

Evangelism Again?

Despite the many books, articles and how-to-do-it programs available today, several major mistakes continue to plague United Methodism and other mainline denominations. Some of them infect the programs and theologies being promoted as answers. My top ten major evangelistic misconceptions are:

1. Evangelism is primarily about saving the institution through getting new members, preferably those who tithe.
2. Evangelism and missions are two separate activities, best cared for by different committees.
3. Evangelism is something optional that we can do when we get around to it.
4. Evangelism and social action are opposed to each other. In pursuing one, you exclude the other.
5. Evangelism is the pastor's job; don't ask or expect laity to do it.
6. Large, suburban, upper-middle class congregations are the primary places pastors should go to learn how to build successful congregations.
7. Television, radio and other digital media necessarily distort the gospel and should not be used for its communication.
8. Evangelism is something needed by those immigrants and we need to do it to them so they'll be good Americans.
9. Crusades, revivals and the ministries of para-church organizations are the best examples of evangelistic practice.
10. We have too many churches already (we are short of clergy) and we don't need to start new ones.

All of them except 2, 3, and 4 contain a grain of truth. In their most popular forms, however, they lead congregations away from evangelistic effectiveness. The following articles address all ten of these as well as other misconceptions.

A vital and thriving church is always discussing evangelism. Along with inquiring about other essential aspects of the Christian life, the questions "what is evangelism?" and "how is it best practiced in our setting?" demand our continual attention. I hope this issue of *Circuit Rider* continues and improves the conversation among us.

Scott J. Jones
Guest Editor