not giving up. We can learn from them. One person is Rev. Jason



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Li. Jason came to the United States from communist China to study engineering. The first Sunday he was at graduate school his roommate invited Jason to church. Jason was not at all interested but went because he did not want to offend his roommate. Then the roommate kept inviting and Jason kept going, not getting anything out of it, until he was invited to a Bible study in Chinese. The Spirit of Jesus came through His Word to stay in Jason Li. Here is more to the story, a story of sacrifice and redemption. You can see and hear it at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_5y3YO8JSc&t=12s

The late Pr. Peter Kelm was passionate to help churches in the South Wisconsin District reach new Americans. We discussed this in an interview a few years ago. He spoke about the great variety of immigrants that have come to Milwaukee and why and how churches can prepare to reach these faithful Christians. One important distinction is between pastors and missionaries. Not until recent times have our seminaries given attention to raising up missionaries. Check it out at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h-NyaTAVo9s&t=8s>.

Concordia St. Paul Professor Samuel Deressa came to America as an immigrant from Ethiopia. He has personal experience finding a church that would welcome an immigrant family. Professor Deressa compares the church in his homeland to the church in America. How is mission different between the two? Hear his insights at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g0OR8UvS8FQ&t=16s>.

President Mike Gibson is President of the LCMS Pacific Southwest District, one of the most multiethnic districts of the LCMS. Mike had the blessing of supervising a missionary reaching Chinese immigrants in California. President Gibson knows the challenges and the blessings of reaching across cultures and shares his learnings in this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kooTAyoBnDs>

Dr. Terry Chan is the chair of the Asian Mission Society and Pastor of Christ for All Nations Lutheran Church in San Francisco, CA. His congregation is composed of Asian, Hispanic, African, and Anglo members. Terry just finished a doctoral program where his focus was understanding how churches can be prepared to welcome people from other cultures. He shares some of the lessons he learned at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_solyL63Co&t=16s

President Mark Adrain shepherds one of the most missional congregations in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Four Hispanic missionaries work out of Messiah Lutheran in Tampa, Florida. I asked Mark in the following interview if it was a sacrifice for the Anglo church to support missionaries to Spanish speaking people. Hear what he had to say here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_solyL63Co&t=16s

Professor William Schumacher is the new President/CEO of Mission Nation Publishing. He came to Concordia Seminary after ten years as an evangelistic missionary in Botswana. I had the privilege of interviewing Will as he shared the differences between

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mission work in Africa and America. How is missionary work carried out in an area that knows it is on a mission field as opposed to the United States. In 2001 the LCMS declared the US a mission field, but just saying it doesn't make it so. Learn from Professor Schumacher at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBieuaGPiTc&t=817s>

Recently, a pilot program began in the Florida Georgia District to develop new resources that can inspire and equip churches to reach new ethnic groups. A website has been created where those resources can be found. As new resources are discovered they will be added to the site. You can see it at <https://www.missionnationpublishing.com/rev7-9>

The book of Acts is through and through an account of how the Gospel transverses cultures to bring salvation to the world. God knew what He was doing when He sent Jesus the Christ to humankind, and He did it well—no, He did it perfectly. Jesus showed us that God wants people of every nation to know His love and the way to eternal life. Today, Jesus is celebrating with that heavenly, multiethnic, multicultural, multilingual Revelation 7:9 crowd surrounding God's throne.