

## **Evangelism in the Congregation**

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### **APPROACHES TO EVANGELISM IN THE CONGREGATION**

Canvass: An approach that involves teams of members from the congregation who go house-to-house in a specific geographical area or to a definable group for the purpose of obtaining information. It makes use of survey forms that the teams can fill out at the door or in the home of those visited. The survey form is tailored to the purpose of the canvass. Often the questions on the form can lead to an opportunity to present the gospel.

Confrontational Evangelism (DEII, Evangelism Explosion, etc.): There are a number of variations on this method. A Christian meets a person he does not know and presents the Gospel in short order. The most widely used method in LC-MS circles is Dialogue Evangelism II, written by Leroy Bisenthal. It is an adaptation of the method developed by James Kennedy. An attempt was made to remove the synergistic style of Evangelism Explosion. It requires substantial amount training and practice. New evangelizers are sent out with someone who has more experience with the method. The team goes door-to-door, or looks for opportunities at busy places like parks, airports, shopping malls, on airplanes, at the beach, concerts, etc. It is based upon the belief that there are two levels of Christian witness. First, all Christians are witnesses, either good or bad. Those are the Level I witnesses. Second, perhaps ten percent of Christians are truly gifted with a special capacity for evangelism. These are the "Level II" evangelists. Dialogue Evangelism II, for example, is designed to prepare those gifted for evangelism at Level II. DEII available in kit form and includes an eight-week training program with videos. (DE is available also in Spanish).

Friendship Evangelism (Sometimes called "Life-style" evangelism, or "Family" evangelism): It is perhaps the most common method of evangelism given that approximately eighty percent of new church members say they were brought to the church through their friends, etc. This is an unstructured, "soft sell" approach to evangelism that makes use of the existing personal relationships that people have. In some programs, the idea of creating new relationships for the purpose of having an evangelistic opportunity is promoted, but generally it is directed to the friends, relatives, associates and neighbors of the church membership. The process has three steps: 1) Developing the relationship; 2) Looking for an opportunity for evangelism; 3) Clearly presenting Law/Gospel as appropriate.

Friendship Sunday Evangelism: The goal is for each member family/person to invite at least one other family/person to a special Sunday service. The service is tailored with special hymns, liturgy, and preaching to be as attractive and pleasing to the visitor as possible. The idea is to present the gospel to the visitors, and to introduce them to the programs and activities of the church. Usually there is a special event, presentation on a topic of interest, etc. during the Bible study hour, as well as a special meal or snack. Theoretically, Friendship Sunday should have at least double the number of people in the worship service. There are many resources for having a "friendship Sunday" available from CPH.

Cell-group Evangelism: A frequently talked-about approach today. It uses small groups who meet regularly for some kind of activity, bible study, etc. Usually they meet during a weeknight in someone's home. Approaches vary, but usually the number of participants is limited to ten to twelve. If the group grows beyond that, it is to divide and start two groups. The members of a cell group are also participants at a mother congregation, where they meet for regular Sunday worship services. This method has become popular among some LC-MS congregations.

Small Group Bible Study Evangelism: This approach is something like the cell-group method described above. The idea behind this approach is that people are willing to invite their friends and neighbors to an informal Bible study in their homes, the church being seen as threatening to many unchurched people. Often this Bible study is lead by the pastor, or another trained individual. During the course of the study, invited guests/newcomers have an opportunity to discuss their questions in a non-threatening way, and to hear a clear presentation of the Gospel. Eventually, as the guests become more comfortable, hear the Gospel and have their spiritual concerns/questions addressed, they are invited to become members of the congregation.

Educational Evangelism: This is an evangelistic approach that makes use of education as a means for making contact with new people. Usually, it is part a Vacation Bible School or Sunday School program. It would involve somehow making the educational opportunities known and extending an invitation to the community. This is often done through posters in prominent places in the neighborhood, newspaper ads, or by canvassing or leaving an invitation at the homes in the neighborhood. Follow-up is necessary, especially in programs that are directed toward children.

Parochial schools, although traditionally operated for the benefit of the children of the congregation, have made it possible for many children to hear the Gospel in class, and the church-operated school can often times follow-up with the families. Sometimes people join the church because of a tuition break, but thereby are exposed to the Gospel for the first time in a meaningful way.

Human Care Evangelism: In many places, there are people who have a variety of needs concerning this body and life. In some communities, there are people who are in need of food, clothing, and housing, and so foodbanks, "soup-kitchens," and/or temporary sleeping/bathing quarters are made available. Other approaches are more ambitious and try to provide long-range solutions, such as sponsoring a housing renewal project in the neighborhood, or providing job training. Some churches run a daycare center so mothers have a place to leave their children while they work. Another example would be teaching English, helping with immigration forms, survival skills, helping people to find jobs, etc. In other words, anything that cares for people's physical needs can be opportunities also to address spiritual needs. Approaches vary from basically no articulation of the Gospel unless someone specifically asks, to approaches that include, or even require, participation in Bible studies and/or worship service as a condition to receiving the aid.

Mass Media Evangelism: Mass media evangelism has been an approach of the LC-MS, through the work of the Lutheran Laymen's League, since the 1930s, when Dr. Walter A. Maier's radio broadcasts were the most widely heard religious programs in the world. Today, the more strategic approach has been to incorporate some use of radio, television or print media in coordination with an intentional effort on the part of a local mission or congregation to

personally follow-up on contacts. Typically, a radio “spot” of thirty seconds briefly discusses a topic of general interest, such as, for example, the challenges of the mother of a family working outside the home. An offer is made to give the respondent a booklet on the topic. Often, the goal is to actually deliver the booklet personally, perhaps establish a relationship, and invite the person to participate or host a small-group Bible study in the area. As more people from an area become involved in the Bible-study, it either incorporates into an established congregation or it soon forms into the nucleus of a congregation, and eventually a new congregation is established. There are, of course, variations on this model, but the idea is to attempt to provide personalized follow-up to those who request information on the theme of the month.

Telephone Evangelism: This is really a form of canvassing, and not technically evangelism. Normally it is not the intent of the caller to get into a presentation of Law/Gospel on the phone. Usually teams of callers make phone calls to people in a geographic area to invite them to a special activity or worship service at the church. It usually includes asking for permission to send a packet of materials. It requires a number of people who volunteer to do the calling, a short orientation session, and somewhere that has a bank of phones from which to make the calls. The phone lists can be purchased easily. In some cases, the phone book is simply scanned for Jewish or Spanish sounding names, for example.

Evangelistic Tracts: There are a number of evangelistic tracts available. The Bible Society produces small portions of Scripture that can be purchased inexpensively and left with people. CPH also produces some tracts, the most famous probably being, “You Can Be Sure” (*Usted Puede Estar Seguro, in Spanish*). It is a tract based on the Confrontational Evangelism model of James Kennedy, starting with the question, “If you were to die tonight . . . .” The answers are given in five parts, dealing with the grace of God, the sinfulness of mankind, the justice of God, what has been done in Christ, and faith. Many times tracts are not used in ineffectual way, sometimes taking up space in the tract rack, and sometimes being distributed far and wide without anyone reading them. They are used best if they are accompanied by an explanation, and with a way of providing follow-up. A congregation can design its own tracks, informational brochures, etc. that can be useful in canvassing.

Church Event Evangelism: Some congregations utilize church events for evangelistic purposes. Perhaps a special play or concert is planned, to which the whole community is invited. In some cases, the activity includes a direct, intentional presentation of the Gospel. Sometimes members of the congregation are mobilized to welcome visitors and invite them to worship services. Some congregations gather information from those who arrive to follow-up on them later.

Church Activities Evangelism (Fellowship Evangelism): Organizations and fellowship activities within a congregation have sometimes afforded opportunities for the unchurched to hear the Gospel and respond by becoming part of the congregation. Youth group activities that emphasize bringing friends, couples clubs, young adults clubs, men’s clubs, ladies’ aid and other such groups often time will bring new people in because they address the special concerns of individuals on the outside. Participation in sports leagues has brought many a people to the point where they were able to hear the Gospel and incorporate into a congregation.

Other Approaches: