

Nbr. 53 – August-September, 2023

With-ness

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). *Witness* springs from *with-ness*.

“With-ness” comes completely by grace. The same Peter had once said, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8). Faced with God Himself, what else could a sinner say?

Jesus would not take that *No* for an answer. By His self-sacrifice, the Man Who is also God became Himself *THE Yes* answer. He turned the most terrible *No* into *Yes*. “Do not be afraid,” He told Peter. For He had come to be with Peter, not against him. God with us, Immanuel (Matt. 1:23), in effect said to Peter: I’m putting you with Me. “From now on you will be catching men” (Luke 5:10).

God was in Christ, “reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:19). The “us” Paul particularly had in view was probably himself and fellow pastors, Still, his words apply to the entire church and to every Christian. In our sin, we are no more *with* Christ than anyone to whom we speak. Yet in Christ, God reconciled us to Himself. Jesus has come to be with us in His grace, and He has put us with Him.

Witness springs from *with-ness*. Jesus knew so. After He told His church to make disciples of all nations, He – Immanuel, God with us – added, “behold, I am *with you* always . . .” (Matt. 28:20).

See? WOW! Ignite *witness* via *with-ness*, basking in the Lord’s means of grace.

Back early

The present issue is for August *and* September. There are a few things coming up that I did not want to wait until summer’s end to note.

Sharing the Good News in a Bad News World

At 9:00 a.m. on Sat., Aug. 26, the Rev. Dr. Adam Koontz will speak at the Tuscola Community Building on “A Hope and a Home: Proclaiming the Everlasting Gospel in Today’s America.” Attendance is free but limited. For more information, contact Immanuel Lutheran Church, Tuscola. Register at <https://bit.ly/notashamed2023>

Save the date for next Small Church Summit

The Small Church Summit will have its winter meeting in parallel sessions. One will be in southern Illinois, at Messiah, Carlyle, on Jan. 6 or (if weather is bad on the 6th) Jan. 27. The meeting in central Illinois will be on Feb. 3 or (if weather is bad on the 3rd) Feb. 10 at Faith, Lincoln. CID folks can attend either of these for free.

Conversation between participants will be emphasized at this meeting. SID President Tim Scharr will also make a presentation concerning inactive members.

Remember, if you think your church is small, you are invited to SCS. Mark your calendar!

Beyond the Classroom (BTC)

Last May brought the end to a series of informational sessions on this application of Connect to Disciple to churches with schools. “Full” BTC training will commence in April, 2024. If a church with a school or preschool in your Circuit has missed out so far, they can still be involved. Have them contact Trip Rodgers or me at CID office.



Circuit Witness and Outreach Workers

See? **WOW!** News and Encouragement for CID **C**ircuit **W**itness & **O**utreach **W**orkers

Worth Considering: **Toward evangelistic practice**

At the District pastoral conference last May, I administered a survey about evangelism. The return rate was good, as about half the pastors in attendance submitted their responses.

Broadly it can be said, concerning both CID pastors and the churches they serve:

- We are doing things in evangelism.
- We could be doing better in evangelism, working both “harder” and “smarter.”

There certainly is room for improvement.

Evangelism Commission will be discussing and prioritizing possible ways to engage this opportunity.

One result from the survey already is that it has exerted some influence on a proposed convention resolution. I am a member of floor committee 1 on National Witness, and I brought thoughts inspired by our survey to Res. 1-01 for Synod in Milwaukee (the convention still lies in the future as I write these words). Res. 1-01 would resolve, in part, that *the Synod encourage its congregations, their pastors and other church workers to take serious and realistic stock of how often and how well they employ recurring parish education opportunities (including, but not limited to: Bible and catechism classes; youth ministry; retreats, etc.) to teach church members key witnessing skills (such as listening discerningly to nonchurched people; beginning a spiritual conversation; making a simple statement of the Gospel; defending the resurrection), including the provision of opportunity to **practice** such skills.*

I added the emphasis on “practice” above because this dimension of evangelism training

seems particularly lacking among us. How can we at least move toward providing people with practice?

Here is a way that might be surprising. Next month, I am scheduled to begin a series of *Issues, etc.* interviews on Evangelism. I will pre-record these interviews, starting on Fri., Aug. 25. The interview recorded that day will likely be broadcast sometime during the next week, Aug. 28-Sept. 1.

At present, I am envisioning a series of six interviews, largely informed by our May CID survey. Here is the working outline for the series, which is subject to change as we go along:

1. Orientation to the series
2. Role of the pastor in evangelism
3. “Easy” congregational efforts in evangelism
4. Preaching and teaching on evangelism
5. Basics of Every One His Witness
6. Basics of Connect to Disciple

A unique feature of this series will be introduced already in the first interview. I will ask *Issues, etc.* listeners to telephone the IE comment line and offer their descriptions of actual evangelistic conversations they have had with people – something on the order of: “I said . . . then he said . . . then I said . . .” During subsequent installments of the series, we can play back the recordings of these listener calls and offer analysis.

This would not yet constitute actual practice at evangelistic conversation. But it would provide examples of real, not contrived, evangelism encounters. Perhaps listeners will be able to envision themselves in such situations. This is a good direction in which to take a step.

How will it all work? Will listeners call in and give us descriptions? How helpful might these be?

Stay tuned . . . – Ken Schurb kschurb@cidlcms.org



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