

Vancouver School of Theology

**SAH- PT5/750:**

***Practicing Evangelism in a Post-Christendom World***

Wednesdays 6 pm to 9 pm

*“Evangelism is that dimension and activity of the church’s mission which seeks to offer every person, everywhere, a valid opportunity to be directly challenged by the gospel of explicit faith in Jesus Christ, with a view to embracing him as Saviour, becoming a living member of his community, and being enlisted in his service of reconciliation, peace and justice on earth.”*

*David Bosch, Transforming Mission*

Rev. Dr. Ross Lockhart  
St. Andrew’s Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
604.827.2097  
rlockhart@standrews.edu

**Course Description:**

This course is designed for students approaching ministry in pastoral and public contexts. Located in the field of Mission Studies, this course will attend specifically to contemporary issues in evangelism, by analyzing and studying the history, practice, and effectiveness of how Christians share the gospel in the world, with a particular emphasis upon the Canadian context.

**Purpose:**

In her classic book on evangelism *Out of the Saltshaker* Rebecca Pippert confesses a time when, “there was a part of me that secretly felt evangelism was something you shouldn’t do to your dog, let alone a friend.” On the surface many kind-hearted Christians in Canada today would agree that the “E word” has become an embarrassing practice within the broader Christian movement. While reading Scripture on Sunday mornings in church is fine, speaking to others about their deep faith in Jesus where they live, work or play the rest of the week seems daunting to some and unseemly to others. While sanctuaries encourage people to flex their doxological muscles, the wider world can be a place where many Christians commonly experience “liturgical laryngitis.” And yet, the Triune God calls us to witness in the world. Like women running from

the empty tomb to proclaim the resurrection to others locked away in fear, we are sent Sunday by Sunday into the world with good news to share. At the heart of this course, is the desire to address the question of how we might best practice that sharing of good news with others, in a way that feels authentic and sensitive in a post-Christendom, pluralistic, and multi-faith world. Together, we will explore how to reclaim a “playful urgency” in sharing the gospel with others in partnership with the Holy Spirit’s ongoing reconciliation and redemption in the world.

### **Competence Objectives:**

1. *Discern* the challenges and opportunities for practicing evangelism in a post-Christendom Western context, while developing an ability to *articulate* the essence of, and the urgency in, sharing the gospel as a means of participating in God’s reconciling mission in Christ to mend the world.
2. *Name and identify* a deep awareness of the missional pitfalls and fateful errors of evangelism linked with empire in our Christendom past, including the Residential Schools’ legacy with Indigenous peoples.
3. *Identify and assess* a variety of current evangelization models that build upon God’s agency in the world. By doing so, students will *evaluate* current approaches to evangelism vis-à-vis the reductionism that has been a shadow part of our mission history.
4. *Articulate* critical theological questions at stake in our attempt to build witnessing communities of Christian faith in the world today that engage in effective evangelistic practice.

### **Required Texts:**

Bowen, John. *The Unfolding Gospel: How the Good News Makes Sense of Discipleship, Church, Mission and Everything Else*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2021.

Everts, Don, Doug Schapp, and Val Gordon. *Breaking the Huddle: How Your Community Can Grow Witness*. Downers Grove, IVP, 2016.

Osmer, Richard R. *The Invitation: A Theology of Evangelism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021.

Pope-Levison, Priscilla. *Models of Evangelism*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020.

Stackhouse, Jr., John G. *Can I Believe? Christianity for the Hesitant*. Oxford: Oxford University

Press, 2020.

Stone, Bryan. *Evangelism after Christendom: the theology and practice of Christian Witness*.

Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007.

Texts are NOT on order at the UBC Bookstore. Instead, students should check for the required reading in the VST library or order online as ebooks or hardcopy or check with the Regent College Bookstore or another independent retail source.

**Format & Content:** This class meets weekly for three hours throughout the term. The primary format will be lecture and discussion based on the readings of the assigned texts, as well as an opportunity to practice and reflect on “E-Challenges” assigned throughout the course.