



EQUIPPING FOR... **EVANGELISM & MISSION**

Sharing Your Faith A Congregational Workshop Guide

Imagine what it would look like if each congregation in The Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) was intentional about equipping their members to share their faith and to invite others to experience the fullness of life in Christ. Canadian Ministries is spearheading a program to turn this into a reality. In late October 2017, five congregational leaders from across the country gathered to learn more about evangelism and to begin crafting the first stages of projects to take back to their congregations. This meeting between leaders was the first step in many towards developing a network that will eventually support a culture of evangelism in the context of local congregations across the PCC.

This *Equipping for Evangelism* brings together key learnings from this training and provides practical exercises in the form of a workshop that can be used as a springboard for your own congregation's evangelism initiatives.

Sharing Your Faith Story as YOU— the awesome, gifted, wonderful person God created you to be!

Nurturing a culture of evangelism in your congregation means equipping people to embrace, understand and share their faith as *the people God created them to be* through their own unique gifts, talents, connections and experiences.

For many Christians, the mere mention of evangelism brings up feelings of discomfort and anxiety. One of the reasons for this discomfort is that many people believe that “being an evangelist” requires taking on characteristics—saying and doing things—that don't feel true to who they are.

When Jesus told his followers to go and share the good news, he did so recognizing that they were a diverse group of people with different gifts and experiences. The one thing that they all had in common was a life-giving encounter with the Son of God.

Jesus invites us to share our transformed lives, which shine uniquely from within each of us, with others: “In that same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Lead with love

Too many modern Christians and churches lead with beliefs, Bible quotes, traditions and theological arguments. The early church led and grew with love. They certainly had beliefs and a growing familiarity with what would become the New Testament, but not like today. With relatively low literacy rates, no printing press to produce Bibles, and a less developed theology, they memorized the Sermon on the Mount, and it became their template for living. They were compassionate. They were kind. They were forgiving.

“The Way it Used to Be” – *Presbyterians Today* (Jan/Feb 2017)

Experience. Understand. Share.

We have a tendency to overcomplicate evangelism when it is really much easier than people think. People need to **experience Jesus, understand their experience**, and then **share it with others**.

Hosting a workshop is a good way to raise your congregation's comfort level with evangelism. Just be sure to invite a diverse range of people. Go out of your way to invite especially those who may not see themselves as having a role in evangelism.

In the following workshop outline, you will find key ideas, personal reflection questions, and group

"We need to know how to talk about Jesus from our own lives, out of our real feelings of faith and doubt and in real life words."

Unbinding the Gospel: Real Life Evangelism, pg. 83

discussion prompts to get your congregation talking about faith sharing.

Aren't able to host a whole workshop? The material can be easily adapted to suit your congregation's needs. Each part of the workshop can be used on its own, or feel free to pull out some of the questions and activities for use during session meetings or small group gatherings.

Evangelism Workshop for Congregations

Goal: To facilitate conversations about evangelism that will help congregations and individuals identify how they can use their unique gifts, skills and interests to share their experiences of God.

Workshop Guidelines:

- Put aside any preconceived notions of what faith sharing looks like or should be.
- Come with openness to listening to each other and to God.
- Forget about coming up with the perfect idea. All ideas should be welcome at the table.
- Focus on enjoyment; seek out a faith sharing initiative that your congregation would enjoy, not something that you feel obligated to do.
- Don't be afraid to be creative.

Part 1: Experience Jesus in a way you just can't help but talk about!

Opening Prayer:

Lord of all creation,
You invite us to live vibrant spiritual lives,
filled with the joy and love of Christ.
You call on us to be salt and light in the world,
generously opening our homes, churches and selves
to others.
We want to experience the fullness of your love
in all aspects of our lives.
Inspire us to be attentive to your presence.
Equip us to be light-bearers in the lives of others.
Be with us as we learn to share your love in a world
so desperately in need of it. Amen.

Key Idea: Write the following key idea on chart paper or project it on a screen in a prominent area of the room. The workshop leader should read it once for the group and then invite participants to read it out loud together.

As Christian communities, we are called to facilitate opportunities for people to encounter God. After all, people need to "experience" Jesus in order to invite others to experience him. Churches that prioritize evangelism are intentional in orienting all aspects of faith life (worship, sacrament, ritual, community, education, small groups etc.) towards experiencing the presence of the triune God and the fullness of life with Christ.

Personal Reflection: Read the following personal reflection question. Allow a few minutes for participants to contemplate the question on their own. Then, invite them to form pairs or small groups to discuss the common factors in their experiences of God.

Think about a time when you experienced (saw, heard, felt, intuited) the presence of God.

What were the features of that experience?

Biblical Inspiration: Read John 4:27-30, 39-42.

When we read the story of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman, we often read it as an example of Christ's love extending beyond social barriers.

How is this passage also a story about evangelism?

Take the time to unpack the reading, focusing on why and how the woman shared her experience of Jesus and the impact her testimony had on the people with whom she shared.¹

Group Discussion: Divide into three groups and assign one of the following discussion questions to each group. Give each group time to discuss their question and record their answers on chart paper. Once each group has finished, gather together and report back on what has been discussed.

- 1) How are those in your congregation being spiritually fed? Describe the practices that invite people to not only know about God, but also to experience the living presence of God.
- 2) Do those who join you for worship leave with more energy than they came? What is it about the worship service at your church that is energizing, inspiring and life-giving?
- 3) How does your mission outreach engage people in relationship with others and with God?

Goal Setting:

Pray. Pause to pray at this point. Invite God to guide you in your goal setting.

Review the insights that have been gathered in this part of the workshop.

One New Thing. Choose one new thing that your congregation will do to help others experience the presence of God. It can be something small, like promoting a daily prayer practice, or something larger like hosting a spiritual retreat.

Remember:

- It is better to set a small goal that is attainable than a large one that is too overwhelming!
- It should be something you, as a congregation, would enjoy doing. Ideally, it will draw on your existing gifts and strengths.
- Your goal can be to improve or strengthen an existing ministry.

Part 2: Understand the Experience and what it means for your everyday life.

Opening Prayer: Invite people to share where they have seen God in their lives over the last week and then offer up a prayer of thanks together as a group.

Key Idea: Write the following key idea on chart paper or project it on a screen in a prominent area of the room. The workshop leader should read it once for the group and then invite participants to read it out loud together.

Each person is gifted with the ability to experience God. Sometimes our experiences are big, miraculous and life-changing; other times, they are quiet, subtle and commonplace. In Christian community, we notice, unpack, celebrate and seek to understand how and where God is at work in our lives. We develop our ability to share our faith stories by practicing sharing these stories together.

Personal Reflection: Read the following personal reflection question. Allow a few minutes for participants to contemplate the question on their own. Drawing the whole group back together, list on chart paper all of the ways that others have shared their faith with the participants.

Remember a time when the faith of someone you encountered made you think differently about your own life.

What was it about the way they expressed their faith that made an impression on you?

Faith Mapping Activities:¹ Choose one or both of the faith mapping activities on this page for participants to do. Afterwards, offer an opportunity for participants to share what they've learned about their own faith formation and identity.

Group Discussion: Divide into three groups and assign one of the following discussion questions to each group. Give each group time to discuss their question and record their answers on chart paper. Once each group has finished, gather together and report back on what has been discussed.

- 1) What opportunities are there in your church for people to share their experiences of God?
- 2) Describe a time when you have experienced the presence of God in worship or during another activity at church.
- 3) What are the gifts God has given you as a faith community that can be a point of connection with people outside the church?

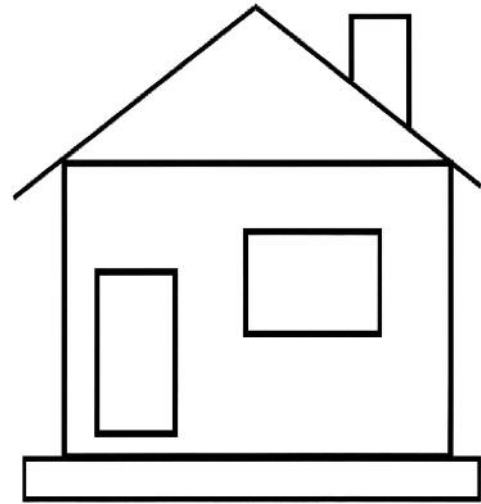
Goal Setting:

Pray. Pause to pray at this point. Invite God to guide you in your goal setting.

Review the insights that have been gathered in this part of the workshop.

One New Thing. Choose one new thing that your congregation will do to create an opportunity for those in your congregation to practice sharing their experiences of God. For example, commit to having a time during each worship service for a few people to share how God has been active in their lives over the last week.

1. Provided by the Rev. Dr. Jerry Canon during the "Evangelism Pilot Project – Preparing for Liftoff" workshop (PCC National Office, Oct. 30-Nov. 1, 2017). Used with permission.



Building Your Own House

1. In the foundation, write the concept or idea by which you govern your life.
2. Along the walls, write the methods which you use to support this idea.
3. In the door, write an important part of you that you borrowed from someone else, and the name of the person you got it from.
4. In the window, write something you are proud of and want others to see.
5. In the roof, write a protective mechanism which you use.
6. In the chimney, write a means of release for you.



MY FAITH

Stream Chart

1. Name the tributaries that go into making a river called "My Faith."
2. Share your chart with one person, so that together you can consider things that affect our various faith responses.
3. As a whole group, talk over what we have discovered.

Part 3: Share the Experience in a way that uses your gifts and builds relationships.

Opening Prayer:

God of Infinite Love,
You are with us wherever we go,
giving us strength and courage to do all that you
ask of us.
You call us to proclaim the good news of Christ,
sharing your love so that others might move into
relationship with you.
Inspire us to go deeply into the joy and peace of
life in the Spirit.
Equip us with the words and actions to share
this life with others
in ways that are respectful and build our
communities.
Be with us as we learn to share your love in a world
so desperately in need of it. Amen.

Key Idea: Write the following key idea on chart paper or project it on a screen in a prominent area of the room. The workshop leader should read it once for the group and then invite participants to read it out loud together.

Because we want others to experience God's life-giving love, we *always* lead with love. We share our experiences in ways that are helpful to others, build our relationships and increase our connection to those God has placed in our lives. Our goal is not to convince or to convert, but to open the door for another to have an experience of God.

Wherever you are now, God has placed you there. Your gifts, interests, ideas, words, actions, relationships and connections are all avenues for inviting others to experience God's presence in their own lives.

Personal Reflection: Read the following personal reflection question. Allow a few minutes for participants to contemplate the question on their own.

Divide into pairs or small groups and pray for the people with whom you will share your experience of God.

Make a quick mental list of all the places you visit, social circles you belong to, and communities you connect with in your daily life.

Are there people you regularly encounter with whom you could share your faith in a way that is authentic, true to your character and strengthens your relationships?

Neighbourhood Mapping Activity: Using a large piece of paper (or several pieces of paper taped together) and colourful markers, create a map of your church's neighbourhood. Identify all of the places that congregation members frequent by drawing smiley faces beside them. Brainstorm ways that you could share your faith stories in these places. Are there any locations on your map that you think you should reach out to? Draw hearts around those locations. What might you do? Scribble the ideas right onto the map. While you are still sitting or standing around the map, pray for your neighbours and neighbourhood.

Group Discussion: Divide into three groups and assign one of the following discussion questions to each group. Give each group time to discuss their question



and record their answers on chart paper. Once each group has finished, gather together and report back on what has been discussed.

- 1) Who do you know who might be receptive to your faith story?
- 2) How could you share your story in a way that is comfortable for you and helpful to the person you are with?
- 3) How does your church encourage its members and/or provide opportunities to share faith stories with those outside the church?

Goal Setting:

Pray. Pause to pray at this point. Be reminded that God is guiding you in your goal setting.

Review the insights that have been gathered in this part of the workshop.

One New Thing. Choose one new thing that your congregation will do to encourage members to share their faith stories with those outside the church. Remember that faith sharing is best approached with a spirit of caring, openness and creativity. It is not meant to be a chore, so choose a goal the people in your congregation will enjoy.

Now start sharing your faith!

If you've done the whole workshop, you've now chosen **3 faith sharing goals** as a community. If you've only done part, you will have chosen **1 or 2 goals—that's good too!**

Now, it is time to set things in motion to fulfill your goals.

Look beyond the usual leaders in the congregation and invite those whose **gifts, skills, and experiences** are best suited to moving you forward towards your goals.

Choose your most attainable goal and start there.

Don't overcomplicate evangelism; just start sharing your faith story! In the words of Jesus, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15).

Sharing God's invitation for people to come to know Him and know His love for them is not done by following some recipe. We aren't selling people something. We don't need to cajole, threaten, trick or shame someone into something. Rather it involves sharing what we've found in the context of real relationships. It involves listening and respecting a fellow human being. But it also involves being aware of opportunities for sharing your story of faith and why it matters to you. And that takes a certain amount of vulnerability and courage.

– *Invited: Exploring Genuine Christian Invitation*, a free six-week study resource for churches looking to explore evangelism.

Looking for more resources on evangelism?

Check out:

- Matha Grace Reese's *Unbinding the Gospel: Real Life Evangelism* (available for loan from Canadian Ministries)
- John P. Bowen's *Evangelism for "Normal" People*
- Wycliffe College's Institute of Evangelism's webpage: <https://institute.wycliffecollege.ca/>
- *Invited* evangelism study guide: <https://spiritofinvitation.com/>

Canadian Ministries wants to hear from you!

The evangelism initiative that Canadian Ministries has begun is designed to grow. Our goal is to provide resources and ideas to inspire our denomination in this important area of our faith. If you've recently started an evangelism initiative in your congregation, we'd love to hear about it!

Contact us at canadianministries@presbyterian.ca or call 416-441-1111 or 1-800-619-7301 ext. 271. Find more great ministry ideas through our weekly Facebook post *Take it Up Tuesday*. Follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/pccconnect.