

MISSIONAL INITIATIVES

Monthly Newsletter

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Why Evangelism Is Often a "Waste" of Time.

By Merv Budd: Equipping Evangelist

The other day I was walking home from work for lunch, (a practice I began during COVID and have kept up on fair weather days) and a neighbour about 5 blocks down from where I live greeted me saying, "Are you the pastor guy?" Although I had seen this man before and had often said, "Hi" we had never really talked, and I was surprised to know that he knew I was a pastor.

"Yes," I said. "My name's Merv."

And so it began, a conversation with Rick. He began by telling me that he used to go to a Catholic church and how he and his wife (who was United) had stopped going. We continued for a couple of minutes about polite "church talk," and then I commented on his immaculately kept lawn and asked him about his cars I'd seen in his driveway on my many trips past his house.

Apparently that was all he needed, and 15 minutes later he's still talking about cars. I thanked him for saying hi and excused myself for lunch. On the remaining blocks back home, I thought about our encounter. I asked God why we couldn't have talked about "church" more and perhaps have had a more "spiritual" conversation. To be honest, all the talk about cars seemed like nothing more than a waste of time. Surprisingly, the answer I received back was, "Because Rick was not interested in church, he was more interested in cars." Then it became apparent that when I see Rick next, perhaps a couple of weeks or months later, he won't recall what we spoke about; he'll just remember how he felt. I suspect that because he felt the conversation was stimulating and enjoyable he will be open to me talking further with him. Perhaps, as we continue to dialogue, an opening will be presented in which I might share more about faith.

This is often how I find evangelism working. It is a slow, relational encounter in which people first determine if I'm safe, interesting, and interested in them. What feels like a waste of time is actually the slow, intentional work of preparing the soil of a person's heart to receive the Word when the opportunity is presented to sow it. In the often hectic and frenetic pace of ministry life, we have to work hard to leave margin for exactly this kind of "wasting" time.

A Different Way to Gather

By Cam Roxburgh: Team Lead

I am blessed. I get front row seats to watch God at work in an increasing number of churches as we seek to join with what God is doing in our neighbourhoods.

Years ago, I remember Stuart Murray Williams suggesting that we need multi-voice churches in this post-christendom era. That was a good word. Just this last week I heard a wonderful story of a church putting that into practice. This church was asking the question of whether preaching was the “end” or a means to an end – “making disciples.” They decided the latter. So they have begun to meet on Sunday mornings around tables. The text is opened and some brief comments are made before a question is raised. Then the people go to work around the table in the text. What is God like? What is He doing? What is He saying to them?

When they have worked together around the tables, they come back as a larger group and share what God has been saying. The “preacher” (the one who has done the work in the text) makes sure that they are not twisting the meaning of the text as they listened to what God was saying. Then they go back into different table groups and discuss what it is that God wants them to do with what He has said. How might they live as followers of Jesus in this day and age so that they faithfully bear witness to who He is? What practice do they need to engage in?

Finally, there is a sharing of what they have heard God ask them to do and a commitment together to engage in God’s mission through the power of the Spirit. Prayer follows as they commit themselves to the Lord. I am quite sure there are bugs in the system still, but what a joy to hear of this experiment as they are seeking to join with God on mission.

Resources: The Missional Network

By Karen Wilk: Neighbourhood Life

A not-your-same-old-seven-steps leadership resource that I recommend these days is the website of one of our partners on this journey, [The Missional Network](#). Here we can find numerous short and longer videos and articles that speak to our current times. They are rooted in the conviction that God is already at work, out ahead of us in our ordinary, everyday lives and neighbourhoods, and we, God’s people, are called and equipped to join the Spirit on God’s mission in the midst of a changing (unravelling) world. With overarching themes of leadership, discernment, neighbourhood, and community, one can explore current and archived stories and blogs that are easy to use, are easy to share, and not only make us think and re-think but encourage us to act. One way they invite us to act is to participate in their virtual workshops and projects, which are co-led with Forge Canada. The four-session introductory one is called Leaders’ Table, and the follow-up year-long cohorts build on it, with leadership and neighbourhood as their foci. As their tagline describes, TMN provides “Practical Tools and experiences to shape [our] life together around the mission of God.”