

Workers

Nbr. 4 – Jan. 7, 2019

“Well-Pleased”

Some Bible passages put the Good News in a nutshell. John 3:16 does so, for example.

Have you ever considered this one, though? *“You are my beloved Son; with you I am well-pleased”* (Luke 3:22). Luther said that these words of God the Father at our Lord’s baptism form “the real beginning of the New Testament and the summary of the entire Gospel.”

The words seem to stand out especially in Luke. Luke is the only Gospel to mention specifically that others were there when Jesus was baptized. He stood in solidarity with them.

Yet this wasn’t a legal solidarity, with Jesus submitting to the same command as they. For there was no OT command to be baptized. Christ was coming to bear our sin, which was being “washed onto” Him. The Father was well-pleased in Jesus and His work. Therefore He is well-pleased with anyone like you, who believes and is baptized.

God’s pleasure with you does not rest on you for your work in the church, not even in evangelism. If it did, you would only be as good as your last performance. We always fall way short. But God is pleased with you because of Christ.

See? WOW! Baptized into Him, you are His brother, therefore a son of the Father. On account of Jesus, and Jesus only, God is well-pleased in you.

New Look

Here’s hoping you like this newsletter’s new look. Thanks to Pablo Dominguez for the logo in the footer below. A more attractive format, overall, disciplining me not to grow too wordy!

Welcome!

Pastor Brian Lesemann of Chandlerville and Bath is C-WOW for the Jacksonville Circuit. Our numbers continue to grow.

A reminder, too: Feel free to reproduce this newsletter (especially now that it has gotten a face-lift!) and share it widely, either or both pages. Back issues are now being archived on the CID website, too: <http://www.cidlcms.org/cwows.html>

Apologetics audio

Audio of most of the sessions in the apologetics study that I taught at Trinity, Springfield this past fall is now available online. You can check it out at <http://www.trinity-lutheran.com/apologetics-bible-study>

Outreach in cities or larger towns

On Saturday, May 4 from 10 a.m. until noon, Deaconess Rachel Jaseph of Shepherd of the City Lutheran Church, Ft. Wayne, Ind. will be at Wittenberg Student Center, Normal to talk about her work on a two-pronged initiative, providing nutrition and after-school tutoring for neighborhood kids. She will also give us insights into funding this effort.

Rachel’s insights can be especially helpful for city or larger town churches that do not operate elementary schools at their sites. Others can also learn from it, of course. Save the date, and watch for details!

-- Sponsored by CID Congregational Life Commission and Human Care Committee.

Connect to Disciple Workshops are now set up for
Trinity, Springfield, February 22-23
St. John, Bath, April 5-6
Christ, Clinton June 14-15



Circuit Witness and Outreach Workers

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Worth considering:

Q & A Time

Here is an idea from a Presbyterian pastor for whom I am developing a growing respect, Tim Keller. When he began in New York City, I think as a church planter, he conducted question-and-answer time for 45 minutes right after each worship service. People could ask about the sermon, the service, or anything else they wished.

Keller says these sessions turned out great! Obviously, in them people could get their questions answered. But the Q&As did still more. They also afforded the members of that church an "extra" to which to invite friends. They could tell someone, "Come to church with me, and bring along a question that you have been wondering about." Too, Keller was able to model for his members how to speak with unchurched people. He thinks the Q&As turned out to be very important for his work in Manhattan.

Now, that was New York. Depending on where your church is, Q&A may not seem so promising. Don't dismiss it out of hand, though. A pastor may have to prime the pump the first two or three times with an engaging question or two that he brings with him, saying: "I encounter this question a lot, so I thought I would put it on the table here." Or he could engage in a bit of mild collusion and "plant" a few queries with people who are willing to raise them. (The collusion need not be covert. It could even be made quite transparent. A questioner could preface his query, "Now, pastor, you wanted me to ask this . . . !")

As biblical illiteracy declines, even on the part of church members, non-threatening forums to raise questions become increasingly important. There is probably no better time for them than

right after church. Five minutes might be allowed for the pastor to change out of his vestments and take a position on the floor of the nave (not in the pulpit!). During those few minutes, church members can introduce themselves to newcomers.

Who knows? A congregation might conclude that it could be worth tinkering with the Sunday schedule a bit to allow even a short Q&A (say, 15 minutes) immediately after service, even perhaps before Bible class.

What to do with newcomers who have been to Q&A a few times? Keller told people that when they started hearing the same questions being asked and answered again and again in Q&A sessions, they should switch over to Bible class. Every Sunday, while he was doing Q&A, his church had two classes going on, one on apologetics and the other on basic doctrine. Keller recommended that people bothered by lingering doubts go to the first, and that those who were ready to hear more about Christian teaching attend the second.

Again, this may not suit your situation as to timing. You may not have such classes underway right then and there. Even if your next adult instruction class will not begin for a while, though, you can suggest that someone curious about Christian doctrine begin listening to the *Myth or Faith?* series at <http://issuesetc.org/myth-or-faith> And someone grappling with "apologetics" issues might be referred to the apologetics session recordings noted on page one of this newsletter.

In any case, when people have answers to their initial questions, move them on. Try other forums that combine greater depth with personal attention.

— Ken Schurb kschurb@cidlcms.org



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