

Nbr. 38 – December, 2021

An Advent Avalanche of Blessings

Karl Heim verbally painted a picture that can heighten our Advent sensibilities. Here it is:

Heim asked people to imagine a valley in the Alps. This valley is ringed by tall, imposing mountains covered with an enormous quantity of snow. The mere sound of a gunshot or a yodel may set off a massive avalanche capable of annihilating everything in its path. Before the avalanche occurs, the snow on those mountains amounts to tremendous potential energy – waiting, as it were, to be actualized.

The tremendous power of Christ's redemptive work, completed once and for all in His death and resurrection and capable of doing away with all His enemies for good, hangs over the creation. At the last trumpet, it will be released.

For the moment, this full power waits. Make no mistake, though; this avalanche *will* come.

From God's standpoint in eternity, Heim observed, reconciliation and fulfillment occupy a single moment. Atonement and new creation belong together, as inseparable as lightening and the following thunder.

During Advent, we look to the Christ who came and did the work of redemption. We live in the present tension of now-but-not-yet, sustained by Word and Sacrament. And the consummation for which we wait is nothing other than the fulfillment of Jesus's seeking and saving mission.

See? WOW! In evangelism, we speak the Gospel that delivers an avalanche of blessings from the Christ Who came, Who comes, and will come again. For He is indeed coming again!

Following up on the recent C-WOW meeting

My profound thanks to those who joined in the annual C-WOW meeting via Zoom this past Saturday! I was especially delighted that Mark Wood from the Synod's Office of National Mission joined us for a time.

Attached to the same e-mail message that brought you the present newsletter issue, please find two attachments that Mark sent me after our meeting. First, there are the powerpoint slides that Mark showed us in his overview of *re: Vitality*. Also, there is a set of discussion questions to accompany Mark's new book, which he described briefly for us on Saturday.

I made several notes as you C-WOWs described current happenings. Let me highlight just one: efforts to reach "pandemic inactives," that is, church members whose inactivity began in or after March, 2020, under circumstances set up by the pandemic. I am quite interested to learn from CID churches that are making concerted efforts to reach out to such folks. Please keep me in the loop.

OAFC Seeking Executive

Ongoing Ambassadors for Christ is seeking a new full-time Executive Director who will have the challenge of rebuilding OAFC "from the ground up." If you have questions about this or would like to suggest someone, please let me know.

Apologetics book in CPH Thanksgiving Sale

CPH is running a Thanksgiving sale, Nov. 22-29. One of the items available at a cost of \$5.00 is a recent little book on apologetics by Allen Quist of the ELS. It is *The Reason I Believe*, item number 124517. This could constitute a good opportunity to stock up for your circuit churches!



Circuit Witness and Outreach Workers

Worth considering:

Psalm 67, the Reformation, and Gospel Outreach Part Three

In the October See? WOW! we noted the church's need for the kind of help that would fall in line with what Psalm 67 says. Specifically, that:

1. *We first receive God's gracious blessing, His shining face, before His way can be made known to the nations through us.*
2. *We have the privilege of proclaiming the saving power of a salvation completed in Jesus Christ.*
3. *All the peoples can praise God -- Gentiles as Gentiles, without becoming Jews! In fact, this proclamation centers in justification by grace for Christ's sake through faith.*
4. *Available tools for proclamation are to be used wisely and well.*
5. *The roles of all Christians in telling the Good News should be recognized.*

Last month we started to see that just this sort of help is available in the heritage of the Lutheran Reformation. Now, to conclude:

4. *The Reformation used every available means to get the message out. You might consider this more an historical point than a theological one. For the available means were used to great effect in the Reformation. Such means included the printing press and the various books and pamphlets it could produce. They also included a spate of hymn-writing in the language of the people, and the composition of catechetical materials to teach the faith. For us today, "every available means" can encompass not only radio and television, but also an array of digital possibilities. We should utilize these tools with care, yet certainly not fail to make appropriate use of them.*

Still, just as at Luther's time, there remains the simple value of Christians living the life of Christ in the world and so arousing curiosity in others about the hope that is within us. Our Lord said, "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Luther sang:

O let the people praise Thy worth, in all
good works increasing;
The land shall plenteous fruit bring forth,
Thy Word is rich in blessing (LSB 823:3).

5. *The Reformation recognized the roles of all Christians in telling the Good News about Jesus.* Lutherans affirm that lay Christians are members of God's royal priesthood in this world. While they are not to compete with their pastors or step into the pastors' public responsibilities, they definitely are to "proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

Let all the peoples praise God, then – starting with the "people" in each of our congregations. As Luther sang:

Thine over all shall be the praise and thanks of every nation;
And all the world with joy shall raise the voice of exultation (LSB 823:2).

In short, Lutheran identity is key to our evangelistic outreach. To reach out, dig down!

May God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit bless us!

Let all the world praise Him alone, let solemn awe possess us.

Now let our hearts say, "Amen!" (LSB 823:3)

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