

Dear friends,

Most Christians think they are rotten evangelists. At least that is my take on the majority of conversations I've had about evangelism whenever the topic comes up over coffee. Of course I can't speak for all Christian denominations, but I know that most of the very faithful, Lutheran church-goers that I know think that they aren't good at evangelism. All of the Lutheran jokes about Northern European quietism probably haven't helped, either. *How can you tell the difference between Lutheran introverts and extroverts? The extroverts stare at your shoes instead of their own.* Hmm. Since we haven't been a German/Norwegian/Swedish/Danish Church for several generations, the Northern European thing doesn't seem to explain much.

Even among clergy, I think most of us feel like we may be much better at preaching, teaching, administration, or providing pastoral care than we are at being evangelists.

Maybe we all could benefit from a few moments of thinking about what evangelism is in the first place. Taken from the Biblical Greek term euangelion - which translates as "good news" - an evangelist is essentially a person who brings good news, more specifically the good news about Jesus Christ. It seems to me that we could learn a lot about how the good news of Jesus is spread by looking at how Jesus spread it himself.

Somewhat surprisingly, Jesus doesn't drown people with lots of words when he encounters individuals whose spiritual questions are bubbling to the surface. Instead, Jesus listens to them and invites them to "Come and see." "Come and see" is the primary phrase that Jesus and Jesus' followers use throughout the Gospel of John when they encounter someone who is asking spiritual questions. Following Jesus' lead, I think evangelists are people who invite others to "come and see" what God is up to in their own lives and in the life of their faith community.

Therefore, the first step in being an evangelist is mentally attaching Jesus' name to the acts of care and love we are already doing for others. For example, if you are volunteering at The Banquet or at the local school in part because you are following Jesus' invitation to give your time and energy to people in need, you are attaching the hope of Christ to your service. When you bring cookies to the home of a neighbor whose spouse has died, if you are doing it because of Jesus' care for the broken-hearted, you are acting because you are following Christ. If you have survived the darkness of depression because you heard the whisper that God would not let you go, and you offer your hand to another person who you know is walking in the shadow, you are offering your care as a spiritual act.

The second step of communicating the reason behind your acts, however, is the more nuanced step that turns simply performing a kind act into evangelism. This second step is what churchy people like pastors call witnessing. In the New Testament, when Paul speaks about being ready to bear witness to the hope that is in us, I think he is saying to be ready to tell people why you do what you do. I say our response is a nuanced because, as St. Francis taught, "Preach the gospel (good news) always. Use words when necessary." Sometimes the act of kindness is more than enough, sometimes we need the courage to say, "I am doing (fill in the blank) because I have seen Jesus."

The third step of evangelism, according to the pattern of John's gospel, is to invite people to "Come and see" for themselves. Please invite people to visit Trinity Lutheran church to a worship service or to one of the many events we host. Share a favorite hymn or Bible verse that is important to you. Engage in caring conversation. Who knows, your witness may be similar to that of the woman at the well in John chapter four. After she has had a powerful encounter with Jesus, she goes back to her community and says, "He cannot be

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the Messiah, can he? (John 4:20)” Maybe it is my personal Northern European temperament that is impressed that this very quiet, lack-luster announcement results in her entire town experiencing the life changing presence of Jesus for themselves. They “come and see” because of her simple actions and words. They subsequently believe in Jesus because they now see for themselves. Thus, the miraculous chain reaction of evangelism sustains itself and blesses the world.

To be honest I think most of us are way better evangelists than we think we are. Thank you for your many acts of kind service in Jesus name. I pray that we all can have even more confidence to individually attach Jesus’ name to who we are and what we do. Jesus has seen us and declared us beloved. May the entire world experience that same good news.

Peace and best wishes,
Pastor Tom

Milestone Minute

For February’s Milestone, the 1st graders learned the Lord’s Prayer. To help them learn it, we used sign language. Then on our Celebration Sunday, they showed the congregation how to do it and received a beautiful pillow case made by Nancy Mette. The pillowcase had a pocket with the Lord’s Prayer in it. Thank you parents for bringing your child to their milestone!

In March, the 6th graders will meet on 3rd and 10th for their lesson on memorizing the books of the Bible. We will celebrate with them on March 17 at both services.



Lutheran World Relief National Quilt Day

Please join Trinity’s quilting group on Saturday, March 16th from 9am – 11:30am for Lutheran World Relief’s National Quilt Day. No special skills are needed, just tie a knot! Coffee, hot chocolate and donuts will be provided. Bring a friend! Visit the servant tower to see where the quilts go! Trinity sends around 30 quilts each year to LWR’s warehouse in Minnesota that are sent around the world.

A Season of Prayer and Renewal Wednesdays in Lent Begin Mar. 6th

Our theme throughout Wednesday evening Lenten services is “A Season of Prayer and Renewal” and will look at how we are renewed by entering into God’s presence through prayer. This year we will hear faith stories of Trinity members. Come each week to hear how they live out their prayer life in Christ.

Family Meal begins at 5:15. You do not have to cook at all on Wednesday nights! Come enjoy a warm meal served until 6:15.

Family Worship begins at 6:30. We will be using the beautiful and popular Holden Evening Prayer. Each evening will feature special music and a sermon on the theme words of “listen”, “look”, “respond”, “forgive”, and “love”.

Confirmation in Lent – Confirmation in Lent takes on a different format. Confirmation students and their mentor will meet for the meal and discuss questions pertaining to the evening’s sermon. Then they will worship together at 6:30.



What is Ash Wednesday?

The season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, March 6, and continues for 40 days, excluding Sundays. The 40 days of Lent is based on Jesus’ 40 days of fasting in the wilderness.

Lent began as a time of preparation for those who would be baptized on Easter Eve. Through the years, it became a time for all Christians to examine our lives, strengthen our faith and make an emphasis on confession of our sins as we prepare for Easter. As a reminder of Jesus’ sacrifice for us, many people “sacrifice” by giving something up for Lent.

Lent can be a time to take something on, also. Perhaps as a family, you take on a regular devotion time or take on the practice of praying for someone each day. Think about what you might do during this time of Lent. Email/message either Melody or Christie with your idea so we can share it on Facebook and our website. Others may be inspired by your sacrifice or your taking something on. Tell us your story.

Ash Wednesday service will be at **6:30 pm on March 6**. We will have the imposition of ashes symbolizing that our bodies will someday return to the dust of the earth. Bring your family to this service as we begin our walk through Lent together.

Trinity Preschool Registration

Our Preschool is accepting registrations for the 3 year and 4 year class. You may register online at www.facebook.com/TeaTrinityPreschool. There are packets available also on the bulletin board by the bathrooms.



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