

Nbr. 41 – March, 2022

A Lenten Prayer

Heartless scoffers did surround Thee,
Treating Thee with shameful scorn
And with piercing thorns they crowned Thee,
All disgrace Thou, Lord, hast borne,
That as Thine Thou mightest own me
And with heav'nly glory crown me
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.

See? WOW! Christ is the life of all the living!

Spring (Church) Planting Season

Our Synod resolved "That congregations and circuits be encouraged and supported by their respective districts to investigate and identify new mission plants" (2019 Res. 1-02). However, I have conducted surveys which show that people here in CID think our congregations seem pretty much lukewarm toward church planting. Even if they are not against it, they are not much for it, either.

To enable pastors and others to begin talking about church planting, I am working with the Synod's Office of National Mission to produce resources: a.) a brochure, in two parts and b.) a set of four short videos. These tools will help inform and stimulate church plantings conversations in congregations. They should be available about Easter time, in mid-April, if not before.

I strongly encourage congregations to use these tools during May. You might call this month "Spring (Church) Planting Season." There are several possibilities, such as: Talk church planting at Bible classes on four of the five Sundays in May. Devote time at a regularly scheduled meeting to a discussion of church planting. Hold a special

meeting for such discussion. If nothing else, encourage people to view the videos and read the brochure, then talk amongst themselves.

CID's Mission Commission has submitted to the upcoming convention an overture on church planting, so the District will be talking about the subject this July. Why not "prime the pump" via discussions in congregations during May?

Note that this subject is quite pertinent to evangelism. The Synod's Office of National Mission made a study of LCMS church planting, 2000 to 2020. It found that ". . . church plants are effective at reaching the lost. Church plants are much more likely to grow than . . . [older] congregations of comparable size, and the growth they experience is attributed in large part to the baptism and confirmation of new adults into the LCMS."

Church Planting Discussions at Winkels

On a related note, during the next year or so my predecessor Joel Cluver and I would like, between us, to visit every Circuit Winkel in CID to encourage discussion of church planting prospects. I have started scheduling these discussions with the Circuit Visitors. Look for Joel or me at a Winkel soon

Church Extension Fund has generously given CID a grant to help pay for these visits. It will also pay for subsequent visits to congregations showing particular interest in church planting.

"Members of One Body" re: vitality module

This next module deals with Assimilation of new members. It is nearing completion.

Congregations can serve as beta test sites for the penultimate version of the module this coming summer or early fall. If a church is interested, please ask them to contact me.



Circuit Witness and Outreach Workers

Worth considering:

“How are you going to get me to church?”

Recently my colleague, Pastor Heath Curtis of LCMS Stewardship, reported a story he had heard in which a man said to his pastor, “Pastor, how are you going to get me back to church?” It seems this man has grown comfortable sitting at home on Sundays, watching services as they are posted online from his church.

Via his question, the man was suggesting that it was going to take something extraordinary to get him out of his bathrobe and off his couch and to get him into the door of the church building to gather with others. Well, there is something extraordinary!

However, it lies right under our noses. We find it so readily available that we end up regarding it as ordinary.

How do you get Christians to church? With the body of Christ!

Body of Christ is a loaded phrase. The Bible itself loads it.

First, when we gather at a divine service we receive the body of Christ given for us and His blood shed for us in the Sacrament of the Altar. Here is the greatest communion that we can experience in this world with the Lord Who bought us.

We should not forget Luther’s bracing words in the Preface to the Small Catechism: “When someone does not seek or desire the Sacrament at least four times a year, it is to be feared that he despises the Sacrament and is not a Christian, just as a person is not a Christian who does not believe or hear the Gospel.” Luther added: “For Christ did not say, ‘Leave this out, or, despise this,’ but, ‘Do

this, as often as you drink it’ . . .” (SC Preface 22, *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, 315).

Luther elaborated in the Large Catechism: “if a person withdraws . . . from the Sacrament, he will daily become more and more callous and cold, and will at last disregard the Sacrament completely. To avoid this, we must examine our heart and conscience . . . and we must act like people who desire to be right with God.” He concluded: “The more this is done, the more the heart will be warmed and enkindled, so it may not become entirely cold” (LC V 53-54; *Concordia*, 437).

Christians get to church to *receive* the body of Christ. At the same time, Christians get to church continually to *become* the body of Christ.

I like to eat nuts. Whenever my wife cooks up a recipe that involves them, I express my delight. “I really like it whenever you cook with nuts,” I say. Then she always tells me, “You are what you eat.”

So here: receiving the Lord’s body born of Mary, we are strengthened and confirmed as His mystical body, the church. “Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body; for all of us partake of the one loaf” (1 Corinthians 10:17). The church father John Chrysostom echoed this truth: “What is the bread? The body of Christ. And what do they become who partake of it? The body of Christ; not many bodies, but one body” (quoted in the *Concordia Commentary* on 1 Corinthians, 343).

Nothing could be more out of kilter with this than sitting at home alone, staring at a screen. As one body, we will want to come face to face with one another. And we will love and serve one another. Compare *See? WOW!* #33 (April, 2021).

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Circuit Witness and Outreach Workers