

2022: Time to finetune our evangelistic efforts

By Bob Young

Something many may not know: I am a clarinetist. I played the clarinet throughout junior high and high school. I played in the high school band for six years! (In my small school district, 7th and 8th grade students were eligible for high school band.) In college, I played first chair clarinet in the Wichita State University symphonic band. Playing the clarinet was always for me great entertainment. In high school, I often blew my horn 40 more hours each week (we were required to keep practice charts). A few years ago, I gave my clarinet to a promising student who could not afford to buy a new horn.

During daily band practice, each band member was responsible for tuning their own instrument. We were playing for ourselves, practicing. But before a concert, we finetuned our instruments. My clarinet played a perfect Middle C. I blew Middle C again and again as the instructor helped students finetune their instruments. We were a better band, ready for the concert, when we were exactly in tune.

Many local congregations need to finetune their evangelism efforts. The church needs every member in tune and ready to play in harmony. Too often, evangelism in the local church is left to a few soloists. Soloists are not God's plan. Using only soloists, evangelism in local ministry tends to deteriorate easily. Before long, the members have settled in and we are playing only for ourselves. It is much easier to limit oneself to those we already know and to make the church a place of fellowship between believers. When that happens, the church focus turns inward, the church plays for itself, and the continuing formation of disciples is hindered. The band quits playing public concerts!

Evangelism is the church's concert, an opportunity hear a beautiful song of salvation presented to a needy world. What would be required for a local church to finetune its evangelism?

- All of the members need to learn their parts and be ready to play. Evangelism is the work of the body, not the work of soloists. Each member plays an important part.
- The leaders must lead the way, strengthening the work of the members. This begins by providing an example, each leader reaching out evangelistically to those around them.
- Members should be reminded constantly of their roles and trained to fulfill those roles. (When concert time rolled around, we band members invited everyone we knew to attend the concert. In parallel, without invitations and new contacts the church will stagnate, become unproductive, and fail to multiply. The invitation is not to hear a soloist—the invitation is to the church's concert!)

Playing a concert was a wonderful experience, but it was not nearly as much fun if no one was present to listen! The success of the concert depended on the invitations.

Evangelism is like the church's concert. Can you help your church finetune its outreach in 2022?