

A LISTENING CONGREGATION IS A WITNESSING CONGREGATION

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is relational! This is a statement that has been at the heart of the English District Evangelization Team's encouragement for every individual and congregation to share the Gospel. We love because Christ first loved us. And there is no greater love that we can share with one another, our neighbor, than the relational Gospel of God's ultimate Gift of love, Jesus Christ and His saving grace through His life, death and resurrection.

BUT, one of the great discovery points of our time is that we are short on being relational. We (and by we, I mean the "world" in general) are a selfish people. We live in a "ME" first and foremost world. Therefore, we take little time to listen to the issues and concerns of one another. This begs the question, "How are we going to practically 'Love one another' if we don't even relate to one another or know each other and therefore know how we can love each other best?"

God has given to us a wonderful tool to help in this regard. It's called, "Every One His Witness – Lutheran Evangelism." The Office of National Mission has developed a teaching tool for our congregations that will help each individual learn how to be relational with the broken world around them and therefore be able to share the Gospel in real and tangible ways. And it all begins with listening. This is where E1HW (Every One His Witness) is wonderfully and creatively different than Evangelism tools that have preceded it. **When evangelism begins with listening and then listening some more, it engages the world relationally with a Gospel that is relational.**

My congregation, Grace Lutheran, Wyoming, MI, served as a "pilot" congregation for Every One His Witness. Almost every student commented on the particular blessing of this tool in learning the introductory skills of listening and asking (L.A.S.S.I.E. – Listen, Ask, Seek, Share, Invite, Encourage) prior to sharing the Gospel. To a person, they commented that it fit "hand and glove" to listen first, then to apply the loving Gospel right where the person needed the healing grace of Jesus Christ to their particular life. When I asked the class what the most practical lesson they learned from the E1HW Evangelism Workshop, they responded, **"A listening congregation is a witnessing congregation."**

Now I ask you – or even as much as challenge you: Isn't this the desired outcome you would want in your congregation? The Holy Spirit does great work through the power of God's Word. E1HW is available through CPH and the English District is making it available at a discounted rate through a \$40 grant. Purchase the resource. Make it available to your congregation with a six week Bible Class or a two day workshop. But when a congregation becomes a listening congregation, it serves as a blessing to the entire church family. And a listening congregation serves as a blessing to the broken world (beginning with your own congregation) that desperately needs Jesus. Because a listening congregation is a witnessing congregation. Witnessing is all about Jesus Christ. Love one another – first by listening and asking – then by sharing the Gospel.