

Nbr. 60 – April, 2024

### **He's Risen, He's Risen!**

Then sing your hosannas and raise your glad voice;  
Proclaim the blest tidings, that all may rejoice.  
Laud, honor and praise to the Lamb that was slain;  
With Father and Spirit He ever shall reign.

(LSB 480:5)

*See? WOW!* Easter makes the good news  
GOOD NEWS!

### **Assimilation (Incorporation) Training**

*Witness* is essential in evangelism. Someone has to “break the news” – the Easter Good News – to a nonchurched person. Such witness is not the end of the story, though, but the beginning.

Making disciples includes not only initial *baptizing* but also ongoing *teaching*. New Christians need to be incorporated into the body of Christ in particular ways, by being gathered with fellow Christians to receive Christ through His Gospel and Sacraments in specific places at set times. Evangelism should attend not only to witness but also to what has been termed *assimilation* of new church members.

I am scheduled to teach a four-session study on assimilation at Trinity, Springfield on a series of four Wednesday nights after Easter: April 10, 17, 24, and May 1. These sessions, at Trinity's Parish Center (not the church downtown) will run from 6:00 to about 7:15 p.m. Members of CID churches in or near Springfield are welcome. (I taught a similar set of sessions in early 2020, but then came COVID and, well, you know . . . )

These sessions will include Bible study and introduction of helpful practices. I will also describe ways to set up an organized assimilation approach.

A *re:Vitality* module on assimilation, “Members of One Body,” is in preparation by Office of National Mission. If you want a “leg up” on the topic, you may find our upcoming sessions helpful.

Assimilation helps to prevent backdoor losses. This becomes important as a practical matter. As pastors and lay volunteers have their time and energies increasingly stretched, they will find it more and more difficult to reach out to inactives. So let's do all we can to keep people from becoming inactive in the first place!

The material I am to present at Trinity after Easter can be re-packaged into a workshop for a single congregation or several on a Friday night and Saturday morning, or all day on a Saturday. However, starting after Easter I will be heavily involved in Beyond the Classroom workshops. If you would like to invite me to come to you to talk about assimilation, we will have to plan carefully.

### **Beyond the Classroom (BTC)**

Speaking of BTC, it really amounts to the “Connect to Disciple” *re:Vitality* module, adapted for congregations with Lutheran schools. BTC training for leadership teams within these churches will begin, D.v., shortly after Easter.

Trip Rodgers and I would like to reach all CID congregations operating schools or preschools with BTC. Please let them know that they do not have to wait to be contacted. They can contact us first to set up their workshop.

### **“Back page” item**

Our “Worth Considering” feature is part of an essay found in its entirety in the March issue of the *Lutheran Clarion*. The excerpt appears here by courtesy of the Lutheran Concerns Association.



**Circuit Witness and Outreach Workers**

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

## *Worth Considering:*

Include evangelism skills in parish education, and do not omit practice of them.

Pastors responding to our CID evangelism survey last year reported a number of inventive ways to bring the Gospel to nonchurched people. One was for them to sit down in some public place, and display a sign with a message like “Can I pray for you?” Then they talk with anyone who responds. Pastor Mark Wood of LCMS Witness and Outreach says that while this can be good, given a choice between pastors spending an hour sitting next to a sign that may go unnoticed OR spending that time teaching laypeople to tell the Good News, he would prefer that they teach.

At its convention last year, the Synod encouraged pastors and congregations 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.” The Synod went on to give four examples of such key witnessing skills: “listening discerningly to non-churched people, beginning a spiritual conversation, making a simple statement of the Gospel, defending the resurrection” (2023 LCMS Res. 1-01A).

In fact, our survey last year had asked CID pastors where, in their congregations’ Christian education programs, members learned these very same skills. Some of the numerical results were surprisingly high. For example, 89% of respondents said that in adult Bible classes members learn to begin spiritual conversations and 91% said that in those same classes they learn to make the case for the resurrection. Across all parish education

platforms, the numbers came out the lowest for learning to listen discerningly to the nonchurched.

Frankly, I do not believe the really high numbers. I think that in most adult Bible classes these points may have come up, say, within the last six to nine months, perhaps even two or three times. But how many class participants would say that they now know how to begin a spiritual conversation or defend the resurrection? The measure of learning is not how much teacher says, but rather what the students take with them.

Note, too, that the items specified in the Synod’s resolution are skills. Think of how people learn skills – for example, playing the organ. If your organ instruction details the history of the organ, tells you all about organ construction, lets you hear great compositions written for the organ over the years, but you never actually touch a keyboard, would you say it has taught you the skill of playing the organ? And what organ instructors would dare to say they taught pupils to play the organ this way?

Let’s not kid ourselves into thinking that we teach people evangelism skills if all we do is talk to them. Wisely, the Synod went on in its recent resolution to say that congregations, pastors, and other church workers should include “the provision of opportunity to practice such skills.”

Setting aside time for practice may prove challenging. Some people may not like class activities that call upon them to do something. Yet these hardly constitute reasons not to try to follow the Synod’s advice, at least at some points within a parish education program. I know one pastor who is building into his youth catechism classes some evangelism role-playing exercises. There’s a start.

– Ken Schurb [kschurb@cidlcms.org](mailto:kschurb@cidlcms.org)



**Circuit Witness and Outreach Workers**