

ASSESSMENT ON CHURCH'S EVANGELISTIC PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE

A Paper Presented to
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Introduction

This paper evaluates the strengths and weakness on the evangelistic philosophy and practice of the church I attend, Lord's Grace Christian Church (LGCC). The assessment is divided roughly into five areas. The first area concerns LGCC's philosophy on evangelism. The second area focuses its praxis. Third area is my view on its effectiveness. The fourth part concludes with my suggestions for greater impact on lost and un-churched people. This paper will then be presented to our Senior Pastor, Pastor Poon, for his response, being set at the end of the paper.

LGCC's Philosophy on Evangelism

The mission statement of LGCC's Evangelism Ministry is stated as follows:¹

“In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”—Matthew 5:16

The Evangelism Department of Lord's Grace Christian Church exists to mobilize and support believers in sharing and living out the Gospel of Christ through words and actions. We join partnership with cell groups, fellowships, and LGCC Ministry Departments in exploring, providing, and promoting:

1. Education, training, and tools on evangelism (sharing, seminar, Sunday School, workshop, webinar, etc.);
2. Opportunities to actively spread the good news (community outreaches, evangelistic events, visitations, caring ministries, social gatherings, and activities), in order to energize and mobilize members to be able to:
 - a. Understand, internalize, and articulate the purpose and result of LGCC evangelistic-related events;
 - b. zealously proclaim the good news by praying, planning, implementing, and discipling new believers;
 - c. regularly share their faith and personal testimony with boldness and confidence;
 - d. support each other as Christ's messengers to expand God's Kingdom;
 - e. be 'the salt and light' in their personal circles of friends, families, and LGCC's surrounding communities,

We welcome everyone to join us in this exciting journey.

¹ <http://www.lordsgrace.org/ministry/evangelism-ministry/>

Gleaned from the mission statement, the main thrust of LGCC's philosophy of evangelism is for congregation to share and to live out the Gospel through words and actions, presumably in their daily life. The church plans to help congregants to put this philosophy into practice by exploring, providing, and promoting on the know-how of evangelism and opportunities to practice evangelism.

The scope of mission statement is broad and general. Certain amount of in-coherency, I observe, exists between the leading quote from Matthew 5:16 and the rest of the statement. Matthew 5:16 is outward looking from the church to the world that our congregants live in while the rest of the texts is largely inward looking in ways of providing training and opportunities to church people. In my view, the high level statement on the evangelistic philosophy of living out the Gospel through words and actions touches on the idea of believer being the ambassador of Christ in our contact with the people of the world; and it is right on target. However, since most of the congregants spend a large portion of their waking hours in their workplace, it might be more appropriate to clarify further the living out of the Gospel through words and actions is in people's workplace or settings that our congregants are in contact with the pre-believers. Doing so would alter the way the church thinks how to equip them to evangelize in their workplace.

In addition, living out our faith in the workplace on basis of the believer is the same as following and growing in Christ since following Christ would naturally provoke challenges and resistance. From that perspective, evangelism and sanctification are linked tightly together in the life of a believer as he or she lives out the faith in the world. This truth should be the basis to formulate the philosophy of evangelism and to design the corresponding praxis.

LGCC's Praxis on Evangelism and Its Effectiveness

In practice, the Evangelism Ministry follows largely the main text of the mission statement. Occasionally, the ministry hosts events or talks on interesting topics such as medical, financial matters, etc. to attract pre-believers. Altar calls are seldom done in these events or talks. The ministry also promotes regular visits to convalescence home to evangelize the old folks. The results are less than desirable since the visit is mostly entertainment in nature and these folks only see the visiting team twice a month at most. LGCC also holds "Gospel Sunday" every three months with the aim of inviting pre-believers into the church for them to hear the gospel message. In conclusion, LGCC's praxis on evangelism, with the exception of convalescence home, is largely "come-oriented." Hence, to my estimate, the effectiveness of the Evangelism Ministry might be limited.

Improving Effectiveness

If we consider Jesus as the missionary from the Triune God to proclaim the Good News to humankind, we realize that Jesus leaved his fellowship with the Father and the Holy Spirit to where we are. That is a "go-oriented" model of evangelism, taking the Good News where is needed. Consider also Paul's ministry and the scattering of the early church in Jerusalem in the book of Acts. We see clearly that the biblical model of evangelism is go-oriented. This is further confirmed with the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Therefore, for believer to live out the Gospel in the marketplace is a biblically based model of evangelism. Think about it. In no other place followers of Jesus would come to contact

with a huge harvest field of non-believers than the marketplace. In the marketplace, believers have meaningful relationship with pre-believers and non-believers alike. Naturally, evangelizing would be much more effective than passing out tracts on the street corner, telling total strangers about the Good News of Jesus.

Living out our faith in the marketplace is the most effective model of evangelism. However, it has its challenge. It demands believers to lead an increasingly holy life for all to see. If we are worthy ambassadors of Christ in the workplace, people will see what it is like to be in God's kingdom. If we do not lead a holy life, we give our Lord a bad name and become an anti-witness to God. Living out our faith in the marketplace demands continual sanctification on the believer. It also compels us to have a clear understanding of our faith when the opportunity comes to witness for Jesus. That is where the church can help in training for righteousness and sound teaching of doctrine. Evangelism is not programs but a lifestyle that every believer should take on. This very idea should be the platform on which the church formulates its philosophy on evangelism and designs its praxis. Once congregants are trained with the mindset of evangelism being the Christian lifestyle, the witnessing of the church would become effective in bringing the lost and the un-churched.

Response of Church Leader

I email the above paper to Pastor Poon, Senior Pastor of our LGCC, to read through and then followed up with a lunch meeting with him. The following is the summary of his response:

1. Pastor agreed with the idea that Evangelism is not a program but living out Christian faith in the marketplace to which he also listed home life with friends and relatives.
2. We also discussed the idea how the church could be helping brothers and sisters to strengthen their faith in the workplace. We discussed an article on the four types of

Christians in the workplace as a model of viewing the trajectory of spiritual maturity.² We concluded that evangelism at the workplace should aim at helping brothers and sister to transform workplace.

3. In concluding of our lunch meeting, we explored the idea of starting a Faith at Work ministry as a church-wide initiative, which I might be participating in the near future.

² <http://www.intheworkplace.com/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=12851&columnid=1935>.

The four types described in the articles are:

1. Christian who is simply trying to survive.
2. Christian who is living by Christian principles.
3. Christian who is living by the power of the Holy Spirit.
4. Christian who is transforming their workplace for Christ.