

“Therefore We Speak” Evangelism in Practice

By Daniel Malchow

Introduction

At times one sees in the office of a pastor a rather humorous description of his vocation. In answer to the question, “What does a pastor do?” the anonymous humorist responds, “The pastor teaches, though he must solicit his own classes. He heals, though without pills or knife. He is sometimes a lawyer, often a social worker, something of an editor, a bit of a philosopher and entertainer; a salesman; a decorative piece for public functions; and he is supposed to be a scholar. He visits the sick, marries people, buries the dead, labors to console those who sorrow and to admonish those who sin, and tries to stay sweet when chided for not doing his duty. He plans programs, appoints committees when he can get them; spends considerable time in keeping people out of each other’s hair; between times he prepares a sermon and preaches it on Sunday to those who don’t happen to have any other engagement. Then on Monday he smiles when some jovial chap roars, what a job - one day a week.”

As has been stated, this so-called “job description” is intended to be humorous. Actually Christians endeavor to treat the office of the holy ministry with the lofty dignity and respect it deserves. This office is a most precious gift which God has given to His Church. We treasure the rich blessings, blessings of eternal consequence which our Heavenly Father has showered upon us, His children, through the office of the holy ministry.

The Pastor’s Dilemma

At the same time, as is so often true of humor, we see a “kernel of truth” in the aforementioned description of the pastor’s office. We are aware of pastors burdened with an almost endless detail of duties. We sense discouragements and frustrations they encounter in trying to carry out faithfully and conscientiously the varied, almost countless, responsibilities of their office. We recognize that the complexity of duties which confront the pastor is a compelling problem which cries for attention and assistance.

One ministerial responsibility which gives rise to repeated frustration is the pastor’s desire to reach the unchurched people of his community or his immediate neighborhood. As Paul exhorted Timothy, the pastor is to “do the work of an evangelist” (II Tim. 9:5). For those in his neighborhood who are lost in sin, entangled in the clutches of Satan, grasping for peace of mind and soul, urgently in need of God’s precious love and mercy proclaimed in the Gospel, the pastor has the “pearl of great price.” But how does the pastor uncover or find such lost sheep? How can he reach them?

Every Christian Is a Witness

There is an answer, at least in part, to this problem. It is to this answer that we want to direct our thoughtful attention. Doing “the work of an evangelist” is a God-given responsibility that concerns more individuals than just the pastor. It is a God-given directive to every child of

God. Every Christian is a daily witness to the Gospel of peace and to the living faith which the Holy Spirit has worked in his heart. When Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth in his second epistle, "We also believe and therefore speak," he was referring to a characteristic or a quality that is inherent in every sanctified child of God.

How does the Christian carry out this vital responsibility of functioning as an evangelist? How does he do so with the greatest possible effectiveness? How does the Christian congregation aid its members in their desire to function as faithful witnesses to God's message of grace? What are some of the significant factors which are important in establishing and carrying out a practical evangelical ministry? These are questions which emerge as we further consider the words of the apostle Paul, "WE BELIEVE AND THEREFORE SPEAK." Our attention is thus directed to the topic:

THEREFORE WE SPEAK - EVANGELISM IN PRACTICE

As we consider evangelism in practice, we wish to point to three things which would suggest themselves as having prime importance in putting evangelism into practice. They are:

- I. Preparation.
- II. Program.
- III. Passion.

I. Preparation

It is recognized that in almost all endeavors of life there is a need for preparation. This is why we send young people to school. It is why skilled workers begin at the bottom rung on the ladder instead of at the top. It accounts for in-service training which is becoming ever more common in business and industry. No matter how easy or simple the task, under ordinary circumstances there is great profit in preparation.

A. A Carefully Prepared Study of the Scriptures

What type of preparation is needed for the work of evangelism? Basically this preparation consists in a carefully prepared study of the Scriptures. If the Christian is to witness to his faith, he will need to have and will want to have a thorough knowledge of the precious truths to which he is witnessing.

An Invaluable Tool

How important is such a sound knowledge of the Scriptures when speaking with people who are unchurched. If the question is raised, "Why do many people not accept the free offer of God's love and promise of salvation?" we quickly become aware of the numerous barriers which Satan has established to prevent a fruitful reception of the Gospel message. There are those who despise the Christian message because there is much of it which they do not understand or which they misunderstand. The fanaticism of the many religious sects has created a situation where people are bombarded on all sides by almost countless distortions of the Truth. Added to this is the fact that with alarming frequency people have personal problems or family problems which

deter them from seeking refuge in their God. In a family where the husband and father is vehemently anti-Christian the mother and children will be cautious if not even fearful about identifying themselves with the Christian faith. Our loving God has answers for those who suffer from a lack of understanding of His message, from a misconception of His truth, or from personal problems, but the tragedy is that these unfortunate individuals do not know these answers. The Christian witness should. The Christian witness should, as Peter says, “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (I Pet. 3:15).

Extensive Theological Training Not Necessary

This does not mean that extensive training in theology is necessary for Christian witnessing. It is not necessary that the Christian have superior intelligence or such an extensive knowledge of Scripture that he can answer every objection which people may raise or every problem which they may unfold. Eloquence or scholarship does not save. Only a faithful presentation of God’s saving message has that power. It matters not whether this message comes from the lips of a university professor or from a person with only an elementary school education. St. Paul made a special point of saying to the Corinthians, “I came not with excellency of speech” (I Cor. 2:1). Should you be harboring misgivings about your intellectual ability to function as a witness to the Gospel, remember what has frequently been said about evangelism, that “no one has ever been argued into the kingdom of heaven.”

To be sure, the need to defend the validity of our faith by means of intelligent argument is not to be regarded as something which has no place in the church. Most of the confessional documents of our church came into existence because false teachings had to be refuted. There is need to show critics of the Christian faith who pride themselves on their intellectual approach to religious truth that they can be refuted on their own terms. Hut as the Rev. Paul Madson stated in a recent article in the LUTHERAN SENTINEL: “As for producing the conviction of faith, that is not accomplished through an appeal to the intellect but only through an appeal to the heart. The natural intellect can know (intellectually perceive) what the Bible says, but to believe what it says is a supernatural work produced by the activity of the Holy Spirit in the heart.” This appeal to the heart can be made by every Christian, regardless of his schooling or degree of intelligence.

At the same time the Christian who seeks to put on the full armor of God will assuredly want to arm himself to the extent that God makes it possible. As God has given us His gifts, so we want to utilize these gifts to their fullest potential. We have the Savior’s encouragement to “search the Scriptures.” This searching serves to edify us in our faith, and it enables us to spread this message with greater clarity and effectiveness, as God grants His blessing. This is preparation, preparation for putting evangelism into practice which is vital for a practical evangelism ministry.

A Basic Function in the Christian’s Life

Such preparation serves another purpose. A searching of the Scriptures serves to impress upon the child of God that witnessing is an important and basic function in his life as a Christian. The plain, simple truth is that every Christian is a witness. It is not a question whether or not you want to be a witness. You are one. The question of importance, however, is the kind of witness you choose to be.

For one thing, you are a witness to your Christian faith in the type of life you lead. A careful study of the Scriptures reveals the kind of life which God desires of His children. The conduct and behavior you display testify to the faith that abides in your heart. Nor should this form of witnessing be lightly regarded. The apostle Peter writes in his first epistle, “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul: Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles; that whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation” (I Pet. 2:11,12). Very familiar to us are our Lord’s words frequently quoted from His Sermon on the Mount, “Ye are the salt of the earth Ye are the light of the world ...Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven’ (Matt. 5: 13-16). In your conduct as a Christian, whether that conduct is good or bad, you are functioning as a witness to your faith. It is to be deplored, of course, when evil conduct functions as a hindrance to the Gospel message.

As important as such conduct is, however, it cannot replace personal testimony. If the Gospel is to take root in a person’s heart, there must be a proclamation of the Word. It is only the Gospel in Word and Sacrament which is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom. 1:16). This Word is to emanate from the lips of every sanctified child of God. Only this proclaiming of the Word can bring lost sinners to repentance.

B. An Acquaintance with Methods

Another important aspect of preparation is acquaintance with methods or procedures to be used in reaching the unchurched. At this point we shrink from words like “techniques” or “salesmanship. Words such as these suggest “tricks of the trade” employed by some door-to-door salesmen who peddle their wares to the public. They suggest devious or cunning devices used to unload merchandise which customers do not really want. The Word of our God warns against such devices when Paul writes in his second letter to the Corinthians, (We) have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully” (II Cor. 3:2).

Methods Are Used in the Church’s Work

Yet, the use of methods or procedures in witnessing to the Truth is hardly out of place in the work of the Church. Seminary students receive a considerable amount of training in the art of preparing and delivering a sermon. They become familiar with methods and styles to aid them in their pulpit work. Students preparing to serve as teachers in our Christian day school enroll in courses which are aptly designated as courses in methods. Again, the purpose of such courses is to enable these teachers to communicate the message of the Scriptures as effectively as possible. The same is true of our Sunday school teachers. The new Sunday school course of our Synod has been set up in such a way to enable the teacher to present these lessons in a well-organized way.

There is a distinct pattern which the teacher is encouraged to follow. Our vacation Bible school courses also follow such a pattern. A salient example would be the one most recently published, which is intended primarily for unchurched children.

Similar methods or procedures are also important in personal witnessing. What the Christian wants to avoid is anything that would hinder this testimony of his faith. Here we may think of our work in foreign mission fields. At times we have learned to our dismay that the

message of salvation was hindered because our missionaries unknowingly followed customs which were offensive to the native population. The purpose of acquainting ourselves with evangelism methods is primarily to avoid anything which would hamper or even block our efforts to reach the lost soul.

C. The Pastor's Role in Preparation

Finally, in considering the importance of preparation for evangelism, one dare not overlook the vital responsibility of the pastor for guidance and instruction. It is he who has been called as the spiritual shepherd of the flock. He has received the theological training to strengthen and deepen the spiritual knowledge of his congregation. Paul writes that among God's gifts to the Church are pastors and teacher And he adds that these gifts are given for the "perfecting of saints" (Eph. 4:12). A better translation for "perfecting" would be "equipping." In addition to proclaiming the glorious news of salvation, pastors are to equip their people for service in the church. Assuredly this includes the Christian's function as witness. One is even led to wonder whether pastors at times do not wound consciences when they repeatedly exhort their parishioners to function as witnesses of their faith but then provide n preparation for such a formidable challenge. What, for example, we think of a basketball coach who would continually lecture players on playing better basketball but would never give them training, never conduct any practices, or never organize a team? Nor is there any lack of material for the pastor in pursuing this work of preparation. Our Synod's Commission on Evangelism has prepared a helpful booklet, "Study to be Witnesses unto Me." The booklet is well suited for this purpose. Efficient, faithful leadership on the part of the pastor is absolutely vital in the work of preparation for a practical evangelism ministry.

II Program

The second important aspect "evangelism in practice" is a program. We shall at once be very explicit. With this word "program" we are referring to organization. We are speaking of an organized evangelism program.

A. A Striving Orderliness

To some this word "organization" or "program" may sound a bit distasteful. To such as may feel that congregational life is already overly organized, suggesting another organization or another organized activity may seem reprehensible. At this point, however, the observation may well be in place, that where there is no organization, there is often disorganization. Where there is no orderliness, there is often disorderliness. In this area of Christian endeavor we feel the oft-repeated repeated words of Scripture are once more appropriate "Let all things be done decently and in order" (I Cor. 14:40).

To Christians the Lord of Church has given the weighty but glorious responsibility of spreading the blessed news of redemption. As with any other s responsibility we would hardly conceive of doing this in a careless or haphazard way. It is surely our desire to carry out this divine commission as efficiently and effectively as possible. And requires forethought and planning. It needs organization. This is why Christian congregations organize as a Synod - to promote efficiency in carrying on the Lord's work. This is why we set up a well-defined and

well-organized program of training for our pastors and teachers. It is why we have home mission boards and world mission boards. We want to put to the best possible and most effective use the resources which the Lord has made available to us. So it is with a congregation which wants to be faithful in reaching the unchurched people in its community. The congregation that wants to do this as effectively as possible will see merit in having a Program.

Seeking the Unchurched Who are Unknown

To avoid any misunderstanding, let it be plainly stated that one does not need a program to do the work of evangelism as such. As stated earlier, every child of God in his sanctified Christian life functions as a witness. In his everyday contacts with people he has the opportunity and the responsibility of giving testimony to his Christian faith by his conduct and his conversation. But what is to be said about the people with whom we have no normal contact? What concentrated efforts are we making to reach the lost souls in our neighborhood, those lost souls which our Savior loves so dearly that for them He shed His precious blood? What are we doing about those in our area or in our community who are living in the vise grip of Satan and who without a knowledge of their Savior from death, are plunging into the frightful abyss of hell? This is where planning, organization, and a program enter into the picture.

B. The Soul Responsibility List

One of the first steps in a congregation's evangelism program is compiling what is referred to as a soul responsibility list or a prospective member file. Basically this is a gathering of names. The names of people who have no active church affiliation are recorded and filed. To some this may sound unnecessary. Particularly in smaller communities or rural areas the sentiment is oft times expressed that the church affiliation of all people in the area is commonly known, indicating that such a file of names would be useless. While certainly allowing for unusual situations, the truth is that this often is a sorry fallacy. Many are the small congregations which have been amazed at the number of unchurched families which have been uncovered after efforts were undertaken to set up a prospective member file.

The sources one can use to prepare such a file are numerous. In this presentation we shall mention just a few.

1. The guest register. Asking visitors at a church service to sign the guest book is common practice in most of our churches. Information gained from such a register usually includes not only the names of guests but also their religious affiliation, if they have one.
2. A community canvas. A religious survey or canvas is frequently helpful in acquiring names. Statistics reveal that every year one out of every five families in our country changes its residence. Because of this population mobility it is felt by some that most communities should be canvassed every two or three years.
3. The Welcome Wagon. Many cities have some type of community service which makes contact with new residents. In almost all cases these agencies are willing to supply churches with the religious information they obtain.
4. The utility companies. In communities where there is no Welcome Wagon, the gas or electric company will frequently provide the names of newcomers who have moved into the area.

5. Children in the Sunday school or vacation Bible school. Very often these children come from families that are unchurched and thereby exist as mission potential.

6. Hospital visits. Many hospitals have at the information desk a clergy file in which patients are grouped according to their church affiliation. Often the word "Protestant" simply appears, which usually means that the patient is unchurched. On occasion no religious preference is listed at all.

7. The congregation's members. This last resource is often the most important and productive of all. In a congregation which I served it was customary to hand out cards periodically to all of the Sunday worshippers, asking them to list the names of unchurched people with whom they were acquainted or of whom they knew. Closely related to this is the adult membership class. Such people frequently have unchurched friends, and their new-found joys in Christ prompt them to respond readily when asked for the names of prospects.

So one could go on. Many other sources could be cited. We have merely endeavored to illustrate that the sources for building up a prospective member file are numerous, and they are available.

Some congregations have worked out unique systems for arranging this file. In my former congregation different colored tabs were used for the cards that made up this file. Prospects were divided into three categories: excellent, good, and fair. Before a new adult membership class was about to begin, every effort was made to visit these prospects. Those listed as "excellent" would naturally receive prime consideration.

C. The Visitation

The next part of an evangelism program involves the visitation. The prospective member file may be ever so complete or well organized, but it will avail nothing unless these people are visited. Thus the next step in a congregational evangelism program is to enlist and to train a team of visitors, visitors who are to witness.

The Witness Who Visits

To some this may at first sound contradictory. Earlier it was stated that every Christian is a witness to his faith. Now we hear it said that there should be a team of witnesses. There is no contradiction involved. Here we are speaking about reaching the unchurched community. Who should make these contacts? Quite obviously we would like to have these visits made by members of our congregations who are most suitably gifted or qualified for this work. Our omniscient God has distributed gifts in various ways and measures among His children. Some have talents for keeping the property of a congregation in good repair. Others are gifted for teaching little children. Still others have been blessed with voices which are put to holy use in a congregational choir. In like manner some Christians are more gifted than others in contacting the unchurched people of a community. This does not necessarily mean that they are the most intelligent. A friendly disposition, an even temperament, an amiable personality - all these are gifts of God. They can be precious attributes for one functioning as a witness for the Lord's Church.

The Visitor's Training

This team of visitors needs training. Extensive reference to this was made earlier in this presentation. At this point, however, let it be emphasized strongly that these visitors are to be trained not simply to invite but to witness. The purpose of their visits is not to win members for a congregation but to win souls for salvation. One of the points which must receive strong emphasis is that these witnesses should never make a visit without talking about the Savior. Just as effective preaching by a pastor is not something entirely innate but only results after adequate training and experience, so effective witnessing by the Christian benefits immeasurably from thorough training and experience.

It is not surprising that often the Christian has feelings of reluctance or hesitation about becoming an active witness for his Lord. The Old Adam is at constant war with our Spirit-wrought desires to carry out the will of our Lord. It bears mention, however, that many who have experienced this same reluctance have subsequently been led to experience the rapturous joy of leading a lost soul to his Savior. Could you conceive of a greater blessing which you could render in your lifetime? What immense gratification there is for one to know that God has used him as a tool in leading a soul destined for eternal doom to the rapture of heavenly bliss: God wants to use you as such a tool:

Training Materials

It should be apparent that in a presentation such as this it is simply impossible to list all of the procedures or mechanics for an efficient program of evangelism on the congregational level. Excellent materials on this subject, however, are available. Two booklets prepared by our Synod's Commission on Evangelism can be effectively used. They are entitled "Train to be Witnesses unto Me" and "Organize to be Witnesses unto Me." The commission on Evangelism of the Michigan District has prepared an excellent manual entitled "Sharing the Savior." Congregations have used this manual effectively and with thorough satisfaction. The same is true of a Lenten program prepared by the Michigan District for reclaiming inactive members and which carries the title "Strengthen thy Stakes." A book which we have found extremely informative and stimulating is "The Church in the Community" by Arthur E. Graf. It is a book upon which this writer drew heavily in developing this presentation. Obviously in a book such as this there will be items which are not adaptable, feasible, or desirable for every congregation. However, as resource material it is extremely valuable.

C. The Pastor's Role in Visitation

Finally, one must again single out the importance of the pastor in any type of evangelism program. It would appear inconceivable that a congregation could initiate and carry out an evangelism program without the enthusiastic support and leadership of the pastor. It is our conviction that a conscientious study of the merits of such a program will convince a majority of pastors that it has far-reaching benefits. Enthusiastic concern for Christian witnessing brings us to a last aspect of "evangelism in practice" which we regard as having prime importance, and that is passion.

III. Passion

Passion for souls lies at the very heart of the Church's mission. As stated by Arthur Graf: "Passion is to a program what gas is to a car. Passion is the substance which moves the program,

and without it congregations never get much beyond reworking programs. Standing and sitting committees will rarely become walking and talking committees where there is no passion”.

Passion Motivated by Love for Christ

Where does such passion have its origin? What motivates the child of God to show such passion? It is love for Christ and love for Christ alone which is the source of that motivation. The child of God has a fervent love for his Savior and for the precious salvation which he won. This is what motivates the Christian to do what Jesus said to the demoniac, “Return to thine own house and show how great things God hath done unto thee” (Luke 8:38).

The work of the Church is a work of life and death. The success of the Gospel in penetrating and taking root in a man’s heart determines whether that soul will spend eternity in the horrors of hell or in the happiness of heaven. With our present-day world seemingly sinking deeper and deeper into the depths of depravity, one might well wonder why the Almighty continues to permit this world to exist. There is only one answer. Our loving God in His infinite mercy is still sparing this world, so that the Church may continue its mission of calling sinners to repentance.

A. The Cost of Salvation Paid by the Savior

Carrying out this mission requires great effort and continual sacrifice. Christians willingly expend such effort and make such sacrifices when they have a passion for souls. For us it is a wondrous blessing that the Gospel is free. The gift of salvation is one that God offers to us freely. But when we speak of the Gospel as free, let us not think that there was no cost. The cost was paid by our Savior. The price He paid was the shedding His life’s blood. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (I Cor. 6:20).

Borne by the Disciples and Christian Martyrs

There were others who paid a cost - not a cost for their salvation but a cost so that the free Gospel might be transmitted to us. We think of the Lord’s apostles. How frequently they were severely persecuted because of their witnessing: Yet their response was consistently that which was uttered by Peter and John, “We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20). To receive “five times forty stripes save one” would most likely deter many of us from witnessing for Christ. Yet that was only the beginning of the apostle Paul’s catalog of suffering. Add to this the cry of the martyrs that has risen through the centuries, and it becomes very evident that the Gospel of salvation was delivered to us at a cost that mathematics cannot measure and for which money cannot serve.

Are we ready to pay the cost? Do we have an intense passion for the lost souls of our neighborhood or our community? Even a cursory look at conditions in today’s world indicates that Christ’s members must stand ready to make the fullest possible use of their talents to bring the risen Christ to a fallen world. Alarming statistics can be cited, which intensify the Christian’s passion for those who are lost. There are approximately 3,000,000,000 people in the world. Only 888,800,000 even claim affiliation with some Christian church. In our own country, which

people like to call Christian, there are over 73,000,000 unchurched; 20,000,000 children receive no religious instruction; three-fourths of our youth do not attend church. Some 11,000 babies are born in the United States every day, about 4,000,000 a year. About forty percent of these children are born to families which have no church affiliation. Nor does the rural population differ drastically from this picture. If one regards the rural population as such living in town of 2,500 or less, the salient fact is that one-half, of the unchurched, over 37,000,000 live in rural communities. We must face the stark reality that under present conditions the world and our country are daily become more and more heathen.

B. A Congregational Check List

What passion do we have for such who are mired in the muck of sin? What efforts are our congregations making to reach those about us who live without faith and hope? Permit me to present a short check list so that you may briefly evaluate the dedication your congregation is showing in respect to a practical evangelism ministry.

AN ABBREVIATED CONGREGATIONAL CHECK LIST

1. Does my congregation place much emphasis on the fact that every Christian is called to witness for Jesus Christ? Yes No
2. Does my congregation have a defined geographical area of responsibility within which it seeks to serve intensively, discovering and teaching every person who is without Christ and His Church? Yes No
3. Does my congregation periodically conduct a religious canvas of the area or community in which it is located? Yes No
4. Does my congregation have a dedicated and active evangelism committee? Yes No
5. Does my congregation train members for the responsible task of witnessing? Yes No
6. Does my congregation periodically review the number of adult confirmands in past years and evaluate this past performance? Yes No
7. Does my congregation maintain an active interest in families of the congregation in which either the husband or wife is unchurched? Yes No
8. Does my congregation have ways of discovering members who are becoming inactive and of seeking to reclaim them for Jesus Christ? Yes No
9. Does my congregation have a soul responsibility list, containing names of persons whom it must confront personally with the message of Jesus Christ? Yes No
10. Does my congregation maintain an up-to-date Cradle Roll and keep a watchful eye over the religious instruction of the young? Yes No
11. Does my congregation provide means by which members may submit names of persons who ought to be on the congregation's soul responsibility list? Yes No
12. Does my congregation make diligent efforts to enroll unchurched children in its Sunday school? Yes No

Many more questions for self-evaluation could be raised. Suffice it to say that if your answers to the questions just posed are predominately negative, it would be well to examine the passion which your congregation is showing for those lost and doomed by sin.

Passion is born of love - love for one's fellow man, love for the eternal salvation of one's neighbor. Such passion, born of love, has its origin in God. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4:10). Like passion was displayed by the Savior. "Christ loved the church and gave himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:25). St. Paul exhibited such a passion for souls that he spoke about laboring under an inner compulsion. "Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel" (I Cor. 9:16). And what was the source of this passion? In his second epistle to the Corinthians he writes, "The love of Christ constraineth us" (II Cor. 5:14).

C. The Role of the Pastor in Passion

Again we conclude this section with reference to the pastor. If passion for souls is to be burning in the hearts of a congregation's members, it must be blazing intensely in the heart of the pastor. It can be quite safely stated that any evangelism outreach of a congregation will not succeed unless it is initiated and supported with vigorous leadership by the pastor. Nor is the pastor left with a choice. As stated in the introduction to this presentation, Paul's words to Timothy are the words of the Good Shepherd to all of the under-shepherds: "Do the work of an evangelist" (II Tim. 4:5). Or as Beck translates: "Do your work of telling the good news." Every day the conscientious pastor spends many hours in carrying out the various functions of his office. But how many hours does he spend or is he able to spend in a week or in a month in seeking to reach the lost souls in his own back yard? In far too many cases is it not a case that these hours number very few?

Conclusion

To say that a majority of members and congregations of the Wisconsin Synod would profit by giving serious thought to their evangelism efforts can hardly be contradicted. A study of the past points to some glaring and disappointing deficiencies in this vital work.

The report of the Board for Home Missions to this convention indicates that the goal established for adult confirmations during the past year was 635. The number of confirmations reported is 909 or 64 percent of the goal. According to the latest statistical report our Wisconsin Synod numbers 271,117 communicants. Of this number 2,740, or slightly over one percent, were adult confirmands. Stated another way, there was one adult confirmation for every 99 communicant members of our Synod. Are not some soul-searching questions in order? How many people did you bring to the Lord during the past year? How many efforts did you make? How often did you witness?

As you return to your homes and as you report back to your respective congregations and delegate conferences, I ask that you stress the importance of evangelism in the work of every congregation. Pray to our merciful Lord that He give us willing and zealous witnesses. Pray that He impress upon us the necessity of earnestly carrying out this work "while it is day before the night cometh when no man can work." If you have any questions about procedure, the Commission on Evangelism in your district will be eager to provide you with all the necessary help and materials which you need. "Lord, here am I, send me." Apart from those who suffer from severe mental illness or severe retardation, none of us lacks the gifts necessary to "speak the truth in love." How often have we not sung: "If you cannot speak like angels, If you cannot

preach like Paul, You can tell the love of Jesus, You can say He died for all.” Not only can we say it; God has obligated us to say it. After His triumphant resurrection Jesus appeared to the disciples and said, “Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” And so He sends us. May our response to this commission be that which we repeatedly sing: “Lord, here am I, send me, send me:”

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