

Fremont Presbyterian Church What We Mean by the Term “Evangelical”



Many of us at Fremont Presbyterian Church think of ourselves, or describe ourselves as “evangelical.” We even have an elder for evangelism on the Session. What do we mean when we use this term?

Unfortunately, this word has been corrupted in some circles in our current culture. It does not mean narrow, or fundamentalist of some kind, and it is not connected to any political party or social agenda, and we do not believe that it means high pressure or hard sell.

The Encyclopedia of Christianity defines “evangelism” as “the proclamation of the gospel.” “Evangelism” comes from the Greek word “euangelian,” from which we also get the word “angel,” and means “glad tidings.” The term implies a good message, as in a victory. Jesus has conquered sin, death, and the grave. The noun form means *evangel* - the good news or the gospel. The verb form means *evangelize* - proclamation of the good news.

This word appears in almost every book in the New Testament, appearing 33 times in places such as Luke’s Gospel, the Acts, and Paul’s Epistles: Luke 4:43 - “Jesus mission is to be the divinely sent proclaimer of the good news;” Romans 10:15 - “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news;” and the Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-20 - Jesus commanded his followers to “go and make disciples of all nations”-- a directive that we at Fremont embrace, along with the whole teaching of scripture. The word also appears frequently in many of our confessions: the Heidelberg Catechism, the Second Helvetic Confession, the Barmen Declaration and the Confession of 1967. It is one of the oldest and most commonly used words in Christianity.

We believe that God has good purposes for each of our lives; that He wants to have a relationship with each of us. For us, the cost of this relationship is free – it is amazing grace. That “good news” should be shared not only by our words, but by our lives and actions as well. We believe that sharing the gospel is a combination of both. Words alone, without the desire to try to meet the tangible needs of others, nor social justice alone, without the spoken message, are not completely effective in changing lives.

We believe that the people in our community want to talk about things that really matter – who God is, what life means, mortality, struggles with guilt and goodness, hope, truth – and we believe that the good news of Christmas and Easter can change all of our lives. The promise of Jesus Christ is that he came so that we might have abundant life. This is truly “good news” we want to share, both in word and action, with the community and the world.

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life—a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45)