Introduction

2 Corinthians 2:1–17 is both an encouraging and a challenging passage. God chooses to use you and me to tell others about Jesus Christ through our words, actions and lives. One translation of verse 15 reads, “As far as God is concerned there is a sweet, wholesome fragrance in our lives. It is the fragrance of Christ within us, an aroma to both the saved and the unsaved all around us” (TLB). Sometimes we make evangelism more complicated than it has to be by relying so much on programs, initiatives, campaigns, or even copying other “successful” churches’ models. It really all begins with living lives that have the fragrance of Christ that causes other people to want to know more about why we live as we do. At that point, we need to be “ready to give an answer to anyone who asks about the reason for our hope” (1 Peter 3:15, NIV).
I like how Alan Hirsch puts it in his book *Right Here, Right Now: Everyday Mission for Everyday People* when he writes:

“The prevailing approach to evangelism and Christian mission is for churches to develop programs, services and events for the purpose of attracting unbelievers. There is nothing inherently wrong with wanting to be attractive, and we certainly wouldn’t want our churches to be unattractive. The problem is that we rely on the gathered services to do the mission and evangelism—as well as the discipleship, education and worship! To exacerbate the problem, outreach and ‘in-drag’ has become the dominant approach to evangelizing our culture. The New Testament church was definitely attractive to its communities, but not from this perspective. Their attractiveness was in their living . . . in what we call ‘witness.’ The love and presence of Jesus flowed through them into the various societies and communities they lived in. The secret of their success as a transformational movement is that it wasn’t a secret, but a life evident to all.”

Even though Evangelism Sunday is a yearly event, it is important that we place as much—or even more—focus on sending people out into the world to be the fragrance of Christ for others outside our church community. It is important to gather for worship and community, but it is also important to be sent out into our communities and lives, as followers of Jesus Christ, to share in our words and deeds the good news of Jesus with others. **We are a sent people and a “scent” people!**

For ideas and help with what it means for our churches to join with what God is already doing in our communities and in people’s lives, refer to Gathering 6 (“The Sent Community”) in *Engage: Mission*, the third resource in the *Engage* curriculum line.

**Download *Engage: Mission Sample Gathering 6***

pcusa.org/evangelism
Thinking about a few things before worship on Evangelism Sunday can make all the difference:

- What is the emphasis of this service? Is it primarily to teach your church members how to be better evangelists, or is it to invite others to the service? Consider this question as you are planning.

- Are there signs or friendly people directing visitors where to park and how to get into the sanctuary?

- People need to be truly welcomed when they arrive at your church by those who have the gift of hospitality. They can help people feel comfortable by greeting them warmly and asking if they need help finding anything (such as the nursery, restrooms, or children’s worship bags).

- A few weeks before Evangelism Sunday, have members invite to the service those with whom they have been developing relationships. Take some time to think through how you might connect with neighbors around the church property and invite them to join you that Sunday. You may want to plan an outreach event the Saturday before, working in the community for the community. Have members invite visitors, offering to pick them up if they need a ride or directions. Instruct those members to gather in the narthex, watching out for the people they invited in order to sit with them and aid them if necessary.

- Many people don’t want to be singled out as a visitor during the service. Instead, instruct your people beforehand to greet visitors warmly before the service and during the passing of the peace, and then thank them for coming when the service is over. In the Sundays before, you may offer examples of how to extend hospitality to people in sermon illustrations or even in a children’s sermon where it fits. Unless people feel the welcome of a warm congregation, a sermon based on hospitality will ring false.

- People are looking to see whether we’re for real. We can’t just preach what real is; we have to live it. Christianity has received much media attention for its lack of integrity, so people are watching for evidence of integrity, that is, whether our actions match our words. To that end, you may want to have a sign-up sheet in the narthex for the next community project that is
consistent with what you preach so that you can draw attention to it during your announcement of opportunities for further service. Some people want to help others and may get involved in service projects before they become disciples of Christ, so make sure they know how to get involved in service opportunities.

The pastor should have someone follow up with visitors. Ask a church member who is gifted in this area to do this, perhaps dropping by that evening with fresh baked goods and/or a church coffee mug just to say you’re glad they came to the service. If no one is home, leave the baked goods in a secure container on the doorstep with a handwritten note communicating this welcome message. Include church business cards or phone numbers of people to call if the visitors to your service have any questions or needs the church can help them with. If someone is home, the church member should not stay, but just introduce herself or himself and be available for any further questions, unless it’s obvious that the person wants company. The pastor should then follow up with a phone call later in the week. Offering personal relationships with people who care is one of the best gifts the church provides to others. As the old adage goes: People aren’t going to care how much you know until they know how much you care.

So plan carefully in advance, getting as many people as possible involved by making use of their gifts. Some have the gift of gab; others can make the space beautiful and welcoming. Some love to bake. Others have the gift of intuition for anticipating others’ needs. Some have a way with children. God gave us these gifts to use for ministry, and we are called to live into the Reformed practice of the “priesthood of all believers.” So let us use the varied gifts present in your church community this Sunday to the glory of God in Christ Jesus.

The Evangelism Sunday worship service calls for more participation from readers and congregants. Get good readers. Music, too, should be your best, drawing on the best gifts of the congregation. This suggests using music from the hymnal supplement *Sing the Faith* as well as from *Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal*. Your music director can also suggest music. The service needs to flow deeper into the knowledge of God. Hence, the following service includes a call to discipleship and optional testimony time, leading to communion.
Greeting and Announcements

We are the church, so we send greetings as the body of Christ, such as, “The Lord be with you!” or “Peace be unto you in the name of Christ Jesus the Lord” or something similar. The Book of Common Worship has additional greetings (see p. 48). We want to extend a hearty welcome to all who are gathered, not just visitors, and we want to sound like we mean it, not like we are just reading it. At the end of announcements, the pastor may say something like: “Now let us quiet our hearts and minds before God our Maker in order to prepare ourselves to worship the Lord.”

Prelude

Call to Worship

Leader: Gracious God, forever seeking us,
People: Open our minds to the truth of your care.
Leader: Open our hearts to the gentle power of your love.
People: Open our lips to share stories of faith.
Leader: Open our lives to do justice and show kindness.
People: Open our mouths to sing boldly and loudly your praises.

Hymn (select one): “I Love to Tell the Story” (Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal, no. 462); “I, the Lord of Sea and Sky,” a.k.a., “Here I Am, Lord (Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal, no. 69)

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God, forgive us that so little of your blessing reaches others through us. We are guilty of keeping silent when a word is needed. We treat your call to be fishers of people as a nice story to be kept at a distance.

Forgive us, bless us, encourage us, empower us. Make us bold disciples who graciously and authentically share the good news of Jesus Christ with others in our words and our actions. In Jesus’ name. Amen.
Assurance of Pardon
Psalm 103:12 or
Romans 5:1

Song of Praise

Passing of the Peace
As forgiven people of God, we are freed to love and extend God's peace to others.
The peace of Christ be with you.
And also with you.

Testimony: Have a member of the congregation share their faith story (a shortened version) with the congregation.

Prayer for Illumination
Most gracious God, prepare our hearts and minds to receive your words by the insight of the Holy Spirit through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture Readings and Sermon Starters:
The Scripture recommended for Evangelism Sunday is 2 Corinthians 2:14–15. (The recommended translation is The Message.) You may use the reflection provided in the introduction at the beginning of this guide. You may also want to use one of the lectionary readings, looking to exegete the passages with attention paid to its relevance to evangelism.

The lectionary passages for September 28, 2014 are:
Exodus 16:2–15
Psalm 78:1–4, 12–16
Philippians 2:1–13
Matthew 20:1–16

An excellent resource for preaching the Revised Common Lectionary is Feasting on the Word (Westminster John Knox Press).
Confession of Faith
You may together use the Apostles’ Creed or Nicene Creed.

Announcement of Further Opportunities for Service to Christ and Invitation to Discipleship

This is not a commercial for church activity, but a way of helping people see that what they do out in the world, together and individually, is supposed to be a faithful living out of the gospel in service to the world. You may want to draw attention to opportunities for further growth in faith during this time by letting folks know that they can know Christ more deeply in various church school classes or programs and service or mission opportunities. After this announcement, the pastor may wish to issue an invitation to further discipleship by saying something like the following:

This is not our church; it is Christ’s. We’re just a bunch of recovering sinners who have been saved by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Jesus bids anyone who wants to, regardless of what they’ve done in the past, or where they were born, or what their status in society is, to come and follow him and join the new community of those being made new in Christ. If you are interested in a deeper relationship with God through the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ, we would be happy to help you on your faith quest by journeying with you. If you would like to begin that journey today, we invite you to . . .

At this point, tell folks what they need to do. This may include coming forward for prayer during the hymn of commitment and having church members follow through with mentoring. Have church members (those who will appeal to a variety of folks) standing up front to answer questions, and invite people to meet with them. They can connect interested people with the right person for where they are now (do they need a Sunday school teacher, program leader, catechumenal leadership team, seekers class, mission project leader or potential friend?) and pray with them. Have the mentors report to the pastor, who will follow up.

Hymn of Commitment

This should reflect the sermon’s themes to lead people to a deeper commitment to Christ. Here are some possibilities from Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal:

“I, the Lord of Sea and Sky,” no. 69
“Spirit of the Living God,” no. 288
“Breathe on Me, Breath of God,” no. 286
Prayers of the People

This prayer needs to be tailored for your community. You may wish to make this a bidding prayer with a responsive refrain such as, “Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer” after each petition.

Offering

As we pray, so we offer ourselves unto God, giving of our time, talents, and resources in service to the Lord. Out of thanksgiving for all God has given us, let us freely give to share with those in need and spread the Lord’s blessings to all.

Doxology or Musical Ascription of Praise for God’s Providence

If communion is not celebrated, the following prayer may be offered. Otherwise, continue with the Invitation to the Table.

Prayer of Consecration

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray. You have so graciously provided for us out of the abundance of your love, dear Lord, and we give you thanks. We thank you for the beauty of this earth that sustains life, for society and its cultures, for those who serve others in your justice, peace, and love. Thank you for the love of family and friends and for those who have gone before us who have taught us your Way. For what else do we give thanks?

The congregation is free to respond here, perhaps ending each thanksgiving with the pastor saying, “For this, O Lord,” to which the people can respond, “We give you thanks and praise.” The prayer then ends with the following:

For all your many gifts you so graciously lavish upon us, we give you thanks and praise. Use these gifts of money and all our gifts, O Lord, to further your work of compassion in the world. To Christ’s glory we pray. Amen.

If communion is not celebrated, the service continues with the closing hymn.
Sacrament of Holy Communion

This communion service is designed to have the pastor serve the people bread by breaking off a piece of the loaf and handing it to them, followed by an elder with the common cup in which to dip the bread. Communicants are ushered to stand shoulder to shoulder in a line across the front of the sanctuary (as if kneeling at a rail) until all are served. The next line of communicants fills in as members return to their seats. Those who have not been baptized can join with the others and receive a blessing rather than the elements without drawing attention.

We give ourselves to God and find the Lord just keeps pouring out blessings upon us. Our Lord now invites us to this table, where we can feast upon the divine presence as we remember the lengths our Lord goes to show us how much we are loved.

For on the night he was betrayed by the kiss of a friend, the Lord Jesus dined for the last time with his disciples. He took bread (raise the bread), and after giving thanks to God, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take, eat. This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” (Put the bread down and begin pouring the juice or wine into the cup.) He also took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood, shed for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me” (Put the cup and pitcher down.)

Christ wants to share this meal with all his baptized followers. Even if you haven’t yet been baptized, the Lord wants to bless you, so you’re invited to come, too, to receive the blessing of our Lord’s grace poured out for all.

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.
Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to the Lord.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.
O Lord, we bless you, we praise you, we adore you, for you mold the world with your word, speaking darkness into light swirling on an axis of beauty. When we use our freedom to allow sin to permeate our world, you clothe us in mercy, freeing us from a slave’s oppression, shaping us to be your people, and bringing new life out of the exile of death. Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with all the saints of all times and places who forever sing to the glory of your holy name:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.

You are indeed holy, O Lord God, yet you want to be in communion with even the likes of us, going so far as to send Jesus, laid in a manger at his birth, to live among us, lowliest of the low. We give you thanks, Holy Christ, for teaching us God’s ways when you could have led a quiet life of peace without upsetting society. But you kept teaching and healing and judging those who hurt others until those in power defiled your innocence with joke justice, police brutality, and execution on a cross. Beaten, alone, betrayed, forsaken, still you poured out love, crying, “Father, forgive them.” We praise you that the force of your love prevails over death, calling us in resurrection victory to follow you in faith:

Dying, you destroyed death.  
Rising, you restore life.  
Lord Jesus, come again in glory.

Speak once more, O Lord, that your Spirit might grace us with your presence, so that the bread we break and the cup we drink might be for us the communion of the body and blood of Christ. May we know his lifeblood coursing through our veins, our bodies incorporated into his Life, as we join with all the saints of all times and places to minister in praise to your name.

Through Christ, in Christ, with Christ, all glory and honor are yours, Almighty God, now and forever more. Amen.
(Raise and break the bread.) When we break the bread, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?  
(Raise the cup.) When we give thanks over the cup, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ?

The gifts of God for the people of God.

Thanks be to God!

As people are ushered forward down one side of the sanctuary to await their turn in lining up and being served shoulder to shoulder, people sing communion hymns such as nos. 2254–2269 in Sing the Faith. The pastor takes the loaf, breaks off pieces of bread to hand to each communicant, followed closely by an elder with the cup for intinction. The pastor may hand the bread to the elder to hold while she or he lays hands and prays for those she or he knows need prayer before serving the elements. The pastor can also lay hands on those who have not been baptized with a blessing, such as, “Bless, O Lord, this, your child, that (he/she) may come to know and love you in all joy.”

Prayer after Communion: You know us, Lord. You know our faults, our failures, our denials, yet still you deign to dine with us. Make us worthy of your grace. Increase our faith. Embolden our witness so that as we rise from this place, we might be your hands reaching out to bless and heal and hold a broken world. This we ask for your honor and dominion and glory now and forevermore. Amen.

Hymn: “Lift High the Cross” (Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal, no. 826)

Charge and Blessing
And now Lord,… grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus. —Acts 4:29–30

Postlude
The Sent Community

Scripture
Luke 10:1–12 Jesus sends out the disciples.
Acts 1:1–8 The Holy Spirit is at work.

Prayer
O God, you have given us the gift of community; we are grateful for the nurture and preparation for ministry we experience in Christ's body. Never let us forget that the love and healing we experience in the faith community are always preparing us to love our neighbor and become part of what you, God, are doing to heal our communities. We are humbled, a bit fearful, and excited that you would use our lives for your purpose of righting ancient wrongs. Show us again your way in Jesus. Amen.

Encounter
The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has a clear sense of purpose in being sent to do the work of Christ. Consider the following statement from the Book of Order:

The Apostolicity of the Church
Apostolicity is God’s gift to the Church in Jesus Christ. In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God sends the Church into the world to share the gospel of God’s redemption of all things and people. Because in Christ the Church is apostolic, it strives to proclaim this gospel faithfully. The Church receives the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ through the testimony of those whom Christ sent, both those whom we call apostles and those whom Christ has called throughout the long history of the Church. The Church has been and is even now sent into the world by Jesus Christ to bear that testimony to others. The Church bears witness in word and work that in Christ the new creation has begun, and that God who creates life also frees those in bondage, forgives sin, reconciles brokenness, makes all things new, and is still at work in the world. To be members of the body of Christ is to be sent out to pursue the mission of God and to participate in God’s new creation,
God’s kingdom drawing the present into itself. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) affirms the Gospel of Jesus Christ as received from the prophets and apostles, and stands in continuity with God’s mission through the ages.

The Church strives to be faithful to the good news it has received and accountable to the standards of the confessions. The Church seeks to present the claims of Jesus Christ, leading persons to repentance, acceptance of Christ alone as Savior and Lord, and new life as his disciples.

The Church is sent to be Christ’s faithful evangelist:
- making disciples of all nations in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit;
- sharing with others a deep life of worship, prayer, fellowship, and service;
- and participating in God’s mission to care for the needs of the sick, poor, and lonely; to free people from sin, suffering, and oppression; and to establish Christ’s just, loving, and peaceable rule in the world.¹

**Explore**

The church is called to do the work of Christ, to be the means of his action in and for the world . . . . Mission, in its widest as well as its more focused senses, is what the church is there for. God intends to put the world to rights; he has dramatically launched this project through Jesus. Those who belong to Jesus are called, here and now, in the power of the Spirit, to be agents of that putting-to-rights purpose.²

Read Luke 10:1–12, a passage describing how Jesus sent his followers into mission.

As we encounter again Jesus’ instructions to his first followers, we realize that these instructions are applicable for our mission today.

- Jesus sends them out two by two. We are not sent out alone!
- Once again, we experience Jesus telling his followers that the harvest field is plentiful. There are people all around drowning because they do not know the love of God in Jesus or are bound by injustice.
- Jesus tells them not to take a purse or bag or sandals and not to greet anyone on the road. What strange advice until we realize that these were

the same instructions given to the Jews on pilgrimage to worship God in the temple in Jerusalem. In other words, your service to others is directly connected to your praise and worship of God! Are we helping one another see that worship is not an end unto itself but that it’s about equipping and nurturing the body of Christ to serve people in our communities?

- Jesus teaches, “Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house!’ And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. Remain in the same house . . . Do not move about from house to house..” In other words, if you meet people interested in who you are and the spirit of your life, then invest in them. Share life with them, and give the Holy Spirit room to work in your works of service! In other words, mission takes time. Relationships take time. Remember the body of Christ is equipping us for this mission.

- If you are not received, move on. Don’t spend your time endlessly debating your beliefs with people not open to who you are and what you are offering.

In what ways is your church sending out people in mission? If it is not sending people out, what are some of the roadblocks your church is facing? Are there opportunities for youth and adults to participate in mission trips throughout the year? If not, where do you think you would like the church to serve in mission? What critical need could your community of faith address—poverty, homelessness, hunger, domestic violence? Have you been called to God’s mission and sent to serve? Have you ever been teamed up with someone for mission? Is there someone in your church that you would like to team up with to do God’s work? What effort would you like to make “to put the world to rights” and thus cooperate with God?

**Engage**

In *A New Kind of Christian*, a significant text for what is being referred to as “Emergence Christianity,” Brian D. McLaren writes,

For Christ, his “called ones” (which is what the Greek term for “church” really means) were also to be his sent ones. He trained those he called to follow him as apprentices so that they could be sent in his ongoing mission to teach his good news. In this line of thinking about the church, we don’t recruit people to be customers of our products or consumers of our religious programs; we recruit them to be colleagues in our mission. The church doesn’t exist to satisfy the consumer demands of believers;
the church exists to equip and mobilize men and women for God’s mission in the world. Thankfully, his mission isn’t to make more and more people more and more religious! His mission is much bigger than an individualistic or even human project. How big is it? Well, I guess you’d have to read Isaiah 2:1–5; 9:2–7; 25:6–9; 35:1–10; 58:5–12; and 65:17–19 to get a feel for its full dimensions. That, to me, is a vision of the future that informs a mission for the church. That’s something I can be excited about for the new millennium.3

The full dimensions of God’s mission spoken by Isaiah include such magnificent expressions as these:

- “They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” (2:4)
- “He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore.” (9:7)
- “Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?” (58:6–7)
- “For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.” (65:17)

In every aspect of its structure and organization, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) believes, along with McLaren, that “the church exists to equip and mobilize men and women for God’s mission in the world.” Since 1837 the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has been sending mission co-workers around the world. There are now almost two hundred mission workers in more than fifty countries.

Through the Evangelism and Church Growth ministry, these Engage resources have been created to equip and mobilize those who are called as disciples to share the gospel of Jesus Christ, grow in their discipleship, and respond in commitment to God’s mission.

Through Presbyterian World Mission, three campaigns engaging in God’s mission have recently been launched:

1. Evangelism: training pastors for community transformation
2. Poverty Alleviation: educating 100,001 children by 2020
3. Reconciliation: ending violence against women and children

World Mission (www.persbyterianmission.org) seeks to connect with congregations desiring to participate in God’s mission through these campaigns for poverty alleviation, evangelism, or reconciliation.

Express

Watch the video Engaging the Community from the online training on the Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.) website: www.pcusa.org/evangelism. The video is in chapter 4.

In Engage: Discipleship, we encountered the importance of spending more time in our spheres of influence to build more intentionally our relationships with people outside the church. As we continue to enter into our spheres of influence, it is also important to understand who lives in our community and to understand the needs of the community. Demographic information that you receive from a company like Mission Insight is important, but nothing can take the place of praying for and meeting people in your community.

Where are the gathering places for people in your community? Determine the place where you would like to spend time (an hour or two) this week discerning how God is already at work in the community and talking with people about life and faith. How would the Luke 10 passage inform your community visit and interaction?

Make plans to go to a location where people hang out in your community: a park, coffee shop, mall, or restaurant. Maybe you already hang out in a place where people in the community gather. For example, if you are part of a sports league or coach in a league, then that could be your context to be with people and have a conversation around the needs and faith of people in the community. Make sure you have a mission partner to go with you.

Once you are in conversation with people in a particular gathering place, ask them if they have a few minutes to talk about the needs and religious attitudes of people in the community. Tell them which church you are from and that you want to be more present with people in the community. If they say they’d be interested in talking with you, then ask the following questions:

- What is the greatest need in this community?
- How could a church help meet this need?
• When you hear the name Jesus, what comes to mind for you?
• When you hear the word Christian, what’s the first thing that comes to mind?

Spend time in preparation with your mission partner. Share why you both feel led to talk with people in the spot you’ve chosen: the park, coffee shop, or favorite hangout. Decide on the day in which you want to be part of discerning the needs of your community and what God is already doing there. Pray for each other as you are sent on this mission trip.

Spend time with your mission partner debriefing the experience. Share what you observed and discovered about people in your community. What are their needs? How can your church help? Who is Jesus to those who shared with you? What do they think of Christians? What is God already up to in your community?

Pray. This week give thanks for the expansive community of individuals who are participating in God’s mission throughout the world. Consider ordering and making use of the Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study. The following description appears on the website www.presbyterianmission.org:

Where are the young adults? How often have you wondered, where are the young adults in the PC(USA)? Wonder no longer. The 2014 Presbyterian Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study is devoted to the theme of young adults in the church. Its stories, many told by young adults, lift up how Presbyterians of all ages are engaging and joining with Presbyterian young adults in reforming the church for Christ’s mission.