

The Evangelism Strategy of The Connection Church

Most church employ an evangelism strategy that could be summarized as “Believe, Belong, Become.” John Finney, writing in his book, *Recovering the Past: Celtic and Roman Mission*, calls this the Roman Model for evangelism. He says, “The Roman Model for reaching people says: 1) Present the Christian message; 2) Invite them to decide to believe in Christ and become Christians; and 3) If they decide positively, welcome them into the Church and its fellowship. The Roman model seems very logical to us because most American evangelicals are scripted by it! Presentation, Decision, Assimilation. Extremely logical.”

But he contrasts this model with another known as the Celtic model of evangelism, which was pioneered by Patrick the missionary who took the Gospel to Ireland, otherwise known as “Saint Patrick”. According to Patrick’s records, during his ministry in Ireland, God allowed him to start 200 new churches and baptize 100,000 new believers. Patrick pioneered the Celtic model of evangelism.

The Celtic model for reaching people says: 1) you first establish community with people, or bring them into the fellowship, you engage in conversation, ministry, prayer, and worship. 3) In time, as they discover that they now believe, you invite them to baptism and discipleship.

In other words, instead of “Believe, Belong, Become,” the order of things is “Belong, Believe, Become.” The idea is that most people experience faith through relationships; that they encounter the Gospel through a community of faith; and that becoming a Christian involves a process that takes time.

The Celts lived a life of faith that showed those around them that Christ made a difference in their lives. The compassion and love of Christ was evident in their day-to-day living. Life was hard! Pain and suffering were all too often their reality, yet their lives were a witness and testimony to their God. This ‘living’ testimony caused countless people to befriend them and then, in God’s perfect timing, become a follower of Jesus Christ.

Consider the details of the Celtic model described below and how it is implemented at The Connection Church:

The key principles of the Celtic Way of Evangelism included building authentic relationships, engaging communities through storytelling and music, practicing radical hospitality, doing ministry in teams, and understanding the cultural context of those being ministered to. Additionally, it emphasized prayer, patience, and a commitment to serving both Christ and the people being reached.

How this strategy is applied by The Connection Church

As the United States has become increasingly pagan (much like the culture Patrick was commissioned to reach with the Gospel), the Celtic Way of Evangelism offers valuable lessons for The Connection Church. How does The Connection Church practice this approach to evangelism?

- We emphasize authentic relationships, developed through involvement with God’s people in large, mid-sized, and of course, small group gatherings in our Connection Groups.
- Our music is modern and contemporary, celebrating God’s goodness!
- We regularly feature testimony and personal storytelling in our services.
- We seek to present God’s truth in clear, practical, applicable ways.
- We practice radical hospitality.
- We do ministry as teams.
- We allow people to belong before they even believe, through welcoming them to our worship gatherings, our ministry gatherings, our Connection Groups and even inviting them to serve as part of a Dream Team.
- As we welcome them to belong, they eventually believe, and become devoted followers of Christ.