

See? WOW!

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

Nbr. 3 – Dec. 1, 2018

Ready?

Jesus said, “Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come” (Mark 13:33). We’re about being ready for Christ’s return. In a sense, evangelism amounts to Advent work. We’re getting people ready for their Judge.

But how are *you* going to be ready?

You *know* what to say. Deep down, though, are we really *confiding* in what we do? After all, we are leaders in EVANGELISM: top-of- the-line kingdom work! Won’t such working get me ready?

The answer for the coming of Christ as Judge never lies in us. It is His coming as Savior.

How was Noah ready? “By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith” (Hebrews 11:7). Noah did remarkable and important deeds, building the ark. Yet his works did not save him. He was an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. In this faith he could wait calmly for the end of the world as he knew it.

See? WOW! You do a lot in the church. But the same Savior make you ready through the same faith. The Good News for others is good for you too.

Course Companion Audio

Please remind pastors in your circuit that CID website has companion audio for two courses:

- *Myth or Faith?* by Donald Deffner, a CPH adult instruction course, currently out of print.
- *The Christian’s Mission*, a Lifelight topical course, still available, good for new members.

These audio resources enable an instructor to “flip the classroom” and devote maximum time to discussion in class. Link to this audio at <http://www.cidlcms.org/coursecompanionaudio.html>

Apologetics workshops

Last month I finished teaching a 10-week apologetics Bible study at Trinity, Springfield. This was a “shake-down” to get apologetics material ready to present elsewhere in CID. So now I’m ready to go, with three units to offer:

1. Christ and His Resurrection

The “basic” apologetic, as advanced by Christ Himself

2. Science under the Microscope

Evolution, but also the place of science and the results of evolutionary thinking

3. Responding to 21st Century Religious Challenges “New Atheists,” Islam, and Postmodernism (This last one will be featured at CID Campus Ministry retreat in March.)

Each of these units contains 3 sessions. A single session takes about an hour, perhaps a bit more.

A workshop could take up one of these units, say, on a Saturday. Or a single hour or two could be scheduled on a Sunday afternoon, perhaps as part of the program at a Circuit Forum or Circuit Convocation. Please help me get the word out, and let me know if anyone expresses interest.

Mission Festival Toolkit

Also on CID website is a set of tools to help congregations plan and execute mission festivals. One of our churches was searching in vain for such

materials a few years ago. Well, here it is:
<http://www.cidlcms.org/missionfestivaltoolkit.html>

Connect to Disciple

Nothing much new to report on this front. I am still encouraging churches to have a workshop during 2019. We would like to schedule four (4) in the second half of the year. Currently we have none firmly set within that time, but a couple expressions of interest. The sooner we schedule, the better!

Worth considering:

More on “Not About You”: What does it mean?

Last month we noted a catchphrase from a church served by James Emery White: “It’s not about you.” If people object to something that this church is doing, leaders there often respond: “It’s not about you.”

They make a valid point, I said. Controlling groups in lots of congregations probably need to hear that the church does not exist to tickle their particular fancy or carry out their idiosyncratic whims. It’s not about them. This catchphrase makes for a dandy device to put ecclesiastical narcissism in its place. So, while maintaining that the church is for you, it can be good to add that it is not about you.

Let’s dig down a bit more, though. At the church served by White, “it’s not about you.” Yet the implication is that it *is* about young seekers. Such people constitute this church’s target group.

But should it be about the young seekers?

At this point the imprecision of colloquial language needs some specification. “It’s not about you” can mean A.) the church does not fit itself to your tastes or B.) the church does not attempt to meet your genuine needs. At White’s church they probably intend meaning A, as suggested above. But they might end up implementing meaning B, and failing to meet some genuine spiritual needs.

Here’s an example from White’s book *Meet Generation Z*. He introduces another snappy phrase, “Disciple your mission,” which is to say: plan Christian education with your chosen target group in mind. White’s church does two things: it trains its

veteran members for “missional engagement” (his term, not mine!) and it provides basic material for new people. The church is NOT interested, White says, in providing Bible classes that serve up what he describes as high calorie spiritual feasts for longtime members. Of course. It’s not about them.

In this case, I will give White a percentage of a point. It is important to offer Christian education opportunities where brand-new people can fit right in, where *everything* is explained without insulting anyone’s intelligence. And it can be salutary to challenge veteran church members to consider discussing the faith with the unchurched. The veterans’ comfort zone can be stretched, and should be. It’s not about them, in the sense of maintaining a Bible class as their cozy cocoon.

Yet they too have spiritual needs that should be met. Why did God give us books like Malachi and 2 Chronicles and Numbers, not to mention the doctrine of election? “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Romans 15:4). Some Bible classes may never delve into the details of certain biblical books, I recognize. But to rule those books out of the overall curriculum from the start as not befitting your mission strikes me as not even trying to meet genuine spiritual needs of long-time Bible students.

The church shouldn’t be *about* any target demographic *as a target demographic*. At best, White’s church may forego scratching the itches of its veteran members (meaning A above) so it can meet the real spiritual needs of young seekers (meaning B). As just noted, it runs a risk here: failing to meet some true spiritual needs of their veteran members. But does this church turn and cater to the idiosyncrasies and whims of young seekers? I wonder. Think about it: the new young seekers they are now receiving into membership will in a few years turn into “old” members. If this church acts consistently, someday it will also tell these people,

“it’s not about you” – that is, their idiosyncrasies will not end up ruling the roost either.

Or in the clutch, will that church decline to tell them this? Then their idiosyncrasies will have won, regardless of the next generation’s true needs.

Bonhoeffer wrote: “Whoever wants to have more than what Christ has established between us does not want Christian brotherhood, but seeks some sort of extraordinary experience of community.” The church is not *about* anyone except the Lord. – Ken Schurb kschurb@cidlcms.org