REC 100: Revitalizing Mission in the Parish: Part I
A monastery in Germany trained Christian brothers for various responsibilities. One Christian brother in training lived in mortal fear of being called upon to preach the sermon in the daily chapel. As this young man thought about his apprehension, he decided to head it off by going to the monitor of the monastery and discussing the problem with him. In the course of the conversation he said, “Sir, I am willing to do any menial job that you assign me. I would be delighted to go out into the fields and plow, fertilize, and irrigate them by hand to increase productivity. If you would care for me to do so, I would be happy to get down on my hands and knees and scrub the floors here in the monastery. It would be a privilege for me to polish the silverware. Any menial job that you call upon me to do I shall be happy to do. However, please don’t ask me to preach a sermon in chapel.”
The monitor, looking at the young man and recognizing that an assignment to preach was exactly what he needed, replied, “Tomorrow you are to conduct the chapel and preach the sermon.” The next day as this young brother stood behind the pulpit and looked out into the eyes of his peers who had assembled in the sanctuary, he was greatly apprehensive. He was so nervous he hardly knew what to do. He started his sermon by asking, “Brothers, do you know what I am going to say?” They all shook their heads in the negative. He continued, “Neither do I. Let’s stand for the benediction. Pax vobiscum.” Naturally, the monitor was infuriated by this. He said to the young man, “I am going to give you a second chance. Tomorrow you are to conduct the service in the chapel, and this time I want you to preach a real message.”
The next day the scene was the same. And the young man began as he had the day before, “Brothers, do you know what I am going to say?” When they all nodded their heads in the affirmative, He said, “Since you already know, there is no point in my saying it. Let’s stand for the benediction. Pax vobiscum.” The monitor was livid with anger. Once again he went to the young brother and literally roared at him, “I am tired of your chicanery. Tomorrow I am going to give you a third chance. If you don’t come through, I am going to put you in solitary confinement on bread and water.” The third day the scene was the same. The brother began as he had the two previous days, “Brothers, do you know what I am going to say?” Some nodded their heads in the affirmative. Some shook their heads in the negative. He then told them, “Let those who know tell those who don’t. Let’s stand for the benediction. Pax vobiscum.”

In one sense the monk was right, those of us who know are to tell those who don’t know . . . Which brings us to REC 100
To Revitalize Mission in the Parish
Means . . .

• Remaining Committed to Prayer Book Worship as we have approved in the REC
• “Reaching out without dumbing down” (Marva Dawn book title), the worship of God or the content of the faith
• Rising from a preservation mindset to promotion of the Gospel . . . The dual movement of Holy Altar Table to Mission and Mission to the Throne of God should drive everything we do . . . Therefore mission/evangelism is more than a committee tacked on to everything else . . .
• Resulting in the making of disciples in the Anglican Way to become worshippers through the multiplication of prayer book congregations
• Realizing that the world of post modernity is different and has rendered certain approaches to evangelism much less effective . . .

Growing a Church is not the Way It Use to Be . . .
The Challenge of the World of Post Modernity: “The old ‘certainties’ of modernism derived from the Enlightenment are being assailed by the diverse ‘uncertainties’ of postmodernism . . . Whereas modernism was strictly rational, the new ways of thinking are fuzzy, suspicious of logical thinking, unsure of progress” (John Finney, *Recovering the Past*, pp. 34-35)

Characteristics of Post Modernity: The Challenge of Reaching the New Millennial

- Distrust of meta narratives, systems that explain everything else, including belief, moral and justice systems (i.e. worldview etc.)
- Approaches not from the rational and the mind but from experience and the personal
- Approaches life from the immanent, presence, and not from the transcendent
- Truth is relative and impersonal
- Seeks Community
- When Christians approach with one way to salvation (even though there is only one way) Post Moderns see this as meta-narrative
- When Christians emphasize a set of doctrine, the Post Modern sees this as impersonal
- When Christians refer to Jesus Christ as Divine, the Post Millennial response is “so what . . . Where’s the humanity in Him?”
- For Christians Truth is absolute but not abstract . . . Rather it is Incarnational . . .
- When Christians approach with a plan for individual salvation the Post Millennial wants to know what’s in it for me . . . For the community
What this means for evangelism and mission is . . .

- Post moderns are suspicious of the big event approach to conversion such as crusades and tent meetings. . . They are too impersonal . . .
- Going door-to-door is not only unsafe but viewed with suspicion . . .
- Canned Gospel presentations appear as a “one-size-fits-all” approach to people who want diversity and most of all a customized approach “just for me.”
- When we advertize our own set of meta narrative (Anglican, Biblical, Evangelical, Sacramental etc.) we appeal only to someone who already holds these views, who are fewer and fewer in number in society . . .
- When we try to explain ourselves as those Christians who are not liberal, against ordaining women and same sex marriage, we attempt to reach people by saying “what we’re not.”

But the Scriptures Speak to All the Situations Calling for a Biblical and Apostolic, Pre-Christendom Rethink . . .

1. The Use of an Emmaus Road View of Conversion as well as the Damascus Road Model . . .
2. The Western Church Returns to the parish-mission-model and away from missions as something that happen far away
First Presentation
Fishing With A Net: The Community of the People of God Reaching the Communities of the World . . .

Jesus’ and His Disciples Fished with Nets not Hooks
“On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats which was Simon’s, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch’”  
(Luke 5:1-11)

To the Contrary . . . Fishing With Hooks Implies . . . One Way of Doing Evangelism that Translates into the “Silver Bullet” Expectation . . .
1. The Silver Bullet Approach Means Usually Looking for the Magical Program But the Mission of the New Testament is Not a Program per se . . .

2. The Silver Bullet Approach Usually Means Placing God’s People Under Tremendous Guilt to Take on the Evangelism Task By Themselves . . . But in the New Testament an individual may introduce someone to Christ (i.e. Andrew with Peter) . . . but in reality it takes More Than One Becoming Fully involved in the Conversion of a Person; Mission Is therefore the effort of the whole Gospel Community of the Church . . . Usually It is a Group of People That Brings a Person to Christ . . . Biblical Mission and Evangelism are thus a community effort . . .
3. The Silver Bullet Approach All Too Often Treats All Believers As Though They Have the Gift of Evangelism. Yet the New Testament Indicates That Some Do . . . While Certainly Not All . . . And Most Don’t . . . Have the Wonderful Gift of Evangelism . . .

Rather, in the New Testament . . . St. Paul offers a twofold approach distinguishing Evangelist from individual believers’ responsibility to evangelize:

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may now how to answer everyone” (Colossians 4:2-6).
“For evangelists, Paul asks for opportunities to share Christ and for courage to proclaim the gospel clearly (verses 3-4). But he doesn’t suggest the Colossians pray as much for themselves. Rather, evangelistic believers are to pray for the evangelists’ ministry, to be wise in their conduct toward outsiders, and to look for opportunities to answer outsiders. . . . This is why Paul’s twofold approach is so strategic: We need both gifted evangelists and ordinary believers who are habitually evangelistic” (Michael Frost, Surprise the World, pp. 3-4, 27)

4. The Silver Bullet, Fishing-With-Hooks Approach Has Tended To Have As Its Goal the Making of Converts Instead of Disciples . . . Are More About Obtaining a Decision Than Making a Disciple . . . And as such fail to see the task of discipleship as reforming a person into the Image of Christ as a true worshipper of the Living God . . .
“Personal conversion is not a goal [of Mission] in itself. To interpret the work of the church as the ‘winning of souls’ is to make conversion into a final product, which flatly contradicts Luke’s understanding of the purpose of mission. Conversion does not pertain merely to an individual’s act of conviction and commitment; it moves the individual believer into the community of the believers and involves real – even radical – change in the life of the believer, which carries with it moral responsibilities that distinguish Christians from ‘outsiders’ while at the same time stressing their obligation to those ‘outsiders’” (David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 119)

. . . Instead We Should See Our Work Of Mission as a Parish Task of the Whole . . . The Entire Community of the Parish Bringing People to Christ . . . Which Provokes the Question, “Is my parish a mission-al Community?”
“When He came back to Capernaum, it was heard that He was back home. And many were gathered together so that there was no room not even near the door. And He was speaking the Word to them. And they came bringing to Him a paralytic carried by four men . . . . And when they had dug an opening in the roof they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying. And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, “Your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:1-5)

The Great Commission in All the Gospels Provides a Complete View of Ways the Church as a Community Fishes with a Net . . . The Whole Community of Believers . . . Particularly Luke/Acts . . .


There are 19 meals in Luke’s Gospel, 13 of which are unique to him . . .
The meals in Luke’s Gospel are community occasions for healing and hospitality (9:10-17; 10:5-7), for fellowship, for celebration (13:29), for worshipping Jesus and receiving forgiveness (7:36-50) for proclamation (11:37-54) and for redemption and the celebration of redemption (15:6, 9, 23-24). The book concludes with an extraordinary meal at the end of the Emmaus Road journey . . . It connects all the meals of the Gospel with the centrality of the Eucharist where the Host of God, Jesus Christ, is received by faith . . . Then in union with Christ the Church becomes the living Body of Christ formed in His Image . . . to host its own meals amidst the communities of the world . . . And through these meals to bring people to the True Host . . . Jesus Christ

Does Our Parish Have Meals Where Unbelievers Can and Do Come?
Or are they always and only meals for those who already believe?

Meals and hospitality according to St. Luke are primary means for the people of God to reach unbelievers: “In various cultures underlying the New Testament, dining with someone indicated solidarity with that person. To eat with someone is to indentify with him. To take a meal with another was to offer that individual the right hand of fellowship in the deepest sense of the term.

Meal fellowship – what an appropriate image for Incarnational Christianity. . . . The thematic emphasis on table fellowship fairly explodes in Luke’s Gospel (sometimes labeled as the Gospel of Hospitality)”

(Robert I. Kelley, *Meals with Jesus*, p. 123)
And so meals are a primary activity of the Biblical Church revealing how mission is a community effort . . . For it takes more than one to host a community meal . . . But community mission extended from meals to other community activities of the people of God . . .

This early community-mission-approach to the Great Commission appears in the concerns of antagonists to Christianity . . . The Pagan Emperor of Rome, Julian, in the 4th century . . . Complains of the “atheism” of Christians because they do not worship the pagan gods . . . And in his complaint believing Christianity to be a sickness he writes a directive to his official in which he notes how the Christians reach unbelievers . . .
“We must pay special attention to this point, and by the means effect a cure. For when it came about that the poor were neglected an overlooked by pagan priests, then I think the impious Galileans observed this fact and devoted themselves to philanthropy. And they have gained ascendancy in the worst of their deeds through the credit they win for such practices. For just as those who entice children with a cake, and throwing it to them two or three times induce them to follow . . . By the same method, I say, the Galileans also begin with their so-called love-feast, or hospitality, or service of tables – for hence they call it by many names – and the result is that they have led many to atheism” [i.e. Christianity] (John Dickson, *The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission*, p. 93)

“In the book of Acts, Jesus’ mission to restore the world as God intended it to be is transformed into the mission of the community of Jesus’ followers. Acts traces the life of the community of Jesus’ followers as the Spirit forms them into a group of people who work and use work-related power and wealth [for service not power] differently from the world around them. The work begins with the creation of the unique community called the church. Luke begins with the community, “when they had come together,” and continues with the mission to “restore the kingdom to Israel” (Acts 1:6). To accomplish this work, the community must first be oriented to its vocation for the kingdom of God, and then to its identity as the kingdom of God’s witnesses in daily life.” *Theology of Work Commentary Volume 4: Matthew through Acts*
Therefore We May Conclude About the Concept of Mission by the Community . . .

- Mission in the New Testament is not a program but a community operation . . . There may be programs but they are not the mission . . . Only part of it . . .
- Jesus allowed people into His Incarnational community primarily through meals and hospitality before they believed . . . So must we . . .
- In Acts the community of the people of God took the table fellowship of the community into the community . . . Becoming the parochia (parishes) of the ancient Greco-Roman world
- Our English predecessors called, the Celts, were a model of: belonging preceding believing . . .

The Early Celtic Model of Christianity is the background of our own Anglican tradition According to George C. Hunter’s insightful book, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism* . . .

Hunter describes this Celtic Approach to Mission as the Unbeliever being permitted to belong before believing . . . Not necessarily to be baptized or to commune before believing but to belong within the community in ways . . . Before believing . . .
Who Were Those Celts?

- Christians in early Briton who established Celtic Monastic Communities to do mission as community
- They had a “missionary ecclesiology” (Hunter, p. 47)
How Did the Celts Do It?

• They understood evangelism and mission as carried out by a “team” or the parish as a community, as opposed to a “Lone Ranger” or “confrontational evangelism” approach (Hunter, *Celtic Way of Evangelism*, p. 47)

• “The importance of the parish as a team is a group of people can think and pray together. They inspire and encourage one another. The single entrepreneur is too easily prey to self doubt and loss of vision” (John Finney, *Recovering the Past: Celtic and Roman Mission*, p. 67)
Hunter’s Research Contrasts
The Celtic Versus Roman Model

- Roman
- Presentation
- Decision
- Fellowship
- Therefore believing required before belonging

- Celtic
- Fellowship
- Ministry and Conversations
- Belief, Invitation to Commitment
- Therefore belonging permitted before believing

Belonging Before Believing Meant The Celts Allowed the World to See The Habit of Their Community in a Variety of Ways . . .

- The parish was viewed as monastic community sent into the world to reach the world with its habit
- Monastic model is habitus, or a formed life in Christ in community around the throne of God in Holy Communion and going into the world as a community with a habit takes Christ into the world
- Walking with Christ is a lifestyle or habit. The New Testament teaches that faith is not only a momentary trust in Christ but a lifestyle in and with Him: “. . . It is not just an act, a single choice, or even just a belief system; it is [also] a habit” (Michael Frost, *Surprise the World*, Navigators Press, p. 18)
- A habit according to the French philosopher, Pierre Bourdieu: “society at large develops a complex series of norms, and tendencies, that guide the behavior and thinking of its members. In other words, the practices and actions that a society endorses in turn shape the way members of that society think. Habitus is the way a society helps people to think, feel, and act in de-terminantal ways, which then guide them” (Frost, p. 18)
- The Book of Common Prayer expresses not only the Celtic but the Benedictine threefold rule of Daily Office, Morning Prayer, Private Devotion
“If our only habits as Christians are going to church and attending meetings, they’re not going to connect us with unbelievers nor invite their curiosity about our faith. The trick is to develop habits that unite us together as believers, while also propelling us into the lives of others [unbelievers]” (Frost, p. 22) . . .

Also a parish with a habit must allow the world into the community to see the habit . . .

Michael Frost in his *Surprise the World* offers a model of habit and releasing the habit with the acronym BELLS . . .

**BELLS: Five Characteristics of Missional People and the Celts . . .**

- **Bless:** Blessing unbelievers by acts of kindness and giving
- **Eating:** Eating with unbelievers by going to eat with them and by allowing them to the parties and meals of the church . . . Even allowing them to behold the Divine Mystery of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist . . . Trust the liturgy . . .
- **Listening:** Listening to the world of the Spirit and the Kingdom of God in the midst of the unbelievers . . . God uses creation to reveal His will (i.e. storm and providence etc.) . . . And their view of Heaven as here not up there (i.e. the Celtic Knott) . . . Talking with God and the saints
- **Learning:** Learning community catechizing and being communities of schools and knowledge (i.e. *How the Celts Saved the West*)
- **Sending:** Sending the whole community by constantly trying to figure out ways to insert the community of the Church into the communities of the world with small groups, chapels, missions, parishes and monasteries
Relevance Today of the Celtic Community Approach:

“In an empirical study conducted by the United Bible Societies in Great Britain . . . A research team received 360 completed questionnaires from converts, and they interviewed 151 converts. These 511 converts represented the range of denominations in England . . . . In Finding Faith Today: How Does It Happen? John Finney reports that most people experience faith through relationships, that they encounter the gospel through a community of faith, that becoming a Christian involves a process that takes time. In his later book, Recovering the Past, Finney summarizes their chief finding in four words. For most people, ‘belonging comes before believing’” (cf. Hunter, p. 54)

The Parish, Fishing-With-A-Net, Team Approach To Mission and Evangelism Means . . . Allowing Belonging Before Believing . . . Inserting the Habit of the Community of Faith Into the Midst of Unbelievers by BELLs . . . And Balancing Right Versus Risk . . . It Can’t All Be Right Before We Risk Reaching Out . . . If We’ll Ever Successful in REC 100 . . . It will take Risk . . . And Yes failure . . . And risk . . . Then Success

![Image of hands holding a plant]
Therefore Each Parish Must ask, “What is our community?” “What is our life together?” “How do we gather as a community at other times besides Sundays?” “What are things that we do as a community that outsiders can participate in?” “Where are the meals and do those outside come to our meals and parties?” “What are activities that our community participates in the community with Word and Deed?” “Are we a community inviting to belong?”

Fish With a Net . . . The Whole Community