

Nbr. 56 – December, 2023

Advent Donkeys

“... a young donkey ... on which no one has ever sat ... bring it to Me” (Mark 11:2). Mark and Luke mention this detail about the donkey.

Often animals devoted to the Lord in the OT had never been under a yoke. They never served any other (Num. 19:2; Dt. 21:3; 1 Sam. 6:7).

Well, that wouldn't be me. In my sin, I have served lots of other masters, including myself. True.

Jesus belonged to no earthly father. He was the eternal Son of the eternal Father. He owes allegiance to no one else. Virgin birth shows that.

And the new you reborn in baptism has never belonged to anyone but the Lord. Baptized, we Christians are His “advent donkeys.”

See? **WOW!** You are free to serve Him!

Short Services Every Weekday during Lent

Trinity, Springfield (across the street from state capitol) will conduct 25-minute services *every weekday* of Lent, 2024 at 12:15 p.m. Short sermons at these services will go through the Passion history.

Lots of people travel a long way to work at businesses or government offices in downtown Springfield. Therefore *these services have potential to generate referrals for many CID congregations.*

What can churches in your circuit do?

- Pray for the services, and those who attend.
- Publicize the services, especially to any of your members who work in downtown Springfield. They can attend, and bring others along!
- Prepare for new people who may attend your church after having been to one or more of the noontime Lenten services at Trinity. If you do get such a contact, persist in your follow-up!

AGENDA FOR 2023 C-WOW MEETING

December 2, 2023

9:30 Opening Devotion

9:40 The Synod's 2023 Convention and Evangelism

10:00 Report on Evangelism Commission discussion (Planning to implement 1-01A, CID Pastors' Survey, Lyman Stone studies, “O AFC for adults”, “question of the week,” etc.)

10:30 Break

10:40 Promoting *Every One His Witness* in 2024

11:00 Update: *Beyond the Classroom*

11:05 Reminders: Demographic Studies, CAD/DS survey, *re: Vitality* modules

11:20 General discussion . . . end by 11:30

Register for Small Church Summit

The next Small Church Summit will meet in southern Illinois at Messiah, Carlyle, on Jan. 6 or (if weather is bad then) Jan. 27 and in central Illinois on Feb. 3 or (if weather is bad then) Feb. 10 at Faith, Lincoln. Attend either of these for free! See the September CID *GatePost* for details.

Be sure to register *by Jan. 2* for the SCS meeting in Carlyle *or Jan. 22* for the one in Lincoln at <https://forms.gle/5eEQYVGgAwMdtj4v6>

“Back page” columns

Next month I am scheduled to speak on evangelism at the Lutheran Concerns Association's annual meeting in Fort Wayne. My remarks also may appear in a future *Lutheran Clarion* issue.

The LCA is graciously allowing me to bring most of my presentation directly to you, little bit by little bit, via these *See? WOW!* issues. The last issue's back page started carrying the content. The series continues in the present issue.

GatePost Dec., 2023 issue features Evangelism!



Circuit Witness and Outreach Workers

Worth Considering:

Confessing one's faith before others begins with confessing one's sin to the Lord and receiving His absolution.

In summer, 1530, Lutheran princes and some theologians went to the imperial meeting at Augsburg and faced the challenge of confessing the faith. Easily they could dwell on how meager their group was, and how many and how mighty the forces arrayed against them seemed to be!

Martin Luther was at the Coburg at the time, keeping in touch with friends in Augsburg via mail delivered by courier. Luther wrote several letters that can help us as we seek to confess the faith – that is, tell the Good News about Jesus – under much less intimidating circumstances today.

Luther spent a lot of time at Coburg on his knees, as it were. He was praying for the delegation at Augsburg.

Not only was the good doctor praying; he was also writing. To Philip Melancthon, who was beset by fears that the peace could be disrupted, Luther sent some especially poignant letters. He wrote one a couple of days after the Augsburg Confession was presented (although Luther did not know this fact at the time when he was writing).

In his letter, Luther told Philip that he hated the fears that were consuming Philip. The real trouble, he went on, was not the size of the cause at hand, but the mammoth proportions of unbelief. Luther was reminding Philip about God. God was working in this cause. He, the Lord, was the Author of it. Why make Him out to be a liar when He gives great promises to us? Instead, we should do what Scripture says and cast our care on Him. Luther added, "I too tremble often, but not continually."

You see, Luther had not only been on his knees interceding for the Lutheran party at the diet; he was also confessing his sin. Now he was urging Philip to similar confession, so Philip too could receive forgiveness by the blood of the Lamb.

More from Luther: "I for my part am, so far as the cause is concerned . . . not very much disturbed – yes, of better hope than I had expected. God is able to raise the dead. He is also able to sustain His cause when it wavers; when it has fallen, to raise it up again; when it stands, to further it." God can raise the dead! At Coburg, Luther had been working on his commentary on Psalm 118, which includes the words: "I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the Lord" (v. 17).

Speaking of psalms, Luther also found in Psalm 119 a verse that has been put right before the Augsburg Confession in printings ever since: "I will also speak of your testimonies before kings and shall not be put to shame" (v. 46).

Who do you and I have to speak to concerning Christ? It may be a king, or it may be somebody else. We can speak, and not be silent.

Confession of faith begins on our knees, like it did with Luther. We confess our sins – among others, that we do not tell the Good News as we should. Then we are lifted up by the Lord's word of absolution. It raises the dead! This word of forgiveness that is so good for us is good for others too, so we tell them the Good News about Jesus.

His absolving word quells our fears and snuffs our unbelief. We can speak of His testimonies to friends and neighbors and not be put to shame. It's His cause, and He will defend it.

Confessional Lutheranism entails confessing the faith. - Ken Schurb kschurb@cidlcms.org

