

# Getting Ready for *Sharing Faith in a New Century*

## A Workshop Design

to introduce

*Toward a Vision for Evangelism:  
a guide for prayer, Bible study  
and planning*

### **Introduction**

In August 2001, the churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church adopted “Toward a Vision for Evangelism in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: Sharing Faith in a New Century.” The resolution asked for the appointment of a “Blue Ribbon” task force with long term and short term elements within its scope.

The longer term goal of this task force is to recommend specific plans and actions for the future evangelism ministry of the ELCA, with recommendations for future budget allocations and possible changes in budget priorities, and to bring this report to the 2003 churchwide assembly for consideration and approval.

The resolution also invites attention to a number of more immediate pieces which will help engage the conversation and planning process from a congregational, grass roots perspective; inform the shape of the 2003 proposal; and result in some more immediate offerings being shared in the form of "pilot" resources, training opportunities or strategies.

The resolution specifically invites and encourages all expressions of our church to:

- make a commitment to pray for evangelism
- make a commitment to identify and broker the witness and evangelism gifts of our global companions
- get clear about the ELCA's mission and purpose with respect to evangelism and create openness to innovation and change
- develop a process for encouraging local study and reflection on evangelism that leads to creating evangelism plans; a process for the collecting of local and synodical evangelism plans for sharing at the 2003 churchwide assembly
- discern, discover and lift a multiplicity of models for congregational growth that pays attention to "best practices" from the field for the field
- continue expansion and highlighting of the Call to Discipleship

## Purpose

This design offers a 60-90 minute workshop that helps:

- introduce this churchwide call to *Share Faith in a New Century*,
- acquaint congregation leaders with the print resources *Toward a Vision for Evangelism*, Leader and Participant Guides, and the *Ecumenical Evangelism Tool Box*, and,
- excite congregations to the opportunity to create homegrown congregational evangelism plans, including sharing any early synodical information concerning how these plans will be collected and celebrated in your synod context.

This workshop may be used in your work with an individual congregation, a group of congregations in your cluster or conference, as part of a synod-wide training event, or in any other setting that works best for you. Additional activity ideas for shorter or longer presentation times are listed at the end of the workshop design. The design assumes the workshop leader has some familiarity with the resources and has a passion for evangelism. The workshop is written to be used by any synodical leaders (synodical staff, the Partners in Education and Evangelism, the synodical evangelism leaders network, the synodical Christian education network, etc.) who may have opportunity to work with congregations and congregation leaders to introduce *Sharing Faith in a New Century*.

## Materials

The following equipment, supplies and advance preparations will help in the facilitation of the workshop:

- ▶ a writing surface (newsprint, overhead, black/white board)
- ▶ overhead projector (if using overheads)
- ▶ name tags, markers, Bibles (or copies of *Into the Word* handouts)
- ▶ paper and pencils for each participant
- ▶ overheads or slides made from the “display samples”
- ▶ copies of the *Toward a Vision for Evangelism* Participants Guide (6-0001-3412-6) or copies of the pages (11, 12, 13, 14 & 15 ) from the guide
- ▶ copies of the *Putting It All Together* handout for each participant
- ▶ copies of the churchwide assembly resolution (attached)

## About the Workshop

The workshop design follows the five segment flow of each session in *Toward a Vision for Evangelism*, namely, Getting Started, Into the Word, ELCA Mission Snapshots, Sharing and Discussing and Taking it Home. Several options are provide for each of the five segments. Please select the options that seem most appropriate for your goals, audience and time restraints. The time markers in the design (example: 10 minutes) support a 90 minute workshop experience.

## Workshop

### 1. *Getting Started* (15 minutes)

**Introduce yourself and tell why you are here** leading this workshop. Share some of your excitement for evangelism and discipleship. Add comments about the 2001 Churchwide assembly resolution, *Sharing Faith in a New Century* and the *Call to Discipleship*, as appropriate. This is an opportunity to “charge up the troops” to the possibility of creating their own homegrown evangelism plan.

If time permits, ask participants to introduce themselves and name the congregation where they are members. As possible, invite participants from the same congregation to sit together.

**Tell participants that the workshop follows** the flow of the four sessions in the *Guide for Prayer, Bible Study and Planning*. Display the five sections: Getting Started, Into the Word, ELCA Mission Snapshots, Sharing and Discussing, Taking it Home (see display sample #1), and/or make reference to the Contents page of the *Participants Guide*.

**Share verbally and visually** (see display sample #2) that the goal of the workshop is:

to introduce participants to the printed resource *Toward a Vision for Evangelism*, and  
to invite participants to prepare for the task of creating a congregational evangelism and discipleship action plan.

**Offer a short prayer** that asks God to stir the hearts and imaginations of all the members and expressions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

**Ask participants to respond** to the following questions (see display sample #3) one at a time and in order, as a large group or in smaller (congregational) groups, as possible.

What is your understanding of the word *evangelical* as in the title of our Church (ELCA)?  
How does *evangelical* define or describe your congregation?  
How would you respond to the statement *every Christian is an evangelist*?

**Read the questions out loud**, and encourage participants to offer their responses in the large group. Allow five minutes for this exercise. As possible, collect responses on newsprint for display.

2. *Into the Word* (15 minutes)

**Read together** (from display sample #4 or handouts) **Acts 1:8**

**Tell participants that these words record** Jesus' final instructions to his disciples. When Jesus ascended, he left the extension of his kingdom in the hands of his followers empowered by the Holy Spirit. This passage not only names the primary task given by Jesus to his followers, it also identifies the audiences and places where we are to go.

**Ask and/or have on display** (display sample #5), *According to Acts 1:8 what is the primary task of Jesus' disciples? (to witness) And, to what distance are we to witness? (the ends of the earth).*

Make available handouts, overheads and/or Bibles with the texts of: Acts 1:8, Matthew 28:16-20, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:47-48, and John 20:21 (see display sample #6).

**Tell participants that Acts 1:8 is the fifth** appearance of what is often called "the Great Commission." Point out that Jesus' Great Commission appears in all four of the gospels.

**Invite participants to form small groups** (preferably with individuals from the same congregation). Ask them to read the scripture texts silently to themselves. After everyone has had an opportunity to read all of the passages, discuss the following questions (see display sample #7). Give 10 minutes for this conversation.

What do these passages say about the task of evangelism?

What do these passages say about the mission of your congregation?

Allow time for large group sharing. If time is a concern, focus on response to only the first question.

3. *ELCA Mission Snapshots* (15 minutes)

**Ask participants to remain** in their small groups and respond to the following questions (see display sample #8) one at a time and in order.

What is the primary mission of your congregation?

What evidence is there to support your answer?

What are the resources used by your congregation to carry out this task?

It may be helpful to hide the second and third questions while the groups respond to the first question for 2 minutes. Then, display the second question for another two minute discussion, and finally the third question for the final two minutes.

**Invite groups to share their responses** after six minutes. Accept all responses. Encourage participants to note common and dissimilar responses and, as time permits, to explore the reasons behind the responses. Listen for comments that name elements of the Great Commission. Direct the conversation and summarize this exercise by stating that there is just one business that the Gospel describes for the church: the evangelizing and disciple making business. “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:19-20)

#### **4. Sharing and Discussing (15 minutes)**

Distribute copies, or have on display, *What is Evangelism for us?* (Participant Guide, page 11). **Ask participants to follow along as you read** through the text. Invite participants to record as individuals some ways they can imagine their congregation engaging in evangelism.

After several evangelism activities have been listed, distribute pages 12 and 13 from the *Participants Guide*. **Invite participants to quickly scan** the suggestions. Have them add to the list they started by checking off three activities that seem like good possibilities for their congregation to consider.

Encourage congregational members to compare their choices looking for similarities. As time permits encourage participants to explore present practices and organizational structures of congregational life that would be involved or impacted with implementation of each the particular activity (i.e. Who would do this? What would change?, etc.).

#### **5. Taking it Home (20 minutes)**

Distribute copies of *Making an Evangelism Action Plan* and *The Shape of Our Plan* (pages 14 and 15 in the *Participant Guide*). **Review quickly the three steps** of making an evangelism action plan and the *Shape of our Plan* page. Clarify as necessary.

**Remind participants that their congregation** *Evangelism Action Plan* should be considered only after their congregation’s leaders and members have had time to complete sessions one through four of the *Guide for Prayer, Bible Study and Planning*. Tell participants that one of the goals of this workshop is to show the value of such prayer and Bible study prior to planning.

Distribute Copies of *Putting It All Together* (handout). **Invite participants to work down** the page individually or with other members of their congregation, responding to each item and making specific assignments.

**Share any early information** you have about the synod's time line for when congregation plans will be collected. Suggest a time frame based on the synod's timetable during which congregations might schedule their study and planning process.

6. *Closing Prayer and Godspeed* (10 minutes)

**Thank the participants** for their good work. Encourage them to bring their plans to their congregation as soon as possible. Let them know that congregation *Evangelism Action Plan Commitment Forms* will need to be submitted in advance of the August 2003 Churchwide Assembly. Information on exact dates and procedures will be communicated during 2002.

Great Commission Benediction (*Meeting God in the Bible*, The Kerygma Program, 1992)

**Invite participants to stand** for a group benediction. Have displayed *The Great Commission Benediction* (see display sample # 9). If possible, have them gather in the same small groups they worked in or in groups of six to eight and, if they are comfortable, to hold hands. If the entire group is thirty or less, invite participants to stand in a circle and join hands.

*The Great Commission Benediction*

Jesus said "Go!"

Jesus said, "Make disciples!"

Jesus said, "Baptize and teach!"

Jesus said, "I am with you always, \_\_\_\_\_!"

- A. You, in the large group, or one participant around each table in the small groups, speak the first line to the person on the right "Jesus said, 'Go!'" That person repeats the words to the person on his or her right and so it proceeds around the circle.
- B. If in small groups, after the person on the leader's left speaks the word to the leader, the leader starts the second phrase by speaking the words to the person on her or his right. The same process is repeated for each phrase. With the last phrase each person adds the name of the person to the right, thus the person for the blank line of the display copy.

- C. If you are the leader of the single large group then you begin and the participants continue as described above. However, instead of waiting for the statement to go around the circle, speak the second statement after the first has traveled to about six or seven persons, then the third after another six or seven, and so on. Be alert for the statement coming full circle from the person on your left.
- D. In order for this to work, everyone needs to know the name of the person on his or her left, and the display copy must be seen by all small group leaders. Close by saying, "Amen."

### **Additional Activities and Resources**

The following activities and resources may also be helpful in introducing *Toward a Vision for Evangelism*.

1. As a *Getting Started* activity ask participants to respond to the following three questions:
  - What was the original mission of your congregation? Why was it founded?
  - What is the mission of your congregation today?
  - How do you discern the mission to which God is calling you?
2. As an *Into the Word* activity refer to the *Toward a Vision for Evangelism Leader Guide* for additional scripture reference and commentary that may be used and discussed by workshop participants.
3. As an *ELCA Mission Snap Shots* activity use the *Evangelism Essentials Self-Scoring Inventory*. Available to score online (display with LCD project for group use) or to download for hard copies at [www.elca.org/eteam/assessment/EvnEssSelfInv.htm](http://www.elca.org/eteam/assessment/EvnEssSelfInv.htm) or order through Augsburg Fortress at 800/328-4648. Ask for item ISBN 6-000-9998-3, \$1.25
4. As a *Sharing and Discussing* activity distribute copies of the *Ecumenical Evangelism Tool Kit* and invite participants to select resources that could possibly be used as part of their congregations' evangelism and discipleship efforts.
5. As a *Taking it Home* activity check with synod or conference leader to see what evangelism initiatives are being planned and how congregational *Evangelism Action Plan Commitment Forms* will be collected, celebrated and passed on. Help shape creative expressions of these initiatives that honor the synod's needs and setting.

Questions or comments about the workshop design can be addressed to:  
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800/638-3522, ext 2427, [Plutz@elca.org](mailto:Plutz@elca.org)

***Toward a Vision for Evangelism:  
a Guide for Prayer, Bible Study  
and Planning***

- 1. Getting Started**
- 2. Into the Word**
- 3. ELCA Mission Snapshots**
- 4. Sharing and Discussing**
- 5. Taking it Home**

## Workshop objectives:

1. to introduce participants to the printed resource *Toward a Vision for Evangelism*, and
2. to invite participants to prepare for the task of creating congregational evangelism and discipleship action plans.

# Getting Started

1. What is your understanding of the word *evangelical* as in the title of our Church (ELCA)?
2. How does *evangelical* define or describe your congregation?
3. How would you respond to the statement *every Christian is an evangelist*?

# Into the Word

Acts 1:8

*But you will receive power when the  
Holy Spirit has come upon you;  
and you will be my witnesses  
in Jerusalem, in all Judea  
and Samaria,  
and to the ends of the earth.*

# Into the Word

*According to Act 1:8*

- 1. What is the primary task of Jesus' disciples?*
- 2. And, to what distance are we to witness?*

# Into the Word

*Acts 1:8*

*Matthew 28:16-20*

*Mark 15:15*

*Luke 24:47-48*

*John 20:21*



# ELCA Mission Snapshots

1. *What is the primary mission of your congregation?*
2. *What evidence is there to support your response?*
3. *What are the resources used by your congregation to carry out this mission?*

# *The Great Commission Benediction*

Jesus said, “Go!”

Jesus said, “Make disciples!”

Jesus said, “Baptize and teach!”

Jesus said, “I am with you always,  
\_\_\_\_\_!”

## ***Putting It All Together***

# **Designing Your Take Home Action Plan**

List those who ought to be involved in creating your congregation's *Evangelism and Discipleship action plan*?

How will you congregation go about creating an *action plan design team*? Develop a plan for enlisting participation.

List those who might raise objection. Develop a plan for enlisting their support.

What people resources do you need and how will they be recruited?

What program resources will you need and where will you obtain them?

What equipment and materials will you need? Are they readily available? How will they be provided?

How much will the action plan cost to implement and how will it be funded?

What is your timeline for creating the action plan design team?

Who will you ask to pray for this endeavor?

# *Into the Word*

## **Acts 1:8**

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

## **Matthew 28:16-20**

*Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.  
When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.  
And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.  
Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,  
baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,  
and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.  
And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

## **Mark 16:5**

*And Jesus said to them,  
"Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation."*

## **Luke 24:27-28**

*And that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations,  
beginning from Jerusalem.  
You are witnesses of these things.*

## **John 20:21**

*Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."*