

See? WOW!

News and Encouragement for CID **Circuit Witness** and **Outreach Workers**

Nbr. 2 – Nov. 15, 2018

“Your brother is made . . .”

The desert fathers talked about demons who tried to tempt a pious old monk, unsuccessfully. Finally, Satan himself showed his minions how to do the job. The devil whispered in the man’s ear, “Your brother is made bishop of Constantinople.” The man blinked.

That’s how to tempt a churchman.

We can be so eager for seats of honor. We don’t do our work for the Lord to get recognition, we insist. But if recognition were to come along . . .

Yet for damnably proud sinners like us, the Lord of all humbled Himself even to death on a cross. And then God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name above every name.

Your brother is made Lord of heaven and earth. Christ “is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent” (Col. 1:17-18).

See? WOW! The Lord of all remains unashamed not only to be our God but also to be our Brother, sharing all good with us. The honor we have in Him beats everything else.

Connect to Disciple

I think we have 3 churches for CTD workshops in the first half of 2019: Trinity, Springfield; St. John, Bath; and Christ, Clinton. We are now working out the exact workshop dates.

Wes Reimnitz has agreed to serve as our CID trainer. He will be trained himself at these first three workshops, then he will be training the members of our 3 facilitator teams. By the way, I

am still recruiting these facilitators, with the goal of having 2-member teams located northwest, central, and southeast within CID. Your suggestions of possible facilitators are welcome! And if any church wants the CTD workshop later in 2019, let me know.

Christmas

It may be a little late for congregations to make extensive plans for Christmas time outreach in 2018. Nonetheless, at Christmas unchurched people, especially those who used to go to church, can be particularly prone to want to go again. So our churches can encourage their members to invite their unchurched neighbors and friends to church at or around Christmas.

In some ways, this makes for an end-run on the “Connect to Disciple” thinking that you first invite people to something “low key.” Nothing can take the place of a Christmas service! However, if unchurched folks do come along with our church members to a service at Christmas time, it would be a good idea for the members to think about what they can invite the unchurched folks to *next*.

Also, the evangelism page of the CID website includes a 30-second television spot suitable for use at Christmas, and another for Easter. These were made by CID’s own Jim Frazee. Church members can download these spots and distribute them via e-mail or possibly social media. Cable public access channels may well run them for free. Or a church could pay a commercial station to run the Christmas spot next month, possibly with a customized “tag” for the church. See <http://www.cidlcms.org/evangelism.html>

Demographic studies and re:Vitality survey

Here's a reminder. Please continue to make people aware of 1.) the demographic studies that the District can run, from an organization called Mission Insite, and 2.) the congregational Self-Assessment that the Synod provides on a no-cost, no-obligation basis as part of its re:Vitality offerings.

Broadly speaking, the first helps a congregation know its *community* and the second helps it to know its *capacity*. Both can be useful.

Worth considering:

For You, but Not About You

Anyone who knows me knows that for years I have been raising flags about the "Missional Church" movement. If anyone mentioned the word "missional" when I was in Missouri District BOD meetings a while back, I asked what they meant. In the essay for CID's 2015 convention, I engaged in a critique of "missional" thinking. Less than two years later, remarkably, CID extended to me the Lord's call to be an executive – to work here in missions!

I am happy to let my critique stand, though. I hold that the mainline "missional" movement does not square with biblical and Lutheran theology. It has no place for the means of grace as means of grace. It more than tends toward enthusiasm. It does not keep Law and Gospel straight.

Most to the present point, however, "missional" thinking dares to tell Christians that the church is not for them. It is not for you folks "in here," the claim goes; it exists for the unreached "out there." The problem with this claim, of course, is that the Holy Spirit has placed the church in this world to deliver forgiveness through the means of grace also to people who already believe in Christ: "In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers." See the *suggested mission festival sermon at* <http://www.cidlcms.org/missionfestivaltoolkit.html>

The "for you" of the Gospel gets lost in the "missional" conception. This amounts to a big loss! Philip Cary, a non-Lutheran scholar who appreciates Luther, wrote that "Christ himself says 'you' and means me. To believe this word is to learn about

myself from another, rather than to trust my own personal experience or feeling. Thus the Lutheran *pro me* [for me] does not make faith reflective, but precisely explains why it is unreflective: to believe Christ's word is to be uninterested in the fact that I believe but captivated by what Christ has to say to me." By contrast, "missional" thinking becomes wrapped up in the fact that the Gospel is for others – which it is! – and loses track of the "for you."

But recently I have had another wrinkle placed in my brain. I don't take back any of what I have asserted, but I do want to clarify and refine it.

The wrinkle came from an interesting and rather insightful recent book, *Meet Generation Z* by James Emery White, former president of Gordon-Conwall seminary and now pastor of an interdenominational church specializing in outreach to young people. White mentions a motto that has become something of a mantra among his members: "It's not about you." They say this a lot.

They say it to combat the spiritual narcissism which can easily set in among Christians. If, for example, someone does not like some new initiative at that church, others there respond: "It's not about you." I'd say they have a point.

Don't get me wrong. White characterizes his own theology as basically Baptist. I am not approving that, nor any deployment of his church's catchphrase to approve doctrinally faulty practices. Yet there stands a big difference between the Gospel being *for you* and *about you*.

We rightly tell catechism pupils that although the Gospel saves you, it is not about you. Rather, the Gospel proclaims what Christ did and does for you.

Likewise, the church being *for you* certainly differs from the church being *about you*. A Missouri Synod seminary president of yesteryear observed: "Instead of seeing themselves as the church, [people] see themselves as supporters of the church. They react to a church like customers. If the store is uncongenial, they are ready to take their

business elsewhere.” Such people could use the reminder: “It’s not about you.”

We can make this statement, while in no way denying that the church exists to bring the Gospel to the world and to you. Really, the church cannot be *about* you – not if it proclaims and lives by God’s Word of Law and Gospel for you.

The church is for you. But it is not about you. That’s worth considering in evangelism . . .

-- Ken Schurb kschurb@cidlcms.org