



Targeted Evangelism

by Kevin Wilson

With about 90 worshippers gathering on weekends, St. John's Lutheran Church in Secor, Illinois, was like the majority of Lutheran churches in the mid-1990s. But about that time, church members realized their town of 250 residents had become a bedroom community for young families, according to Rev. John Schmidt, former pastor at St. John's. The congregation developed "a desire to reach the hearts of the children, to provide the opportunity for Christian learning," said Rev. Schmidt. St. John's chose to open a preschool to attract the young families and teach them the Christian faith. The first year the preschool drew about five children. However, the second year 25 children were enrolled. Targeted Evangelism was a success in rural Illinois.

Targeted Evangelism is intentionally connecting a specific group of non-church members to Jesus as part of the congregation's ministry. The targeted group can range from non-Christians who practice false religions to unchurched Christians who formerly participated in churches. The key factor is that the targeted group learns about Jesus.

Targeted Evangelism is often more effective than broad-based outreach because the church customizes the outreach effort. Leaders know ex-

actly who the church is trying to reach, so the results are more measurable than in mass advertising. The ability to identify how God is working through the efforts translates into better stewardship of resources.

There are five basic steps to Targeted Evangelism.



1. Pray for the entire Targeted Evangelism effort throughout the process. The starting point for Targeted Evangelism is prayer. Utilize every avenue for prayer available to the congregation, from worship services to prayer chains to small groups. The Targeted Evangelism team is tasked with providing weekly prayer petitions and praises.

2. Form a team to implement the Targeted Evangelism effort. The key term in forming Targeted Evangelism teams is "shared." Look for people with *shared experiences*. People with like experiences often have a

passion for reaching other people like themselves. Search for people with a *shared heart* for the lost. Members of diverse backgrounds can rally around this shared cause. Finally, find people with *shared responsibility* for outreach. A Board of Evangelism has authority to do such work.

3. Discern which groups to evangelize. Discernment starts by looking inside the congregation. Members with shared life experiences are the best place to start. For example, former Mormons are often drawn to seek ways to reach people who still are Mormon. The Targeted Evangelism team can survey the congregation, seeking referrals to unchurched community groups. The team also can seek discernment through sources outside the congregation, ranging from demographic studies to news publications to specialty stores in a neighborhood.

4. Develop the plan for reaching the targeted group. Many outreach efforts by congregations are basically "beacons." Signs on church property and newspaper ads "draw" the community to the church building. This rarely is effective in Targeted Evangelism. The group being reached is relatively small and unique and not looking for a church home. For this

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Singled Out

by Michelle Connor and Karla Galik

Recently I attended my first singles retreat. Not only was I surprised to hear that a local church was actually offering a singles retreat to the area churches, but I was encouraged at what it might bring. “Finally,” I thought, “some young, single Christian believers!”

I'm a 20's-something, a lifelong member of the non-married club. Since college graduation I have felt the gap left by



the missing generation X and Y in our churches. It is challenging to find folks my age in a church, let alone those that are single.

As a first-timer to these sorts of singles gatherings, I wasn't sure what to expect. I had hoped to meet other fellow Christian-believing 20's- and 30's-somethings, and, to be honest, maybe even an eligible bachelor. (Hey, a girl can hope, right?!) But most of the single people in attendance were not of my generation nor did their singleness stem

from similar life circumstances.

But God worked through this event in several ways. First, it helped me realize that singles come in all ages with varied life experiences. Never before had I put divorcees and widowers in the same “singles” category as my never-been-married self. Secondly, it also showed me that one blanket “singles” ministry cannot be successful. Talking about divorce, or watching grieving videos, made me feel even more isolated. God showed me that not only does singleness come in many different situations, but that it needs to be handled uniquely for each case. How can we address this in today's church?

As the body of Christ, we cannot ignore one of the largest populations in America. According to George Barna, the United States has more single adults than any other nation except China and India. ‘Single’ can be classified into three main groups—never been married, divorced, and widowed. Since there are obvious differences among these groups, outreach cannot be approached in just one way.

When considering outreach to singles, these action steps might be

helpful. First, identify your single adult audience using the aforementioned groupings. Then find your core team, people as passionate about reaching out to singles as you are. Then start praying and planning, asking God to lead you. You may also want to do some research. George Barna's book *Single Focus* (see www.barna.org, Barna update for March 11, 2002; book available at Amazon.com) captures great ways to reach all groups of singles. Some examples:



Never-Been-Married: Age specific groups can be highly successful for these singles. They do not necessarily want to be segregated from married people, so incorporating married couples and singles within the same age group would be beneficial.

Divorced: Divorce is a reality in our world today. Most divorced people are seeking healing and forgiveness. A Divorce Care group is a great way to reach these singles and show Christ's love. See www.divorcecare.com for more information.

Widowed: Most widows and widowers are older and are concerned with needs such as health-care and housing situations. Consider starting a group to help in these areas or allow opportunities for these people to mentor younger people.

From the singles retreat experience, and failed attempts to find an existing

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New Harvest is published four times a year to provide information and encouragement for sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the United States.

Center for U.S. Missions, 1530 Concordia West, Irvine, CA 92612-3203; 949-854-8002 x1780; fax 949- 854-6854; email: michelle.connor@cui.edu. Mike Ruhl, Executive Director; Glenn Lucas, Director of Training; Mike Zehnder, Worship Consultant; Michelle Connor, Coordinator; Karen Kogler, New Harvest editor.

The Center, a partnership of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod World Missions, Concordia University, Irvine, California, and the LCMS North America Mission Executives, exists to provide research and training for mission work among unevangelized people in the United States.

Center Welcomes National Worship Consultant

We are delighted to announce that Rev. Michael Zehnder of Gilbert, Arizona, has accepted the divine call to serve as National Worship Consultant at the Center for U.S. Missions.

Mike has been engaged in worship and music ministry for thirty years as a pastor, church planter, Minister of Music and Director of Christian Education. Musically, he has served as a performer (classic pipe organ, contemporary keyboards, synthesizer, MIDI, guitar, trombone and vocal soloist), director of choirs and musical teams, and editor and compiler of worship resources and seminars for *Fellowship Ministries* of Tempe, Arizona (1999-2006).

Starting August 2006, Mike will be available for *worship diversity consultations* in congregations, schools, districts, mission societies and other Christian movements. These on-site consultations will provide guidance and resources for the application of worship diversity to local evangelism and congregation renewal.

In 2004, LCMS Convention Resolution 2-04* affirmed respect for diversity in worship practices, and encouraged pastors, musicians and worship leaders to exercise this freedom responsibly and biblically. This new ministry of the Center for United States Missions has been

created to assist congregations and ministries navigate the exploration of diverse worship practices.



You are invited to contact Mike about worship consultation through www.centerforusmissions.org or our office 949/854-8002 x1780. ■

*Text at lcms.org. Search for "Resolution 2-04." Open doc named "2" dated 8-16-04.

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network of singles in our churches, we found God leading us to change the way we reach out to singles. We formed a small group, "Revolution So Cal" (Southern California). With the Lord's guidance, we are reaching out to connect disconnected young professionals in their mid 20's and 30's to Christ and to other believers. We facilitate discussion groups that challenge people to think about their spiritual lives, and we network and fellowship through social gatherings. It is a start. Our prayer is that we not only reach unbelievers, but we also ignite a desire in Southern California congregations to reach out to singles.

Congregations not only need to reach out to singles, but they need to be single friendly congregations. Too often singles say they feel Sunday is the most segregated day of the week. So many churches focus on families (mother, father, and children); singles

don't know where they fit into that picture. Simply by not over-emphasizing traditional families and couples as the norm, our congregations could become more inviting places for singles. It can be as easy as valuing each person as they are, regardless of their marital status.

Jesus, a single man himself, calls us to love each other just as He loved us and gave His life for us. He never favored married people over single people. When reaching out to singles, we need to ask ourselves: *Are we ready to receive them?* Singles are looking for a place to truly belong. If your congregation provides this, singles will find it to be home. ■

Michelle Connor and Karla Galik are young professionals living and thriving in Orange County, California. Michelle is Coordinator for the Center for U.S. Missions. Karla, the recent singles retreat attendee, is a Website Project Manager for a surviving dot com. Together they have a passion for the Lord, adventure and great music. Comments, questions, suggestions, rants, or praises can be emailed to RevolutionSoCal@gmail.com.

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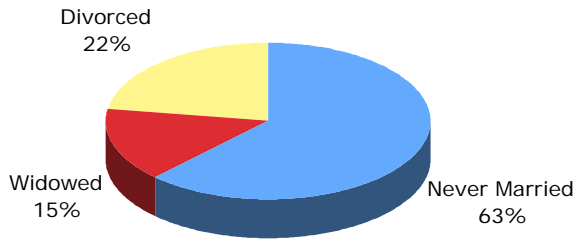
reason, Targeted Evangelism plans include "bridges" to the targeted group. The team or church members "go" to the people the church wants to reach, then personally walk them into the life of the congregation.

5. Build on Targeted Evangelism successes quickly. When God causes people to come to Christ through Targeted Evangelism, He opens a brief window for new Targeted Evangelism efforts. God has provided the congregation with momentum. Wise church leaders will quickly call for more people to join the cause of Christ through Targeted Evangelism, especially those who were recently reached. In this way Targeted Evangelism is expanded. ■

Rev. Kevin Wilson serves as a mission developer at Word of Life Lutheran Church in Surprise, AZ.

Census Bureau Info

Singles in the U.S.



2004 U.S. Household Population

Total age 15 and up:	224,939,628
Never Married:	62,495,052 of whom 58% (36,102,489) are ages 18 to 34
Widowed:	13,657,284 of whom 76% (10,431,254) are age 65 and over
Divorced:	22,929,169 of whom 54% (12,456,310) are ages of 35 to 54
Source: American FactFinder, U.S. Census Bureau, www.census.gov	

On the Web

Mosaic (www.mosaic.org) - See what one church is doing to reach different people groups.

Crossroads Community Church at www.crossroadschurch.net. Offers three ministries targeting singles: *Catalyst* for ages 18-24, *Reach* for ages 25-34 and *Crossroads Singles 35+* for ages 35 and over.

A Revealing Look at Three Unique Single Adult Populations, at <http://www.barna.org/Flex-Page.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=108>. This research is referenced in the Singled Out article in this issue.

Worth Reading:

Seven Practices Of Effective Ministry by Andy Stanley, Lane Jones, and Reggie Joiner. Great insights help a ministry target its evangelism and be intentional. Also available in Spanish.

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Center for U. S. Missions
 Concordia University
 1530 Concordia West
 Irvine, California 92612-3203