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A Lenten Guide for Study and Action YEAR A

by Jim Lemler and Charles Fulton

Introduction

groundwork is a resource for individuals, congregations, and their leaders to assist them in engaging Holy Scripture and the mission of God's Church. These activities till the ground of prayer, learning, reflection, and conversation so that people and congregations can learn together. The goal of *Groundwork* is to encourage personal and congregational transformation, to ask congregational members and leaders to dig deeply into the soil of their mission and context to do serious and joyful learning about evangelism, invitation, and welcome. *Groundwork* has been prepared for Lent of 2005 using the lectionary from the *Book of Common Prayer* but may be used at any time for congregational learning and planning (including use with the Revised Common Lectionary).

This is a crucial time in American culture and the Episcopal Church. It is a time of immense change, and with that change come new challenges and new opportunities for mission. There is great seeking and searching for meaning, hope, and spiritual experience throughout American society. However, these factors often do not lead to participation and membership in the Church.

It is an urgent moment for Episcopal congregations to examine their mission and to prepare themselves for evangelism, invitation, welcome, and incorporation. The Church will not thrive unless we become more intentional and alert to these dimensions of our mission. Conversely, there is a growing vision for and attention to these ministries in many quarters of the Episcopal Church.

Groundwork provides a connection between the Lenten Scripture for 2005 and resources for the mission of evangelism. The Scripture for this season is abundant in powerful transforming stories and images of God's love and invitation. This Scripture is naturally placed in a framework of invitation to and incorporation within the love of God and of God's community, the Church. This resource also provides links to a number of mission and evangelism resources that are available from the Episcopal Church Center. The intent of *Groundwork* is to be flexible so that people may use it for Sunday or mid-week study, for congregational or leadership retreats, for committees and evangelism working groups, for preachers, and in other ways that may come to mind.

Groundwork may be used in a variety of ways. Here are some examples:

- It may be used during Lent or at some other point in the year. The evangelism resources and the Scriptural themes are pertinent at any point.
- This resource may be used on Sunday mornings (this guide provides 30-minute lesson plans) or for mid-week study (90-minute lesson plans are provided as well). It is also possible to make use of both Sundays and mid-week times sequentially for this learning.
- You may want to use all five themes or take one theme and develop it in depth for five weeks.
- This guide provides a learning pattern for a retreat setting (for vestry, evangelism committee, or others).
- *All* materials have been designed as starting points for you. Please use them and develop your own structures for their use. They are practical in their nature. Use what is of value to you and your congregation.
- *Groundwork* includes numerous resources. A table of contents appears inside the front cover of this booklet, and additional materials appear on-line at www.episcopalchurch.org/groundwork.

God is at work in the Episcopal Church. God is at work in your congregation. God is at work in your life. God is transforming us through love, companionship, and spirit. God is also calling us to become more attuned to and focused on our mission of evangelism. *Groundwork* is an opportunity to do just that. *Groundwork* is also one stage of a focus on evangelism happening in dioceses and in the Episcopal Church nationally that will result in an advertising campaign targeted to the younger or “next” generations of people because God is at work in their lives and experiences too. To do this, we must be ready to invite and to welcome.

May God bless you and your community of faith during this learning time of renewal, restoration, and transformation.

Note: The *Groundwork* resources are designed to be used by congregations, their members, and their leaders. They also have particular import for preachers and the preaching task, and they invite preachers to give some real focus to evangelism during this Lenten season. The sermon is a time to frame themes and issues of congregational life. Themes and issues of evangelism can be at the heart of preaching as the preacher seeks to increase the awareness of these dimensions of mission. The Scripture for Lent 2005 lends itself to that in a very natural way. Preachers will have the opportunity to proclaim God’s invitation to love and to life as they also highlight the invitation offered by the local community of faith.

Lent I — The Great Temptation

Theme: The Great Temptation for a congregation and individual Episcopalian alike is to ignore the Great Commission, “Go... Baptize... Make disciples...” and the definition of the mission of the Church in the Book of Common Prayer, “To restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.” We can no longer rely on others to do the work of conversion for us, and to leave us only the work of making a few already converted Christians into Episcopalians. Most people in the United States are not connected to a faith community of any kind on any given Sunday. Among those people are often our own children. It is tempting to ignore the reality of our community, the Gospel mandates, and the new work of evangelism and conversion that we may never have done before. It is the Great Temptation. Are you and your congregation going to yield to temptation?

Scripture

Genesis 2:4b-9, 15-17, 25-3:7

Psalm 51

Romans 5:12-19

Matthew 4:1-11

Introduction

The Scripture for the First Sunday in Lent offers poignant stories about the “fall” of humankind through the disobedient decisions of Adam and Even and of the temptation of Jesus by the devil in the wilderness. Paul focuses on both of these stories and reflects on them by drawing a distinction between Adam and Jesus. Adam represents separation from God due to his decision to take an action contrary to God’s invitation and direction. Jesus represents restoration and reconciliation with God as he decides to follow the way that joins him to God’s love, and, in so doing, he brings grace and love to all humanity.

The theologian Diogenes Allen (*Temptation*) frames the story of the temptation in the wilderness in a helpful way by focusing on the needs that we humans have in our lives. The three temptations are connected to basic needs for security, material goods, and prestige in our living. The Tempter’s role in this framework is to trick (the devil is called the “Old Trickster” in some traditions of faith) Jesus into believing that he can grasp these things for himself rather than relying on God and trusting God. Jesus refuses to be tricked. Instead he places his reliance on and trust in God and God’s love.

God knows that we need certain things to live, and we know that too. The good news is that we can rely on and trust in God rather than having to

clutch and grasp these things for ourselves. The good news is that we can be joined ever more closely to the love and grace of God, that we are not condemned to separation and alienation.

Congregations are communities where people bring their need for God and the love of God. Your congregation is a community of support, service, worship, and transformation where people gather to hear God's word of love and meet God's abundant grace. Congregations need to be aware of the needs that people bring with them and the needs of the human beings who live in the community that is external to and served by the congregation. Churches that are most effective in their invitation and welcome intentionally consider the needs and characteristics of the external community and its residents. They then work to shape their invitation and program in a way that connects with those needs as they proclaim a message of hope and love.

There is a great temptation for congregations to be oblivious to the world around them. There is a further temptation to deny the need for intentional evangelism and invitation. Even good things can become a temptation for us as churches. Sometimes we allow such good things as beautiful worship and sincere outreach to distract us from our call to evangelism. Yes, they are vital to congregational life, but they cannot deter us from the "Great Commission" of Jesus to proclaim, invite, and make disciples.

Scriptural Themes

- Old Testament — Temptation and the Fall
- New Testament — Paul's emphasis on grace given through the "new Adam"
- New Testament — Temptation of Jesus in the Wilderness

Evangelism Themes

- Human beings need security, material goods, and prestige (Diogenes Allen — *Temptation*). God responds.
- Congregations are called to relate to the needs of human beings. They need to learn about these needs, and envision and plan responses to them.
- Newcomers express certain needs, hopes, and desires that are reflective of a "post-modern" world.
- The "need-driven" ministry of growing churches such as Willow Creek Church deserve consideration by the Episcopal Church.
- God invites us to the experience of God's grace.
- It is tempting to avoid intentional ministries of and strategies for evangelism in the press of congregational life.

Study Questions

- What did Adam and Eve feel that they needed?
- What did the Devil tell Jesus that he needed?
- How does God respond to the needs of human beings?
- What needs did/do you bring to your life in the Church?
- When have you experienced the brokenness that is the result of the Genesis story, and when have you experienced the wholeness and connection to God that is the result of the Gospel story?
- How does your congregation learn about the needs of human beings in your community and envision ways of response and ministry?
- When have you experienced grace in your life?
- How does your congregation develop and embrace ministries of invitation and evangelism, and how does your congregation resist and avoid such ministries?

For Preaching

- God knows that we need certain things in our lives and responds out of love and grace to those needs.
- Evil is real and tries to trick and deceive us into making bad decisions about things. How do we encourage good decisions and discernment that resists evil and deception?
- Focus on the brokenness, evil, and alienation of this world and how it is overcome by the love and grace of God.
- God's grace is given to us by virtue of the love and mission of Jesus of Nazareth.
- What is the meaning of "obedience" in the world and the church today?
- Describe the pattern of evangelism in the life of your congregation and the ways that this pattern is developed and avoided.

Resources and Activities

- Community survey instruments, www.episcopalchurch.org/congdev
- "Percept" demographic information, www.episcopalchurch.org/congdev
- "First View" and congregational data information from the Episcopal Church Center, www.episcopalchurch.org/congdev

- Do a presentation and consideration of the demographic characteristics of your community.
- Talk with people who are on the fringes of your congregation or in the wider community asking them about their impressions of the church and to identify their own needs.

Poetic Reflection

Iona Prayer

Because the world is beautiful,
And beauty is a tender thing,
And we are stewards of creation,
We need you, God.
We need you, God.

Because Human knowledge seems endless,
And we do not know what we do not know,
We need you, God.
We need you, God.

Because we cannot live without you
And are free to go against you,
And could worship our wisdom alone,
We need you, God.
We need you, God.

Because you came among us,
And sat beside us,
And healed our pain and let us wound you,
And loved us to the end,
And triumphed over all our hatred,
We need you, God.
We need you, God.
Amen.

— *Iona Community Worship Book*

Resources and Ideas for Adult Programming

Sunday Morning Adult Forum or Class, Lent I

- Introduce the Episcopal Church Advertising Collaborative and timeline and your design for local use of *Groundwork*.
- Introduce this Sunday's theme, The Great Temptation."

- Briefly engage today's Gospel. This can be done in small groups or can be led by someone other than that Sunday's preacher. Focus on what was used to tempt Jesus.
- What are today's temptations for us? (Focusing inward rather than outward? Avoiding the work of conversion?) You might want to use the theme summary in your *Groundwork* materials for this Sunday.
- Look at the "First View" for your zip code (found on the web at www.episcopalchurch.org/congdev). Create a short three- to five-question true/false test on what surprises you about that data. Give the test to the group and then briefly discuss the answers.
- Invite the group to a further exploration of the demographics of the community in relation to those of the congregation and the implications for the future.

A Mid-Week Adult Program, Lent I

- Introduce your design for local use of *Groundwork*.
- Summarize the learning and main points from Sunday, emphasize the results of the true/false test.
- Have copies of the "First View" for the zip code of your location (in color if possible).
- In small groups, process the report, identifying new information and its implications for the ministries of the congregation. Information needed to reach new people:
 - ◆ What are the ethnic and racial identities of the people in your neighborhood?
 - ◆ What is the average age in relation to national averages?
 - ◆ What are the households like? Single, single-parent, married, etc.
 - ◆ What is the average educational level?
 - ◆ What is the household income?
 - ◆ What are the major concerns of the people?
 - ◆ What do people in your neighborhood enjoy?

As we get a picture of the community we are in, we need to ask what we have in common, how we will effectively welcome them, and what might be attractive to them

- Have the small groups report in plenary their conversations.
- Identify next week's theme.

Five Mid-Week Adult Programs, Lent I — Lent V

Week One

- ♦ As preparation, have four people individually go out in the neighborhood of the church to a service station or convenience store or grocery store and ask people if they know where the local Episcopal church is located. If they know where it is, ask them what they know about it. Do not give up on the location until three people have been asked.
- ♦ Introduce your design for the five-week program and summarize the learnings and main points of Lent I. (This summary of the Sunday worship, sermon, and forum needs to be shared each week.)
- ♦ In small groups, have people briefly discuss the historic relationship of the church to the community, identifying the highs and lows of that history.
- ♦ Small groups report in plenary.
- ♦ Explain the selection and tasking of the four people who were sent out into the neighborhood.
- ♦ Have the four people report their experience and findings to the group in a full and complete report.
- ♦ Invite group discussion of what participants would like the answers from those in the neighborhood to have been; what needs to be overcome?

Week Two

- ♦ For this session, use the outline that was proposed for the Lent I Mid-Week Program, perhaps expanding the true/false quiz as an introduction to the “First View” report.

Week Three

- ♦ Use the materials in *Groundwork* on Ministry with Young People/Next generations (enclosed in presentation folder and on-line at www.episcopalchurch.org/groundwork).

Week Four

- ♦ Use the materials in *Groundwork* on Competence in Cross-Cultural Ministry (enclosed in presentation folder and on-line at www.episcopalchurch.org/groundwork).

Week Five

- ♦ Using brainstorming to identify what learnings and next steps for the ministry need to be reported to the vestry and congregation from this Lenten exploration.

Notes on brainstorming:

- Everyone is invited to participate.
- No corrections, judgments, valuing, or culling takes place, only recording what each says.
- All lists need to have at least 13 items. If people stop offering ideas, go into small groups with the same question and do a plenary report.
- When the brainstorming is complete, use some kind of vote (the three items each person thinks are the most important) to weight and value the responses.
- Record and report in writing the results to the vestry and to the membership at large.

Lent II — Faith Story: Traveling With God

Theme: Can we trust God enough to embark on intentional and hopeful evangelism in our parish life? Can I trust God enough to invite a friend to Church? Evangelism happens in parish life when people take the initiative and risk to invite others to Church. Sometimes that invitation is personal and one-to-one. Sometimes that invitation is made by way of advertising and public communication. Both are important. A foundation for personal and public invitation is our own faith story. The General Convention of 2003 passed a resolution urging every Episcopalian to tell his or her faith story as a means of discovering the presence and companionship of God in their own journeys and as a foundation for the action of evangelism. Whom will you invite to join the journey?

Scripture

Genesis 12:1-8
Psalm 33:12-22
Romans 4:1-17
John 3:1-17

Introduction

Will we trust God? That is the question raised in the Scripture for this Second Sunday of Lent. The question is first posed to Abraham (and Sarah). Will he trust God enough to embark on a journey that will lead to an unknown destination? Will he move his entire household and proceed on a journey of faith? Paul describes Abraham's decision as an action of faith, trust, and hope and suggests that such faith, trust, and hope are at the center of Christian believing and following.

The Gospel is a story of the encounter of a leader of the people Israel named Nicodemus with Jesus. He is also on a journey in his life in which he encounters the traveling teacher/rabbi Jesus of Nazareth. It is a pivotal point for his journey and holds the potential for directing it and him in a new and life-giving way. Jesus describes the transformation that can happen to a person through faith and trust as being "born again" or "born from above." God's love can and does intersect with the life and journey of a person transforming him or her and leading to new directions and new possibilities. Why does God do this? John the Gospel writer puts it this way, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son so that all that believe in him may not perish but have everlasting life."

Each of us in on a journey of faith and trust. Our journeys have good times and bad times, hopeful times and challenging times. We proceed in the love and companionship of God as we walk our walk. A congregation is also on a journey, and it is a community where people walk together in

their journeys of faith. It is vitally important for people in a congregation to share their stories of faith with each other. It weaves a fabric of genuine friendship and community in faith. It is also essential for the invitation and welcome of people in the life of a congregation. Congregations of transformation welcome and honor the telling of life stories by new and continuing members of that congregation.

Scriptural Themes

- Old Testament — Abraham setting out on his journey
- New Testament (Romans) — Abraham’s willingness to journey described as faith and trust
- New Testament — The encounter in which Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be “born from above...” Evangelist’s reflection “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son...”

Evangelism Themes

- God invites us into an experience and community of trust.
- We encounter God in our journeys of faith and need to tell our “faith stories....”
- Evangelism in the Episcopal tradition is sharing Good News about the love of God rather than emphasizing human sinfulness.
- God respects us and meets us wherever we are in our journey of faith.

Study Questions

- What strikes you most about Abraham’s decision to pick up stakes and move on?
- What are decisions in your life that have required significant trust and faith?
- What are some of the significant new beginnings that you have experienced in your journey of life?
- How is the love of God presented and represented in your congregation?
- What strikes you about the celebration and meaning of Holy Baptism in your life and in the practices of your congregation?
- What did Nicodemus discover that changed his life and perspective?
- How are people’s faith journeys honored and nurtured in your congregation?

For Preaching

- Trust is a gift of God given to us in prayer and relationships. It is the primary issue and expression of Christian believing.
- Faith is a journey. Focus on the journey experienced in the life of a believer and describe the presence and companionship of God in that journey.
- A congregation is a community of mutual love and respect. Think through the ways that the local community of faith reflects the abundant love that God gives us.
- Describe the new life and new beginnings that God gives people, engaging the meaning and practices of Holy Baptism as substance for your reflection
- Tell the story of God's love as the primary story of Scripture and the primary purpose of Jesus on this earth... "For God so loved..."
- Focus on the transformation of living and believing experienced by Nicodemus and ways that we are transformed "from above."

Resources and Activities

- "Preparing to Tell Your Faith Story" resource
- *Let Your Life Speak*, Parker Palmer
- Tell your "faith stories" in your congregation.

Poetic Reflection

Nicodemus

I went under cover of night
By back streets and alleyways,
Not as one secret and ashamed
But with a natural discretion....

Rabbi, I said,
How is a man born, being old:
From the torn sea into the world?
A man may be forced only the one time
To suffer the indignation of the child.
His childish distempers and illnesses.
I would not, if I could, be born again
To suffer the miseries of the child,
The perpetual nearness to tears,
The book studies through burning eyes,
The particular malady of being always ruled
To ends he does not see or understand....

Rabbi, Now the end of my desire is death
For my hour is almost come.
I shall not say with Sarah
That God hath made me to laugh,
Nor the new word shall not be born
out of the dryness of my mouth.

Rabbi, let me go up from Egypt
With Moses to the wilderness of Sinai
And to the country of the old Canaan
Where, sweeter than honey, Sarah's blood
Darkens the cold cave in the field
And the wild seed of Abraham is cold.

— *Howard Nemerov*

Resources and Ideas for Adult Programming

- Introduce this Sunday's theme, Faith Story.
- Using the guide "Preparing To Tell Your Faith Story" (next page), have two people prepared to tell their faith stories to the group.
- Debrief the experience of telling and hearing faith stories.
- Invite the group to a further experience of faith story at the mid-week program

continued, next page...

Preparing to Tell Your Faith Story

by Charles Fulton and Susy Miller

1. Draw a time line from left to right on a sheet of paper, the left being your birth, the right being the present.
2. Time line:

Birth _____ Present
3. On the time line, mark and identify (by year) significant events that were turning points in your life.
4. Above the line, describe the context within which the event occurred. What else was going on in your life at that time?
5. Below the line describe your awareness of God at that point. Was God present or absent?
6. What was God doing with you in that event — comforting, challenging, provoking, teaching, giving, providing, loving, affirming, etc.?
7. Look at the whole time line. Are there patterns in the turning point events of your life? What initiates turning points, what is required of you, how were you different after these events?
8. What are the patterns in your experience of God and your relationship with God? Is there a consistency in God's actions and responses in your turning points?
9. Imagine telling someone about your insights into God's presence and working in your life. Tell your story of how God has come into your life and what has been the result when you have recognized God's presence. Tell the story to yourself, then tell your story to a friend and listen for the story your story will trigger in your friend.
10. Tell your story to someone outside a faith community.
11. Commit to inviting God into your life as your life line lengthens into your future, regularly engaging the Gospel with others.

A Mid-Week Adult Program, Lent II

- Introduce the theme and summarize the learnings and main points from Sunday worship, sermon, and forum.
- You will be engaging in work essential for evangelism, but it is at the same time a spiritual exercise:

Behind our daily and weekly observances and practices as Christians is our experience, knowledge and remembrance of God at work in our lives, our personal faith story. Often the most powerful experiences have slipped into our unconsciousness as our conscious selves have been occupied with the busyness and business of being a member of a congregation. This week reconnects us with our own experience of God's reconciling work and our experience of being God's beloved:

"I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance. I know that you cannot tolerate evildoers; you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them to be false. I also know that you are enduring patiently and bearing up for the sake of my name. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first" Revelation 2:2-4.

- Using the guide "Preparing To Tell Your Faith Story," explain the process and invite everyone to work on her or his own time line identifying only five significant events on the time line and then following steps 3-7. This should take at least 30 minutes. This is just a beginning to this preparation.
- Have each person find someone with whom she or he is comfortable and do step 8.
- Debrief the experience with the whole group.
- Invite people to continue to work their time lines in more detail at their leisure and to do steps 9 and 10.

Five Mid-Week Adult Programs, Lent I - Lent V

Week One

- ◆ Introduce your design for the five-week program and summarize the learnings and main points of Lent I. (Each week this summary of the Sunday worship, sermon, and forum needs to be shared.)
- ◆ Use the outline for this session that was proposed for the Lent I Mid-Week Program explaining that next week will begin with the assumption that additional work has been done on the time line and steps 3-7.

- ♦ The guide “Preparing To Tell Your Faith Story” needs to be available for those who missed Week One and want to Join the group on Week Two.

Week Two

- ♦ With a further developed faith story, form pairs with someone you don't know well. Each person has 20-25 minutes. The listener's job is to listen and to speak only to help the speaker tell her/his story.
- ♦ Debrief the experience in plenary.
- ♦ Invite people to do step 9 in the coming week.

Week Three

- ♦ This session deals with the congregation's faith stories (plural because there is not just one version of a congregation's faith story).
- ♦ Form small groups. If you group by how long people have been a part of the congregation, the stories will be more distinctive. Use the time line as a structure. Each group will tell the story as they have experienced it next week. You may want to divide the time. First tell the story. Then plan how and who is going to tell the faith story of the congregation next week. If you have more than four or five small groups, you need to select which are going to present the next week. Encourage creativity in the story telling.
- ♦ Debrief the session in plenary.

Week Four

- ♦ This session is the telling of individual stories in plenary.
- ♦ End by weaving the various stories into a single story.

Week Five

- ♦ Have a parish dinner and tell the composite faith story of the congregation using the audio-visual aid of projected pictures and music.

Lent III - Thirsting Souls: Living Invitation

Theme: Evangelism today requires openness to people. In the past the Episcopal Church and its congregations could act as if we had the answers and people could simply “come and get them” in our congregations. That is not a workable approach today. We must welcome people where they are particularly recognizing that they are seeking and searching and that offering pat answers puts people off. The Episcopal Church often has not been effective in welcoming certain groups of people into congregational life. Young adults, people of color, and new immigrant populations have not been widely sought, but we must change that. Now is the time to include, not exclude, and to do this inclusion in proactive and creative ways.

Scripture

Exodus 17:1-7
Psalm 95
Romans 5:1-11
John 4:5-42

Introduction

Water is essential to human life. It sustains us, nourishes us, and transforms us. We human beings thirst for it. The Scripture of the Third Sunday of Lent is focused on water. The Old Testament story comes from the saga of God’s people in the wilderness. They had been freed from the oppression and slavery of Egypt. Now they are making the trek through the wilderness, and they are terribly thirsty. They are also uncertain. God has freed them, but can God really provide for them? They are not so sure. They complain and murmur, but God does provide. Moses strikes a rock with his staff and water flows as a gift from God and a sign of God’s provision.

The story from John’s Gospel is also a story of water and thirst. A woman is at a well in the middle of the day, a time when no respectable woman would be doing that task. Jesus, the traveling rabbi from Nazareth, encounters the woman and takes the risk of talking with her, even though there were prohibitions for a religious leader to talk with a woman with a questionable background who is one of the hated Samaritans. But, Jesus does talk with her, and he does even more than that. He offers “living water,” water that will quench the thirst of her soul, water that will flow with the gifts of hope, reconciliation, and renewal (as described by Paul in the Epistle for this Sunday.) He recognizes her deep, deep thirst, and makes the bold claim that the waters of life and love which he offers can quench that thirst.

We are thirsty. That's part of the human condition, and it particularly describes the spirit and spirituality of American people as we enter the 21st century. The spirituality of our age is one of thirsting. It is a spirituality of seeking, searching, and yearning. A congregation is a community of such seeking, searching, and yearning. The Episcopal Church is a church that honors that spirit of inquiry and quest. However, we have not expressed that as openly as we should. Particularly, many Episcopalians have not listened to and learned from the experience of people who thirst but are often underserved in the Episcopal Church. Now is the time to do that.

The experience of inclusion and exclusion brings the issue of spiritual quest to a very personal level. All of us have had times in our lives, and in our life in the Church, when we have felt included and welcomed. We have also had times when we felt excluded and turned away. It is important to engage our own experience as the first step to understand how potential newcomers to our parish sense being included and excluded. Then we can work on means of ever greater inclusion in the life of our congregation.

We are a community gathered around water. Water is the outward and visible sign of the living waters of Holy Baptism in which inward and spiritual gifts of love, renewal, and life are given freely and abundantly. Lent has always been a season of invitation to reflect on the waters of Holy Baptism, our basic identity as Christian people, and Jesus' offer of "living water" to us throughout our lives as we engage in the Sacrament of Incorporation.

Scriptural Themes

- Old Testament — Water from the Rock (amidst the murmuring and complaining of God's people)
- New Testament — The gifts of hope and reconciliation
- New Testament — The Samaritan Woman at the Well and the offer of living water

Evangelism Themes

- The dominant spirituality today is "thirsting," seeking, and searching.
- To invite many people in our present context, is to acknowledge and respect their searching and "thirsting."
- Jesus quenches thirst with the "living water" of meaning, hope, and love.
- God gives people the gifts of hope and reconciliation in their lives and invites them to the mission of reconciliation and restoration.
- We are called to offer the "living water" of inclusion rather than exclusion in our lives and congregations.

Study Questions

- How is a spirituality of “thirsting,” seeking, and searching different from one of arrival, answers, and certainty?
- What do we know about “next generations” (Generation X and Millennials)?
- What welcomes seekers in our congregation, and what would form barriers to their welcome?
- Whom do we know whom we might invite to our congregation as they search and seek in their own experience?
- What are signs of God’s presence and assurance in our own lives?
- When have we felt that our thirsting for God has been quenched?
- How is the mission of inclusion, reconciliation, and restoration represented in our congregation?

For Preaching

- Tell stories of personal thirsting and seeking for God.
- Focus on the gifts of hope and reconciliation in a world of alienation and fragmentation.
- Describe an “open” spirituality and the nature of spiritual seeking in our age.
- Tell the story of the mission and values of this congregation as it strives to be a community of reconciliation and hope.
- Focus on what the offer of “living water” means in our culture and church.
- Tell about ways that you have felt included or excluded in your own experience.

Resources and Activities

- “Inclusion/Exclusion Experience” Exercise
- If not previously used, Young Adult Ministry Resources (see packet)
- “Incorporation Resource”

Poetic Reflection

My Lord Is the source of Love...

My Lord is the source of Love; I the river's course.
Let God's love flow through me. I will not obstruct it.
Irrigation ditches can water but a portion of the field;
The great Yangtze River can water a thousand acres.
Expand my heart, O Lord, that I may love yet more people.
The waters of love can water vast tracts,
Nothing will be lost to me.

The greater the outward flow, the greater the returning tide.
If I am not linked to Love's source, I will dry up.
If I calm the waters of Love, they will stagnate.
Can I compare my heart to the boundless seas?
But abandon not the measure of my heart, O Lord.
Let the waves of your love still billow there!

— *Wang Weifan*

Resources and Ideas for Adult Programming

Sunday Morning Adult Forum or Class, Lent III

- Introduce this Sunday's theme, "Thirsting Souls: Living Waters."
- Set up and play the simulation game, "Inclusion/Exclusion Experience."
- Reflect on and debrief the experience.
- Invite the people to the Mid-Week Adult Program to learn about welcome and inclusion.

Inclusion/Exclusion Experience

A congregation knows who it wants and who it doesn't want in its membership. A congregation has at its disposal subtle screening behaviors, so subtle that the average congregation is unaware of its behaviors. In order to welcome visitors, we must become aware of those behaviors and learn how to intervene when screening behaviors are being used. The following is a blatant screening device, a very brief (one minute) simulation game:

- Use a flip chart for directions.
- Form groups of six and number the members of each group 1-6.
- Numbers 1-2-3 begin a lively conversation about anything they choose.
- Number 4 tries to break into the conversation anyway he/she can, using all his/her skills of entry.
- Numbers 1-2-3 do everything, short of physical violence, to keep Number 4 out.
- Number 5-6 observe without becoming involved, watching for behaviors and body language.
- One minute *only*.

Group reflection on the experience

- How many 4's got in?
- Note that screening behaviors are well developed, that no one asked for training.
- Screening behaviors are far better developed than entrance behaviors.
- Our culture teaches us how to screen, not how to get in.
- Ask the 4's what it was like to be kept out of a group. What if it had gone on for five minutes?
- Ask 1-2-3 what it was like to deliberately keep someone out, and be good at it.
- Ask 5-6 to identify behaviors and body language that they observed and what they experienced watching it.

A Mid-Week Adult Program, Lent III

- Introduce this week's theme and summarize the learnings and main points from Sunday.
- Play the Inclusion/Exclusion simulation game again. Ask those who were there Sunday to take the roles of observers or to take a different role from the role they played Sunday.
- Reflect on and debrief the experience. Asking people to exclude is one of the few tasks you can ask people to do without someone saying that he/she does not know how to do it.
- In small groups make a list of what helps you in a group know that you belong.

Knowing That You Belong

People become members of a church for a variety of reasons. One big reason that they stay is how well they feel welcomed and included in the life of the congregation.

Individually reflect for a few moments about what helps you know in a group that you belong. What do people say or do that communicates to you that you are a valued member? Write your thoughts on a piece of paper.

Share your personal reflections in small groups.

- Small groups report in plenary

Another Mid-Week Adult Program on Welcome or Sub-committee Tasks

(See also additional *Groundwork* publication by Susy Miller)

- **Examine the following areas of your congregations welcome:**
 - ♦ How is your congregation's phone answered and what does the recorded message say and imply?
 - ♦ Evaluate the bulletin and worship (web resources address).
 - ♦ Is the coffee hour hospitable and welcoming?
 - ♦ Assess the work of ushers and greeters

Note: Use the young adult ministry resource materials during this third week of Lent, if they have not already been introduced.

Lent IV — Take A New Look: Checking Your Vision

Theme: Are your congregation's eyes open or closed about things? Probably a bit of both... Evangelism can be discouraged by not looking at things in parish life to see how the congregation invites people and how it doesn't. We need to take a good look at ourselves, at our facilities, at our worship, at our music, at our strategies and means of invitation.) By taking a look we can see the potential and the challenges. Are you willing to have your eyes opened?

Scripture

Samuel 16:1-13
Psalm 23
Ephesians 5:1-14
John 9:1-38

Introduction

Imagine having your physical sight restored after years of not being able to see. What a gift! That is the theme of the Gospel for the Fourth Sunday of Lent. Jesus gives a man his sight as an action of God's love and healing. Ironically, this blind man had greater insight even with his physical disability than the religious leaders of Israel could muster. They were truly blind to Jesus' offer of God's love and to the purpose of proclaiming that love which was at the heart of the mission of Jesus of Nazareth.

The Scripture for this Sunday shines with the themes of sight, insight, light and recognition. In the Old Testament reading, the youthful David is recognized as a young Israelite bright with the potential for service and leadership. Paul identifies Christian people as "children of light," people who have been illuminated with the radiance of God's love. These stories join with the Gospel story of sight restored to tell of the gifts of light, love, and insight that are given by God to us.

A powerful and accurate metaphor for Christian life and leadership is eyes being open to see. We are invited to open our eyes to perceive the love that God has for us. We are called to see the world around us through the lens of the Gospel. One of the important tasks of a congregation is to look at itself and at the community that it serves. This examination allows us to consider whether we are as inviting and welcoming as we want to be. A congregation can open its eyes to perceive God at work and to look at its own welcome to others.

Scriptural Themes

- Old Testament — David is recognized and anointed to be the king.

- New Testament — Paul describes us to a “children of light” and calls us to walk in the light.
- New Testament — Sight is restored to a man who has been blind from birth.

Evangelism Themes

- God gives gifts of sight and insight, and invites human beings to engage these gifts in our lives.
- Relationship with God is often described as moving from blindness to sight. “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see....”
- The invitation to see and perceive Jesus in our lives is the action of evangelism. In our Anglican tradition evangelism is defined in this way: “To present Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit in such ways that people might be led to believe in him as Savior and follow him as Lord within the fellowship of the Church.”

Study Questions

- When have we had the experience of our eyes being opened to see something fresh and new?
- How and where do we see Jesus in our lives, our world, and our Church?
- What do people “see” when they visit our Church? How is welcome visible?
- Where are our blind spots to newcomers and the invitation and incorporation of them into our midst?
- How does the life of the Church help to open our eyes to see things anew and in a fresh light?

For Preaching

- Focus on what you see in the congregation and community as it relates to the presentation of Jesus and the incorporation of people into congregational life.
- Re-tell the story of the blind man in terms of human sight and insight.
- Describe the Christian faith as a gift of sight, illumination, and seeing with eyes of faith opened by the grace of God.
- Probe the “blind spots” of congregational life and our experience as believers.

Resources and Activities (posted on-line at www.episcopalchurch.org/congdev or www.episcopalchurch.org/groundwork).

- “Ideas for a Welcoming Church”
- “A Walk Through the Building”

Poetic Reflection

Amazing Grace

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed!

The Lord has promised good to me, his word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be as long as life endures.

— *John Newton*

Resources and Ideas for Adult Programming, Lent IV

Sunday Morning Adult Forum or Class, Lent IV

- Introduce this Sunday's theme, “Take A New Look: Checking Your Vision.”
- Explain that participants are going to look at Sunday morning here from the point of view of the first time visitor.
- In small groups, make a list of everything you can identify that puts the visitor at a disadvantage. This is easier if you can put yourself in the shoes of the visitor and start like a visitor arriving at your site, walking or driving as a typical visitor would.
- Small groups report their list in plenary.
- Continue plenary discussion about what you can do to make visiting easier and to be a visitor-friendly site and building.

A Mid-Week Adult Program, Lent IV

- Summarize the learning and main points from Sunday's worship, sermon, and forum.
- Invite everyone to close her/his eyes and imagining coming to your church site for the first time as a visitor. Walk around the site and buildings. Stay outside. When each has finished the walk, open eyes and take notes on what messages you got from your walk about who the people are who belong here, what is important to them and what is not important. Who is their God and what is that God like?

- Share notes in small groups.
- Debrief the experience in plenary and in teams or small groups walk through the buildings with the eyes of the visitor. If your number are large, you may need to start people in different parts of the buildings.
- In plenary, ask for the most absurd or ridiculous obstacle you have for visitors.
- On newsprint, make a list of what you have learned.
- Articulate a new vision for visitors.

Lent V — Leaving the Grave Behind

Theme: “Can these bones live?” That’s an evangelism question. To put it somewhat differently... can we nurture, own, and communicate the vitality of our congregation’s life and mission? Every congregation needs to reflect on where it is in its life cycle and where the points of vitality or lack of vitality are found. Every congregation also needs to do some sort of advertising, communicating the welcome to life and faith that is at the heart of mission. How will your congregation live fully into the new life of resurrection?

Scripture

Ezekiel 37:1-14
Psalm 130
Romans 6:16-23
John 11:1-44

Introduction

Our God is the God of life. Our God is a God who gives life to human beings and to communities of faith. The Scripture for this fifth and final Sunday of Lent proclaims life, life given and life restored. It begins with Ezekiel’s prophecy of the valley of the dry bones. God’s people were in a cycle of death, denial, and despair as Ezekiel had the vision of a valley full of skeletons, of arid bones. The question is, “Can these bones live?” The answer is that they can if God breathes the breath of life back into them.

The other two readings from Scripture also proclaim life. Paul proclaims the gift of life that is given through Jesus. In the Gospel Jesus breathes life into his old friend Lazarus who has been dead for several days. It is a magnificent moment and a prelude to the gift of resurrection life that will be given to Jesus and through Jesus to human beings in the future. Throughout all of the readings the theme is power of life and the gift of life that is given by God to humanity.

It is a good time to reflect on our own experience of life. We have known times of potency and vitality, and we have also had times that were arid and dead in our own experience. The same is true in our congregation. For every congregation there are experiences of life and renewal and of decline and aridity.

God is breathing life into us. God is breathing new life into God’s Church. The 2020 vision of the Episcopal Church is of a Church that is “healthy, dynamic, and inviting,” all of which are signs of life. We are invited to consider the vitality of our own congregation and to ask how God is giving us the gifts of health and renewal today.

Scripture Themes

- Old Testament — The valley of the dry bones
- New Testament - “The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
- New Testament — The raising of Lazarus from the dead

Evangelism Themes

- God invites us to life and vitality in our own lives and in the congregation in which we participate.
- God is breathing new life into our souls and our Church.
- We are called to invite people into God’s sphere and gift of life.
- The 2020 Vision affirmed by Episcopalians and the General Convention describes a Church that is healthy, dynamic, and inviting as signs of life.

Study Questions

- Where do you perceive God breathing new life into your own existence and the existence of your congregation?
- What are the signs of life and vitality that make your congregation inviting for people in your community?
- Where is your congregation in its life cycle?
- What do we believe about life in this age and the age to come?
- What experiences of resurrection have you had in your life and/or congregation?
- How does your congregation communicate its life and vitality in the wider community?

For Preaching

- Describe ways that God’s gift of new life have been experienced in your own journey and in the lives of human beings that you serve.
- Focus on the dry bones that adversely affect the ministry and mission of the Church today and how God may be breathing life into them (and into us.)
- Talk about vitality and life in your own congregation and how it might be increased.
- Tell stories about God’s gift of life being given to people.

- Describe God's preference for life over death and the gift of resurrection life.

Resources and Activities

- "Congregational Life Cycle" (www.episcopalchurch.org/congdev)
- *Advertising the Local Church*, George Martin
- Work through a life cycle exercise viewing the life of your congregation.

Poetic Reflections

Lazarus

He sat up slowly, and around his left side
All his long life's muscles ached.
His death was torn from him like caked gauze.
Rising was as hard as having died.

— *Agnes Nemes Nagy*

Prayer from Litany of the Four Elements

Leader: God of earth, air, fire, and water,
We surrender to you our old humanity.

All: Christ, we would rise with you:
We would be born anew.

Leader: Christ has died: Christ is risen.
We are forgiven: we too may leave the grave.

— *Kate Coompston*

Resources and Ideas for Adult Programming, Lent V

Sunday Morning Adult Forum or Class, Lent V

- Introduce this Sunday's theme, "Leaving the Grave Behind."
- Distribute copies and project (if you have a LCD projector) the chart of Participation & Giving Trends for your congregation. This chart is found on the Episcopal Church's web site (www.episcopalchurch.org/congdev).
- This chart covers the past 11 years. Identify any major or significant events in those years that affected attendance or giving.

- Does the trend indicate that the congregation is growing, stable, or declining? Are the trends for money, membership and attendance the same. Note: At the beginning of decline giving often stays the same or increases. Increase in membership but not in attendance suggests a serious look at incorporation strategies.
- In small groups as if your congregation has reached its potential in giving and in membership/attendance?
- Plenary report from small groups.

A Mid-Week Adult Program, Lent V

- Summarize the learning and main points from Sunday's worship, sermon, and forum.
- Distribute copies of "Congregational Life Cycle" and use the PowerPoint presentation found on the Episcopal Church website (www.episcopalchurch.org/congdev) if possible.
- Point out the larger truth that every member, every ministry, every leader has her/his/its own life cycle.
- In small groups, summarize the major learnings of life cycle and discuss appropriate response to the ministry and the ministries of the congregation.
- Continue with plenary discussion and presentation by the communication/advertising committee on its work and planning.

Using Groundwork During the Season of Easter 2005

Groundwork may also be used during the Easter Season. The evangelism activities can be joined to the lessons from the *Book of Common Prayer* Lectionary (and with the Revised Common Lectionary as well.) These activities may be connected to Sunday Scripture as the Lenten series of lessons suggests.

An example of Scripture/evangelism resources for each Sunday of the Easter Season (Lectionary A, Book of Common Prayer) follows.

Easter 2

Scripture

Genesis 8:6-16, 9:8-16

Acts 2:14a, 22-32

I Peter 1:3-9

John 20:19-31

Introduction

The Gospel for the Second Sunday of Easter focuses on the experience of “Doubting Thomas.” He believes only what he can see with his own eyes and, in the beginning of the Gospel story refuses to believe the reports of Jesus’ resurrection. By the end of the story, he has seen with his own eyes. However, Jesus suggests something even more powerful and hopeful. He suggests that the resurrection can be seen and perceived by the eyes of the heart and calls on believers to do that in the future which is to come.

Congregations also need to open the eyes of the heart to perceive the needs that human beings bring within the congregation and from the wider community. Eyes need to be open, and congregations have to take a look at what is happening around them. The *Groundwork* resources for Lent 1 can be used during this second week of the Easter Season to encourage a view of the neighborhood and context in which the congregation finds itself. Use the Percept/First View resources to see what is truly happening.

Easter 3

Scripture

Isaiah 43:1-2
Acts 2:14a, 36-47
I Peter 1:17-23
Luke 24:13-35

Introduction

A remarkable thing happened on a dusty road from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Some very dispirited followers of Jesus met a man whom they did not recognize. Their journey was one of sadness and hopelessness, but they proceed along the way in the companionship of this stranger. As the Gospel tells the story, their eyes are finally opened. They share Scripture and break bread with this mysterious figure and discover that he is Jesus who is truly alive. From that moment on their journey is changed. The journey to Emmaus is transformed into becoming a journey of faith.

Individuals are on a journey of faith and so are congregations. They proceed with eyes open to recognize Jesus and in the companionship of the one who is their friend and redeemer. *Groundwork* invites people to tell the stories of their faith journeys. Use the resources from Lent 2 to assist you in sharing your own journeys of faith and recognition.

Easter 4

Scripture

Nehemiah 9:6-15
Acts 6:1-9, 7:2a, 51-60
I Peter 2:19-25
John 10:1-10

Introduction

In the Anglican tradition, the Fourth Sunday of Easter is called “Good Shepherd Sunday.” The Scriptural images, particularly those of the Gospel, talk about shepherding. Jesus is described as the “Good Shepherd” who knows his sheep, who loves his sheep, who invites his sheep, and who protects his sheep. We are invited to reflect on our own identity as a pastoral community led and guided by the Good Shepherd.

Some people are in the flock. Others seem to be outside the flock. *Groundwork* asks participants to consider issues of inclusion and exclusion on this Sunday. Even though congregations want to be welcoming and inviting, sometimes they do not live up to these ideals. Use the *Groundwork* resources for Lent 3 to reflect on ways that congregations invite and keep people out.

Easter 5

Scripture

Deuteronomy 6:20-25
Acts 17:1-17
I Peter 2:1-10
John 14:1-14

Introduction

The images from Scripture for the Fifth Sunday of Easter are rich and powerful. The Old Testament reading describes Israel's redemption from oppression and slavery. Both the Acts of the Apostles and the reading from First Peter tell about confidence and assurance even when we meet obstacles in our living and believing. The Gospel encounter describes Jesus in conversation with his disciples as he promises that he is going to prepare a place for them. This promise of place is intended to encourage believers so that their hearts will not be troubled.

Congregations are promising places and communities. They are meant to invite people in to discover the hospitality of God and place of God that welcomes and nurtures them. *Groundwork* asks participants to examine their "place" of invitation and welcome by walking through and examining what is inviting and what is a barrier to new people. Use the activities of Lent 4 to help you perceive more about your congregation as a place of hospitality.

Easter 6

Scripture

Isaiah 41:17-20
Acts 17:22-31
I Peter 3:8-18
John 15:1-8

Introduction

It is the beginning of gardening season in most parts of the United States. Springtime is a time of new life and vitality. Easter is a time of new and resurrection life. The Gospel for the Sixth Sunday of Easter depicts Jesus teaching about life and vitality by using the image of a vine and branches. He is clear and direct. He is the vine, the connection of life, the source of vitality, and his people are the branches as they grow in faith. Always they must stay connected to the source of life.

Congregations are living organisms. The image of branches joined to a vine is descriptive of congregational life. Congregations need to consider and focus on their vitality and find ways to increase their liveliness.

Groundwork offers the framework of a congregation's life cycle to help us in reflecting on life and vitality. Use the resources from Lent 5 to help you recognize and nurture the life of your congregation.

Easter 7 (Optional)

Scripture

Ezekiel 39:21-29

Acts 1:1-14

I Peter 4:12-19

John 17:1-11

Introduction

The seventh week of Easter is a transitional time. It reflects the reality and message of Christ's Ascension. It gives a glimpse of the impending gift of the Holy Spirit to be given on the great Feast of Pentecost. The Scripture for Easter 7 holds both of these themes in a creative tension. The gift of the Spirit and the ongoing companionship of the Risen Christ are promised. The prophet Ezekiel affirms that no one will be left behind from God's love.

Groundwork does not provide specific resources for this final week of the Easter Season. A congregation may want to do a final reflection on the sequence of learning throughout the series. Celebrate the gift of life. Celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit. And... give thanks for the vitality of your congregation and its call to welcome others.

Groundwork Retreats

The *Groundwork* resources may be used in retreat settings for vestries, evangelism committees and other interested parishioners. Parish leaders are invited to examine the resources and use them in the way that accomplishes the desired learning outcomes for the event. Retreats would well include biblical/spiritual reflection and the use of evangelism/learning exercises and tools. *Groundwork* is designed so that it can be transforming for individuals and communities of faith. This transformation opportunity is present in a retreat setting.

Vestry Planning for Evangelism: The Groundwork of Leadership

Vestries and bishop's committees bear a particular responsibility for the mission of the congregation and its work of evangelism. The vestry's leadership work is to determine and articulate the mission of the congregation, to envision a hopeful future, and to plan specific goals and tasks for that future. Evangelism is an integral and essential dimension of the mission and vision of the congregation. Congregations are called to proclaim, invite, incorporate, form, and send human beings as core ingredients of vibrant parish mission. The vestry provides oversight and support for the evangelism mission of the congregation.

Several things are essential to the vestry's leadership work relating to evangelism.

- 1. Know your purpose:** The vestry has primary responsibility for defining mission and purpose in the congregation. This means that leadership must spend intentional time in examining the purpose of the congregation generally and in relationship to the mission of evangelism specifically. Leaders need to know what they are trying to do and why they are doing it. Vestry leaders encourage a congregation to learn about the purposes and work of evangelism within the congregation.
- 2. Have a purpose rooted in the gospel:** All organizations possess a mission and a purpose. Our mission is the Gospel Mission reflecting the call, purposes, and values of the Good News of Jesus Christ. The general mission of a congregation represents the basic mission of the Church "to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ." (Book of Common Prayer, Outline of the Faith) This is also true for the mission of evangelism. In the Baptismal Covenant we are asked if we "will proclaim Jesus Christ by word and example." That is our mission of evangelism: to present and proclaim the love of God in Jesus. That's why we pursue evangelism, not simply to grow numbers, but to present God's love and welcome people to it.
- 3. Find a way to determine if you have achieved your purpose:** You must continually evaluate your progress in mission and evangelism. Establish an evangelism committee and a communication/advertising committee in your congregation. Demonstrate competence in cross-cultural communication and ministry. Establish clear analysis and reporting mechanisms so that your vestry is clearly aware of the progress being made. Compare results to your purpose and make sure that they are attuned to each other.
- 4. Make Some Evangelism Goals:** You need goals for various areas of parish mission, and this is an important part of every vestry's ongoing work. You need specific (and measurable) goals for evangelism too. Evangelism goals should be hopeful and ambitious. They should stretch the congregation in a way that makes them more active in and accountable for ministries of evangelism. Some goals should be long-term, and some goals should be targeted for the next 12 months.

5. **Survival is not a fit goal:** Sometimes parish leaders mistake evangelism for survival. The belief undergirding this mistake is that a congregation needs to attract new people so it can pay its bills and keep a certain level of program. This is *not* evangelism. Evangelism is the action of presenting the Good News because it is good and because people are thirsting, seeking, and searching for meaning and hope in their lives.
6. **Establish a plan of action:** Goals are important, and so are plans. Sometimes congregations express an unformed wish for growth and evangelism ministry. It's a good wish, but it's not enough. Evangelism deserves a clear plan that is evaluated regularly. Such a plan will address areas of program, facility, worship, advertising, communication, and education.
7. **There are obstacles to evangelism:** Evangelism is blessed and hard work. It involves planning, energy and action. There are obstacles that resist evangelism. Several obstacles stem from counterproductive attitudes within the congregation itself. Congregations sometimes reflect denial when they approach issues of evangelism. They deny the present realities of attendance or decline. They believe that cultural norms that encourage participation and membership in the Church still exist in our society. There are also other obstacles to evangelism: community context, lack of program or financial resources, and fear to risk an intentional evangelism mission strategy.
8. **Accountability is essential** — A vestry is accountable to many stakeholders as it plans and implements the mission of evangelism. It is accountable to present parish members, to people within the wider community whom the congregation is called to invite, and to the bishop and diocese. All these stakeholders need to know what you are doing. The vestry is also accountable to God who is at work in the proclamation of the Good News.
9. **Celebrate and acknowledge your evangelism efforts and successes:** The vestry and congregation need to celebrate and acknowledge the work of evangelism and its results. Offer thanks to God for God's gifts of grace that empower your mission and enable you to proclaim the Gospel. Acknowledge the people who have demonstrated commitment and action in evangelism ministry. It is especially important to communicate the effective results of evangelism because that leads to greater awareness and sense of capacity within congregational life.
10. **God blesses you in your mission and evangelism:** God is at work in the life of the Church and cares deeply about people who invite and people who are invited. Evangelism is one of the signs of vitality in mission within congregational life. When we do our mission of evangelism sincerely, God blesses the congregation with new life and hope. ■

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