

Nbr. 31 – February, 2021

Humble Boasting . . . in and for the Lord

As a parish pastor, when I spoke with new members who had transferred from sister LCMS congregations, I told them about our congregation: its church services, Bible classes, and a bit on its structure and organization. However, I was intent on *not* emphasizing various human trappings of the church. I didn't want to appear to be bragging or boasting. "Basically," I would say in almost a kicking-the-ground, "aw-shucks" sort of way, "we preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments."

In hindsight, I think I missed something. At that point, I should have talked more about WHY.

Why were the Gospel and sacraments so important to and in our congregation? Sinners need forgiveness. "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven," said the once-crucified but now risen Christ (John 20:23).

Why Gospel and sacraments? Also because people need life, life from God. "God has given us life, and this life is in His Son" (1 John 5:11).

At baptisms, I as pastor simply poured the water and spoke the Word. But nothing short of a miracle occurred there, done by the Lord as He claimed and blessed the baptized as only He could.

People can come to see their own telling of the Good News about Jesus in an "aw-shucks" way too. I wonder if we can give impetus to such thinking when we suggest that telling the Good News isn't so hard. Why, then, is it important?

See? WOW! Christians simply speak God's Word, yet God Himself acts through it. We must decrease, but He must increase (John 3:30). "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1:31).

The "Pandemic Inactive"

It is important to reach out to inactive church members. Part of the way to address inactivity is by prevention. That is, keep people from becoming inactive in the first place.

Part of such prevention is to teach people why it is important to come to church. This always needs to be done, but especially now as the pandemic has kept people at home and they risk getting ingrained in habits of inactivity.

See the issue of the CID *GatePost* which will appear soon. And please let us know how the District office can be helpful to congregations addressing the "pandemic inactive."

Central Illinois LLL Convention

A virtual appearance by Lutheran Hour Speaker Michael Zeigler will highlight the District Lutheran Laymen's League convention, to be held on Saturday, March 6 at St. John Lutheran Church, Effingham. Mention will be made of "Households of Faith," the recent LLL/Barna group research project.

Registration is at 8:30 a.m.; sessions start at 10:00 a.m. Registration fee for adults is \$15/person; children and students are free. Send registration to Deloris Blessman, 24204 CR 1850N, Topeka, IL 61567. Checks can be made payable to Central IL LLL District. Responses are requested by February 25.

From LHM Learn . . .

The Lutheran Laymen's League now offers three new short (about 20 minutes each) courses on the "spiritual conversations curve." These and other similar resources can be accessed at

<https://www.lhm.org/learn>.

Worth considering . . . words from 50 years ago:



“Without a doubt the church is a divine society. Yet it is a community immersed in history and exposed to all the forces that shape a given social order. The church comprises the people of God. But how does this people relate to the secular structures surrounding it?

“There are several ways in which one might come to grips with such an issue. Perhaps the most effective way of taking on the subject is to work at it in terms of the Biblical understanding of the conflict raging between the realm of darkness and the kingdom of God. Such an approach will help us reckon with that one major factor in the problem which is often overlooked: the dimension of the demonic.

“We shall help ourselves a great deal . . . if we remind ourselves that the forces of anarchy, confusion, injustice, and tyranny always lie just below the surface of any civic order. They are ready at any moment to break through and engage in violence and destruction. The riots in various American cities have alerted us to this hard fact of life.

“Someone who was an eyewitness of one of these riots was moved to observe, ‘But this is crazy!’ It is not ‘crazy’ at all. It is the kind of thing one must expect where a measure of might is still available to the ‘prince of the power of the air’ (Eph. 2:2). Such an outbreak of disorder . . . is one of the evidences of the rift that runs through man’s heart. Such violence often turns out to be something of an incarnation of man’s rebellion against his Creator. . . .

In Colossians, “our Lord Jesus Christ is presented both as the Lord of the universe and the Head of the Church. Christ’s lordship over the world is at work in the church as the sphere of His present

activity, offering men the reconciliation and peace accomplished by the cross and in the resurrection. Of Him we read that He has divested principalities and powers of their authority and made a public example of them in His triumph on the cross (Col. 2:15). The consequences of His victory are still hidden; yet they are assured.

“The church, then, is the community which offers men continuity in depth. The church consists of men and women who assemble around Word and Sacrament. In the proclamation and in the observance of the redemptive acts of God, believers are taken up into that sequence of events which represents the realization in history of a kingdom God designed in eternity. By this Word the demons of meaningless and futility are not only neutralized but overcome, for here men, in dire need of a history and a destiny to provide background and direction, are given a share in the age to come. The Christian community therefore is an open society offering its understanding of life and history to men groping for meaning and providing them an altar to which they may bring their broken and fragmented lives in order to become whole. . . . She is in fact the bearer of God’s revelation in the matter of providing meaning for existence.

“In the worship services of the church men hear God’s reconciling Word and in turn function as a craft of priests engaged in intercession and forgiveness. . . . They live and serve with others in a climate of reconciliation. . . .”

-- *The above is excerpted from Martin H.*

Scharlemann, The Church’s Social Responsibilities (Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 50 and 65-66.

