



Lutheran Evangelism Initiative

A Congregation's Guide

Written By:

Dr. Frederick W. Baltz

Pastor, St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Galena, Illinois
and President, Institute of Lutheran Theology

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About the Lutheran Evangelism Initiative (LEI)

The program presented in this guide is adapted from a program designed and used by St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Galena, Illinois. It was inspired by the Preaching, Teaching, Reaching programs of the 1950's and '60's. These "PTR's" were developed first by the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and soon became pan-Lutheran across the whole United States. They represent a commitment to evangelism not seen since.

St. Matthew Lutheran Church named its program simply Evangelical Renewal. St. Matthew Lutheran Church held two such renewals, several years apart. Other churches were involved in these, and two area churches held events of their own after being involved with St. Matthew's first event. The WordAlone Network offered a workshop on this program at its national convention in 2006. Through that workshop others became interested in the program. The planning committee of the Augustana District, LCMC, deemed it worthy of still further attention, and determined to present it at its February, 2012, theological conference: *The Meaning and Means of Conversion*. Those involved with the Lutheran Evangelism Initiative hope that it will go on to become a resource with a significant impact for many churches. Responses from churches that use it in the near future will be sought to improve the program for those who use it later.

Foreword

A new wind is blowing for many Lutheran churches in North America. Evangelical outreach, long nearly absent from among denomination-encouraged concerns, has become the subject of major interest for those congregations that have identified themselves with the Lutheran reform movements of recent years. From church leaders comes the urgent call for evangelism: theology, practice, and training. This Lutheran Evangelism Initiative program is offered to churches looking for effective ways to engage in the vital ministry of evangelism to which the Lord has called us all.

*Jesus said to them,
“The harvest is
plentiful, but the
laborers are few.
Therefore pray
earnestly to the Lord
of the harvest to send
out laborers into his
harvest.”*

Luke 10:2 (ESV)

An Overview

The Lutheran Evangelism Initiative requires time. LEI has three parts, or phases, and the first and third parts will require months. The full program will require half a year at the least, and can require a full year. None of this time is wasted simply waiting for something to happen or for some calendar date to arrive. Throughout the months given to LEI a planned, strategic sequence of events will unfold. The first indication of how substantial LEI can be in the life of the church is the amount of time that it will require. LEI is not to be a “flash in the pan” which is soon gone and forgotten.

First a determination must be made to proceed with Evangelical Renewal and commit the necessary resources of time, energy, and money. This may be a Council decision, and it may be helpful to have the decision ratified at an Annual Meeting or other meeting of the voters, so that it truly becomes the whole church’s effort. Once the decision has been made to move ahead with the program, the necessary committees must be formed for organizing the event, and a date must be set for the Renewal Sunday.

In the weeks and months preceding the Renewal Sunday the church is encouraged and helped to focus on evangelism. Resources are provided so that each member can participate in some way beyond the ordinary. In this time leading to Renewal Sunday, all members will be helped consistently to know and understand what will happen on Renewal Sunday when it arrives, and they will be encouraged to help make the most of this day. Inviting is one of the primary ways they will be able to take part. Much that happens on



*And you, child,
will be called the
prophet of the Most
High; for you will go
before the Lord to
prepare his ways,
to give knowledge of
salvation to his people
in the forgiveness
of their sins.*

Luke 1:76-77 (ESV)

Renewal Sunday is purposely “invite-able.” Members may naturally invite others to the morning worship service, the dinner which follows, the break-out sessions/small group meetings in the early afternoon, and especially to the late afternoon community-focused event with its special guest presenter. A brief service with prayers for healing ends the day, and this is an occasion to invite those for whom such prayers would be especially welcomed.

Other area churches may be encouraged to take part, especially in the Renewal Sunday itself. In the time leading up to Renewal Sunday these churches may be invited to participate, and with sufficient lead time so they can become involved if they wish. (The church hosting the renewal should offer to reciprocate if these other area churches hold their own Renewal in the future.) Some examples of participation by other churches are: providing musicians for Renewal Sunday; lending the help of other trained persons such as pastors, youth workers, and teachers for events on Renewal Sunday as needed; asking these other churches to join in a prayer ministry for the sake of the outreach of all the churches; and (very important) sending members to some or all the events of Renewal Sunday.

*Philip found Nathanael
and said to him, “We
have found him of whom
Moses in the Law and
also the prophets wrote,
Jesus of Nazareth, the
son of Joseph.”*

*Nathanael said to him,
“Can anything good
come out of Nazareth?”*

*Philip said to him,
“Come and see.”*

John 1:4-46 (ESV)

Renewal Sunday is a full day. The church will gather for worship in the morning with a guest preacher invited for the occasion. A dinner follows the special service, and this should be arranged so that members are not distracted by excess duties in the kitchen; the dinner should be catered if possible. A speaker may address those who attend the dinner. Following this dinner small group sessions may take place in individual rooms. This can be a time for the men’s group, women’s group, youth group, and other organizations within the church to involve their members and friends. The focus of each of these small groups should be outreach, even if in a very general sense. This could also be a time for the presenter at the coming, community-wide event to meet the public in an informal setting.

Later in the afternoon the community-wide event is to occur that has been publicized for the entire community and the area churches. In this community-focused event a special presenter will bring his or her personal witness to the Gospel of Christ. This person may be a well-known athlete, a musician, an individual who has survived extreme or tragic situations with the help of God, etc. This person should be chosen as one who (1) can testify to Christ from personal experience, and (2) will be of interest to people who have shown no interest in Christ or the church. It may be a wise choice to have this event in a place other than the church building, a neutral location that will not repel guests who have problems with churches.

Immediately following the community-wide event, a brief worship service brings Renewal Sunday to its conclusion. In the New Testament the proclamation of the Gospel is often accompanied by healing. This concluding service should offer prayers for healing for all in attendance who express their desire for these prayers. This opportunity should be announced beforehand.

Thus, the Renewal Sunday follows the general pattern of preaching (morning worship), teaching (dinner speaker, break-out sessions), and reaching (community-focused special presenter.)

Following the Evangelical Renewal Sunday the congregation continues to mature in its outreach, and assists any who have expressed interest in the Christian faith because of the events of the Evangelical Renewal Sunday. This is the third phase of LEI, and it keeps the activity and interest from abruptly ending with Sunday's events.

Jesus said: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Matt. 11:28-30 (ESV)



Suggested Schedule for LEI

Lutheran Evangelism Initiative (LEI) begins with the leadership of the church. Pastor(s) and Council should become familiar with LEI through this guide, and after prayer and discussion they will need to determine whether to proceed with LEI.

If they decide to take the next step, at this point it becomes necessary to begin to inform the congregation about LEI and what it will entail. One way to do this is to hold an actual business meeting of the church with LEI the only agenda item. A vote to proceed with LEI can be a means of helping secure the commitment of the members—it is then *their* decision. The business meeting environment can also be a means of affirming that evangelical outreach truly is the business of the church, the real reason for buildings, budgets, preaching, teaching, fellowship, and programs.

For budgeting purposes, know that the church will need to pay for a guest preacher, a special guest presenter who may be found through a speakers' bureau, a dinner, media advertising, food and rooms as necessary, possibly a neutral setting such as a school gym for a large number of people, and educational resources including Bible studies. There may also be printing and other advertising costs. The Council should prepare an estimate for the congregation as it considers whether to conduct the LEI.

When the final commitment has been made to conduct the LEI, the necessary committee chairs must be secured.

- Event Committee
- Education Committee (or the church's own, if it has one)
- Promotion and Publicity Committee
- Food and Arrangements Committee
- Site Committee
- Worship Committee (or the church's own, if it has one)

The chairs of these committees will work together, and will secure members for their respective committees.

The Event Committee will plan the events of Renewal Sunday, and any other special events the church may wish to include in its LEI. These events are the breakout sessions (if held), and the community-wide event for the afternoon of Renewal Sunday. This committee will secure the speaker for the dinner and for the community-wide event.

*By grace you have been
saved through faith.
And this is not your
own doing; it is the gift
of God, not a result of
works, so that no one
may boast.*

*For we are his
workmanship, created
in Christ Jesus for
good works, which God
prepared beforehand,
that we should walk
in them.*

Ephesians 2:8-10 (ESV)

The Education Committee will develop or find Bible study material and other relevant material for the congregation in relation to evangelical outreach. It will also explore effective ways to assist the pastor(s) in teaching the faith, especially to inquirers who express interest in baptism.

The Promotion and Publicity Committee will work to help all in the church understand the three parts of LEI so they may participate fully. The events of Renewal Sunday will require special publicity in local area media. If other churches are invited to participate, the Promotion and Publicity Committee will encourage them to do so. The Worship Committee will be involved if other churches offer to be involved in the worship services of Renewal Sunday.

The Food and Arrangements Committee will be in charge of the dinner on Renewal Sunday, and of any other meals or snacks that accompany LEI events through the year, if requested.

The Site Committee will arrange where the various events and activities take place. In most cases this will simply be a matter of their approval, so that no two groups inadvertently plan to use a meeting room at the same time. The most important task for the Site Committee is the selection and securing of the venue for the community-wide event on the afternoon of Renewal Sunday.

The Worship Committee is responsible for any special worship events throughout the LEI, especially the worship services of Renewal Sunday (morning worship and evening healing service).

Youth Encounter is a resource your church may wish to use, especially on Renewal Sunday. If a team is booked for your Renewal Sunday, team members can provide Bible study for youth, hold a breakout session for/with youth, and participate in the worship services. This is an excellent way to make your Renewal Sunday that much more special while involving the youth of your church. The Youth Encounter team might also present its own concert the night before Renewal Sunday. The team might also be part of the community-wide event Sunday afternoon.

The pastor is the chief evangelist for the church. The pastor should meet with the committee chairs to help them develop a master plan and schedule for the entire LEI. This cooperative work of pastor and committee chairs will establish the basic form the LEI will take. Then the committees can carry out their individual assignments.

*You have multiplied, O
Lord my God, your
wondrous deeds and
your thoughts toward
us; none can compare
with you! I will
proclaim and tell of
them, yet they are
more than can be told.
Psalm 40:5 (ESV)*



Phase One: Hearing the Word

In the weeks and months prior to Renewal Sunday the members and friends of the church will be encouraged to become personally involved in LEI. They must first understand LEI, and this is the task of the Education Committee. Brief talks during announcements in church, coffee/discussions, forums, newsletter articles, website articles, bulletin announcements, and displays can help accomplish this.

*The word is near you,
in your mouth and in
your heart – that is,
the word of faith that
we proclaim.*

*So faith comes from
hearing, and hearing
through the word of
Christ.*

Romans 10:8, 17 (ESV)

Each member should be encouraged to do something personal and meaningful as part of the first phase of LEI. Suggestions include:

- praying that God would bless the LEI, and use it to reach people
- becoming involved in a special Bible study
(by Education Committee)
- becoming involved in an evangelism or witnessing class
(by Education Committee)
- reading the entire Gospel of John
- committing to attend worship seven Sundays in a row
- inviting someone to the services of worship
- reading and discussing a book or video suggested by the pastor

The worship services during this first phase promote awareness of the LEI and the evangelical outreach of the congregation. Prayers of the congregation should lift these up. Sermons should refer to evangelical outreach where appropriate. A special word from a council or committee member within the service can be very helpful. Throughout the first phase, whatever its length, evangelical outreach should be emphasized, and LEI in particular.

Phase Two: Renewal Sunday

Phase one has been leading up to the central event of LEI, the Renewal Sunday itself. Members and friends have by now invested effort of their own. They have had adequate time and opportunity to know what will happen on Renewal Sunday, and to be involved through the day. They have been encouraged to bring friends and acquaintances to the events of the day. The Food and Arrangements Committee is ready by means of reservations for the dinner, and they have allowed for last-minute guests who have not made registrations. If it is at all within the area of possibility for the church, this dinner should be catered. Then no one from the church has to be involved in cooking or clean-up. This should be a Mary moment, not a Martha moment, for everyone in the church.

The Promotion and Publicity Committee will have made known to the community what is available to them on this day. Four “invite-able” events will happen in succession. The willingness of church members to actually invite others to these events will be extremely important. Members must use their judgment about whom they should invite to which of the events. The community-wide event in the afternoon should be something of interest to all.

The worship service(s) of the morning should be planned to uphold and celebrate the church’s call to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There are, of course, many avenues for doing this. One avenue is music, and the Youth Encounter team, as well as a multi-church choir can play an important part here. (The first time St. Matthew Lutheran Church held a Renewal Sunday, choir members from other churches joined St. Matthew members to form a choir, because St. Matthew Lutheran had not been able to form a choir by itself. Since that Renewal Sunday, St. Matthew Lutheran Church has always had a choir of its own. This is an example of how a Renewal Sunday can change a church.) The guest preacher should be chosen with evangelical renewal in mind.

*May all who
seek you rejoice and
be glad in you!
May those who love
your salvation
say evermore,
“God is great!”*

Psalms 68:3-4 (ESV)

The four invite-able events of Renewal Sunday are:

- the worship service(s) in the morning
- the dinner and optional breakout sessions
- the community-wide event
- the concluding service with prayers for healing

Members are encouraged to invite family and friends to these events, and actually to bring them as guests as natural and appropriate.

Phase Three: Continuing in the Word

*Jesus said:
“If you continue
in my word, you are
truly my disciples;
and you will know the
truth, and the truth
will make you free.”
John 8:31-31 (NRSV)*

As hoped-for results of the first two phases, the congregation may see renewed interest in evangelical outreach, new people who are inquirers about the Christian faith, and possibly marginal or lapsed members who have shown interest in returning. The third phase of LEI builds on these results.

Renewed interest in evangelical outreach can lead to additional classes and Bible studies for helping the members to be evangelists. In-depth study of evangelism and church growth literature might naturally follow for some under the direction of the pastor. A refinement or up-grading of the evangelism ministry of the congregation can proceed with the benefit of the learned experiences of the first two phases. For instance, if the community-wide event proves to be very exciting in terms of reaching people with the Word, then perhaps more such events can be sponsored in the future, whether they involve persons brought to the community from outside, or take the form of other public events such as internet classes or special programs related to apologetic issues.

If persons are identified who wish to learn more about the Christian faith, phase three must include the provision of that opportunity for them. These persons should have been given ways to indicate their interest through discreet means during phases one and two. This third phase can become a time for the church to intentionally improve its means for instructing potential new believers. Some of these persons may go on to receive baptism. Others may go on to be “re-evangelized” and return to the services of worship, and to the other ministries of the church. Depending on the length of time the church usually requires for an individual to become a member, a new-members celebration may be scheduled to conclude the third phase.

During this third phase the church’s work of world missions is a natural topic for exploration. This is, after all, evangelism beyond the local church’s walls. Opportunities for this include inviting someone with mission experience to be a guest preacher or teacher. Of course, new missions starts in the United States are also a timely and important subject in the third phase. LEI may help bring about a new commitment to support one or more missions. Such discussions and decisions properly belong to the third phase of LEI.

Resource List

The following are resources that can be valuable to any church planning a Lutheran Evangelism Initiative. Please note that books and other media are usually not developed from a Lutheran viewpoint, so theological adjustments may have to be made. Eventually the suggestions from other pastors and churches which have done LEI experiences will become valuable resources as they become available.

Some Helpful Evangelism Books

Coming of Age by David Anderson, Paul Hill, and Roland Martinson

Conversational Evangelism: How to Listen and Speak So You Can Be Heard by Norman and David Geisler

Evangelism in the Early Church by Michael Green

Evangelism That Works by George Barna, especially the section on five kinds of evangelism

Questioning Evangelism by Randy Newman

The Celtic Way of Evangelism by George Hunter III

The Heart of Evangelism by Jerram Barrs

Why Men Hate Going to Church by David Murrow

Adult Studies from Sola Publishing (www.solapublishing.org)

A-3010 Who Is Jesus? An Introductory Bible Study

W-7010 One for All: *Experiencing the Exclusive Claim of Christ*

A-2010 Three Keys to What Lutherans Believe

A-7010 We Still Believe

Connections Magazine (Bi-monthly Periodical)

Youth and Young Adults

How to Stay Christian in College (book) by J. Budziszewski

Youth Encounter (www.youthencounter.org) 3490 Lexington Ave N. Suite 300 St. Paul, MN 55126

Upper Room Devozine: <http://upperroom.org/devozine/2012/janfeb/default.asp?week=current>

Apologetics

The Real Face of Atheism by Ravi Zacharias

Is God a Moral Monster? by Paul Copan

I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist by Norman L. Geisler, Frank Turek (book/DVD series)

What's So Great About Christianity by Dinesh D'Souza

Show Me God by Fred Heeren

For Councils and Committees

The Great Commission Retreat available from LCMC and on The Disciple Ship site (see below)

Simple Church by Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger

Essential Church by Thom Rainer and Sam Rainer

World Missions

Igniting a Passion for Missions by Bill Moberly

Media and Internet

The Disciple Ship <http://tdship.org/index.shtml>

Did you know...? (full page newspaper ad example, see next page)



NASA image

Did you know...?

- The universe was not always here, as scientists once thought. It began in a mysterious instant known as the “Big Bang.” All that exists—matter, energy, time itself, physical laws, and even space—came into being in that instant, *from nothing*
- If the force of gravity had been different by a fraction of only .00000000000000000000000000000001, there could be no life in the universe?
- After the “Big Bang,” the universe expanded at just the critical rate. If it had been less than a millionth part slower or faster, there could be no stars, and therefore no life.
- There are many more known “coincidences” like these of unimaginable improbability, and each one had to happen or there could be no life anywhere.
- The story of the birth of the universe and of the earth lines up with the story of the creation in Genesis, the first book of the Bible. This is true of no other religion’s creation story.
- So far no one has been able to make life in a laboratory, but some insist that life was just a matter of time and chance, without any supernatural activity.
- Atheists claim to be the rational ones in their denial of the existence of God, even in spite of such overwhelming numbers that point to a Creator. Agnostics don’t allow God to be important to them.

God is **real** and God is **important!** It isn’t a matter of what people may think, no matter who they are, no matter how many. God has revealed himself in Jesus Christ. We at _____ Church are here to make Jesus known. We hope you will join us.

(Church name and address goes here.)