

Approach to Evangelism

by Arthur Freeman

OVERVIEW

The statistics today indicate a serious decline in traditional church membership. We need to explore what is happening and why. It is especially disturbing when we realize Evangelism has to do not just with church growth but communicating of the religion's message which is intended to call forth life and meaning and bring to persons an understanding of God. What sort of a God does it portray and how does it portray the persons to whom its message is addressed? God can be powerful and judgmental or loving and supportive. Humans can be seen in the light of their failures or their promise and potential, resourced by the nature of God's love or doomed by their limits and God's anger. The message of the Gospel can speak to the heart or have no meaningful reality to communicate.

It is important to know what the Christian Gospel/Good News describes. The discussion of this crucial question will be dealt with in the materials included in this *Approach to Evangelism*. Its essence is summarized in the first summary paragraph which says:

Evangelism is
opening the HEART to God,
understanding God in life,
and learning how to tell
your and God's story.

This might be paraphrased as: Letting God into our life and learning how to describe what happens in God's life and ours when we let God in. If we can get hold of this, interpret this, we can use these insights in powerful and personal ways and share them with others. Persons are drawn to what enables life and opens to them its spiritual realities. Our most wonderful task in life is the sharing of life which enables life. We all must learn how this works for us and may work for others.

There are simple and complicated ways of talking about this. There is an **Article on Evangelism** beginning p. 8, which has section summaries in boxes which are put together on p. 7 into something that looks like a poem so that you might meditate on these thoughts together. The summary boxes are also placed at the beginning of each section of the Article and printed along with the whole section: Thus you can see at the same time a simple summary and details of the thought process --- going back and forth as you explore meaning. Also, some sections have within them a lot of somewhat complicated biblical material, something necessary to lay the foundation for understanding. If you look at the simple boxes you will know what you need to know without the complications, but you can explore the complications as much as you would wish and discover that the ideas are biblically based. People function differently and we need the freedom to have different ways to explore.

When you get to the end of the article you come to a poem which should help to explore the mystery of God midst the questions of life – and text:

Life is	and how
an experiment	it might be lived,
to discover	with passion.
what is there	

Hopefully somewhere in the content of these varied materials you should begin to resonate and think about what is being discussed, and somehow let it become gift.

Beginning pp. 4-5 there are **two collections of pictures**. On p. 4 the images are concerned with the Moravian sense of mission and its rebirth in the 18th century: the Moravian Seal, Count Zinzendorf, 20th century Tanzania, Africa, the church in Herrnhut, Central Moravian in Bethlehem, PA, and the First Fruits of the 18th century Moravian Mission. P. 5 includes a search to discover where Christ is, in heaven or here, affirming Christ's intent, that "*In your life is one of the most important places I can be*" *True for children as well as adults.*

Beginning p. 13 there is an extensive discussion of **the Spiritual Character of the Life Process** so that we may understand God's contribution to life. So much of what God provides is profoundly necessary. And here we begin to learn about what life is like and the resources life needs. Life is not just biological but there is a spiritual dimension to life as a whole and to the life of each person. Sacraments are symbols of God's resourcing life. And the Great Healing, p. 15, affirms the reality and possibilities of God's promises in life.

On p. 23 **Personal Differences and Evangelism** are discussed, according to the insights of the Moravian Church, the insights of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, and an analysis of the New Testament portrayal of the different ways of being Christian. It is important to know that the New Testament itself confirms the reality and rightness of differences in persons (**The Reality of Being Christian in Different Ways**, p. 28). Just imagine, we have four presentations of Jesus rather than one.

On page 31 we begin a discussion of the ways in which our differences are confirmed by the Gospel differences, where the Gospels become **Our Stories As Well As His**. There is a meditation on the thought within the Gospel of John and an extended treatment of the Gospel of Mark which Mark's author designed so that we might know how to fit our story into Jesus' story when we enter its embodiment of life and experience.

On p. 49 **God Experience as the Center** is analyzed to indicate that the experience of the living Christ as our Companion is central and interaction with Him is of the essence of life. This section closes with **Evangelism: Other Religions and Jesus** (p. 52). While there are differences between other religions and Christianity, we must note that there are differences about Jesus within Christianity itself; and if the introduction to the Gospel of John is right in claiming experience of Jesus (the Word of God) as behind not only creation but all experience of God, then we must look carefully to see whether in some way Christ may be met in other religions – as an experienced but perhaps not defined reality. If we have gotten to know Christ well enough, we can figure the differences from him in other religions, some of which are not terribly different from the differences from him in some of Christianity. The big issue in the Gospels was whether Jesus was to suffer or to be a God of great power only. He chose to be a part of our world and suffer. Hardly any Gods do this. But this was the act of his love.

On p. 54 **the Impact of Christ on the Cosmos**, his view and understanding of the cosmos and his transformation of the structures of the cosmos are discussed, with extensive treatment of Paul's views in Galatians and Colossians. Christ provides a profound interpretation of life and world by which all may live, something often not given sufficient attention in evangelism.

The last two pages, 59-60, are part of a creedal brochure on **A CENTRAL PERSPECTIVE ON LIFE** which Central Moravian has been using to define itself to its neighbors and affirm its understanding of life and God. It is amazing that there is so much on two pages.

APPROACH TO EVANGELISM

THE CENTRAL MORAVIAN CHURCH

73 W. Church Street
Bethlehem, PA



With appreciation to all who participated in the forming of this project over the last two years.

These materials are an attempt to refine what has been thought, discussed and reviewed for the last several years regarding the program of Outreach and Evangelism developed with our Evangelism and Outreach Committee and the Church Boards. We now want to begin to share materials and approaches we are developing with the congregation. The first item produced was the creed entitled **A Central Perspective on Life**, included here as the last pages, placed on the back of the pews and often handed out with other materials. Though our developing materials and approaches contain a great deal of information and printed documents (e.g. our **Resource Library** to be located in the West Room of the Church will include additional materials), all of this is

simply intended to help our members define their faith and share it with others. In its simplest form Christianity is not complicated but centers on **our relationship with Christ responded to in faith, love and hope. This is the one Essential of faith: God and our response**, as defined in the *Ground of the Unity*, Moravian statement of faith. Christ, you and our Christian community can explore this relationship, your understanding of it, and your mission in it in ways unique to your life. Faith can be very simple or truly profound. Be our guest. *Explore and discover. God calls you to this journey*

These materials were written and prepared by Dr. Arthur Freeman who for 35 years taught at Moravian Theological Seminary New Testament, Spiritual Formation and the Theology of Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf and served as the Director of Continuing Education. These materials were especially designed for Central Moravian Church, Bethlehem, PA , where he served as an Interim Pastor for 3 years.



The **Moravian Church**, founded 1457. **For over 500 years** we have called people around the world to let Christ share their lives, to follow him, and let him be their friend in life. Central Moravian Church believes in all the good things God would share and the love for you in God's heart.



Count Zinzendorf helped the Moravian Church rediscover its mission to the world after its near destruction in the 17th century. And 19 Provinces of people around the world came to be established. You can be a Moravian in many countries of the world in this unique international Church.



TANZANIA, Central Africa

Within a few years



Herrnhut Church



- Societies were started in local churches
- A 100 year program of prayer was begun
- The use of devotional biblical texts was started
- Missions were started on the Caribbean island of St. Thomas and a mission was started in Georgia

And the Moravian Church was established in Bethlehem in 1741



Friendship with Christ brought many together in the 18th Century

HELLO !!!

AM I UP HERE ?



**I AM WHERE YOU ARE IN YOUR WORLD PROMISING TO BE WITH YOU
AS YOUR FRIEND AND COMPANION ALWAYS *CHRIST***

**I CAN'T FIX EVERYTHING, BUT I CAN BE WITH YOU
AND DO NEED YOU AND DO LOVE YOU**

LET'S MAKE OUR WORLD HAPPY AND BETTER

TOGETHER WE CAN DO A LOT

WHAT DO YOU THINK?



IN YOUR LIFE IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT PLACES I CAN BE.

(Though some of the materials and the photos are in color we tried to hold down the printing costs by keeping this in black and white.)