What is Evangelism?

Wow! This is the fun of being a blogger getting to chat about your own personal passion when it comes to things like evangelism. So, what is "Episcopal evangelism"? I'd sure love to hear what some of the rest of you think. But, for me, personally, it is this....

Other than "love one another" it is probably the clearest imperative we have in the Gospels. It is the Great Commission the "go" "tell" and "do." And, it is most and first about intentionally mirroring the embodiment of hospitality Christ lived out in his ministry.

Evangelism is an inside-out proposition. I believe it begins with preparing ourselves, personally and collectively, spiritually and practically, to intentionally welcome and incorporate the stranger in our midst. In most congregations, I believe it entails a significant culture shift one where every individual comes to feel very personal responsibility for the ministry of hospitality and incorporation, beyond just an assumption that it is something the clergy or the "evangelism committee" or "welcome committee" or ushers/greeters are responsible for accomplishing. Only when we make that culture shift, and embrace those personal roles, can we effectively reach out to others. Have you ever stepped into a church where this type of cultural shift has taken place? The truth is, you can feel the living nature of it in the room before you even speak to a person. It is a very palpable, atmospheric, living sensory experience.

What does this personal and collective behavior mean, more specifically? It is about orienting absolutely everything to the guest in our midst. Practical things such as our worship bulletin, our signage, and even our parking lot. A thousand personal behaviors such as holding one another accountable for how positively we speak to each other and our guests on Sunday mornings about our church... saying hello to three strangers after church before chatting up your best friend... not assuming that, just because you have brunch plans each Sunday, your guest is surely included somewhere/with someone else, too. Not assuming anything, basically Biblical knowledge, liturgical language, even that everyone surely knows there's a coffee hour AND how to find the church restrooms.

Next? It is about truly wanting to grow. The desire to stretch and share one's church with the wider world, risking that new people might bring change but giving that over to God's care. One night, I spent a three-hour marathon vestry meeting in a small, languishing Episcopal parish where the topic was evangelism. Well into our third hour of discussion, a quiet person at the end of the table spoke up. "Well I think we DO want to grow
our church so long as we can grow it with people who sort of fit in with us and can accept the ways we do things here." I wanted to stand up and cheer for their honesty. Claiming that in the cold light of day is a starting point, allowing us to perhaps begin to re-think a different road forward together.

There are a lot of bad reasons to want to grow a church. I hear them all the time. "So we can finally make our budget." and "So we can get ourselves off of mission status." "So we can make this capital campaign work." and "So we'll have some more people around here to serve on committees and relieve those who are burned-out." There is actually just ONE good reason for a church to reach out and grow as followers of Jesus Christ, it is a primary thing we are called to do.

Some evangelism truths... two-thirds of the people in the state of Indiana are statistically unchurched. 80% of the people who come to an Episcopal Church come because someone a friend, family member, or business associate, or neighbor personally invited them. Once they do come to church, we've got about 24 hours to begin the process of welcoming and incorporating them into our collective life. It begins the moment they drive up to the church and park their car. And, if we don't do a good job with our ministry of hospitality and welcome/incorporation, chances are they'll go somewhere else or even worse nowhere at all.

Evangelism, as a word, needs to be reclaimed in our culture. It has somehow been co-opted by folks who tend to have rather narrow, limiting agendas in the Church. And, a lot of Episcopalians need to learn not to be afraid of the word or the concept.

Evangelism happens one person at a time. One of the singular, most important things we can all do is to create a compelling "30-second pitch" true-to-ourselves personal answers to the questions "So what's YOUR church like? And, what's an Episcopalian, anyway?" When I ask those questions around the diocese, folks tend to automatically default to the negative, going on about "older" parishes in "dying towns" and what their church "used to be" years ago. When it comes to their denomination, I hear about Henry the VIII and controversies on CNN. So, I look them in the eye and say, "No you don't understand. Tell me what's REALYOUR story. What is it about this church, your church, that causes you to get up out of bed on Sunday mornings and show up here week after week?"

Evangelism begins to happen when we can all personally speak a real word person-to-person about who we are, and whose we are, and why. It doesn't require newspaper ads or billboards or incorporating Flash on our websites, though those things can certainly support our storytelling efforts. It is just most fundamentally one Episcopalian talking to one other person, grounded in a commitment to the type of hospitality modeled by Jesus Christ.

Anyone else care to join in this discussion?!
Evangelism

Evangelism, no ministry in the church is more vital. Evangelism involves several key actions: telling the good news, announcing the kingdom (reign) of God, and bearing witness.

Articles

The Missing Theologians

Talking to visitors
http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/talking-with-visitors/

Understand what your Church needs to know about marketing
http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/marketing-white-paper/

Invite and they will come

The Both And of Church and Tech

Tradition verses Traditionalism
http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/tradition-versus-traditionalism-fresh-expressions-for-real/

Witness
http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/witness-2/

Social Media Evangelist
http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/social-media-evangelist/

The things Churches can learn from Starbucks
http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/ten-things-churches-can-learn-from-starbucks/

Millennials: What do we know and should we care
http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/millennials-what-do-we-know-and-should-we-care/
Not frozen but introverted
http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/not-frozen-introverted/

Explaining Episcopal
http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/from-scratch-explaining-episcopal/

the Basics : Mission Development
http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/the-basics-mission-development/

Live out: Incarnate Good news

Repackage your Rituals
http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/take-out-re-package-your-rituals/

Break out: find the faith life connection

NewCommer incorporation

Christian Hospitality

Cultivating new practices of invitation and welcome
http://www.ecfvp.org/vestrypapers/real-basics-for-vestries/at-the-end-of-the-day/

Study your congregation and community
http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/studying-your-congregation-and-community

Double our size - Anglicans online
http://anglicansonline.org/resources/essays/whalon/evangel.html

Evangelism: a Spiritual Practice
http://www.episcopalcafe.com/evangelism_a_spiritual_practice/


https://www.barna.org/barna-update/faith-spirituality/611-christians-more-like-jesus-or-pharisees#.VLpl1lpH1z9

PROGRAMS AND CURRICULA

Invite, Welcome and Connect http://www.invitewelcomeconnect.com/  A three part newcomer program with tools and resources for all size parishes.

Sharing Faith Dinners http://www.sharingfaithdinners.com/#start

Sharing Faith dinners invite people to gather around a meal and participate in life together. At each dinner, a moderator will prompt participants to share stories of their faith journey with printed questions. Sharing Faith provides a welcoming and safe way to engage one another, articulate our faith and build relationships.

Sharing Faith is designed for groups of 8-12 people who share a meal, get to know one another and share stories of faith through engaging questions. The process of sharing stories helps to deepen our own personal faith. Hearing others’ stories of God’s presence in their life brings us into deeper relationship with each other and with God.

The Story - http://www.thestory.com - Offers a variety of resources/curriculums to help congregations understand the narrative of scripture by breaking it down into 31 stories and show how they all point to the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Gospel Project - https://www.gospelproject.com - Similar to thestory but takes you through scripture over a three year period.

Be my Witness
http://bemywitness.org/en/
BOOKS

**Welcome!: Tools and Techniques for New Member Ministry** by Andrew Weeks

This toolkit of intentional and compassionate strategies takes an encouraging, incremental approach to help even small groups get started quickly. Study the separate chapters on: imaginative marketing; the ministry of greeting, crafting welcoming materials, tracking and involving newcomers and structuring groups for growth. Then adapt an additional 34 pages of template forms, brochures, and procedures to your needs while employing Weeks’ point-by-point recommendations to: make sure your signs and property invite, not confuse; create powerful, welcoming ads and print communication, train and prepare greeters; and develop programs to incorporate and track newcomers during their first critical months.

**People of the Way and Agile Church** by Dwight Zscheile

There is a renewed conversation about identity and mission in American Anglicanism today, based on the recognition that the church’s context in the U.S. has dramatically changed. The legacies of establishment, benefactor approaches to mission, and the ‘national church’ ideal are no longer adequate for the challenges and opportunities facing the 21st century church.

But if the Episcopal Church is no longer the Church of the Establishment and the benefactor model of church is dead, what is the heart of Episcopal mission and identity?

Scholar and Episcopal priest Dwight Zscheile draws on multiple streams of Anglican thought and practice, plus contemporary experience to craft a vision for mission that addresses the church’s post-establishment, post-colonial context. With stories, practices and concrete illustrations, Zscheile engages readers in re-envisioning what it means to be Anglican in America today and sends readers out to build new relationships within their local contexts.
**Unabashedly Episcopalian** by Andy Doyle

Excellent for inquirers and new members, this book is also a good book for long-standing Episcopal Church members unfamiliar with some of the Church’s history, beliefs, and practices. This introduction to the history, polity, spirituality, worship, and outreach of the Episcopal Church is written in an easy-to-read conversational tone. Study questions at the end of each chapter, making it an excellent resource for adult education.

**The Social Media Gospel** by Meredith Gould

If you are responsible for managing digital communications in your parish, staying current with trends in the rapidly changing world of social media can seem like an overwhelming task. Which social medium platforms make sense for your church community? How can you make them an effective tool for ministry?

**Transforming Evangelism (Transformation Series)** by David Gortner

At once “travel guide” and vision for the future, the Transformation series is good news for the Episcopal Church at a time of fast and furious demographic and social change. Series contributors - recognized experts in their fields - analyze our present plight, point to the seeds of change already at work transforming the church, and outline a positive new way forward. What kinds of churches are most ready for transformation? What are the essential tools? What will give us strength, direction, and purpose to the journey?

Each volume of the series will:

- Explain why a changed vision is essential
- Give robust theological and biblical foundations
- Offer a guide to best practices and positive trends in churches large and small.
- Describe the necessary tools for change
- Imagine how transformation will look
How can Episcopalians reclaim evangelism primarily as an enriching spiritual practice? How soon will we recognize that our traditional hands-off approach has led to a crisis of evangelism with our own children? How can we learn to practice evangelism in a multicultural and multifaith society? and to what purpose? What styles and practices of spirituality do most to enrich our sense of evangelical calling?

These are some of the questions David Gortner asks in this book on evangelism for clergy and congregational discussion. He delivers both good and bad news about Episcopalians and evangelism, and provides models and spiritual practices to feed the growing hunger in our churches for good news.

*Church in the Marketplace* by George Carey
The spiritual journey of George Carey, from rector to Archbishop of Canterbury. An inspiring story of witness and renewal.

*Venti Jesus Please (for teenagers)*

*Venti Jesus Please* captures a conversation between three friends at their local Starbucks - an atheist, agnostic, and Christian. Listen in on their real and raw conversation as they talk about life, God, truth and relationships.

Told from the perspective of the atheist teen, this quick, short read provides a clear, concise and compelling gospel message for today’s teens. It will not only motivate your teens to share their faith, it also models how to do so in a natural, conversational style. Then they can pass the book along to their friends who don’t know Jesus and use it as a conversation starter for bringing God up!

Websites:
Evangelism in the 21st Century - The Use of Social Media.
Video with Meredith Gould: Social Media is a Tool for Evangelism

Meredith Gould is a sociologist and digital strategist with decades of communications experience. She founded the weekly Twitter-based ecumenical Church Social Media Chat (#ChSocM) and serves as its lead moderator. Her book, The Social Media Gospel, was a featured Book Club selection by Patheos Progressive Christian in July 2013. Watch her video here to learn more about: how you can take small steps to create big impacts, using the Social Media “threads” to connect those in the pews with those that are not able to attend, how to reach those who are unable to attend your “in house” worship service a part of your church community. Check out her video here: [https://vimeo.com/78111049](https://vimeo.com/78111049)

Episcopal Church Foundation - Evangelism Articles - [http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/topics/evangelism](http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/topics/evangelism)

The Episcopal Evangelism Society (grants) - [http://www.ees1862.org](http://www.ees1862.org)

Anglican Witness - [http://www.anglicanwitness.org](http://www.anglicanwitness.org)

The Social Media Gospel (video) - [https://vimeo.com/78111049](https://vimeo.com/78111049)


[http://www.acts8moment.org](http://www.acts8moment.org)
2. We challenge The Episcopal Church to proclaim the good news of Jesus in effective ways.
3. We encourage and equip local missionary communities.
4. We carry out our work with hope, optimism, and good humor.
5. We consistently and transparently communicate to achieve dialogue across the church.

Potpourri - Episcopal Church USA

http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/church-signs
http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/embed-code-generator-tool
http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/logos-shields-graphics

Standing Commission on Evangelism
https://extranet.generalconvention.org/staff/files/download/12920.pdf

Presiding Bishop on The Jesus Movement

http://www.forwardmovement.org/Products/2414.1/the-jesus-movement.aspx
Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry invites us to respond to God's call to be "the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement in this world." At his installation as the 27th Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church, the Most Rev. Michael B. Curry offered a rousing sermon on what it means to join the Jesus Movement -- living as faithful followers and sharing the Good News with the world. Embrace Bishop Curry's challenge for The Episcopal Church and his vision for our future in this pamphlet -- and share it with your entire congregation! Also available in Spanish.

Bishop of Canterbury - Top 10 Tips for Evangelism
The Barnabas Principle

https://multiplychurches.org/2015/11/17/the-barnabas-principle/

At Your Journey Resources we are committed to coaching and mentoring leaders who are fully engaged in the harvest field. We specialize in coaching and equipping leaders in areas of spiritual formation, church multiplication and church health from the local church level to regional and national leadership.

Our vision is to see that no leader travel their ministry journey alone. We desire to emulate the ministry of Barnabas by becoming a son of encouragement to the next generation of leaders.

“Joseph a Levite from Cyprus, whom the Apostles called Barnabas (which means the Son of Encouragement).” Acts 4:36

As we tour the historical record on the life and ministry of Barnabas we discover the essential qualities of being a strong coach.

We discover that Barnabas...

1. Had a generous spirit - “Joseph a Levite from Cyprus, whom the Apostles called Barnabas (which means the Son of Encouragement), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles’ feet.” (Acts 4:36-37)

2. Had a deep belief in people’s potential - “When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles…” (Acts 9:26-27)


4. Was a ‘Grace’ finder - “When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God...” (Acts 11:)

5. Was an example to follow - “He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith...” (Acts 11:2)

6. Provided opportunities for people - “Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch.” (Acts 11:25-26)

7. Experienced life with people in both good times (Acts 13:2) and the tough times (Acts 13:50)

9. Didn’t Avoid Conflict - “This brought Paul and Barnabas into a sharp dispute and debate with them.” (Acts 15:2) “They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company.” (Acts 15:39)

10. Was ready to give a second chance - “Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them...” Acts 15:36 cf. Colossians 4:10