

The Road Less Traveled – August 26, 2016

Evangelism has become one of the most dreaded words in the modern church. We are told over and over again that evangelism – sharing the story of Christ – is the key to growing the church, and in so doing, growing the Kingdom. We know it. We believe it. We preach it. But the truth is most of us really don't want to do it.

I think it's mostly because we don't understand it. Evangelism brings with it images of the lone guy standing on the street corner, shouting out Jesus' message at the top of his lungs, or the door-to-door "salesman for Christ" demanding to know where you will find yourself if you die tonight. Even simply sharing the story of how Christ is working in our own lives can be intimidating when you start talking about communicating that to strangers – or even scarier, your friends.

But at its best and most basic, evangelism happens when we make Christ's presence and work in our lives manifest – visible – to those around us. That happened on Wednesday evening. On the surface, it may not have looked like evangelism, but that's exactly what it was.

Let me back up. On Wednesday we kicked off Wednesday Nights @ Aledo UMC. We enjoyed a wonderful fellowship meal together, then split off into various ministry opportunities. Our parents had the opportunity to explore what it means to parent with Christ at the center of it all. Other adults engaged in a Bible study. Our Youth had a great time with Color Wars. And then there were our younger students. Those elementary-age students played Slip 'n Slide Kickball. Picture kiddie pools for bases, with watered down plastic connecting them. Use your imagination, but I promise you it is not as entertaining as the real thing.

In any case, the kids were playing kickball and having a great time. As they were, however, a family from our neighborhood passed by, taking an evening walk. They stopped to watch, and their son was particularly intrigued by the game. Clay McDaniel, one of the newer faces of our church family, met them and began chatting with them. He told them about our church, about our service times and so on. But before it was all over with, this family's child had joined in the kickball game and had a great time with our Aledo UMC students.

It was a simple kickball game, but it said something profound about who we are as a community of faith. And that message was communicated loud and clear to our neighbors. And in some respects, evangelism really is that simple. Because every time we gather as a community – whether for worship or study or Lord's Acre or kickball – we speak a good word for Jesus Christ. And the reality is that people are watching. People are listening.

Will that family from Wednesday night come to church? Time will tell. But what I do know is that they went home Wednesday night knowing that there is a place for them here. And to me, that's the real goal of evangelism – creating a space for the Holy Spirit to work.

See you Sunday.