

See? WOW!

News and Encouragement for CID Circuit **W**itness & **O**utreach

Workers

Nbr. 13 – November 23, 2019 (for December)

Ready for the Return

In Jesus' parable of the bridesmaids (Matthew 25:1-13), the wise girls remembered to bring extra oil for their lamps. The foolish ones did not. Yet they knew full well that the bridegroom was coming, and might arrive at night. How foolish, indeed, to forget! How foolish we are to forget about the surest of all upcoming events, the return of our Lord. Such foolishness amounts to faithlessness, for which there is one answer: repentance.

Only through faith in Christ can we relax before his coming. The wise bridesmaids did. They went to sleep just like the rest. They did not have to "stay up all night" to be ready for the bridegroom's return. God gives us forgiveness by His grace in Christ, not on account of our strivings but because of our Savior. So we too can relax.

And we can be response-able, *able* to *respond* to our Savior and His call as we await His coming. As people who are heavenly minded, we really can be of earthly good. For we are free. We can spend and be spent in the Lord's service.

See? WOW! Nothing can put aside our hang-ups and anxieties over evangelism quite like knowing that our Lord Jesus Christ is coming. He's coming for His bride, coming to take you home.

Connect to Disciple (CTD)

I just learned from the Synod's Mark Wood that he will soon start re-formatting CTD so it will

be like all the other *re:Vitality* modules, or for that matter, like *Every One His Witness*: available in a kit, not requiring facilitators. Likely, however, this new version will not appear until some time in 2021.

However, the Synod will finish out the training for our District CTD trainer, Bill Denham, as soon as we schedule workshops where this can be done. We in CID will still have the option of offering the CTD workshop using facilitators.

Shepherding our Strays (SOS)

This is the *re:Vitality* module on inactive members. The Synod has had a beta test version available for a little while now. If a congregation agrees to conduct the beta test, it will get the module for free, but it will have to report on the plusses and minuses to help Mark Wood compose the final version. Any congregation in the Synod that can commit to finishing this SOS module by the end of March (at the absolute latest) is welcome to participate in the beta testing.

If a church in your circuit is interested, it should contact Sarah Baughman ASAP. It would also be helpful if they copy me with their e-mail. Sarah's e-mail address is LCMS.WOR@lcmsorg

Serving in God's Mission

This is the *re:Vitality* module on strategic planning. The Synod is now recruiting churches to beta test this module also. It is an umbrella module, addressing multiple factors of vitality.



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Mark Wood tells me that the testing for this module will take a while -- several months, in fact. Interested congregations should contact Sarah Baughman (see above) immediately, for they will need to get started rather early in 2020 in order to finish the beta test by the end of the year.

Right now Sarah only has a handful of beta test congregations on her list. She could certainly incorporate more. Here is an opportunity to get in on the "ground floor" with this new module, on a subject which should be useful to many.

Worth considering:

Outside In

Ephesians 4:4-6 is a classic passage on the unity of God's people. Seven times it says, "one": there is one body and one Spirit, one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all? This is a perfect unity, given by the Spirit.

Contrast John Lennon's song, "Imagine," which has its own set of 7. This time, it's 7 "no"s, starting with no heaven, and no hell. Above us, only sky! There's nothing to kill for, or die for, and certainly no religion. The idea is, take away supposedly artificial barriers between people, and what will be left is the brotherhood of man.

The song expresses the desire that the world will live as one. This sheer desire not only drives the vision but also constitutes its horizon. In other words, in this song there's nothing much here except what we want . . . but we really, really want it, deep down. Unity *has* to be from the inside out, because outside nothing seems solid enough

to be unified around. And anything outside us could become a bone of contention. The song sticks with a pure inner desire for oneness.

Yet what happens when I get up on the other side of the bed one day, lacking any urge toward brotherhood? What about when my love grows cold? What if I am challenged to love the unlovely, or the unlovable? (I'm a tolerant person, but if I catch people being intolerant, then I refuse to tolerate *them*!) What if, in my so-called love, I end up dominating and manipulating others?

You can only deny original sin for so long. You can only deny the wrath of God for so long.

The song sings of unity that starts inside and wishes that it goes out. But Ephesians 4, as it talks about the church, could not contrast with this more sharply. Paul wrote of unity from outside that goes in.

Instead of 7 "no"s, he wrote of 7 "ones," culminating in one God and Father of us all. And there is one Lord, one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, Who wins our hearts by winning *us*. He gave Himself as a ransom for all, then rose victorious over death. He holds everything together. We relate to everything through Him. The unity that is in Him does not depend on our feelings, and it does not get erased by our failures. There is one faith, one saving message, because there is no other name under heaven given among men by which to be saved. This is all outside us.

Yet it is brought into us. One Spirit brings us Christ through one baptism and baptism creates



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in us a new man – an inner man who delights in all these works of God. Baptism also incorporates us into one body. In the church we are united not on peripheral details but on the most important thing – the most important One – in our lives. This unity endures because the One Who is our Head lives and reigns to all eternity. He calls us to share one hope. All that makes us eager right now to keep the unity that is given by the Spirit.

Above us, there's not just "only sky." Cars were made to run on gas. So also, man was made to run, as it were, not on "no"s but on God – not any old idea of God, either, but the true gracious God Who makes His face shine upon us, the triune God Who calls us into fellowship. Fellowship with God leads to fellowship with one another.

This unity is no imposition. It is restoration. It culminates in celebration! God grants inclusion that goes not from the inside out, but outside in.

-- Ken Schurb kschurb@cidlcms.org



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