

Vancouver School of Theology

SAH-PT5/70

Practicing Evangelism in a Post-Christendom World

Thursdays, 9AM to 12PM

“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

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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 an 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.

Root, Andrew. *Evangelism in an Age of Despair: Hope beyond the Failed Promise of Happiness.*

Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2025.

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.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

1. Foundations for Evangelism Today

Tuesday, January 20

Shouting Stones: The Biblical roots of Evangelism

Please read *The Invitation*, pp. 1-131 (Introduction, Chapter 1, Chapter 2, Chapter 3)

Evangelism After Christendom, pp. 1-110. (Introduction, Part 1, Part 2)

(What did you find most intriguing in reading about the biblical roots of evangelism? What did you find particularly challenging in today's reading? What new insights into evangelism did you gain from the reading?)

Tuesday, January 27

Good News & Bad News: The mixed history of Evangelism in the West

Please read *The Unfolding Gospel*, pp. 1-122. (Introduction, Chapters 1 to 7)

Please read Elaine Heath's “Healing the Wounds of Christendom” in *Trauma-Informed Evangelism* (provided on Populi), 61-69.

Please read *Evangelism in an Age of Despair*, pp. 1-100 (Introduction, Chapters 1-3)

Watch Ray Aldred's interview on 100 Huntley Street, "First Peoples Voices":

<http://100huntley.com/watch?id=225553&title=first-peoples-voices--ray-aldred>

as well as

<http://100huntley.com/watch?id=225553&title=first-peoples-voices--ray-aldred>

(What would you say to someone who asked you to explain how the church has hurt so many in its history of evangelism and mission? What could the Church be doing more effectively today to both acknowledge the good news and the bad news of evangelism's past? Darrell Guder says that we must read the history of Christian mission and evangelism in the West dialectically – what do you think he means by that?)

Tuesday, February 3

Saved to be Sent: How Evangelism today reverses the reductionism of Constantine's gospel

Please read *Evangelism after Christendom*, pp. 111-170. (Part 3)

Please read *The Unfolding Gospel*, pp. 123-178. (Chapter 8 to 10, Conclusion)

Please read *Evangelism in an Age of Despair*, pp. 101-200 (Chapters 4-6)

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(What was potentially lost and gained when Christianity was adopted as the state religion of the Roman Empire in the 4th Century? What is an example of Christendom legacy still present in the Church today in Canada? What new insights into evangelism did you gain from the reading?)

2. Practicing Evangelism Today: Personal

Tuesday, February 10

Elevator Speech for Jesus? Testimony as a Christian practice of evangelization

Please read Jenn Richards, "From Soldiers to Midwives: Bearing Witness to the Triune God in Our Everyday Conversations," in *Christian Witness in Cascadian Soil*, Ross Lockhart, ed. (Eugene: Cascade, 2021), pp. 102-112. (on Populi)

Please read Priscilla Pope-Levison's blog post from November 28, 2023, on testimony:
<https://thepastorsworkshop.com/testimony-in-worship/>

Please read Daniel Silliman, "Gen Z Wants to Talk about Faith," *Christianity Today* August 13, 2021:

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2021/august/gen-z-evangelism-faith-conversations-jesus-barna.html>

Please read *Models of Evangelism*, pp. 1-30. (Introduction and Chapter 1)

(What would your elevator speech for Jesus be akin to what is asked for in 1 Peter 3: 15? What advantages might there be to adopt Richards' approach to evangelism that offers non-militaristic metaphors for evangelism? How might congregations better equip Christians to develop and share their testimonies with emerging generations?)

Tuesday, February 17

The Five Thresholds: Helping people take steps towards faith in Jesus

Please read *Breaking the Huddle*, pp. 1-138. (Introduction, Part One and Part Two)

Watch the Five Threshold videos: <https://vimeo.com/showcase/3605316>

Please read *Models of Evangelism*, pp. 31-48. (Chapter 2)

(In your experience, what helps people takes step towards faith in Jesus? What holds some people back after showing interest in Christianity but then not following through with a commitment to becoming a Christian? What new insights into evangelism did you gain from the reading?)

Tuesday, February 24

Gotta Serve Somebody: Evangelism in a world converted by consumerism

Please read *Models of Evangelism*, pp. 49-68. (Chapter 3)

Please read *Lessons from Laodicea* Chapter 2 (on Populi)

Please read *Evangelism in an Age of Despair*, pp. 203-274 (Chapters 7-9)

Please read Darrell Guder's "Incarnation and the Church's Evangelistic Mission," and Ronald Sider's "Evangelism, Salvation, and Social Justice: Definitions and Interrelationships" in Paul W. Chilcoate & Laceye C. Warner, eds., *The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008), pp. 171-204. (on Populi)

(Beyond religious conviction, what are the most powerful forces of conversion at work in western society today? What did you find particularly challenging in the readings when it comes to choosing Christian faith over other belief systems available in the culture? How might you frame an evangelistic invitation to someone who appears to "have it all?")

Reflection Paper Due at the end of Class

Reading Week: March 2 to 6

Practicing Evangelism Today: Corporate

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Tuesday, March 10

Missio Dei Methodology: How Missional Theology impacts the Church's evangelism

Please read *The Invitation*, pp. 141-219. (Chapter 4, 5 and 6)

Please read *Models of Evangelism*, pp. 69-90. (Chapter 4)

Please read Charles Kiser's "Educating Trauma-Informed Leaders" in *Trauma-Informed Evangelism*, pp. 104-112 (Provided on populi)

(What is your understanding of what "missional church" means? What is the difference between mission and evangelism? How does the practice of evangelism change in light of an understanding of the missio Dei?)

Tuesday, March 17

Celtic Evangelism: Lessons from St. Patrick's leadership for today

Please read "Foreword & Preface" in Ross Lockhart's *Beyond Snakes and Shamrocks: Missional Leadership Lessons from St. Patrick* (Eugene: Cascade, 2018). (on Populi)

Please read *Models of Evangelism*, pp. 91-112. (Chapter 5)

(What impressions do you bring into class about St. Patrick? What advantage might we gain from studying an evangelistic mission to a pre-Christian culture in our current post-Christendom context? What new insights into evangelism did you gain from the reading?)

Tuesday, March 24

Speaking to Itchy Ears: Evangelistic preaching in a mainline context

Please read Judy Paulsen, "The Evangelism Spectrum" Good Ideas:

<https://institute.wycliffecollege.ca/2018/06/the-evangelism-spectrum-where-are-you/>

Please read Philip Der, "Preaching on Evangelism: Three Key New Testament Passages," Good Ideas: <https://institute.wycliffecollege.ca/2020/11/preaching-on-evangelism-three-key-new-testament-passages/>

Please read *Models of Evangelism*, pp. 113-134. (Chapter 6)

(What is necessary in the preaching of a sermon to make it "evangelistic?" What holds preachers back from making their sermon evangelistic? What might preachers do in their weekly proclamation of the gospel to more effectively equip members of the church to share their faith?)

Tuesday, March 31

Great Commission Teams: Equipping the local church for evangelism

Please read Darrell Guder, "Locating a Reformed Theology of Evangelism in a Pluralistic World," in Milton J Coalter & Virgil Cruz, eds., *How Shall We Witness? Faithful Evangelism in a Reformed Tradition*, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1995, pp. 165-186. (on Populi)

Please read *Evangelism after Christendom* "The Evangelizing Community," pp. 171-276. (Part 4)

Please read *Breaking the Huddle*, pp. 139-206. (Part Three and Part Four)

Please read *Models of Evangelism*, pp. 135-156. (Chapter 7)

(What specifically did you find most helpful in today's reading for building evangelistic teams? What did you imagine is the most challenging part of helping congregations engage in a ministry of evangelism? What can a congregation do in evangelism more effectively than an individual cannot?)

Tuesday, April 7

Can I get a witness? Evangelism's future in a post-Christendom West

Please read Darrell Guder, "Incarnation and the Church's Evangelistic Mission," Paul W. Chilcoate & Laceye C. Warner, eds., *The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008, pp. 171-184. (on Populi)

Please read Ross Lockhart "Not Our House, but God's" in Good Idea:

<https://institute.wycliffecollege.ca/2021/03/not-our-house-but-gods/>

Please read *Models of Evangelism*, pp. 157-190. (Chapter 8)

(What model of evangelism do you find most compelling as we end our time of study together? What role do you see evangelism playing in the church of the future in North America? What questions remain regarding the role of evangelism moving forward?)

ASSIGNMENTS:

Please note:

Audit students will complete:

- All reading as assigned by instructor
- Class participation

No letter grades will be given for the completion of courses by audit.

Certificate students will complete:

- All reading as assigned by instructor
- Class participation and group work
- A 3-credit course requires 9-12 pages; therefore, Certificate students will complete the mid-term personal reflection paper *but NOT* complete the final paper.

Written assignments should demonstrate the ability to thoughtfully engage the material and reading for the class while offering a personal reflection on the reading and material covered. Certificate courses will be evaluated on an Approved (APP) /Not Approved (NAPP) system. No letter grades will be given for the completion of certificate courses.

**Asynchronous Students* in Certificate and Basic Degree programs will also be required to submit to Professor Lockhart (by email at rlockhart@vst.edu) a 500-word summary after watching the recording providing their top three insights from the class.

Basic Degree students will complete:

- All the assignments below numbered 1 through 4.

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Advanced Degree students will complete:

- All the assignments below numbered 1 through 4, with #2 (mid-term) being 3,000 words and #4 (research paper) being 5,000 words.

1. Class Participation and Expectations

Consistent and timely attendance is required according to VST guidelines. This includes the completion of the assigned reading for each class with students ready to engage in discussion. *Students will be asked to read and summarize in class a chapter (model) of Priscilla Pope-Levison's "Models of Evangelism" according to a presentation schedule developed in class.* If a student is unable to attend a class, Professor Lockhart is to be

informed by email (rlockhart@vst.edu). Please set all phones to silent during class. Sending texts and emails will be limited to breaktime.

2. E-Challenges

Students are expected to engage and reflect upon the challenges given to them weekly as part of the course. Whether one feels they succeeded or failed in the challenges is not important. Instead, the student's ability to reflect theologically on the practice is the essential part of the exercise. Students will email a summary of the experience (250 to 500 words) prior to the next class (in a Word document) to our Teaching Assistant Angie Song (asong@vst.edu) and cc'd to Professor Lockhart (rlockhart@vst.edu). Angie will review your submission to make sure it meets the guidelines above, send a response to your email confirming receipt and provide Professor Lockhart a record at the end of term regarding completion of this weekly assignment.

3. Reflection Paper

Students will submit a personal non-research reflection paper of 2,000 words in which they share what they understand evangelism to mean in the church and how they see themselves engaged in an evangelizing ministry. Included in this paper should be:

- A personal philosophy of evangelism (2 pages suggested)
- How evangelism would be incorporated into the student's future ministry (2 pages suggested)
- An assessment of personal strengths and weaknesses that the student brings to the practice of evangelism (2 pages suggested)
- A continuing education plan that the student might employ to further develop skills in the practice of evangelism (1 page)

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DUE DATE: February 24th at the end of class.

4. Research Paper/Presentation

The final assignment is a 3,500-word paper that integrates and tests the student's study, knowledge, and practice of evangelism in this course through a specific "speech act." The student will use the first 1,000 words to set the context for their talk, drawing on their learning from lectures, course readings, e-challenge insights and class discussion. Students may also choose to identify which of the models from *Models of Evangelism* their presentation is based on, or where they imagine the majority of participants may be

regarding the Five Thresholds. The next 1,500 words will be used for the speech act or talk itself. The final 1,000 words will be used for theological reflection and analysis on what was communicated in and through the evangelistic encounter. The student's first and last 1,000 words (context and analysis) will be supported by proper footnotes and bibliography. For example, the first 1,000 words might name the context as a university setting and draw on lectures and readings exploring particular aspects of evangelism for Millennials, Generation Z or Gen Alpha. The next 1,500 words would be an example of an evangelistic presentation made to a student gathering on a university campus. The final 1,000 words would analyze what was presented and name the key theological concepts and principles that the speaker attempted to make and explain why they were important for this evangelistic presentation.

DUE DATE: April 17th by email to rlockhart@vst.edu

DEADLINES:

Submission of assignments on time is a part of academic, professional, and pastoral competence and a part of every course at VST. All assignments in courses are due on the dates specified in the syllabus for each course. Failure to submit an assignment on time will be noted in the narrative evaluation of an assignment. Repeated failure to submit assignments on time may affect the final grade for the course. All assignments are to be submitted electronically (in Word not PDF) to Professor Lockhart at rlockhart@vst.edu

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Bauckham, Richard. *Bible and Mission: Christian Witness in a Postmodern World*. Grand

Rapids: Baker, 2003.

Barrett, Lois, ed. *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns of Missional Faithfulness*. Grand Rapids:

Eerdmans, 2000.

Bass, Dorothy, Ed. *Practicing our Faith: A Way of Life for Searching People*. San Francisco:

Jossey-Bass, 1998.

Bowen, John. *Evangelism for "Normal" People: Good News for Those Looking for a*

Fresh Approach. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002.

Bowen, John, ed. *Green Shoots out of Dry Ground: Growing a New Future for the Church in Canada.* Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2013.

Brueggemann, Walter. *Biblical Perspectives on Evangelism: Living in a Three-Storied Universe.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993.

Byassee, Jason & Ross A. Lockhart. *Better Than Brunch: Missional Churches in Cascadia.* Eugene: Cascade, 2020.

Byassee, Jason, Albert Y.S. Chu, and Ross Lockhart. *Christianity: An Asian Religion in Vancouver.* Eugene: Cascade, 2023.

Chilcote, Paul and Lacey Warner, ed. *The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

Florence, Anna Carter *Preaching as Testimony.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007.

Green, Michael. *Evangelism in the Early Church.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970.

Goheen, Michael, ed. *Reading the Bible Missionally.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016.

Guder, Darrell. *The Incarnation and the Church's Witness.* Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2005.

Guder, Darrell, ed. *Missional Church: A Vision of the Sending of the Church in North America.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

Hastings, Ross. *Missional God, Missional Church: Hope for Re-Evangelizing the West.* Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2012.

Heath, Elaine. *The Mystic Way of Evangelism. A Contemplative Vision for Christian Outreach.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008.

Holtom, Jamie & Debbie Johnson, *Bullseye: Aiming to Follow Jesus*. Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 2015.

Honeycutt, Frank G. *Preaching for Adult Conversion and Commitment*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003.

James, Christopher B. *Church Planting in Post-Christian Soil: Theology and Practice*. Oxford:

Oxford University Press, 2017.

Kallenberg, Brad J. *Live to Tell: Evangelism for a Postmodern Age*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2002.

Kiser, Charles and Elaine A. Heath. *Trauma-Informed Evangelism: Cultivating Communities of*

Wounded Healers. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2023.

Lockhart, Ross A., ed. *Christian Witness in Post-Christian Soil: Coworkers with God in the Land*

of Hiking, Hipsters and Hand-Crafted Lattes. Eugene: Cascade, 2021.

Lockhart, Ross A. *Lessons from Laodicea: Missional Leadership in a Culture of Affluence*. Eugene: Cascade, 2016.

Lockhart, Ross A. *Beyond Snakes and Shamrocks: St. Patrick's Missional Leadership Lessons for*

Today. Eugene: Cascade, 2018.

Long, Thomas G. *Testimony: Talking Ourselves into Being Christian*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.

Newbigin, Lesslie. *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986.

Newbigin, Lesslie. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.

Newbigin, Lesslie. *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*.

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.

Noble, Alan. *Disruptive Witness: Speaking Truth in a Distracted Age*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2018.

Pathak, Jay and Dave Runyon. *The Art of Neighboring: Small Steps to Building Genuine Relationships Right Outside Your Door*. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 2012.

Pentland, John. *Fishing Tips: How Curiosity Transformed a Community of Faith*. Toronto: Edge, 2015.

Richardson, Rick. *Evangelism Outside the Box: New Ways to Help People Experience the Good News*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2000.

Roxburgh, Allan J. *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011.

Roxburgh, Allan J. *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011.

Sanneh, Lamin. *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002.

Stone, Bryan. *Finding Faith Today*. Eugene: Cascade, 2019.

Wells, Samuel. *Incarnational Mission: being with the world*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018.

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WEBSITE RESOURCES:

<http://www.evangelismconnections.org>

<http://Presbyterian.ca/resources/resources-ef/> (Equipping for Evangelism and Mission)

<http://institute.wycliffecollege.ca>

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/>

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/theology-formation-and-evangelism/evangelism/>

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