

Learnings From The 2013 Evangelism and Church Growth Conference

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I am Bill Hayes, Pastor of Edgewood Presbyterian, a church with around 100 on the rolls and around 60 in Worship most Sundays located in Sanford, NC. Edgewood is an active Church and we reach the community around us with God's love in many ways, but, like many smaller church ministers and members, I have often found myself wondering if we are doing all we can to reach those around us with God's love and doing all we can to reach people for Christ. Getting new members would be great, but reaching the most people we can for Christ would be greater!

When I heard about the Evangelism and Church Growth Conference I thought that it would be a wonderful resource to take advantage of – and with the help of Coastal Carolina Presbytery's Church Revitalization and Transformation Committee I was able to attend the conference.

I was blessed in so many ways at the Conference! One idea that particularly stuck in my mind and heart was that every Church, and every Christian, needs to see that they are on God's mission to their particular community. One of the Seminar leaders read from Luke 10:25-38 – the story of the Good Samaritan – and challenged us to discover how we can “be a neighbor” in God's name to those around us and show them God's love in new and different ways. As the speaker asked: “How can we ‘go and do the same’ as Jesus told us to do?”. In another Seminar Ray Jones from the denomination's Evangelism staff challenged us to read the book of Acts and ask ourselves what it would look like if we took God's mission to our community as seriously as the early church took it.

I left the conference with a new sense of commitment to being on God's mission to the community around Edgewood and to leading the Church in that mission also. Since the conference I have shared my learnings and new commitments with the members of Edgewood in sermons, sharing with the Session, and in meetings. We have begun a Bible Study on the book of Acts on Wednesday nights and have lifted up the question of what it would look like if we were as excited about being on God's mission to our community as the early church was about being on God's mission in their community. One direct offshoot of these discussions has been that several of our members are now tutoring Hispanic boys in our neighborhood in English skills and with their school work. This is a real blessing for the boys – and the Church! Some of our members have also begun working with the boys parents on English skills while others are working with the children! What a blessing for all concerned! We have also decided to make 2014 a year for becoming stronger in our faith by reading through the Bible in a year and beginning Bible Studies based on the denomination's new Engage! material.

Jerry Cannon, one of the speakers at the conference, opened the conference by looking at Joshua 1 and urging us to “use what you've got, because you've got what you need”. Indeed, at the Evangelism and Church Growth conference I learned more about how to use what God has given me for His mission to my community, because He has given me what I need!

I would like the opportunity to talk with you about the conference or my learnings. Please feel free to e-mail me at bill.edgewoodpc@windstreamn.net or call me at 919 888 3070.