

Making A Small Town Congregation An Evangelistic Community

Messiah Lutheran Church,
Middletown, OH

Submitted in partial fulfillment of
The requirements of PMM 247:
Evangelism in the Congregation

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Charles St-Onge

1. The Evangelism Task: *Setting The Word Loose*

Evangelism is not an “extra” that a congregation is free to do or not do as it pleases. Reaching the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ is part and parcel of what it means to be *church*.¹ The Magna Carta of the Lutheran reformation, the Augsburg Confession (A.C.), does not contain an article on “mission” precisely because such an article is superfluous. The A.C.’s fourth article, “justification”, is the *raison-d’être* for the church. “We receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ’s sake, through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us.”ⁱ The mission of the church is to bring this justifying faith to all people, which is the content of the A.C.’s fifth article. “To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments.”ⁱⁱ Through the Gospel and the sacraments made effective by the Son, the Holy Spirit brings people into a restored relationship with the Father. The mission of the church is to use the Word of God – Law and Gospel, in teaching, preaching, baptism, and the Lord’s Supper – to reconcile a rebellious humanity to God. No innovative mission statement is necessary for a Lutheran church: the fifth article of the Augsburg Confession and all it entails *is* our mission statement.

How this mission is to be accomplished, however, has become increasingly unclear. The proliferation of Christian confessions, each with its own “unique” approach to missions, has complicated matters in many areas of North America. Western society’s rejection of traditional confessions of Christianity during the modernistic period has left the door open to all forms of unusual religious expressions, all viewed as equally true. Though the trend toward moral relativism seems to be on the wane since September 11, 2001, metaphysical relativism is most certainly not.ⁱⁱⁱ In the midst of all this, the average LC-MS congregation is left struggling to figure out how to be faithful to the mission of the church. In the 1950s and 60s, LC-MS congregations could be started almost anywhere and be expected to boom. Now those same congregations are struggling with declining attendance and membership. People are not beating a path to the congregation’s door, but rather out of it. What to do?

Sadly, most LC-MS congregations have begun floating from program to program, technique to technique, in order to stem these ‘numeric losses.’ In the process God and his Word have often been sidelined, and occasionally overlooked altogether. Yet only the Holy Spirit at work through the Word can create disciples. We have forgotten the words of Paul: “But how are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?”^{iv} The mission of the church remains the same as it always has been: proclaiming the Word that it might create disciples. The evangelism question for the Lutheran is not “how do we bring more people into the Church?” but rather, “How do we bring people into contact with God’s Word?”² The task of evangelism for the Lutheran, then, is twofold:

- 1) To broaden the area of interface between the world and the Word
- 2) To deepen the world’s contact with the Word

¹ “To reflect upon ‘mission’ or ‘evangelism’ is to reflect upon the church itself, for the act of mission or of evangelism is not accidental or coincidental to the Church – like the activity of golf, tennis or horseback riding is to this or that individual – but the act of mission belongs to the very core of what it means to be the Church.” William Weinrich, “Evangelism in the Early Church”, in *Concordia Theological Quarterly* (Fort Wayne, IN: Concordia Theological Seminary, 1981)

² “The Word is sufficient. This, too, has implications for evangelism. People need nothing more than the message of the Word, sin and grace, law and gospel. The evangelist’s tool is not the Word plus something else; it is the Word alone. David J. Valleskey, *We Believe – Therefore We Speak* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997) 28

These two might seem to be the same thing. They are, in one sense, different aspects of the same mission: bringing the world into contact with the Word. But they differ in this sense. Consider the metaphor of the fisherman.³ The first task of the fisherman is to cast the biggest net across as far an area as possible. We may not be able to make a whole community sit down for Divine Service at our congregation, but we can bring an incredible number of people into contact with enough of God's Word that the Spirit may lead them to investigate further. This first task also creates awareness of the congregation's existence in a community, and *why* it exists: to create justifying faith in all people, "non-members" and "members" alike. The second task, deepening the world's contact with the Word, is akin to the fisherman pulling the net that God has filled into the boat. This is the task of bringing the people with whom the Spirit has brought us into contact into a deeper understanding of God's "Yes!" in Jesus Christ.

2. The Mission Field: The Greater Middletown, OH Area

2.1. The People

This is the general approach proposed for evangelism in any Lutheran congregation. Consider, though, a specific congregation as an example of how this approach might be applied. The congregation in question is Messiah Lutheran Church, in Middletown, Ohio. Middletown is located 26 miles north of downtown Cincinnati, OH and 18 miles south of downtown Dayton, OH, west of I-75 on State Route 122. Middletown is located on the border between Butler and Warren Counties. Butler County (pop: 337,000) has experienced significant growth in the last decade, and showed growth of 1.3% in the last year and a half. Warren County (pop: 169,000) is currently the 41st fastest growing county in the US, at 6.7% growth in the last year and a half. This represents an increase in population of over 10,000 in the last couple of years. A good portion of this population, however, is flight from the cities of Dayton and Cincinnati. Both Montgomery (pop: 554,000) and Hamilton (pop: 835,000) Counties, in which those cities are located, have experienced decreases in population of about 15,000 in the last couple of years. The two other counties closest to Middletown, Preble (pop: 43,000) and Greene (pop: 148,000), have experienced limited but positive growth.^v The total population within half an hour of Middletown is approximately one million.

There are several communities in the area immediately surrounding Messiah Lutheran Church, besides Middletown. To the north, the closest of these communities are Franklin (pop: 11,000) at 5 miles, Carlisle (pop: 5,000) at 6 miles, and the growing suburb of Springboro (pop: 7,000) at 8 miles. Five miles to the south is Monroe (pop: 5,000), a growing suburb of Middletown. Trenton (pop: 6,000) is 7 miles to the southeast. None of these communities has an LC-MS congregation. With Middletown's population of 48,000 the total population of the greater Middletown area is about 82,000 people. Adding in the semi-rural areas between these towns, the population may be closer to 100,000.^{vi}

Looking at population demographics, 34% of people could be classified as "busters", 37% as "boomers", and 29% as "builders". This makes Middletown slightly older than the national population. There are slightly more families with children (36%) and single parent families (9%) than the national average. Note that almost 23% of residents claim to be single, living alone. Housing in Middletown is more detached housing oriented than the national average (70% compared to 60% for the US) and has fewer renters (33% compared to 36% for the US). Education levels are substantially below the national average for higher education, but about the same for high school education. About 14% of residents have a high school diploma, and 15% have at least a bachelor's degree (14% and 23% for the US, respectively). Racially, the area is predominantly "white". People claiming to be "white" make up about 92% of the

³ Recall that Jesus himself called his first disciples, "fishers of men." Matthew 4:19, ESV. Valleskey also writes, "Evangelists are net-casters. God makes the seed grow. God fills the net." Valleskey, 29.

population, versus 5% for “black” and 1% for Latino. Almost 27% of the population claims to be of German ancestry.^{vii, viii}

The Middletown area is home to the AK Steel mill, and this mill has dominated the economy of the area in the past. However the shift of steel production overseas and AK steel head office’s relocation out of the area has lessened its economic importance and left the downtown area of the city rather impoverished. Still, 21.7% of jobs in the area are in manufacturing, with 19.0% in education, 11.8% in retail, 2.7% unemployed. Many people hold jobs out of area, however. The average commute for a Middletown area resident is 23 minutes. The household income is slightly below the national average at \$35,000. 5.4% of families and 8.7% of individuals are living below the poverty line.^{ix}

2.2. The Churches

Non-LC-MS

Middletown does not suffer for a lack of churches. There are almost 100 congregations in Middletown and its immediate surrounding area. The breakdown of the most significant of these churches is shown in Table 1. Their locations throughout the city of Middletown are displayed in Figure 1. Messiah is highlighted, and green pins display the two ELCA churches. Middletown is one of the last “loops” of the southern Bible belt, as is evidenced by the preponderance of Baptist and Methodist-type churches in the area. Churches of God, Baptists of various flavors, and “non-denominational” congregations make up almost 70% of the area churches. To be sure these congregations vary in size and in influence. Some of them are small “inner-city” congregations. Others, such as First Baptist and the Briel Boulevard Church of God (coincidentally across the street from one another) are large growing suburban congregations. In contrast the traditional magisterial confessions – Reformed, Lutheran, Roman, and Eastern – account for only 9 churches in the area.

Table 1 : Christian Confessions in Middletown, OH

<u>Confessional Affiliation</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Confessional Affiliation</u>	<u>Total</u>
Assemblies of God	2	Baptist	25
Christian Scientist	1	Church of Christ	6
Church of God	17	Full Gospel	3
Episcopal	1	Lutheran	3
Jehovah’s Witness	1	Mormon	1
Seventh Day Adventist	2	Orthodox	1
Roman Catholic	1	United Methodist	6
United Church in Christ	1	Presbyterian	3
Nazarene	1	Salvation Army	1
A.M.E.	1	Other	23

A variety of evangelism efforts are currently underway in the community. Some are socially oriented, such as First Baptist’s programs, and Bethlehem Lutheran’s outreach to truants and shut-ins in the downtown core.^{x, xi} Other efforts are of a more Pentecostal or Evangelical bent. There is a coffeehouse-style storefront ministry in the downtown area. The Vineyard Church of Dayton has for some time been having “Bagels and Bible” meetings at a local sandwich store. The larger churches have passion plays and Christian pageants that attract large numbers of people in the community. The Stratford Heights Church of God recently hired a “Revivalist” to conduct tent meetings at their congregation. The results are posted

on the Revivalist's website.⁴ The Rev. Philips of University Baptist Church preached a sermon last December, posted on his church's website, pushing for further evangelistic outreach into the surrounding community:

“Thirty five years ago Sarah and I came to the Miami Valley in Ohio (from South Carolina) to plant a church in Middletown...There were more people within fifteen minutes of our home on Manchester Road than there were in miles in South Carolina at that time. Contrary to popular opinion many of these same people were willing to listen whenever I knocked at their door to tell them about Christ. The question people sometimes ask now is "Why did you stay?" The answer is simple! The challenge hasn't changed. It has mushroomed. University Baptist Church now sits on the belt buckle of population growth in the Miami Valley in Ohio.”^{xii}

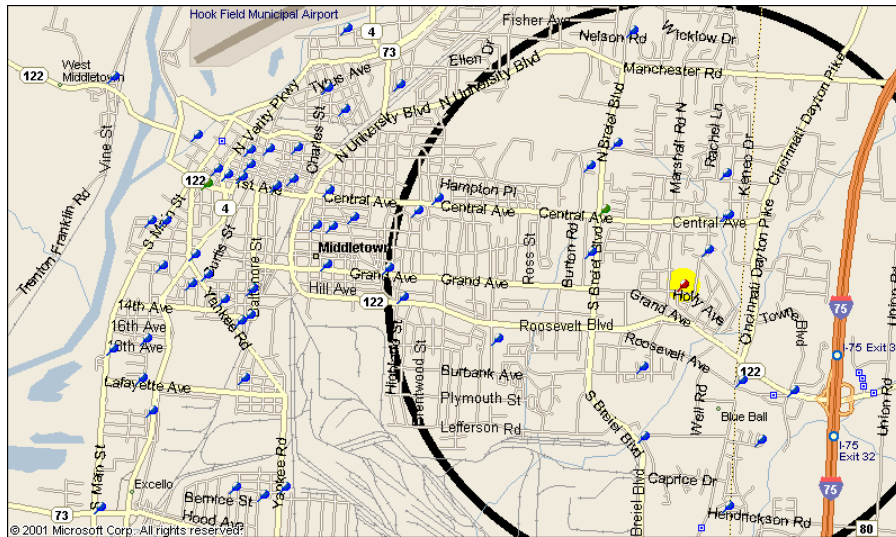


Figure 1: Middletown Churches

As another example, two “Apostolic/Prophetics” of the CINC (a California group) have recently arrived in the area to begin an “anointing” ministry:

“Bill is a former Pastor, Evangelist, Worship Leader, Teacher, Chaplain and Spiritual Life Leader in Christian colleges, and has the calling of the Prophetic-Apostle, ministering by teaching and demonstration of the Spirit in prophecy, power, healing, and joy. Nancy – also fully ordained as Prophet – has a Faith-camp 'flavor' and has served in various helps ministries including Benny Hinn and TBN. Nancy moves strongly in prophetic exhortation, power, healing and prophecy. Bill & Nancy are developing a regional school of the Holy Spirit which will enable leaders and workers from various churches and ministries to advance in the gifts of Christ, spiritual gifts, and the callings of God.”^{xiii}

The Orthodox congregation in Middletown has a “Greek Festival” every year on the site of the church that acts both as a fund-raiser and a means of disseminating information about Orthodoxy. A very large Pentecostal-oriented, non-confessional congregation known as “Solid Rock” is quite well known in the area. Although it sits off of I-75 south of Middletown, they consider Middletown one of their target areas. The large Vineyard Church in Cincinnati also attracts people from Middletown. The Mormons

⁴ “Stratford Heights Church Of God: Middletown, Ohio. Pastor W.D. Watkins. Length of revival meeting: 1 week. Results: 13 Saved, 65 Sanctified, 65 Baptized in the Holy Ghost, and 23 Rededicated lives to the Lord.” <http://stevepegaministries.com/ExamplesOfRevivals.htm> (10/23/02)

and the Jehovah’s Witnesses both have a presence in the city. A new Islamic mosque and school sits on a very visible site just off I-75 near “Solid Rock”.

The two ELCA congregations are relatively small. The downtown church, organized in 1854, has seen an increase in membership, but a decrease in attendance from 94 to 87, in the last decade. The newer suburban church, Zion, has also seen its membership increase and its worship attendance drop, from 182 to 148, in the last decade. Other ELCA churches in the area can be found in Trenton (St. Peter, attendance 62 in 2001), in Franklin (St. Paul, attendance 85 in 2001), in Springboro (Springboro, attendance 99 in 2001) as well as in nearby Lebanon, Hamilton, and southern Dayton. None of these churches, with the exception of one in southern Dayton, has been showing increases in attendance.^{xiv}

LC-MS

There are only five LC-MS congregations within 15 miles of Middletown (see Figure 2). The oldest is Immanuel in Hamilton, OH, to the southwest of Middletown, which dates to the 1800s. Messiah itself is the next oldest, established in the 1960s. Emmanuel, Kettering, Royal Redeemer to the south of Middletown, and King of Kings southeast of Middletown in Mason, are all “Evangelical” oriented LC-MS mission plants dating from the late 1970s. Immanuel, Hamilton’s attendance has dropped from 352 to 275 in the last ten years. Royal Redeemer’s likewise has dropped from 145 to 116, despite aggressive use of Church Growth methodology and their presence in a fast-growing neighborhood. King of Kings has increased in attendance from 143 to 331, which should be expected in a high growth area like Warren County.^{xv}

Messiah, Middletown recently went through a pastoral crisis, with the arrest of its pastor for public indecency in a local park. Nevertheless, attendance has remained fairly steady around 60, despite having lost around 20 members who for various reasons left with the pastor when he was removed from the Synod. In fact new members are continuing to find their way to the congregation, and old members who had left for various reasons over the years have also been returning. The congregation is aging, but not old. A couple of young families have joined the congregation. There are some young childless couples as well. The pastor has a young family and has a strong mission orientation. Messiah also finds herself on the edge of the growing Warren County suburbs between Springboro and Lebanon, in a community with no true confessional Christian churches. There is certainly a need for a congregation like Messiah to be a voice crying out with the Gospel in the midst of a cacaphony of unclear messages.

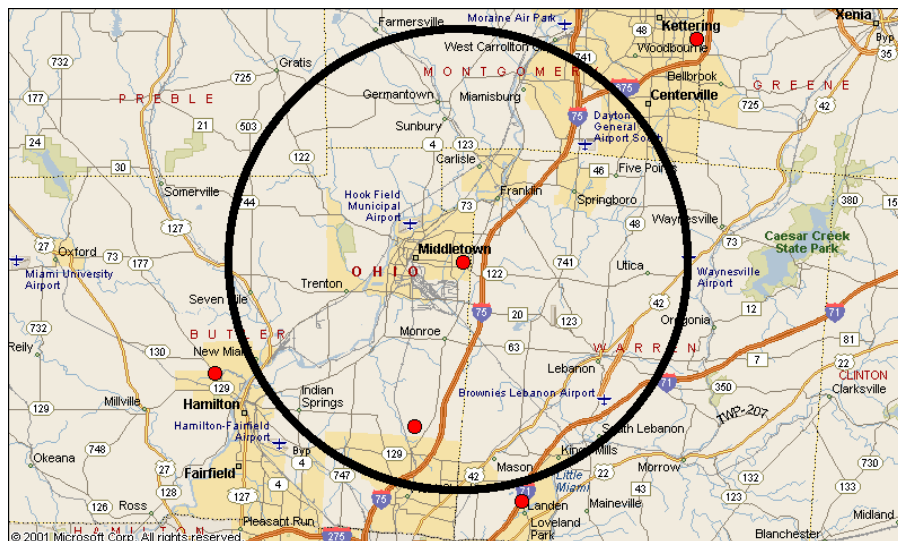


Figure 2: LC-MS Congregations in the Greater Middletown Area

3. The First Task: Broadening the Word's Presence

Previously it was stated that the task of Lutheran evangelism was twofold: to broaden the area of interface between the world and the Word, and to deepen the world's contact with the Word. How might Messiah broaden the Word of God's presence within the surrounding community? There are two primary ways through which people in the community may come into contact with the congregation, and thus provide an opportunity for "speaking the Word." The first is through personal contact with the members of the congregation, including the pastor.⁵ Members have friends, neighbors, and acquaintances that need the Word of Life. They may only interact with them briefly, but they do interact. Members also eat out, have their cars' oil changed, shop and in many other ways enter the marketplace where they interact with people who may not be a part of the Church.

The second way people come into contact with the congregation is through direct contact. Although contact with members is more frequent than direct contact, people do drive by the congregation, call the congregation, or read its ad in the local newspaper. It is even more likely that they will come into contact with the congregation through its web site, especially if that site is 1) information rich and 2) well linked with other sites and search engines. These are the two main opportunities for bringing people into contact with the Word: through contact with members and through contact with the congregation.

The problem is that in our hurried world most of these encounters will be brief. They are opportunities merely for broadening the Word's contact with the world, but not necessarily for deepening that contact. A phone call to the church or a visit to its web site may provide deeper contact than a minute spent talking with a neighbor. But few members have the time to develop a relationship with their neighbors to the point where they can truly witness using, for example, the Socratic method or some other form of "dialog evangelism." Even if a member does have the time and does develop such a relationship, they may be profoundly uncomfortable in deepening that person's contact with the Word of God. What is needed are some easy, non-threatening ways for members to bring those they meet every day into some contact with the Gospel, so that the Spirit might then bring those people into a deeper contact with the Word of God. What is needed are some quick and easy "tools for communication" that any member, no matter how timid, can use with anyone they meet. These tools, when used with the approach suggested further on for deepening contact, are at the heart of this evangelism program for a small-town congregation.

3.1. Tools for Communication

This section suggests a couple of basic tools that every congregation should have. The next section will present how members of a congregation like Messiah could use these tools for evangelism in Middletown and its surrounding communities.

A Logo

The use of a simple graphic to serve as an easily identifiable mark of an organization has been widespread for generations. Flags and shields are some of the oldest examples of the use of an identifying graphic. "The Star-Spangled Banner" is essentially a hymn, not to the Logos, but to the Logo. Consider further the Crescent, the Star of David, and the Cross, the "Compass and Square" of the Masonic Lodge, the "Check Mark" of Nike, or the "Inverted Ls" of the LCMS. A well-designed logo, used on letterhead,

⁵ I use the word "member" here because of its widespread use. However those who are "members" of a congregation have the same needs as those who do not. They need to hear God's Law and God's Gospel, week after week, for the building up of their faith. The difference between members and non-members, from a Lutheran perspective, is that members are getting the food they need while non-members are not. This distinction is important to keep in people's minds. "We are all beggars: this is most certainly true."

business cards, posters and web sites can easily and graphically tie all this communication to the congregation.

A good logo communicates the core value of an organization. For that reason alone, any Christian congregational logo should speak two messages. The first is the message of the cross. In the cross God's Law and God's Gospel are clearly stated.⁶ The second is what that message means for this particular congregation, in this place. For a congregation like Messiah, that may as simple as saying that the congregation is the message of the cross proclaimed specifically in Middletown, Ohio. The logo should then reflect Middletown in addition to the cross. For another congregation that may be multilingual, the logo may reflect that characteristic. A congregational school, outreach programs, mission projects, or a congregations historical character might all be things to reflect in the logo. Whatever is finally chosen, however, should be simple, easily reproducible, and have at its heart the Christian message of this particular congregation.

Scriptural Statements

Along with a logo, a congregation should identify certain scriptural verses to accompany the logo on its communiqués. These verses should be picked to fulfill three purposes. The first is that they include both law and gospel. Using as a verse either the 1st commandment or the statement "Jesus loves you" are not appropriate because they either ignore God's "Yes" or God's "No" in a very obvious way. Second, these verses should be short. The parable of the prodigal son won't fit on a business card, and its message is too difficult to quickly read and grasp by the average non-churchgoer. The third requirement is that the verses open, not close, conversation. Statements like "God says it, I believe it, that settles it!" aren't all that helpful for the reason that they offer no possibility for further conversation other than "I agree" or "I disagree". Some verses that might fit these qualifications include the following:

- 1 Cor. 1:23: "We preach Christ crucified"
- 1 John 4:17: "We love because God first loved us"
- 1 Cor. 7:23: "You were bought with a price"
- John 12:33: "While you have the light, believe in the light"

All these verses include the law in some form: crucifixion, our need to love, not being a slave, or believing. They also include some element of Gospel: being bought, having the light, preaching Christ. They are also not traditionally used in "evangelical appeals", and so may be good sparks for discussion. How has God loved us? What does it mean to believe in the light? Why were we bought, and what was the price? But most importantly, rather than using a "mission statement" written by men, these are Scripture – the double-edged sword of the Word of God. Where the Word is present, God is at work.

3.2. Communicating Through Relationships

Here are some ways members could use these tools of communication to bring people into contact with the Word of God. The pastor of the congregation should discuss how these "tools" could be used either in a special instructional event or during adult bible study. Recall that these "broadening" approaches, while meant to stand alone, are also meant to lead people into a deeper contact with the Word as will be discussed in the next session.

⁶ The proclamation of the cross is not only a proclamation of salvation, but also of God's judgment on sin. The Formula of Concord, Article V, writes: "The proclamation of the suffering and death of Christ, the Son of God, is an earnest and terrifying preaching and advertisement of God's wrath which really directs people into the law, after the veil of Moses has been removed for them, so they now know for the first time what great things God demands of us in the law, none of which we could fulfill, and that we should now seek all our righteousness in Christ." (F.C., Art. V, 9)

Business Cards

Business cards should be produced with the logo and verse of the congregation on them. The cards should also include a small map to the church, phone and email, web site address, and the time of divine services and of the Education/Fellowship Gathering. Every member should have a supply of these cards. They can be left with neighbors, friends, food servers, and mechanics, anyone with whom members come into contact. If the logo has already been designed, these cards can be designed by anyone with basic computer skills and the proper software.

Posters

Professional color posters containing the same information as the business cards should also be produced. They could be put up on public bulletin boards, at the work place if there is a spot for public announcements, at schools if allowed, and any other locations thought of by members. These posters can be designed by anyone with the proper software and some graphic design skills, once the logo and scriptural verses have been picked.

Pamphlets

A pamphlet that contains more information about the congregation and its teaching, similar to the poster and business card, should also be produced. These pamphlets can be given to local hospitals, funeral homes, pregnancy centers, crisis centers, and other public places for distribution. They should also be provided to local “welcome wagon” groups. In the case of Middletown, these should be given not only to the “welcome wagon” in Middletown, but also in neighboring communities, especially the growing areas of Warren County. Members should also have a few on hand to give to those people who would like more information about the congregation.

Invitations

Members may not be comfortable or have time to discuss the Gospel with those they come into contact with in the world. But they will have a chance to invite people to a gathering or event. Help and encourage the members to use their “cards” and “posters” to invite the people they know, no matter how little they may know them. This may be a good way to strike up a friendship!

3.3. Communicating Through The Congregation

While it is true that 75% of all new members of a congregation join through personal contact with members, this is no reason to ignore other “common sense” means of interfacing with the world. People call congregations, look for their web site, and may look them up in a phone book or newspaper. All of these means can broaden contact with the Word and invite people to drink more deeply of the water of life.

Website

Every congregation should have a professional-looking web site, containing these basic elements: location with map, phone number, email address, name of the pastor, and times of church activities. Information on the “deepening” event that is discussed in the next section should also be included. Beyond these basics, links and information are what bring people to a site. If the web site is to bring the Word effectively to a congregation’s community, a collection of links of benefit to those in the community would be appropriate. For example, Middletown’s population is aging, and made up largely of lower-middle class white families. A collection of useful links on parenting and aging may attract people to the site. Links to local hospitals, doctors, clinics, and pregnancy centers could be included, along with their phone numbers and hours. There is also a large singles community in Middletown.

Perhaps resources such as Christian web sites dealing with being single, including the LCMS' "International Lutheran Single Adults" organization could be included. The congregation, in turn, could urge other web sites dealing with singles, parenting, and aging issues in the southwestern Ohio area to provide a link to the church's site.

Phone

The phone message for the congregation should include one of the scriptural verses, service and event times including the time for the "deepening" activity discussed later, and the name of the pastor if the caller is asked to leave a message. An answering machine message is the "greeter" for a congregation, and should be treated as such. Do we thank people for calling? Do we treat the call as if it's important and wanted, or does the answering machine message treat the caller as a nuisance? Ads in the phone book may or may not be that productive. However an ad at least establishes the congregation's presence in the community. If a larger ad is used, the logo should be included as well as a scriptural verse, the location of the congregation, service times and the time of the "deepening" activity. The cost of such an ad would likely be prohibitive, however.

Newspaper

Research is mixed as to the usefulness of newspaper ads in reaching the community with the Word. A better approach may be to place a minimal ad most weeks, with special ads before every quarter publicizing the next series of "deepening" activities that will be discussed in the next section. This ad could be the exact same one used on the Internet, except that it might include information specific to the time of publication. "Special interest" newspapers for the single community in Middletown should also be considered for ads.⁷

4. The Second Task: Deepening the Word's Presence

4.1. Historical Precedence

These activities and tools all have to do with "broadening" the Word's presence in the community. This is the first task of evangelism. The second is to "deepen" contact with the Word. The two are of course related. Business cards, posters, pamphlets, ads; all of these things serve to bring the Word, even in the most limited sense, to the world. But they should also serve as invitations for people to drink deeper. Traditionally the main "deepening" activities that occur in an LC-MS congregation are Sunday morning bible studies and Divine Service. If members want to invite people "to church" they invite them to one of these activities. Normally members invite friends to Divine Service, and more rarely to Bible study.

In areas like Middletown, members have become more and more reluctant to invite friends to these two activities for the following reasons. The first is the style of worship. The liturgy of the church has become so counter-cultural that members are afraid it will "turn off" their friends. This question has been addressed in many quarters by either simplifying the liturgy or eliminating it altogether. Messiah has tended toward simplification. The second concern is the LC-MS's practice of closed communion. Members do not wish to bring their friends to worship when they will not be able to fully participate. This has been addressed in some congregations by opening the communion table either partially or fully. Messiah has continued to struggle with this issue, while continuing to practice closed communion. There is, however, a more historically tenable option. That is to return to the idea of catechesis apart from, and serving as a preparation for, full participation in the Divine Service and in Holy Communion.

⁷ For further information on the merits of various forms of advertising, consider visiting the following web site: <http://www.businesstown.com/marketing/strategy-medium.asp>

Catechesis apart from the service of Holy Communion has two historical precedents. The first is the practice of the church of the first three centuries, where catechumens had their own times of instruction. After all, it was the pastor himself who led the instruction in the faith, which he couldn't do while leading the Mass. When catechumens did participate in the Divine Service, they were dismissed before Holy Communion. While it is suggested here that catechumens be trained entirely apart from the Divine Service at first, the practice of "early dismissal" could be reintroduced at some point in the future. The important point is that Divine Service should not be the primary entry point of non-Christians into the church; catechetical instruction should be. Then an appreciation for what is going on in the Divine Service can be instilled in non-members, and preparation made for eventual participation in the Lord's Supper.^{xvi}

The second precedent is the preaching services used by the Dominicans in the 13th century. These services were held apart from the Mass, and were meant to increase in the general Christian population knowledge of and commitment to the faith. St. Dominic's order, the Dominican brothers, was founded to carry out this kind of teaching ministry. They were known for this reason as "The Friar Preachers" and received the designation "O.P.", Order of Preachers. These "black friars" emphasized sound homiletics, good theology, and knowledge of the preacher's audience. These preaching services were never meant to be a substitute or alternative to the Mass. Rather, they were meant to deepen an appreciation for the Mass and encourage increased participation.^{xvii}

4.2. A "Deepening Event"

What is proposed here to "deepen the world's contact with the Word" is a "deepening event" that is a hybrid of the medieval preaching service and the catechetical instruction of the early church. This event would occur Sunday evenings. It would not be a worship *service*, per se. The reason for this is twofold. First, the hope is that members of the congregation will invite non-members to this event. Worship that involves non-Christians and Christians is automatically problematic. Second, calling it a "service" puts it into conflict with the real Divine Service, the liturgy of Holy Communion, which occurs Sunday morning. No event in the church's life should compete for attention with Sunday morning Divine Service. Whatever this "deepening event" is called, the word "worship" or "service" should be avoided. The word "event" is promoted here because it is believed to be fairly non-threatening to non-Christians in a Bible-belt area (over and against "revival" or "rally"), not theologically laden (like "catechesis") and not "dull" (like "instruction" or "class").

What would this event look like? Time and space does permit a detailed curriculum to be developed here. The format, however, should be informal. The event might start around 5:30 with a light dinner provided by the congregation, which would last until 6:00, and allow time for mingling and talk. The pastor should be the host, and ensure that no one is left out and all included in discussion. This is especially important if any singles arrive. During dinner special music could be provided. Two members of Messiah play harp, one plays cello, one is doing voice training, and another is completing a Ph.D. in organ from Indiana University. Discussion would begin, informally, over coffee after supper and last until 7:00. The evening would conclude with a special dessert (there are a couple of bakers in the congregation) and people could leave as they desired. One or two fellowship activities each quarter could be added before or after the event.

The discussion portion of the event would lead through the 10 Commandments and the Creed. Some short video, audio, or newspaper article would be used to start off the discussions. For the discussion of the Law of God some clips of the news from Israel might be used, or other reports from closer to home. The pastor would lead a discussion of the nature of evil in the world and use it to lead into the common morality present to everyone through natural Law. For the creed, a segment from a "Christ" movie with Jesus asking, "Who do you say that I am?" could be used. In this way something concrete is in people's

minds that they can question and grapple with. A month or two might be used in discussing the law, another month to discuss the creed. The discussions should nevertheless contain elements of both law and gospel. Given the lower education levels of those in the Middletown area, care should be taken in not leading the discussion “over people’s heads.” These activities should also be “single-friendly”, avoiding too much talk about “family” and “family values”. Feedback from the sessions should be collected from both members who attend with friends and from the non-members, and discussions adjusted based on their feedback.

The end result, of course, should be a desire for people to join. In this case adult instruction of some kind might occur as part of and continuing for half an hour after the event for three months. The pastor, and hopefully an elder, would also visit these catechumens once a month to supplement these sessions and conduct individual instruction. The catechumens would then be brought into the church by either baptism or confirmation and become part of the worshipping community. The cycle of “deepening” events and adult instruction is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 : Yearly Cycle of "Deepening" Events

What	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Summer
Supper 5:30-6:00				<i>Break</i>				<i>Break</i>	<i>Break</i>
Discussion 6:00-7:00	Intros	Law	Creed		Intros	Law	Creed		
Instruction 7:00-8:00					Law/ Creed	Creed/ Prayer	Baptism/ Supper	Conf./ Baptism	

5. Costs and Resources

Table 3 and

Table 4 show the fixed and variable costs for Messiah Lutheran Church’s implementation of this project. The costs could be expected to be similar for a congregation of the same size in an American small town. The manpower requirement should not stretch the resources of a congregation like Messiah. The heaviest requirement will be from the pastor. Some people gifted with hospitality should be asked to attend the events for a whole quarter, perhaps 2 hosts per session. Production of the web page, business cards, pamphlets, and posters could be given to one of a few talented youth in the congregation. A professional ad design company should be enlisted, if possible, to help design an ad layout for use in newspapers, phone books, and even as a text banner ad on the web. The fixed cost would be \$875 (about \$60 per family); the monthly cost of the program would be \$540 (about \$36 per family) for the six months out of the year that the program would run, for a total of about \$3200 a year.

6. Conclusion

This evangelism project is meant to be applicable in any small congregation, whether in a small town, suburb, or city. It is based on the key principle of Lutheran theology: that the Holy Spirit works faith through the Word. The mission of any congregation, then, is to get the Word out into the world. This particular project aims to reach people through all members, even through members who are shy and reluctant to “evangelize”. The cost of the project for Messiah Lutheran Church in Middletown, OH would be approximately \$18 per family per month over the course of the year, plus an additional one-time outlay of \$875. While other approaches to evangelism could be implemented later, such as canvassing in the growing communities around Middletown, this project will be a good base from which to start.

Table 3: Fixed Costs⁸

Item	Source	Unit	Cost	Total
Software	MS Publisher and Dreamweaver	2	\$130	\$260
Logo Design	Time to Design	15 hr	\$15/hr	\$225
Prof. Ad Design	One Time Cost for a Professional Layout	1	\$500	\$500
Business Cards	Time to Design	3 hr	\$10/hr	\$30
Posters	Time to Design	5 hr	\$10/hr	\$50
Pamphlet	Time to Design	5 hr	\$10/hr	\$50
Newspaper Ad	Time to Design	2 hr	\$10/hr	\$20
Web Page	Time to Design	15 hr	\$15/hr	\$225
TOTAL				\$875

Table 4: Variable Monthly Costs

Item	Source	Units	Cost	Total
Business Cards	Cards	10 sheets of 8	\$10	\$10
Posters	11' x 17'	10	\$4 @	\$40
Pamphlets	3-fold	30	\$1 @	\$30
Newspaper Ads	Small	4 monthly	\$15	\$60
	3" x 2"	1 quarterly	\$60	\$15
Web Page	Time to Maintain	4 hrs.	\$15/hr	\$60
	Cost of site listings with search engines	5 ads	\$5	\$25
Phonebook Ad	Small ad with logo, location, times	Per month	\$60	\$60
Light Dinner	Prepared by members	4x12 people	\$5/per	\$240
TOTAL				\$540

⁸ Costs in these tables are from the following sources: Newspaper Ads: Middletown Journal of Middletown, OH (www.middletown.com), Office Max Office Supply Store (www.officemax.com), Max Effect Ad Design Company, (www.max-effect.com), Yahoo Yellow Pages (yp.yahoo.com), the Foolish Visions web site design company, (www.foolishvisions.com) and Ad Resources (adres.internet.com).

ⁱTheodore G. Tappert, *The Book of Concord : The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2000, c1959).

ⁱⁱTheodore G. Tappert, *The Book of Concord : The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2000, c1959).

ⁱⁱⁱ Gene Edward Veith, *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994)

^{iv} Romans 10:14, ESV

^v <http://eire.census.gov/popest/data/counties/tables/CO-EST2001-06/CO-EST2001-06-39.php> (10/20/02)

^{vi} *Rand McNally Road Atlas*, 2002 Edition (Rand McNally, 2002)

^{vii} <http://www2.pcusa.org/demographics/> (PCUSA Demographics, 1998) (10/21/02)

^{viii} *State and Metropolitan Area Fact Book*, 5th edition (US Department of Commerce, 1998)

^{ix} <http://eire.census.gov/popest/data/counties/tables/CO-EST2001-06/CO-EST2001-06-39.php> (10/20/02)

^x <http://www.fbcmiddletown.org/>

^{xi} “Pray for Pastor Eugene Leiter and Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Middletown, Ohio, as they work to enliven the inner city through music programs, Project Connect -- a program offering counseling and alternate life choices for students with truancy, suspension or expulsion issues -- and PALS, a prayer chain and ministry visiting and providing meals and transportation for the homebound.”

<http://www.elca.org/dgm/resource/prayerv/aug2002.txt> (10/18/02)

^{xii} <http://www.u-b-c.org/sermons/evangelism.html> (10/22/02)

^{xiii} http://swordoffire.com/bill_bio.htm (10/26/02)

^{xiv} <http://www.elca.org/hompage.html> (10/26/02)

^{xv} <http://locators.lcms.org/nchurches/church.asp> (10/26/02)

^{xvi} Williston Walker et.al. *A History of the Christian Church*, 4th edition (New York: Scribner, 1985) 107

^{xvii} Williston Walker, 309-312