



Center for United States Missions

Mission Moments



May 15, 2015

P-U or Phew?

By Rev. Mike Ruhl



A pastor stood at his stand-up desk, shaking his head and wringing his hands. With pounding heart, he stared at the pages of the recent Pew Center Poll on *US Religious Landscape Study*. A discouragement tsunami flooded his soul as he read that ... *in 2007, 78.4% of Americans were Christian. In 2014, only 70.6%*. His discouragement yielded to depression as he recalled a seminary debate that questioned whether a person who claims to be a Christian actually can be a Christian without connection to the Body of Christ (the church). P-U! he thought to himself. What a 'smelly' message. The church of Jesus Christ is in precipitous retreat and decline. The harder we work ... the behinder we get.

On the other side of town, a church planter stood at his stand-up desk, draining his third cup of *Sumatra* coffee and reading the same Pew Center Poll on *US Religious Landscape Study*. Phew! He thought to himself. Even though the number of people in the USA who call themselves Christian has declined by 8% since 2007, more than 70% are still favorably inclined toward Christianity. What an amazing and abundant opportunity for consecrated, intentional mission work! What a powerful testimony to the strategic importance of *multiplying the planting of new churches* in the United States! Phew! Now I understand how Saul (Paul) and Barnabas must have felt when they revved up their engines and departed from the church at Antioch, sent by the Holy Spirit to extend the *diaspora* and plant new churches in a culture of escalating 'secular evolution'.

Still standing at his stand-up desk, the church planter bowed his head and raised his hands toward heaven in prayer. His heart was pounding as he gave thanks to the Lord for imparting such a clear vision of the kind of church that God had called him to plant. Phew! he uttered in his prayer, thanking God that the Holy Spirit had clearly revealed that the Lord was calling forth a new church plant that would 'major in the majors' of: (1) Engaging culture with the gospel (2) Forming missional communities

(3) Developing missional leaders and (4) Multiplying local mission movements. Phew! he uttered again in his prayer. The workers may be few, but the *harvest is so incredibly plentiful* (Luke 10:2). Phew! This is not just the age of the good commission ... it really is the GREAT Commission!



Rev. Mike Ruhl is the Director of Training for the Center for US Missions. You may contact him at mike.ruhl@cui.edu.

Moment Extras

Questions for Reflection

1. Ask your staff and lay leaders: Is our church part of the problem – or part of the solution – to the trend(s) identified in the Pew Center Study?
2. How is your church ‘engaging the community culture’ with the Gospel of Jesus Christ?
3. What are the signals that your church is optimistic and hopeful about the mission of reaching lost people with the good news of Jesus?
4. Why do many churches cease being ‘mission congregations’?
5. What are the signs of ‘escalating secular social evolution’?
6. What is your church doing – and not doing – in response to ‘escalating secular social evolution’?

Resources You Can Use

The Religious Landscape Study surveys more than 35,000 Americans from all 50 states and analyzes the relationship between religious affiliations versus demographic factors. Ready the full report at [Pew Research Center](#).

[Finding A Faith-Based Optimism](#), a blog post by Skip Bell in the Ministry International Journal for Pastors.

[The Missional Journey](#), by Robert E. Logan, brings together many ideas surrounding the topic of what it means to be missional – it’s all about the Kingdom of God and doing the work Jesus entrusted to his disciples.

Get a free download of [Multiplying Missional Leaders](#) by Mike Breen of Verge Network.

Mission Moments is the e-newsletter sent by the Center for U.S. Missions to bring information and encouragement to all who desire to share God's great love in Jesus Christ with others. Permission is given to copy this article for distribution within your congregation or organization. Please credit the author and the Center for U.S. Missions, www.c4usm.org.

For more information contact the Center at [952-657-2182](tel:952-657-2182).

Center for U.S. Missions

office@centerforusmissions.com

Dr. Peter Meier, Executive Director; peter.meier@cu.edu

Rev. Michael Ruhl, Director of Training; mike.ruhl@cu.edu

Kathy Meier, Coordinator; kathy.meier@cu.edu

Mil Behnken, Office Manger; mil.behnken@cu.edu