




***Congregational Leaders to Evaluate and Enhance
the Evangelism Program of Their Church***


PART 1: CLEAR SENSE OF OUR MISSION

The Church is the Body of Christ

 *1 Corinthians 12:12,27*

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. ... Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

A body that is built up—nurture


 *Ephesians 4:11-16*

It was [Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

 *2 Peter 3:17,18*

Dear friends, ... be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

A body that builds together—fellowship

 *Ephesians 4:4-6*

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

A body that builds out—outreach

📖 *Ephesians 3:6*

...through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

For our physical bodies to be healthy, the various systems must all function well and complement one another. Think of nurture, fellowship, and outreach as systems that Christ our Head has for his body, the Church. If the systems are imbalanced, the functions Jesus has designed for his body of believers are negatively affected. Guided and strengthened by God's Word, we strive to focus on people with ministry of nurture, fellowship, and outreach.

It happens, perhaps far too much, that congregations become more inward-focused than outreach-oriented. The “bodily systems” of nurture and fellowship receive attention and effort, while attention to outreach lacks.

Discussion:

How does a congregation's nurture ministry serve its outreach ministry?

And vice versa, how does its outreach ministry serve its nurture ministry?

What tensions do congregations experience as they strive to do both nurture and outreach?

Learn from Jesus

📖 *Matthew 9:35,36*

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

📖 *2 Corinthians 5:14-20*

Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.

Commission of Christ

com + mission = the mission of Christ that he has called us to share with him.

Four Commissioning Passages:

📖 *Matthew 28:18-20*

Then Jesus came to [the eleven disciples] and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

📖 *Mark 16:15,16*

[Jesus] said to [the Eleven], "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."

📖 *Luke 24:46-49*

[Jesus] told [the Eleven and those gathered with them], "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

📖 *John 20:21-23*

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Discussion:

If you had been one of the disciples in the presence of the risen Lord Jesus and heard him speak these words, what key truths would impact your mind and how would those truths shape your life?

With a clear sense of our mission for evangelism:

- Unbelievers and the unchurched are a focus of our attention and action.
- Church leaders prayerfully plan with purpose: evaluation of current situation, setting goals, developing strategies, implementing action plans.
- Members are unified in their service to one another and in their efforts to reach more people for Jesus through involvement in evangelism efforts of the congregation and in their friendship witnessing.
- "Church is people, God's people—gathered, forgiven, motivated, called, sent, and energized by the gospel, a people missionized and on mission from our Lord Jesus, a people who are God's mission within their sphere of influence, an amazing grouping of groups of people who have God's mission in their hearts, a God-given purpose for their lives, and a harvest field of empty and helpless and hopeless and homeless and fatherless and godless and pain-filled souls waiting to be welcomed, accepted, and gathered—by someone." ~Wayne Schulz (conference paper: *Every Church a Mission*)

PART 2: CONGREGATIONAL EVANGELISM

Evangelism—What it is?

In the middle of the word “evangelism” is the word “angel”. One of the tasks that God gave his angels is to be messengers. We recall how God sent the angel Gabriel to announce to Mary that she would give birth to the Savior of the world (Luke 1:26–38). Thus, the word “angel” means “messenger”. With the word “evangelism” the focus is on the message that messengers bring. The prefix “ev” comes from the Greek and means “good” so evangelism is about the good message, the good news—the gospel. Evangelism is the activity of spreading the good news of the kingdom of God, the gospel of eternal salvation through Jesus Christ.

Evangelism—What is needed?

Only two things needed for evangelism:

1. **The gospel** which is “the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile” (Romans 1:16).
2. **An audience** of the gospel: “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17).

Evangelism—What is the motivation?

- *Christ’s Work for Us Completed Our Joy*

Christian joy is possessing peace that comes with God’s forgiveness. It is having the assurance of God’s presence and providence. It is living with the confidence of life after death in heaven. Our joy in Jesus is perfect and permanent. It is perfect because he paid fully the price of our redemption. It is permanent because God has declared us free from sin through Jesus and gives us eternal life by faith in him.

The gospel is the amazing message that Jesus has completed everything for our salvation. He lived a holy life to fulfill God’s will of perfection for people. He bore the punishment of the world’s sin by his bitter sufferings and death. After Christ completed every detail of God’s plan of salvation, he declared from the cross, “It is finished.” There is nothing more that we can do to complete salvation. It is already done. In amazing grace God credited the perfect life of his Son to us, and he counted Jesus’ death as our death for sin. Jesus is our joy because he is our complete Savior!

- *Our Work for Christ Completes Our Joy*

The Savior who fully completed the work of salvation is the same one who gives us the work of spreading the message of salvation. When we proclaim the gospel so that others come to faith through the power of the Word, our joy in Jesus is completed. The apostle John wrote in his first epistle: “We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete” (1 John 1:1–4). In his second epistle he writes also, “I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope

to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete” (2 John 12). John’s joy in the Lord would be complete when his readers shared saving faith in Jesus with him.

The original word rendered in the NIV as “complete” means to perform a divinely given task. The same Greek word translated with the word “fulfillment” is used in connection with Jesus’ transfiguration. Moses and Elijah talked with the Lord “about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem” (Luke 9:31). On Good Friday Jesus fulfilled his Father’s will of completing the reconciliation of the whole world to God.

Now our work is to complete the divinely given task of sharing the good news of salvation through Christ. Just as Jesus loved his Father and obeyed his will, so we love Jesus and dedicate ourselves to obeying his will. The Savior said, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete” (John 15:9-11).

Jesus finished the work of salvation in loving obedience to his Father. It filled him with joy and satisfaction that he had complied fully with his Father’s will and redeemed the world from sin’s curse. Similarly, our love for Jesus makes us glad to do his bidding of sharing the only message which saves people from eternal death. How it gladdens our hearts when people see Jesus through the gospel and are led to confess him as their Savior and Lord!

This is our single motivation for working hard to identify and seek prospects: “For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again” (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

Key Components of a Congregation’s Evangelism Program

Locating Prospects

1. Prospect is:

- Any unchurched/unbelieving person we discover through personal contacts or outreach efforts who is open to receiving information about Jesus or our church.
- Any unchurched/unbelieving person who comes to us and expresses interest, openness to discussion, or receiving information about Jesus or our church.
- Any unchurched/unbelieving person who is known by someone in our congregation who requests that name be put on the prospect list and for whom they are praying: loved one, FRAN, co-worker, etc. (FRAN = Friend, Relative, Acquaintance, Neighbor)
- Any church member who initiates the discussion or visits our worship service or other event and expresses an interest for more information.

2. Prospect Sources:

- Worship service guests
- Families of children in Sunday School & VBS
- Early Childhood Ministry & Lutheran Elementary School
- People requesting pastoral ministry
- Member referrals
- Adult Information Class referrals
- Unchurched spouses/family of members
- Those who respond to outreach efforts
- Guests of church organizations
- Those who participate in programs or events
- Inactive members

“Come” events—these are activities to which you invite people—“DOORS” which are open for people to come into contact with the gospel and your church’s ministry. Coordinate those events with **“Go” activities** that infiltrate the community with information and invitations. While planning those events, be clearly aware of the society around you, realizing that you are called to do ministry within today’s culture—even seizing opportunities that are created by this changing world!

Examples of “Come” events:

Focus on Families

- Christmas/Easter for Kids
- Sunday School
- Sports and activity camps; youth group
- Preschool/early childhood care programs
- Seminars on marriage/family issues

Seasonal Opportunities

- Worship services: Christmas and Easter, outdoor/picnic-neighborhood service
- Special events: “Advent by Candlelight”
- Important days: Mother’s/Father’s Day, Valentine’s Day, Veterans Day

Community Service

- Invite local schools, leagues to use your gym/field
- ESL classes
- Volunteer your facilities for a polling place, blood bank to set up, meeting place for community organizations

Examples of “Go” Events:

Mailings/electronic media: invitations to special services and events

See the people

Go to them, engage them in discussion, listen and learn all you can about them.

Go about this effort with the conviction that each and every person in your area is a blood-bought soul and that only by faith in Jesus will they share the joy of heaven.

- interviews
- booth survey at a fair or community festival

Conduct interviews/surveys with these purposes in mind:

- to raise awareness of your church in the community
- to seek input regarding people's needs/desires—information that can help you develop specific outreach plans
- to leave an invitation to a service or event at your church

Focused Outreach for People in Your Area:

- new residents
- new parents
- senior living centers
- nursing care facilities
- campus ministry
- military bases
- jails/prisons

Nurturing Prospects

Nurturing prospects means bringing them into contact with the gospel. Some ways of doing that are through mailings/emails, visitation by the pastor and trained lay evangelists, and invitations to services and church events.

For some people on the list, there may be no response from them for a long time, but we never know what circumstances the Holy Spirit might use to open their ears to the gospel. Then we want to be ready.

It is very helpful to have a prospect data manager for your congregation's prospect list. After all the work of collecting information about people through “come” and “go” events, you want to put that information to use. A data manager helps to assure that the information on prospects is collected, maintained, and available for the follow-up methods that the church leadership determines and utilizes.

Prospect List Management

1. Information to gather

- **Basic information:** Strive to obtain for every person/family on your prospect list: name, address, email, and phone number.
- **Background information:** The more you know about people, the more you can personalize your contacts. Try to find out family information, employment, church background, and interest in your church's ministry.
- **Bonus information:** Having information on birthdays, anniversaries, and hobbies gives you opportunity for showing a deeper, personal interest in people.

2. Rank Prospects

The available resources of people, time, and finances in congregations are not likely large enough to serve every prospect with the same focus of attention, especially with a large list. For that reason, it is wise to categorize the list.

- **Excellent**—those who show great interest in your church's ministry. Likely, they have attended a worship service or event. They ask questions or request information.
- **Good**—those who are friendly and indicate an interest in your church and ministry. They are receptive to follow-up contacts, but do want to take it deeper.
- **Fair**—those people who agree to be on your prospect list, but do not show much/any interest or response.

Share the Word

Establish a follow-up plan to spiritually nurture those on the prospect list through closer contact with the Word and with your congregation's gospel ministry.

Sample Plan for nurturing prospects:

1. **Excellent Prospects**—Give these the most attention, both personally and impersonally:
 - Personal visits/contacts
 - Monthly mailing/email (*Outreach Newsletters*)
 - Invitations to special services, events, Adult Information Class
2. **Good Prospects**—When this group is large, regular personal visits are not always possible. But keep in touch with all of these people by sending:
 - Monthly mailing/email
 - Invitations to special services, events, Adult Information Class
3. **Fair Prospects**—Make periodic connection with these by sending:
 - Invitations to special services & events

Member Witness

We cannot underestimate the importance of friendship evangelism. Members of our congregations have a circle of people they know who need Jesus. In the bonds of those relationships a trust is formed which is a natural setting for spiritual conversation and invitation to learn more. To help our members be more confident and equipped for witnessing to people they know, an important aspect of every congregational evangelism program is member witness training.

For most of us, friendship is a better setting for witnessing than trying to share the gospel with people we don't know or don't know very well. What are some reasons for this?

A special aspect of member witness training in congregations is to identify and train some members to nurture those on the prospect list by making Law/Gospel presentations.

A Checklist for Congregational Outreach Readiness

Leadership

- Leaders are models in worship and Bible study.
- Leaders know and seek to carry out the mission of the church.
- Leaders exercise a Christ-like servant spirit and joy in their work.
- Leaders are encouragers; they work at trust and consensus building.
- Leaders plan the work and work the plan.

Planning

- We have a long-range plan and/or planning committee.
- We know our community (demographics) and are planning ministry to match.
- We have a written, displayed and practiced mission statement of purpose.
- We have goals for ministry this year and action plans to carry it out.
- We evaluate our programs and over-all ministry regularly and annually.

Outreach

- Members own the mission of the church and desire to seek the lost.
- A growing budgetary percentage is for outreach work.
- Evangelism callers are recruited and trained for law/gospel visits with prospects.
- Friendship witnessing is taught and practiced regularly.
- We have “go” & “come” strategies planned.
- We have attractive and cost-effective publicity, and advertising in the community.

Appearance

- Our signs are attractive, readable, well placed.
- The buildings and grounds are well kept, strikingly attractive, neat and clean.
- We have greeters to welcome people before and after services.
- Our people are warm, friendly and caring; they greet visitors readily.
- Our called workers, leadership and people display a joyful, resurrection faith.
- Harmony and unity are evident in the church's life.

The Mission Field around Your Church

Wherever you are located; whatever the age of your congregation; no matter how many other churches exist close by, there are people in your area to tell the saving truth of Jesus Christ. In fact, that's the reason you're located where you are. God has established you in that area to be the beacon of spiritual light to those lost in the darkness of eternal death.

Congregational outreach takes planning, organization, and effort. For this the Commission on Evangelism stands ready to partner with you in the process. Particularly, the School of Outreach serves congregations of the WELS with planning, assistance, and resources for congregational evangelism programming and implementation of outreach strategies. Presentations include: Congregational Organization and Planning for Evangelism, Locating Prospects, Nurturing Prospects, Friendship Evangelism, Church Identity, Worship Welcome, and Assimilation. Interspersed among the presentations are several breakout sessions in which congregation leaders work to take the information from the presentations and establish specific outreach plans for their congregation.

Additionally, **Telling the Next Generation** is a program provided by the WELS Commission on Evangelism, the Commission on Lutheran Schools and Early Childhood Ministry to assist congregations with planning, assistance, and resources for implementation of outreach strategies utilizing their Lutheran elementary school and/or early childhood ministry. There is a one-day workshop led by WELS church and school leaders who are experienced with conducting school ministries with an outreach focus. In breakout sessions, the presenters and other advisors work with individual congregations to advise them regarding outreach plans and strategies. In the months following the workshop, those advisors follow-up with congregations in order to answer questions, supply resources, and give advice for fulfilling the goals that were discussed and planned at the workshops. Information at: wels.net/tellingthenextgeneration

Conclusion

Leaders that the church needs now are driven by a passion for reaching the lost. This is at the heart of church leadership. Leaders observe the life and ministry of Jesus and draw from him the heartfelt desire to conduct the work of the church, always with the goal of reaching more and more people with the saving message of the gospel. They keep careful watch over every aspect of ministry, every program, every organization, every function and ask, "How is our activity helping us share the name of Jesus, especially with those who do not know him as Savior?" The church needs leaders who carefully balance the church's nurture ministry for its members and outreach efforts to people in their locality. They guard against a congregation becoming too inward-focused and not enough outreach-minded. Passionate leaders for Christ are constantly working to create and sustain an outreach awareness and commitment in the minds and hearts of their fellow members.

Church leaders are needed now who repent of shortcomings, passivity, and failures. Clinging to the joy of forgiveness in Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit through the gospel, they lead their congregations forward to accomplish Christ's will for his church on earth.

The church needs faithful leaders who are serious and passionate about evangelism.

Dear leader, the church is blessed to have you now!