

Nbr. 43 – May, 2022

In the “Control Room,” not the “Green Room”

Dr. Dale Meyer observes that, sadly, the church a way of minimizing Christ’s Ascension. Alas, he has a point.

Maybe you have observed this, too. Lots of churches do not even observe the Ascension.

We Lutherans do celebrate the Ascension of our Lord. Do we take it to heart, though?

We fail to take it to heart when we lose sight of the fact that our ascended Lord Jesus Christ is, right now, “Head of everything for the church, which is His body, completely filled by Him who fills everything in every way” (Ephesians 1:22-23). He is in the control room of the universe, as it were, for the good of His church, His people.

Do we get that? Or do we slide into regarding our Lord as a Savior Who, having completed the work of redemption, now pretty much resembles a guest on a television talk show – waiting in the green room for His next appearance, as Dr. Meyer puts it?

At the beginning of Acts, Luke wrote by inspiration, “In my first book . . . I wrote about everything that Jesus began to do and to teach” (Acts 1:1). This next book, Acts, was about what Jesus *continued* to do and teach. He still acts and teaches through His church.

And He is over all. He is Lord. At length, every knee will bow to Him and every tongue confess His Lordship. Yet He is Lord already now, as His kingdom of grace is extended through His Gospel and the sacraments.

See? WOW! The ascended Lord Jesus is not in the “green room,” but the “control room.”

Ascension & Evangelism: they go together!

C-WOWs into the future

Evangelism Commission has recommended that CID endorse a redefinition so that laypeople could serve as C-WOWs.

Right now, a C-WOW is defined as a pastor or other rostered church workers. Most of our present C-WOWs are pastors. One is a DCE.

Evangelism Commission was thinking that it might help recruit C-WOW in the Circuits currently lacking one if the position would be opened to laypeople. There is nothing inherent in the liaison work of a C-WOW that requires a rostered church worker, although it would be good if C-WOWs are able to attend Circuit Pastoral Conferences (Winkels), for at least part of their meetings.

A related point: All of you current C-WOWs got involved in this position after the last District convention. Since the C-WOW position is informal, there are no “term limits.” However, no one wants to see you “trapped” in the position. If you would like to step down as C-WOW, the best thing you do is appeal to your Circuit Visitor and the pastors in the Circuit to appoint someone new.

Resources for Church Planting Conversation

CID’s website has a page from which one can link to a brochure and (as these words are written, hopefully very soon) a video to resource pastors and others to begin conversations about church planting in our congregations. The URL is <http://www.cidlcms.org/outreach-church-planting.html>

Please encourage consideration of and conversation about church planting prior to the District convention in July. The subject of church planting will come up at the convention too.



Circuit Witness and Outreach Workers

Worth considering: “*Missional*” *Meanderings*

The term “*missional*” means different things to different people. However the word may be used in any particular place, though, for years there has been in the Christian world a mainstream, self-identified “*missional*” movement that proceeds from Reformed theological premises. It does not recognize that the means of grace really deliver forgiveness and life. It tends not to distinguish between God’s right- and left-hand governance. Relatedly, it fails to distinguish Gospel from Law.

Last year a “*missional*” leader published *Joining God in the Great Unraveling: Where We Are & What I’ve Learned*, which seems to mark yet another turn for the stream of “*missional*” thought. Author Alan Roxburgh seems frustrated that *missional* has been considered a category of technique(s) for church improvement, or taken as a paradigm for reconceptualizing the church. He has in mind a more radical meaning for *missional*, as he grinds a postmodern axe against not only western power and control but also rationality.

Churches should not rely on human agency, Roxburgh advises, but depend on God. For God is already at work in our neighborhoods. We just join Him there. Roxburgh proposed that much in a 2011 book. What he has come to see since is that doing this does not require technocratic methods.

Among other things, Roxburgh suggests that Christians figure out what God is doing in their neighborhoods by listening for His presence in their neighbors. Roxburgh advises dwelling with people in everyday life, and learning from those who can point to now-obscure traditions of sociability and belonging. Be open to disruption, he says.

Roxburgh predicts that his set of suggestions “likely means the end of seminaries as

they were formed in the twentieth century” to turn out a graduate who will become a “branch manager of a denominational culture” (pp. 99-100). Roxburgh is less clear about the implications of his ideas for seminaries whose roots run deeper in the Christian past, and in means of grace theology.

He claims that gaining significant knowledge requires experience and intuition, even that “revelation is dependent on relationship, commitment, and trust” (101). In support of this contention, he cites Christ’s appearance to Saul of Tarsus. Think about this, though: Saul had no relationship, commitment, or trust as regards Jesus of Nazareth until the Lord revealed Himself on the Damascus Road.

The book is haunted by the specter of *Schwaermerei*. Going into your neighborhood, how can you know what God is doing? The book’s last chapter offers a few furtive ideas, culminating in: enter into relationships with others in which we risk revealing something of ourselves (p. 148)!

We might agree with Roxburgh that today’s church leans too heavily on human agency. Also, members of congregations often do not trouble themselves to get to know one another. And local churches can turn into little more than theological affinity groups that people simply visit for a couple of hours on Sunday mornings. The new book can prick us when it makes these and similar points.

In any case, Roxburgh works up to the assertion that: “*Missional* is a logic of knowing rooted in God’s self-revelation that has been mostly lost in the Euro-tribal churches” (152). Here is the latest meandering of the “*missional*” idea. It gives us very good reason to ask people who describe themselves as “*missional*”: what do you mean by that? – Ken Schurb kschurb@cidlcms.org

