***The Mission Central Meyer Minute***

Has this ever happened to you? You get into a conversation with a complete stranger and the more you talk, you discover mutual acquaintances and connections? I had such a conversation several weeks ago.

I preached for the retirement of Pastor Mark Bangert. What a wonderful man! Congregation members talked about how much he quietly and persistently showed his care for people, care for people for whom our Lord Jesus died and rose. Under Pastor Bangert’s 31 years of ministry, the congregation doubled in size. After the packed church service, a buffet meal was offered. After going through the line, I found a place to sit but first asked a woman, “May I sit here?” “Yes,” she said.

Not much interaction at first, but in time she asked if I had been the preacher (I guess we look different without the robes) and she said, “I’m Christie Nelson.” “Oh, after my dad died, my mom married a man named Nelson.” We go back to eating. “I was a missionary in Thailand,” she offered. “When the opportunity came up, I talked to Pastor Bangert and he really helped me.” Hmmm, now I’m thinking. “When were you in Thailand?” “2005-2020. I came back because of health reasons.” “Exactly the same years I was president of the Seminary.” And now, I ask THE question: “Do you know Mission Central?” The heavens opened, the trumpets sounded, the angelic choirs sang “Alleluia!” and Jesus appeared to take us all to heaven!

Well, no, that didn’t happen, but Christie and the woman next to her started praising the work of Mission Central. I shared that I used to go with seminarians to visit Mission Central, and we always had a faith enriching, mission motivation time. I had taken a seat next to a stranger but won’t forget the wonderful conversation we had. Dear reader, if you and I would bump into each other and start talking, Mission Central will eventually come up. That’s because we missionaries care for people, just as Pastor Bangert did during his ministry. And when we start learning about each other, we discover we are both followers of Jesus and want other people to know Jesus. Here’s the moral: “Never meet a stranger.” God may well use the conversation to build you both up in faith!