

Chance-Meeting Joys



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Synod Vice President

Greetings!

Time and again in my travels I meet someone whom I knew long ago but wasn't expecting to meet that day, or I meet someone and we quickly discover that we have an acquaintance in common. You experience this too. We call it the "small world" syndrome. A non-believer might call these chance meetings co-incidences; I prefer to call them God-incidences.

Early this summer I was in a new part of Wisconsin performing at a WELCA gathering and met a college friend with whom I had lost touch for forty years. In Tanzania I met a woman named Rehema and told

her I knew another Rehema in Tanzania. She knew her too! I have run into former students at the baggage carousel in Union Station in Chicago and at a restaurant in Alexandria and in congregations all over our synod. These God-incidences happen with such regularity and they always create warm and happy feelings—but why do they happen?

You perhaps have some possible answers to that question. I wonder if meeting people we know in unexpected places is a reminder that we are never alone, no matter where we might be. We have tangible, physical evidence of our connection and relationship to other people, and people are instruments of God's love. Therefore, this might be one way that we have tangible, physical evidence of God's presence in our lives, of God's loving us all the time in all places.

I don't need to know why these chance meetings occur; I just know I look forward to them and enjoy them!

Blessings in Christ,

Shirley



Called into God's Marvelous Light
To Be Joyful Witnesses
To Be Christ-Centered Disciples
To Be Strong Leaders

2006: A Synod Joined in Bible Study

Getting People 'Hooked on God's Book'

By Pastor Jim Ahlquist
Congregational Renewal Team

As a pastor, I'm thankful for the people that attend Worship each week. I know how busy people are and how precious time is. If we are to offer opportunities to enter into the Scriptures in daily life, the Bible Studies better be worthwhile! People are hungry for the "Bread of Life" that will allow them to live forever. Many continue to search, but until the Spirit opens hearts to search the Scriptures, the emptiness will continue. How can we get people "hooked by the Book?" (a phrase used by Dr. Harry Wendt of Crossways International).

Dr. Wendt's "convictions that fuel our ministry" could prove helpful to our ministries.

1. If we wish to light a spiritual fire in people's hearts, we must inspire and empower them to study the Scriptures in depth.
2. To spark and fuel that fire, we must teach people the Bible's "big story," the key themes that weave their way through it, and what Jesus did with that story and those themes.
3. Teachers must have access to materials that empower them to lift learners from the simple to the sublime.
4. God's people must be inspired and equipped to get beyond believing in Jesus to following Jesus in servant-discipleship.
5. If people feel no compulsion to share with others the truths they have studied, they have not understood or been captured by those truths.
6. In a world where 70% of people are either illiterate or functionally illiterate, tools must be provided to enable people to take the message of the Living Word to those who cannot read written words.
7. The most important teachers of children are their parents. Although children may not hear everything that their parents say, they watch everything that their parents do.

As our Synod continues to focus on Bible Study this year, our prayers are that more and more of God's people will be "hooked on God's Book!"