

John the Baptizer, that fabled son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, “went into the region about the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.”¹ Touched by the Word of God, it was his example we follow every time we have a Baptism and every time we have a Renewal of Baptism Vows. Every time we do, each and every one of us promises that, with God’s help, we, too, will “proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ.”² We give our Word, in front of God and one another, that we will take our place in making the paths straight that lead our friends and neighbors to the doors of God’s house, this house. We will proclaim the Good News of God in Christ to the region about the Fox River. We will become, gulp, Evangelists.

To help us understand what this means – and, perhaps more importantly, what it doesn’t – I’d like to invite Betty Giles and Robert Borchert to share some insights they gleaned from their experience at the Magnetic Church Conference, held here at Trinity last month.

¹ Luke 3:2-3.

² *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 305.

Black = Betty Giles Blue = Rob Borchert

Today we're going to discuss Evangelism. Evangelism is.....

No, not evangelism!

Evangelism means going out and visiting strangers in their homes and begging them to come to Church. I can't do that!! I won't do that!

Evangelism is a dirty word in the Episcopal Church. But it doesn't need to be. To a Magnetic Church, Evangelism means that we first establish hospitality by actively inviting non-churched people into our congregation.

Secondly it means that within our fellowship, we engage newcomers in conversation, ministry, education, prayer and worship.

And lastly, it means that as they learn about faith and discover that they believe, we invite them to commit and become a member of our Church

Well Betty, that still means that we've got to go out and invite people – I've tried and tried and it hasn't worked!

No Rob, It means we need to be to be AWARE! Aware?

"A" means to Attract newcomers – through getting our name out through the media, hosting events that bring strangers to our doors, and through having a beautiful and welcoming Church.

"W" means to welcome newcomers in a planned and thoughtful way

“A” means to affirm them as children of God through fellowship, prayer, conversation, and worship.

“R” means to respond to their spiritual needs – not what can they do for us – what can we do for them!

“E” means Engage them to become disciples of Christ

That’s fine and good Betty but what has that got to do with us wearing these dumb nametags!

We wear them for newcomers not for the old guard! We hand write them so newcomers can have the same nametags as we do! And I bet, Rob, that you couldn’t name everyone who’s in the Church right now!

Uhhhh – well. But.

No ifs, ands or buts – unless we purposefully engage newcomers and strive to make them a part of our journey, the new people who come through the door will not become members of our Church! If people don’t feel welcome within three weeks, they won’t ever come back!

But I thought we did Evangelism to grows the Church and get new members to pledge and serve on committees? So we can balance our budget!

If you take that approach, you are trying to meet the needs of the Church, not the needs of the people who come to the Church.

Hmmm. I guess you are right – when I came to Trinity, I was mourning the loss of my Mother and I felt that I needed to bring Christ back into my life. The last thing I wanted was more stuff to do, more responsibilities! It wasn’t until I was welcomed as part of the

congregation and found that Trinity was my spiritual home, that I was ready to get with the program!

But what are other people looking for in spiritual home?

Well research has shown that people need to feel that life is meaningful and has a purpose, that they belong to a community of people they are close to. They need to feel appreciated and respected and that they are heard and listened to. They need to feel they are growing in faith and that they are getting practical spiritual help in developing a mature faith.

Wow – that’s a mouthful! How do we do that?

Well, Rob, That’s why we are concentrating on the practical things we learned over the two days of the Magnetic Church Conference during the Adult forums today at 10:40 and next week at 10:40.

Super, Betty! I sure will be there and I hope everyone who can come will be there with us.

Please join us today as we explore what we do or don’t do in inviting and welcoming newcomers to Trinity – you will be amazed!

Then come back next week when we explore our own first remembered experiences and try to pin down what it was that made us stick! It promises to be fun and insightful!

See you at 10:40!

Evangelism is Love

Jesus said, “ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another- Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another –

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Introduction; Father de Kay

Dialogue: Betty Giles, Rob Borchert

