

See? **WOW!** News and Encouragement for CID **Circuit Witness & Outreach Workers**

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Pray!

I didn't see it coming, not like this. Maybe the signs were there, but I did not pick up on them.

The coronavirus pandemic has hit our country in a major way. As these words are written, Illinois has just begun implementing a shelter-in-place order, and the U.S. has now passed Germany in its number of confirmed cases of the disease. Only a few days ago, who would have thought this?

It's a trying time. People grow concerned about health, theirs and that of loved ones. Needed medical equipment is in short supply. No one knows exactly how long extraordinary measures in society will remain in effect, or how effective they will be.

The impact of all this on the economy looms as massive, despite government mitigation efforts. And the financial effects will, in all likelihood, be felt by our churches. Frustrations abound.

God's church is always to be His praying people. The present time is no exception.

Prayer can take the form of adoration, or confession, or thanksgiving. At the heart of prayer, though, lies petition.

To pray is to ask. For implicit in this asking is acknowledgment that God is God and we are not.

"Call upon me in the day of trouble," the Lord invites his people, "I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me" (Ps. 50:15). Jesus, Who was put to death for our transgressions and was raised for our justification, taught us to pray a prayer consisting of seven petitions. So ask.

One more thing . . . this is yet another frustration. It's felt especially by professional church workers, but hardly confined to us:

Social distancing and "shelter in place" make it difficult to proclaim the Gospel, to say the

least. Parochial schools are closed, Bible classes are not meeting, and church services have been cancelled.

A few days ago, I saw some anguished e-mail messages back and forth between a few CID pastors who were concerned about how best to distribute the Lord's Supper under the prevailing circumstances. Since then, the circumstances have changed. Now churches have temporarily suspended Divine Services. No Word or Sacrament!

That's the added frustration I mentioned above. I know you feel it, as do I. We are called to proclaim, to preach and teach this message that is sorely needed. But currently, many of our usual platforms for doing so do not lie open to us.

You are, no doubt, finding good ways to get the Word out anyway. We will all be in a position to help one another out with ideas and prospects in this regard. (See the next page.) For the moment, by the way, I am not referring to the Lord's Supper. See the recent document from CTCR leadership at <https://files.lcms.org/wl/?id=F64Yu9xwsZKeXMxfXEvRCQK6EaEBgSkw>

Here's a basic point, before going into any discussion of what to *do* overtly in the present situation. I echo what I said before. Pray.

Prayer, of course, is not a means of grace. Yet it was not for nothing that our Lord taught us to pray, "Thy Kingdom come."

Some of the most chilling words in all the Bible came when God told Jeremiah not to pray for the people to whom he was preaching (Jer. 7:16). Well, even if you cannot preach as such right now, you can still pray for people. Pray that our heavenly Father would give His Holy Spirit to the folks you serve, so that by His grace they believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity. It's a good place to start.



Circuit Witness and Outreach Workers

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Worth considering:

A Time of Opportunity

Pandemics are Law.

The coronavirus reminds people that they are not in charge. They are not God. That's Law.

What's more, the wages of sin is death.

Death results from sin – maybe not from a particular sin in a person's life, but certainly from the sinful condition of sinful people. That's Law.

Even when family members are cooped up with one another for unusually long periods of time, so they get on each other's nerves, sin begets sin. And that too is Law.

The hammer blows of God's Law do not by themselves make sinners less resistant to the Gospel. But these hammer blows do get the attention of sinners – that is, both Christians who are saint and sinner at the same time, and unbelievers too.

We stand at a time of opportunity for the Gospel. How to seize it?

The Good News of Jesus must be told. No one knows it naturally. For that matter, a connection must be made between the hammer blows of the Law and the reality of the sinful condition. Law and Gospel are to be proclaimed.

So, how? What can be done?

No single article can exhaust this subject. I want to keep on sharing ideas with you, and to pass along good ideas that I get from you and others.

The items below amount to just a beginning.

- Special issue of *The Gate Post*: CID has released a special issue of our District newsletter. It contains encouraging articles and active links to resources to enable people to hear the Word on the Internet. This issue was made to be shared! The *Gate Post* is published only electronically, but therefore it can be shared electronically,

also with the unchurched – a handy witnessing tool! Please raise awareness about this special *Gate Post* among your Circuit's churches. Find it on the home page at <http://www.cidlcms.org/>

- Tell Mr. Rodgers a Bible Story: The special *Gate Post*, mentioned above, invites kids in CID churches, preschool through high school, to make their own Bible story videos and e-mail them to Education Executive Trip Rodgers. CID intends to post the best of these videos online. This project will not only give kids something constructive to do while they are home from school; it will also move them to closer acquaintance with the Bible, both as they tell their own stories and as they view online the videos submitted by others. Kids can also tell their friends – perhaps unchurched friends – that these friends can view the videos that are posted online. Grandparents can share with their friends, also unchurched friends, a link to their grandchildren's videos which are posted online. Or even if the grandchildren's video does not appear online, the grandchildren can still forward it to their grandparents. They in turn can send it to people they know. These videos can become tools to open conversations about Jesus. Please help the churches in your circuit to see the potential when their kids, family by family, tell Mr. Rodgers a Bible story. Send the stories to: trodgers@cidlcms.org
- Keep in touch: Finally, please remind pastors to remind their people to stay in touch with family and friends, including unchurched folks. Today we have such great tools: telephones, e-mail, social media. Care about people by connecting with them, and keep a Gospel door open.

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