

Out of the Saltshaker

A bi-weekly pamphlet for members of the Cloverdale Canadian Reformed church, intended to encourage each other to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ in our spheres of influence.

A bi-weekly encourager

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E v a n g e l i s m work is one of the most beautiful ministries which the Lord has given to his church. Nothing is more glorious than seeing people who were in darkness, come to repentance and faith and receive salvation. (A.J. deVisser)

Please let the Lord strike an evangelistic zeal in our hearts. Being lukewarm is not of the Lord. (Cahill, 2004)



How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things!

(Rom. 10:15)

It doesn't matter whether people like us. Jesus was perfect, loved everyone perfectly and still got nailed to a cross! (Cahill, 2004)



God burdens our hearts to reach the lost, but we must get out there and start practicing those conversations. (Cahill, 2004).

There are only two times to share the Gospel with people: in season and out of season. Any other time would be wrong!

(2 Tim. 4:2-8)

Why we should witness as a congregation.

CONTINUE TO ENCOURAGE, AND BE ENCOURAGED! When people share their own experiences, whether they are good or bad – the very act of sharing serves to bring them closer. This is the cement that holds people together in community – large or small. It was encouraging to hear testimonies of witness two weeks ago: members of this community *did* go out and share the Good News of Christ when the neighborhood came for a treat! Cahill is right: we must get out there and start practicing those activities and conversations. This issue will focus once more on the topic of *congregational evangelism*. It's easy to skim over this topic and get busy doing this or that. Yet, we need to realize that evangelism is part of living out your faith in the context of community. Out of this flows that

all members can play a role one way or another, by way of establishing contact, follow up, or teaching the essentials of the faith. We need to realize Evangelism is not just anybody's hobbyhorse - it is rather rooted in and directed from Scripture and Confessions.

We do well to continue to build each other up by sharing stories, events, opportunities, fears, and incidents of *overcoming* fear.



1. Evangelism is a congregational ministry, backed up by our confessions.

The Canons of Dort, in the second chapter, speak about the **universal** proclamation of the gospel: "The promise of the gospel is that whoever believes in Christ crucified shall not perish but have eternal life. ***This promise ought to be announced and proclaimed universally and without***

discrimination to all peoples and to all men to whom God in His good pleasure sends the gospel, together with the command to repent and believe." (CD, II, 5)



2. Evangelism is congregational activity that flows from the doctrine of covenant, not from the doctrine of election and regeneration. "If the gospel does not come across to sinners as gospel, as genuinely good news, we cannot legitimately expect that multitudes will be saved. The frustration and ineffectiveness of many Reformed ministries may well be traced to precisely this point... if evangelistic methodology is oriented to the doctrine of election [we] can at best wait, hope, and pray for occasional seasons of revival. But if [our] evangelistic methodology is consciously oriented to the Great Commission and God's gracious covenant, [we] can and ought to expect permanent vitality in the

steady expansion of the church of Christ... The prophets and apostles viewed election from the perspective of the covenant. To look at covenant from the perspective of election is ultimately to yield to the primal temptation to be as God. The proper stance for Adam and for all of us after him is a covenantal stance of faithful obedience. Therefore, although from the perspective of covenant there is mystery, there is no dilemma and no paradox and no contradiction.” (Norman Shepherd: *The Call of Grace: How the Covenant Illuminates Salvation and Evangelism*. (P&R Publishing: Phillipsburg, NJ, 2000:82/3)



3. Congregational Evangelism is beneficial for the atmosphere in a community, because it is the perfect antidote for ‘doing church’ out of tradition. *We benefit when we witness!* Witnessing stimulates our growth at least as much as regular Bible study. Witnessing leads us to pray and to study God’s Word and encourage us to depend on Christ. As we witness in the power of the Holy Spirit, we sow love and joy and peace. According to Galatians 6:9, God blesses us through what we sow for Him. Usually, we harvest the same seed we plant. For example, if we sow love, God will bless us with love. If we plant joy, we will experience joy. And always, the harvest is greater than the seed sown. (Bill Bright: *How You Can Introduce Others to Christ* – NLP, Orlando, Florida, 1998:11).



4. Congregational Evangelism is hands-on. Again, evangelism is a *congregational* ministry. Various members of the church could in various ways be involved in the process of one person coming to faith. The following example is from a speech about evangelism delivered by Professor A.J. de Visser. (quoted with permission).

“Recently, we started the new season of Catechism instruction in our local church in Hamilton. I had been asked to teach one of the groups, so I went to church the first evening, wondering how many young people would be in my group. When I arrived at the church building, I found a bunch of young people, but to my surprise there was also one of the elders of our congregation. He introduced a young fellow to me: “This is so and so, he is 21 years old, and he has been coming to our church for the last 4 months. He would like to attend in the Catechism class. Is that OK?”

The young man told me that he did not have a Christian background. He had not even been baptized. So I asked how it had happened that he started to come to our church. It turned out that one of his colleagues had talked to him about the gospel. She is member of one of our Canadian Reformed churches in Ontario. When he showed interest, she introduced him to another colleague who is also a member of our churches, this time a member of our congregation in Hamilton. This brother invited him to come and attend a church service. He started doing so four months ago. He liked the people, he liked the preaching and he felt at home. So he expressed his desire to learn more about the faith. His friend then introduced him to one of the elders, and now the elder had introduced him to me as the Catechism teacher.

To me this episode is a beautiful example of congregation-wide evangelism. Just imagine what has happened here: It started in a natural way: Two Christians talk to a colleague and one of them takes him to church. Then, as he expressed a desire to be instructed, an elder and the minister become involved and the process of instructing him further in the Christian faith is started. This is the way to go. This is an example of church members ‘making the best of every opportunity’. It is natural. It starts in everyday life... I am convinced that the best way of doing evangelism is the one that starts in everyday life situations: at work, in the neighbourhood. The more ‘natural’ it is, the better.”

What are the things that you are already doing that you can tweak and then use as an opportunity to share your faith?

Certainly, God can use all types of styles Of evangelism: tracts, radio testimonials, television preaching, crusades, door-to-door visitation, one-on-one sharing in the street, serving others in practical ways. The real issue is how and why we approach people and the attitudes behind our actions. Do we approach people sensitively, honoring who they are and their needs and interests? Do we approach them out of love or with selfish, ulterior motives? Are we in touch with the Spirit’s leading or simply manufacturing opportunities in our own strength? Compare pressures, manipulative and insensitive approaches to sharing the Gospel with the approach taught by Paul:

And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will. (2Tim. 2:24-26).

**Questions? Comments?
Feedback?**

**The Evangelism Committee is
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