

# Tools for Evangelism

November-December 2016

## Inspired by the Mustard Seed

By Betsy Fisher, part of the Vestry Papers issue on [Tools for Evangelism](#) (November 2016)

“If your church closed tomorrow, what difference would it make to your neighborhood?”

That’s the question we asked ourselves 10 years ago at St Thomas Church, Amenia Union, New York. At the time, St Thomas was a parish of 16 members with a history as a mostly weekend congregation for many of its 150 years. Yet this group of 16 people had called me as their full time vicar because they wanted to make a go at becoming a full time church with a real mission. I said yes and off we started on this most amazing journey.

I remember so clearly how much these 16 original parishioners wanted something to happen at their church. They loved this place dearly, but hadn’t a clue as to where to begin. Everything they thought of seemed overwhelming. We decided to begin with prayer – to intentionally pray for guidance and see where God led us. For inspiration, we chose the symbol of the Mustard Seed, deciding to believe Jesus when he said all God needs is the littlest seed of faith to do great things. Well, we had that! So we decided to trust that little seed, and trust that God would provide the rest.

Over the past 10 years we have discovered a few things. First we discovered before you can do anything you need to know your call. We thought of our call as *our great joy meeting our neighborhood’s great need*. We realized that, even as a very small congregation, we were great at hospitality and really good with food. And we discovered, much to our surprise, that hunger was an everyday reality for many of our neighbors. We decided to focus on those two gifts of this little congregation to try and meet that great need. We started doing small things, like building three little raised beds on the church lawn to grow fresh vegetables for a food pantry 20 miles away. We started collecting nonperishable food for them as well. We provided Thanksgiving and Christmas dinner for a local family in need. Little by little, our mission, and the people who wanted to join us in that mission, grew. Today our mission statement says we are a Christ-centered community of Radical Hospitality. We take that mission very seriously!

We also discovered that if you are faithful to your call, what you need to live out that call and mission will show up. We have experienced this over and over again at St. Thomas! People who had the skills we needed found their way to our pews. Grant writers, fundraisers, chefs, communication professionals, art historians who knew exactly what was needed for a church restoration. Even a stonemason showed up! We often did not know what our next step would be until we met someone who had an idea or a skill and was interested in helping us.

Our mission happened organically. We lived through many starts and stops. Some things worked, others not so much. But we trusted that what we needed would show up, and if what we needed was not showing up, we trusted enough to let go of our idea and wait on the Spirit. We kept on keeping on.

We discovered that the life of our church is rarely found within the four walls of our church building. Location is not our strong suit. Our church is tucked away in a bucolic rural community, far from a main thoroughfare. We first thought of our location as a hindrance to our mission. How will they find us? It turns out our location was our saving grace because it forced us to venture out of our buildings and into the marketplace to let people know we were here and ready to serve our neighbors. For most of my first five years here, I spent time in coffee shops, with community groups, at town meetings, or just talking to people, getting to know the community, listening to their stories, and telling them ours. *Our congregation became part of them, rather than waiting for THEM to become part of US.* We still gather in our beautiful church every Sunday for worship. But most of our church's work is done in the marketplace, talking to our neighbors, sharing a common life, and being of service.

Telling our story is the most important part of church growth, and it's done in a million different ways. We spend time making sure people know what radical hospitality means and what it looks like. We do that through the old fashioned kind of evangelism, our one-on-one interactions with our neighbors. But we also do it through social media like Facebook; through our electronic newsletter *The Mustard Seed*; through writing newspaper articles and speaking on local radio shows; through our website and creating our own [video](#) for our food pantry; through mass mailings and public speaking. We use whatever avenues we have to tell the story of St. Thomas and Radical Hospitality.

Today, we are a congregation of about 96 members, with a core group of 55 who attend services regularly (monthly or bi monthly). Our budget has more than doubled, growing from approximately \$90,000 to \$237,000. We recently completed a \$500,000 church restoration. We have our own [food pantry](#) that provides food for an average of 150 people per week and gives out over 1300 meals weekly. We have a large [community garden](#) where we grow fresh produce to distribute to our neighbors through the food pantry. And we have a global mission called "[Change the Babies](#)" that collects \$1500 a year in loose change to help feed the children at the Mampong Babies Home in Ghana.

We are still a small church, and expect we will always be small. We have decided to be what we are – a small church with a big mission. Our reach has expanded by joining with other churches in our area, with schools, businesses, local groups such as the Lions Club, Rotary Clubs, Scout troops. Our mission of Radical Hospitality and feeding people who are hungry has caught the imagination of hundreds of people beyond our pews. By joining with them, St. Thomas has become vital to the life of our neighborhood. If St. Thomas ceased to exist tomorrow, it would have a huge impact on hundreds of people in our community. And it all started with just a mustard seed worth of faith, and the abundance of the Holy Spirit.

***Elizabeth (Betsy) Fisher*** was called as vicar of [St. Thomas Episcopal Church](#) in February 2007. Previously, Betsy worked as assistant priest at [St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, Bedford, New York](#), and as a seminary intern at the [Church of the Messiah in Rhinebeck, New York](#).

*Betsy served as hospice chaplain at Dutchess County Hospice from 2004-2005, and as oncology chaplain at Westchester Medical Center from 1997-2000. She also worked for three years as a school counselor for deaf teenagers at Mill Neck Manor Lutheran School for the Deaf in Mill Neck, NY, gaining experience in crisis intervention and counseling.*

*Betsy received her masters of divinity from Yale Divinity School in 2004 and was ordained to the priesthood in September of that year. Previously, she completed her internship and residency in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) at Westchester Medical Center in 1999, training as a hospital*

chaplain specializing in oncology and death and dying. She earned a Certification in Spiritual Direction from the Guild for Spiritual Guidance in 1993. Betsy also holds a masters of professional studies (MPS) in counseling from the New York Institute of Technology, 1986. She completed her undergraduate education at American University in Washington, D.C., where she earned a bachelor of arts degree in communications.

### Try This

Has your vestry or other committee or commission explored this question: “If your church closed tomorrow, what difference would it make to your neighborhood?”  
What were your responses?

### Resources

- [Change the Babies](#), St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Amenia Union, NY
- [Giving Garden](#), St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Amenia Union, NY
- [Radical hospitality](#) a sermon by Marilyn J. Sewell, Unitarian Universalist Association
- [St. Thomas Episcopal Church](#), Amenia Union, New York
- [The Food of Life/Comida de Vida Food Pantry](#) video

## #EvenTalk: Connect via Twitter

By Nancy Davidge, part of the Vestry Papers issue on [Tools for Evangelism](#) (November 2016)

A reference to #EvenTalk in Alan Bentrap’s [blog post](#) piqued my curiosity. Skeptical of Twitter as part of a congregation’s communications toolkit, I clicked.

The link brought me to the St. Dunstan’s Episcopal Church (Houston) Facebook page and a listing, with two photographs:

*“Join us for [#EvenTalk](#) tonight 8-9 for a Christ-centered discussion on Twitter. Tonight, we will discuss the role of church in the public sphere after reading this article from *The Living Church*: <http://www.livingchurch.org/ behold-man>.”*

Text on the first image included an invitation with instructions for participation and the second, this list of discussion questions:

Q1: *How is Christianity countercultural?*

Q2 *How can Christians positively interact with subcultures that in some ways mirror the Gospel but also depart from Christian values in other ways?*

Q3: *What is the significance of one voice in a radically democratic community?*

Q4: *What does it mean to be the Church in the public sphere? How is the church’s image important in the public sphere?*

I wanted to learn more.

An email introduction from Alan led to a phone conversation with Brian Tarver, curate at St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church in Houston. Here's what I learned:

At St. Dunstan's, an active parish with many opportunities to grow in faith and serve others, the reality of families, jobs, and responsibilities at times limit a parishioner's availability to participate. For parents with young children and early bedtimes, driving to the church on a weeknight for a Bible study or adult formation class wasn't realistic. Yet, as Brian shared with me, that didn't mean they weren't interested in participating. What if people could participate without leaving home?

Brian began testing a different approach to bringing people together for conversation, fellowship, and Bible study. He invited parents with younger children to join him on a weeknight, via Twitter, for a directed, faith-based conversation about an article, presentation, or video. He soon expanded his invitation, seeking to include people from different generations and situations. Interest came from young adults without children as well as older parishioners

#EvenTalk is born.

Brian soon learned that getting people to participate would take more time than he first expected. He offered social media tutorials and asked participants for feedback. He kept at it and by late summer had a core group of eight to nine active followers, people who after joining the conversation and tweeting a greeting to other participants, respond to the questions as they are posed and interact by commenting on other's posts or asking questions as a way to delve deeper into a response. This group, for the most part, is composed of regular Sunday worshippers.

There's also a secondary group of participants – which I joined one week this month: people who read or watch the material chosen for discussion and follow the live Twitter chat in real time, perhaps liking a Tweet yet otherwise not actively participating in the conversation. Others sign on and read the transcript later in the week.

So what's the experience like? An #EvenTalk session begins and ends with prayer. Greetings are exchanges as participants sign on, join together in prayer, and then begin to respond the first posted question. During the conversation, people comment on each other's posts, at times sharing a poem or image, and as happened in the session I sat in on, warmly welcomed a participant from Pennsylvania who, perhaps learned of the event through Alan's blog on ECF Vital Practices.

When asked how the animated film chosen as this week's topic challenges people's expectations of animation and how challenging expectations ties in to faith, responses included:

*Expectations lead to misinterpreting & placing unfair burdens on someone(thing), even setting limitations. #eventalk*

*Challenging people's expectations forces us to go against the grain and opens our eyes to new views. #eventalk*

*As Xians, many think we should be perfect & like Jesus but in doing so miss redemptive message of the cross & core of r faith #eventalk*

*To challenge expectations is a want to find a better way. #EvenTalk*

*It can cause you to think of things with new perspective. “Roles” can be rigid. “Breaking out” could cause a “break through. #eventalk*

*Church should challenge expectations by presenting the material (Bible) in different ways to connect to those on the edge #eventalk*

As sometimes happens in a face-to-face group, side conversations take place, these posts related to an observation made about a watch and directed at the person who originally asked about the watch and the person who posed the follow up question:

*@xxxx No one but you has mentioned the watch. Anyone else have thoughts on the buried watch? #eventalk*

*@xxxx @yyyy Time heals wounds #eventalk*

*@xxxx @yyyy I think it was his only connection from that incident. It’s what brought him back from the edge #eventalk*

*As a way to strengthen the relationship among #EvenTalk participants – be they active or passive – Brian invited local participants and their families to gather at a local BBQ restaurant this past summer. Some of the conversation focused on process, with people offering ideas for topics as well as tips, such as using Tweet Chat on Hootsuite to make it easier for someone to follow the conversation. There was enthusiasm for meeting quarterly at the aptly named “EvenTalk Gathering,” with the second occurring in October.*

*What’s next? With #EvenTalk analytics showing a spike in visitors the day after the live Tweet chat, Brian is reaching out to other congregations to introduce them to the approach and welcome them to the conversation. His message? #EvenTalk offers an opportunity to bring both members and interested others into deeper relationship with each other and with God using social media to overcome the obstacles of commitments and distance that often hinder participation. Soon, EvenTalk will have its own account on Twitter (@Evan\_Talk), making it easier for other churches to be involved.*

*Check it out!*

**Nancy Davidge** is editor of ECF Vital Practices.

### **Try This:**

*Sit in on #EvenTalk on a Thursday evening, from 8:00 to 9:00 pm CT. Visit [@saintdunstans](#) on Wednesdays for featured content and discussion questions.*

*Interested in learning more? Like what you see? Follow the conversation at [@Even\\_Talk](#). Questions, email Brian Tarver at [btarver@saintdunstans.org](mailto:btarver@saintdunstans.org) .*

### **Resources**

- [#ChSocM](#) a weekly Twitter-based chat about using social media to build church and faith

- [St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church on Twitter](#)
- [#EvenTalk on Twitter](#)
- [Getting Started with Twitter](#)
- [St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church, Houston, Texas](#)
- ["#SocialMediaSunday, Tragedy, and Real Community," ECF Vital Practices' blog by Alan Bentrap](#)
- [Social Media Sunday, A Building Faith blog by Sarah Stonesifer](#)
- [@TweetChat - a place to follow TwitterChat conversations](#)
- [Twitter Tutorial for Beginners, a YouTube video](#)

## Social Media Campaigns

By Charis Bhagianathan, part of the Vestry Papers issue on [Tools for Evangelism](#) (November 2016)

Scrolling through Instagram, a post suddenly caught my eye. It was a picture of a dressed altar with two candles with "Ever wondered what's that for?" in bold print across the image. Some exploring revealed the post was a part of social media campaign by St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Durham, North Carolina.

This "[Ever wondered what's that for?](#)" campaign is as original as it is useful. This is its basic premise: Every week or so, St. Luke's posts a picture of a church tradition or symbol that's commonly seen in church life but perhaps not immediately understood. Each post explains the significance in simple terms. Posts include "Why is that candle in the corner always lit?" "What are all of the clothes that priests wear on Sunday?" and "Why is water added to the wine for communion?" The answers explain the logic and meaning behind the traditions very succinctly (as is key with social media), but more importantly, make a connection between tradition and faith in real and meaningful way. The result is that objects become bestowed with meaning, making our experience of church richer. Log on to Instagram and take a look at their wonderful campaign. [@stlukesdurham](#) [#instagramcatechesis](#)

### Why a campaign?

Many church leaders, and especially church communicators, use social media. For some of us, posting links on Facebook, re-tweeting articles on Twitter, and choosing our best images for Instagram are everyday tasks. Some of us have even forayed into the very confusing yet hilarious youth-ridden world of [Snapchat](#)! Many are already posting useful, well-written, and captivating content, so you may ask: Why do I need a social media "campaign?" Increasingly used during conferences, meetings, and events, social media campaigns (unlike individual posts), focus on a shared experience. At the most basic level, campaigns help to collate and

gather similar content, generate interest, and build a brand. The consistency of the idea (typically tied together with a [hashtag](#)) ties together a host of common information from a sea of individual comments and posts, and makes it easier for followers or readers to see what they're looking for in one place. Some campaigns however, create an experience, and the best ones always herald the start of a relationship between the brand and reader. A good campaign will always focus on a shared experience between the creator and the receiver of content.

### **Just a hashtag**

Earlier in 2016, at ECF we experimented with a social media campaign called [#ChurchLeaders2016](#). The hashtag was specifically created for our annual Church Leadership Conference at and in collaboration with the Kanuga Conference and Retreat Center in Hendersonville, North Carolina. Our goal was a simple one: to encourage sharing and interaction through social media during the conference. In the weeks leading up to the conference we built interest around the hashtag by bringing it to everyone's attention and making sure all the participants were aware and involved. We used Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to share the hashtag widely. During the actual conference we were amazed at how people took that hashtag and made it their own. There were posts of learning and thanks, of sharing and inspiration, of old friends and new. That mini campaign brought people and their experiences together – all through just one hashtag.

### **A single great idea**

Once in a while, we hear about a social media campaign that's so successful it has us all wondering why we didn't think of it first. This one grew out of a capital campaign for St. Crispin's Camp and Conference Center in Wewoka, Oklahoma. As part of the campaign, diocesan bishop Ed Konieczny offered a special "thank you" gift to all who donated or pledged \$100 or more to *Tomorrow's Leaders: the Campaign for St. Crispin's*. This "thank you" gift was an 8-inch Bishop Ed bobblehead – complete with the bishop's traditional vestments and a staff. Already an idea that was equal parts ingenious and adorable, the diocese really took it up a notch by connecting it to a social media campaign. The "[Where in the World is #BishopEdBobblehead?](#)" social media campaign was launched and everyone could post their photos of where [#BishopEdBobblehead](#) had appeared around the world. People loved this idea! [#BishopEdBobblehead](#) appeared at dining tables and altars, with children and adults, indoors and outdoors, doing fun things like playing bingo, hanging out in the snow, and even on a golf course! A successful campaign like this one encourages sharing, engagement and creativity. The campaign has already received over 100 photos that can be viewed in [this Facebook album](#).

Social media campaigns can represent the best of what social media has to offer. A good campaign encourages sharing, gives information freely, builds relationships, and expresses content creatively. While they do take some planning to execute effectively, once a good idea or hashtag is in place, there's no looking back.

**Charis Bhagianathan** joined the [Episcopal Church Foundation \(ECF\)](#) in November 2015 as communications coordinator. Before moving to New York, Charis worked at Council for World Mission in Singapore as communications manager and at Dorling Kindersley Publishers in New Delhi as senior editor. At ECF, her focus is on strategic internal and external communications. While Charis has always enjoyed working in marketing and communications, her heart lies in social/new media and writing.

### Try This:

New to Instagram? Become familiar with some of the ways churches are using this social media platform. And educate yourself using one or more of the free resources listed below.

### Resources:

- [4 Components of the Best Social Media Campaigns](#) by Marketing Land
- [10 Things You Need to Do When Getting Started on Instagram](#) by Constant Contact
- 2016 Church Leadership conference hashtags: [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#)
- Get started on [Instagram](#)
- [Hashtag](#), Wikipedia
- [Instagram tutorials](#) by GCFLearnFree.org
- St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Durham, North Carolina [website](#) and [Instagram](#) page
- [Where in the World is #BishopEdBobblehead?](#) Facebook album

## Making God's Love Visible

By Robyn Banks, part of the Vestry Papers issue on [Tools for Evangelism](#) (November 2016)

Calvary Episcopal Church's theme for our 2017 annual giving campaign is *Love God. Love your neighbor. Love Calvary.* We have learned that when we talk about annual giving, it always resonates with our parishioners to hear others' stories about their experiences at Calvary and for us to find new ways to tell our story of how we are making God's love visible in downtown Memphis. With this year's campaign, we focused on Calvary's worship life (Love God.), community ministries (Love your neighbor.) and community life at Calvary (Love Calvary.).

Once we decided on the theme for our annual giving campaign, it became obvious that it would work well as three different videos. We are fortunate to have a parishioner who is a videographer and many, many parishioners who enjoy talking about Calvary and what Calvary means in their life. Take a look:

**Love God** - <https://youtu.be/ska9oTvJN5U>

**Love Your Neighbor** - <https://youtu.be/buFF1TpQR08>

**Love Calvary** - <https://youtu.be/j6KDmYFps-U>

While these videos give a boost to our annual giving campaign, they may also be used as evangelism tools. Posted on our website and social media channels, the videos have received over 20,000 views and over 100 shares. We also have incorporated them into our monthly

Welcome Class, an introduction to life at Calvary for newcomers and visitors. And the timing was perfect this year for us to use them in our parish profile to call our next rector.

**Robyn Banks** is director of communications at Calvary Episcopal Church in Memphis, Tenn. In this role, she enjoys overseeing all of the internal and external communication efforts of Calvary, including the website, the Chronicle newsletter, worship bulletins, posters, press releases, social media, and more. She always tells people that she has “the best job ever” because she gets to “tell Calvary’s story and share with the world how Calvary is ‘making God’s love visible in downtown Memphis.’”

### Try This

A central part of Calvary’s approach to telling their story sharing the ways they contribute to making God’s love visible in downtown Memphis. In what way is your faith community contributing to make God’s love visible in your community?

### Resources

- [Calvary Episcopal Church](#), Memphis, Tennessee
- [Episcopal Video Network’s Guide for Creating a Quality Welcome Video](#) on a limited budget
- [Opportunities to share one’s time and talent at Calvary](#): Detailed and easily scanned listing of the many ways to volunteer to be God’s hands and feet to each other and Memphis. A good model for others to consider.
- [Treasure](#): Ways to support Calvary through a variety of giving options.
- [YouTube Channel, Calvary Episcopal Church](#), Memphis

## Strangers to Neighbors

By Audra Abt, part of the Vestry Papers issue on [Tools for Evangelism](#) (November 2016)

### From Strangers to Neighbors

A few years ago, if someone had told me that I’d be part of a bilingual house church movement, and that I’d spend the Advent season canvassing neighborhoods in a Southern state (North Carolina) where the mores of hospitality are held in high regard, looking for people willing to let strangers knock on their door, only to reject them, all in the name of Jesus Christ, I would have laughed. And yet, this practice, and the Las Posadas gatherings we’re preparing for as Christmas nears, has now deeply shaped the way we observe this holy season of Advent and live out our call to formation, evangelism, and communion outside the church’s walls the rest of the year. We are Comunidad Puerta Abierta (Open Door Community), and this is a little of our story of how God’s coming among us in the flesh has inspired us to boldness in embracing our neighbors, sharing our faith, and adapting traditions in our multicultural context.

## **What is Las Posadas?**

As you may know, Las Posadas is an Advent tradition from Latin America as well as parts of the Southwestern U.S. In the nine days leading up to Christmas, people gather in homes and neighborhoods for candlelit processions, knocking on doors and being rejected entrance until they finally arrive at a welcoming household, “the inn,” where all share in singing, prayers, food and reflection on Mary and Joseph’s search for lodging in Bethlehem before Christ’s birth. Here’s how this tradition made its way to Greensboro, North Carolina.

A few years ago, several Spanish-speaking families from the Episcopal Church in Central America showed up at the predominantly Anglo, English-speaking church where I was serving. No Episcopal churches in our area were offering services in Spanish, but the families were looking to connect with other Episcopalians, so they started attending regular Sunday services. Despite their limited English, the youth served as acolytes, and people started getting to know each other through offering rides to church and communicating through a combination of generous non-verbal gestures and translator apps on their phones.

Something I quickly noticed was that people really did want to hear from and connect with one another, and they were willing to bear the discomfort of language barriers to do so. So, we set up some Sunday morning bilingual storytelling sessions as the Pentecost season waned. More than anything, it was important to create a space for people to be together, to tell their stories of faith and learn to listen to each other across different cultures. Favorite liturgical year traditions was an early prompt, and what surfaced as we shared was Las Posadas.

## **Leaving the Church Walls Behind**

Following the lead of our Latin American members, we decided to act and make Las Posadas happen in a way that allowed for the multiple languages and cultures present in our community to participate and contribute. That first year we considered offering just one Posada at the church to ease into the tradition, but the families invited us to be a little bolder and step outside the church and away from Sundays to make our porches and living rooms the sites of our Advent formation throughout the week.

That first year, over the nine days we did a Posada in four different homes in very different parts of town. But, we stuck to those home spaces, only singing the traditional Posadas song outside the host’s door. So the next year we worked ahead, starting in October, to identify the hosts in different neighborhoods and then find three or four neighbors who’d be willing to help us expand our celebration by letting a group knock on their door, seek sanctuary, but then turn us away.

Particularly in places where Las Posadas isn’t well known, and where neighbors don’t necessarily know each other, this knocking on doors isn’t just preparing the way for a community-based Advent Posadas celebration- it’s evangelism. It’s telling the story - to people we may or may not yet know - of our God who came among us in vulnerability, as the Other, in a season of mistrust, unrest, and upheaval, and then inviting people to enter that story with us. In walking our neighborhoods and knocking on doors and telling the story, well before the official Posadas gatherings even happen, we find ourselves walking with Mary and Joseph, sanctuary-seekers and bearers of Christ, uncertain about how we’ll be received but ever hopeful that God’s grace, and welcome, and new life will make themselves known to us and those who open the door for us.

## **Creating a More Open, Beloved Community**

The families from Latin America with Las Posadas in their history found the scripture readings and prayers for us to use and taught the community the songs they knew from home. We found more on YouTube, and enjoyed swapping carols in various languages from our many beloved traditions. Immigrant grandparents delighted in sharing a Posadas with their U.S.-born grandchildren who had never experienced this custom. The host households hailed from Honduras, Cuba, Uruguay and the U.S., and we all got to appreciate the cultural variances among Posadas.. One Posada is not like another, and what a gift this is! In creating new community each night, we experienced the blessing of being honored guests at the nativity and encountered God's generous presence among us as we turned from strangers into neighbors.

With all the contentious public debates going on about whether and how to welcome immigrants and refugees in our communities, people felt strongly that Las Posadas should not only be a time for intercultural sharing and hospitality for our church friends and neighbors, but also seek to answer a larger concern. The Posadas call us to be even more open to those in our wider community who are newcomers and most vulnerable. Hosts invited people to bring donations of diapers and food for emergency pantries at immigrant and refugee community centers, and we spent time during each Posada giving thanks for the work of different community partners and strategizing ways to become more involved in meaningful relationships.

The Las Posadas tradition really lends itself to leaving the church walls, and what extra work is entailed in preparing for liturgy in new places is well worth it for the spiritual vitality that it brings a community (and their neighbors). The resources created by and available through the Episcopal Church Foundation and the Episcopal Church's Office for Latino/Hispanic Ministries are fantastic, and drawing on them allows our lay and clergy leaders to spend more time in the important work of walking neighborhoods, knocking on doors and inviting our wider community to be part of this season in which we experience the heartbreak of rejection, the hope of being radically welcomed in the name of Christ, and the expectation that our God is indeed pleased to pitch a tent among us and promises, in the midst of despair and fearful times, to make all things new.

*A 2015 ECF Fellow, **Audra Abt** is a priest working in the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina, serving as Area Missioner for Intercultural and Community-Based Ministries around Greensboro, NC, and is part of an emerging bilingual Spanish-English worshipping community there.*

## Resources

- [Las Posadas: hospitality & Evangelism](#) by Robert Williams, *Vestry Papers*, November 2012
- [Resources for los Posadas](#), including a bulletin and Posadas song in English and Spanish by Forward Movement
- [Room in the Inn: Ideas for Celebrating Posadas](#) by Forward Movement, YouTube video
- [Be born in us: Love of Neighbor in Advent](#), an ECF webinar led by the Rev. Ali Lutz
- [Welcome Neighbor](#) by Daniel Trudeau, *Vestry Papers*, November 2011
- [Posadas: Searching for a place...](#) by Richelle Thompson, *ECF Vital Practices* blog post

# A Ministry of Invitation

By Nancy Davidge, part of the Vestry Papers issue on [Tools for Evangelism](#) (November 2016)

Evangelism. For years, the word made me uncomfortable, calling to mind the memory of feeling trapped in my small dorm room after opening the door to a pair of earnest Campus Crusade for Christ students intent on convincing me of the rightness of their beliefs and practice of the Christian faith. What I knew that day – and still believe – is that words alone, no matter how persuasive the voice, aren't enough to change my mind or my heart. Seeing, or experiencing, actions that match the words are what I need to become a believer and an advocate.

While my comfort with evangelism has grown over time, I expect I was not alone in feeling this way. Stephanie Spellers, Canon to the Presiding Bishop for Evangelism and Reconciliation, in her introduction to The Episcopal Church's [Evangelism Initiatives](#), notes:

*“Lots of Episcopalians get skittish the moment they hear the “E” word. Let’s imagine evangelism that is true to the bold, generous and hopeful spirit of the Jesus Movement. Evangelism that welcomes people into a loving, liberating, and lifegiving relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Evangelism that first listens for what God is doing in our lives and in the world ... and then celebrates and shares it.”*

## The power of invitation

In recent years, part of my ministry has included seeking out and sharing the many ways congregations and other Episcopal communities of faith are living into our Baptismal Covenant, specifically proclaiming by word and example the Good News of God in Christ. The challenge for some continues to be a reticence related to talking about their faith outside of the circle of people who share their same belief.

What changed things for me was an invitation. A friend, knowing I had gutted and helped rebuild houses after Katrina, invited me to join her on a Habitat for Humanity workday sponsored by her church. This led to other invitations, including joining one of her church's teams that provides a meal six times a year at a local community services program. Invitation honors an individual's capacity to experience this holy work while participation builds relationship with others and may be the first step in laying a foundation that may lead a person closer to Christ.

## Taking that first step

How do we become comfortable issuing an invitation outside of our comfort zones? Stephanie Spellers, writing about Episcopal Evangelism Initiatives, recommends these steps:

*“First, by sharing stories that energize and inspire Episcopalians. Then, by spreading resources that equip regular Episcopalians and churches to become evangelists and storytellers in daily life. Finally, by sharing good news with people beyond the Episcopal fold via new ministries and digital evangelism.”*

Here are examples of congregations, dioceses, or organizations taking these steps or developing and sharing resources to equip themselves and others to become evangelists and storytellers in daily life.

**1. Sharing stories that energize and inspire Episcopalians:** What first springs to mind are the many ways Episcopalians share their stories during the annual pledge campaign. From personal witness during worship services or community gatherings to [videos](#) or stories shared in the parish newsletter or pledge materials.

The question we may not be asking ourselves is: Are we providing enough opportunities to share [all of our stories](#)? As congregational leaders, our level of engagement presumes a knowledge and understanding of all of the church's programs and ministries that may not be widely shared. How might we find ways to [incorporate stories](#) in an intentional way to the fabric of our congregational life?

**2. Spreading resources:** The sharing of resources is central to ECF Vital Practices. Among my favorites are these websites, each of which provides specific ideas or practices for congregations to consider, adapt, and/or try: [Acts 8 Movement](#) evangelism resources, including [video](#) invitations congregations might use; [All Our Children](#) school partnerships; [ECF Vital Practices](#); [Episcopal Evangelism Initiatives](#); [Invite! Welcome! Connect!](#); [Radical Sending: Go to Love and Serve](#), and [Sharing Faith Dinners](#).

**3. Sharing the Good News beyond the Episcopal fold:** For some, this may be the most difficult step. There are many reasons for this ranging from time limitations to believing to do so may be seen as looking for accolades from the wider community, or the fear of what might happen if we talked openly, in public, about our faith.

Extending an invitation may take many forms. For the [Episcopal Church of the Redeemer](#) in Lexington, Massachusetts, the invitation – offered via a sandwich board sign, local news stories, word-of-mouth, and a website - is to become part of a collaborative community initiative: [Lex Eats Together](#). This weekly dinner, initiated by members from Redeemer and a local synagogue and carried out by volunteers from the wider community, offers a weekly meal in a restaurant-like setting that respects privacy and dignity. Two memories stand out from my meal there earlier this fall: How different this felt from the 'soup kitchen' type meal I volunteer for. The positive energy level in room, building from familiarity, genuine pleasure dining with friends, and a blurring of the lines between volunteers and guests.

Inspired by Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's [invitation to become part of the Jesus Movement](#) the congregation of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Columbus, Mississippi made a decision to overcome their fear of evangelism and created [a reason to go out and talk with people](#) in their immediate neighborhood. And, while making these face-to-face visits was difficult, they discovered it became easier with each knock on a door.

At St. Nicholas Episcopal Church in Pompano Beach, Florida, their ministry of invitation recently expanded to include a food truck, The Holy Grill. Photos posted on Facebook, brought this ministry of offering breakfast to people who are hungry and homeless to my attention. Visiting their [website](#) and reading the [October](#) and [November](#) (2016) issues of their parish newsletter, *The Sampler* (scroll to the rector's letter, page 2) I learned this church is one that talks openly about evangelism, with the rector offering support and encouragement to help individuals move from a place of resistance to becoming comfortable extending an invitation.

### **A ministry of invitation**

Two of our strongest tools for evangelism are the sharing of our personal stories: be they offered face-to-face or via video and spoken, or through the written word and shared via print, the web, or social media; and extending an invitation to witness our faith in action.

Mark Andrew Jones, rector of St. Nicholas Church in Pompano Beach, Florida, writing about evangelism and invitation, offered this advice to his congregation:

*“Remember – you’re Ministry of Invitation is successful the moment you extend the invitation, regardless of whether the person you invite accepts or not. We are to be a People of Invitation. We are to invite everyone with out limitation. Then, as act of loving respect for their dignity – after letting people know they are welcome – we accept their answer without a desire to possess or control”*

*The Sampler, October 2016*

**Nancy Davidge** is the former editor of *ECF Vital Practices* and editor of the 2015 revision of the Vestry Resource Guide.

## Resources

- [Acts 8 Movement](#) evangelism resources, including [video](#) invitations
- [All Our Children](#) school partnerships and [example of a church-school partnership](#) in *Vestry Papers*
- Episcopal [Evangelism Initiatives](#): Evangelism resources from The Episcopal Church
- [Invite!Welcome!Connect!](#) and [Invite\\*Welcome\\*Connect: Building a Vital Newcomers Ministry](#) webinar
- [Lex Eat Together](#), and [Episcopal Church of the Redeemer](#), Lexington, Massachusetts
- [“Making God’s Love Visible”](#) by Robin Banks, *Vestry Papers*, November 2011
- [“Making Space to Share Our Stories”](#) and [“Sharing Our Stories”](#) by Nancy Davidge, *ECF Vital Practices’ Vital Posts and Tools*
- [Radical Sending: Go to Love and Serve](#) and [“Get the Hell out of Church”](#) by Demi Prentiss and J. Fletcher Lowe
- [“Sharing Faith Dinners”](#) by Luke Blount and Laura Shaver, *ECF Vital Practices’ Vestry Papers*, July 2013 and [Sharing Faith Dinners website](#)
- [St. Nicholas Episcopal Church](#), Pompano Beach, Florida and their rector’s messages in the [October](#) and [November](#) 2016 issues of their newsletter, *The Sampler*.
- [St. Paul’s Episcopal Church](#), Columbus, Mississippi’s evangelism experience [“St. Paul’s Open Letter to Presiding Bishop Curry”](#) and [“Follow-up: St. Paul’s Open Letter to Presiding Bishop Curry”](#), *ECF Vital Practices* blog posts

# Using Instagram Effectively for Church

By Charis Bhagianathan, part of the Vestry Papers issue on [Tools for Evangelism](#) (November 2016)

With over 500 million monthly active users, it's likely you have heard of [Instagram](#) and some of you may use it. A popular online photo and video sharing social network, Instagram was launched six years ago and is currently owned by Facebook. For me, the most interesting thing about Instagram users is this demographic: more than 90% are younger than 35, with almost half under 24. Instagram is clearly a space that belongs to youth. Which begs the question: Are churches doing enough to interact with young people in this space they are obviously very comfortable in?

## **Picture perfect**

To begin using Instagram effectively for your church it's helpful to know what works best in this specific platform. To start off, the Instagram app can only be downloaded and used on a smart phone. This immediately makes it a platform of choice for people (like me) who consider their phone to be an extension of their arm. The app is meant to be used to capture both moments from everyday life and special events, and shared with friends and "followers," with the best ones being "liked" or "reposted." Although the app offers several beautiful filters to enhance the colors and tones of the image, it's always best to start off with a picture is already well framed, color-balanced, and most importantly, meaningful and evocative to you and to the people you choose to share it with.

## **Too many words**

Unlike Facebook and Twitter that rely largely on words, on Instagram the focus is on images. Communicating without words can often be very liberating – pictures open themselves up to many different interpretations and aren't limited to only those who know the language. It is possible, however, to go overboard with hashtags on Instagram. Since Instagram doesn't have a 140-character limit like Twitter, pictures can be accompanied by too many hashtags that may not make sense, are too long, or aren't related to the image; this is as common as it is annoying. On the other hand, when used thoughtfully hashtags can be very useful in terms of connecting with your target audience, building interaction, and creating a unique virtual pin board of images with other contributors.

## **Mirroring the church**

[An effective Instagram account](#) is intimate yet welcoming. It opens a window into a space that is real and honest, while inviting others in to witness and share. These are qualities that we often encounter in a successful church. Much like a good church, an effective Instagram account celebrates community, expresses diversity, encourages sharing, and doesn't take itself too seriously. A successful church Instagram account will be inviting, positive, and give new visitors a sense of the soul of church. It will also be a space where members and worshippers see themselves and their relationship with the church expressed with love.

## **A good post**

What makes a memorable Instagram post? The obvious answers include a great picture, a meaningful story, and an honest portrayal. At ECF we have found that certain kinds of posts work better than others on Instagram. Here are a few of our favorites that you can try too:

**Quote pictures** – Try everything from a Bible quote to a greeting that is time and [season appropriate](#). These can be created using a beautiful background picture, an evocative font, and branded with your church's official logo. We've found that these really resonate with people – it's like we're celebrating a special occasion or festival together with our virtual family!

**Behind-the-scenes** - Sometimes what is mundane for us can be something unusual and interesting for our followers. An all-staff meeting, a Christmas party, or “the weather from our window” posts make you/your church more relatable. A peek into the real, everyday life of a church is intriguing and special to many.

**Short videos** – Instagram works well with both images and videos, and the latter can be a great post if it's short and candid. It could be a short Christmas greeting from the rector, the choir singing part of a special number, or children in Sunday school creating something special. Videos are such a pleasure to watch and often give viewers a more intimate understanding of the life of the church.

**People shots** - Pictures of members and worshippers in action, laughing, sharing, or learning are some of the very best kinds of Instagram posts. It is the people who make up the church and seeing them in action is an accurate and true reflection of what the church is, and should be. This kind of picture is not only relatable but it also shares joy, which is really the most wonderful thing about Instagram.

One caveat: when posting pictures or video on social media, written consent should be obtained from anyone appearing in the photo or video and always from parents or guardians for all children.

*Charis Bhagianathan joined ECF in November 2015 as communications coordinator. Before moving to New York, Charis worked at Council for World Mission in Singapore as communications manager and at Dorling Kindersley Publishers in New Delhi as senior editor. At ECF, her focus is on strategic internal and external communications. While Charis has always enjoyed working in marketing and communications, her heart lies in social/new media and writing.*

## Resources

- [10 Things You Need to Do When Getting Started on Instagram](#) by Constant Contact
- [20 Great Ways to Use Instagram at Your Church](#), The Creative Pastor.com
- [Tips for Instagram Photos and Videos for Churches](#) by Laura Leist Catalano, ECF Vital Practices blog post
- [Advent Word \(@adventword\)](#), A global Advent Calendar
- Get started on [Instagram](#)

- [Important Instagram Statistics](#)
- [Instagram tutorials](#) by GCFLearnFree.org
- [Photo Release Form](#), Ann Fontaine, St. Catherine of Alexandria Episcopal Church, Episcopal Diocese of Oregon
- [“What’s That For?”](#) St. Luke’s Durham, NC Instagram campaign

## Your Church Needs a Welcome Video

By Christian Anderson and Trevor Black, part of the Vestry Papers issue on [Tools for Evangelism](#)(November 2016)

*Editor’s Note: Welcome videos can be an effective tool for evangelism – inviting people in and sharing the joy that a church brings to a community through a short video. Sounds expensive to produce? This article provides a low cost solution.*

When you’re lost and you don’t know where to turn, where do you look? Maybe you’re searching for connection. How do you cope? If you need a powerful, but invisible force to come into your life with all of the answers, what do you seek out?

The Internet, right? Oh, did you think I was talking about God? Well, people are looking for divine mysteries online too. They turn to Google whether they’re searching for a place to drink coffee or a place to share Eucharist. Either way, the locations that communicate a clear identity build the largest following. We live in a time when people want to know about their destination before they make their visit.

So—can you describe your church’s character? More importantly, would someone who found your website say the same things? It’s a tough question.

You need a welcome video.

This is where the Episcopal Video Network (ECN) can help. The Episcopal Video Network Guide is a step-by-step walkthrough on writing, filming, and editing a church welcome video on a tight budget.

The Guide is the brainchild of two Episcopalians with backgrounds in film and technology. Christian Anderson and Trevor Black have worked behind the scenes in film and television production, and want to share their knowledge with the Church. Thanks to a grant from the Episcopal Evangelical Society, the duo was able to build The EVN Guide. Thanks to some daring Head Rectors, they were able to beta-test it in congregations in New York and Washington DC.

The EVN Guide is an online resource for Churches of all sizes and skill levels. Are you already tech-savvy? Use The Guide to fill in the gaps as you work. Are you intimidated by the idea of a welcome video? The Guide will hold your hand through every step. Readers will find detailed instructions for recruiting teams, identifying their Church’s “brand,” choosing equipment, script-

writing, filming, and even editing and uploading. You'll use worksheets, discussion questions, and thought-exercises to identify a message and create a video from the ground up.

Below, you can see two videos that were made using the EVN Guide. The first introduces Trinity Wall Street's Summer Camp, and was shot entirely on an iPhone. The second uses a DSLR camera, and was directed by two middle school students who read the Guide.

Trinity Wall Street Summer Camp - [https://youtu.be/LEt\\_IQT3B9Y](https://youtu.be/LEt_IQT3B9Y)

Middle School Students - <https://youtu.be/KYcidLKVjVo>

In addition to education, EVN is also working on building a community of church leaders who recognize the power of the Internet to help spread the Gospel. [The site](#) includes pages to share videos produced with EVN's guidance, and its creators want to see what you've done with their resource. Click over to the "[contact](#)" page to suggest an edit, ask a question, or share your project!

The point is this: the community outside your church deserves to know about your good works, and a quality welcome video is within your reach.

**Try This:** <http://episcopalvideomini.wixsite.com/theguide/part-three-who-are-we>

Click over to Pt. 3 of the Guide, and set up a mock episode of "Shark Tank." How would you communicate what makes your Church great in only 90 seconds?

**Christian Anderson** - Former actor, network host, and producer in Los Angeles that now finds himself in on the other coast serving as an assistant rector at St Mary's Church in Stuart, Florida. Christian Anderson created the content of The Guide with a grant through the Episcopal Evangelism Society.

**Trevor Black** - Media junkie, film music creator, and minister, Trevor Black studied technology and music, and now uses his experience in applying The Guide to congregations and creating the EVN site itself.

## Resources

- [Episcopal Video Network](#): A learning community for the Episcopal Church
- [Using video to tell your story](#), tools from *ECF Vital Practices*
- [Lights. Camera. Action.](#) by Terri Mathes, *Vestry Papers*, July 2012
- [Social Media as a Pastoral Tool](#) by Richelle Thompson, *ECF Vital Practices* blog post

# Dios, es tu iglesia

By Alfredo Feregrino, part of the Vestry Papers issue on [Tools for Evangelism](#) (November 2016)

***This article is also available in English [here](#). Este artículo es disponible en anglais [aquí](#).***

Como sembrador de iglesias, sé la importancia de la comunicación. Hay un dicho que dice: Si no hablas, nadie te va a escuchar. Estamos tratando de evangelizar y comunicar el amor de Dios en todo el mundo y tenemos herramientas poderosas a nuestra disposición. Si no hablamos, si no nos comunicamos, nadie nos va a escuchar.

Oí una historia sobre las hormigas. Cuando una va y encuentra azúcar, regresa y les da las buenas nuevas a las demás y todas pueden ir a comer el azúcar. Pero si la hormiga no regresa a comunicarles las buenas nuevas del azúcar, entonces se quedan sin comerla. La comunicación es dar las buenas nuevas de cómo Dios nos ha bendecido. Podemos compartir nuestras bendiciones, nuestros milagros y nuestros testimonios para que los demás sepan que Dios puede actuar en sus vidas también. Cuando compartimos el evangelio, es como que tomamos el granito de azúcar y se lo llevamos a los hambrientos.

## **Cómo comencé a dar las Buenas Nuevas en Seattle**

Comencé usando [Meetup](#) (meet up en inglés significa reunirse o encontrarse). Meetup.com es un sitio web para hacer conexiones sociales que facilita encuentros entre personas en todo el mundo. Este medio ayuda a que sus miembros encuentren grupos que comparten intereses, como política, libros, juegos, pasatiempos o, en mi caso, la búsqueda de la espiritualidad. Comencé a organizar encuentros en los que la gente podía hablar en español sobre espiritualidad. Nos reunimos en bares y en restaurantes. Tal vez me equivoqué, pero dejé de organizar esas reuniones cuando noté que no iba a iniciar una iglesia de esa manera. Fue una experiencia exitosa que nos encantaba, pero mi finalidad era conseguir gente para mi nueva iglesia y los/las que venían a los encuentros no estaban buscando una iglesia.

Después, comencé a hacer eventos en la iglesia. Como tengo muchos amigos en Seattle, invitaba a todo el mundo a mis eventos del Día de los Muertos, las Posadas o a celebrar a la Virgen de Guadalupe. La gente venía a estos eventos y ahí comencé a decirles que iba a iniciar una iglesia y les pedía que se unieran. Así comenzó Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe.

Tratamos de usar [Twitter](#) pero no nos funcionó muy bien. Tal vez lo volveré a intentar, pero debido a la edad de mis feligreses, el [Facebook](#) nos funcionó bien, incluso para compartir nuestros eventos. El mes antepasado usamos [Facebook en vivo](#) para mostrar nuestro evento del Día de los Muertos. Mucha gente se conectó para ver los altares, la banda, la gente y el arte de ese evento tan especial para nuestra comunidad. Algo importante de recordar es que tenemos que mantener nuestras páginas de Internet y de Facebook al día con la información más importante -- como los horarios de los servicios religiosos, la dirección, cómo comunicarse, el nombre del/la líder y dónde estacionar -- en la portada.

Otra herramienta que usé es [MailChimp](#). Uso MailChimp para enviar un correo electrónico semanal lleno de fotos, información y próximos eventos a los contactos que conozco personalmente.

Pero todos estos medios de comunicación no ayudarán si uno no tiene algo que compartir. Recordemos que no son la respuesta, sino solo un complemento. No se puede dar lo que no se

tiene. Comparte lo que tienes. Piensa qué experiencias vas a compartir con los/las que se conecten contigo por Internet o correspondencia electrónica para que crezcan y se animen. Si tu mensaje no será constructivo, bueno, positivo o edificante, no lo publiques.

La comunicación es importante, especialmente por los medios sociales, porque a través de ellos puedes llegar a más gente. En los tiempos de Jesús, él iba a todas partes y nunca se quedaba en un mismo lugar por mucho tiempo. Ahora tenemos medios de comunicación que nos ayudan a llegar a cualquier parte del mundo rápidamente. La teología que tenemos en Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe se basa en la unidad. El sueño que tiene Jesús para nosotros es que tengamos unidad. ¿Cómo podemos hacer que este sueño se convierta en realidad? En nuestro contexto bilingüe nos preguntamos: ¿cómo podemos rezar juntos en dos idiomas y entender nuestras culturas? Las buenas nuevas, en nuestro contexto, es que la gente anglo e hispanohablante puede estar unida. Y mientras que más gente lo sepa y lo comparta, todo el mundo podrá estar inspirado y esperanzado de que sí se puede hacer un ministerio bilingüe.

Aunque los medios digitales son muy importantes, especialmente para anunciar las buenas nuevas al mundo, siempre se necesita ese toque personal, el cara a cara, el uno a uno. No dejemos eso de lado: si es posible, vayamos y hablemos con la gente. La idea es diseminar las semillas, inspirar a la gente y esperar que Dios la haga crecer. Empieza a dispersar semillas empleando los medios de comunicación y espera que Dios proporcione el crecimiento. Ora conmigo, “Dios, enséñame tus caminos. Es tu iglesia, no la mía”.

***Alfredo Feregrino** nació en la Ciudad de México. En 1992 se radicó en Seattle, donde vive con su esposa y sus gemelos. Ha sido sacerdote episcopal desde 2013. Se ve como un facilitador de la unidad y tiene la capacidad y el don de unir personas de diferentes lugares y orígenes. Afirma que las conexiones teológicas más fuertes en su identidad ministerial y vocación son la hospitalidad radical y la inclusión. Cree que el amor de Dios es incondicional, abundante y que no discrimina, y transmite eso en su vida cotidiana. Plantó una nueva feligresía, Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, en Seattle, una feligresía bilingüe y multicultural en un medio urbano. Este diciembre iniciará un ministerio satélite en la ciudad de Renton, Washington.*

## Recursos

- [Our Lady of Guadalupe Episcopal Church](#), Seattle, WA
- [St. Mary Magdalene Episcopal Church](#) - Manor, Texas (buen ejemplo del uso de las comunicaciones, bilingüe)
- [St. Matthew's Parish / Iglesia San Mateo Anglican / Episcopal Church](#) (buen ejemplo del uso de los recursos digitales, español)
- [Una invitación de la Navidad](#) - un ejemplo de un vídeo para usar en sus iglesias. Puede ser personalizado. Más información [aquí](#).
- [Comunidad de Todos los Santos](#) - Vídeo corto (hecho con imovie) invitando a personas a la Iglesia por Oscar Rozo
- [Vídeo](#) corto creado con Animoto por Eigner Juárez

# God, it's your Church

By Alfredo Feregrino, part of the Vestry Papers issue on [Tools for Evangelism](#) (November 2016)

*This article is also available in Spanish [here](#). Este artículo está disponible en español [aquí](#).*

## God, it's your church

As a Church planter, I know the importance of communication. There is a saying you may have heard: "If you do not speak, no one will hear you." In our efforts to evangelize and communicate the love of God to the world, we have powerful tools at our disposal which we can, and must use. If we do not talk, and if we do not communicate, no one will hear us.

I'd like to share an illustration about ants. When one ant goes and finds sugar, she returns and gives the good news to the others and then all can go to eat the sugar. But if the ant does not return to tell them the good news of the sugar, then they will not get to eat it. Our communication is to share the good news of how God has blessed us. We can share our blessings, our miracles, and our testimonies so that others know that God can also act in their lives. When we share the gospel, we are taking sugar to a hungry person.

## Communicating to spread the good news

The first tool I started using was Meetups. [Meetup.com](#) is an online social networking portal that facilitates offline group meetings all around the world. Meetup allows members to find and join groups unified by common interests like politics, books, games, hobbies, or in my case, the pursuit of spirituality. I started organizing "meetups" where people could talk about spirituality in Spanish. Although the experience was wonderful, I stopped arranging these meetups when I realized that I was not going to start a church this way. My main purpose was to get people to come to my new church.

Once my purpose was clearly defined, I decided to organize church events. As I have many friends in Seattle, I invited everyone to my events like the Day of the Dead, the Posadas, and to celebrate the Virgin of Guadalupe. As people came to these events, I told them that I was going to start a church and extended an invitation to join me. Thus began Our Lady of Guadalupe.

For the people in my church, [Facebook](#) has worked well for us. A couple of months ago we used [Facebook Live](#) to share our Day of the Dead event. Many people joined us to see the altars, the band, the people, and the art of the event that is special to our community. One important thing to remember is to keep social media pages updated with the most current information (time of service, address, how to contact, name of the leader, and parking etc.) so that people can easily access the information they need.

Another tool I recommend is [Mail Chimp](#). I use MailChimp to send a weekly email filled with photos, information, and upcoming events to my contacts that I know personally.

## Something to share

All these communication tools will not help if you have nothing to share. Remember that they are a complement, but not the answer. You cannot give what you do not have. So focus on sharing what you have in abundance. Think about what experiences you are going to share with

people who connect with you on the internet or via email to encourage them and help them grow. If the message is not going to be constructive, positive, or uplifting, then do not post it.

Communicating through social media has one big advantage – you can reach many people at the same time. In Jesus' time, he traveled to many places and never stayed in one location for too long. Now through social media, we can share with any part of the world quickly and effectively.

### **Unity and brotherhood**

The theology we believe and profess in Our Lady of Guadalupe is based on unity. The dream that Jesus has for us is that we are one. How can we make this dream possible? In our bilingual context we ask ourselves: how can we pray together in two languages and understand our cultures? The good news is that Anglo and Latino people who speak English and Spanish can be united. And the more people know and share this good news, the more people can be inspired and have hope that they can also have a bilingual ministry.

Although digital media is very important, especially to share the good news with the world, we need that face-to-face and one-on-one communication as well. Let's go out and talk to people. The idea is to scatter the seed, to inspire people, and to know that God will tend to the growing. Pray with me, "God, teach me your ways. It's your church, not mine. "

***Alfredo Feregrino** was born in Mexico city and has lived in Seattle since 1992 with his wife and twins. He has been ordained since 2013. He sees himself as a facilitator for unity and has the gift to unite people from different places and origins. He affirms that radical hospitality and inclusion are his greatest theological connections in his ministry and vocation. He believes that God's love is unconditional, abundant, and does not discriminate and Alfredo transmits that in his daily life. He planted Our Lady of Guadalupe in Seattle, a bilingual, multicultural congregation in a contemporary urban setting. He will start a new "satellite church" in Renton, Washington this month.*

### **Resources**

- [The Ministry of Communications](#) by Richielle Thompson, ECF Vital Practices blog post
- [Media, Art and Community](#) by Eric Law, *Vestry Papers*, November 2010
- [Sharing our Church Through Stories](#) by Barbara Dundon, *Vestry Papers*, November 2010