

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTIONpp. 1-5

EVANGELISM ESSAYS

Christ Goes Before Us: Evangelism in Seminary Admissions - *DeWayne Teig*pp. 6-7

Hebrew Bible: Immersing Ourselves in the Stories - *Ann Fritschel and Gwen Sayler*pp. 8-9

Can This Congregation Live? - *Bill Bernau*pp. 10-11

Foundations of the Church - *Elizabeth Leeper*pp. 12-13

Social Ministry and Evangelism - *Craig Nesson*pp. 14-15

Advocacy, Evangelism and the Church in Public Life - *Terri McMaster*pp. 16-17

Ministry in Time of Crisis: Stress, Depression, Conflict and Opportunity - *Daniel Olson* . .pp. 18-19

Educational Ministry: Learning Leads To Mission - *Norma Cook Everist*pp. 20-21

Spiritual Direction Conversations - *Ginger Anderson-Larson*pp. 22-23

Evangelism and the New Testament - *David Lull*pp. 24-25

Becoming Evangelists through Seminary Study - *Sandra Burroughs*pp. 26-27

Master of Arts Program in Theology, Development, and Evangelism - *David Ramse*pp. 28-29

The Evangelism of Discovering Hope in Rural Congregations - *Shannon Jung*pp. 30-31

Acts: A Call to Servanthood - *James Erdman and Elizabeth Reinking*pp. 32-33

Youth, Culture and Mission: Ministry with Young People - *Nathan Frambach*pp. 34-35

Theology for Youth Outreach - *Ralph Quere*pp. 36-37

Systematic Theology and Bearing Witness To Jesus Christ - *Duane Priebe*pp. 38-39

Student Services and Evangelism - *Ronald Schardt*pp. 40-41

Office of Mission Support - *Kenneth Gibson*pp. 42-43

“I Can't Wait to Tell You!” - *Jennifer Henry*pp. 44-45

INTRODUCTION

We, along with all partners in our church body, have been asked to study and implement the Evangelism Strategy called “Sharing Faith in a New Century: A Vision for Evangelism in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,” adopted at the 2003 Churchwide Assembly (www.elca.org/dcm/evangelism). As one response, we have prepared this booklet, “Forming an Evangelizing People: Perspectives and Questions for Use in the Church.”

Churchwide Strategic Directions

The perspectives are in keeping with the Strategic Directions adopted by our church body:

Claimed, gathered, and sent by God's grace for the sake of the world,
The Evangelical Lutheran Church in American in and
Through its churchwide expression will:

- Support congregations in their call to be faithful, welcoming, and generous, sharing the mind of Christ;
- Assist members, congregations, synods, and institutions and agencies of this church to grow in evangelical outreach;
- Step forward as a public church that witnesses boldly to God's love for all that God has created;
- Deepen and extend our global, ecumenical, and interfaith relationships for the sake of God's mission; and
- Assist this church to bring forth and support faithful, wise, and courageous leaders whose vocations serve God's mission in a pluralistic world.

As a seminary of the church, Wartburg's mission statement is congruent with the ELCA's strategic directions:

Wartburg Theological Seminary serves the mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America by being a worship-centered community of critical reflection where learning leads to mission and mission informs learning. Within this community, Wartburg educates women and men to serve the church's mission as ordained and lay leaders. This mission is to proclaim and interpret the gospel of Jesus Christ to a world created for communion with God and in need of personal and social healing.

The perspectives here presented are for the purpose of “supporting the members, congregations, synods, and institutions and agencies” of the ELCA as all of us together “grow in evangelical outreach.” Wartburg is committed to deep “global, ecumenical and interfaith relationships” and, as an expression of a “public church,” to the ongoing task of “bringing forth and supporting faithful, wise and courageous leaders.”

Writers and Contexts

These essays invite you to look in on some of the Wartburg classes and other ministries, showing how they help form leaders for an evangelizing people. It is not sufficient, of course, to simply teach evangelism as a course subject; evangelism is part of the entire ethos of the seminary community. Just as in a congregation, evangelism cannot be the responsibility of only one person or committee, but is the atmosphere of the whole community. We have prepared twenty brief perspectives, written by faculty members, four staff, one student, and two diaconal ministers and three pastors who are recent graduates of Wartburg.

The heart of Wartburg's life together is the time each morning when we gather for daily worship in our chapel and communal conversation in the refectory. In chapel worship, we focus on the Word and are fed with the body and blood of Christ, which nurtures us in becoming an evangelizing people. Evangelical ministry begins even before a student comes to Wartburg, continues daily in our life together and reaches beyond the walls of the seminary into the public world.

Each essay is written from the perspective and in the context of its author – whether that be a professor of Hebrew Bible, Director of Admissions, or graduate serving a mission congregation. In each particular context the author describes an approach to evangelism he or she is already using. In designing evangelism strategies, whether at seminary or in congregations or other ministries of the church, it is helpful to look around at how God is already forming an evangelizing people among us. However, we do not rest there. Authors also offers challenges for future growth for themselves and for all of us.

Evangelism Images

The term “evangelism” cannot be easily or simply defined. As you read these pages, you will hear a variety of images expressing the depth and breadth of evangelism. You will read such phrases as:

- “Evangelism is sharing the good news of God's love and forgiveness in Jesus Christ.”
- “Evangelism is the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ as it addresses the whole person.”
- “Evangelism is not just content, but a way of being.”
- “We need to focus on being evangelical rather than doing evangelism.”
- “The Good News of God reconciles and restores relationships.”
- “Social ministry (the ministry of Christians in the world) and evangelism (speaking the Gospel to others) belong together.”
- “Evangelists are called to speak a prophetic word when they, as disciples of Christ, are anointed to bring good news to the poor.”
- “Our task is effectively bearing witness to Jesus Christ in a world where there are many competing alternatives, both religious and secular.”
- “Drawn by the Spirit, our cause and deepest passion is to attend to the reign of God within community and in God's world. Community in Jesus Christ is not something we create or can coerce people into – it is a gift to which the Spirit calls people.”
- “The heart of evangelism is the invitation to ‘Come and see, come and hear the story out of which our community lives.’”
- “Evangelism: Words of excitement. Words of action. Something has brought deeper meaning to our lives and we are changed.”
- “Evangelism is not really a strategy. We don't have one, except for the fact that the people love the Lord and each other as best they can, and live in a state of grace.”

We need to be careful: “When the desire to be effective is not controlled by a commitment to being faithful, evangelism may be reduced to mere cynical manipulation. When the commitment to being faithful is not shaped by a concern for effectiveness, evangelism may serve nothing more than the desire to be regarded as righteous.”

- “In an authentic Christian community, there are no insiders and outsiders, but only souls from both far off and nearby, being drawn closer to God and one another by the love of Christ.”
- “Relationships are essential for conveying the gospel of God's grace.”
- “We need to infuse Good News into our conversations by honoring each other's speech and by seeking reverently to understand the tapestry of our lives.”
- “We need to proclaim Christ evangelically in both word and deed and to empower others to do the same.”

The ELCA Evangelism Strategy has four objectives:

1. Call the Church to Prayer
2. Prepare and Renew Evangelical Leaders
3. Teach Discipleship
4. Start and Renew Congregations

We continue to pray for the renewal of the Church. As a seminary of the ELCA, we have particular responsibilities in regard to the second and third objectives. Along with the entire ELCA, we work toward meeting the fourth objective. Together we strive to “nurture evangelical leaders under the renewing power of God's Spirit” and to “equip people of all ages to be faith-filled witnesses to God as revealed in Jesus Christ and committed disciples in service to others, working for justice and peace in all the earth.”

Uses of this Booklet

We encourage you to use these perspectives and questions in your congregation or other ministry settings. At the end of each essay, we have provided two questions for reflection and discussion to stimulate conversation. We have also provided a passage from scripture for Bible study that might be used before or after conversation on the essay.

This resource could be used at the beginning of church council meetings or at a council retreat. It could serve as a resource for a Sunday morning adult forum or for small group ministry. It might serve as a catalyst for an Evangelism Committee or for discussion on evangelism in various committees. Church staff or area text study groups might use the booklet. You have permission to download (www.wartburgseminary.edu) or duplicate any of these essays, so they could be used in your newsletter or on your website.

We want to continue to learn from the church, as well as be teachers of the church. A postcard insert invites you to send a response about how you used this booklet. We also would like to hear evangelism stories of your own.

“Forming an evangelizing people” is one of the most urgent missional tasks for the church in our time. As the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, we need to reclaim our “evangelical” identity in this and every generation. The ELCA Evangelism Strategy is a significant contribution to this task. May these perspectives and questions stir the church, even as they continue to stir us, to faithfulness in evangelizing!

Norma Cook Everist
Craig L. Nesson

Approach

Admitting a student to seminary is much more than a process of reading an autobiography and checking a person's references and academic transcripts. Helping prospective students attend to their personal journey and sense of vocational calling is also paramount. Tending to an individual's call to professional Christian ministry should always be encouraged within the broader baptismal invitation of being "a worker with us in the kingdom of God." Hopefully, this covenantal perspective toward vocation affirms one's sense of call to evangelical ministry whether or not it leads to advanced theological study.

Listen in on an example of such tending: Sammi's eyes quickly glance around at the décor in my office as she cautiously sits down in the tan vinyl chair. It does not take much skill in reading human behavior to sense her anxiety. We exchange the usual pleasantries about how far she drove, who came with her, and where she stopped for coffee along the way. But somewhere within the first few minutes of choppy conversation, a sudden shift happens.

Apparently Sammi decides this is sacred space for her to tell her story. At first, it is more of an apology for taking up my time, about her rambling on about the silliness of God nudging her to be a leader in the church. The words and images of a lifetime of wondering and questioning spew forth in an animated and unrehearsed manner as she verbally serpentine toward a goal line I have yet to see. Then, as abruptly as she started, she stops and says, "You must think I'm crazy."

"Apparently Sammi decides this is a sacred space to tell her story."

Then her litany of "buts" is confessed - but my failed relationships; but my age; but my lack of scriptural knowledge; but my lack of confidence in this calling. These perceived roadblocks to ministry are quickly dismantled by citing a few biblical examples, by

pointing out others who have gone before us who claimed their own foibles and failings as excuse enough to go another way.

The conversation turns more serious. What about my kids; my aging parents? Will my spouse find work? Can I do graduate academic work? Will I fit in? Sammi's questions are starkly real and we both swallow hard. It feels like weak reassurance when I respond by saying that none of us can predict what awaits us around any corner. Yet both of us know, regardless of the paths we choose, we go with the knowledge that Christ goes before us; and wherever we join with others to be the church, we are still with family. This is the heart of evangelical ministry.

The preceding story is a composite of many similar conversations. These exchanges cause me to ponder what might be considered “evangelical” about my vocation as the admissions director at one of the ELCA seminaries. I wonder how we honor one another’s “call to ministry” gifted in baptism that invites us to be faithful in sharing the Good News wherever we might serve. Presumably, when we set aside time to hear each other’s stories, when we give attention to another’s life fragments coming together into some kaleidoscopic whole, we create space to help others make peace with their vocations and their very selves. We infuse Good News into our conversation by honoring each other’s speech and by seeking reverently to understand the tapestry of our life’s journeys, of struggling together with what it means to be “fellow members, children, and workers... in the kingdom of God.”

For Reflection and Discussion

1. What are some “buts” which act as roadblocks to being an evangelizing people that you and people in your congregation express? How does the reality that Christ “goes before us” speak to those roadblocks?

2. How can you provide “sacred space” (in any variety of ordinary settings) for people to tell their stories?

Approach

Hebrew Bible Content is a four credit course required of all students. To us the heart of evangelism is the invitation “Come and see, come and hear the story out of which our community lives.” We understand the biblical story as a living story with transformative power for us today. Entering the biblical story is a risky venture because as the biblical story becomes our story we find ourselves transformed for mission in ways that we had never before envisioned.

Our task as teachers is to guide our students into this on-going, living story, to help them hear the many different biblical voices that speak the living word among and to people in vastly different time periods and life settings. As learners with our students, we hear how we have been shaped by the biblical story. We all gain new insights as the students come to claim their own voices in our common study of the text.

The stories from which we live consciously or unconsciously shape our attitudes and behaviors. To equip the students to live more deeply in and through the Hebrew Bible we immerse them in the biblical texts. Attention is paid to the content and claims of the text as well as the shaping power of the language used to convey its message.

Stories live and grow in real life settings. For this reason, the context of the ancient Near Eastern world in which the stories were formulated and retold is essential. We also explore in depth how major traditions—the Exodus/Sinai covenant and the David/Zion covenant—are retold and reshaped to address changing community life situations. Building on this exploration, students are ready to investigate competing theological claims and to struggle with questions that the text raises, aware that there are often no easy answers.

The goal is to equip students to think in an integrative way about the biblical stories, the stories of their church community and the stories of the people they are inviting to “come and hear.” This is a first step

“Come and see, come and hear the story out of which our community lives.”

in evangelism. All our study in the Hebrew Bible has as its goal inviting the students to enter and claim their interpretive voices in the living, ongoing story initiated in the Hebrew Bible for the sake of the mission to which they are called.

Challenges

As students live with the questions the text raises within the ambiguities and complexities of life, we realize that we are sending them out into a culture that seeks simple answers as a way to avoid dealing with complex realities. Equipping students to meet this cultural situation is an ongoing challenge and responsibility.

The call to discipleship we encounter in the Hebrew Bible does not “fit well” with individualistic, “what’s in it for me” philosophies so popular in American culture today. Preparing students to invite others to hear the story in a way that is both faithful to biblical understandings of discipleship and also receptive to meeting people where they are is an ongoing challenge and responsibility.

For Reflection and Discussion

1. How might you put into your own words “Come and see, come and hear the story out of which our community lives?” Practice such words of invitation among yourselves within the congregation. Try them out this week in the communities in which you live and work

2. Search out specific stories from the Bible. How do those voices from the past speak the living word to us in our day?

Can This Congregation Live?

Approach

Imagine a new congregation distracted by real estate, whose only clear dream was a church building of their own. Imagine a young congregation fresh from conflict, with some members unwilling to speak to others. Imagine a congregation stifled in its evangelism efforts. Imagine any congregation without a pastor, wondering if they would ever have another and if they did, would they like that pastor?

Imagine a congregation with some people leaving and no people joining. Imagine a congregation with 50 gathered to worship in a high school auditorium built for 400; not huddled together but spread too far apart. In this real congregation, no one invited others because no one really wanted to be there.

“The idea of grace was reborn within the community as a way of being.”

Sixteen months is a long time to merely survive. When the congregation hit rock bottom, they had shrunk to the hard-core faithful. The future was not clear; maybe this church would die in its infancy. Can a congregation like this live? If God wills it, it can.

It was in the midst of this situation that Grace Lutheran called a new pastor. For the first time in a long time, there was something to be excited about. Then a member suggested that worship be moved into the music room, which was smaller and brighter. It seated 100 on four levels that rose in a semi-circle from front to back. Worship was in the round.

The new pastor was a first-call seminary graduate. He was good; not great but good. Ironically his inexperience may have been exactly what the congregation needed. It meant that he was free to make mistakes and to be forgiven for what did not work. The idea of grace was reborn within the community as a way of being. Christians are free to be together as an imperfect community with imperfect leaders.

Worship became central to the community's life together. *Now the Feast and Celebration* and *Holden Evening Prayer* became their language, song and prayer. The council dispensed with a formal method of voting on every issue in favor of using a consensus model of making decisions. The congregation stopped worrying about a building; they started building a community. The new mission had been required to give 15% to benevolence. When the requirement no longer applied, they increased their benevolence to 18%.

When they outgrew one service in the music room, the easy choice was to move back to the auditorium and wait for the building. The community decided to be mission focused on outreach and offer an additional worship service on a new day. Not everyone agreed with the choice, but everybody supported the choice once it was made.

Every meeting now starts with Bible study and prayer. The largest and healthiest ministry is the Prayer Team. The foundation of the building is now being dug, but the foundation of the community is already growing strong.

Author: The Rev. Bill Bernau (Wartburg Seminary 2001), serves as Pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, Adel, Iowa.

Challenges

Three years passed from hitting rock-bottom. Can God will a community to new life? Last week 200 people gathered for worship: 95 on Sunday, 105 on Wednesday. What is their evangelism strategy? They don't have one; except for the fact that they love the Lord and each other as best they can, and they live in a state of grace.

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Imagine what it feels like to be part of a congregation struggling to survive. Imagine what a congregation living fully in a state of grace would be like. How does this connect with your own church experiences? Share your own stories. Help your congregation dream....and act.

2. What do you think are essential components of being a congregation that is "mission focused" in evangelical outreach?

Foundations of the Church

Approach

“Foundations of the Church” focuses on Christianity during its first five centuries – those seminal years of Christian identity formation and church growth. In this course students learn how the Church as an institution came into being and how it spread throughout the Roman Empire, to points east, west and eventually northwards, christianizing Europe.

This course is taught in the first semester of a three semester church history sequence. It is required of all Master of Divinity and Master of Arts students. “Ages of Faith and Reform,” covering the later medieval and reformation periods, and “Christianity in the Modern World,” examining primarily Christianity in America, follow the first course for Master of Divinity students. Each course, in its own way, illuminates evangelical foundations of the Church.

How did Christianity move from being a small, persecuted group to the favored, and then official, religion of the Roman Empire? Christianity began as a Jewish sect, initially ignored by Roman authorities. When it did come to public attention, Christians were viewed as a death-loving, subversive cult, centered around a man who had been executed as a criminal by the Roman government. Christians were reviled as atheists, traitors, and haters of humanity. Yet in less than three centuries, Christians were lauded by the emperor and appointed to positions of influence in the Roman government.

This change in fortune had both positive and negative consequences. Christianity became more visible to the outside world. Freedom to proclaim the Christian message allowed open discussions on doctrinal issues. Enthusiastic and highly educated people became Christians, applying their intellect and insight to questions of Christian faith and practice. At the same time, many others joined the church because it was socially or politically advantageous to do so.

“What can we learn from the way the message was contextualized for that culture?”

Christianity had to find ways to evangelize the culture, which was still overwhelmingly pagan in worldview and mindset, now that it had, in effect, “conquered” the governing powers. Eventually, Christianity became so identified with Rome and Roman

power that Christians outside the Empire were viewed with hostility and suspicion as potential Roman agents, curtailing evangelism efforts.

Challenges

The study of Church history needs to be extended from a western-facing bias to a more global perspective. In “Foundations of the Church,” this means finding ways to include Eastern Christianity outside the Empire. Brief mention of Christians in Syria or Persia is not enough. During the centuries before the rise of Islam, Christianity made great inroads along the Silk Routes into India, amongst the tribes of Central Asia, and even as far as China. We need to explore this geographical expansion of Christianity, while not sacrificing the theologians and doctrinal disputes that are of continuing importance to western Christianity today.

A second challenge lies in exploring the ways Christianity did advance during these early centuries and what, if any, mission strategies of that time are pertinent or useful for us today. Were there ways in which the Christian message was spread that have universal appeal, or is the message always so tightly contextual that it needs to be formulated anew for each age? What can we learn from how the message was contextualized for that culture, that we can use to do the same for our own?

For Reflection and Discussion

1. What can we learn from the spread of Christianity around the world in Asia or Africa?

2. What are some of the ways that Christianity relates to governing power today? In a pluralistic nation, how can we evangelize appropriately and well?

Approach

The seminary course, Ethics in Lutheran Perspective, introduces students to an interpretation of Luther's Two Kingdoms teaching that demonstrates why both social ministry (the ministry of Christians in the world) and evangelism (speaking the Gospel to others) are essential to the mission of Lutheran congregations. The ethical framework of the Two Kingdoms makes clear that God works in the world both through temporal governance – which involves Christians in social ministry – and through spiritual governance – which involves Christians in evangelism. Social ministry and evangelism belong together as two distinct, essential ways that God rules in the world.

One crucial challenge for congregational ministry is maintaining an intentional focus on mission. Those congregations that have developed a strong missional focus often gravitate toward one of two alternatives: either they understand mission to be about providing ministry to those in physical need (social ministry) or they understand mission to be proclaiming the Good News to those in spiritual need of Christ (evangelism). Thus there are churches that understand their mission primarily about either social ministry or about evangelism but rarely have equal passion for both.

Luther understood God to be engaged in fierce competition with Satan for control over the world. In this contest, God employs two distinct "strategies," a left-hand strategy of temporal governance and a right-hand strategy of spiritual governance. Traditionally these two strategies have been referred to as the two "kingdoms." In the left-hand strategy, God seeks to provide good and just order in the world through government, labor, and family life. In this strategy, God works through the structures of the world. In the right-hand strategy, God works through the theological use of the law, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the freedom of the Gospel. The Gospel sets us free from sin, death, and the power of Satan and free for serving the needs of the neighbor.

Christians participate in both of these strategies: When we examine our lives in light of God's law, we are convicted of our sin. The recognition of our failure to measure up to God's will leads to repentance and prepares us to receive the Gospel. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is received as a pure gift. It comes to us through the proclaimed word of a sermon, the story of Christ shared by a Christian, or in the visible words of the sacraments. Jesus Christ comes alive as we hear the Gospel and we trust in his grace. The Gospel of Jesus Christ has the power to set us free from everything that holds us in bondage and free for paying attention to the needs of others.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ sets Christians free to engage both in God's left-hand strategy – by caring for the needs of others in all of God's world through social ministry – and in God's right-hand strategy – by sharing the Good News of what Christ has done through our evangelizing! God is ambidextrous! God needs Christians and congregations to hold social ministry and evangelism together as they participate in God's mission.

“The Gospel of Jesus Christ has the power to set us free *from* everything that holds us in bondage and free *for* paying attention to the needs of others.”

Author: The Rev. Dr. Craig L. Nesson serves as Professor of Contextual Theology and Academic Dean at Wartburg Theological Seminary.

Challenges

The Two Kingdoms teaching of Luther has been misinterpreted in many destructive ways, often to justify Christian quietism and complacency. Can we reinterpret Luther's Two Kingdoms in order to restore integrity and vitality to both social ministry and evangelism in the life of the contemporary church?

For Reflection and Discussion

1. How do you envision both social ministry and evangelism joined in mission? How is that happening or not happening in your congregation? How might we engage or re-engage in both with integrity and vitality?

2. Talk, in specific ways, about how the Gospel – being freed from sin, death and the power of Satan – liberates us for serving the neighbor.

Approach

Evangelism and advocacy are intricately woven together in the call to ministry we receive in baptism. In striving for justice and peace in our world, the church witnesses to the Gospel in public life. We challenge systems that serve the idols of power and wealth, and we advocate for public and corporate policies that advance human dignity, justice, and care for creation. In so doing, we speak a prophetic word as evangelists, as disciples of the One “anointed to bring Good News to the poor.”

Listening is a vital part of proclaiming. Wartburg students learn to understand the world from the perspective of those who suffer, or what Bonhoeffer calls the “view from below.” In the course, “Jesus and the Gospels,” we learned about the political impact of Jesus' inclusive life and teaching, and its deep threat to the social structures of the day. In “Church and Ministry,” we studied civil religion, the “justice trajectory” that runs throughout Scripture, and God's desire for “shalom” for all people. In “Educational Ministry,” we learned to read the daily headlines in light of law and gospel. In “Ethics in Lutheran Perspective,” we studied global economics, world hunger, and the roles of church and government. We analyzed the scriptural and theological roots in our church's social statements.

In our ministries, as we continue to grow in identifying with all who suffer, God calls us into new ways of relating. We cannot do other than to advocate justice, one for another.

Evangelical outreach through advocacy encourages disciples of Jesus Christ to deepen and broaden our service to the poor, the powerless, and all who suffer. In addition to providing hands-on ministries of service, we study social

issues, working to address the causes of poverty and oppression, and discern how to respond to challenges in our own context in light of God's Word.

Although Colorado is one of the wealthiest states in the nation, its perverse income tax policy has forced the state into ongoing budget deficits. The brunt of this crisis has fallen on people living in poverty who have lost access to many basic human services. Some children, pregnant women, and legal immigrants lost access to health care. All funding for school-breakfast and affordable-housing programs was eliminated.

Lutheran Advocacy Ministry is working with people in need, service providers, grassroots organizers, fiscal experts, and other advocacy organizations to build a broad coalition for tax reform. Partnering with many faith communities, we have launched the “Let Justice Roll” program, encouraging people of faith to study tax and budget policy, then advocate with legislators, friends, and neighbors for changes that ensure tax fairness. In ELCA congregations, we are providing Lenten resources, encouraging congregations to weave together the faith practices of charity and justice to address the long-term needs of the poor. We are offering budget and advocacy training, providing speakers and advocacy alerts, and organizing congregational teams to visit with policy makers on our Lutheran Day at the Legislature. Our concrete goal is significant tax reform, which must be approved by Colorado voters. All of these are expressions of evangelical outreach.

“Evangelism and Advocacy are intricately woven together in the call to ministry we receive in baptism.”

Author: Terri McMaster (Wartburg 2000), serves as diaconal minister in Lutheran Advocacy Ministry for the Rocky Mountain Synod in Colorado.

Challenges

In recent years, the prophetic voice of the faith community has nearly been silenced in the public sphere. We have allowed it to be drowned out by efforts of the religious right to reduce moral values to a couple of controversial social issues. As a result, legislators often assume that all Christian advocates are intolerant and punitive; our witness is suspect. We must find new, more powerful ways to bring God's demand for justice to bear in the public debate by combining evangelism and advocacy.

For Reflection and Discussion

1. What do you think of when you hear the word, "advocacy"? Where do you see advocacy for justice and shalom in scripture?

2. How does Jesus Christ's death and resurrection liberate and empower us for evangelism and advocacy among the poor, the powerless, and those who suffer? Name one concrete action that is called for in your area.

Approach

“Ministry in Times of Crisis: Stress, Depression, Conflict and Opportunity” is a 3-credit course in pastoral theology. The course meets an area requirement in pastoral care for students in Wartburg's Master of Divinity program, but is open to all Wartburg students. Pastoral ministry in the congregation and evangelical outreach to the world are the twin foci of this course. The central assumption is that ministry and evangelism must aim at being both faithful and effective.

When the desire to be effective is not controlled by a commitment to being faithful, evangelism may be reduced to mere cynical manipulation. When the commitment to being faithful is not shaped by a concern for effectiveness, evangelism may serve nothing more than the desire of the evangelist to be regarded as righteous. While outreach that is faithful requires a deep understanding of the Scriptures, outreach that is effective requires an accurate attunement to the tenor of the times.

A generation ago the church was called and sent to interpret the Gospel in a modernist “age of anxiety.” We responded to that challenge with some degree of both faithfulness and effectiveness. The modernist “age of anxiety” has given way to a postmodernist era of stress and depression. One goal of this course is to help students to understand the factors that make depression a global epidemic and stress-related disorders a major cause of disability and death at the beginning of the 21st Century. The other goal of this course is to help students explore lectionary texts and church doctrines as they address the human experiences of stress and depression.

Each time our class gathers, we read the lectionary texts our congregations will hear the following Sunday. Our goal, each week, is to deepen our evangelical insight by seeking a confluence of three streams: (1) good exegesis of the week's texts, (2) insightful interpretation of the week's news, and (3) scientific understanding of “basic human needs” as they relate to the dynamics of stress and depression.

“Outreach that is faithful requires a deep understanding of the Scriptures; outreach that is effective requires an accurate attunement to the tenor of the times.”

In a world where people hunger for the Good News of God's grace, we see that the experiences that lead to depression are chaos and loss, captivity and futility, shame and humiliation. Students began to find new meaning in the biblical imagery of wilderness and storms at sea. In looking at depression as an “identity disorder,” students become

able to articulate a deeper appreciation of Lutheran insights about “baptismal identity” and justification, as well as a new understanding of the language of contempt, derision, and mockery that describes the Passion of our Lord.

Challenges

A week does not go by without major stories being announced by the leading news organizations about “the new science of human nature.” The new technologies of neuroscience and the mapping of the human genome shape our understanding of what it means to be human, even as they influence our experience of “the perennial human predicament.” One evangelism challenge that pastoral theology must take seriously is this: staying current with new developments in this “new science of human nature” and engaging these developments with the scriptures and doctrines of the church.

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Discuss openly and honestly some misgivings and fears you might have about evangelism being “reduced to mere cynical manipulation” or a “desire to be regarded as righteous.”

2. What signs of stress and depression do you see in and among the people where you live and work? In what words might the Good News of Jesus Christ be spoken so that it genuinely speaks to people experiencing chaos? Loss? Captivity? Futility? Shame? Humiliation?

Approach

The heart of “Educational Ministry,” a 3-credit course, is that the church is a learning community and that learning leads to mission and mission leads to learning. “Education” and “evangelism” are closely and vitally linked.

The way we teach teaches as powerfully as what we teach. Therefore evangelism is not just content, but a way of being. Students learn the difference between teaching methods that are legalistic and those that are evangelical. They develop skills in a full range of teaching and learning methods to reach all kinds of people. Students learn that all Christian education must be parish neighborhood outreach education. A strong emphasis is placed on ministry in daily life. Education is measured not in completed worksheets, pages finished, or books read; education is measured in evangelical mission.

“All Christian education must be parish neighborhood outreach education.”

In designing two lesson plans for two different age groups using the same biblical text, students are asked to assess the specific needs of each group of people. They work on discerning law and Gospel in regard to text and people. The

“Good News” is not Good News if it is not specifically related to the needs of people, the human predicament. Theologian Letty Russell wrote that Jesus did not say to a blind person, “You can walk,” nor to a person who could not walk, “You can see.” Christ looked right at a person and asked, “What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus cared about the societal problems related to specific human need.

In class, students gain skills for ministry through use of a variety of methods. In role-play we explore the various aspects of the human predicament and actually speak the Gospel of Jesus Christ in words that meet the person where he or she is. If the human problem is guilt, the Good News is that God through Jesus Christ forgives; if the human problem is brokenness, the Good News is Jesus makes us whole; if the human problem is being alienated, the Good News is God reconciles and restores relationships; if the human problem is bondage, the Good News is Jesus means freedom. In speaking the Gospel to one another in the classroom, students experience evangelism as they gain confidence in teaching and outreach.

Challenges

In this pluralistic culture, seminary students need knowledge about culture and about world religions. In a time when religion is back in the news, and “spirituality” is popular, we need to reach and teach people who are blending their own mix of religion. How do we prepare adult education classes for a person who considers himself or herself a mixture of Lutheran and Unitarian, or Episcopalian and Buddhist? And everywhere there is a lack of biblical knowledge. We need to help students develop teaching skills and curriculum resources for reaching people with such individualistic syncretistic religious outlooks. Evangelism and education must go together in ever more complex ways.

Children are not only Sunday School students; they are ministers. A strong component of the course emphasizes that all ages need education and that everyone, in their baptism, is called to ministry. We need to continue to develop specific skills in equipping children – as well as youth and adults – to be evangelists.

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Reflect on and discuss examples of how the way we teach “teaches as powerfully as what we teach.” How might we make our methods of teaching more evangelical, more life-giving in Christ?

2. Among people you know (perhaps including yourself), what blending of beliefs have you found? How might the Good News of Jesus Christ be shared differently according to people's different backgrounds, experiences, and current dilemmas?

Approach

Spiritual direction conversation is an intentional conversation in which I listen to an individual reflecting on his or her experience of God's stirrings and activity in life. It is my work to be open to the Holy Spirit and the questions and insights that are raised up through me as I listen to this individual speak about her life of prayer, his growing ways to recognize how Jesus' promises invite deeper trust to live a servant life, her experience of faith in the risen Christ transforming her life into a life of discipleship. There is a close relationship between the practice of spiritual direction and evangelism.

Integrating "God talk" into the ordinary course of conversation releases one's deeply rooted faith into daily life and relationships in a new way. Evangelism, sharing the Good News of God's love and forgiveness in Jesus Christ, happens in a natural way in daily relationships when the passion of faith within a believer is free to be expressed in words, as well as acts of care and justice. The questions of "when" and "how" this is done cannot be answered with specific answers. Rather the person of faith grows in an ability to recognize and trust that the Holy Spirit is prompting her to speak a witness of hope or encouragement in Jesus, in God with us, in the course of ordinary and daily life interactions with others.

A recent conversation with a seminary student happened like this: We sat down in soft chairs facing each other. I reminded him that this next hour was his to talk about whatever was on his heart. Within a few sentences he had shared the litany of home moves, changes in communities of friends, adjustments in household budget that had transpired in the past three years. Now at thirty some years in age, BA degree in hand, he and his family were at seminary.

As I listened, I could sense the sincerity and commitment that filled the core of his being. Like Abraham and Sarah of the Hebrew Bible story, folk do not travel a journey like this without a conviction of God's call. I expressed this to him, and then asked, "How do you sense God's presence in the midst of all this?"

There was a long pause and with embarrassed hesitancy and downcast eyes he acknowledged that he is sure the answer is in him-his faith is deep-but he has never learned how to put it in words to share it with others.

This "cradle Lutheran" seminarian speaks a story I have heard over and over again. One of the many gifts to me in spiritual direction work at Wartburg is

"In spiritual direction they begin to experience the integration of lived faith and freely spoken witness."

that I have no doubt at all that the Holy Spirit is at work among God's people raising up and calling forth leaders for Christ's church. I listen to person after person telling stories of call. In profound acts of trust in Jesus they follow that call to Dubuque to begin seminary studies. The faith that undergirds this trust is deep, abiding, and often times so intimate that it is difficult to find

words to express it in conversation. In spiritual direction they begin to experience the joy that emerges through integration of lived faith and freely spoken witness to that faith in Jesus Christ. The experience of spiritual direction forms people in evangelically speaking their faith.

Challenges

Lack of formation in personally speaking about one's faith, coupled with our society's privatization of religion, has taught in clear and in subtle ways that it is not appropriate to talk about faith. This has yielded that people called to prepare for leadership are reluctant to speak about a personal faith in a conversational setting. Clinical Pastoral Education supervisors have identified this characteristic in their ELCA students as well. Developing a new kind of formation is indispensable to releasing the faith to address daily relationships.

Congregations of faith-filled believers also are caught in this reluctance to speak the faith. Preparing leaders to speak of personal faith offers role models for those who silently cry out for the freedom and courage to speak of faith in their family, work and neighborhood relationships.

For Reflection and Discussion

1. What connections do you see between spirituality and evangelism?

2. How might we minister to people by helping them listen to the Spirit's stirring in their lives so that they might be more equipped to speak about their personal faith in everyday conversational settings?

Approach

What would evangelism look like today if we were to take the "mission discourses" (Matthew 10.1-16 || Mark 3.13-19, 6.7-11 || Luke 9.1-6 and 10.1-20) as its programmatic texts? First, we would notice

“Evangelism would be about proclaiming God’s reign by actions that care for the whole lives of persons.”

that in all three Synoptic Gospels the emphasis is on healing the sick. Luke makes it clear that giving medical care proclaims "the reign of God" (Lk 9.1-2 and 10.9; compare Mk 6.12). "Evangelism," then, would be about proclaiming God's reign by

actions that care for the whole lives of persons. "Christianity" and "social services" would be inseparable.

Second, we would notice that none of these texts make a commitment to follow Jesus, let alone membership in a church, a condition - or expected result - of the offer of care. The expectation is only that residents of the towns and villages "welcome" the evangelists and "listen" to them (Mk 6.11, Mt 10.14, and Lk 10.10). Of course, a decision to follow Jesus and join the Jesus movement would not be refused. An invitation to do so might well be offered, but such an invitation is not in the foreground of these texts.

What is in the foreground, in addition to the care for the sick, is that visits in homes are to begin with words of "peace" and that the evangelists are not to push the gospel on those who indicate no interest in it (Mk 6.11, Mt 10.11-15, and Lk 10.10-16). What are we to make of the harsh words of judgment in connection with the latter? We might begin by understanding them in their context at the time of the Gospels, which was one of intense conflict between the Jesus movement and sectors of eastern Mediterranean societies, which were religiously diverse.

The Jesus movement met opposition, not only from rival forms of Judaism, of which it was a relatively new expression, but also from other indigenous religions and religious thinkers (see, for example, evidence in Paul's letters of the gentile opposition he and his entourage encountered in Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece, and such texts as Acts 17.16-34 and 19.21-41).

Challenges

The question is whether we are obligated to follow the example of the harsh words of retaliation against opposing views, or whether our situation is so radically different that the gospel today calls for different responses to religious diversity. After all, since the time of Constantine, Christianity has been an "imperial" religion, and not an oppressed minority movement. Our situation calls, instead, for the creation of safe places for mutually respectful dialogue, where all points of view can listen to the others.

Christianity developed precisely because of its capacity to transform itself creatively as it encountered the "different others" in the cultures into which it moved. Of course, there have been times when Christianity's leading response to religious pluralism was to safeguard its traditions and to seek to destroy the difference it found in others – and even to destroy the others themselves. It would be a shame for Christianity today to lose its capacity for creative transformation, especially at a time like ours when those from other religions seem open to dialogues that are genuinely two-way.

Finally, what if our churches today were to repent of their preoccupation with in-group self-interests and institutional maintenance? The earliest evangelists, perhaps under Jesus' influence, understood Jesus' and their mission to be limited to Israelites (Mt 10.5-6). But then they expanded their mission to include Gentiles (Mk 7.24-30 | | Mt 15.21-28, Lk 24.47, Acts 1.8, Mt 28.18-20, and, of course, the Pauline letters). To paraphrase a saying of Jesus, churches that help only their own members, or only those who express a commitment to become members, are no different from run-of-the-mill voluntary associations (compare Mt 5.47). God calls the church to a nobler and wider mission.

For Reflection and Discussion

1. How can we help create safe places for mutually respectful dialogue so that Christ's word of "peace" and care for the whole lives of persons might truly be shared?
2. As we encounter "different others" how might we grow in our capacity to creatively engage them and be transformed?

Approach

As faithful Christians and future leaders in the ELCA, students at Wartburg are challenged and taught to live out their baptismal calling by serving God's saving, compassionate, and loving purposes for creation in the world. Students are encouraged to proclaim Christ evangelically in both word and deed and to empower others to do the same. It is clear in most every course and activity that Wartburg strives to teach and instill in students the essence of its mission statement: "learning leads to mission and mission informs learning."

In addition to Biblical and theological studies, Wartburg recognizes that seminary is a critical time for students to develop and deepen good spiritual practices, continue to grow in their faith, further discern their calling, and discover the benefits and necessities of multicultural and ecumenical partnerships. All of these help equip and train students to become life-long faithful evangelists and leaders of mission-based, dynamic congregations.

The introductory preaching course, "Text to Sermon," clearly stresses the need for a pastor's own Biblical study, prayer, and spiritual growth above and beyond the sermon preparation in order to be an effective proclaimer of the message of God. An introductory youth ministry course, "Seen

and Heard," emphasizes the need to empower and support youth to share Christ evangelically with others and to utilize their gifts for service in the church. "Educational Ministry" teaches the importance of life-long faith formation in the congregation that grounds evangelical testimony. Pastoral care classes, such as "Stress and Depression," open the eyes of students to the intense need for the gospel message

among those who are hurting and suffering. The anti-racism workshop and cross-cultural requirements enlarge the worlds of students so that they may learn how to share Christ with others in various contexts and welcome diversity in their congregations.

Beyond classes, Wartburg offers spiritual direction on both a group and individual basis where students can explore how God is working in their lives and share that with others. Monthly retreats, daily chapel, weekly lectio divina, and other offerings help to focus students on their mission and their spiritual development. There are numerous opportunities, some of which are required, to serve outside the Wartburg community. These include serving meals for the homeless, tutoring children at an after-school program for at-risk children, teaching Sunday School and confirmation at local congregations, and supporting others in crisis. These opportunities for ministry immerse students in the evangelical outreach of the church in the world.

"Students are encouraged to proclaim Christ evangelically in both word and deed and to empower others to do the same."

Challenges

While a number of courses help students gain skill in developing vital congregations and transforming struggling ones, a specific course dealing with starting new congregations would be useful. The “Rural Ministry” class is particularly helpful in introducing these concepts.

Assigning student mentors to incoming seminary students would encourage growth, accountability, and encouragement of students in their work and mission. It could also provide an excellent model of one way to train laity in the parish to take on new evangelism tasks.

The seminary is always in need of quality internship sites where the congregation has developed a vibrant ministry that can be a great aid in training students to lead churches in mission.

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Talk about a sermon you recently gave or heard. How did proclamation of the text lead the congregation to more clearly see and be empowered for their own speaking the news of Jesus Christ to others during the week?

2. Not everyone becomes a seminary student. What study opportunities are available in your local congregation for all of the laity to become evangelists in daily life?

Approach

Since 1997, Wartburg Theological Seminary has been offering a two-year residential Master of Arts in Theology, Development, and Evangelism. Foundational to the program is the concept that evangelism, as the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, addresses the whole person. The mission statement of the program states: "The program serves the church and the world by providing advanced theological, missiological, and community development skills to recognized leaders in Lutheran and ecumenical partner churches throughout the world, for the larger purpose of advancing the gospel of Jesus Christ in religiously pluralistic and economically challenging contexts."

The rationale for the program is that God loved the world (cosmos) so much that God gave Jesus. For women and men who seek to follow Jesus, the task is to serve in the name and spirit of Jesus, to make Christ known in word and deed thereby strengthening the church on earth.

"Consider the model of serving as a leader who witnesses through love, understanding, mutual respect, and dialogue."

Within the program, a course is taught entitled "Evangelism in Community Development." This course seeks to fulfill seven objectives:

1. To examine the biblical witness to the gospel;
2. To understand evangelism as a natural part of one's personal relationships;
3. To explore the interrelatedness of gospel, culture, and mission;
4. To consider the meaning of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the encounter with the religions of the world;
5. To consider the model of serving as a leader who witnesses through love, understanding, mutual respect, and dialogue;
6. To explore the Lutheran confessional character of evangelism;
7. To practice "translating" the gospel into the language of one's culture.

Other courses in the program also include an evangelism component. The first semester of the program engages students in learning ways of building community which models Christ's kingdom through actions and words. An objective of the "Methods of Community Development" course states: "to learn ways in which community development witnesses to Jesus Christ."

One person from Tanzania reflecting on the program observed: "This program addresses the commission of our Lord Jesus to the Church... I feel that all our development efforts should stem from our desire to share Christ with others."

Challenges

Within the program and the seminary as a whole, the challenges include:

1. How can the church constantly re-focus on what it means to be faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ in word and deed?
2. How do we articulate the uniqueness of Jesus Christ in our pluralistic age among a pantheon of other deities, including secularism?
3. As witnesses of Jesus Christ, how is evangelism accomplished inside and outside of the Church through presence (incarnational ministry), service and dialogue?
4. How do we announce the Good News of Jesus Christ to the baptized who may not realize God's work of salvation in their lives.

For Reflection and Discussion

1. How did Jesus engage people? In what ways does evangelism, the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, address the whole person in both word and deed?

2. How might your congregation participate in community development in your area? How might you foster more extensive international partnerships of community development?

The Evangelism of Discovering Hope in Rural Congregations

Approach

The Center for Theology and Land at Wartburg Theological Seminary has as its mission “the strengthening of congregations in town and country locations.” This includes evangelism as one of the primary ways of strengthening congregations. Our task has been to work with congregations to discover ways of calling people to discipleship in Christ and of furthering Christ's mission.

One of our findings has been that in rural congregations mission and evangelism are interconnected. Ministries of service and caring are evangelical. Calling others to discipleship means living out the Gospel in mission. This is especially true in those locations where “everybody knows your name” and the authenticity of discipleship is transparent.

A second finding is that relational evangelism is particularly appropriate in most town and country locations. Inviting friends, neighbors, relatives, acquaintances, and newcomers to church-sponsored events is a good way to welcome future disciples.

“Calling others to discipleship means living out the Gospel in mission.”

One project of the Center has found widespread use throughout many Midwestern synods. That is our “Discovering Hope” process for building vitality in rural congregations. It is based on learning the practices (ways of doing things, evangelism activities) that congregations have already put in place. These are concrete, tangible, and identifiable actions.

Over the course of three years, a leadership team set up a process for identifying those congregations whose evangelism, discipleship, and leadership practices had been sources of energy for them and their communities. Three members of each congregational team came to ELCA churchwide offices in Chicago for the “Discovery” event. At that time we asked the participants to discuss with each other the practices which they had been living out in their congregations. Finally, the leadership team produced a book reporting those best practices and a video to disseminate the fantastic reports they had heard. The book, by David Poling-Goldenne and Shannon Jung, is titled *Discovering Hope: Building Vitality in Rural Congregations* (Augsburg Fortress, 2001) and the video uses the same cover graphic and name. The book emphasizes evangelism, worship, and prayer in particular. It can be used by congregations to discover their own best practices in evangelism. The video demonstrates the best practice as it is taking place in three of the particular “discovering hope” congregations.

The book and video have proven useful and been adopted by seven Midwestern synods. They have also been useful in Wartburg's “Ministry in Rural Context” course on campus.

Challenges

Learning ways of inviting people into a relationship with Jesus Christ involves the offering of hospitality and welcome of the whole person without pressure or hard sell.

The rural church thinks of everything it does as mission and evangelism, but sometimes caring ministries need to remember and announce that it is in the name of Jesus Christ and his church that we are engaged in mission to the world. We need to welcome others to the feast that we enjoy.

For Reflection and Discussion

1. In your congregation – whether rural, urban or suburban – how do you see ministries of service and caring as expressions of evangelism? How might relational evangelism be strengthened?

2. How “hopeful” is your congregation? How and where might you “discover hope”?

Approach

The Metro St. Louis Coalition, a regional partnership of 40 ELCA congregations and 14 endorsed ministries, crosses state, synod, ecumenical and congregational lines. This active alliance faces the stark realities of the larger church, as it closes more congregations than it plants in both Illinois and Missouri. Attempting new mission starts with old models created deep frustrations in both an urban and a suburban setting. The search for a new systemic approach led to the formation of ACTS, a gathering of three pastors and three diaconal ministers who felt called to “act” missionally in a region that hungers for new models of evangelism.

Two members came from Wartburg Seminary where the curriculum, colloquia, plenaries, J-Term immersions, and life in a multicultural community encouraged collaboration and innovation. These attitudes helped develop fresh models of ministry in an American church context which is often entrenched and divided. From the beginning, the ACTS group had a communal sense that ministry at all levels must include: the gathering of gifts, intentional partnering, equipping of leaders, and calling all the baptized into discipleship to live in faith everyday.

Of the six ACTors, the clergy (all ELCA Division of Outreach-certified mission developers) serve in the newest urban, suburban, and potential church planting places. One diaconal minister is the Director of the Metro Coalition; the other two are positioned in growing suburban congregations ready and willing to build bridges. Having worked together on various projects since 1999, they recently began a seminal four-week study of Acts.

Common issues surfaced through prayer, biblical reflection, brainstorming, venting, discerning, and exploring. The travels and reconfigurations of the first-century church encouraged ACTS to live into a

similar process of gathering, sending, and circling back to a collaborative home base.

An early goal was to initiate lay mission training, but when the new Episcopal School for Congregational Development began, ACTS transformed into a less focused, but still fruitful, incubator for innovation: existing mission boards were radically restructured; new urban-suburban partnerships, a “GO-Team” to promote church planting, and “Generous Hearts and Hands” (a unified funding and service opportunity) were begun in the Coalition by the

end of the year.

“Attempting new mission starts with old models created deep frustrations in both an urban and suburban setting.”

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Challenges

Pervasive racism and traditionalism make it difficult to raise up minority leaders and to equip rostered personnel and local lay leaders as creative and collaborative 'mission developers.' People working together in evangelical mission need to be open to mutual transformation.

Attitudes of scarcity and fear, lone-ranger and parochial patterns of ministry, and just plain inertia stifle new partnerships. Local meetings of rostered leaders need to focus more intentionally on evangelism and mission. This monthly opportunity could yet be filled with the gathering and sending of 'new-paradigm' gifts and wisdom.

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Consider possible Lutheran or ecumenical partnerships that might creatively encourage one another to "act missionally." Perhaps an old alliance might be revitalized. Perhaps a new configuration might reach across old boundaries. Where might you start?

2. How do racism and classism inhibit mission growth? What can we do about that?

Approach

There are a variety of courses offered at Wartburg that reflect our commitment to ministry with young people and serve our concentration in Youth, Culture and Mission (for both Master of Arts and Master of Divinity students). One course in particular, "Seen and Heard: Foundations for Youth & Family Ministry," is required of all Master of Divinity students before internship. In most of these courses our approach to ministry with young people focuses on being evangelical rather than doing evangelism. In fact, we believe that as soon as evangelism becomes something that one must "do" we risk losing touch with the evangelical impulse that is central to the Christian gospel.

God intends Christianity to be more than a system of belief or a commodity that can be programmed, packaged, and marketed as the ever-elusive new and improved quick fix. Christian beliefs and practices are intended

"God intends Christianity to be more than a system of belief or a commodity that can be programmed, packaged, and marketed as the ever-elusive new and improved quick fix."

to foster a way of life as followers of Jesus Christ that in turn send us into the world to imitate the forgiveness, mercy, and love of God. Drawn by the Spirit, our cause and deepest passion is to attend to the reign of God within community and in God's world. Community in Jesus Christ is not something we create or can coerce people into-it is a gift to which the Spirit calls people. In an authentic Christian community, there are no insid-

ers and outsiders, but only souls from both far off and nearby, being drawn closer to God and one another by the love of Christ.

Students are encouraged to practice evangelical living and forego any programmatic, modernist attempts at "doing" evangelism. We engage in practices that cultivate a posture of evangelical living: attending, or deeply listening to the stories of others; observing and paying attention to the embedded spirituality that exists in people's lives; and honoring and taking others seriously as persons, understanding that each person's spiritual path is unique. In "Seen and Heard" local teenagers are invited into the classroom as "experts" - they teach, we listen. Students also are asked to join in regular conversation with teenagers outside of the classroom as an ongoing practice.

In the course, "The Cultures of Youth and the Question of Identity," students are immersed in a particular context (e.g., Miguel's Coffee Shop, Moondog Music, the lobby of the YMCA/YWCA) in order to set up a "listening post" - paying attention, observing, listening and joining in dialogue with others. As practical theologians, students experience the classroom as a place to stand in between a normative text from the Christian Story (e.g., Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch from Acts 8) and the realities of the life worlds that we inhabit with others. We reflect critically and theologically on who we are as Christians in the present.

Challenges

The birthing of Christians is a work of the Holy Spirit, to which the church community is midwife. As people are called by the Holy Spirit into a love relationship with God, the people of God are called to come alongside them as they journey and discern a calling to the Christian faith.

Although the practice of *martyreo* (bearing witness) is central to evangelical living, there is one important caveat: In our emerging cultural context today, one must earn the right to speak the Good News of Jesus Christ to another. Evangelical living begins with evangelical listening, that is, being present and attending to others in such a way as to build trust and lead people to deeper faith questions. This approach takes time and patience; there is no model or magic formulae. This is a challenge for all of us who live in the age of the quick fix.

For Reflection and Discussion

1. What does a congregation that is being evangelical look like? Give thanks for the places where and people in whom you see the Good News being lived. How, by the power of the Spirit, might you help lead your congregation towards being a more “authentic Christian community?”

2. Where might you establish listening posts among young people? Among people of all ages?

Approach

The course, "Theology for Youth Outreach" is part of Wartburg seminary's mission emphasis and is recommended for the students in the Master of Arts in Youth Culture and Mission. We begin by focusing both on the context of American youth culture and a theological

"With the arrival of religiously diverse people, we have to learn to translate the powerful Lutheran theology of proclamation into a new practice of evangelism."

anthropology that analyzes and addresses youth that are shaped by or in reaction to that culture. Sociological and psychological studies of youth in their culture aid in giving flesh and blood to the outreach task. Surfing the internet in regard to the messages of popular music and the ads aimed at youth gives students a sense of the forces influencing youth today. The church's evangelistic mission and message as shaped by biblical, historical and practical theology is to be framed in "the

language of the mall," which needs to be modeled after Luther's biblical translations in "the language of the marketplace."

Introducing categories like "excluded," "enslaved," and "encultured" helps students "diagnose" and name dimensions of the human condition that theology labels original sin, bondage of the will, and sins or trespasses. Jesus is presented as friend for the excluded, hero for the enslaved, and brother for the encultured. These are given as examples of the way we need to find terms-in mall language-to communicate the gospel without trying to adopt the latest slang, while nevertheless using categories youth can understand.

A consultation of Lutheran youth workers at Wartburg highlighted the importance of using music to reach youth with the gospel. A gospel-rock musical based on Luke's Gospel was the product of the first class on youth evangelism taught with Paul Hill. Contemporary re-telling of John's Gospel, one version set in the 1st century and the other version set in the 21st century, are studied as examples of ways to communicate the Jesus story to those who have never heard it.

The point is to be able to share the gospel in ways that address the issues and problems that concern youth. The importance of listening to individual youth is stressed. Dialoguing with classmates and "practice" in sharing their concerns and their faith is a prelude to the final paper in which they describe how they would share the gospel with a youth they knew or read about. This final paper is discussed with a dialogue partner before its completion and then again afterwards-just before its submission-with oral and written comments by the classmates.

Challenges

The very word, “evangelism,” is a challenge for students, as it is for laity in congregations. Paul Hill and I soon learned that even students interested in youth ministry were scared off by the term “evangelism.” Hence the title of this course: Theology for Youth Outreach. Whether it's door-knocking, tract-passing, or other confrontational “Are you saved?” approaches that scare Lutherans, we have a problem! Now that the “mission field” is moving into our neighborhoods, through the arrival of religiously diverse people, we have to learn to translate the powerful Lutheran theology of proclamation into a new practice of evangelism. We need to learn to witness, with pastoral sensitivity, to youth (and their families) the gospel of justification in whatever mall-talk will communicate that great, Good News.

For Reflection and Discussion

1. What are some of your frustrations with stereotypical approaches to evangelism that “scare Lutherans”?

2. What are some dimensions of the human condition (“excluded,” “enslaved,” “encultured”) that you see in people today? How might Jesus be presented in language that speaks to those conditions?

Approach

The basic framework for the teaching of Systematic Theology at Wartburg Seminary is set by our introductory course. It is informed by the task of effectively bearing witness to Jesus Christ in a world where there are many competing alternatives, both religious and secular. If our graduates are to evangelize, first, they must be able to say clearly the fundamental message of the gospel in a way that relates what God has done in Jesus Christ to fundamental human longings for wholeness and life. Second, they need to be aware of the variety of forms the Christian message has taken in different cultural and social contexts throughout Christian history and throughout the world.

“Our graduates must be able to say clearly the fundamental message of the gospel in a way that relates what God has done in Jesus Christ to fundamental human longings for wholeness and life.”

Third, it is essential that they be able to listen to others sensitively and without passing judgment, to be open to learning from others and to witness to Jesus Christ in open conversation with religious alternatives.

These goals inform other courses in theology. The task of communicating the gospel in conversation with the world in which we

find ourselves also finds particular expression in a course I teach in “Christian Apologetics” and one Winston Persaud teaches titled “The Contemporary Crisis of Defining and Confessing the Gospel.”

In the basic course in Systematic Theology we help students think about the ways simple formulations of the Christian message have shaped theological discussions and debates through time and have generated a variety of interpretations of the gospel as they have engaged varying cultural contexts. In so doing we seek to help students understand both the simplicity of the Christian message and its power to create new insight and generate creative, life-giving interpretations of human reality in varying contexts. Students are required to read systematic theologies from at least three different contexts, including our own. At the same time they work at formulating the central themes of their theology and developing one aspect in greater depth.

In “Christian Apologetics” students are asked to think about what they have to say in conversation with the contemporary cultural, scientific, social and religious contexts. The hardest task is to speak the message of the gospel in a way that is meaningful to people who do not share our Christian presuppositions, which is very much the context in which we live.

Challenges

Our students serve in a world that is increasingly pluralistic, both culturally and religiously. It is also shaped by the sciences and by an Enlightenment rationality that tends to move religious questions out of any central role in our interpretation of life and the world. Often Christians have themselves obscured the gospel by judgmental, closed and exclusive attitudes. Our classical approaches to theological education have been formed in the context of Christendom, with little awareness of the need to interpret the Christian message to people committed to other religious traditions, who do not share our presuppositions about human life and the world.

To bear witness to Jesus Christ effectively, Christians have to be clear about the message they have to proclaim. But they also have to be open to learning from others, even about God and their own message, and to changing their own minds in order to creatively engage the world.

For Reflection and Discussion

1. What do you think are some of the “competing alternatives,” both religious and secular, to the Good News of what God has done in Jesus Christ in the world?

2. In groups in your congregation, practice speaking the message of the gospel in a variety of ways that are meaningful and life-giving for the contexts in which your people live. Take that experience into your ministries in daily life and, when you again come together in your groups, share insights from what you have learned.

Approach

How could one think of Student Services as having any relationship to evangelism? It is perhaps easier to understand how support and encouragement occurs during theological education in a variety of other ways such as in worship, lectures, small groups, private study, as well as in the sharing of table fellowship during meals and community time. Student Services, however, does support and affirm the *evangel* or messenger in a variety of ways! Student Services provides essential support when the seminary addresses students' needs for financial help and suitable, affordable, safe housing for themselves and their families. Theological students who remain healthy physically, spiritually, and also materially, during their formation and training for ministry, become healthy and spirit-filled evangelists.

In the area of financial assistance and management, Student Services effectively combines church and state, where funds from seminary, synod, congregation, and Christian individuals are used together with federal loan funds in the form of financial aid. In this process, students learn accountability and stewardship of these funds entrusted to them for educational preparation for evangelism. Additionally, as students manage their financial resources while in seminary, they are already witnessing to good stewardship. Later, they will continue witnessing to God's generosity and proclaiming human stewardship in their congregational ministries.

Not only in finances and physical accommodations, evangelism is implemented and supported as the seminary addresses personal needs such as transitions, emergencies, grief and loss, and other challenging issues. This ministry happens in community. Relationships are essential for conveying the gospel of God's grace. As God entered into relationship with humans in order to reconcile humans to Godself, we as messengers of God's grace convey and share that grace one to another through the cultivation of community relationships at seminary.

“God . . . reconciles humans to Godself; we as messengers of God’s grace share that grace one to another through the cultivation of community.”

Intentional counseling of students to avoid easy borrowing that might lead to unmanageable educational debt is one example of how the seminary models stewardship and encourages responsible use of God's gifts. Instead of leaving students on their own to find ways and means of supporting their the-

ological education, the seminary offers grants, encourages application for scholarship monies from outside sources, and counsels caution in the use of consumer debt. The seminary also contacts home congregations to encourage support of the students they send to seminary. All of this builds relationships between students, congregations, and other secular agencies. Since God's message of grace is effectively conveyed through relationships these connections are very important.

Author: The Rev. Ronald F. Schardt serves as Director for Student Services and Coordinator of the International Student Program at Wartburg Theological Seminary

Challenges

In a time when well-educated and prepared congregational leadership is in short supply, one would think that congregations would recognize the value of theological education by generously supporting students of theology and candidates for ministry. However, given adverse economic conditions that seem to affect one and all, theological education and candidates for ministry are obliged to compete with many other interests and causes that people and congregations choose to support. How can we as a seminary further encourage congregations and individuals generously to support financially all candidates for ministry and by so doing foster the evangelical mission of the church? How can we alleviate the current dependence on federal loans, potentially and practically burdensome for many beginning church workers, and consequently for their congregations as well?

Affordable and adequate campus housing leads to campus community and essential relationships among colleagues. When accommodation is adequate, not too crowded, but reasonably comfortable, the process of forming community takes place much more easily than when individuals and families are continually stressed by their physical environments. How can we as a seminary continue to be evangelical by ministering to students and families so as to facilitate the flow of God's grace, forgiveness and blessing during students' tenure at seminary by providing the necessary, appropriate physical environment?

For Reflection and Discussion

1. How does a congregation's support and nurture of its members help the congregation's proclamation of the gospel and service in the world?

2. How can the church as a whole encourage congregations and individuals to support candidates for leadership in ministry and mission?

Approach

Wartburg Seminary's Board of Directors changed the name of its "Development Office" to "The Office of Mission Support" to more clearly reflect its purpose. In raising resources, we exist to support the mission of the seminary. This reality does not reflect and does not denote a self-only understanding, for at the core of "Mission Support" is the mission of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I reflected on evangelism through the lens of being trained for and having served as a parish pastor. My formation at Wartburg Seminary over a decade ago served me well in the parish and in the role I now have as Associate Vice President of Mission Support.

Educational formation in community centered in the realization that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is for all people. We do not study for our own sake, nor even for the sake of "my" ministry. We do not raise resources, in a congregation or in a seminary, for our "own" sake, but for the sake of mission among all people.

"The experiences shared here through daily work, worship and conversation lead to ministry beyond these walls."

We best prepare for ministry beyond ourselves by sharing in an experiential learning process in community. While I was a student, my own thoughts were molded together with the thoughts and views of many others – from all over the

world – as we studied, worshiped and lived the Good News of Jesus Christ in community.

As a parish pastor serving in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, we in the congregation treasured our time together around Word and Sacraments. We learned and grew through together being part of the body of Christ, the church. We shared the Gospel in our community.

In my current call at Wartburg, the task of securing funds for this learning community is predicated on knowing where the mission of the seminary eventually leads. The experiences shared here through daily work, worship and conversation lead to ministry calls beyond these walls.

Having shared in this community, graduates create and sustain learning communities of disciples in their respective ministry settings. So, too, members of congregations gathering regularly for lifelong worship and education are called beyond their church doors to witness and serve in their respective ministry settings.

Author: The Rev. Kenneth Gibson serves as Associate Vice President of Mission Support at Wartburg Theological Seminary

Challenges

In a culture that worships individualism and self-sufficiency, how do we communicate the role community plays in development of valued leaders? How do we evangelize in a culture that does not value anything beyond taking care of oneself or one's "own"?

How do we recruit financial resources in a society that looks for easy solutions? For example, we hear, "Wouldn't it be cheaper to just let students study online?" Learning online does not equate with evangelism. In fact that seems to be an oxymoron. The Good News of Jesus Christ, if anything, was about embodied relationship.

We constantly hear the misunderstanding that the "Church" pays to educate its students. In reality, while churchwide and synods of the ELCA provide essential funds, private gifts and grants make theological education possible and yes, even, affordable, in relation to other programs of graduate studies.

Ultimately the evangelical question is, "How is the Gospel to be shared? How can we support one another as the body of Christ to be and become an evangelizing people?"

For Reflection and Discussion

1. What might "mission support" mean in your congregation? Why is it so important for becoming an evangelizing people?

2. Why is becoming part of a learning community an important part of evangelism?

“I Can’t Wait to Tell You!”

Approach

“I can't WAIT to tell you!” The words escape our lips before we can stop them. Words of excitement. Words of action. Something has brought deeper meaning to our lives and we are changed. The words declare their purpose: the promise of a conversation implies the sharing of the Good News. These dynamics can lead to evangelism.

This excitement and wonder of words that declare their purpose was nurtured in my preaching and worship classes at Wartburg. Through honest – and sometimes painstaking – wrestling with biblical texts, through careful teaching and practicing of the church's sacred activities, and through worship that honors God's mystery and God's presence in our lives, we participate in evangelism. In the gathering of people and in the speaking of the Good News, God exposes God's deepest hope and delight for us and for the world. God weaves this hope and delight into our stories so that we not only *speaking*, but we also *do* by serving.

“Something has brought deeper meaning to our lives and we are changed.”

Christmas Eve services are rich opportunities for fellowship, hospitality, and spiritual enrichment. But what if a church has no building in which to hold this traditional service? The mission congregation, Seeds of Faith, Mount Vernon, Iowa, in its unique academic and rural setting, identifies itself in the community by offering its Christmas Eve service in a barn. When an elected county official initially questioned the appropriateness of the site, the barn owner replied, “Do you know the Christmas story?” The opportunity became its own evangelism. People came from other counties and even other states to offer their praise and gratitude for the profound birth in a simple stable.

During summer months, the Sunday worship service is held during the late afternoon in the city's central park, spilling from a gazebo onto the existing tiered lawn. Thus, this congregation's worship is directly exposed to the community.

Worship that is welcoming and hospitable is important for the Good News to be heard. In the inner city context of Davenport, St. Paul Lutheran Church blends and diversifies its worship styles while emphasizing hospitality. A welcoming team greets all worshippers. A contemporary group leads worship each month. Dovetailing with the city's annual jazz festival, visiting jazz musicians bring their own Lutheran liturgy.

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Challenges

Evangelism cannot just be a special church committee with varied goals: community outreach, congregational “in-reach” or fellowship, or church growth. A congregation that sees evangelism as core to its purpose is a congregation challenged to see and hear excitement and hope. The Good News emanates from a church's worship structures and activities into the everyday lives of its people and the surrounding community.

Instead of viewing evangelism only as a strategy or as a rallying cry, it is important for us to see that God is already at work and is inviting us to be participants. Worship becomes God's chance to say, “Come on! I can't WAIT to share with you!”

For Reflection and Discussion

1. When was the last time you were genuinely excited about telling someone what Christ has done and is doing in the world? Share that experience.

2. What outdoor or unusual spaces might be suitable for holding either a Lutheran or an ecumenical worship service for your community? Who might be invited to come that might not easily find their way inside a church building?

The Stories Continue . . .

We hope that the evangelism perspectives in this booklet have encouraged you to engage in discussion of your own.

Conversations in your own community can provide sacred space to hear people's stories. In studying the biblical story we find its transformative power for our lives. We need to tend each other's call to share Jesus Christ through our ministries in daily life.

In order to be an evangelizing people, we need to tend our own ongoing biblical study, prayer and spiritual growth, building on the foundations of the church to discover the challenging message of Jesus Christ for our time. We shall thus be strengthened to sustain a focus on mission through both proclaiming the Good News and caring for the needs of the world. We sustain evangelical concern for justice through advocacy for the poor and marginalized in a world that would forget them.

To shape an evangelizing people, we need to pay attention to contemporary cultural, scientific, social and religious contexts. We need to address issues and problems that concern youth...and people of all ages, each unique, yet sharing similar fears and hopes. We need to listen to others sensitively and without passing judgment, to learn from others as we bear to witness to Jesus Christ through open conversation in a world of multiple religious alternatives.

In this age of stress and depression, “forming an evangelizing people” will lead us to developing skills for ministry that speak directly to people's experience of chaos or captivity, humiliation or futility. Jesus' work of salvation meets people where they are: wholeness in our brokenness, forgiveness for our shame and guilt, liberation in the midst of our bondages. Such evangelization will not be a quick fix, nor a one-time shot. It goes much deeper than that. People thirst for spiritual meaning and – whether they demonstrate it or not – hunger to be part of a caring, enlivening community gathered around Word and sacraments. We need to experience God's unconditional love and steadfast faithfulness in a committed faith community. Thus we will be strengthened to reach beyond our own walls, all kinds of walls.

So, what stories are happening in your community? What's going on to help form an evangelizing people where you are? We're all in the story. The question for us is: “How can we reach out to one another across all kinds of barriers?”

by Norma Cook Everist

Some of the barriers are in attitude or habit. One more story: In the class, "Church and Ministry," we emphasize that evangelism is never out of season. At any given time, there are numerous people "on the edge," those who are on the verge of leaving a congregation and those who might be just about ready to join or rejoin a faith community. All congregations need to be continuing redevelopment sites.

There are people who have heard about the church, may intend to come some day, or who are waiting for an invitation. Not just, "You should come to our church sometime," but, "I would love to pick you up on Sunday and bring you with me." And then, after they come once, to hear again next week, "I'd like to bring you again this week."

How do people find their way in? Do they venture openly a little way in the door? Or is it a revolving door: in the front door out the back? What hospitality do we really offer? And what significant education in the basics of the faith do we provide? Do we show people we take them seriously by engaging them in biblical and catechetical education in response to their own questions as they live in a stress-filled world?

Then there is the question of "inactives." What does that term mean anyway? And why do we divide people into categories? To test our attitudes in class we do a role play. Two people are invited to play out a typical scene – possibly at the supermarket or mall – where two parishioners run into one another, one whom people label "active" and the other "inactive." These two are told to engage in casual conversation. Meanwhile, two other students are invited to stand behind each of the parishioners, being the "voice" of what each is *really* thinking. (We allow ourselves a little fun with the role play.) It might go something like this:

Julie: "Hi, Jim!"

Jim: "Hi, Julie. Hey, it's good to see you. I didn't recognize you for a minute. We haven't seen you for some time."

(Julie thinks): "There he goes again. I didn't think it would take him long to start harping on my not being in church."

(Jim thinks): "Of course I didn't recognize her. She's never in church. But she sure seems to be able to go everywhere else!"

Julie: "I've been really busy. This world seems to be getting crazier and crazier, doesn't it?"

(Julie thinks): “My life feels like a rat-race, almost out of control sometimes.”

Jim: “Yeah, I've been pretty busy, too.”

(Jim could think): “She thinks *she's* busy! On top of my work and family life, I've got all those jobs at church that the inactive like her leave for the faithful few of use to do.”

(Or, Jim could think): “She sounds really stressed out. I wonder what the pressures in her life are right now.”

Where might the conversation go from here? What might Jim say next? What might Julie say? What does the Good News of Jesus Christ have to say in this encounter? How can we listen to one another and really hear what the other is saying?

Listen to people's stories in your faith community. What encounters have they had at the mall? What concerns do they bring from the daily news? What ministries of care and justice-seeking do they already participate in? How does learning lead to mission and mission lead to more learning in your faith community?

Together we can help each other in our journey of being and becoming an evangelizing people. Together we can stretch our imaginations to envision congregations fully in mission, places where there are no insiders and outsiders. Places where, like Peter and John in Acts 3 and 4, we, too, engage in ministries of healing and proclamation. Then when we are questioned about our zeal we can reply, “We cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard, (Acts. 4:20).

We will speak the Good News of Jesus Christ to the baptized who may not fully realize God's work of salvation in their lives. Evangelism will permeate our daily ministry as a natural part of personal relationships. We will be a radically hospitable people and take time to purposefully invite reinvite people into relationship with Jesus. We will work ecumenically. We will speak and embody a clear Word about Jesus Christ and openly dialog in a pluralistic world, hungering for hope and peace.

May we be formed in God's own image to be an evangelizing people!