

personal contact. The group thus gathered went through the course. More recently, the *Alpha* course is a valuable means of group evangelism.

Focal-point evangelism may range from a monthly or quarterly “Guest Service” at the local church (with an evangelistic message and specific call to commitment) to a full-scale “evangelistic mission” with a visiting evangelist. These “mass” methods are most effective when they are part of the context of the congregation’s on-going evangelising, a support and impetus to that evangelising – but not a substitute for it!

• In what forms of intentional evangelising are we currently engaged?

• What strategies for evangelism should we now adopt?

• What members do we discern as having a specific “gift of evangelism” that may need encouragement and training?

4. Evangelising

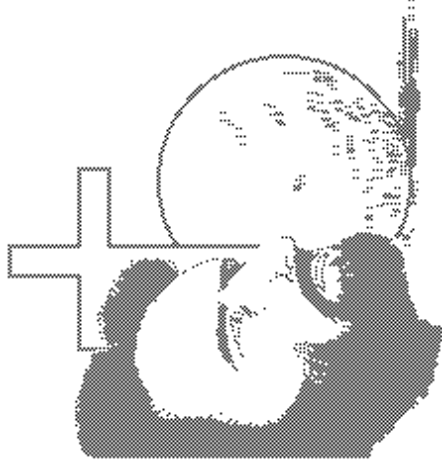
Bible References: Luke 24.46-49; Matthew 5.13-16.

In our first session we noted that “People outside the Church need to hear our loving Lord calling to them, ‘Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest’ (Matthew 11.28). They experience this in the caring service of God’s people. And they hear it when the good news – of Christ, forgiveness, salvation, new life – is shared with them (**evangelising**) and they have the opportunity to respond to Christ by faith.”

In our third session we looked at the cycle of the Church’s life. There are some churches whose life never gets out into the world – who rarely, if ever, “go”. There are others who “go” but rarely, if ever, share the good news with the intention of gathering people into the life of the Body. Sharing the good news (**evangelising**) is an important part of the life of the Body – not something to be tagged on occasionally because “it’s time we did it again”!

The *Regulations* no longer make specific reference to evangelism. Since it is a central part of “Christ’s mission to the world”, it is a clear responsibility of the Elders to ensure evangelism has a high priority in the life and mission of the congregation.

What is the Good News?



Look again at the Great Commission as recorded in Luke 24.46-49. “*This is what is written: the Messiah must suffer and must rise from death three days later, and in his name the message about repentance and the forgiveness of sins must be preached to all nations beginning in Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And I myself will send upon you what my Father has promised. But you must wait in the city until the power from above comes down upon you.*”

So there is a message that must be “preached to all nations”. The big question is, “What is that message?” So there is “good news” and it focuses on the life and ministry of Jesus. What is that good news? How do we understand it? How can we begin to communicate it “out there” – where people haven’t been brought up on the Bible and don’t understand the “jargon”?

- What is the "good news" for me in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus?

- What is the "good news" for my non-Christian neighbour in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus? What words can I use to express this good news beyond the walls of the church – out there in the world?

"You are witnesses of these things"

We have sometimes talked about "witnessing" as one of those things that Christians should do. But Jesus says, "You are witnesses of these things." In other words, they had seen and experienced the life, work and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in their own lives.

And every person who is truly a Christian has likewise seen and experienced the Lord Jesus – though not "in the flesh" in the way the first Christians had done. Our lives are part of the evidence that Jesus saves, that Jesus is alive and relevant to the needs of people today. This is why our initial diagram linked evangelism and service. The evidence of our lives – and of our life as a Body – is crucial to our sharing of the good news.

Listen to these words of Jesus – "You are like salt for all mankind. But if salt loses its saltiness, there is no way to make it salty again. It has become worthless, so it is thrown out and people trample on it. You are like light for the whole world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bowl; instead he puts it on the lampstand where it gives light for everyone in the

house. In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5.13-16).

- What more can we do to help every member to be salt and light in their relationships with others out in the world?

Intentional Evangelising

Every Christian is to be a witness. Some Christians have a particular gift of evangelism (Ephesians 4.11) The task of sharing the good news is a key one in the life and mission of the Body of Christ, fulfilling the very purpose for which he "came in the flesh". One definition puts the task this way – "Evangelism is so to present Jesus Christ to the world in the power of the Holy Spirit that men and women shall come to put their trust in God through him, accept him as their Saviour and serve him as their Lord in the fellowship of his Church."

Evangelism should not be incidental or accidental, but intentional. Sometimes we hear it said that all that we do is evangelism. But this becomes an excuse for not intentionally sharing the good news outside the life of the congregation!

Consider these two statistics – What percentage of our members have come into the life of the church from a non-church background? What percentage of our members have come from a non-church background in the past five years? I believe that the answer to the second should be **at least** ten percent. But it will not and cannot be unless we are consciously saying, "Lord, what should we be doing to fulfil this part of your commission to us?", and then intentionally sharing the good news out there.

There are many methods of evangelising. At their best they depend on one another. Using a particular method must never become a substitute for addressing the whole evangelistic task.

Scatter-evangelism (dropping leaflets with an evangelistic message in people's letter-boxes) is valid when used as part of a wider plan to contact people face-to-face.

One-to-one evangelism is always basic, even when other methods are used. Lay Institute for Evangelism has provided a tool (*Have You Heard of the Four Spiritual Laws?*) and Evangelism Explosion a method (involving an apprenticeship training) which have helped many people to get their tongues untied and begin sharing the good news. We should expect that about ten percent of our members have a specific spiritual gift of evangelism – a gift which may need to be developed and encouraged.

Group evangelism can helpfully bring these two methods together. *Christianity Explained* (used as follow-up for Pavilion of Promise contacts at Expo '88) was originally designed to be used like this. Invitations to attend were to be delivered to a hundred homes around the proposed host home and followed by