

Faith Matters

stump
the pastor

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Q: Words like evangelism, the Evangelists and Evangelicals are obviously related, but they all seem to have different meanings. What do those terms actually mean?

A: The root word for all those terms is from the Greek word εὐαγγέλιον (you-on-GALE-ee-on). It means good news. Sometimes it is translated into English as the Gospel or good news of Jesus. At other times, it is transliterated (carried over) into English as evangel and then expanded in various ways.

Thus, an evangelist is one who proclaims the Gospel. The Evangelists (capital E) refer to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, authors of the four accounts of the Gospel in the Bible. The adjective evangelical means “Gospel-centered,” although Evangelicals (capital E) refers to one wing of the Christian church that includes Baptists and many non-denominational churches. (So, Faith Lutheran *is* an evangelical church, but is *not* an Evangelical church.)

It is no surprise that there is disagreement in the Church about how accurate the various uses of evangelical are. In every case, however, words that include “evangel” are connected in some way to good news, and almost always to the best news of all, the good news of Jesus Christ.