



The **Ichthus**, an image of a fish and an early Christian symbol, is a recognised symbol in the Evangelical movement. Other common symbols include a plain cross, the Bible or a dove, representing the Holy Spirit.

EVANGELICAL CHURCHES

Evangelicalism is a movement within Christianity distinguished by its distinctive emphases. These are the sole authority of the *Christian Bible*, the need for personal conversion and new birth through faith in Christ's death on the cross (hence the reference to 'born again Christians'), and the mandate for preaching the Gospel throughout the world. The movement also shares the principal beliefs of other traditions of Christianity (described on page 16).

An evangelical Christian may be a member of a Christian denomination or of an independent evangelical church or group that is not part of any Christian denomination.

Pentecostalism is a closely related movement and is usually included in the category of evangelicalism. The evangelical movement has been growing steadily and presently numbers hundreds of millions on all continents.

Summary of Essential Practice Points:

Please refer to the full text of the highlighted points related to the following summary points.

1 *Profile of evangelical churches in Ireland:*

Evangelicalism is a movement within Christianity that is now expressed as a part of most Christian denominations as well as numerous independent churches and social agencies. Evangelicals may be Irish and from new communities, particularly Africa, Asia (including the Philippines) and South America. An *evangelical* or an *evangelical Christian* are correct terms, while the term 'evangelist' is incorrect when used as a description for this group.

2 *Religious contacts and religious practices:*

An evangelical Christian may not be easily recognisable in a healthcare setting, while they will wish to have any religious practices conform to their belief system. They may identify themselves as part of a particular denomination, an independent church or simply a Christian. It is particularly important to clarify the name of the contact to be called for religious support for the person and guidance for the healthcare setting at critical points.

3 *Death-related religious rituals:*

Death-related religious rituals vary depending on whether the person is from a particular denomination or not. In case of imminent death the named religious representative should be called, who will provide support as necessary.

4 *Cleaning and touching the body:*

The normal washing and preparation procedure can be carried out.

5 *Initiation ritual/infant baptism:*

Evangelicalism practices the initiation ritual of baptism later in life, while practice may vary due to the trans-denominational nature of the movement. Most independent (non-denominational) evangelical Christians, Pentecostals and Baptists are unlikely to practice infant baptism, even in the case of threat to life of a newborn. Members of the Church of Ireland (Anglican), Methodist and Presbyterian Churches may follow their own denomination's guidance. Specific guidance on each of the latter denominations is given in their specific sections. Guidance will need to be sought from the family or religious contact.

Profile of Evangelical Churches in Ireland

The Irish evangelical movement developed its present form in the 18th century. A major early influence in evangelicalism was the Reverend John Wesley, an Anglican minister whose distinctive method of teaching and preaching later gave rise to the Methodist Church.

The movement uses a lower case e when writing the word evangelical.

Essential Practice Point

1

Evangelicalism is now expressed as a part of virtually every Christian denomination including Baptist, Church of Ireland, Methodist, Presbyterian and Pentecostal. There are also numerous independent evangelical churches in Ireland, some with congregations in excess of five hundred. A number of social, relief and mission agencies such as the Salvation Army and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), TearFund Ireland, etc., work to evangelical principles.

Census 2006 recorded an increase of almost 40% among those identifying themselves as evangelicals, amounting to 5,276 members. As evangelicals in the major denominations tend to list as members of those churches the actual figure in the Republic may be much larger. Contributors estimate that there are in excess of 30,000 evangelicals and Pentecostals in Ireland. Evangelicals may be Irish and from new communities, particularly Africa, Asia (including the Philippines) and South America.

There are evangelical congregations throughout the country in major cities and other urban centres. As mentioned above, some of these are led by clergy or ministers from the major denominations.

Others are independent churches, groups, or fellowships, whose leaders are usually referred to as pastors, elders or sometimes senior leaders. There are currently a number of evangelical and Pentecostal churches in Ireland including Chinese, Filipino and African (the last are detailed in the Pentecostal section).

Evangelical Alliance Ireland (EAI) is the largest movement of evangelical churches, organisations and individuals in Ireland. There are also other organised groupings of evangelical churches.

Care of the ill

Religious contacts and religious practices

Essential Practice Point

2

- There are numerous evangelical congregations in Ireland. An evangelical Christian may not be easily identifiable in healthcare settings, while they will wish to have any religious practices conform to their belief system. They may identify themselves as part of a particular denomination, an independent church or simply a Christian. It is particularly important to clarify the name of the contact to be called for religious support for the person and guidance for the healthcare setting at critical points, such as death-related matters.
- The evangelical movement places emphasis on the *Christian Bible*, prayer and personal faith in Jesus Christ. Relatively speaking, compared to some other Christian traditions there is less emphasis on ceremony, ritual and symbols. It is likely that religious and/or community members may sit at the bedside

reading passages from the *Bible* and praying, and sometimes a group may request a room to worship with singing.

Blood Transfusion and Organ Transplantation

There is no religious objection to these procedures.

Care of the Dying

Death-related religious rituals

Essential Practice Point

3

- Rituals to prepare a person for death, where they exist, vary depending on whether the person is from a particular denomination or not. In case of imminent death the named religious representative should be called, who will provide support as necessary.
- Evangelical Christians do not pray for the dead; prayer at this time is usually thanksgiving for the life of the deceased person and comfort for the family.

Cleaning and touching the body

Essential Practice Point

4

The normal washing and preparation procedure can be carried out.

Postmortem requirements

There is no religious objection to postmortem.

Interment ritual

Both burial and cremation are acceptable generally.

Bereavement

The religious leader will generally facilitate the family with bereavement issues.

Religious Icons and Symbols

Personal and religious items

Plain crosses and the *Christian Bible* tend to be the most common symbols across the spectrum of the evangelical movement.

Use of religious symbols

- A plain cross is appropriate in the mortuary area.
- The crucifix (a cross with the figure of Christ) is not usually considered an appropriate symbol. It should not be displayed in a hospital mortuary unless the religious leader/family directs otherwise.
- Icons/images of Christ, Mary (Mother of Jesus) and saints as well as prayer beads are also not usually appropriate.
- It is advised to check with the religious leader or family before using candles as they are not a common symbol across all denominations and groups in the evangelical movement.

Additional Notes on Maternity and Paediatric Care

Initiation ritual/infant baptism

Essential Practice Point

5

- Evangelicalism emphasises personal conversion at a time the person is ready. However, the practice of baptism, the initiation ritual common to Christian traditions, is likely to vary across the groups within the evangelical movement.
- Most independent (non-denominational) evangelical groups, Pentecostals and Baptists practice baptism (i.e. initiation into the religion) by full immersion in water at a time when the person is ready to choose the Christian religion. Therefore, infant baptism is not practised, even in cases of threat to life of the infant.
- The Salvation Army does not practise baptism.
- The Church of Ireland, Methodist and Presbyterian sections of this Guide contain specific information about the views of the respective churches on infant baptism and the manner in which it should be carried out if necessary. Please consult these sections for specific guidance if the infant is a member of any of these traditions.

Foetal, infant and child death

- There are no specific religious requirements in cases of foetal death or stillbirth. The parents' wishes should determine what should happen.
- Normally a service is held for deceased infants and children, while the nature of the service

depends on the age of the child and the parents' wishes. The religious contact will be a resource in these matters.

Memento of a deceased child

There are no religious restrictions on giving a memento of a deceased child to the parents such as hand/foot-prints, a lock of hair etc. It is appropriate to ask if families would find this helpful.

Developing a Local Evangelical Church Contact

Individual religious contacts need to be sourced from the person, given the scale and diversity of churches and organisations within the overall movement.

For information about the overall movement in Ireland or for information on local churches contact:

Evangelical Alliance Ireland, Ulysses House, 22/24 Foley Street, Dublin 1.
Tel: (01) 8881111
Website: www.evangelical.ie

Contributors

Mr Fergus Ryan, Senior Leader of Trinity Church Network (www.trinity.ie) and member of EAI theological committee provided information for this section and approved the finalised section. Mr Ryan also provided us with detailed guidance and clarification on the historical development of Christianity for the sub-section *Terminology and traditions within Christianity* in section 3. Ms Kait Morrell, EAI, facilitated us in sourcing contacts in the evangelical community.