

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

Nbr. 28 – November, 2020

Evangelism and Eschatology

I think it was John Wesley who tried an experiment. Climbing aboard a stagecoach, he decided that, for once, he would not say anything to anyone about Jesus on this particular trip. The result proved unsatisfactory. He had no cross to bear or take up, he said, and soon he went to sleep.

“Be alert, since you don’t know when the master of the house is coming,” said our Lord. “Otherwise, when he comes suddenly he might find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to everyone: be alert!” (Mark 13:35-37).

Evangelism goes together with eschatology. Not that we artificially induce some super state of alertness by evangelistic effort, though! No, it turns out to be much more natural.

Determining that we will tell the Good News about Jesus provides us a constant reminder of the eternal life-and-death import of faith or unbelief – not only for others, but also for us. When we actually tell the Good News to someone else, we get to “eavesdrop” on it ourselves, hearing it yet again for our own life. If we encounter pushback and even hostility for telling the Good News, we finally have nowhere to turn except to our returning Lord. In all these ways, we act as wide-awake, alert disciples of the crucified but now exalted Christ.

See? **WOW!** Evangelism and eschatology really do go hand-in-hand!

Evaluate this Newsletter

This newsletter was first published two years ago. Is it doing the job of resourcing you? What might be done differently? We will discuss these questions at the annual C-WOW meeting.

These newsletters are archived at <http://www.cidlcms.org/outreach-cwow.html>

C-WOW Meeting for 2020

Saturday, Nov. 21, 9:00 a.m. to noon via ZOOM

- HOUR ONE: Opening Devotion and Discussion of Evangelism in the Wake of the Pandemic
- HOUR TWO: Church Planting – Is our heart in it? (see page two of the present newsletter)
- HOUR THREE: Miscellaneous –
 - New resources
 - Evaluate the *See? WOW!* Newsletter
 - Laypeople as C-WOWs?
 - Any other discussion

Pass This On Messages

In early October, the CID office conducted a survey on the utilization of our weekly “Pass This On” messages. Of 20 churches responding, 16 use PTO messages. 13 of these 16 categorize these messages as more useful for congregation members than for unchurched people.

The survey shows that PTO messages have proven helpful. Yet these results also indicate that at this time, at least, most of the potential they may have for evangelism is not being realized.

PTOs seem a better tool at present for the CID Congregational Life Commission. I have suggested that this commission take them up.

Christmas Video

A while back CID produced a 30-second Christmas video spot announcement. Find it at <http://www.cidlcms.org/resources/videos/CIDChristmas.mp4>

Possible uses for this spot:

- Load it onto your website or YouTube channel
- Share it via Facebook
- Try to get it onto local cable public access TV – not many people watch this, but those who do are often lonely, especially at Christmas time.



Circuit Witness and Outreach Workers

See? WOW!

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

Worth Considering: Do We *Want* to Plant Churches?

Our Synod's last convention resolved "that congregations and circuits be encouraged and supported by their respective districts to investigate and identify new mission plants" (2019 Res. 1-02). Note the wording: while the Synod simply *encourages* churches and circuits, this resolution *requires* districts to offer support and encouragement in identifying new church plants. In fact, in the statement of the first mission priority on a list from the Synod, the very first word is "plant." From indications like these, you would think that church planting is a subject gathering more and more interest and support within the Synod.

I do not want to assume too much, though. Experience, to say nothing of common sense, would suggest that few things could prove worse for a church planting effort than to get it underway, only then to discover that some of us were not so strongly committed to church planting. It would not be good to launch an effort, run into some rough sailing, and only then discover that a significant number of us were never on board with church planting.

Lutheran Hour Ministries has been pointing out, with regard to spiritual conversations, that eager conversationalists desire spiritual conversations. They want to have them. Similarly, I am asking how much we desire church planting. Do we really want to plant new churches?

I have started posing this question to pastors, commissioned churchworkers, and laypeople in Central Illinois. It's not that I want to evade the Synod's directive to the Districts, not at all. However, we will work differently with a church or a church worker who mildly supports church planting than with someone else who strongly resists it.

Does the Gospel pack more power at a new church than anywhere else? Emphatically not! Still, there are good reasons to make church planting a

vital part of outreach with the Good News of Christ. Church planting belongs in a church body's evangelism and mission strategy for work in this country. And please note that I say this with the premise firmly in mind that Lutheran church plants ought to result in Lutheran churches.

New congregations are usually quite attuned to bringing in unchurched people. Established congregations and their pastors often can have trouble thinking beyond the people they see in front of them to the people they do not see.

Unchurched people often have their interest piqued by the prospect of involvement in a new church. What is new tends to attract attention. Is this shallow? Of course! But do we expect unchurched people to think with spiritual maturity?

New churches can be instrumental in bringing the Word to inner cities. They can also be important in crossing ethnic lines with the Gospel.

Moreover, it helps for the church to be physically close to unchurched people.

One more point: Starting new churches can help inspire existing churches toward evangelistic activity. St. Paul took encouragement from the example of the Thessalonians as they held fast to Christ and held forth with His Good News. So today! "Having babies keeps you young," the saying goes.

I have heard a church advertisement to this effect: it is so important for you to attend a faithful Lutheran church that, if none is close by, you should move to a place where you can join one. That may be an option for some. But how about this? If there is no faithful Lutheran church near you, do all you can within your capability and calling to start one!

-- Ken Schurb kschurb@cidlcms.org



Circuit Witness and Outreach Workers