

Interviewing Perspective Church Members....

Dear Partners in the Gospel,

On behalf of the Elders I want to thank you for your help in our Membership process **during both English morning services on the next 2 Sundays, November 27 and December 4.** Indeed we are first and foremost partners in the Gospel. By His great mercy our Lord Jesus has given us life and salvation! And this is the fundamental point I urge you to focus on as you help us grow His body at ZGC. At the end of each of the four meetings we will break into small groups. The number of groups will be determined by how many of us are available. And, the depth of knowing the people will be greater the more groups we have! So please try to come.

The purpose of these mini-meetings is to find out, as best we are able, ***“Does this person have a genuine experience of salvation?”*** Are they also our partners in the gospel? God forbid that ZGC would have members that do not really know Him! That would not only make our leadership a scandal, but it would give them a false assurance that could lead them to hell. Yes, our task is eternally serious!

Please don't think “Oh, this person has been around forever, I don't need to ask them about their salvation.” Luther once said, “When you are trying to find the devil, don't forget to look behind the pulpit!” Social awkwardness is no reason to miss the chance to be crystal clear about whether a person is truly in the family. And if they are, I think they will appreciate that we are taking our responsibilities seriously.

As we have not done these ‘classes’ before we're still not sure how long everything will take. I will be over in the main sanctuary preaching a loooooong sermon to give you as much time as possible ☺! But our small group time will be brief. Please see your task as ***gathering information not giving instruction.*** Hear the salvation testimony of each person. And take notes! You may find that someone does not really have a clear understanding of salvation yet. They may be ‘near’ but not yet ‘in.’ They may have a wrong opinion of a central doctrine or practice. Resist the impulse to take the time to correct wrong ideas right then. Say, “Thanks for your sharing...and now let's hear the next person....” We can help them more later.

After the meeting is over, please give your notes (please write them up clearly at home later and email them early in the week) to Rob or an Elder. Please be specific if there are areas in the person's life where we need to follow up, we will do so.

Sometimes a well worded question can get to the heart of the issue. Remember we are not going to have time to hear the ‘long version’ of everyone's salvation story. Focus on what they really believe, do they trust fully in Jesus as Lord and Savior?

You might ask: What is the Gospel? / What has Jesus done for you? / What do you believe about Jesus?

I have often used the 2 Evangelism Explosion questions: 1) If, God forbid, you should die tonight, where would you go? 2) If you stood before God and He asked, 'Why should I let you into my Heaven?' what would you say?

What I pray we hear is a clear articulation of faith in the Savior, people who fully trust in the death and resurrection of Jesus for their eternal life. Such people are truly our partners in the gospel.

Please do not get lost on the many 'rabbit trails' – even though they are important! Maybe we want them to spend more time reading the Bible, or stop smoking, or be a better parent, or know the power of the Holy Spirit, or more fully appreciate the theology of Calvin, or Arminius, or Scofield..... But stand firm near the cross, please! Let's make it our first priority that ZGC have a membership of true Christians.

We are not in a hurry about this process. We are not pegging our 'self-worth' or 'church-worth' on how many members we have in ZGC. We are first and foremost ministers of the gospel. We want to do all we can to help people know Jesus Christ. Church membership is a secondary issue. So let us seize this process as a great opportunity to make 'the main thing the main thing' and proclaim Him!

Thank you so much for your help in this eternally important endeavor! Your partner in His gospel, Mark