

good idea!

A resource for evangelism & congregational development

Parish Missions: A Catalyst for Evangelism

by John Bowen

Parish missions have a long history in the church, beginning perhaps when the apostle Paul and his traveling companions visited New Testament churches with ministries of evangelism, healing, teaching and challenge. But do such low-tech events have a place in the church in the twenty-first century?

What does it take to grow a healthy parish? Lots of things: firm leadership, clear vision, and a strong sense of mission for a start. But one thing that is often overlooked is the influence of outsiders with a message.

Ralph Winter wrote an influential article a few years ago, entitled *The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission*.¹ Winter suggests that throughout the biblical story and church history there have been two kinds of agencies through which God has worked. One is the parish, where the daily life of the community is maintained. That one we are very familiar with.

But the other is the structure which can be variously called the parachurch, the sodality, the Order, or the mission group. Winter sees these in the Old Testament's bands of prophets; then in the New Testament's traveling groups of apostles, evangelists, and prophets; in the growth of the monastic orders; and in the parachurch agencies and mission societies of the last two hundred years.

Both church and parachurch are needed

Winter's argument is that both are necessary for the health of the church. The parish is essential for the nurture of the church family, and for representing Christ in the surrounding community. But the parachurch is often the source of new ideas and fresh expressions of ministry. If we only have the parachurch agencies, there would be no continuity, and the church would die out. But if we only have parish structures, we are in danger of becoming dulled through routine. The ideal is a blend of the two.

Parish missions are a simple way to inject the adrenaline of a parachurch group into the heart of a parish's life. So what exactly is a parish mission?

The heart of a parish mission is a series of special meetings facilitated by a parish, spread over a weekend or longer, during which the Gospel is shared with people (continued on page 2)



A simple way to inject adrenaline into the heart of a parish's life



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outside the normal range of church activities, with the help of a visiting team.

A series of special meetings: these may be services, but may also be home meetings, a pub night, dinner parties, breakfasts, a theatre event, or any number of possibilities.

Facilitated by a parish: a Mission is undertaken at the initiative of a host parish or diocese.

Spread over a weekend or longer: there are various models, but often a Thursday evening till a Sunday afternoon works best.

During which the Gospel is shared: the main intention is for people to hear the Gospel, perhaps for the first time, to ask questions, to discuss, to reflect, and to respond in whatever way they are ready to do.

With people outside the normal range of church activities: the Mission is not primarily for the benefit of active Christians (though they usually benefit) but for those who would not call themselves Christians.

With the help of a visiting team: the team will generally include one or two gifted speakers and a team, sometimes consisting of theological students, but on other occasions drawn from another parish.

Twenty years ago, a mission was often a *reaping* event, but now, although that can still happen, it is more often a *sowing* or *watering* event. Those who attend are likely to be already involved at least on the fringes of parish life, or to have good relationships with church members. This means that the church needs to be already involved in evangelism and drawing in outsiders, rather than expecting the mission to do it all for them.

There also have to be mechanisms in place for people to pursue the interest engendered by the mission, whether Alpha or Christianity 101 or some other similar program. In other words, if evangelism is a process, a mission can be a useful catalyst in the process—but it can never replace the process itself. For those who like rowing, a mission is like a spurt in the middle of an evangelistic row.

The main intention is for people to hear the Gospel, perhaps for the first time

John Bowen is Director of the Institute of Evangelism and editor of good idea!

1. The full article may be found in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1981), 178-190.

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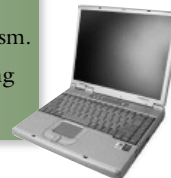
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A Radically Different Life: One Person's Story

by Angie King

Missions serve many purposes such as revitalization, vision renewal, and a challenge to discipleship. But, whatever else happens, evangelism is always a central purpose of these events. This is the story of someone who found faith in Christ through parish missions—and the witness of a friend.

My very presence in a room can make clergy tremble with fear. I can raise their hopes as quickly as I can dash them. I am able to wound and torture their sensibilities effortlessly. At my fingertips, I have the power to ruin a well-planned day. Even though I can do all this, I am not a bishop. I am an organist.

Week after week, as I sat perched on the organ bench, I listened to stories from the Bible I had never heard before. My thoughts went a little like this: Who wrote these stories and why? What in heaven's name was going on with the Psalmist? He was moody and unpredictable—rather like an organist. And who was Jesus? And what did he want with me? You see, I am thirty-eight years old, and I belong to the ever-increasing part of the population which has no Christian memory whatsoever.

No one from church ever talked about Jesus, the Bible or God. I had very simple questions, but the Christians around me couldn't answer them. I started asking the priest questions. After all, he spoke with integrity and I trusted him.

A few months later, several students from Wycliffe College arrived for a mission weekend in my parish. Unsure of these Christians, I kept myself aloof. I made

one friend among the students that weekend. Witnessing Thor's relationship with Christ radically altered my perception of the accessibility of God. I began to consider baptism into the Christian faith.

A year went by and another team, including Thor, returned to my parish. This time, my aloofness was replaced with warmth and joy. I knew then that my life with Christ would be radically different from my life before Christ.

Thor died suddenly in December 2001, shortly after that second mission trip. We had one year to cultivate our friendship, one year to ask and answer questions about Christ, one year to witness what God was doing in our lives. It was in the spirit of that friendship, more than any other, that I learned about God's profound love for me. I remember how deeply happy Thor was when I told him I was to be baptized in January of 2002.

My life is far richer for the experience of those mission trips, far richer for having lived, walked, and shared my life with those mission teams, far richer with Christ, than one can possibly fathom.

Angie King currently works for a legal publisher in Toronto, and is a part-time student in the MTS program at Wycliffe College.



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Equipping Others for Mission in the Inner City

by Maureen Crerar

One thing a mission can provide is a new vision of ministry and how it can be carried on. An inner city mission in Edmonton sparked innovations that continue today.

A team of students from Wycliffe College spent an extended weekend at St. Faith's in inner city Edmonton, infusing new life into the parish and surrounding community through music, storytelling and breaking bread.

St. Faith's is characterized by its ministry to the poor, through Sunday services, community meals and the children's program. This ministry of hospitality created a cornerstone for community, and the parish was ready to take the next step.

The mission team taught the parish basic tools on how to share their faith. They shared personal stories, introduced contemporary worship music, gave a reflection on *Lord of the Rings* for the teenagers, gathered people in home groups, and inspired the children with new songs and games. Much of the activity did not take place in the church: instead, the team went to where the community gathered—the youth centre, the hall and people's homes. These simple but effective methods encouraged people to share their faith more openly. This creative approach opened a door for the people of St. Faith's to be disciples—and to make disciples.

The parish experienced a wave of renewal as parishioners realized their own potential through using their gifts. The mission impacted the women's ministry as one parishioner acted on her vision to create a women's group which still flourishes today. The Women's Fellowship Group, based on the mission model, reaches out

to both the parish and community meeting monthly with testimony, music and a program, all centred around a meal. A monthly healing ministry began at a nearby women's shelter, using prayer, shared stories, and singing.

The home groups gave parishioners on the periphery an opportunity to become directly involved in both the parish and the community. The parish moved quickly from becoming a loosely knit assembly of individuals to a community investing in one another through true friendship and informal pastoral care.

The children's program thrived on the changes from the mission, with several young ones asking to be baptized and to become servers in Sunday worship. Some children also brought their parents and grandparents to St. Faith's. The parish implemented Youth Alpha for the teenagers, and the new music quickly became an integral part of the parish's music ministry.

"We can do this!" was the voice of a growing lay leadership who began looking at intentional ways of implementing the parish mission statement: *Reaching out and growing in Christ's love*. What the Wycliffe mission team offered was an experience of Spirit-filled ministry to "...equip the saints for the work of ministry." (Ephesians 4: 13)

*Maureen Crerar is now Associate Priest at Christ Church in Edmonton.
www.christchurchedmonton.org*

This creative approach opened a door for people to be disciples—and to make disciples

An experience of Spirit-filled ministry



A Breath of Fresh Air: a Parish Priest Reflects

by Rob Davies

Missions do not always work out as the organizers expect. Sometimes areas of weakness are exposed. And sometimes the blessing comes in unexpected ways.

One of the dangers of parish life is that it can come to be a little, well, parochial: we can focus so much on our own efforts and ministry that we can become stuck in the rut of what we do. At St. Paul's, for the past six years we had been focussed on growing and developing our ministry. But now there was a sense that we needed a breath of fresh air. God saw that need and met it through the ministry among us of the team from Wycliffe College.

Anglicans are shy about inviting their friends

The format of the Mission was fairly simple. We held coffee parties in homes; a wine and cheese party at the church; a Saturday morning breakfast get-together at a local restaurant; and an afternoon children's event. Then, on Saturday evening, we had a youth night at the church, with a good turnout of young people, both churched and unchurched. At the same time, the adults met at a local pub for a time of great music and fellowship, and a talk relating faith to today's culture. These were intended to be venues

to which we could invite our non-church-going friends and neighbours. With the exceptions of the children's and youth events, that largely didn't happen: apparently Anglicans are shy about inviting their friends to unfamiliar things.

Having said that, over the time of the Mission we were revitalized, refreshed and reenergized. We saw the importance of small scale social events for outreach. We felt the impact of personal witness. We were reminded of the significance of ministry to and by our youth. And we were inspired by the team who had come among us, strangers in a strange place, to share their love of Jesus: not an easy thing to do.

The impact of the Mission is still with us almost five years later, still reminding us to look for new ways to live and show the old truth. The only real downside is that it inspired two of our core members to leave the parish and head off to seminary themselves!

The impact of the Mission is still with us almost five years later

Rob Davies is the rector of St. Paul's Anglican Church in Almonte, in the Diocese of Ottawa. www.stpaulsalmonte.ca





A Pool of Blessing: My Experience of Parish Missions

by Chris Harper



Missions are not only a blessing for those on the receiving end: they also have a profound effect on those who are part of the visiting team.

I was blessed to participate in four missions while I was a student at Wycliffe College. Each mission held its own specific need and focus, but for me our trip to Wemindji, Quebec, a Northern Cree reserve, was special because it was interesting to see the language difference between my people, the Plains Cree, and theirs.

It was also interesting to note that reserves are similar in many ways, and to see the continued challenges for faith, such as the developing gap between the people and the church, evidenced by the contrast between the numbers on the reserve and Sunday attendance. The fallout from residential schools continues to be a factor, and acknowledgement and healing are crucial.

In Wemindji, it was amazing to see the kids, and their joy of sharing in the faith games of the group. Music was always joyous, especially to hear the Cree Ladies Choir singing, and

all the events were well attended by the community. It was also fun to have interpreters work alongside the speakers,

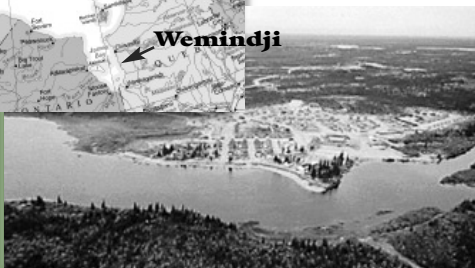
and the laughter and the challenge of getting the words just right. Wemindji for me will always hold a special place in my heart.

Our mission to St. Faith's in Edmonton was also memorable, because the mission focus was outreach, so we connected more with the community outside the church. We were blessed to share in many home visits and special programs for the community and the streets. I remember particularly the impromptu guitar solo, given as an offering, by a street visitor at one of the events.

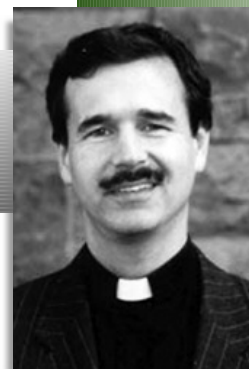
On these trips, it was good for students to see our professors and classmates outside of the college setting, and to see them unfurl their wings of faith and witness. Missions are fun and the relationships that grow from the experience can last a lifetime.

In my present ministry, I have found my mission experience useful as a great resource, enriching speaking and teaching ideas, youth ministry, home visitations, and community and church evangelism. Those experiences have become a pool of blessing that I have dipped into many a time.

Chris Harper is Rector of the Parish of Birch Hills, Kinistino and Muskoday in the Diocese of Saskatchewan.



A Year of Outreach: Evangelism 2000 in New Westminster



by John Oakes

Missions may be large or small. This one involved a whole diocese, shaped a whole twelve months' ministry, and attempted to witness to the heart of a city.

*An integrated,
year-long
evangelistic
program*

How often do 700 Anglicans and their friends fill a downtown theatre to hear the Gospel? Yet this is what happened in the Diocese of New Westminster, Vancouver, in November 2000. The event was one of the most fruitful in the twenty years of the Diocesan Evangelism Unit, which was responsible for this event—*Celebration 2000*.

The evening, however, was only the culmination of *Evangelism 2000*, an integrated, year-long evangelistic training and outreach program which comprised three main elements:

- An opening diocesan conference with Harold Percy and Michael Knowles.
- Thirty people then enrolled in an extended period of training, which included an internship with a local leader.
- These interns and their mentors worked to stage *Celebration 2000* as a mission event for the whole diocese.

In an effort to witness right in the heart of Vancouver, the Evangelism Unit booked the Vogue Theatre, we invited Harold Percy to be the main speaker, and we secured the services of the "VOC Soul Gospel Choir."

Prior to the evening, the Unit held a series of information meetings with parish leaders and sought to build a network of contacts. Parishes were also bombarded with outreach and publicity through different media, including mailings, diocesan newspaper coverage, videos of Harold and the choir, personal phone calls and mass emails.

Prayer and counseling teams were selected and prepared well in advance of the evening and so were follow-up procedures. The use of written response cards, which were collected after Harold's talk, ensured that the roughly 20% of those completing them who requested some form of subsequent ministry were able to be contacted by participating clergy.

The results of *Celebration 2000* were highly encouraging. Not only did a significant crowd turn out on a chilly Saturday night in November, but more than 15% of them made a clear response to the good news of Jesus.

There were, of course, lessons to be learned. If the Unit were to stage a similar event in the future, we might choose a less expensive and more amenable location. We would probably think more about the precise scheduling and logistics of the evening, and we would devote greater time and attention to enabling existing church members to invite the as yet "unchurched."

Celebration 2000 itself provided an invaluable opportunity to conduct and witness large-scale evangelism at first hand. What an event of this nature is able to provide, especially when combined with the kind of training program that was offered, is a powerful means of drawing people together around a positive Gospel focus.

John Oakes is Rector of Holy Trinity Church in Vancouver and has chaired the Evangelism Unit in the Diocese of New Westminster since 1998. He has also taught Anglican Studies at Regent College.
www.holytrinityvancouver.org

*15% made a
clear response
to the good
news of Jesus*



Sources of Resources

Vital Church Planting

At the end of February, the Institute of Evangelism and the Diocese of Toronto co-hosted a conference on Anglican Church Planting entitled *Vital Church Planting*. Sixty enthusiastic participants (including three bishops) came from as far afield as Newfoundland and Oregon. A full report is available on the Diocese of Toronto website at www.toronto.anglican.ca.



CDs of the plenary sessions are now available:

Canon Victoria Heard, *Church Planting Officer for the Diocese of Dallas*:

- **The Gestation, Birth and Early Years of a Church Plant**
- **Types of Church Plant**
- **Transforming a Diocese for Church Planting**

George Lings, *Church Army in Britain*
(read by John Bowen in his absence):

- **Towards a Theology of Church Planting**

Sets may be purchased at a cost of \$30 plus postage and handling by contacting Andrea at (416) 946-3535 or by email to wycliffe.college@utoronto.ca.

Why I Support the Institute of Evangelism

by Barbara Stewart Ferguson

I have always said that one does not have to be a priest to comprehend the significance of the word Evangelism. One only has to open the great book and read God's direction to all of us: "Go into all the world and make disciples..." The Institute fulfills this vital ministry: to help people become followers of Jesus. We all have a role to play in that ministry: it is what our risen Lord has asked of us.

Whether it be through the training of Wycliffe College students in how they will teach the Gospel, or through dispatching the gifts of Institute Associates to spread the Good News, it gives me great joy to know that my donations to the Institute help churches become welcoming places where people find faith in Christ. I warmly encourage you to consider investing in the Institute's vital ministries too, so that through His grace, more people, near and far, may grow in Jesus.



Barbara Stewart Ferguson is a long time friend of the Institute of Evangelism.

For more information on how you can help the Institute of Evangelism, please call the Development Office at (416) 946-3524 or email us at wycliffe.development@utoronto.ca.



WYCLIFFE
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EVANGELISM

April 18, 2007

Dear Friend of the Institute:

In February, I had the privilege of attending the Vital Church Planting Conference that was held at St. Paul's, Bloor Street in Toronto. The conference was jointly sponsored by the Institute of Evangelism at Wycliffe College and the Diocese of Toronto. With participants from across the country and beyond, I found myself more and more excited about the possibilities that God was opening up for us in order to share the Good News of Jesus Christ in our world today. Such is the ministry encouraged and supported by the Institute for Evangelism.

Under the leadership of its director, John Bowen, the Institute of Evangelism continues to have a profound effect upon the life of the church. John teaches a course on Evangelism each semester at Wycliffe, speaks to church leaders and congregations across Canada, oversees the nine Institute Associates who also lead conferences and seminars, to say nothing of the research and writing in the field of evangelism that continue to hold before the church God's call to "Go and make disciples."

As a graduate of Wycliffe College, 1979, I have watched with delight as the ministry of the Institute has grown since its inception. The world in which I live and minister is far different from the world in which I started my ministry. With your continuing financial support, the Institute will have the resources to meet the challenges of reaching out to the world of the 21st century with the gospel message.

I hope you enjoy this latest issue of *good idea!* As you read, I warmly invite you to consider how your support can strengthen the Institute's work to provide our communities with the resources for evangelism, growth and vitality. Whether you are thinking of renewing your support, choosing to become a monthly donor, or perhaps making a first time contribution of \$25, \$50 or \$100, I thank you for considering this request. Your support will make a great difference in the lives of many people through the work of the Institute.

Yours faithfully,

George Elliott
Area Bishop of York-Simcoe
Diocese of Toronto

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