

CULTIVATING AN EVANGELISTIC CHURCH



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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Our God is the great Evangelist, the One who longs for relationship and union with all people and with all of creation. God's very nature is love, and that love cannot help but extend outward: radiating from the intimacy of the Trinity and into creation, then moving into each of us. Through relationship with Jesus Christ, we participate in the love that made the world and remains only reason for being. In Christ, God welcomes us to share a whole new way of being on the earth – the kingdom way of healing, proclaiming, restoring, transforming, dying and rising.

Jesus never intended that love revolution to stop at the doors of the temple or church. His final words to the disciples were, "Go!" As in, "Go and make disciples of all nations . . ." (Matthew 28). As in, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15). As in, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). He launched a Jesus Movement, and now we're his followers, helping others to grow loving, liberating and life-giving relationship with God (evangelism), with each other (reconciliation) and with the earth (stewardship of creation).

There are many ways to live that calling – with our helping hands, with our listening ears, with our moving feet, with our voices and with our laptops – but make no mistake, we're all Evangelists. We are ALL called in our own unique way to share the loving, liberating, life giving Jesus with others.

We are excited to resource you via Episcopal Evangelism Initiatives, a host of pathways designed to INSPIRE, GATHER, EQUIP and SEND Episcopal Evangelists for the Jesus Movement.

The workshop you're attending today is just one of those opportunities to learn and grow together. We hope you will discover more at www.episcopalchurch.org/evangelism or by calling 212-716-6086.

On behalf of Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and the Episcopal Evangelism Initiatives Team, and as your companions on the Jesus Way, welcome to the Jesus Movement!

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Cultivating an Evangelistic Church

The Call of The Church

“The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.”
- *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 854

“The church carries out its mission through the ministry of all its members.” - *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 854

“The Church is the only institution that exists primarily for the benefit of those who are not its members.” - *Archbishop William Temple*

“Evangelism is about sharing the journey into a deeper relationship with God and with each other, and not about us controlling the end result. It’s not increasing our market share, and it’s not just propping up the institution. If we believe the relationship with a living God does matter, and that loving relationship with each other matters, then evangelism and anything that helps us to come closer as human children of God matters. This is how we change the world.” - *Presiding Bishop Michael Curry*

Defining Evangelism

Scripture: From *evangelion* (Greek): gospel, glad tidings or good news

The resurrected Jesus appears and the first words to his disciples are: “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.” Mark 16:15

Tradition: Baptismal Covenant (Book of Common Prayer, 850)

Presider: “Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?”

Candidate: “I will, with God’s help.”

Standing Commission on Mission and Evangelism (2009): “Evangelism is sharing the love of Christ and the good news of God’s actions in our lives – the good news of the kingdom coming to life among us – in the language of the people, so that people can become disciples of Jesus Christ.”

Evangelism Initiatives Team: Evangelism is the spiritual practice of **noticing** Jesus’ loving, liberating and life-giving activity in our own lives and in the lives of others, **overflowing** with wonder and gratitude, then **celebrating** and **proclaiming** that good news, so others may **discover** their place in the Jesus Movement.

Cultivating an Evangelistic Church



Three Points for Cultivating an Evangelistic Church

I. Cultivate a Community of Good News

- a. Get rooted in the story of the good news. “We cannot help but speak about what we have seen and heard.” – Acts 4:20

Options:

- Jesus Encounters
- Renewal Weekends
- Revivals
- Bible Study
- Congregational Retreats
- Cursillo

- b. Pray to be filled and to overflow. “The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest therefore to send out workers into the harvest.” – Matthew 9:37-38; Luke 10:2

Options:

- Harvest Prayer Group dedicated to prayer for the church and church’s efforts to share and be good news. Praying for the laborers of the harvest and the Harvest field.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” Matthew 9:37,38

- Individual Prayer, asking God for the gifts and courage to share the good news. Pray for 3 people whom God has placed in your sphere of influence.

- c. Prepare for evangelism.

“How then can they call on the One they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the One of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.’ ” Romans 10:14

Options (learn more about each at www.episcopalchurch.org/evangelism):

- One-to-One Relational Meetings
- Sharing Faith Dinners
- Story-telling/Story-receiving Workshops
- Gratitude Practice during Church Meetings and Gatherings
- Bible Series (read the book of Acts together)

II. Cultivate a Community for Others

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to ends of the Earth.” – Acts 1:8

- a. Get to know **Jerusalem** (your closest neighbors, family, friends). What is your sphere of influence?
 - Draw or map your Sphere of Influence, including ...
 - Family:
 - Friends:
 - Acquaintances:
 - Work or School Colleagues:
 - Volunteer Groups:
 - Social Groups:
 - Civic Affiliations
 - Hobbies/ Special Interests

PRAY FOR THESE people and ask God how to best love them.

- b. Get to know **Judea** (the neighborhood/parish, the physical community around your church). Where and among what people has God placed you? What is God up to in the neighborhood? Who lives in your neighborhood or within the immediate areas surrounding the church?
- See Customized Neighborhood Demographic Profile available for every Episcopal parish at www.episcopalchurch.org/posts/evangelisminitiatives/church-demographics.
 - See *Neighborhood Prayer Walk* handout (pp. 9-10) for detailed instructions
- c. Get to know **Samaria** (the margins of your community; groups, cultures and generations with whom you do not have relationship, and from whom you or your church has been alienated). Who is the Other through whom God might long to speak to you? Who is forgotten, broken-hearted, neglected, or suffering?
- See your parish's Neighborhood Demographic Profile
 - See *Neighborhood Prayer Walk* handout (pp. 9-10) for detailed instructions
- d. Get to know the **ends of the Earth** (global mission and awareness). In what other parts of the world and creation is God calling you to build relationship?
- Consult Parish, Diocesan or Church-wide leaders around Global Mission Partnerships
 - Consult with Episcopal Relief and Development, Episcopal Migration Ministries, etc.

Next Steps as You Cultivate a Community for Others ...

1. As you notice who and what is around you in each of these concentric circles, ask simple questions:
 - What is God up to in their midst?
 - How can I build relationship with the people and communities I'm discovering?
 - What are their needs and longings? How can I bless and love them?
 - What are my needs and longings? How could they bless me?

 - If Jesus met this person or group, what would he do?

2. Pay special attention to your church's Outreach and Service programs and turn Outreach into Reaching Out.
 - Tell the story of who you are and why God in Christ draws you to serve and be present
 - Invite those among whom you are ministering to be part of church activities.
 - Invite the guests to also be hosts, helping and even leading the reach out/outreach effort

3. Create new ways of interacting with people beyond your church
 - Host gatherings or even Theology on Tap at pubs, coffee houses, parents' lunch spots, etc.
 - Engage with arts and civic organizations, other local nonprofits or social groups, and ask how your church could be helpful
 - Riff on the handout with *Ideas for Turning Your Church into a Center for Blessing* (pp. 14-15).

III. Cultivate a Community of Blessing

“I will bless you so that you will be a blessing.” – Genesis 12:2

a. Practice the Art of BLESSing:¹

Be – just be present

Listen – create a listening space where people can share stories

Eat – welcome people to the table, just like Jesus did

Serve – love and care for people’s felt needs

Share – share your story and the story of God’s love and life (See p.

b. Make your church a spiritual safe haven for doubters, skeptics, seekers and the curious.

- Seeker Bible Studies
- Alpha
- Transforming Questions
- Explore God

c. Observe your hospitality and incorporation practices. Do people feel blessed when they enter your church? Would they want to return and become part of the community? See *Hospitality 101* handout (pp. 10-13)

d. Practice regular, generous hospitality that keeps in mind the experience of strangers and newcomers. See handout with *Ideas for Turning Your Church into a Center for Blessing* (pp. 14-15).

¹ Coined by Leslie Stewart, church planter in Diocese of Dallas.



Neighborhood Prayer Walks

What Is a Neighborhood Prayer Walk?

It's not just walking around. It's not just praying. It's walking through your neighborhood or "parish" praying with your eyes and your heart wide open. It's noticing signs of hope and signs of need, and how God calls you to be present to both. So get a group. Take a walk. Listen closely. Pay attention. Offer prayer. Take pictures. Maybe even video. Notice what God is up to. Then re-imagine how your ministry could join God and join your neighbors.

Guidelines for Prayer-Walking

- Whether you're near your church or in another neighborhood, plan your route ahead of time. Try to walk on a variety of days and times, not just Sunday morning. What's happening Tuesdays at 5 p.m.?
- Meet at the church and pray before you leave. Form groups of 2-6 people. Multiple groups can cover different areas. If the group is too large, you may focus on each other instead of the neighborhood.
- If your area is dependent on cars, you can still prayer walk. Your route should include common gathering places: shopping centers, groceries, dog parks, town squares, community gardens, the church's 5-block radius, and more.
- As you walk, look around with care and pray, either in silence or aloud softly. Tell your walk partner(s) what you are praying about, but avoid chatting or focusing on each other. Focus on the neighborhood.
- Don't call attention to yourselves. Respect the dignity of community members. Be present as servants, not tourists. As veteran prayer walkers say, "You can be on the scene without making one."
- Although it is not the primary purpose, be open to opportunities to interact with people you encounter.
- If anyone asks what you are doing, be prepared to respond: "We're from _____ Church, and we are praying and getting to know our neighborhood better." You're not selling anything; you're demonstrating genuine curiosity about them and their experience of the neighborhood. Offer to pray, if it feels appropriate.

Community Observation Guide

On your walk look for evidence of the following:

- **People groups:** Who is standing at bus stops, hanging on street corners, going into businesses, playing in parks, waiting in line at the store? How much do people interact with one another?
- **Places of activity:** Cafes, shopping plazas, heavily trafficked intersections, playgrounds, schools?
- **Structures:** What are the types and conditions of the structures (homes, businesses, roads, parks)? How much "free space" is in the community? What's the mix of private and public space?
- **Services:** Where do people go to shop, eat, study, worship, and receive assistance? What appears to be the quantity and quality of available services? Who provides services, and who is receiving?
- **Signs of change:** Note businesses opening or closing; housing under construction, for sale, or being demolished. See languages on shop signs, and buildings being repurposed for new uses.
- **Signs of hope:** Where do you see evidence of God's grace and God's people at work? Look for faith groups and nonprofit organizations, playing children, uplifting artwork, social gatherings, gardens. Look especially for local assets that could be connected with neighborhood needs.
- **Signs of need:** Look for evidence of hardship, hurt or injustice. Is what you see specific to particular areas or affecting the neighborhood as a whole? Be aware that marginalized people and social problems are often hidden, especially in communities that appear well-off.

How Should We Pray?

- **Pray for discernment** – Seek the gift of seeing the community through Christ’s “lens,” and to discern what God is already doing there; ask God to show you how you can pray with greater insight for the people, events, and places in the community.
- **Pray for blessings** – Pray for every person, home, school, business and situation you encounter.
- **Pray with empathy** – See and feel what your neighbors live with every day; offer intercession for signs of brokenness and give thanks to God for the blessings and gifts in the community.
- **Pray from Scripture** – Prayers based directly on God’s word can be especially powerful. You might start with Jeremiah 29:5-7; Luke 10:1-2; Mark 12:30-31; or Revelation 21:3-5a.
- **Pray in God’s power** – Allow times of silence for God’s spirit to speak to you, or through you.

Concluding the Neighborhood Prayer-Walk

Immediately afterwards – perhaps over a meal – gather to share your prayers, observations and experiences:

- What did you learn about the neighborhood?
- Where was God’s presence especially apparent?
- What surprised you?
- What was hard? What was engaging?
- What ministries and what worship would speak here? With whom could you partner and learn?

Neighborhood Prayer Walks throughout the Liturgical Year

Gear your walk to the seasons of the liturgical year and make Prayer Walks a regular part of your spiritual and missional life. Notice changes and how the face of Jesus shows up throughout the liturgical year.

- **Advent:** Focus on your neighborhood’s longings. For what are we waiting in this time and place?
- **Christmas:** Where do you see God’s love Incarnate? Sing as you walk in this joyful time.
- **Epiphany:** What places in your neighborhood shine brightly? Where do you still see darkness?
- **Lent:** Where does your neighborhood feel like wilderness? Where are the temptations and angels?
- **Holy Week:** If Jesus processed into your neighborhood, where would he walk? What would people shout to him? Where do you see Jesus suffering most?
- **Easter:** Where are signs of resurrection? Of surprise? Could you call your neighbors by name?
- **Rogation Days:** Walk your parish “boundaries.” What do you pray will grow and blossom here?
- **Pentecost:** Walk your neighborhood seeking the Holy Spirit. What are you fired up to do or say?
- **Ordinary Time:** Where is life springing up? Pray for the community’s flourishing.

Witness for Peace and Partnership

Especially in areas that have witnessed systemic oppression, violence or conflicted police relations, a Prayer Walk can signal the abiding peace and justice of God and facilitate healing and hope.

- Choose an area where you or your congregation already have or desire to be in relationship. It does not have to be the neighborhood where you live or the one closest to your congregation; you could choose to move into solidarity with people whose struggle is different from your community’s.
- Prayer walking is chiefly about being a presence and seeing your surroundings through God’s eyes. As you walk, ask, “What would God celebrate? What would God heal? How can we pray?”
- If you encounter people and enter conversation, you might ask, “Is there anything you want to tell us about? Would you like us to pray for you or someone you are concerned about?” You can pray right there and/or assure them the church will be praying for them on Sunday and throughout the week.
- Consider walking occasionally or regularly in conjunction with local police who “walk the beat.” You can introduce yourself to police officers familiar with the area, and ask to join them as they walk.



Hospitality 101: Inviting, Greeting & Incorporating

Inviting New People

The most important inviting work comes long before Sunday morning.

Define a clear mission, style and purpose: People need to see a clear statement or set of words or images that help to differentiate between you and the ten other churches within a one-mile radius.

Deploy effective, appropriate means for communicating your vision:

1. clear, attractive signage in front of and near the church;
2. web site and e-mail list, regularly updated;
3. fliers, postcards, business cards, perhaps produced by an affordable, high-quality online printhouse;
4. print, radio and TV ads, including public access and college media – it's more bang for your buck

Whatever you do, be sure the materials are composed and designed by people who know what works and that they include all the basics anyone would need to get to your door or find your web site. Not sure what's good? Look around and see what turns you on; then feel free to borrow and cobble until you come up with your own unique look and feel.

Talk to people. People don't usually come to church because they saw a great sign or heard a radio ad. More than 85% of newcomers attend because a church member invited them. The Vineyard Churches have advertisements all over [including my favorite church ad: "Free Coffee (offer good Sundays only)"]. Church leaders say the ads are just seed-planters, so that when people get a personal invitation from a Vineyard member, the newcomers are already curious about this community of Christians.

Greeting New People

Inviting congregations know the first impression is everything. So they literally imagine the pathway someone travels into the church, and try to make it as smooth and pleasant as possible:

Outside: There's clear signage and a well-kept exterior. If you don't have the staff to handle it, rally the volunteer troops a few times a year to tend their common home.

At the door: A greeter is stationed at the open door and every door that might be used, eyes and energy directed out (and not at a stack of paper or to a buddy standing on the side), to offer a warm, genuine, non-cloying welcome to all who enter. Churches need signs of life, including on a Sunday morning.

Inside the door: This is the time to help people if the worship gathering needs some explaining, or if visitors need assistance getting to their seats. Consider nametags for members and newcomers, available when they walk inside. It's easier than you think to set up a kiosk or welcome table where people can pick up an attractive and compelling set of materials geared toward newcomers.

Go beyond pew cards or the 25-year-old church history pamphlet to welcome booklets and packs, videos and DVDs, and online materials people can use to familiarize themselves with the worship before they ever arrive. And don't forget set out a visitors' card or clipboard or book or pew sheet or even a laptop—whatever it takes to capture necessary visitor information and interests for future contact.

Inside the sanctuary: A genuinely inviting parish depends on more than a team of greeters. Everyone takes this ministry seriously. Members should be encouraged to slide into the pew to make room for a stranger. They should also be on the lookout for new faces and be ready to help struggling visitors to find their way through the liturgy.

During the worship: Think through your worship and consider whether someone completely new to your tradition would be able to keep pace and participate fully. If not (or even if it seems clear to you), consider full worship booklets, including the entire worship service, music, and even biblical texts.

Alternately, consider seasonal worship booklets with weekly inserts. They may consume a lot of prep hours and trees, but they're an invaluable resource for the inviting congregation. Barring that, remember that projectors and screens are more than hip; they can facilitate full participation by everyone in the body.

Getting around the church: Greeters and other members should be prepared to escort newcomers to Sunday School, forums, restrooms, etc. Gregory Jacobs, Canon to the Ordinary in the Diocese of Newark, calls this the “the ministry of shepherds”—literally, connecting with new people and guiding them around the church.

After-church fellowship: Coffee hour, breakfast between services, brunch after church—whatever you serve and whenever you serve it, make sure you have plenty, and that it's good quality. If possible, have a Hospitality Team ready to serve with a smile.

Encourage clergy to spend this time connecting with newcomers, not just doing parish business with members. Lay leaders should also keep looking around for new faces or people who appear alone and awkward *before* they link with their closer friends.

This also applies to large parishes where many faces may appear new; what is the harm in intentionally approaching and introducing yourself to fellow parishioners who are, for all intents, strangers? And if you can offer a church tour and introduction, that's a great way to help people get oriented to the space and establish personal contact with a church leader.

Incorporating New People

When the newcomer leaves, the work isn't over.

Follow-up contacts: A lay visitor or clergy person should make a follow-up call or send an e-mail or a card, and suggest a one-on-one get-together to share stories and answer questions. This isn't the time for the hard-sell, but just a time to listen and cement the connection.

Follow-up groups: New people need a variety of entry points to find their way inside a congregation. Seasonal newcomers' gatherings, regularly scheduled small groups, easy-to-access volunteer opportunities, inquirers' classes to learn about the tradition, the community and membership—all these are great ways to create space for people to explore and test their calling into community.

Hospitality 101 Worksheet

For each category, rate your church 1-5:

1 = Strongly agree (We're all over it and could even help others!)

2 = Agree (We've done this, but could do it better.)

3 = Neutral (We could do this, but haven't yet tried.)

4 = Disagree (We need a lot of help here.)

5 = Strongly disagree (It's not even on our radar; where would we begin?)

Our Church Has ...

- _____ a clear mission, style and purpose
- _____ clear, attractive signage leading to and in front of the church
- _____ an outdoor, clearly marked entrance to the sanctuary
- _____ an outdoor, clearly marked entrance to the church hall
- _____ an outdoor, clearly marked entrance to the church offices
- _____ an attractive and well-tended web site
- _____ an active e-mail list that is regularly updated
- _____ attractive paper communications, including fliers, postcards, business cards
- _____ print, radio and/or television advertising

Our Greeters/Newcomer Ministers ...

- _____ are a thoroughly trained team
- _____ are stationed at each available door
- _____ maintain a visible station with welcome booklets/packs, videos and DVDs, etc.
- _____ escort people to bathrooms and post-worship activities
- _____ have a process for gathering newcomer info (visitor card, clipboard, pew sheet, iPad)

Our Hospitality Team ...

- _____ provides food for a memorable gathering after worship
- _____ sees itself as true "hosts" who watch to welcome newcomers and others on the margins

Our Members ...

- _____ talk to people in their lives and invite them to church
- _____ see themselves as greeters and pay attention to newcomers
- _____ wear nametags and assist newcomers with getting settled

_____ will scoot into the pew as soon as they sit down, to make room for late and newcomers
_____ respect that the priest/minister should pay attention to newcomers after worship

Our Worship ...

_____ is designed with both long-time church members AND newcomers, children, families,
teens and different cultural groups in mind (as appropriate for your context)
_____ is lively, grounded and tuned to the gospel AND to the issues in real people's lives
_____ encourages active participation by providing all the information people need in one place:
_____ a full worship booklet with music, worship responses, biblical texts
_____ a seasonal worship booklet with weekly inserts including biblical texts
_____ a projector that displays words and music for all participatory elements

During Follow-up, we ...

_____ offer a tour or other activity to help newcomers get familiar
_____ enter all names into a newcomer database that includes pertinent, public details
_____ pray for all who visit the church
_____ send an email or call newcomers (done by lay visitor or priest/minister)
_____ invite people who visit 3 times to share a One-to-One Meeting or lunch
_____ offer to make a house-visit (if culturally appropriate)
_____ host seasonal newcomer gatherings
_____ welcome people into low-commitment small groups
_____ offer access to simple volunteer opportunities
_____ establish other ways to engage people (*describe below*)

***Use the results to celebrate where you're doing well (4 or 5)
and to identify places for further investment and learning (1 through 3).
A well-rounded, vital church should pay attention to all the areas listed.***



Ideas for Turning Your Church into a Center for Blessing

1. Special Guest Sundays (aka Plus-One Sundays or Plus-One Events)
2. Large meals in the parish hall, like a crawfish boil, BBQ, catfish fry
3. Outdoor concert for your community
4. Concert inside the church, highlighting local musicians
5. Thanksgiving meal open to all
6. Seminars and community forums on issues relevant to neighborhood, with an expert (who might also be a member) speaking on topics like how to raise a child, financial health, navigating tax season in peace, etc.
7. Marriage Enrichment Seminars
8. Movie night, including a speaker linking film to faith
9. Mardi Gras party
10. Engaging the Questions Forum: Have a speaker engage top questions people ask about the Christian faith: Is there a God? If God is good why is there so much suffering in the world? Who was Jesus? etc.
11. Valentine's Dance with short talk on God, the Greatest Lover
12. Youth rallies or sports parties
13. Business peoples' luncheons, with a speaker and/or music during work week
14. Free or reduced-price spa day, with or without a speaker
15. Art shows, where the church showcases the work of local artists
16. Poetry readings
17. Theatrical Presentations
18. Animal Blessings
19. Health-screening event at your church, including flu shots, cholesterol checks, mammogram, cardiograms
20. Community fair/carnival: Fall Festival, a Christmas Fun Day, Spring Fling, Safe Halloween party, All Saints celebration
21. Sports clinics
22. Mother's Day or Father's Day banquet
23. Neighborhood block party
24. Evangelistic Carol Service and Christmas concert/musical
25. Easter drama
26. Community Picnic, inviting neighbors to join and eat
27. Athletic event, as in, take church and friends to baseball game
28. Community marathon or walkathon, to raise money for good causes
29. Arts and crafts fair
30. Cultural celebration of congregation's diversity, featuring music, food, dance
31. Cooking school with a short talk about "Bringing more flavor to your life"
32. Wine tastings, with or without a speaker
33. Book discussion
34. Film Night with discussion
35. Coffee house at church, with a musical performance/poetry reading and testimony
36. Host church book club at local coffee house, and buy coffee for other guests

SHARING

The majority of people (close to 90%) come to know the loving, liberating, life giving God through a personal relationship with a follower of Jesus.

WE ARE CHRIST'S AMBASSADORS (2 Corinthians 5)

PRAYER

CARE

SHARE

Be

Listen

Eat

Serve

Share

ENTERING INTO SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS

Model by Rebecca Manley Pippert

Rebecca Pippert has developed a model which helps the Christian enter into conversations about faith. The key is to develop authentic friendships.

I. Identify Needs Through Listening

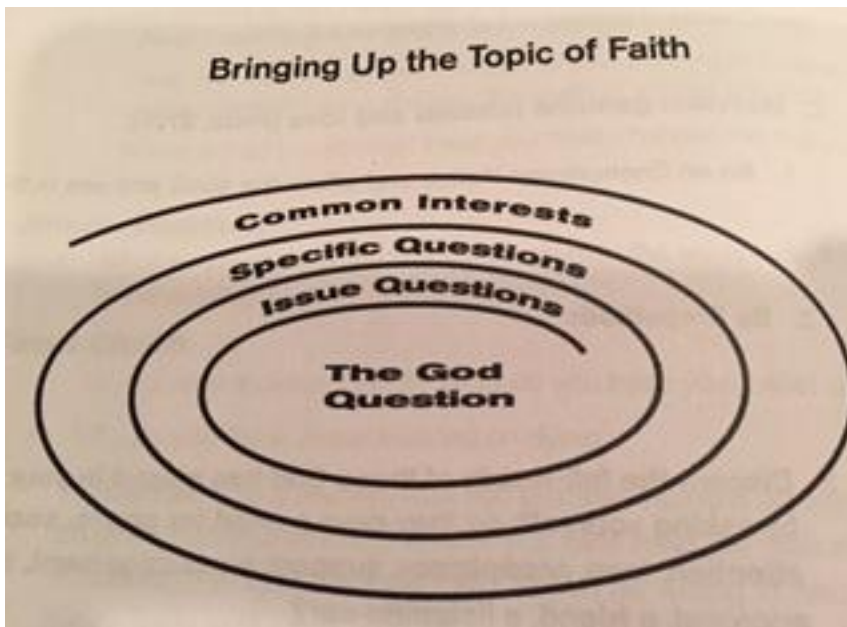
- *What seems to be this person's primary need?
- *What are their interests, hopes, dreams, hurts?
- *What is God doing in this person's life.

II. Conversation skills

- *Affirm Others
- *Find Common Interests
- *Speak life into them. Be encouraging. Share what you see God doing in them.

III. Asking questions on four levels

1. General interest question
2. Specific interest question
3. Issue or belief question
4. God question



THE GOOD NEWS

What is THE Story?

ACT ONE:

ACT TWO:

ACT THREE:

ACT FOUR:

EXERCISE:

Tell the story in your own words:

APPROACHES FOR SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

1) Telling the Story

2) Illustration

3) Highlighting Aspects of Jesus:

***Introducing Jesus Christ. What stands out about His life, His love, His compassion, His death, and His resurrection for you?**

4) What is the best part of the Good News for you?

(*Examples: Unconditional love, total forgiveness, acceptance, hope, peace, strength, grace, community of faith, belonging)

Sharing YOUR STORY

ACT FIVE

SOME KEY COMPONENTS OF TELLING YOUR STORY

1. Keep the focus on Jesus and keep it real. Be yourself.
2. It is not about the past and your past experience as a follower of Jesus. What is happening in the here and now? How is your life enriched by your relationship with Jesus?
3. Center on Jesus Christ and your community of faith. Emphasize that Jesus Christ is alive. Highlight that all can meet Him and all are welcome to be a part of His beloved community.

Why do we tell our stories?

1. It is intriguing.
2. It is natural. When in love you want to talk about the person. It is spontaneous.
3. It is simple. You don't have to tell your whole life story. Keep it simple.
4. It opens up conversations. It allows someone to share his or her story.
5. It brings the Gospel to life.
6. It is irrefutable. People can't deny your experience. For example, the blind man in John 9, said, "Once I was blind and now I can see." This is his story.

I HAVE FOUND _____ (unconditional love, peace, joy, hope, strength...)

How would you answer this question?

YOUR STORY

1) Before I knew God:

-Where I placed my hope/ what were my attitudes/ what was my life like

2) How I came to faith:

-What drew me to start seeking/trusting God?

3) Since I came to faith the difference it has made:

-Focus on the positive aspects but do not paint a false picture. The point of this is not to say, "All is now perfect." Be realistic about your life. Feel free to share your struggles and/or questions (if appropriate).

Emphasize what is going on in your life NOW

What do I like about my church? What stands out to me about Jesus?

What is God doing in my life now? (Helping me through a problem/prayer/scripture/sacraments etc.)

TOTALLY BE YOURSELF

THE POWER OF PRAYER: PRAYING FOR THE HARVEST

All mission begins with prayer. It is our fuel where we draw near to God and He draws near to us. (James 1) It is where we are filled with the Lord and His power AND where we can hear God's heart in how to connect and best love the people God has placed around us. We cannot give what we do not have and prayer and time with the Lord is the best thing we can do to prepare to care and to share Jesus with others.

Jesus began His work with prayer.

"Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray." Mark 1:35

*"Pray as though everything depended on God and work as though everything depended on you."
St. Augustine*

"Pray without ceasing." – 1 Thessalonians 5:7

POWER PRAYER MODEL – Rebecca Manley Pippert Model

Who has God strategically placed in your life? What is their central interest in life? (arts, education, parenting, technology, sports, retirement, business?)

ASK GOD ON THEIR BEHALF TO:

- *Create a hunger in them for God
- *Open their hearts to be willing to have a spiritual conversation.
- *Bless them in specific ways they need.

ASK GOD ON YOUR BEHALF TO:

- *Help you live a consistent, attractive and joy filled life.
- *Draw people to you because of your authenticity.
- *To increase your faith and courage. He will use you just as you are.
- *Open the doors to spiritual conversations and help you develop authentic friendships with seekers.
- *Give you wisdom in how to love seekers you are praying for.
- *Give you discernment as to where they are spiritually and how you can best journey with them spiritually.
- *Show you where God is at work in your world and in the lives of others.