

# See? **WOW!** News and Encouragement for CID Circuit **W**itness & **O**utreach **W**orkers

Nbr. 27 – October, 2020

## “He Died for Me”

Erwin Kurth included this story in *Catechetical Helps*:

Some years after the Civil War, a man was kneeling at a soldier’s grave near Nashville. He was a stranger in town, so someone asked him why this grave was so special. Was his son buried there?

No, the man replied. During the war, all the members of his family had been sick. He was drafted, but his family needed him at home. A neighbor volunteered to go in his place. This neighbor became a soldier, and was wounded at Chickamauga. Eventually he died. His body ended up in this grave near Nashville.

“I have come a great many miles,” the man said, “to write over his grave these words: ‘He died for me’.”

“While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Stop and think about that. Jesus Himself said, “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). He died for you. What powerful words!

“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15). Think of people across the street, across the country, or around the world. They are sinners. Jesus came for them too. He died for them. They need these words now, while they still live in this world.

See? **WOW!** We get to tell them.

## Springfield Circuits Convocation

For those within reasonable range of Springfield, the Circuit Convocation will be Sat., Oct. 24, 9:00 to noon. Location: Immanuel, Springfield.

I will speak on “Confronting 21<sup>st</sup> Century Religious Challenges,” including church planting.

## “Receptive”: To *hearing about Jesus* or to *faith*?

Every now and again, you encounter evangelism resources which suggest that people are “receptive” or “unreceptive.” This potentially misleading terminology sometimes surfaces within Lutheran circles.

True, various people can be at different points or receptivity or non-receptivity *to hearing about Jesus and Christianity*. Really, this is about the only practical way this distinction can be put to use.

Rightly so, too, for it is quite another thing if anyone thinks “receptivity” or the lack thereof refers to *how willing people are to receive Jesus or believe in Him*. In truth, people without faith in Christ are spiritually blind (1 Cor. 2:14) and hostile to God (Rom. 8:7). They are spiritually dead, the Bible says, “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1).

Deadness has no degrees. A person is either dead or alive. People are with the Lord or against Him. Either they have saving faith, or they don’t.

The heart of the unbeliever who is asking questions about Christianity is just as dead as that of the open scoffer. Questioners may be open to *hearing about Jesus*, yet they are still dead in trespasses and sins until the Holy Spirit works faith through His Word. The creation of saving faith is not a gradual process we run, however it seems, but an instantaneous gift that God gives through His Word.

## November 21 C-WOW Meeting – In What Mode?

Last year we had our C-WOW annual meeting on the Sat. before Thanksgiving. This year, that is Nov. 21. We could get together physically, or meet via Zoom. I think three hours should suffice.

I would like to know: Which meeting mode would you prefer? Please submit replies to this query on or before Oct. 19, about a month before the meeting date, so I can plan.



Circuit Witness and Outreach Workers

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## Worth considering: Cultural Idolatries

Last year, I surveyed CID pastors about various “cultural idolatries” they found among the newer adult members of their congregations. In effect, I asked what attitudes these new members had that the pastors wished they did not have. I bore in mind observations like this from Michael Lockwood in his excellent book, *The Unholy Trinity*: “Those who have co-opted Christ’s name in service of the idol of personal happiness are still shaped by the same primary commitment as the secular people around them. Therefore [so long as idols are not confronted] we have no reason to expect their lives to look much different” (CPH, 2016; page 83).

Churches need to expose to these new members various deep cultural assumptions that they have brought along with them, and to deal with these assumptions via God’s Word. Such “hold-over” assumptions certainly can include idolatrous patterns of thought and behavior. These definitely form subjects for Christian teaching.

Yet it would require a lot of time to take the various doctrinal topics covered in a standard adult instruction course and extensively apply these teachings to common worldviews and cultural narratives. Perhaps some churches are prepared for their adult instruction classes to last as long as a year, but most probably would not want quite so much time. In most churches, if “worldview” issues involving idolatry are to be addressed with new members, this will take place *after* people have formally joined the congregation. It will form an aspect of assimilation. Awareness of these attitudes can also inform evangelism outreach to new people.

To show the contours of this challenge, here are the top ten cultural idolatries identified by CID pastors at their spring, 2019 conference:

10. *I want a maximum range of choice in as many things as possible.*
9. *I trust science to solve human problems, given enough time.*
8. *In the final analysis, what matters most is what I think of myself, not what others think.*
7. *I see work more as a means to get things I want than I view it as a way to serve.*
6. *Leisure, and what I need for it, is extremely important to me; I’ve earned it.*
4. *TIE I am more interested in my rights than in my obligations or duties.*
4. *TIE I am more prone to listen to therapeutic advice than spiritual advice, say, from a pastor.*
3. *Meaning for me lies less in the world around me and more in my mind and heart.*
2. *I shortchange the amount of time to devote to spiritual disciplines.*
1. *Above all, I want to be happy.*

To help pastors address especially the “top three” of these attitudes, I have written a series of three articles, to be published one per year in *Concordia Pulpit Resources (CPR)*. Each article examines the Scripture lessons in a single year of the three-year lectionary, focusing on one of the top – or, bottom! – 3 attitudes above. The articles offer suggestions for a pastor to return to a given attitude repeatedly in his preaching over a church year. You might mention these articles to pastors:

- 2020-2021 church year (B): on item #2 above, time for devotion. This article appears in the *CPR* issue for this coming Advent.
- 2021-2022 church year (C): on item #1 above, happiness. To appear in *CPR*, Advent 2021
- 2022-2023 church year (A): on item #3 above, meaning. To appear in *CPR*, Advent 2022

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