



Evangelism Sunday, September 23, 2018

Evangelism is good news. Mark's Gospel begins with these words, "*The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah.*" Evangelism is not a tool to grow our churches and to reach people to fill our pews. Evangelism is the good news of God's love in Jesus that changes our lives and the life of this world. We are a sent people. We are sent to do justice. We are sent to share the hope we have in Christ. All that happens inside the walls of our congregations and other gathering places is about the equipping and nurturing of God's people for God's mission.

The Scripture for this Sunday is about our peculiar life together. By the power of the Holy Spirit and the fruit we bear in Christ (love, peace, joy, goodness, gentleness, kindness, patience, faithfulness and self-control), we are different; we are attractive to people searching for a better way. But we cannot stay where we gather; we must go into our community. We encourage you this Sunday to worship together and then use the neighborhood exegesis to explore your neighborhood.

God is already on mission in your community. This neighborhood exegesis is simply a time to go in groups of two or three into different parts of your community. You will spend about an hour walking and praying for your community. You will listen for and see God's work. The Neighborhood Exegesis is part of the Vital Congregations Tool Kit. The directions for the Neighborhood Exegesis will guide your steps.

Grace,

Ray Jones

Ray Jones, acting director of Theology, Formation & Evangelism

Go to: **pcusa.org/congregations**

(Scroll down page, click on 'Vital Congregations Immediate Toolkit' to download, then go to page 15 for 'Neighborhood Exegesis.')



Neighborhood Exegesis

In preparation for Evangelism Sunday, invite key leaders and interested members to gather on a morning or an afternoon to experience the Neighborhood Exegesis. You can begin with breakfast or lunch. Then, engage the Luke 10 passage and pray with one another and for one another and the community. Depart for an hour in groups of two or three into previously settled-upon parts of your community.

Make sure that there is a coffee shop, store or café in which people can meet at the end of the walk. This is a time to buy something and to sit and talk with people. You can tell them what you are doing. You are from the church down the street and want to know more about the community. You can ask the following questions:

- Do you live in this community?
- What is the best part of living in this community?
- What are some of the needs of this community?
- What are the schools like here?
- How long have you lived here?
- Are you part of a faith community?

At the end of the experience, meet back at the church for debriefing.

- What did you hear?
- What is God doing?
- What surprised you?
- What are our next steps?

These initial people will be the leaders for the neighborhood exegesis that takes place after worship on Evangelism Sunday or at another time.

We also encourage you to use the “seven-day cycle of prayer,” based on the seven marks of vital congregations, two weeks before Evangelism Sunday. Make sure each person has a copy of these simple prayers.



Liturgical resources for Evangelism Sunday gathering

Prayer of the Day (Prayed silently as worshipers gather)

- (1) O God, light of the hearts that know you, life of the souls that love you, strength of the thoughts that seek you: to turn from you is to fall, to turn to you is to rise, and to abide in you is to stand fast forever. Although we are unworthy to approach you, or to ask anything of you, grant us your grace and blessing for the sake of Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.
- (2) God of all glory, on this first day you began creation, bringing light out of darkness. On the first day you began your new creation, raising Jesus Christ from the darkness of death. On this Lord's Day grant that we, the people you create by water and the Spirit, may be joined with all your works in praising you for your great glory. Through Jesus Christ, in union with the Holy Spirit, we praise you now and forever. Amen.
- (3) O God, I will tell of your name to my sisters and brothers; in the midst of the people I will praise you. Honor and glory, worship and awe, this is the calling of the children of God. The poor shall eat and be satisfied and those who seek your presence will praise your name. All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to you, and all the families of nations shall worship you, O God.

Prelude

Call to Worship: (Psalm 1)

Leader: This is the day the Lord has made.

People: Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Leader: Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers;

People: Their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law, they meditate day and night.

Leader: They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all they do, they prosper.

All: For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. Let us worship God, our judge and our redeemer.

Hymns of Praise

#409 God is Here! (Glory to God Hymnal)

#311 Here, O Lord, Your Servants Gather (Glory to God Hymnal)

Confession and Pardon

God of mercy in wisdom that waivers, in flesh that is weak, we come humbly to confess to you. Lord, where our humanity is flawed and frail, broken and distorted, struggling and weak, we pray for your steadfast grace. Lord, forgive us for the ways we exist selfishly, instead of living passionately in Christ. Forgive us where hypocrisy and judgment dwell in our hearts, instead of your compassion and humility. Forgive us where we carry fault in a broken and fearful world, instead of striving for justice and peace. Lord, we are your servants. Representatives of your Kingdom, and brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. Forgive us when we forget; when our lives do not reflect. (Offer a moment of silence for personal confession and reflection.)

Assurance of Pardon

Leader: The epistle of James declares, "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. (James 4:8, 10) Know that in Jesus Christ our sins have been forgiven. Thanks be to God.

People: In Christ, we are a new creation! Let us share the Good News! Amen.

Hymn Response

#435 There's a Wideness in God's Mercy (Glory to God)
(You may select a verse or choose to sing the whole hymn.)

The Peace (Share the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ with others. Remember all come with their own stories, all hunger and thirst for truth, and all people of God are longing for peace. We can offer a glimmer of Christ's light when we embrace one another in peace.)

Leader: May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: In the grace of God, let us offer peace to one another. And as you pass that peace, we invite you to share one way in which Christ has been working in your life lately with your neighbor.

The Word

Prayer for Illumination

Lord, may your living Word be boldly proclaimed, so that hearts stir and souls find no rest until they rest in your truth. May we be confronted by your mercy, shaken by your grace, encountered by your wonder, and never left the same. May we worship in the power of your Spirit and walk forth in your wisdom, bearing witness to the Good News, this day and forevermore. Amen.

First Reading: James 3:13–4:3, 7–8a (You may choose to switch readings, or to read from Proverbs 31:10–31.)

Second Reading: Mark 9:30–37

Sermon

Hymns **#726** Will You Come and Follow Me (Glory to God Hymnal)
#733 We Are All One in Mission (Glory to God Hymnal)

Affirmation of Faith (You may use the Apostles' Creed or Nicene Creed)

Prayers of the People (This time should be an opportunity for people to share their stories, to tell where their lives hunger and thirst for peace, justice and compassion. Whether in writing prayer concerns or joys to be lifted during this time, or to be placed in a basket for the pastor, time should be created for people to participate in sharing their stories and bringing their faith in this sacred space before God and others. Pastors and worship leaders may even prompt people to name prayers aloud by offering moments of silence within the prayer. If prayer requests are lifted aloud before the congregation, do not be afraid to ask for volunteers to take on praying for the person/people during the week. In this way, we remember that we are connected to a community of Christ, and that someone is praying for us by name.)

The Eucharist

Offering (Offering our gifts, our tithes and our service to God is a sacred time; a chance to give a portion back to our Lord for all Christ has done. The offering is a chance to witness, give testimony, rejoice and offer our gratitude in service to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Invite the congregation into a time of prayerfully offering their gifts in this kind of spirit.)

