

Readings on Evangelism

POLICY STATEMENT ON EVANGELISM

Executive Committee
16-17 June 1966

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Executive Committee
1971

UCCP POLICY DOCUMENT ON EVANGELISM

National Council
2006

Evangelism and the UCCP

A Historical Overview
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BIBLICO-THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON EVANGELISM

Rev. Dr. Everett L. Mendoza

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UNDERLYING CONVICTIONS

An old definition of evangelism, originally coming from the Archbishop's Committee of the Anglican Church, goes thus:

To evangelize is to present Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit that men shall come to put their trust in God through Him, to accept Him as their Saviour, and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of His Church.

It is clear from this well-accepted definition that the essence of evangelism is proclamation – the proclaiming of the evangel. It is the presenting of the gospel to all men, in the hope that in accepting the good news they will become active members of God's people. This is primarily an individual matter, for it means the presentation of the gospel in such a convincing and compelling manner that it will bring about the possibility of a free, personal response to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, which in turn will lead a decision for membership in the Church and participation within its fellowship at it witnesses for Christ in the world.

But evangelism also has a social concern. For God loves the whole man, including his world, and is concerned about man's life in society. It is also a part of evangelism to declare the judgment and love of God upon the structures of contemporary life which keep men from being the free, truly human persons God intends them to be, or which keep men from a free response to Jesus Christ.

The proclamation of the gospel is the main business of the Church. But we must realize that there are various ways of presenting this saving word. We are prone to think that it must always be a matter of verbalization. But we can proclaim God's love for men in Christ not only by word (which is undeniably important) but also by deeds and actions. These deeds, which may be also described as Christian love in action, are ways of declaring the nature of God in living terms so that the outsider may perceive the meaning of the gospel. When seen in this light, there is a direct connection between social service and evangelism, although evangelism may be different by virtue of its specific goals as stated in the opening definition.

However, we must be a little careful when we too strictly define evangelism as bringing people into the fellowship of the church. there is a danger here of becoming primarily interested in membership statistics, of getting people for our church and of seeing people as means to our end. There is also the possibility of thinking that the credit is all ours when we are able **to win one**. We must remember that it is only the Holy Spirit who can recreate, forgive, and bring men into fellowship with God. God is always at work in the hearts of men, not only when we arrive on the scene. Our real duty is to faithfully proclaim the gospel and live by it, in all areas of our lives, and leave the result to God. In some instances this may result in more members of our United Church of Christ; in other instances it may not.

This is not to deny the necessity of bringing new Christians into the fellowship of the church for nurture and growth in the faith. We believe that common worship prepares for witness and service. The ultimate goal of the work of evangelism is to develop evangelists from those who are being evangelized. ***The end goal of our evangelism is the evolvment of true witness to the love of God in Jesus Christ, who loyally and consistently witness in all areas of their lives.***

It follows from this that **evangelism is a corporate task**. It is a work to which the whole church is called. Every member must be involved in this great job – not only the ordained, set-apart members. In reality, in being faithful to this high task the local church finds its real life and strength. Therefore, evangelism must be a continuing concern of the local church, not simply a seasonal, once-a-year effort.

This is not to underestimate the role of the ordained clergy. Their role in this task is indispensable. By faithfully teaching and guiding all members, **the pastor helps to prepare them for their witness in the world**, and to become articulate proclaimers of the gospel. By the faithfulness of his teaching ministry he may help the church to fulfill its common calling to evangelism. We further believe that the **seminary curriculum should include courses designed to help the future pastor in this responsibility**.

An additional word should be raised regarding the corporate witness of the church. The church not only witnesses through its members as they participate in various areas of secular life, it also witnesses by what it is, and by what it does and by what it says. A church rent asunder by quarrel, bitterness and strife makes witness a very negative one. A spirit of unity in our local congregations makes our witness more convincing. An active concern for the people or the community and their passing needs also facilitates our witness to God's love in Christ.

In the preceding paragraph it is evident that the line dividing evangelism and Christian Education or nurture is quite a thin one. Although the main task in evangelism is the proclamation of the evangel by whatever means possible, follow-up, and conversation have also been considered a part of effective evangelism. The desire to help all members become evangelistic has also been part and parcel of the program of evangelism. Thus we believe that the **task of evangelism and Christian Education should not be rigidly separated**, but go hand in hand.

STRATEGY AND TECHNIQUES

This policy statement on evangelism has the following objective: TO HELP THE WHOLE CHURCH BUILD EVANGELISTIC STRATEGY AND TECHNIQUES APPROPRIATE TO THE LIFE AND WORK OF THE CHURCH IN ITS MINISTRY TO THE WHOLE MAN AND HIS PARTICULAR SOCIETY. To this end we would like to set forth ten suggestions for your thoughtful consideration.

We should state at the outset that many of these suggestions are based on the prior assumption that in the light of our changing society there is an imperative need for some new approaches and directions in this work of evangelism. This is not to say that all of our old methods must now be thrown away. It is always foolish to discard the old before the one has something better to take its place. Rather than throw away the old, we must build on the old. In some areas the so-called old method of mass evangelism is still very effective. Generally speaking in the urban areas it is no longer. There is one basic question we must ask about both old and new approaches. *Are we reaching the outsider, the non-Christian, through this method?* If we aren't, it is time for us to ponder.

Another assumption here is that at least a minimum of unity already exists in a local church committed to the ministry of evangelism. We doubt that a church (local and national) divided by personal animosities and strife can effectively fulfill its calling to evangelism, unless it goes through renewal and change. Unity is a pre-requisite for dynamic evangelism.

1. Understanding our Society

We believe that we must give more attention to the kind of culture and society in which we live. We must listen to the world, in order to know how to speak to it. Our Filipino people have a particular culture, with a particular world-view. Of course, this does not change the message of the gospel; but it is related to how we frame the message in order to get it across.

2. Dialogue with the Outsider

We believe that if we want to reach the outsider and proclaim the gospel to him it may first be necessary for us to listen to him – even to the so-called atheist or agnostic. In the past, the church has usually wanted to do all the talking. Now, in some parts of the world the church does not want to do all the talking anymore. This is the other extreme. There is a need for real dialogue, which may eventualize when we are first willing to listen. We believe that this is becoming more important in our increasingly secularized society. Especially is it true with the *intelligentsia* and students who are enamored by science and who seem to think that the church and the gospel are irrelevant. If we are going to confront philosophies which many of our citizenry embrace we will have to cultivate this art of dialogue with the outsider.

3. An Ecumenical Enterprise

We believe that in our day evangelism should be viewed as an ecumenical undertaking. In our kind of world where Christians are not growing as fast as other groups, and where people seem to be indifferent to the gospel, the challenge to evangelism is too great for us to assume in isolation from other Christians. We must cooperate with all other groups dedicated to proclaiming the same gospel. We should present a united front. In this day we believe that this also includes our brethren in the Roman Catholic church, for it is becoming more and more obvious that our goals are very similar, if not identical. Some may raise the question as to whether this means that we should no longer seek to win Roman Catholics to our evangelical faith. We believe this is not our purpose. However, if through our witnessing to nominal Roman Catholics they desire to join our fellowship we should be glad to receive them. But we should not put great pressure on them to make this step. It is time for us to recognize that there are sincere and committed Christians in the Roman Catholic Church.

4. Urban and Rural Approaches

We believe that while our country is industrializing at a good rate and while urbanization is also significant, the majority of our people are still rural-oriented. This means that if our pastors are to be effective in mobilizing our membership for evangelism, we will need to have a definite training for each situation, for despite similarities there are real differences between rural and urban people. We believe that urban pastors should be guided so as to be able to work in an urban-industrial context.

We think it is also necessary to prepare pastors for a ministry in rural areas. We would like to eradicate the idea that the rural pastor is lower on the ladder and that a sign of his progress is the move into a city pastorate. But we believe that in order to keep some of our best pastors in the rural area, we should consider the possibility of paying all our pastors an equal salary from a central fund.

5. The Small Group-Neighborhood Approach

We would like to recommend the revitalization of the neighborhood meetings plan, whereby a local congregation is divided into parish groups which meet from time to time in homes. This approach provides an opportunity to invite uncommitted or indifferent neighbors to the meeting, and in a friendly atmosphere introduce them to the Christian faith. This kind of an approach also helps to prepare members for witnessing in the world.

6. Study Class for New Members

We believe that new members should undergo a period of study and preparation before being formally received into the membership of a local church. Our members should understand what they believe and know their faith. This study will help them to give a reason for the hope within. These classes should

consist of some serious biblical and theological studies. If we make such study mandatory, church membership will mean more, and we may have more and better evangelists among our membership.

7. The Role of the Church Building

We believe, as many have said, that the church building itself is a form of evangelism. A beautiful building (not necessarily ornate or luxurious), kept neat and clean may attract outsiders to our worship services. Well-kept surroundings also help. It is certain that people are more attracted to beauty than ugliness. However, a word of caution should be added. While the church building is necessary and helpful, it is not an end in itself. ***We do not erect our church buildings simply to impress society with our cathedrals. Nor do we build in order to seclude and isolate ourselves from the world that God loves. Our purpose is primarily to have a place of assembling ourselves for common worship and nurture.*** We must never allow our desire for a nice church building to stand in the way of our primary calling to evangelism in the world.

8. Concerned Local Churches

We believe that every local church should be actively concerned about the people in its community who have not yet found abundant life through Christ. The local church should be ***a fellowship of the concerned.*** (Elton Trueblood). This means that each local church should have a committee on evangelism, a list of people to be contacted, a regular program of visitation by the pastor and lay people, and an up-to-date record of all members and their whereabouts. From time to time it might be helpful for a local church, either by itself or in conjunction with other churches, to conduct a laymen's seminar on evangelism at which time the church's evangelistic task is squarely faced and plans developed to fulfill the same.

9. Use All Available Media

We believe that there are various media which can be very effectively used in communicating the gospel to non-Christians. Among these we should call the attention to the following, but at the same time emphasize the need for continuing experimentation with these and other media.

- a. **Drama** may be especially helpful. We are thinking here of two types – that presented in the church and that presented in public. Drama presented in the church, preferably in local dialects, may be very simple and still very effective. Chancel dramas may be presented without props or costumes and be more effective than the more elaborate ones. A team of young people might do a fine job in presenting public drama, even on the plaza. We need people who will attempt to write dramas for the Philippines with an evangelistic thrust, as well as people who will experiment with this form.
- b. **Radio** can be used to reach the outsider, as well as nurture present church members. We would like to see the radio stations of the National Council of Churches more widely used. We also believe that the influence of these stations would be increased if they were to prepare first class religious programs which could be used by the commercial stations now proliferating all over the country. We believe that some of our funds for evangelism could well be used for this purpose. We would also like to encourage some of our larger city churches to have their own weekly radio program. We also feel that we should be open to the possibilities of using television.
- c. **Audio-visual aids** can be more effectively used than they are presently. Here we are referring to such things as filmstrips, slides, posters, charts, flannel boards, films, etc. Even simple visual aids can be very useful in communicating the gospel. For this reason we highly endorse the plan of our Audio-Visual Committee to sponsor, in conjunction with the Audio-Visual Commission of the

National Council of Churches, Skill Shops of Communication throughout the country beginning May, 1966.

We also heartily approve the plan to establish conference audio-visual centers and help conferences to secure some of the basic audio-visual aids.

- d. The power of the **printed page** is greater than we think. A well placed leaflet, magazine or book can often lead a person toward Christian faith. The United Church of Christ has published many fine materials which could be used in our program of evangelism. We expect and hope that more will be produced by our denomination and the National Council. We would like to encourage every local church to help in the distribution of these materials.
- e. The Written Word is one of the most effective media for the proclamation of the Gospel, which is the essence of evangelism. Hence, it must be the chief concern of every evangelist to bring God's Word to the world, to consider always the common responsibility to distribute the Holy Scriptures, especially at a time of multiplying populations and rising literacy. The Bible is recognized as the incomparable treasure of God's Word which is power for the salvation of the world. There is no part in the Church which does not acknowledge that it needs the Scriptures for its very life, and there is no part of the Church which disowns the obligation to pay its part in bringing to all men the knowledge of Him of whom the Scripture speak.

10. Natural and Spontaneous Witnessing

We believe that one of the main emphasis in our evangelistic strategy and techniques is simply that of person-to-person evangelism. While not despising mass evangelism, we do believe that small natural and informal settings may be more conducive to sharing the gospel with outsiders. We believe that our members must be equipped to carry on evangelism in such situations. This does not mean giving memorized speeches or quoting a series of biblical passages, but simply sharing with another what Christ means in one's life. God usually works through persons, and an evangelist is one who believes that imperfect as he may be, God wants to work through him and does.

STATEMENT ON EVANGELISM

Executive Committee

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BIBLICAL BASIS

He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor
To bind up the hearts that are broken,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
freedom to those in prison...
to comfort those who mourn...

Isaiah 61:1-2

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor,
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind;
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

Luke 4:18-19

For I was hungry and you gave me food,
I was thirsty and you gave me drink;
I was a stranger and you made me welcome,
naked and you clothed me,
in prison and you came to see me.

Matthew 28:19

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all
that I have commanded you; and lo,
I am with you always, to the close of the age.

Matthew 28:19-20

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit
has come upon you,
and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and
in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.

Acts 1:8

Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth,
and the life, no one comes to the Father, but by me.

John 14:6

A STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

The faith and trust given by Jesus Christ
Evangelism is the bearing of our witness,
in Jesus Christ for the world.

A witness in word and deed.
A movement from word to deed,
the oneness of Word and deed.

Not a privilege but a compelling and humbling task
Evangelism is communication with the world,
of the mighty acts of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit.

Discovering, discerning, and celebrating and sharing
His reconciling acts of love in the midst of Humanity.

Evangelism is God's work in us;
A concern for human life
for its potentiality and abundancy.

A concern for liberation,
liberating men from all sinful
dehumanizing pressures and systems.

A concern for participation,
participating in the task
of love and justice for all.

Evangelism is not image building,
But genuine self-giving
springing from Jesus Christ alone and a commitment to Him
rooted in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

To this task Jesus Christ was obedient,
To this task we commit ourselves,
To this task,
The United Church of Christ in the Philippines commits herself.
Ever conscious that men of courage, dedication and steadfast purpose in love,
obedient to His Spirit are channels of God's power and Grace.

BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR EVANGELISM

To witness is to Proclaim,
To Proclaim is to Preach,
To Preach is to Live
The Living Word, Jesus Christ.
His Good News of Life,
And to Celebrate His Mighty
Act of Redemption in the Cross and His Resurrection

The Local Congregation

The local congregation is the concrete reality of the Church Universal. It is the concrete reality of the gathered people of God. It is her liturgical life *Liturgia* (work of the people) offered in worship that witness is proclaimed in the Preaching and the Acting of the Holy Word of God, Jesus Christ our Lord.

We are to strengthen, enrich, and equip the saints in the worship life of the local congregation. For in the gathered community in worship, we are God's people. It was there from the beginning; we have heard it; we have seen it with our own eyes; we looked upon it, and felt with our own hands; and it is of this we tell. Our theme is the word of life. This life was made visible; we have seen it and bear our testimony; we have declared to you the eternal life which dwelt with the Father and was made visible to us. What we have seen and heard we declare to you, so that you and we together may share in a common life, that life which we share with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. (I John 1:1-3 NEB).

A Style of Life

The Christian presence is a presence of LOVE. It is the Christian's style of life to be SALT, A LEAVEN, A LIGHT, expressed in individual relationships with one another in the family, and in our daily life of responsibility.

I give you a new commandment: Love one another; as I have loved you, then all will know that you are my disciples. (John 13:34-35 NEB)

A Life of a Citizen

To witness to the concerned love of Jesus Christ is to live a life in the given world of God. Participating in human development and nation-building is the Christian's witnessing life. As Christians, our earthly citizenship should be a manifestation of our citizenship of the Kingdom of God. This is made clear and known in our being good citizens of our country. We are to be deeply involved in the ongoing social process of needed changes in our society and nation, that man may become fully human and that our nation share in the humanization of all mankind.

Stand firm against the device of the devil. For our fight is not against human foes, but against cosmic powers, against the authorities and potentates of this dark world, against the super forces of evil in the heavens. Therefore, take up God's armour; then you will be able to stand your ground when things are at their worst, to complete every task and still to stand. (Ephesians 6:12-13 NEB)

Ecumenical Life

The whole body of Christ, local, national and universal is the witness, the Mission of God's loving concern here on earth. To live in Division is Sin. Where there is no unity, the vision is blurred, and the evangelistic task of liberating men from sin is dimmed.

In the pursuance of our evangelistic task we affirm Unity without Uniformity, and Unity in the midst of Diversity. We shall join to witness an ecumenical life together, any local congregation, denomination, religious or non-religious bodies where God is active in love, hope, and faith for the glory of God and the salvation of Mankind. Reference: Executive Committee, Action No. 71-171, 1971.

UCCP POLICY DOCUMENT ON EVANGELISM

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The Biblical Imperative

1. The church has been called for one purpose, which has been variously rendered in the New Testament. In the first Epistle of Peter, it is “to declare the wonderful deeds of God who called [the church] out of darkness into God’s marvelous light” (2:9b). Paul, in his Second Letter to the Corinthians, refers to it as the ministry or proclaiming the message of reconciliation (5:19), with the end in view that, as the Gospel of John put it, “you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name” (20:31).

Evangelism then, or proclaiming the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ, is the church’s reason for being. Jesus claimed that he came “to seek and to save the lost”, referring to his announcement of salvation to the household of Zaccheus (Luke 19:10). Although the larger part of Jesus’ ministry involves doing beneficial acts to suffering people, such as healing and exorcism, those were not the reason for his coming. Even the so-called Nazareth Manifesto found in Luke 4:18 is a mandate to “preach good news to the poor... to proclaim release to the captives... to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” And again, Paul claimed that Christ sent him to preach the gospel, not even to baptize converts to Christianity (I Cor. 1:17).

2. The proclamation of the gospel is not simply a communication of knowledge but an event in which Christ is made present through whom God’s grace is really offered and the hearer is empowered by the Holy Spirit to receive it. In other words, the announcement of the gospel is itself a salvation-event (Rom. 10:17). Therefore, it is through the church’s evangelistic work, that is the communication and reception of the gospel, that salvation is concretely presented to the world.
3. The truths that the church proclaims are not general notions about God which other religions also hold to be true. Rather, these are held to be objective truths that arose from certain historical events which bring objective spiritual benefits to everyone who believes. Evangelism as a specific task of the church, therefore, consists of communicating a cognitive content (the “mysteries” of the faith in I Cor. 4:1, Eph. 3:3) in which God’s saving power is made available to those who listen. With a correct discernment, Christians can proclaim the gospel with integrity even as they espouse or denounce certain philosophies and ideologies that offer concrete solutions to people’s problems. The Gospel’s integrity need not be threatened or compromised by their involvement in secular struggles.
4. The Gospel’s content is stated by the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Romans: “Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God” (Rom. 5:1-2). In the succeeding verses, Paul said that God’s friendship (of justification, in the traditional terms) enables us to have hope and opens us up to the outpouring of God’s love through the Holy Spirit who works in us. This is the Christian gospel which must be distinguished from other gospels of salvation.
5. The church’s proclamation includes: a) the knowledge of a gracious God; b) the fact of a man, Jesus Christ, in whom this gracious God was fully present; c) our access to God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ; and d) that, as a consequence, we have peace with God and made able to participate in God’s glory.

Basic Affirmations

Jesus drew near and said to them, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

1. Evangelism literally means the act of proclaiming the good news (evangel) of freedom from sin and entrance into the reign of God, which implies new and abundant life in Jesus Christ.
2. The good news and its proclamation cannot be separated; it is good news only if it is proclaimed.
3. The proclamation of the good news includes an invitation to recognize and accept in a personal decision the saving lordship of Christ. It is the announcement of a personal encounter, mediated by the Holy Spirit, with the living Christ, receiving his forgiveness and making a personal acceptance of the call to discipleship and a life of service.
4. The proclamation is the moment of salvation itself. What one needs to do to obtain salvation is the acceptance of the good news as truth for one's own life. But one has to demonstrate the reality and efficacy of the good news proclaimed.
5. Evangelism is the Church's intentional and passionate call for everyone to accept God's saving act in Jesus Christ and to decide to ebb a follower of Jesus through membership in a local church.
6. Evangelism is the bearing of our witness to the unbounded love of God in Jesus Christ for the World. It is a witness in word and deed. It is not a privilege, but a compelling and humbling task of the mighty acts of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit.
7. God acts in righteousness and compassion to forgive, heal, and restore people back to God's favor and to enjoy the blessings of God's good will; God is going to restore the nation and make the people stand in prosperity.
8. Evangelism is God's work in us. It is a concern for human life for its potentials and abundance. It is a concern for liberation, setting people free from all sinful dehumanizing pressures and systems. It is a concern for participation in the task of love and justice for all.
9. Accepting the good news requires the believer's personal act, repentance, and the church's collective act, baptism, by which the believers receive both forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.
10. Evangelism is not image building, but genuine self-giving springing from Jesus Christ alone and a commitment to him rooted in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.
11. The proclamation of the good news is not merely a declaration of God's forgiveness through Jesus Christ, but also a challenge, a call to repentance and submission to baptism by which God's objective act is realized in a person's life through the community of believers.
12. The presentation of the good news brings about the possibility of a free, personal response to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, which in turn will lead to a decision for membership in the church and participation with its fellowship as it witnesses for Christ in the world.
13. Evangelism is witnessing to the love, justice and righteousness of God in Jesus Christ through a transformed life. It implies change in persons, their communities and their world.
14. Evangelism is a distinct task of the church that can be realized fully but only in relation to other tasks of the church and its entire ministry.

15. Evangelism should be integral and holistic. It is meant not only for sinners, but also for the victims of sinners. It should combine the verbal proclamation of the good news, the instruction for the believers, and the concrete services in the world to meet human needs.

Basic Principles

From this historical perspective, we derive some basic evangelism principles:

1. The unity of the Church is founded upon loyalty to Jesus Christ, the head and lord of the Church, and on fidelity to the cause of his Kingdom. It is in accord with the Divine will that Christians should be united in worship and in every effort to spread the Gospel (Declaration of Union, 1948).
2. The essence of evangelism is proclamation of the evangel, which is presenting the gospel to all humanity, in the hope that in accepting the good news they will become active members of God's people. Presenting the gospel in such a convincing and compelling manner will bring about the possibility of a free, personal response to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, which in turn will lead to a decision for membership in the Church and participation within its fellowship as it witness for Christ in the world (Policy Statement on Evangelism, 1966).
3. Evangelism is concerned about life in society. It is part of evangelism to declare the judgment and love of God upon the structures of contemporary life which keep men and women from being the free, truly human persons God intends them to be (1966).
4. The UCCP responds to Jesus' call to the ministry (Luke 4:18-19); subscribes to the concern for the hungry, the stranger, the unclothed, the prisoner (Matthew 25:39); heeds the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20), and the commission to expand missionary endeavors to the whole world (Acts 1:8); and is inspired by the knowledge that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6).
5. Evangelism is bearing out witness to the unbounded love of God in Jesus Christ for the world... a witness in word and deed (1971). It is God's work in us manifested in a concern for human life, its potentiality and abundance; concern for the liberation of people from all sinful and dehumanizing structures and systems; and concern for participation in the task of love and justice for all (1971). In other words, evangelism is the conversion of individuals for commitment to Christ to the call for discipleship and the task of social transformation. Our concept of mission and evangelism should consider the task of transforming people and society towards the establishment of the kingdom of God.
6. In an ecumenical sense, evangelism is the proclamation of the Gospel on invitation to recognize and accept in a personal decision the saving lordship of Christ. It is the announcement of a personal encounter, mediated by the Holy Spirit, with the living Christ, receiving his forgiveness and making a personal acceptance of the call to discipleship and a life of service ("Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation", WCC, 1982). It further asserts that the Good News of the kingdom of God is a challenge to the structures of society (Ephesians 3:9-10; 6:12) as well as a call to individuals to repent: if salvation from sin through divine forgiveness is to be truly and fully personal, it must express itself in the renewal of these relations and structures. Such renewal is not merely a consequence but an essential element of the conversion of the whole human being.
7. "Discipling the Nation" is not only a call for verbal commitment to the lordship of Jesus Christ but a program to help members of the become disciples of Jesus Christ – enabled and equipped to follow his commission to preach and teach (Matt. 28:19-20) and emulating Christ's own ministry (Luke 4:18-19) in their lives.

Evangelism and Church Growth

1. Church growth or planting is a necessary corollary to evangelism. People who respond to the gospel are invited to a life of discipleship together with other disciples. The gifts of the Spirit which are poured out to those who have been baptized into the church need to be exercised in the fellowship of the body of Christ (I Cor. 12:13).
2. Membership in a local is presupposed in the proclamation of the gospel. The church is the matrix where in an initiate to the Christian faith is taught and nurtured in the new life to the end that she/he may be conformed to the very image of Jesus Christ, her Lord and Master (Eph. 4:13).
3. During the beginnings of the church, those who have been baptized “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship” (Acts 2:41-42). Justification makes sinners righteous before God but it does not make them essentially righteous. Although regarded righteous by God”, they are still in fact sinners, simul Justus et peccator, as Luther put it. Forgiven sinners need the church for the steady unfolding of the new life and the gradual shedding off of the old one.
4. Sanctification or the realization of the new humanity in Christ is achieved through praxis of the new life in the secular world, according to Martin Luther. But it requires a nurturing community that affirms and safeguards the new identity against the old one. Outside the church, the seed of the new life has little chance of surviving in a hostile world. Therefore, it is imperative that those who respond to the preaching of the gospel are brought into the fellowship of the church. As a newborn babe needs a family, so does a new convert need a nurturing church.
5. The kind of growth which serves the purpose of evangelism is one that allows a meaningful exercise of spiritual gifts. The charismata, or gift of the Spirit, refers to the various forms of services which are required for a fully alive and functioning church. Each member is given the “manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (I Cor. 12:7). This means that every member of the church is called upon to perform specific forms of services for the benefit of the whole church.
6. The right kind of church growth is one that results in the multiplication of local churches which are small or big enough to provide enough space for an optimum participation of every member. The process of sanctification requires a close, personal and direct interaction among the members which large congregations cannot provide. Even more important than the practical consideration is that the great variety of gifts entail various ways of being a church. The diversity of gifts that the members have will require different configurations of local churches to allow the full manifestation of the Spirit. In other words, church growth is not to be a simple numerical extension but a purposive and deliberate one which calls for coherent local formations.

The Task of Mission and Evangelism

UCCP is concerned with promoting the church’s evangelistic task in relation to other aspects of its work, particularly, justice and peace work and church growth and church planting. This is in an effort to insure programmatic and organizational coherence and balance in the total work of the church. In addition, changing social conditions that tend towards political quietism, the reassertion of conservative religious tendencies within the church abetted by the impingement of very aggressive non-mainline religious groups, and overtures for newer forms of ecumenical engagements – all pointing to a need to make a critical review of the UCCP’s evangelistic undertaking.

1. The recognition that mission and evangelism is primarily the task of the local church. Local churches must understand their mission responsibilities in their own localities: to proclaim the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ and witness to the faith in their daily lives, individually and corporately as a Christian community. (The Council of Bishops, in 1986, challenged the local churches to do this basic

evangelistic task and thereby organizing, as the Holy Spirit leads them, new communities of faith in their own areas of responsibilities).

2. While evangelism is primarily the task of the local church and consequently a task of the laity, the role of the clergy is indispensable. The church workers must be convinced of the urgency of the evangelistic task. The seminaries and church workers' training centers have a definite role and responsibility. Courses on or related to Mission and Evangelism must be strongly emphasized and the future ministers be challenged of this responsibility.
3. The UCCP understanding of evangelism and mission must be promoted widely and taught systematically. The concepts of "integral evangelization" and "wholistic mission" must be developed and explained further, with emphasis on ecumenical relations in mission and evangelism to avoid the problem of proselytism or "stealing of one another's sheep." The 1966 document warns of the danger of "becoming primarily interested in membership statistics, of getting people for our church and of seeing people as means to our end." The document reminds us that our "real duty is to faithfully proclaim the gospel and leave the result to God."
4. The UCCP must launch a systematic education for mission and evangelism. The 1966 Policy Statement on Evangelism recognizes the thin line dividing Evangelism and Christian Education and Nurture, gives emphasis on follow-up and conversation as part of effective evangelism, asserts that the challenge to be a committed evangelist is a Christian education task.
5. Although the primary concern is the local area where our congregations are called to serve, we must not neglect our responsibility in world mission and evangelism. Through our partnerships, we are able to continue our participation in world mission. We must continue our involvement and leadership in confronting new issues facing the Christian Churches in different parts of the world. In this case, the United Church must give time and personnel who will study and participate in the discussion of the most urgent issues today. In all these issues, we are called to present and to articulate the meaning of God's love in Jesus Christ for every person and for every situation.

The UCCP needs to pursue its evangelistic thrust in relation to other aspects of its life. This means that it should realize its evangelistic work in relation to its program for social concerns but without confounding the two. Evangelism can now be pursued with integrity and vigor, while Christian service will be freed from certain missiological baggages. But since these are integral aspects of the total life of the church, no local church can justify itself without attending to both. The liberation of each from the other makes coordination possible.

A clear theological and practical connection must also be established between its evangelistic program and its thrust towards church growth or development. Since inviting individuals to become members of local churches is understood to be a necessary function of evangelism, institutional expansion may now be freed from the nagging guilt of proselytizing.

These steps are necessary in order to preserve the theological integrity of the life and work of the UCCP as well as insure coherence in its programs and structure.

Policy Guidelines

The UCCP shall

1. Initiate the development of a comprehensive evangelism program that reflects the beliefs and theological position of the church, which shall include among others:
 - a. the development, promotion and distribution of evangelism resources and materials – training manuals, visual aids, other tools and resources

- b. the training of evangelists
 - c. evangelistic campaigns
 - d. target number of individuals, churches, worshipping congregations, communities to be reached
 - e. campus ministry program in all church-owned and related schools
 - f. chaplaincy program in church-related institutions – schools and hospitals
2. Be zealous in promoting dialogues among churches and groups towards the unity of the church, and with other faith communities.
 3. As locus of mission, the local church shall be the primary base of the evangelism task.
 4. Each local church shall launch a vigorous evangelism program consistent to the biblical mandate, UCCP beliefs, values, principles, perspectives.
 5. Each local church and conference shall allocate at least 10% of their annual budget to mission and evangelism.
 6. Each local church shall report periodically to the congregation and to the conference concerned on the progress of its mission and evangelism endeavor and other church growth and development initiatives. The conference minister shall report to the conference council the progress of such initiatives and bring to its attention emerging issues and concerns. The same shall be brought to the National Council and/or General Assembly.

Evangelism is basically the activity of the people of God, and to a great extent, a lay movement.

The background for this document was drawn from UCCP statements and papers previously presented by Bishop Erme R. Camba and Dr. Everett L. Mendoza – which are both included in this compilation – and is informed by deliberations on issues and concerns raised in recent years on what the evangelistic thrust of the UCCP should be.

Evangelism and the UCCP

A Historical Overview

Bishop Erme R. Camba

Historical Background

As a tangible result of the modern missionary movement, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines declared its fundamental mission and purpose in the very first official statement, the Declaration of Union, which said in part:

... it is in accord with the Divine will that Christians should be united in worship and in every effort to spread the Gospel; [and that] the unity of the Church is founded upon loyalty to Jesus Christ, the head and lord of the Church, and on fidelity to the cause of his Kingdom.

It is interesting to note that the first four departments created by the United Church at that time were all designed for evangelism and Christian mission.

1. The Department of Evangelism undertook “evangelistic activities both for strengthening the present membership and for winning new adherents to the faith.”
2. The Department of Mission took charge of the schools in Lanao and the Cordilleras, promoted literacy program and evangelism in various parts of the country and sent missionaries to other lands.
3. The Department of Public Welfare promoted health and medical activities and supervised hospitals and clinics, undertook rural reconstruction in communities particularly where the congregations were located.
4. Even the Department of Christian Education did not only take care of the regular Sunday school programs but also the religious instructions in the public schools and teaching the Bible in the high schools and colleges of the Church.

The first decade of the existence of the United Church (1948-1958) saw the organization of the Home Mission Program which is survived by the Apayao Mission Conference, the Kalahan Cooperative Parish, and the various programs among the Indigenous Peoples of Mindanao such as the Mindanao Christian Service Foundation (MCSF) in South Cotabato. This was also the decade when we sent missionaries to Indonesia, Thailand, Iran, Turkey, Malaysia and Egypt.”

The United Church had a Division of Chinese Mission which was mainly related to the mission work of the Reformed Church of America. These Chinese churches became an independent denomination which is today called the United Evangelical Church.

In sum, the program of mission and evangelism was a fundamental concern from the very start of the United Church.

Basic UCCP Documents on Mission and Evangelism

In the decade of the 1960's, three major documents on mission and evangelism came out of the experiences and challenges of the decade. All the statements of the following years up to the present are reiterations, revisions and expansions of the basic ideas in these statements for the contemporary situations. These three statements are:

1. Statement on Social Concern, 1960; updated and reissued, 1970
2. Policy Statement on Evangelism, 1966; and
3. Statement on Evangelism

The Statement on Social Concern came out of the socio-economic and political ferment of the 60's which included the issues of student activism, modernization and industrialization. The first major displacement of people – that is the demolition of squatter colonies in Manila – occurred at this time and brought about United Church's involvement in the advocacy for the displaced people and setting up programs of urban resettlement. The organization of Sapang Palay UCCP in Sapang Palay, Bulacan was a direct result of this involvement.

It was also in this decade that our Church started participating in labor union organizing. We sent ordained pastors to study labor union organizing at the Asian Labor Education Center of the University of the Philippines as a response to the call of the 1960 Statement of Social Concern – “to support the trade union movement and to provide the responsible participation and leadership necessary to achieving the goals of freedom and justice in society.”

Strongly influenced by the World Council of Churches studies on “The Common Christian Responsibility Toward Areas of Rapid Social Change,” the United Church set up urban-industrial and rural mission programs bringing the Church and many pastors and lay leaders in to the Urban-Rural Mission (URM) movement.

By 1965, the Department of Evangelism felt it was time to do some new thinking in the area of evangelism. They decided, therefore, to prepare a new policy statement for the General Assembly of May 1966. A two-day national consultation was called in March 1966 gathering together representatives from all the conferences. (Correct me if I'm mistaken, but I have not heard the United Church holding a national consultation on mission and evangelism until this Consultation of 1995 was called. Indeed this consultation will be considered a new sign post in the history of mission and evangelism of the United Church.)

The result of the March 1966 consultation is the Policy Statement on Evangelism, a true landmark in the United Church. Starting with a definition quoted from the Anglican Church, the statement proceeds to say that the “essence of evangelism is proclamation of the evangel,” which is,

... presenting the gospel to all [humanity], in the hope that in accepting the good news, they will become active members of God's people... (P)rimarily an individual matter,... presenting the gospel in such a convincing and compelling manner... will bring about the possibility of a free, personal response to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, which in turn will lead (to) a decision for membership in the Church and participation within its fellowship as it witnesses for Christ in the world.

Moreover, the statement says that evangelism has a social concern: “for God loves the whole [person] including his/her world, and is concerned about life in society.”

It is also part of evangelism to declare the judgment and love of God upon the structures of contemporary life which keep men [and women] from being the free, truly human persons God intends them to be...

The third document, the 1971 Statement on Evangelism, brought together and restated in a shorter form the main ideas in the 1960 social concerns and 1965 evangelism statements. It gives a summary of a wholistic understanding of evangelism and Christian mission and the life style of Christians.

It must be noted that the 1971 Statement combined the following Scriptural bases:

Luke 4:18-19	(Jesus' call to ministry),
Matthew 25:39	(concern for the hungry, the stranger, the unclothed, the prisoner);
Matthew 28:19-20	(The Great Commission);
Acts 1:8	(the commission to expand missionary endeavors to the whole world) and
John 14:6	(Jesus Christ as the way, the truth and the life)

We must point out further that evangelism was defined as "bearing our witness to the unbounded love of God in Jesus Christ for the world... a witness in word and deed." Furthermore, the statement used for the first time powerful words and concepts which during the Martial Law years became very popular (or notorious to Martial Law authorities) and a source of controversy within the Church. Mark these phrases:

Evangelism is God's work in us;

A concern for human life for its potentiality and abundance.

A concern for liberation, liberating [people] from all sinful dehumanizing pressures and systems

A concern for participation, participating in the task of love and justice for all.

Indeed, these three documents are excellent statements, very progressive and theologically sound. It certainly follows the ecumenical understanding of mission and evangelism in its widest sense: the conversion of individuals for commitment to Christ to the call for discipleship and the task of social transformation.

It is interesting to note that these statements of the United Church is affirmed in the ecumenical statements such as the WCCs "Mission and Evangelism – an Ecumenical Affirmation" issued in 1982 which says in part:

The proclamation of the Gospel includes an invitation to recognize and accept in a personal decision the saving lordship of Christ. It is the announcement of a personal encounter, mediated by the Holy Spirit, with the living Christ, receiving his forgiveness and making personal acceptance of the call to discipleship and a life of service.

Moreover, the "Ecumenical Affirmation" says that such proclamation is directed to "all realms of life". For the Good News of the Kingdom of God is a challenge to the structures of society (Eph. 3:9-10; 6:12) as well as a call to individuals to repent. "If salvation from sin through divine forgiveness is to be truly and fully personal, it must express itself in the renewal of these relations and structures. Such renewal is not merely a consequence but an essential element of the conversion of the whole human being.

The Urgency of the Evangelistic Task

I believe in the urgency of the evangelistic task as expressed by our own Dr. Lourdino Yuzon in his article "Evangelism Today" and as expressed by various missionary consultations and ecumenical conferences. Dr. Yuzon quotes an Amsterdam conference of the WCC sounding the urgency in these words:

As we studied evangelism in its ecumenical setting, we have been burdened by a sense of urgency. We have recaptured something of the spirit of the apostolic age, when believers went everywhere preaching the Word. If the Gospel is really a matter of life and death, it seems intolerable that any human being now in the world should live out his life, without ever having had the chance to hear or receive it... Now, not tomorrow, is the time to act.

The concerns expressed by the 1982 WCC Mission and Evangelism document is even more relevant today than when it was written 13 years ago. Listen to this enumeration of the situation of the world:

* *the number of people who have no opportunity to know the story of Jesus is growing steadily...*

- * *the majority of those who do not know Jesus are the poor of the earth, those to whom he promised the kingdom of God...*
- * *people are struggling for justice, freedom and liberation, often without the realization of their hopes...*
- * *the marginalized and the drop-outs of affluent society search desperately for comfort and identity in drugs and esoteric cults...*
- * *so many find little meaning, except in the relative security of their affluence...*
- * *so many Christians are nominal in their commitment to Jesus Christ...*
- * *wars and rumors of wars jeopardize the present and future of humankind, where an enormous part of natural resources and people are consumed in the arms race...*

This is the situation of the world where “the Church is sent to call people and nations to repentance, to announce forgiveness of sins and a new beginning in relation with God and with neighbors through Jesus Christ.”

Our Urgent Tasks

Let me now present to you some tasks which I personally consider urgent for the United Church of Christ as we prepare to celebrate our 50th Anniversary and as we face the new millennium:

1. Mission and evangelism is primarily the task of the local church.

I, therefore, recommend to the policy making bodies and implementing secretariat to give strong emphasis on the local congregations. We must be able to let the local churches understand their mission responsibilities in their own localities – to proclaim the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ and witness to the faith in their daily lives, individually and corporately as a Christian community.

I still believe that the Council of Bishops in 1986 made a correct decision in challenging the local churches to do this basic evangelistic task and thereby organizing, as the Holy Spirit leads them, new communities of faith in their own areas of responsibilities.

Corollary to this...

2. The United Church must launch a systematic education for mission.

As the 1966 Policy Statement on Evangelism puts it: “the line dividing evangelism and Christian education and nurture is quite a thin one.” And so follow-up and conservation are part of effective evangelism, and the challenge to be a committed evangelist is a Christian education task.

“Discipling the nation” is not only a call for verbal commitment to the lordship of Jesus Christ but a program to help members of the Church become disciples of Jesus Christ – enabled and equipped to follow his commission to preach and teach (Matt. 28:19-20) and emulating Christ’s own ministry (Luke 4:18-19) in their lives.

While evangelism is primarily the task of the local church and consequently a task of the laity, the role of the clergy is indispensable. The church workers must certainly be convinced of the urgency of the evangelistic task. The seminaries and church workers’ training centers are primarily responsible for this task. For example, courses on and/or related to “Mission and Evangelism” must be strongly emphasized and the future ministers be challenged of this responsibility.

3. Our concept of evangelism and mission must be disseminated widely and taught systematically

Our concept of evangelism and mission, as basically stated in the three documents I mentioned earlier and affirmed in ecumenical documents must be disseminated widely and taught systematically. The concepts of “integral evangelization” and “wholistic mission” must be developed further and explained as partly articulated in the documents I cited. I am, however, emphasizing ecumenical relations in mission and evangelism to avoid the problem of poselytism or “stealing of one another’s sheep.”

As we do our evangelistic task, we must be warned – as has already been pointed out by 1966 document – of the danger of “becoming primarily interested in membership statistics, of getting people for our church and of seeing people as means to our end.” If, for example, we feel we must organize a local United Church congregation in every town along the Philippine-Japan Friendship National Highway or in every barangay in the Philippines we must be sure that we are not duplicating the work of a sister church who must have been there ahead of us, for the sake of increasing the number of our local churches and congregations. The document reminds us that our “real duty is to faithfully proclaim the gospel and leave the result to God. In some instances this may result in more members of our united Church of Christ; in other instances it may not.”

Moreover, it is imperative that our concept of mission and evangelism should consider the task of transforming people and society towards the kingdom of God as the WCC Mission and Evangelism Document and the UCCP 1960 Statement of Social Concern emphasize.

4. The Church’s responsibility in world mission and evangelism

Although the primary concern is the local area where our congregations are called to serve, we must not neglect our responsibility in world mission and evangelism. This is the reason for our strong participation in the World Council of Churches and other international organizations. We should rejoice for the privilege of participating in the transformation of the German United Evangelical Mission (VEM) into an international mission organization of 33 churches (13 African, 14 Asian and 6 German) which may be called united in Mission (UiM) or United Mission. This is part of our answer to the call of “mission to and in all continents” as the 1963 Conference on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME, Mexico, 1963) puts it and the WCC’s “common witness of churches in each place and in all places.”

In this partnership, we will be able to revive and continue our former participation in world mission by sending co-workers to other countries as well as receiving co-workers from partner churches.

For several years now, we have been doing our part in the international program of mission education through our Internship Program. I suggest that aside from the exchange of co-workers and exchange visits, we should develop further our international internship program as our own offering for a wider mission education.

5. Continued involvement and leadership in confronting new issues facing the Christian Churches in the world

Finally, we must continue our involvement and leadership in confronting new issues facing the Christian Churches in different parts of the world. In this case, the United Church must give time and personnel who will study and participate in the discussion of the most urgent issues today. We have just enough time to mention some of the most urgent issues:

Dialogue with living faiths and ideologies; The continuing secularization and pluralism of our societies; The plight of the marginalized sectors and communities: the indigenous people, the women, the poverty stricken and the oppressed; The devastation of the environment and destruction of God’s Creation; The ideology of the new market economy which is wrecking havoc to

our economy in the name of economic development thereby widening more and more the gap between the rich and poor; The issue of massive proselytism practiced by and among our evangelical and charismatic brothers and sisters.

In all these issues, we are called to present and to articulate the meaning of God's love in Jesus Christ for every person and for every situation.

Concluding Word

Let me now go back to where I started.

I said: our first utterance as a United Christ was that it is the Divine will for us to unite in every effort to spread the Gospel and that our unity is founded on the fidelity to the cause of the Kingdom of God.

My thesis is that we have not changed that understanding of our mission and ministry. Our succeeding official statements proved that we continued our evangelistic task to present the Gospel to people, praying that they respond in faith to the call of Jesus Christ, join the Community of Faith, and be committed to Christ's mission and ministry of Kingdom building.

Our task of declaring the love of God to the whole person, to his or her world and society, is at the same time directed to the structures of contemporary life which keep people from being free and truly human as God intended them to be. This announcement leads us to a confrontation with powers and principalities for the purpose of bringing people and social structures closer to the reign of God where love, justice and peace prevail.

As such our mission is wholistic. It even includes the salvation of God's creation which must be "set from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God."

In our human frailties and weakness, we have neglected this wholistic mission and sometimes have become myopic – concentrating on our own little world – and forgetting the ministry we received from our Lord. We call ourselves united but we often display a disunity which bear a wrong witness to our neighbors. And so we need to ask forgiveness from God in Christ who has sent us to be God's witnesses in the world. As we ask for forgiveness, let us pray that we will be able to recover our mission and ministry which we proclaimed when we organized ourselves into the United Church of Christ in the Philippines.

And so I pray that this 1995 National Consultation on Evangelism and Christian Mission of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines will not only be able to rearticulate our commitment but that each one of us here present re-dedicate ourselves to the basic task of proclaiming the Gospel and bringing people and society closer to the reign of God.

May God bless you all. Amen.

Keynote Address delivered to the National Consultation on Evangelism and Christian Mission, United Church of Christ in the Philippines, CENDET, Cebu City, August 21-24, 1995

BIBLICO-THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON EVANGELISM

Dr. Everett L. Mendoza

Introduction

The Evangelism and Church Development Committee of the UCCP is concerned with promoting the church's evangelistic task in relation to other aspects of its work, particularly, justice and peace work and church growth or planting. This is in line with the effort to insure programmatic and organizational coherence and balance, in the total work of the church. In addition, changing social conditions that tend towards political quietism, the reassertion of conservative religious tendencies within the church abetted by the impingement of very aggressive non-mainline religious groups, and overtures for newer forms of ecumenical engagements – all point to a need to make a critical review of the UCCP's evangelistic undertaking.

An Evangelical Concept of Evangelism

In its broad meaning, evangelism means the church's total act of self-communication and self-propagation.

In a narrower sense, it refers to an aspect of the church's ministry which is particularly concerned about communicating its truths to the world. By its very nature, the church is evangelical in that it is driven by an inner compulsion to announce to the world the saving truths which have been revealed to it. Evangelism is the church's basic mission.

1. The church has been called but for one purpose which has been variously rendered in the New Testament.

In the first Epistle of Peter, it is "to declare the wonderful deeds of God who called [the church] out of darkness into God's marvelous light" (2:9b). Paul, in his Second Letter to the Corinthians, refers to it as the ministry or proclaiming the message of reconciliation (5:19), with the end in view that, as the Gospel of John put it, "you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (20:31).

It is clear from those passages, and from the entire apostolic witness as recorded in the New Testament, that evangelism or proclaiming the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ is the church's reason for being. Jesus claimed that he came to "seek and to save the lost", referring to his announcement of salvation to the household of Zaccheus (Luke 19:10). Although the larger part of Jesus' ministry involves doing beneficial acts to suffering people, such as healing and exorcism, that was not the reason for his coming. Even the so-called Nazareth Manifesto found in Luke 4:18 is a mandate to "preach good news to the poor... to proclaim release to the captives... to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." And again, Paul claimed that Christ sent him to preach the gospel, not even to baptize converts to Christianity (I Cor. 1:17).

2. The truths that the church proclaims are not general notions about God which other religions also hold to be true.

Rather, these are held to be objective truths that arose from certain historical events which bring objective spiritual benefits to everyone who believes. Evangelism as a specific task of the church, therefore, consists of communicating a cognitive content (the "mysteries" of the faith in I Cor. 4:1; Eph. 3:3) in which God's saving power is made available to those who listen.

The church is not the only one that has “good news” to people. There are philosophies, ideologies and other religions which offer some forms of relief and liberation. And since these are addressed to very real and concrete problems faced by so many people, it is critically important for the church to be able to tell the Christian Gospel of salvation from the others, and very importantly, to be able to discern agreements as well as conflicts between our Gospel and other gospels.

With a correct discernment, Christians can proclaim the gospel with integrity even as they spouse or denounce certain philosophies and ideologies that offer concrete solutions to people’s problems. The gospel’s integrity need not be threatened or compromised by their involvement in secular struggles.

The Gospel’s content is stated most comprehensively, and yet so succinctly, by the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, to wit: “Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God” (Rom. 5:1-2).

The church’s proclamation has a particular objective content which includes: (1) the knowledge of a gracious God; (2) the fact of a man, Jesus Christ, in whom this gracious God was fully present; (3) our access to God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ; and (4) that, as a consequence, we have become friends, or have peace, with God and made able to participate in God’s glory. These are the four elements of the Christian proclamation.

In the succeeding verses, Paul said that god’s friendship (of justification, in the traditional terms) enables us to have hope and opens us up to the outpouring of God’s love through the Holy Spirit who works in us. This is the Christian gospel which must be distinguished from other gospels of salvation.

- 3. Moreover, the proclamation of the gospel is not simply a communication of knowledge but an event in which Christ is made present through whom God’s grace is really offered and the hearer is empowered by the Holy Spirit to receive it.**

In other words, the announcement of the gospel is itself a salvation-event (Rom. 10:17). Therefore, it is through the church’s evangelistic work, that is the communication and reception of the gospel, that salvation is concretely presented to the world.

Evangelism and Christian Service

These are vital programs of the UCCP, as already pointed out. But they have been pursued with great unevenness. While Christian Service has been carried out with such fervor that has made the UCCP famous or notorious, depending on who is saying it, evangelism seems to lack an inner dynamism and is done with borrowed orientation and energy, as cited by Bishop Erme R. Camba, yesterday. This situation may be traced to the failure to make a proper distinction and establish a right relation between evangelism and Christian service in the total ministry of the church.

As a program of the church, evangelism needs to be seen in relation to other programs, particular Christian service. An evangelistic program with integrity and coherence is based on a correct theological understanding of the distinction as well as the relation between evangelism and Christian service.

Two models are pertinent for this consultation’s purposes.

1. Integral Evangelization

First is the liberal model in which Christian service is considered the concrete realization or fulfillment of evangelism or viewed from the other side, evangelism is but the cognitive complement

of Christian service. Laying the stress on Christian service, it is popularly known by the term “integral evangelization.”

2. Integrated Evangelism

The second is the conservative model which regards Christian service as but a preparation for or an accompaniment of evangelism. From another angle, evangelism is the true motive and purpose of Christian service. In this understanding, evangelism is understood to be the sole mission of the church, while Christian service plays only an instrumental role. This approach comes by the name of “integrated evangelism.”

Both models or approaches subordinate one to the other. But there could be another approach that involves not subordination but coordination. I call this Evangelism with Integrity and Coherence.”

3. Evangelism with Integrity and Coherence

Here, Christian Service is neither the concrete realization nor an accompaniment of evangelism but is the necessary praxis of the new life which the gospel brings. On the one hand, Christian service is not motivated by the drive to make people Christian but by genuine human compassion which has been purified and energized by the gospel. On the other, it is not meant to complete evangelistic work but is a spontaneous response to others by those who have experienced God’s graciousness in Jesus Christ. There is nothing original about this, I am simply restating what Martin Luther and John Calvin had said in the 16th century.

Christian Service and evangelism are two tasks of the church which are both theologically and functionally distinct from one another, although they are united in the one praxis of a witnessing church in the world. The purpose of evangelism is to present the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ and to make them his disciples. While Christian service is the field where Christians practice and realize their new humanity. In another sense, evangelism is a disciple’s response to the mandate of the Lord, whereas Christian service is a human response to people in their needs.

In other words, the church does not engage in social concerns because it is commanded by God but because it is moved by compassion for the suffering ones.

When the church does evangelistic work it is in obedience to the Lord’s mandate. Faithfulness to Christ and compassion for people are quite distinct motivation but they have a common source – the new life in Christ.

To reiterate, evangelism is the conscious, deliberate effort to make people Christians. That is, to get them baptized if they have not yet been baptized, and to bring them into the fellowship of the church for Christian nurture. Now that is not the reason why the church is helping the tribal Filipinos regain their ancestral lands. The UCCP does not support the peasant struggle for land in order to make them UCCP members. The UCCP is there because it is moved by genuine compassion which is the meaning of agape, or spontaneous love.

Hence, in order for Christian service to be genuine, it must be carried out as a task distinct from evangelism. And in order for evangelism to preserve its integrity, it must be freed from the necessity of delivering social services.

Is it the mission of the church to establish a just social order? No! This mission does not belong to the church. This mission belongs to the poor of society. But the church offers its life to the poor in solidarity with their struggle against oppression. It is not the task of the church to liberate the oppressed but to offer herself totally and unconditionally in the service of the struggle for freedom and liberation.

What service are we capable of here? We shall offer the poor what we have received of the Spirit. We cannot offer what we cannot receive. The Spirit, for instance, to arouse the poor from apathy. The gift to rekindle hope in their hearts, the gift to bear with them their pains.

Evangelism and Church Growth

Unlike Christian service, church growth or planting is a necessary corollary to evangelism,

People who respond to the gospel are invited to a life of discipleship together with other disciples. The gifts of the Spirit which are poured out to those who have been baptized into the church need to be exercised in the fellowship of the body of Christ (I Cor. 12:13).

Membership to a local church is presupposed in the proclamation of the gospel.

1. The church's inner life is none other than discipleship

The church is the matrix wherein an initiate to the Christian faith is taught and nurtured in the new life to the end that she/he may be conformed to the very image of Jesus Christ, her Lord and Master (Eph. 4:13).

During the beginning of the church, those who have been baptized "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship" (Acts 2:41-42). Justification makes sinners righteous before God but it does not make them essentially righteous. Although regarded righteous by God, they are still in fact sinners, *simul Justus et peccator*, as Luther put it. Forgiven sinners need the church for the steady unfolding of the new life and the gradual shedding off of the old one.

Sanctification or the realization of the new humanity in Christ is achieved through praxis of the new life in the secular world, according to Martin Luther. But it requires a nurturing community that affirms and safeguards the new identity against the old one. Outside the church, the seed of the new life has little chance of surviving in a hostile world. Therefore, it is imperative that those who respond to the preaching of the gospel are brought into the fellowship of the church. As a newborn babe needs a family, so does a new convert need a nurturing church.

2. Evangelism in Church Growth

Moreover, the kind of growth which serves the purpose of evangelism is one that allows a meaningful exercise of spiritual gifts. The *charismata*, or gift of the Spirit, refers to the various forms of services which are required for a fully alive and functioning church. Each member is given the "manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (I Cor. 12:7). This means that every member of the church is called upon to perform specific forms of services for the benefit of the whole church.

Local churches which have grown so large cannot help so many of its members to be actively involved in its life and ministry. These mega-churches have become so institutionalized that only a tiny portion of its membership is needed to take care of all its functions. Other than attending the Sunday church service, those who are in the periphery come to regard church attendance as a sufficient participation in the church. In short, they get very little opportunity to exercise the spiritual gifts for the benefits of the whole church.

Growing into a metropolitan church is not the idea of church growth that will serve evangelism well. The right kind of church growth is ___ that results in the multiplication of local churches which are small ___ big enough to provide enough space for an optimum participation ___ every member. The process of sanctification requires a close, personal and direct interaction among the members which large congregations ___ cannot provide.

Even more important than the practical consideration is that the g____ variety of gifts entail various ways of being a church. The diversity ____ gifts that the members have will require different configurations ____ local churches to allow the full manifestation of the Spirit. In other words, church growth is not to be a simple numerical extension but purposive and deliberate one which calls for coherent ____ formations.

For example, among local churches, those whose membership ____ largely drawn from people who occupy positions of power ____ authority and so reflect the concerns and striving of the established ____ order will have the prophetic task of making the rulers among the ____ just: while others which identify with the suffering and struggles of ____ oppressed have the task of keeping the passion for justice and ____ hope for vindication alive and burning. These are distinctly different ____ ways of being a church of Jesus Christ, but in order to keep the ____ of the church these local churches need to find or invent creative avenues for fellowship with one another.

Conclusion

The UCCP needs to pursue its evangelistic thrust in relation to other aspects of its life. This means that it should realize its evangelistic work in relation to its program for social concerns but without confounding the two. Evangelism can now be pursued with integrity and vigor, while Christian service will be freed from certain missiological baggages. But since these are integral aspects of the total life of the church, no local church can justify itself without attending to both. The liberation of each from the other makes coordination possible.

A clear theological and practical connection must also be established between its evangelistic program and its thrust towards church growth or development. Since inviting individuals to become members of local churches is understood to be a necessary function of evangelism, institutional expansion may now be freed from the nagging guilt of proselytizing.

These steps are necessary in order to preserve the theological integrity of the life and work of the UCCP as well as insure coherence in its programs and structure.

Delivered by Dr. Everett L. Mendoza during the National Consultation on Evangelism and Christian Mission at CENDET, Cebu City on 21 April 1995