
THE VOICE

Official Newsletter of Evangelical Anabaptist Fellowship (EAF)

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Called to Witness

Jake Krahn

“But you shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” Acts 1:8

The term that Jesus Christ used when He walked with and taught His apostles, and that He used to define the major task of the early church was that of witnessing. Before Jesus ascended to the Father, the Lord gave His church the divine strategy for world redemption. He said, “You shall be my witnesses unto the uttermost parts of the world.” Then Acts 4:33 goes on to say, “And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.”

What is the meaning of the term “my witnesses” and what is the nature of a winning witness and how does the modern, or today’s Christian who was not an eyewitness of the redemptive acts of Jesus Christ, bear convincing witness for the Lord in today’s society? Acts 2:17-18 says that God, in the last days, will pour out of His spirit upon all flesh, “and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.” In the Old Testament period, God’s spirit came upon the prophets, priests, and kings, or military leaders, to enable and empower them for a specific task.

When we keep in mind that the prophets were basically the only spokespeople that God had, He had many unique ways of relaying his wishes to the people, and in turn they bore witness of how God had led them. After the coming of Christ, the disciples were convicted by the Holy Spirit that each one of them was to bear witness - a verbal testimony based on what they had seen with their eyes and what their hands had experienced of what Christ had done in his or her life.

This group of disciples were the beginning of the church. They were not ordered to build buildings, sing hymns, or any of the other things that most people associate with Christians. They were instructed to be witnesses, to tell people what they had seen and experienced in their time with Jesus. They did not participate in government or civil affairs. It was not their mandate. They were a small group within a hostile pagan world. Their job was to witness for Christ and to keep themselves separate from the world. Surely it was difficult then as it is difficult today.

If the role of the church today is to witness to society; to draw people to Christ and yet not be drawn into the vortex of a potentially pagan society, we must testify to those around us, as did the apostles, of what Christ has done in our lives.

The necessity for a continuing witness by the church today takes on a much deeper role when we realize that the world is never more than two generations away from being pagan. It only takes one generation gap to

lose that foothold on the solid rock which is Jesus Christ. With this in mind, the privilege and sombre responsibility of being a personal witness takes on a much deeper significance. And so the matter of witnessing is not optional. It is imperative. It is mandatory. It is the great commission. Evangelism is not the job for a few gifted and trained men but instead the responsibility of every person who is a follower of Christ. We could even say that as a Christian church we are today's prophet.

In Christ's day, as long as the priests and prophets stayed within the boundaries of the church the political people did not care. But when Jesus drove out the moneychangers they felt he had stepped into their territory. Today, as long as the church stays within its boundaries so to speak, the world for the most part does not care. But Jesus has given us a mandate to step beyond the boundaries of the church - to make an impression on the world around us and to make the invitation to become a child of God so appealing that the world will stop and pay attention. As a church, by our witness alone we should show ourselves to the world and share of our experience with Christ.

Sad to say, many of today's disciples have never contributed to helping another person come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Why? Is it lack of experience or fear of making a mistake? Are we too timid? Is it a lack of faith? Perhaps we have never been taught to witness – at least not verbally. We need to look back one generation to see that this may be a factor, although not an excuse.

To witness means to testify. As in a court of law - to witness or testify means to give an account of what you have seen or experienced first hand. A second or third person account is not taken into consideration as it holds no bearing. The witness also does not try to persuade the jury

but the jury must decide for itself if the witness is genuine. There are good witnesses and poor witnesses. To be a good witness for Christ means to tell others of what you have experienced firsthand; to give a genuine account verbally and with your lifestyle of what Christ has done for you personally.

As Christians our aim should always be to improve our testimony for the Lord. But if there has been no personal experience with the Lord, then there is no testimony to give. And so how do we become a more convincing witness? We must first of all realize that not all lost people are the same; they are all different and have different needs. Yet they are all the same in that they all need the Saviour. Some are burdened with a load of guilt; others are wandering aimless, forlorn, and afraid; still others are ruined by a sinful lifestyle. Many are good people but still do not know the Lord. Yet all are in the grip of sin and need to be shown the way out.

Every person needs to be assured of the saving power of God's forgiving grace. That is where the Christian witness comes in – always working together with the Holy Spirit. Tactful approaches need to be made using persistent persuasion and employing the most effective methods in witnessing. But in the final analysis, it is the Holy Spirit alone who can present Christ to the hearts of the unsaved in a convincing manner.

Companionship with a living Lord and the power of the Holy Spirit, combined with a consciousness of the world's desperate need for Christ, provided the early church with a mighty motive that thrust them into their world with a winning witness for Christ. This was the driving force of the first witnesses. No opposition could deter them. No persecution could stop their witness.

So, with a message that can save the world morally, physically, intellectually, personally, economically, socially, and most

of all eternally, the church needs for us to communicate that message effectively. The world desperately needs Christ. We need just as desperately to want to share Christ with the world. The great commission that Jesus instructs His church with is, “Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you

always, even unto the end of the world” Matthew 28:19-20.

May God, through His Holy Spirit who is present in the hearts of believers, give us a driving desire to be that witness.

Jake Krahn is a pastor in the Sommerfeld Mennonite Church and works in church planting and evangelism as a tent making ministry, farming near Gretna, Manitoba. He is a member of the EAF Board.

Search for Renewal

In the face of declining church attendance and in the face of materialism and the secularization of North American culture, a group of Mennonite churches have joined together to promote renewal in the church. Based in the U.S. and known as Anabaptist Renewal Circles, the group has included some seventy-five congregations. However, organizers planning for an annual convention for July 21 are inviting representatives from other countries and hope that more than one hundred congregations will be represented.

Information regarding this convention scheduled for July 21, 2015 at Slate Hill Mennonite Church, Camp Hill, Pennsylvania is available on the Anabaptist Renewal Circles website – www.anabaptistrenewal.org.

The **Vision Statement** for the group states “**To mobilize the Mennonite and Anabaptist community to bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.**”

The website points to the following commitments:

Our Commitments

We commit ourselves:

- **To be radical in our love for the Lord and compassion for our neighbours;**
- **To be full of His grace and truth as we passionately follow Jesus;**
- **To earnestly seek more of the Holy Spirit and His transforming power;**
- **To rejoice in the holistic witness of Scripture;**
- **To affirm the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective and call the church to faithfulness;**
- **To joyfully embrace Biblical sexuality as taught by Jesus and His apostles;**
- **To understand our brokenness and in humility seek spiritual renewal;**
- **To encourage fellowship in the Mennonite church and welcome a new move of His spirit.**

WISDOM

Is life not full of opportunities for learning love?

Every man and woman every day has a thousand of them.

The world is not a playground; it is a schoolroom.

Life is not a holiday, but an education.

And the one eternal lesson for us all is how better we can love.

- Henry Drummond -

RESOURCES

Teaching materials on the Sermon on the Mount, Biblical peacemaking, and Anabaptist understanding of the Bible continue to be available from EAF. Watch for the new blog: eaf@wordpress.com.

EAF BOARD MEMBERS

Jerry Hildebrand - Winkler EMMC; Jake Krahn - Altona Sommerfeld Mennonite Church; Menno Kroeker - Rosenort EMC; Bernie Loeppky - Grace Mennonite Church, Winkler; Edwin Plett - Landmark, EMC; Harvey Plett - Landmark EMC; David Friesen - Halbstadt Mennonite Church; Dick Plett - Winkler EMMC.

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Donations are used for sound Biblical teaching on salvation and Christian discipleship, printing adult Sunday school material, promoting Christian peacemaking, printing "The Voice" and for special public meetings.

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