

Here we have a 5-week study on evangelism. Week one deals with how to define evangelism. In it we look at various definitions, look at the term “evangelical,” and then look at the Great Commission. Week one concludes with writing a personal definition of evangelism that will get looked at again after each session. Week two looks at the importance of evangelism. In it we look at what the “good news” is, the mission statement of the United Methodist Church, and looking at the current situation with the number of people who currently do not have a “home church.” We finish with looking at the definition of evangelism that we drafted in week one and make any updates and adjustments that we feel are needed. In week three we discuss who needs evangelism and the different methods of doing evangelism. We then once again review the definitions from week one and again look at any changes we might make. Week four looks at our personal faith story, where we can put evangelism into action, and discuss what challenges we might face. We finish week four by reviewing our definition of evangelism again. We also discuss what will happen in week five. The last week is a dedicated open discussion of ideas and concerns for the future of evangelism in the local church. These discussions will include everyone bringing an idea to the table for putting evangelism into motion.

For each week, I tried to cater the amount of content to my local congregations given the number of questions and group discussions that normally take place at any given study session. I also looked to evenly distribute the information across each week and have the study as a progressive move towards the final open session where we discuss future plans for the local church.

The goal for this study is not only to discuss evangelism in general, but as a starting point for new outreach from the church and for individuals, with the hope of having the study done by multiple groups over time, with the possibility of having an initial study with a group of people who would be able to guide others in the study and having all the sub groups come together afterwards for a larger discussion among the three different churches that I serve. The final page is a list of sources for all of the quotes and information used in the study.

1. Defining Evangelism – Week 1

a. Definitions of evangelism

- i. Merriam-Webster: the winning or revival of personal commitments to Christ or militant or crusading zeal.¹
- ii. UMC.org: The winning of persons to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. From the Latin word evangelium, meaning good news or gospel, evangelism is the proclamation of the gospel to individuals and groups by preaching, teaching, and personal and family visitation. It is the seeking by the Christian to bring others into a vital personal relationship with Christ.²
- iii. Christianity.com: Evangelism means preaching, announcing, or otherwise communicating the gospel, our salvation. It's delivering the message that Jesus Christ is not only the Son of God but also gave His life as a sacrifice for our sins. In doing so, He ensured eternal life for anyone who believes.³
- iv. Transforming Evangelism: Evangelism is our sharing and inviting others to experience the good news that God loves us and invites us into a transforming relationship through which we are forgiven, receive new life, and are restored to the image of God, which is love.⁴
- v. The Gospel Coalition: Evangelism is proclaiming the Gospel – the good news about Jesus Christ which is God's power to save all who believe it and turn from sin to follow him.⁵
- vi. Cru: Evangelism is sharing Jesus Christ with people who do not know Him yet.⁶
- vii. SBC: the intentional, consistent, and verbal declaration of the Gospel to unbelievers in the power of the Holy Spirit.⁷

¹ (Merriam-Webster, 2022)

² (Waltz, 1991)

³ (Brodie, 2020)

⁴ (Knight III & Powe, Jr, 2006)

⁵ (Coekin, 2022)

⁶ (Kight, n.d.)

⁷ (On Evangelism And Soul-winning, 2016)

- viii. Archdiocese of Detroit: Evangelization is bringing the good news of Jesus Christ to those around us.⁸
 - ix. Sharing the good news of Jesus Christ by word and action as an invitation to change hearts and lives. - CDS
 - x. Discussion points
 1. What differences did you find in the definitions?
 2. What were some common themes?
 3. Did any definition speak to you? Any that felt “off”?
- b. Evangelism vs Evangelical
- i. Evangelical has often become a problematic term because of the many different definitions and the growing political definition. It is important to be able to distinguish between the political and religious definitions of evangelical and the distinction from evangelism.
 - ii. Two views from United Methodists
 1. Rev. Thomas Lambrecht: recognizing the primary authority of Scripture in living out the Christian faith. It also means maintaining a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and believing that salvation comes through Christ alone. The obligation for evangelicals, then, is to invite people into a relationship with Christ.⁹
 2. Rev. Pamela Lightsey: helping usher in the Beloved Kin-dom of God. That calls for working to ensure the poor are raised up, the sick receive adequate care, children are protected, discrimination is eradicated and war ended.¹⁰
 - iii. In some sense, all Christians have an element of being an evangelical, because they all share to one degree or another those basic Christian beliefs. – John Green.¹¹
 - iv. “...the concept of being an evangelical has been used so much... as a key demographic that we find that there's a lot of perceptions that the term

⁸ (Archdiocese of Detroit, n.d.)

⁹ (Hahn, 2017)

¹⁰ (Hahn, 2017)

¹¹ (Kurtzleben, 2015)

evangelicals means 'Christians who vote Republican.'" – David Kinnaman¹²

- v. "Everything is political, but not everything is partisan." – CDS
- vi. Discussion Points
 - 1. What are your thoughts on the term "evangelical"?
 - 2. How have you heard that term used?
- c. The Great Commission
 - i. "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you. Look, I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age." (Matthew 28:19-20 CEB)
 - ii. The Mission—The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Local churches and extension ministries of the Church provide the most significant arenas through which disciple-making occurs. (UMC BoD ¶ 120)¹³
 - iii. Discussion Points
 - 1. How do you understand the Great Commission?
 - 2. How do the definitions of evangelism we've discussed match with the mission statement of the United Methodist Church?
 - 3. Do you see that mission in the local church today?
 - 4. What questions do you have about what evangelism is?
- d. Write your personal definition of evangelism
 - i. Consider the definitions discussed
 - ii. Consider what sharing your witness means
 - iii. Consider what is core to your faith
 - iv. Keep this definition as we will revisit it each session.

¹² (Kurtzleben, 2015)

¹³ (United Methodist Church (U.S.), 2016)

2. Importance of Evangelism – Week 2

- a. **Spiritual Gift of Evangelism:** The gift of evangelism is the gift of faith-sharing and proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ to those we meet. Evangelism is primarily a one-to-one or small group experience, grounded in building relationships with others and inviting them to make a decision for Christ. Gifted evangelists do not force their faith on others, but offer relationship with God as a gift, and are ready to tell the story of God and Christ in their own lives.¹⁴
- b. **What Is the Good News?**
 - i. After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee announcing God’s good news, saying, “Now is the time! Here comes God’s kingdom! Change your hearts and lives, and trust this good news!” (Mark 1:13-15)
 - ii. **Gospel:** From the Latin evangelium, meaning good tale or good news. Gospel has a number of distinct meanings. It refers to the Good News concerning Christ, the Kingdom of God, and salvation. It also refers to the teachings of Jesus and the apostles. The word is used in connection with the first four books of the New Testament. For example, the Gospel of Mark or the Gospel according to Mark refers to the New Testament book ascribed to Mark in which the life and teachings of Jesus are described. In services of worship, the Reading from the Gospel or the Gospel Reading refers to the Scripture reading from one of the four Gospels.¹⁵
 - iii. But he said to them, “I must preach the good news of God’s kingdom in other cities too, for this is why I was sent.” (Luke 4:43 CEB)
 - iv. All who call on the Lord’s name will be saved. So how can they call on someone they don’t have faith in? And how can they have faith in someone they haven’t heard of? And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of those who announce the good news. (Romans 10:13-15 CEB)

¹⁴ (Spiritual Gifts: Evangelism, 2019)

¹⁵ (Waltz, 1991)

- v. The good news in the New Testament is a multi-layered experience with Christ at the center as THE good news. It is the culmination of the teaching, example, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It is God's grace active in our lives. It is the message of forgiveness of sin and deep love that Christ brings. It is salvation and hope. It is the liberation we experience holistically through Christ.
 - vi. "A fascinating feature of Matthew's summary of Jesus' ministry is not only that it confirms that Jesus' evangelization was centered in 'the good news of the kingdom,' but that it describes Jesus' holistic method: teaching, preaching, and healing. The good news of the kingdom is for the whole person – physically (healing), intellectually (teaching), and spiritually (preaching)...Jesus points to a holistic ministry of good news as the sign of his divine mission." - Arias¹⁶
 - vii. Discussion Points
 1. How would you describe the Gospel message?
 2. How would you describe what the "good news" is for you personally today?
 3. How would you describe the ways that you have been changed by the good news physically, intellectually, and spiritually?
- c. More than words
- i. Rationale for Our Mission—The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by proclaiming the good news of God's grace and by exemplifying Jesus' command to love God and neighbor, thus seeking the fulfillment of God's reign and realm in the world. The fulfillment of God's reign and realm in the world is the vision Scripture holds before us. The United Methodist Church affirms that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Savior of the world, and the Lord of all. As we make disciples, we respect persons of all religious faiths and we defend religious freedom for all persons. Jesus' words in Matthew provide the Church with our mission: "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations,

¹⁶ (Arias, 2001)

baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you" (28:19-20), and "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind. . . . You must love your neighbor as you love yourself" (22:37, 39). This mission is our grace-filled response to the Reign of God in the world announced by Jesus. God's grace is active everywhere, at all times, carrying out this purpose as revealed in the Bible. It is expressed in God's covenant with Abraham and Sarah, in the Exodus of Israel from Egypt, and in the ministry of the prophets. It is fully embodied in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is experienced in the ongoing creation of a new people by the Holy Spirit. – UMC BoD ¶ 121¹⁷

- ii. Discipleship - The active living of the individual Christian in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ, that is, being as effective a disciple of Christ as possible. Discipleship involves a ministry of outreaching love and witness to others concerning Christ and God's grace. Discipleship also calls the Christian to ministries of servanthood and service to the world to the glory of God and for human fulfillment. – UMC Glossary¹⁸
- iii. Discussion points
 1. Do you see evangelism as a natural part of the mission of The United Methodist Church?
 2. Do you see the actions of the church lining up with the mission goals?
 3. What are some ways that the church currently practices discipleship?
- d. The Harvest is Plentiful
 - i. Jesus traveled among all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, announcing the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness. Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them because they were troubled and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The size of the

¹⁷ (United Methodist Church (U.S.), 2016)

¹⁸ (Waltz, 1991)

harvest is bigger than you can imagine, but there are few workers.

Therefore, plead with the Lord of the harvest to send out workers for his harvest.” (Matthew 9:35-38 CEB)

- ii. Americans' membership in houses of worship continued to decline last year, dropping below 50% for the first time in Gallup's eight-decade trend. Over the past two decades, the percentage of Americans who do not identify with any religion has grown from 8% in 1998-2000 to 13% in 2008-2010 and 21% over the past three years... Given the nearly perfect alignment between not having a religious preference and not belonging to a church, the 13-percentage-point increase in no religious affiliation since 1998-2000 appears to account for more than half of the 20-point decline in church membership over the same time. Most of the rest of the drop can be attributed to a decline in formal church membership among Americans who do have a religious preference. Between 1998 and 2000, an average of 73% of religious Americans belonged to a church, synagogue or mosque. Over the past three years, the average has fallen to 60%.¹⁹
- iii. Happier people? - “Controlling for theology, church attendance, general sociability, and other demographic factors, gaining friends at church seems to make you both happier and nicer, and losing friends at church seems to have the opposite effects. Church friends produce happier, nicer people.” - Putnam²⁰
- iv. Discussion points
 1. Do you know someone who is Christian but doesn't have a church home? Why don't they have a church home?
 2. Do you know someone who is not religiously affiliated?
 3. What are some of the things you can recognize from church as having a positive impact on your life?

¹⁹ (Jones, 2021)

²⁰ (Newport, 2022)

4. Does this change your definition of evangelism? Feel free to make changes for this week in your understanding of what evangelism is and make sure to keep it for next week.

3. Accessibility of Evangelism – Week 3

a. Who needs evangelism?

- i. Is evangelism just for people outside the church?
- ii. Is evangelism just to reach “new” Christians?
- iii. Evangelism can reach those in the church and those outside the church, as all people need to hear the good news of Jesus Christ.
- iv. Churches are only as strong as their membership and are dependent on their members for financial support and service to keep operating. Because it is unlikely that people who do not have a religious preference will become church members, the challenge for church leaders is to encourage those who do affiliate with a specific faith to become formal, and active, church members.²¹

b. How does one “do” evangelism?

i. Types of evangelism

1. Proclamation

- a. Proclamation consists of preaching or verbally professing the Gospel message. Proclamation is not as interactive as other types. It is also less personal, usually aimed at an audience.
- b. He said to them, “Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to every creature. (Mark 16:15 CEB)
- c. Examples of proclamation evangelism
 - i. Tent Revival
 - ii. Open-air preaching
 - iii. Televangelism and other broadcasting
 - iv. Street-corner evangelist
 - v. Sunday sermon
- d. Discussion points
 - i. Other examples of proclamation
 - ii. What are your experiences with proclamation evangelism?
 - iii. Pros and cons of proclamation evangelism

²¹ (Jones, 2021)

2. Apologetics

- a. Apologetics is “the intellectual defense of the truth of the Christian religion.”²² Apologetics uses rational discourse in order to argue for the truth of the Gospel. This style of evangelism can take on many forms.
- b. Instead, regard Christ the Lord as holy in your hearts. Whenever anyone asks you to speak of your hope, be ready to defend it. Yet do this with respectful humility, maintaining a good conscience. Act in this way so that those who malign your good lifestyle in Christ may be ashamed when they slander you. (1 Peter 3:15-16 CEB)
- c. There are many forms of apologetics, using reason, evidence, historical arguments, and logic in order to explain and argue for Christianity and the Gospel message.
- d. Examples of apologetics as evangelism
 - i. Radio programs and Podcasts
 - ii. Books and tracts
 - iii. Feature films
 - iv. Museum or Theme Park (such as Answers in Genesis)
 - v. Small study groups
- e. Discussion points
 - i. Other examples of apologetics
 - ii. What are your experiences with apologetics?
 - iii. Pros and cons of apologetic evangelism

3. Contact or Spontaneous

- a. Contact or spontaneous evangelism is sharing the Gospel message with a stranger. This is often done by sharing the message without a focus on building a continuing relationship.
- b. In this way, I have a goal to preach the gospel where they haven't heard of Christ yet, so that I won't be building on someone else's foundation. (Romans 15:20 CEB)

²² (Britannica, 2007)

- c. Examples of contact evangelism
 - i. Cold calling
 - ii. Door-to-Door
 - iii. Handing out tracts or pamphlets
 - iv. Conversations with strangers you meet in public spaces (waiting rooms, stores, etc)
 - d. Discussion points
 - i. Other examples of contact or spontaneous evangelism
 - ii. What are your experiences with contact or spontaneous evangelism?
 - iii. Pros and cons
4. Relational
- a. Relational evangelism is the purposeful building of a long-term relationship with others while sharing the Gospel message. This can be done with friends, family, or others that you will interact with on a regular basis.
 - b. One of the two disciples who heard what John said and followed Jesus was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated Christ). He led him to Jesus. (John 1:40-42a CEB)
 - c. Relational evangelism can take many forms and may not always seem like evangelism. This is because part of the relational method is that you focus on relationship building as a pathway into the Gospel message. This means that spending time with someone and listening to them can be part of evangelism. It is a long-term plan instead of a “one-and-done” style. This can include inviting someone to church or a study group but also going to get lunch or sharing in common interests like music or the gym.
 - d. Discussion points

- i. What are some examples you can think of that would be relational evangelism?
 - ii. Pros and cons
5. Mission or Service
 - a. Missional or Service evangelism comes from social action and outreach in the community to share the Gospel message. This can be through specifically defined mission projects or through Christian acts of service for others.
 - b. And serve each other according to the gift each person has received, as good managers of God's diverse gifts. Whoever speaks should do so as those who speak God's word. Whoever serves should do so from the strength that God furnishes. Do this so that in everything God may be honored through Jesus Christ. To him be honor and power forever and always. Amen. (1 Peter 4:10-11 CEB)
 - c. Missional evangelism examples
 - i. Traditional mission work in foreign countries
 - ii. Mission trips
 - iii. Local community service
 - d. What are some examples you can think of that would be missional evangelism?
 - e. Pros and cons
6. Review
 - a. Which evangelism method stood out for you?
 - b. In what ways is the local church already engaging in evangelism?
 - c. What kind of evangelism can you envision happening in the local church in the future?
 - d. Does this change your definition of evangelism? Feel free to make changes for this week in your understanding of what evangelism is and make sure to keep it for next week.

4. Evangelism Everywhere

- a. Every day they continued to teach and proclaim the good news that Jesus is the Christ, both in the temple and in houses. (Acts 5:42 CEB)
- b. Where can evangelism be done? How can it be done?
 - i. Personal Story - What is your faith story?
 1. “Above all, show sincere love to each other, because love brings about the forgiveness of many sins. Open your homes to each other without complaining. And serve each other according to the gift each person has received, as good managers of God’s diverse gifts.” (1 Peter 4:8-10 CEB)
 2. “But, if those of us who have the eyes to see and the ears to hear can somehow bear our hearts with authenticity and sincerity that every life is a ministry and every person is a minister, what both the Church and the world might realize is that this time in American history is one in which a country is explicitly calling out for an experience of the divine through the Spirit-motivated initiative of regular people like you and me.” – James Kang²³
 3. The Heart of Christian Ministry—The heart of Christian ministry is Christ's ministry of outreaching love. Christian ministry is the expression of the mind and mission of Christ by a community of Christians that demonstrates a common life of gratitude and devotion, witness and service, celebration and discipleship. All Christians are called through their baptism to this ministry of servanthood in the world to the glory of God and for human fulfillment. – BoD ¶ 126²⁴
 4. Why are you a Christian?
 5. Why are you a United Methodist?
 6. How can you share your faith story with others?
 7. Try coming up with the “elevator version” of why you live a life in Christ.

²³ (Kang, n.d.)

²⁴ (United Methodist Church (U.S.), 2016)

- ii. Evangelism in Sunday Worship
 - 1. Is a sermon evangelism? Who does it reach?
 - 2. What else would you think of as evangelism as part of worship?
 - 3. Do you consider inviting someone to service an act of evangelism?
 - 4. Do you know anyone who can't make it because of scheduling problems? Is there a solution?
- iii. Evangelism through class and small groups
 - 1. "And let us consider each other carefully for the purpose of sparking love and good deeds. Don't stop meeting together with other believers, which some people have gotten into the habit of doing. Instead, encourage each other, especially as you see the day drawing near."
(Hebrews 10:24-25 CEB)
 - 2. What class experiences are currently a part of the church?
 - 3. What class would you be interested in being a part of?
 - 4. What classes can you envision as part of the future of the church?
 - 5. What about small groups in the ministry?
 - 6. Would you want to participate in a small group ministry?
 - 7. Would you consider helping to lead a small group?
 - 8. How can classes and groups be part of evangelism?
- iv. Evangelism with neighbors
 - 1. "You were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only don't let this freedom be an opportunity to indulge your selfish impulses, but serve each other through love. All the Law has been fulfilled in a single statement: Love your neighbor as yourself." (Galatians 5:13-14 CEB)
 - 2. Do you know your neighbors?
 - 3. What kinds of evangelistic efforts might be made with your neighbors? What would evangelism in that context look like?
- v. Evangelism with friends
 - 1. "Some men were bringing a man who was paralyzed, lying on a cot. They wanted to carry him in and place him before Jesus, 19 but they couldn't reach him because of the crowd. So they took him up on the

roof and lowered him—cot and all—through the roof tiles into the crowded room in front of Jesus. 20 When Jesus saw their faith, he said, ‘Friend, your sins are forgiven.’” (Luke 5:18-20 CEB)

2. Have you thought of how you can share your witness with your friends?
 3. What methods of evangelism do you think would be most effective with your friends?
- vi. Evangelism in the community
1. “So now, let’s go to him outside the camp, bearing his shame. We don’t have a permanent city here, but rather we are looking for the city that is still to come. So let’s continually offer up a sacrifice of praise through him, which is the fruit from our lips that confess his name. 16 Don’t forget to do good and to share what you have because God is pleased with these kinds of sacrifices.” (Hebrews 13:13-16 CEB)
 2. What community mission work is currently being done?
 3. What projects could the church take on to be more involved in the community?
 4. What about in our “global community”? An example would be the recent support for UMCOR with relief for Ukraine.
- c. Concerns about evangelism
- i. Age
 1. Both the age of the person doing evangelism and the age of the person being approached can both create complications.
 2. How does your age impact the evangelism you do?
 3. What are ways that you can reach out to other generational groups?
 - ii. Location
 1. What does your community look like?
 2. What are the challenges you see in doing evangelism in your community?
 3. What are some positives you see about evangelism in your community?

- iii. Ability
 - 1. Are there worries you have about your own abilities?
 - 2. What do you think your strengths and weaknesses are?
 - 3. What method of evangelism do you see as your “best fit”?
- d. For next week, we will be having an open discussion about the future of evangelism in the church. Please bring any questions you may have. I would also like you to bring at least one plan for putting evangelism into action. It doesn't need to be very detailed, but I would like to hear your ideas so that we can share and discuss and possibly even begin new programs within the church.
- e. Looking at the definition of evangelism
 - i. Review the definition of evangelism that you've used in the last 3 sessions.
 - ii. Would you change it?
 - iii. Can you put your definition into practice?
 - iv. I would like you to use that definition when explaining your ideas next week.

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