

good idea!

A resource for evangelism & church growth

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A Marriage Made in Heaven: Evangelism and Social Action: a Bible Study

By John Bowen

In one of the Sherlock Holmes stories, a police detective has been asking Holmes for his help in investigating a crime scene. "Is there any other point to which you wish to draw my attention?" he asks. Holmes replies, "To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time." "The dog did nothing in the night time," replies the baffled detective. "That was the curious incident," replies Holmes. The significance of the dog's silence, it turns out, is that the burglary was committed by someone whom the dog recognised. Silence is always significant, especially when one might have expected something different.

While the Synoptic Gospels use words relating to evangelism up to twenty times each, John's Gospel has just such a significant silence on the topic of evangelism. Why might this be? In John, the absence of any reference to evangelism seems to be made up for by his interest in the idea of sending. Whereas Mark uses the word "send" roughly ten times, Matthew twenty times, and Luke thirty times, John refers to "sending" no less than sixty times. The plot thickens!

Most of the uses of the word "sent" (forty out of the sixty) are in phrases like "the Father who sent me." For John, it appears that Jesus can hardly think of the Father without thinking of his mission. He is deeply aware that he comes to this world as a missionary from the Father.

Father>Son

What then is the "primal missionary", as Martin Hengel calls him, "sent" to do? Classic theology would say "to die for our sins," or "to show us a truly human life." John's answer, however, embraces all such answers: "I have come to do the will of him who sent me" (6:38), says Jesus.

Father > Son > Will of God

And what then, we may well ask, is this will of the Father? In a phrase, it is simply to give life, that "eternal life" which is defined later as knowing both Father and Son (17:3). "This is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. This is indeed the will of the Father, that all who see the Son may believe in him and have eternal life" (6:39-40).

Father>Son> Will of God> Life

But how is it that Jesus brings life? The answer seems to be two-fold. He does it by speaking the words

of the Father, and by doing the will of the Father. "Whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say," he tells the disciples. (12:49). And as he is about to heal the man born blind, he explains, "We must do the works of his who sent me." (9:4).

(Words of God
Father>Son> Will of God>Life (
(Works of God

As Jesus does the Father's will by speaking the Father's words and doing the Father's works, an amazing thing happens: God is visible in him. "Whoever sees me sees him who sent me" (12:45). A human being without sin, fully in the image and likeness of God, fully obeying the Father's will, makes the character of God visible to the world.

(Words of God
Father>Son> Will of God>Life (God visible
(Works of God

So far, so good. But then, at the end of the Gospel, Jesus turns around and says to the disciples, "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you" (20:21). The content of "as . . . so" is clear from what has gone before. The disciples are sent under precisely the same conditions as Jesus. They too are sent to do the will of the Father by words and works. And, as they do so, God will be visible in them too. John Robinson once called Jesus "a window into God at work." Now Jesus commissions us to become a million windows into God at work.

(Words of God
Father >Son>Disciples> Will of God >Life (God visible
(Works of God

Is this possible? We are not left to struggle with this intimidating calling alone. Jesus provides the resources to make it possible. There is one more indispensable step in the sending: "The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything" (14:25); "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father . . . he will testify on my behalf."

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Father>Son >SPIRIT> Disciples> Will of God> Life
God visible (Works of God

Almost a century ago, a split emerged in the church between those who emphasised the priority of the ministry of evangelism but had no time for social concern; and those who had a low opinion of evangelism and majored on social action as the most authentic expression of their faith. In the ministry of Jesus, those two aspects went together hand in hand, the actions lending credibility to the words, the words interpreting the significance of the actions. The church that follows Jesus today will find ways to imitate his example. This edition of *good idea!* offers three ways in which Christians are seeking to follow their Lord.

John Bowen is the editor of *good idea!*

"What does he know about love that I don't?": A priest's reflection on the ministry of L'Arche

By Wendy Lywood

In L'Arche communities around the world, Gospel message and Gospel action are woven seamlessly together. Wendy Lywood describes how as an Anglican priest she met Jesus in a new way at L'Arche, and how she now witnesses others having the same experience.

I first got involved in L'Arche because I was feeling burned out in parish ministry. I really longed to find a place where I could live in an intentional Christian community. I started by visiting the L'Arche community in Calgary because it was one of the most visible options for Christian community in Canada.

I arrived for supper on a Tuesday evening. I was seated across the table from a man named Darryl, and I have to say that my initial reaction to Darryl was one of complete repulsion. I just wanted to get up and run away. He didn't have any teeth, so his food was all pureed, but as he ate, food dripped down from his mouth. Then at one point during the meal, Darryl gave a big smile to Dave, the helper who was sitting next to him. His hands dropped into his food, and he turned to this fellow and gave him a big hug, and, as he did so, his hands touched the man's hair and shirt. I just thought, "Ugh. Now I know this is not for me." At the same time, what got to me was that Dave simply received the hug for what it was. I thought, "What is this? What does he know about love that I don't?" I had never seen that kind of love in action and it's really what hooked me.

After that we went for Eucharist, and found I was deeply moved by the prayer of the core members. It just came directly from their hearts. Again I thought, "What is this place?" I was profoundly touched by something, and I felt it was the presence of God. I wanted to know more.

I find that this is often people's experience when they come to L'Arche. There is a quality in our life together that makes it easy for people to access the presence of the Spirit of God. We have people come for a meal and, though I may think the food is terrible, people go away saying, "Oh, that was so wonderful." This has happened enough now that I have come to trust that God really is with us. And when people are searching, they discover that.

We have a lot of young people who are attracted to L'Arche because of the social justice aspect of the ministry, and who have often rejected their own faith tradition. One of the things we say to them is, "You're welcome to come and experience our life. But you need to know we are a community of faith. And you need to know that we are a community that is really rooted in the Beatitudes." Evangelism happens through the liturgies, through the teaching, and through individual conversations.

Everybody who visits is given a "spiritual accompanier." We ask visitors where they are at spiritually, and what their desires are. We are pretty direct about those things, even though it may be a long time before people are able to make that more concrete for themselves. So in all those ways, we present people with the Gospel message.

The Rev. Wendy Lywood lives and works at Daybreak, the L'Arche community in Thornhill ON.

Journey into a Faithful Future

By Helena-Rose Houldcroft

Can evangelism happen in areas where the very existence of the Anglican Church is threatened by claims of residential school abuse? One priest argues that there has to be significant healing first if the message is to have credibility.

The Diocese of Qu'Appelle, of which I am a member, is going through a major time of crisis. It faces more claims against it associated with residential school abuse than does any other diocese. But, really, our diocese was in crisis before litigation. Litigation has only sped up the process. We were already facing problems of falling numbers, rural de-population and the ability of parishes to support full-time paid ministry.

"Crisis" is defined in the dictionary as a "turning point". I find that more a more positive description than the usual view of crisis as a potentially destructive time. I think we could even conceive of times of crisis as opportunities for evangelism. Our parishes and diocese are at a "turning point": the choices we make

now will determine our future.

I know there are many wonderful programs that are intended to help churches reach out and grow. I think that for us, however, evangelism has to take an even more basic form. Our journey into a faithful future has begun with people talking to each other and listening to one another.

One way our diocese has responded to the "crisis" is by developing a new ministry aimed at healing and reconciliation, to address the real issues of abuse and build more significant community among aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples. I work in this ministry with Dale Gillman, a native woman priest, originally from Gordon's Reserve. We go together to speak with people in parishes, deaneries, educational institutions, reserves or anywhere we are invited. We tell the story of the residential schools and respond directly to concerns raised by the process of litigation. We gather in circles, begin and end with prayer, hear the story from a non-aboriginal perspective and then in an aboriginal voice, and we respond directly to questions and concerns. It is a "face to face" ministry that models partnership and common ground. "Common ground" does not mean we are all in the same place or think and believe the same things. It does indicate our mutual respect for all who gather and how important each person's voice is. It is an experience that can help us be a "better church".

I am convicted that when God calls the church into the world, we need to know our story well enough to tell it to the world. The crisis in our diocese has pushed us to the part of our story that is about relationships and what it means to be a community that bears the name of Christ. At this point in our story as a diocese, the greatest illumination for our journey will be the truth of covenant. It matters how we agree to walk with God and with all the people we share this world with. Residential school abuse, litigation, and rural de-population are not just issues our diocese has to consider, but represent the human face of another sister and brother.

The journey through crisis is not without challenges. But there is also abundance and inspiration in dioceses which are facing their "turning point". As the stories are shared and as this journey continues, the whole of our communion has an opportunity to grow and thrive. By faithfully healing the relationships of our past and nurturing greater mutuality for our future, the Anglican Church will be a better church. And that is the healthiest context for evangelism.

The Rev. Helena-Rose Houldcroft works part-time on issues of residential school abuse and the future of parishes in the diocese. She also works part-time as parish priest of St. Philip in Regina.

Faith acting through love

By Rick Sandberg

A Church Army Captain tells how he learned the hard way that real love is the only way to earn the right to tell the Gospel.

One day at the start of my efforts as a street chaplain, as I walked along an alleyway I saw a young girl sobbing. Mascara was running down her cheeks, marring her heavy punk makeup. I was stirred and my heart went out to her. But another part of me was thrilled--- here was a chance to prove my mettle as an evangelist and novice outreach worker!

At first she didn't want company from a stranger, but after seeing my card and my sympathetic manner, she began to open up. I drew upon my Church Army counseling training and two years' experience as a jail chaplain, and soon she began to share how, at fifteen years old, she had returned home one day to find her room emptied and that she was no longer welcome there.

Just then two more evangelists from another organization approached, ready to share the gospel. They initiated a conversation with the girl about her eternal destiny. I could not restrain my self, and joined in

with the visiting evangelists. The three of us reasoned for over an hour with the girl. She was unconvinced, but we hoped that by the end at least she was better informed!

I saw the girl the next day, and the next day and the next. In fact I saw her regularly for years, but she never again trusted me. It must have been two years before she would even exchange greetings. I had learned a painful and lasting lesson.

The Lord had already impressed on me that I should speak little and listen a lot. I did not understand, however, and I did not trust I was hearing him correctly until I met that girl. For years after that, I struggled to remain quiet and to speak only "in season." As I did, I was increasingly able to put aside my own need to be "successful" as an evangelist. Instead I have learned to focus on discovering and responding to the needs of the people whom I am trying to love.

Some people's needs are obvious---food, shelter, safety, friendship. God's love in us should compel us to respond to these without question. I have found that as I respond to a person's obvious needs, I begin to make a new friend. Then, in the context of a true relationship, I can express my concern that my friend to be fulfilled in every way. And as a trusted friend I can witness credibly to the gentleness and love of Jesus Christ.

"I can't see Christians because of the Bible in front of their face," a young man told me. Yet as I helped to keep him fed and sheltered, he engaged me in long discussions about his troubled life and about Christianity. Eventually he did become a church-going believer. I don't see many troubled youth turn around like that. They are on the run from everyone who might take harmful control over them. Loving them draws them nearer to the well that never runs dry.

I do not agree with people who minister to people according to their temporal needs with no regard for their eternal relationship with God. How could I fulfill my call as an evangelist and assuage my concern for youngsters' souls without explaining the gospel? Yet without social ministry there could be no understandable communication of the gospel to these youth. I'm convinced that evangelism without social ministry is just empty words. What matters is "faith acting through love" (Galatians 5:6).

Capt. Rick Sandberg is Street Chaplain for the Victoria Christian Street Chaplaincy in Victoria, B. C. He is a Church Army officer.

New Centre for Congregational Development Opens.

Harold Percy recently announced the opening of the new Centre for Congregational Development at Trinity Anglican Church, Streetsville. good idea! talked with Harold about this new ministry.

good idea: So what is this new Centre for Congregational Development all about?

HP: The mission statement of the Centre says it quite clearly, I think: To equip clergy and lay leaders with the knowledge and skills needed for developing and leading healthy congregations.

good idea: It sounds a lot like some of the work you were doing as the director of the Institute of Evangelism.

HP: Exactly. The Centre is basically a continuation of that work, but working out of Trinity Anglican Church, Streetsville. And of course, the ministry of this new Centre will be carried on in close association with the Institute of Evangelism. I think the two organizations will prove to be a perfect complement to each other.

good idea: Are you intending to "franchise" Trinity church, or to develop a number of Trinity, Streetsville

clones through this Centre?

HP: No. No. No. Not at all. That is the farthest thing from my mind. What I do believe is that there are a number of basic principles that are involved in developing and leading healthy congregations, and that these principles are highly transferable. They will look different as they are put into practice in different situations, but the principles themselves will be the same.

good idea: And you obviously feel there is a need for a Centre like this? HP: I know there is. In my travels across the country I constantly meet clergy and other congregational leaders who are looking for some practical help in leading their congregations to the next level, or who are facing tough challenges in their ministry, or who feel they are at an impasse that they can't break through. My vision for the Centre is that we will be able to provide some practical help in nurturing healthy congregations and seeing them become more effective in their ministry. I believe we can help with this.

good idea: But surely there are already a number of churches and organizations offering conferences and seminars offering a similar kind of service. What is this new Centre going to add to what is already available?

HP: You are quite right. I don't see myself attempting to compete with any of these other organizations. However, my observation is that there aren't that many organizations that are targeted primarily towards helping mainline congregations. I think there is a niche here for working with mainline congregations which will never number in the multiple hundreds or thousands, but who are nevertheless seeking to be effective, and who could use some coaching in various areas from time to time.

good idea: And you will be continuing as the Rector of Trinity Church?

HP. Oh yes. One of the key purposes of our ministry at Trinity is "to help other congregations become more effective in their ministry of sharing the Good News". The Centre is simply our way of carrying out this purpose .

Consultation On Ministry

Have you ever wished you had a coach or mentor in ministry to help you think about what you are doing, and how you could become more effective in your ministry as a congregational leader?

Spend two days (May 7 and 8, 2001) with Harold Percy, in a round table discussion, reflecting on the basics of ministry and thinking about how you can become more effective in your ministry.

Topics covered in the discussion could include (but are not limited to): getting focused in ministry, helping nice church people become committed followers of Jesus, leading a congregation through change, and basic leadership principles required for developing healthy congregations.

Registration for this event is limited to 12 participants to insure that everyone will be able to be fully involved in the discussion.

This event is for clergy only, and will likely be of greatest benefit to those who are leading congregations with an average weekly attendance of over 100 although this is not a pre-requisite.

The cost is \$125.00 for registrations confirmed before April 16th. After April 16th the cost is \$150.00. Prior to April 16th the cost is \$125.00. Lunch and coffee breaks each day are included. The event runs from 9 – 4 each day.

REGISTRATION FORM:CONSULTATION ON MINISTRY
with Harold Percy

May 7 & 8, 2001 @ Trinity Anglican Church, Streetsville, ON

Registration is limited to 12 Clergy only. (Participants may be interested in arriving early enough to attend Sunday morning worship at 9:00 or 11:00. There is also a special service of Adult Baptism & Reaffirmation of Faith at 7:00 p.m.)

Title First Name Last Name

_____ (_____) _____

Address Phone

City Prov. Postcode

Church Denomination Average weekly attendance

____ Early Registration received by April 16, 2001 \$125.00 ____ Standard Registration \$150.00
____ I have enclosed a cheque for \$_____

Cost of registration includes 2 days discussion (Monday & Tuesday 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.) and lunch. Accommodation , meals, and transportation extra.

____ I will need help finding accommodation ____ I would be willing to billet in a parishoner=s home

My stay will be: day arriving _____ departing _____

On application you will receive more detailed program information, map, and questionnaire regarding your specific church situation and issues that you are facing.

Mail Registration to: Consultation on Ministry, Trinity Anglican Church

69 Queen St. So., Mississauga, ON L5M 1K5

More Information: (905) 826-1901

E-mail: shirley@igs.gta.net

Web site: www.trinitystreetsville.org

Sources of Resources

A new Dare Booklet

Finding a Story to Live By: Christianity Rediscovered by John Bowen.

In five short chapters, this booklet introduces basic elements of Christian faith to people just beginning to explore their spirituality or returning to church after a time away . A useful companion to a "Christian Basics" course.

\$5 each plus p&p. Special rates for purchase of ten copies or more.

Others in this series are still available:

#1 Becoming a Christian: a Practical Guide to the Why and the How

#2 The School of Jesus: a Beginner's Guide to Living as a Christian

#3 Jesus the Only Way? Why Christians Seem Arrogant.

#4 Does God Care? A Christian Perspective on Suffering

#5 Love: Is it Worth the Hassle?

#6 A Jesus for Generation X? A Place for Faith in a Post-Christian Age, by Mark Harris

- #7 Euthanasia: a Christian Perspective by John Patrick and Sheila Rutledge Harding
- #8 Jesus is Alive, Elvis is Alive: What's the Difference?
- #9 The Spirituality of Jesus and the Dangers of Religion
- #10 A Solid Foundation: Seven Pillars of the Jesus Seminar Re-examined, by Edith Humphrey
- #11 What's so Special about Jesus? Compared with Muhammad, Buddha, Socrates and Zoroaster by Edwin Yamauchi
- #12 Faith, Hope and U2: the Spirit of Love in the Music of U2, by Henry VanderSpek
- #13 The Gospel According to Robin Williams: Jesus' Answers to Robin's Questions

Forthcoming titles:

God and the Simpsons: the Spirituality of Springfield
Harry Potter and the Ultimate Questions
Celtic Spirituality
A Neevil in the World: Sin in the Chronicles of Narnia
Intelligent Design: The Evidence for God

Available from Wycliffe College: (416) 946 3535 or wycliffe.college@utoronto.ca.

Giant Theological Book Sale at Wycliffe College!

Don't miss this unique book sale! Thousands of quality books in Biblical studies, church history, theology, and a variety of related areas left over after the merger of Wycliffe's Leonard Library with the Trinity College library.

Dates:

Friday March 30, 2001, 6 p.m.-10 p.m. Wycliffe students, alumni, faculty (past and present), staff, trustees, advisory council only
Saturday March 31, 10a.m.-6p.m. Open to the public
Monday April 2, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Open to the public

For further information, call (416) 946 3534 or email wycliffe.college@utoronto.ca. (With apologies to those *good idea!* readers outside the GTA.!)