

Nbr. 52 – May, 2023

### **Easter and Evangelism**

Here our true Paschal Lamb we see,  
Whom God so freely gave us;  
He died on the accursed tree –  
So strong His love – to save us.  
See, His blood now marks our door;  
Faith points to it; death passes o'er.  
And Satan cannot harm us. Alleluia!  
*See? WOW!* We point to Christ crucified and risen.  
So the Holy Spirit grants faith that points to Him.

### **Small Church Summit**

Remember the Small Church Summit (SCS) in Farmersville on the Saturday after Pentecost, June 3, 10:00 to 2:30. Guest presenter will be Pastor Todd Kollbaum, LCMS Rural & Small Town Ministry.

For more information on the SCS, and the registration link, go to page 8 of the latest *GatePost* issue. You can find it on the CID website at <http://www.cidlcms.org/resources/gatepost/2023.GatePost.2.pdf> Please register for SCS by May 26.

If you have a long drive to Farmersville, I can arrange a billet for you with a host family in Springfield on Friday night, June 2. To request such, be sure to contact me by May 8.

Late-breaking news! When the SCS ends at 2:30, there will be an ice cream social! You are cordially invited to stick around and chat.

Remember, if you think your church is small, you are invited. And bring someone with you!

### **Archive of this Newsletter**

All back issues of *See? WOW!* are archived. See <http://www.cidlcms.org/outreach-cwow.html>

### **What Teenagers Want in a Church**

The Barna research organization recently asked 13,000 teenagers what they wanted in a church. Those surveyed were to finish the sentence: “I would prefer to attend a church that supports...” Here were the leading ways they filled in the “blank”:

- *ending extreme poverty* (35%)
- *positive mental health* (35%)
- *ending hunger and famines* (34%)
- *ending sexual abuse* (34%)
- *promoting racial justice* (28%)

Some observations:

1. Perhaps unsurprisingly in a secular age, none of these items that young people want from the church are specifically the church’s mission to provide. Further, other organizations in society address all of these concerns.
2. This has implications not only for retention of the young people already in our congregations, but also for the incorporation of new members in their age cohort. We have to teach them to crave the one thing needful (Luke 10:38-42) from the church, and to settle for nothing less. Behind all of their concerns lies sin, original sin. Only Christ can deal with that. Only the church will bring you Christ in His Word & Sacraments.
3. The Gospel of Christ leads people to want to make contributions to society, in these areas of concern and others. The church encourages such good works, while remaining careful not to become so committed to any one particular strategy for addressing them that it excludes other cogent approaches. For then the church would be susceptible to division between those who favor various ways, say, of fighting poverty.



**Circuit Witness and Outreach Workers**

*Worth Considering:* **Prayer and Evangelism**

If there was one lesson that my fellow students and I seemed to learn well already while we were in the midst of seminary studies, it was that *prayer is not a means of grace*. The lesson stands out as important. Prayer can get to be an *ersatz* means of grace in the practice of many churches, especially non-Lutheran churches – to say nothing of the piety of many Christians, very much including some Lutherans.

Since prayer is not a means of grace, there might not seem to be much to say concerning prayer in relation to evangelism. Right? Wrong!

Although prayer itself is not a means of grace, the best prayers come thoroughly soaked in God's Word. In fact, the Psalms and the Lord's Prayer are themselves God's Word, given by none other than God Himself. As we pray these God-given and Gospel-centered words to the Lord, we also hear them ourselves.

This is what happens in church services, as we say back to God what He already has said to us. Therefore model Prayers of the Church (as, for example, in the online resources from the LCMS LetUsPray series) purposely reflect the appointed Scripture lessons for Sundays or other occasions.

Never underestimate how seriously churchgoers take the time of intercessory prayer. Reflecting on my years as a parish pastor, I think I grew so focused on the "sacramental" elements of the service like the sermon that I did not always give due prior thought and preparation to the Prayer of the Church. For one thing, I could have been much more deliberate in planning precisely who and what to pray for, not only from week to week, but also across an entire church year.

How often are our congregations praying, within the Prayer of the Church at services each week, for the nonchurched people with whom we are all surrounded in our communities? Here is a very obvious – yet, I fear, an oft-overlooked! – place where prayer can embrace evangelism.

The more specific these prayers, the better! Don't keep repeating vague, generic petitions for the nonchurched. Rather, on various weeks pray for

- Those who have wandered from their baptism
- Those who have never been baptized
- Those who have questions and doubts
- Those who feel injured by the church
- Those who truly have been injured by the church, and needlessly so
- Those who see the church as harsh, judgmental
- Those who would like to learn more about Jesus

This list can go on and on. You get the idea.

Might there be a sinfully selfish reason if we fail to pray such public prayers on a regular basis? Are we trying to "hide out" because we know that if we do pray such prayers, the Lord might answer them in part by placing in our path someone to whom to tell the Good News about Jesus?

Public prayers form models for private prayer. The church praying corporately for nonchurched people provides impetus for church members to pray for them at home.

When my wife said "Yes" to my proposal of marriage, I was delighted to tell her: "I have been praying for you for years." In fact, I had been praying for my future wife, even when I had no idea who she would be. Likewise, how wonderful it is when we can look nonchurched visitors to our churches in the eye and say, "We have been praying for you"! – Ken Schurb [kschurb@cidlcms.org](mailto:kschurb@cidlcms.org)

