

Mission Central Meyer Minute

Some congregations seem to have no oomph, no get-up-and-go for the life of the church. For some it's attend when you can, go to the occasional potluck, make sure that the building is in good repair, but not much zeal for more, especially zeal for witness in the community and missions around the world. Mission education can help.

Everything at Mission Central is about mission education. In "The Barn Museum and Worship Center" people of all ages gather to worship surrounded by mission artifacts, and the stories behind the artifacts are sobering, people living and dying without Jesus Christ. Meals and presentations in "The Ministry Center" offer a menu of great country cooking surrounded by photos of missionaries, each photo revealing more miracle stories of mission. The web site brings updates, articles featuring missionaries, and connects us in our homes to the Word of Christ going into all the world.

Mission education prompts us to think about our own faith. It makes us ask earnest questions. Why is there so much darkness in the world? Am I truly living for Jesus, or am I just a country club church member? Does the sadness of people who are living without our blessed hope prompt me to more earnest prayer? Am I truly relying on the grace of God or am I basically self-righteous in my comfortable life? How can I rouse fellow church members to the urgency of faith and good works? The German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer saw troubles as a stimulant to greater faith.

I discovered later, and I'm still discovering right up to this moment, that it is only by living completely in this world that one learns to have faith.... I mean living unreservedly in life's duties, problems, successes and failures, experiences, and perplexities. In so doing we throw ourselves completely into the arms of God, taking seriously, not our own sufferings, but those of God in the world – watching with Christ in Gethsemane. That, I think, is faith; that is repentance; and that is how one comes a man and a Christian. (Letters and Papers from Prison, Collier; pp. 369-370)

Mission education can do that for us. Learning about the idolatries, injustices, poverty, and hopelessness of many people in mission fields snaps our attention to the supreme importance of faith in God and Christ and good works to others. And if we can share that in our congregations... Imagine the energized gatherings of our fellow Christians for worship, study, and outreach. Might more people want to come to church?