

ECO SPOTLIGHT

Is it Okay to be Evangelical?

Jesus' public ministry began in provincial Galilee with a proclamation of good news—the Kingdom of God is near!—accompanied by signs of that longed-for Kingdom's proximity: physical healing, miraculous abundance, mercy, forgiveness, and restoration. The book of Acts traces the Spirit-powered spread of the good news from a small band of disciples gazing dumbstruck at the sky to people and places across the Roman Empire. Today, in an era in which the word “evangelism” provokes ambivalence and “evangelical” has been co-opted as a political brand, the church still recognizes in these narratives the pattern for our own ministry: sharing, in word and deed, God's love in Christ for all.

In a recent online newsletter, ECO Synod Executive Dana Allin writes that being evangelical commits ECO to the centrality of God's Word and the necessity of saving faith in Jesus Christ, as well as to uniting all believers into one family “regardless of gender, race, socio-economic background and other earthly distinctions,” and working for the transformation of society. (ecopres.org/blog/november-newsletter-a-word-from-dana-allin/) In some ways, this is a restatement of the Core Value of Missional Centrality: “We believe in living out the whole of the Great Commission—including evangelism, spiritual formation, compassion, and redemptive justice—in our communities and around the world.” At NPC, we look for ways to embody these commitments as well.

(Continued on the back)

Transition Team Update

Since December, NPC's Transition Team and the Administrative Commission of the Presbytery of Philadelphia have been working on reaching agreements in three key areas: church property, provision for pastors, and possibilities for ongoing relationship. Together, these will form the basis of the Terms of Gracious Dismissal. **We've made good progress!**

Once all of the terms have been agreed upon by both the Session and the Administrative Commission, they will be presented to the congregation for a vote. If approved, the Terms of Gracious Dismissal will then be presented to the Presbytery for final approval.

It will be critical to have a greater than 50% participation rate in order to meet the quorum (approximately 220 NPC members) for this vote. **Your participation in this congregational meeting is essential to the future of Narberth Presbyterian Church.** Once the date (we're hoping for spring) for the congregational meeting has been determined, it will be widely communicated, early and often!

Please continue to pray for and with NPC's Transition Team, leadership, and the Administrative Commission, for continued positive interaction and a process that glorifies God, preserves the unity of our congregation, and blesses the Presbytery. In the weeks ahead, please pray particularly for the teams as they work together on the Terms of Gracious Dismissal.

Joining ECO, says elder John Kennedy, would encourage and support NPC in embracing all parts of the Gospel: “[It] will allow us to continue as Christ followers who desire to see growth in our lives and the church as a whole—growth to know God more and to love him more as well as our neighbors of all races, nations, and tongues.” Nearly four decades in missions have taken John and Jan Kennedy around the globe and, John says, they “have grown to love all peoples, especially those who have yet to hear about who Jesus is and how much he loves them and their families and communities.”

Spreading that message is happening in new ways in Narberth as well. Following last summer’s Wednesday night Bible study series on the Holy Spirit, NPC hosted a brainstorming meeting on evangelism. Clara Louie attended both, and it was after the brainstorming session that the idea for a new ministry—the Curbside Café—came to her. Open Sunday mornings on Windsor Avenue, weather permitting, the Café offers hospitality to passersby, with free coffee and pastries, conversation, prayer if requested, and, when the opportunity arises, sharing the gospel in the course of conversation. The Café has also popped up at the Narberth train station. “The one important element is we follow the lead of the Holy Spirit,” she says, meeting guests where they are, however they wish to engage.

Clara remembers leaving the brainstorming meeting with the sense that people want to share the gospel, but often they feel intimidated and inadequate. Rather than pressuring team members to assume roles they’re not ready for, the ministry encourages them to begin where they’re more comfortable, and to team up with those who are more experienced and confident. Beyond the curbside encounter, team members continue to pray for the people they meet. Sometimes, Clara says, conversations go beyond Sunday morning with further opportunities for friendship and witness.

ECO’s blog is similarly peppered with reports of churches reaching beyond boundaries; a sampling of recent articles is included below. “The hope is to go beyond the walls of the church—literally and metaphorically—in small, progressive steps that are not too intimidating, yet always stretching at the same time,” Clara says. “My feeling is we can’t just talk about evangelism, we have to do it, and the Curbside Café, I hope, is providing a tangible way for people to step out and do it. How it is done is the work of the Holy Spirit!”

For John, being evangelical means “that a person or church has come to know about the gracious gift of God to all of us on this planet who need to be reunited with our heavenly Father, through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, his son.” Partnering with ECO, he believes, “will allow [NPC] to continue to discover and expand our Gospel outreach to our Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth...till all have heard!”

Recent blog articles from eco-pres.org:

- “Helping Florence Flourish,” February 22, 2017
- “Expanding the Kingdom of God in Jerome, Idaho,” February 23, 2017
- “‘Joyful Encounters’ Via The Outreach Foundation,” April 6, 2017
- “An Invitation to Freedom Sunday—Integrating Justice into our Mission Values,” August 31, 2017
- “God is Transforming the Muslim World, and ECO Churches can be Part of this Story,” December 4, 2017

Other resources on the ECO website:

- Global Engagement: eco-pres.org/who-we-are/global-mission/
- Church Planting Network: ecoplanting.org

