



Center for United States Missions

# Mission Moments



October 1, 2015

## Reinventing the Church

By Rev. Mike Ruhl

Many of you saw it. It was nothing less than a first-hand experience of history in the making. There was Pope Francis – addressing both houses of the US Congress on national television – with Vice President Joe Biden and House Speaker John Boehner in the background, sometimes laboring to hold back the tears of emotion and gratitude that were welling up in their eyes.

Without politicizing the Pope's message, one notes that many people were struck by the humility and popular appeal of Pope Francis ... hugging children, riding in a Fiat, and his concern for people living in violence, despair, social injustice and with broken families. During a post-papal-pronouncement-analysis by a television network news pundit, the Pope was described as a man who is *reinventing the Catholic Church*.

REINVENTING the church? Really? To *reinvent* something means *to invent again or anew, especially without knowing that the invention already exists*. That being the case – and with October 31 just around the corner – certainly *Martin Luther* was a man who *reinvented the church* by calling her away from good works achieving salvation – and calling the church back to the heart of Gospel – that salvation is appropriated by grace and through faith in Jesus Christ alone (*sola*).

The planting of new missions likewise is a biblical way for Jesus' disciples to *reinvent the church*. In an age when so many congregations and denominations have drifted away from mission into maintenance (almost 50% of some mainline Christian denominations report 0 – 1 new adult converts per year), we look to the Holy Spirit to *reinvent the church* – and return her to her 'first love' of reaching pre-Christian (lost) people who live in despair, violence, brokenness and darkness without the good news of Jesus Christ. New mission plants are focused on reaching new and unsaved people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ ... and not simply 'dragging a stone-filled wagon with square wheels' (issues and practices assaulted by *moths, thieves and rust* – Matthew 6:19). Even the recently departed baseball legend, Yogi Berra supposedly (undocumented) said: *The main thing is to keep the main thing ... the main thing*. Certainly that applies not only to staying focused on the fundamentals of baseball – but also in the Church of Jesus Christ – staying focused on the 'main thing' of reaching new and unsaved people with the good news of Jesus Christ.

So perhaps we all need to reaffirm that planting new missions (Gospel Lighthouses) is not a foreign or imported or humanistic invention. Planting new missions is a direct pathway to *reinventing the church* ... seeing the Holy Spirit return the church to her ancient-future DNA ... inventing her anew, *especially without realizing that the invention already existed*.

*I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic (sent on a mission) church ...*

Amen – and so shall it be.



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## ***Moment Extras***

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### ***Questions for Discussion***

Personal or Group Reflection

1. How might you as a Pastor or Ministry Leader stand in need of being REINVENTED?
  2. Which aspects of your current ministry are in need of CHURCH REINVENTION?
  3. Why is REINVENTING THE CHURCH an appropriate synonym for HEALTH?
  4. How does Mission Planting support our congregations and denomination to be SELF-RENEWING MINISTRIES in the world?
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### ***Resources You Can Use***

Related Books and Links

Donald E. Messer, president and professor at the Iliff School of Theology, shares an article titled [Reinventing the Church](#). He includes trends, tools, and models for reinventing the church.

Eighteen tested strategies for pastors and churches are included in the book, [Reinventing Your Church](#), by Brian D. McLaren. The strategies encourage church members to acknowledge their desire to be somewhere else and to use reliable and practical help to get there.

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