



embracing
EVANGELISM

FACILITATOR GUIDE SPRING 2020

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THE *Episcopal* CHURCH 

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Embracing Evangelism

Facilitator Guide

Welcome to *Embracing Evangelism*, a video series on Episcopal Evangelism from The Episcopal Church and Virginia Theological Seminary. Throughout this adventure, we will explore evangelism as a spiritual practice rooted in joy, gratitude, and holy curiosity; a practice through which we seek and speak of Jesus' loving presence and invite other people to celebrate God's life and love for them.

This series can be used in several ways:

- As a class, in a setting such as an adult forum or adult Sunday school program
- As a retreat, over the course of one or more days, with time for rest and fellowship
- Online, between two or more people

Contents

- Session 1: Introduction to Embracing Evangelism
- Session 2: Seek, Name, Celebrate
- Session 3: The Great Story and Your Story
- Session 4: The Stories of Others
- Session 5: Invite Everyone to More
- Session 6: Go! Discernment and What's Next

How to Use These Materials

The bulk of the teaching is contained within the six videos. The Participant Guide, which provides a simple way for participants to follow along, contains explanations for each Exploratory Exercise shown in the videos, along with discussion questions. The Facilitator Guide lays out a rhythm for each class.

Suggested Flow for Each Session

- Welcome the group and open with prayer.
- Introduce the session theme.
- Begin the video.
- Watch through explanation of the Exploratory Exercise.
- Pause the video and lead the class in the Exploratory Exercise and post-exercise discussion.
- Resume the video.
- Pause the video for the Discussion Questions.
- Engage the Discussion Questions as a group.
- Finish the video.
- Close with a prayer led by you or a volunteer.

SESSION I

INTRODUCTION TO EMBRACING EVANGELISM

Introduction

Welcome to *Embracing Evangelism*, a video series on Episcopal Evangelism from The Episcopal Church and Virginia Theological Seminary. Throughout this adventure, we will explore evangelism as a spiritual practice rooted in joy, gratitude, and holy curiosity; a practice through which we seek and speak of Jesus' loving presence and invite other people to celebrate God's life and love for them.

In this first session, we introduce the practice of evangelism and explore the importance of growing your own loving relationship with God. Before we begin the video, let's open with a word of prayer. *Offer your own prayer here, or use one of the following:*

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. Amen.

Gracious God, as we begin our time together, help us to open our hearts and minds to what you would have us learn today, as a group and as individuals. Help us to set aside our prejudices and to release our imaginations, opening ourselves up to what is possible through your Spirit. Thank you for the time to spend in study and for the opportunity to dive deeper into our call to proclaim your love. Amen.

Begin the Video

Watch video from start to 21:56. Note these highlights for yourself:

Scripture gives us ample guidance for practicing evangelism: In John 4, we read Jesus' intense conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well, a conversation that leaves both of them changed. In Acts 11, Philip chases down the Ethiopian eunuch and helps the eunuch to understand where God was already speaking in his life. In Luke 19, we meet Zacchaeus, a tax collector who climbs into a tree to spy on Jesus and, by the end, hosts Jesus in his home and welcomes others to follow Jesus.

We draw on these and other scriptures in Episcopal Evangelism – the spiritual practice through which we seek, name, and celebrate Jesus' loving presence in the stories of all people and then invite everyone to MORE.

Here is a breakdown of each part of this practical definition of *Episcopal Evangelism*:

1. *Seek* – Episcopal Evangelism is inherently curious, wondering where Jesus' loving presence is showing up in others' lives and in our own.
2. *Name* – Once we find that loving presence, we name it. "Hey, when I see you do this..., it looks like God to me." "I feel the Spirit at work when...." In other words, proclamation is essential.
3. *Celebrate* – When you discover good news, you can't keep it to yourself. You celebrate it. Let the gratitude and wonder flow, and share it with others.

4. *Jesus' loving presence* – Christian life starts with Jesus and his love. Through him, God meets us, heals us, surprises us. Through him, we have intimate knowledge of the fullness of God. Through him, God invites us into the eternal dance of the Trinity.
5. *Everyone's stories* – Stories are the heart of evangelism. There is the story of the God we meet in scripture. There are our own stories of life with God: our struggle, loneliness, authentic presence, resurrection. And there are other people's stories. Maybe they wouldn't name God, but you see God in them and can help them to find their own words and relationship.
6. *Invite everyone to MORE* – Evangelism includes an invitation: to more conversation over coffee; to a book, poem, or film that resonates with whatever you've both discovered together about God; to visit a community that is growing in faith and practice. "Come to church with me" is an option, so don't be afraid to say it! But that's just one of many ways to invite someone to MORE.

For a lot of us, this is a different kind of evangelism, but it might just be what our neighbors and even we are most hungry for.

- *If your group is doing the Exploratory Exercise: Watch until 21:56, which is the end of the explanation of the Exploratory Exercise. Pause the video and lead your group in the exercise and the post-exercise discussion.*
- *If your group is not doing the Exploratory Exercise: Continue watching the video to witness the masterclass group as they try out the exercise.*

Exploratory Exercise: Recognizing God in Your Midst

As was mentioned in the video, Episcopal Evangelism flows directly from our gratitude, joy, and wonder for all God's goodness.

During a time of quiet meditation, ask participants:

- Take a minute to reflect on a moment in your life when you experienced wonder, joy, or deep gratitude.
- What was happening? How was God part of this for you?

After a minute or two, you may offer this explanation:

Now, we will share with each other using One-to-One StorySharing. This is a brief relational experience of sharing our stories during which each person has the chance to serve as an attentive listener and authentic storyteller.

1. Turn and find one partner. Make pairs, so everyone gets the chance to listen and to share. (*Facilitator: If you see several trios, invite one person to hold up a hand and look around to find someone else who is in a trio and needs a partner to make a pair.*)
2. Sit or stand so that you and your partner are looking at each other face to face.
3. One person will be Partner A and one will be Partner B.
4. Partner A will go first and will have one minute to share. When one minute has passed, you will hear a signal. This is the time to switch, so Partner B will share.
5. When it is your turn to speak, offer your authentic story, using details and emotions.
6. When it is your turn to listen, create the space to welcome the story of the other as a real blessing.
7. When you both have taken a turn, thank each other for the gift of sharing.

Brief Discussion

Pose the following questions to the group:

- How did it feel to share your story?
- How did it feel to receive your partner's story?

Let's resume the video and see how the *Embracing Evangelism* participants did.

Resume the Video

Watch from 25:27 to 36:06. At that point, pause the video for discussion.

Discussion & Reflection Questions

Use the following reflection questions to guide your discussion. Depending on time, you might choose one or two on which to focus. Encourage participants to reflect on the remaining questions later themselves.

- How do you feel about your relationship with God?
- Are you able to see and feel the love of God in your life?
- What part of the definition of *Episcopal Evangelism* resonates for you?
- Does any part of the definition bring you hope?
- Who has been Good News to you? How was that person Good News to you?

Finish the Video

Review the Try It Out section of the Participant Guide (see guide for more detailed instructions). Encourage participants to do the following before the next session:

- Ponder the questions from the Discussion and Reflection section on your own through journaling or in conversation with a partner from the class.

Close with Prayer

In your own words, thank God for being present in each person's life and in the stories shared, and pray for God to continue to open hearts and minds to see Jesus' loving presence in our lives and in every person's life. Ask for God's guidance as you continue to explore and embrace evangelism.

SESSION 2

SEEK, NAME, CELEBRATE

Introduction

Welcome to Session 2 of *Embracing Evangelism*. In this session, we explore the importance of Seek, Name, and Celebrate for the practice of evangelism. First, let us open with prayer. *Offer your own prayer here, or use one of the following:*

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. Amen.

Creator God, thank you for this opportunity to come together to explore what it means to Seek, Name, and Celebrate your goodness in our lives and the lives of those around us. As we begin, help us to open our hearts and minds to what you would have us learn, as a group and as individuals. Help us to connect to your Spirit and to follow wherever you may lead. Amen.

Begin the Video

Watch video from start to 18:37. Note these highlights for yourself:

As Episcopalians, we promise in our Baptismal Covenant “to seek and serve Christ in all persons.” That is a bold statement of faith! We say that we will actively listen for God’s presence in others – and we dare to believe God is moving in every person.

One of the keywords we need to remember as we explore evangelism is *Incarnation*. This term, from the Latin *carnis* (“flesh”) literally means “enfleshment.” It is based on John 1:14: “And the Word became flesh and lived among us.” So, Incarnation is the doctrine that Jesus was fully human and fully divine, the Son of God “in the flesh.”

If we look at the world through the lens of Incarnation, we can see how God is still showing up “in the flesh” everywhere. The world is shot through with holiness and the lively presence of God. We get to see the Holy Spirit moving and going before us into all places, already at work. We can see where the light of God is already present, especially in the people around us, since we are all made in God’s image.

It is in conversation that we listen for and speak of God’s good news. In conversation, we show who WE are and receive who OTHERS are. We hear and speak truth with one another and get a glimpse of how God is stirring in our lives.

Seeking is a humble practice that requires deep listening and watching – a holy curiosity. We ask, “How is God present and at work in this person’s life, this person’s story?”

Naming is when we put into words what we see of God moving in others’ lives and in our own lives. Words do matter! Offered in humility, they can be a gift when we name how we see God in what brings joy, gives hope, and delivers freedom – in others’ lives and in our own.

Celebrating Jesus' loving presence is deep, authentic, and soulful. To celebrate means to honor, to mark, and to hold up something worth noticing – to bless and give praise. When we seek and find Christ, we find ourselves encouraged, grateful, and delighted, like the widow who finds her lost coin and goes out saying, “Rejoice with me!” (Luke 15:8-10).

- *If your group is doing the Exploratory Exercise: Watch until 18:37, which is the end of the explanation of the Exploratory Exercise. Pause the video and lead your group in the exercise and the post-exercise discussion.*
- *If your group is not doing the Exploratory Exercise: Continue watching the video to witness the masterclass group as they try out the exercise.*

Exploratory Exercise: Welcome to the Feast

Let's try an exercise about seeking, naming, and celebrating: Welcome to the Feast.

During a time of quiet meditation, ask participants to take a minute to settle in. Then, ask them to do the following: Recall a truly memorable meal. It could be a holiday or just a stirring moment. A meal that you can feel and taste still in your memory, that fills you with warmth as you remember it all – the tastes, the people, or the surroundings. Take a minute to think back to this meal that really stands out in your memory.

Offer the following prompts with at least 7-10 seconds between each, like a guided meditation.

- *What was the food? What really stood out in the meal – flavors, textures, aromas?*
- *Where were you? What was the setting? What was that place like?*
- *Who was there? Were you alone or with others? What were your interactions like?*
- *Were you the cook? If so, what was it like to prepare and plate it?*
- *What was going on in your own life, just before, during, or after the meal?*
- *Was there something important about the timing of this meal?*

One-to-One StorySharing

Ask participants the following: Have you gathered the details, feelings, and thoughts around your experience with this meal? We will engage once again in One-to-One StorySharing. Each person has the chance to serve as an attentive listener and authentic storyteller.

1. *Turn and find one partner. Make pairs, so everyone gets the chance to listen and to share. (Facilitator: If you see several trios, invite one person to hold up a hand and look around to find someone else who is in a trio and needs a partner to make a pair.)*
2. *Sit or stand so that you and your partner are looking at each other face to face.*
3. *One person will be Partner A and one will be Partner B.*
4. *Partner A will go first and will have 90 seconds to share. When 90 seconds have passed, you will hear a signal. This is the time to switch, so Partner B will share.*
5. *When it is your turn to speak, offer your authentic story, using details and emotions.*
6. *When it is your turn to listen, create the space to welcome the story of the other as a real blessing.*
7. *As each story ends, you who are the listener get to name and celebrate what you have heard that is joyful, beautiful, holy.*
8. *When you both have taken a turn, thank each other for the gift of sharing.*

Brief Discussion

Pose the following questions to the group:

- How did it feel for you to recall and share your story?
- How did it feel to receive someone else's story?
- How did this exercise engage you in *seeking*?
- How did it engage you in *naming*?
- How did it engage you in *celebrating*?

Let's resume the video and see how the *Embracing Evangelism* participants did.

Resume the Video

Watch from 24:13 to 38:11. At that point, pause the video for discussion.

Discussion & Reflection Questions

Use the following reflection questions to guide your discussion. Depending on time, you might choose one or two on which to focus. Encourage participants to reflect on the remaining questions later themselves.

- Where do you see God at work in your life?
- Where would you like to develop better "seeking" skills (in your neighborhood, in your relationships, at work, etc.)?
- What keeps you from talking about and naming your faith and relationship with God?
- When have you celebrated a "God moment" with others? How did that celebration grow your own faith?
- Can you recall a moment when you really saw God alive around you? Write about it.

Finish the Video

Review the Try It Out section of the Participant Guide (see guide for more detailed instructions). Encourage participants to do the following before the next session:

- Actively notice God's loving and lively presence around you.
- Keep a list of those "sightings" on your cell phone, or journal about them.
- Write about any of the times you saw God really alive in your life, past or present.

Close with Prayer

In your own words, thank God for being present in each person's life and in the stories shared, and for Jesus who is Emmanuel – "God with us." Pray for God to help us become tuned in to God's presence and to seek signs of Jesus Christ in every person's life and in our own lives.

SESSION 3

THE GREAT STORY AND YOUR STORY

Supplies Needed

For the Cardboard Testimonials Exercise, provide each participant with a piece of blank cardstock (if you're in a pinch, regular letter paper will do) and a marker or thick pen.

Introduction

Welcome to Session 3 of *Embracing Evangelism*. In this third session, we will explore the Great Story and Your Story. First, let us open with prayer. *Offer your own prayer here, or use one of the following:*

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. Amen.

Loving God, as we begin this session, may we remember the beauty of your story and our place in it. Help us to open our hearts and minds to what you would have us learn, as a group and as individuals. May we grow more brave as you lead us through your Spirit to proclaim with both word and example the Good News of God in your son Jesus Christ. Thank you for being present to us and through us, and for your love, which is greater than we can ask or imagine. Amen.

Begin the Video

Watch video from start to 16:32. Note these highlights for yourself:

Stories are the heart of evangelism, and everybody has one. You don't need a degree or a collar to share your story; you just need to notice the moments when you've experienced God's loving presence in your life and then to use your words – aloud – to share those stories.

Stories are also the heart of faith. Our faith wouldn't exist without stories. There's the story of God, which we discover when we look more deeply at our own lives and the lives of other people, and especially as we dive into scripture. That's where we find the Great Story.

The Old Testament is basically the long, complicated, beautiful, and sometimes disturbing saga of the Hebrew people's stories with God. That Great Story continues into the New Testament, when Jesus starts a new chapter in the story of God's life with us by coming to be among us in the flesh.

It's easy to see just how critical stories were to Jesus' ministry. He used them to teach profound and eternal truths, and he invited people to find a new life – and a new story – by following him.

Each of us knows and treasures parts of this Great Story as our own. Whether through parts of scripture, hymns, liturgy, or the lives of saints and faithful people, each of us has a special way we enter into the Great Story of God and God's people. That's the story we want to invite others into.

- *If your group is doing the Exploratory Exercise: Watch until 16:32, which is the end of the explanation of the Exploratory Exercise. Pause the video and lead your group in the exercise and the post-exercise discussion.*
- *If your group is not doing the Exploratory Exercise: Continue watching the video to witness the masterclass group as they try out the exercise.*

Exploratory Exercise: Cardboard Testimonials

For this exercise, each participant will need either a piece of blank cardstock and a marker to write in large, clear letters to share one's own testimony.

During a time of quiet meditation, ask participants:

- Take a minute to reflect on a moment of hardship, struggle, pain, or loss in your life (that you are willing to share with others).
- Where has God brought you, or at least, where do you see God in the struggle now?

After a minute or two, you may offer this explanation:

You might still be in the process of healing, and it is OK if that is the story you want to share. Simply follow your story's arc: 1) Here's where I was. 2) Here's where God has taken me or is taking me. In the simplest way, you're narrating the transformation that God has worked in your life. You're testifying to the truth of God's work in your life.

You'll eventually be sharing your story with others, so make sure the story is something you're comfortable with other people knowing – but don't let that stop you from being open and vulnerable. Remember: We carry this message in jars of clay. We're broken vessels. The cracks are OK – that's how the light comes through.

Give a moment of silence to allow for more reflection. Then, explain that the next step in this exercise is to name the transformation:

Take your piece of cardboard or paper, and using a marker, write the following in large print and as briefly – but clearly – as possible: On one side of the cardboard, capture part one of your journey – the source of the pain or heartache. On the other side of the cardboard, capture part two – where God has brought or is bringing healing.

You may show your own example, so people can see how much and how large they should write. Examples might include:

- *Paralyzed by fear and anxiety ... Receiving therapy and opening to God's loving presence*
- *Heartbroken at loss of child ... Sharing love as foster parent*
- *Painful divorce ... Restored relationships with old friends*

Once everyone has completed both sides, ask participants to stand up and walk around, pausing at each person to silently show both sides of their board. Ask participants to witness both sides of each other's cardboard. They should not tell their story or explain their card, but rather simply acknowledge the glory of what God has done in a way both people agree on. You might encourage a smile, a tear, a hug, a high five, a hand on the shoulder, or an "Amen!" or "Thank God!" Participants should celebrate with each other and then keep moving.

One-to-One StorySharing

After a few minutes and lots of milling around, ask everyone to stop where they are and break into pairs for One-to-One StorySharing. This is an opportunity to share the story behind the cards and celebrate God's healing, transformative presence in each other's lives. Invite participants to self-select who will be Partner A and who will be Partner B.

Explain Round 1:

- Partner A will share the story behind each side of their cardboard testimonial. Partner B will listen.
- After Partner A has shared for 90 seconds (*at which time you will give the group a signal*), Partner B should respond for a minute about where they saw God in what was shared, using the prompt, "Here's where I heard or saw God in what you shared...."

You then will signal for the pairs to pause so the other partner can share.

Explain Round 2:

- Now, Partner B will share the story of each side of their cardboard for 90 seconds (*at which time you will signal*). Partner A will listen.
- Partner A will then reflect back for one minute, using the prompt, "Here's where I heard or saw God in what you shared...."

Brief Discussion

Pose the following questions to the group:

- How does it feel to share and receive these testimonies?
- What did you learn about your own story?
- What did you learn about how God works and what God's presence looks like?

*Let's resume the video and see how the *Embracing Evangelism* participants did.*

Resume the Video

Watch from 20:25 to 32:30. At that point, pause the video for discussion.

Discussion & Reflection Questions

Use the following reflection questions to guide your discussion. Depending on time, you might choose one or two on which to focus. Encourage participants to reflect on the remaining questions later themselves.

Think back to when you heard the Great Story of God alive in the world – in scripture, worship, song, conversation, or stories of the lives of followers of Jesus through the ages and today.

- Which parts of the story do you treasure? Why?
- How would you capture the Great Story of God in relationship to the world?
- What's the Good News of God's loving presence?

Think of your own story of faith.

- At which moments did you sense God stirring? When did God move or change you?
- Who are your faith ancestors and mentors – the people whose faith and lives you admire?
- What were their lives like? What was the role of faith in their stories?

Finish the Video

Review the Try It Out section of the Participant Guide (see guide for more detailed instructions). Encourage participants to do the following before the next session:

- Consider the moments when you felt God show up in your life.
- Share the story of one of these moments with someone you know.
- If one of your faith ancestors or mentors is living, tell that person what his or her story and faith mean to you.

Close with Prayer

In your own words, thank God for being present in each person's life and in the stories shared, and especially for being present and helping us during the difficult and painful times in our lives. Thank God for the honesty and openness of the people in the room and for the holy time with each other. Pray for God's gifts of courage, kindness, care, and love as we open ourselves to others and as we receive what others have to share. Thank God for the Great Story of which we are all a part.

SESSION 4

THE STORIES OF OTHERS

Introduction

Welcome to Session 4 of *Embracing Evangelism*. In this fourth session, we will explore The Stories of Others: why they matter and how to truly receive them and be blessed by them. First, let us open with prayer. *Offer your own prayer here, or use one of the following:*

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. Amen.

Gracious God, thank you for the gift of story. Help us to open our hearts and minds to what you would have us learn today, as a group and as individuals. May we learn to hear with your ears, proclaim freedom with your mouth, and bring healing with your hands. Give us the patience we need to listen to others and the courage we need to invite them into your goodness as your Spirit leads. Thank you for this time of learning, may we humbly receive what your Spirit has in store for us. Amen.

Begin the Video

Watch video from start to 13:39. Note these highlights for yourself:

At the heart of our Christian faith is the Great Story, the collection of stories of God's creating, redeeming work in scripture, especially in the story of Jesus. We are all part of this Great Story – all made in God's image, all moving through a world shot through with God. We still need to grow our capacity to seek, name, and celebrate God at work in our own lives.

One-to-One StorySharing is a simple way to open the door to this practice. A One-to-One is an intentional conversation between two people who share and receive each other's stories of what matters most.

You may wonder why we call it *StorySharing* and not *storytelling*? *Storytelling* is used to persuade, to convince, to shape understanding. It is generally one-way and thus can be transactional. *StorySharing* is relational. It is about engaging and creating connections. In the course of StorySharing, we help to form the Beloved Community: a just and compassionate community where we are deeply invested in each other's flourishing.

StorySharing is also not interviewing or pastoral care. In StorySharing, both people share their stories and both discover the blessing of creating a space to receive others' stories. The key word here is *mutuality*. If the sharing is one way – I ask questions and you answer, or you as the expert or caregiver and I am the one with a particular need – then we haven't really formed the basis for life-giving mutual relationship.

In StorySharing, both our stories matter. We both experience the vulnerability of offering a story and the blessing of receiving one.

- *If your group is doing the Exploratory Exercise: Watch until 13:39, which is the end of the explanation of the Exploratory Exercise. Pause the video and lead your group in the exercise and the post-exercise discussion.*

- *If your group is not doing the Exploratory Exercise: Continue watching the video to witness the masterclass group as they try out the exercise.*

Exploratory Exercise: One-to-One StorySharing

We've been practicing with One-to-Ones through most of our sessions together. Now, we're going to do some deeper learning using The Episcopal Church's Beloved Community StorySharing Guidebook.

Some of the time, you'll be the one offering your story. Here's what you should keep in mind when sharing:

- Keep it real, sharing real stories from real life.
- Make it vivid and full of all the senses: what you saw, smelled, and tasted; who was there; where you were; what you felt. In other words, re-create the experience.
- Avoid interpreting or reflecting on the experience.
- Notice the beginning, middle, and end of your story, plus points where you made a significant turn or choice.

Sometimes, you'll be the one listening. Here are some points to keep in mind when listening:

- Make sure you're an active, engaged listener.
- Imagine the speaker is revealing something holy.
- Offer generous hospitality. What gestures or quality of presence help you to feel valued? Give that to your partner.
- If there is a pause, ask open-ended questions to help your partner speak freely, and to fully go deeper with their story.
 - "How did that make you feel?" or "What was that like for you?"
 - "I'd like to picture this. What did you see?"
 - "Please, tell me more."
- Ask for follow-up opportunities:
 - "Is there anyone you think would share this passion or concern?"
 - "Would you like to join me for/read this together/check out this podcast/meet this group...?"

This is how we approach both offering and receiving a story.

Now, here are some prompts for sharing stories with each other. *Give one prompt at a time, allowing both parties to share their stories before moving to the next prompt. Allow for 2 minutes per prompt per person.*

- When have you felt connected to a community, humanity, the universe, or something greater than yourself? What was happening?
- Tell me about a time that you felt God really alive (in our church [if appropriate]).
- Tell me about a time that you shared your gifts. What did you do? What made that possible?

Brief Discussion

Pose the following questions to the group:

- How did it feel to share your story?
- How did it feel to listen to the story of another person?
- Where would StorySharing be helpful in your church's life?
- How could you introduce it?
- Where would StorySharing be helpful in your practice of Episcopal Evangelism?

Let's resume the video and see how the *Embracing Evangelism* participants did.

Resume the Video

Watch from 19:09 to 35:53. At that point, pause the video for discussion.

Discussion & Reflection Questions

Use the following reflection questions to guide your discussion. Depending on time, you might choose one or two on which to focus. Encourage participants to reflect on the remaining questions later themselves.

- What is one way you could imagine StorySharing as part of your church's life?
- What is one way you could weave StorySharing into your personal life and practice of evangelism?

Finish the Video

Review the Try It Out section of the Participant Guide (see guide for more detailed instructions). Encourage participants to do the following before the next session:

- Invite a fellow church member, friend, or family member to help you out.
- Explain that you're practicing something called StorySharing and you're genuinely curious about their experiences. Then, offer the time and attention to listen and share with them.

Close with Prayer

In your own words, thank God for being present in each person's life and in the stories shared and for the wonder and joy of discovery of God's presence in other people's stories. Thank God for the holy time of StorySharing with each other. Pray for God's gifts of holy curiosity about others and of ease in sharing our own stories. Thank God for the Great Story of which all people are a part.

SESSION 5

INVITE EVERYONE TO MORE

Introduction

Welcome to Session 5 of *Embracing Evangelism*. In this fifth session, we will explore Invite Everyone to MORE: how to be truly curious and open to the Spirit, and how to invite people to discover more with God. First, let us open with prayer. *Offer your own prayer here, or use one of the following:*

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. Amen.

Loving God, as we come to this new session, help us to open our hearts and minds to what you would have us learn, as a group and as individuals. May we look to the life of Jesus for courage and wisdom as we begin to practice invitation. Fill us with boldness and joy as we follow the Holy Spirit's leading, inviting others to discover and share your goodness and love. Amen.

Begin the Video

Watch video from start to 22:12. Note these highlights for yourself:

- % **Pay attention.** Look and listen for the Holy Spirit's prompting, and look and listen for moments when it might seem as if someone wants to be invited. Then you can share an authentic, generous invitation appropriate to the moment. It should be based NOT on a formula or predetermined "good" outcome, but rather on whatever God is up to in that moment and on your genuine desire to celebrate that moment.
- & **Be authentic.** Stay rooted in what makes your relationship with God in Christ unique. Stay tethered to that hope and joy, and share your invitation from that place. Remember that you're showing up with openness to whatever God wants to do in this person's life through you and your story.
- ' " **Be present.** Inviting does not have to be imposing. It's a ministry of presence. When we are in tune with others, we can offer a generous, non-imposing invitation. If someone says, "I lost my job and am so confused about where my life is going," don't respond with a generic invitation to church. Instead, share a story of how your faith has provided direction in your life. Share a scripture passage that helped you through a rough time or a book that God used to encourage you, or simply invite the person to walk or pray with you. Whatever being the loving presence of God with this person looks like, do that. Then wait for the Holy Spirit to open the door to MORE.
- (" **Use your words.** If you're being authentic and present – to God and to the person you are with – the words will come in time. In our Baptismal Covenant, we do not promise to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through perfect words and deeds. Instead, we make these promises as we are –awkward and a bit flawed – with God's help. In Luke 12:11-12, Jesus promises his followers: "Do not worry about how you are to defend yourselves or what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what you ought to say." Evangelism is about simultaneously showing up and getting out of God's way.

5. **Know your motivation.** There's a good chance that many people you know and encounter are lonely. Only about half of Americans have daily meaningful in-person social interactions. In England, there is a cabinet-level position – a Minister of Loneliness – to combat an “epidemic of loneliness.” When we invite people to MORE with God, then share our stories and invite theirs, and then celebrate God's loving presence in both, we help to remove the deep aloneness many of us experience. In Genesis 2:18, God says that it's not good for humans to be alone. Jesus lived, ministered, died, and rose again within the context of community. The truth is, human beings thrive when we are heard, wanted, and loved. Who doesn't want a life with more love, more connection, more liberation, more hope, more meaning? That life is possible with Jesus. Sharing about it might be the most powerful motivation for evangelism.
6. **Be brave.** Chances are you will experience rejection if you make an invitation. Some people don't want to connect with the Spirit or with faith. Or perhaps you will not be the one to unlock the door and draw them out. You can't force it, get attached to a particular outcome, or take the response personally. Create a hospitable space where people feel valued, heard, and held. Offer people the opportunity to taste and see for themselves the goodness of God. The rest is up to them and to God.
 - *If your group is doing the Exploratory Exercise: Watch until 22:12, which is the end of the explanation of the Exploratory Exercise. Pause the video and lead your group in the exercise and the post-exercise discussion.*
 - *If your group is not doing the Exploratory Exercise: Continue watching the video to witness the masterclass group as they try out the exercise.*

Exploratory Exercise: Invitation Matters

None of us just got here on our own. People have shared invitations that kept us walking through the many doors that led us to where we stand today. In this exercise, we're going to recall and share stories of when we were invited and why it mattered.

First, take a moment to think of a time when you received an invitation that made a difference in your life:

- What was the invitation?
- What was happening in your life during that season?
- Why did the invitation matter?
- Who made the invitation?
- What lasting effect has that invitation had on your life?

Does everyone have a story? Great – hang on to it. We will use principles from One-to-One StorySharing, but now in a group circle. The Beloved Community StorySharing Guidebook helps with StorySharing in a circle.

Review these guidelines with the group before beginning:

1. Listen deeply. Listen again. Then listen again.
2. Assume response-ability for yourself.
3. Speak only when it is your turn.
4. Give each person equal time.
5. Be a participant, not just an observer.
6. Get out of the information mindset and listen for feeling and experience.

7. Resist the temptation to use Prayer Book speak.
8. Never argue or debate another person's story.

I will review the prompts, and then we will begin with the person to my right and continue around the circle. When it is your turn, if you are not ready to share, you may simply say "pass." I will keep time for each person sharing. I will also repeat the prompt, as necessary, as the StorySharing continues.

If someone hesitates, remind the group that anyone may choose to pass and their turn will come around again. After everyone in the circle has had the opportunity to speak or pass, begin the rotation again for those who have passed.

StorySharing Prompt: Recall a moment when you received an invitation that made a difference in your life.

- What was the invitation?
- What was happening in your life during that season?
- Why did the invitation matter?
- Who made the invitation?
- What lasting effect has that invitation had on your life?

Share your answers to these questions in the circle.

Brief Discussion

Pose the following questions to the group:

- Why did that invitation work for you? *Possible responses might include the following:*
 - Sensitive to urging of Spirit and of this person's heart
 - Not attached to outcomes or getting people inside church
 - Not trying to convince or teach; instead, looking for opportunities to explore and build relationship
- What would NOT have worked?

Let's resume the video and see how the *Embracing Evangelism* participants did.

Resume the Video

Watch from 26:26 to 33:52. At that point, pause the video for discussion.

Discussion & Reflection Questions

Use the following reflection questions to guide your discussion. Depending on time, you might choose one or two on which to focus. Encourage participants to reflect on the remaining questions later themselves.

- Now that you have had a chance to reflect on an invitation that mattered, what would you say to the person who shared it with you?
- How did this exercise and conversation shift the way you view and approach invitation?

Finish the Video

Review the Try It Out section of the Participant Guide (see guide for more detailed instructions). Encourage participants to do the following before the next session:

- Create an Index Card Invitation, naming the invitation you most hope to offer and the person with whom you want to share that invitation.
- Pray to God, asking for a blessing on you and the person who rose to your heart.

Close with Prayer

In your own words, thank God for the gift of invitation and for the love that we are able to give and to receive when we accept God's invitation to draw nearer to the love and hope that Jesus brings. Thank God for the invitations in our lives that have made a difference. Pray for God's guidance and courage in offering invitations to others, asking for both the eyes to see the opportunity to invite and the words to offer. Close your prayer by thanking God that, through the gift of Jesus, we always are invited and welcomed at God's holy table.

SESSION 6

GO! DISCERNMENT AND WHAT'S NEXT

Supplies Needed

For the Who Is My Neighbor? Exercise, provide each participant with a blank piece of paper and a pen or pencil.

Introduction

Welcome to Session 6 of *Embracing Evangelism*. In this sixth and final session, we work on Go! Discernment and What's Next and practice ways of going into the world to bless and be blessed by others. *Offer your own prayer here, or use one of the following:*

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. Amen.

Creator God, thank you for all we have learned together during these sessions. Help us to open our hearts and minds to what you would have us learn today, as a group and as individuals, as we discern what is next as we prepare to GO where your Holy Spirit will lead us. Amen.

Begin the Video

Watch video from start to 21:11. Note these highlights for yourself:

Jesus was always inviting people to come follow him and to go. “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). “Go into all the world and preach the Good News to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15).

He knew it was a risk and that it wouldn't make people popular or successful. He knew it might feel awkward and uncomfortable, but he knew it was worth it. Jesus invited them into an ever-deepening relationship with God. And then he invited them to carry that love into the world, so people everywhere could fall in love with God and follow his way of love, forgiveness, hope, and healing.

Lots of Episcopal churches are comfortable with service and compassion for others. However, sharing our faith, being vulnerable, and going public about faith are harder and riskier. Thankfully, the followers of Jesus can take risks together.

Archbishop of Canterbury William Temple once said, “The Church is the only society that does not exist for its members.” Jesus never intended for God's love to stop at the doors of a beautiful temple or upper room. He was out, among people, and he brought disciples with him to share in words and deeds the life-changing love of God. He's still pulling us out, beyond what we know and who we know.

- *If your group is doing the Exploratory Exercise: Watch until 21:11, which is the end of the explanation of the Exploratory Exercise. Pause the video and lead your group in the exercise and the post-exercise discussion.*
- *If your group is not doing the Exploratory Exercise: Continue watching the video to witness the masterclass group as they try out the exercise.*

Exploratory Exercise: Who Is My Neighbor?

For this exercise, each participant will need a piece of paper and a pen or pencil.

Ask each participant to draw four concentric circles on a piece of paper.

Explore the Circles

- **Innermost Circle:** Get to know JERUSALEM (your closest neighbors, family, friends). Whom has God placed around you? Especially call to mind people in your closer circle who are not part of a faith community but seem to yearn for MORE.
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances
 - Work/School colleagues
 - Volunteer groups
 - Social groups
 - Civic affiliations
 - Hobbies/Special interests

- **Second Circle:** Get to know JUDEA (the neighborhood/physical community around your church or your own home).
 - Where and among what people has God placed you and your church?
 - Is it a residential area? Commercial? Mixed?
 - What are the civic centers or businesses around your church?
 - Are there schools or other faith centers?
 - What is God up to in the neighborhood?
 - Who lives or regularly inhabits the area near or surrounding the church and your own home?

- **Third Circle:** Get to know SAMARIA (the margins of your community: groups, cultures, and generations with whom you do not have relationship, or from whom you or your church have been alienated).
 - Where are the social, racial, or economic rifts or divides in your community?
 - What groups are most separated or alienated from your church?
 - Through what unlikely groups might God speak, teach, or bless you with their gifts?
 - Who on your margins is waiting to hear good news? What might that good news be?
 - How could you find out what “good news” sounds like to them?
 - Whom are you connected with, and whom can you connect with, in your SAMARIA

- *(Optional)* **Outermost Circle:** Explore the ENDS OF THE EARTH (the many places and groups that are truly outside your own experience and familiarity – far physically or far because of experiences and attitudes).
 - How could you open yourself to even see these new groups?
 - How could you learn and share with them?
 - What challenges might you face if you seek to connect with and get to know one another?
Note: You might not have a solid picture of who is in this outer circle. The point here may be exploring your willingness to go with Jesus beyond your imagining.

As you notice who and what is in each of these concentric circles, ask:

- What is God up to in their midst?
- How can you build relationship with the people and communities you are discovering?
- What are their needs and longings? How can you bless and love them?
- What are your needs and longings? How could they bless you?
- If Jesus met this person or group, what would he do?

Let's resume the video and see how the *Embracing Evangelism* participants did.

Resume the Video

Watch from 21:12 to 42:05. At that point, pause the video for discussion.

Discussion & Reflection Questions

Use the following reflection questions to guide your discussion. Depending on time, you might choose one or two on which to focus. Encourage participants to reflect on the remaining questions later themselves.

- Look back at your concentric circles. Who is in your circles?
- Is there a particular group or community you are most yearning to connect with? How can you bless and love them? How could they bless you?
- If Jesus met this person or group, what would he do?
- How could you follow his footsteps?

Finish the Video

Close with Prayer

Participants gather in a circle.

One by one, around the circle, we will offer our prayer to God.

- The first time around, we will offer a word thanking God for one important experience in this time of learning and practicing together.
- The second time around, you are invited to commit to God one step you will take – a person you will talk to, a place you will go, a story of God's goodness you will share, etc.
- This final time, please ask for God's help in whatever way you need for this next step as you prepare to Go.

We conclude our time together praying the prayer that Jesus taught us, in the words and language of our hearts. *All say the Lord's Prayer together.*

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Thank you for participating in Embracing Evangelism. For additional Episcopal Evangelism resources, please visit episcopalchurch.org/evangelism.