

Nbr. 76 – February, 2026

The Gospel Gives Purpose to Life

From a lecture by Dr. Gerhard Aho

[The Gospel of Christ, the Light of the world] enfolds Christians in God's plan. Thus, it offers a reason for living.

The Christian's life is not under the control of fate. Good things do not happen to him by luck, and bad things are not God's punishment. God is in control in the Christian's life, as in history.

Christians can look back to their baptism as their birth into God's kingdom, and they can look forward to their final triumph when the kingdom is revealed in its glory. God is working in the world and in individual Christian lives with our final redemption in view.

We do not have to bear the burden of attaining our goals, nor do we have to be in a torment of frustration when an obstacle is placed in our way. We can let God work things out for us.

We may seem to be defeated sometimes. We may be knocked down, but we are never knocked out. We are part of God's eternal plan.

See? WOW! When we bring the Good News to people, it does things. It gives life a purpose.

I'm Available

Now that I am on modified service, I work fewer hours per week than I used to. Yet I am still open to preach and teach for Evangelism festivals. I did so last September in Coal Valley, and I am willing to do more. It's just a matter of scheduling.

Also, please don't forget that I have several presentations that I can make or modify. A listing is found at <https://www.cidlcms.org/outreach-presentations.html>

A Zoom in Your Future

Evangelism Commission has encouraged me to converse with each C-WOW individually, via Zoom. I will start scheduling these contacts in February. Looking forward to it!

Partners and Practice in the Gospel

Our "O AFC for adults" project has hit a couple of rocks: 1.) Unanticipated difficulties in contacting former O AFC members or others who might be interested in serving on an (older) adult team; and 2.) Internal weakness of the O AFC organization, which put its Executive Director on unpaid status at the end of November due to its lack of funds.

This disappoints the three Districts (SWD, SID, and CID) that issued O AFC \$5,000 of their \$15,000 Bolick Foundation grant as a retainer. The money already given seems unrecoverable.

Still, in partial fulfillment of O AFC's agreement, a couple of its board members are scheduled to conduct a weekend event at an SID congregation in Mt. Carmel April 11-12. We will try to schedule an event in Shumway sometime in the spring and learn all we can there, so we could do at least aspects of such an event on our own in CID.

Whether through the "O AFC for Adults" vehicle or some other, the challenge remains to provide witnessing practice for pastors and laypeople. Your ideas on this are welcome!

Welcome!

Our District's newest C-WOW is Pastor Jacob Moore of St. John Lutheran Church, New Berlin, serving as C-WOW for Springfield East and West. Jake takes over for Jeff Gross, who recently retired as pastor of Bethlehem, Petersburg.



Circuit Witness and Outreach Workers

Worth considering:

A Couple More Noteworthy Trends from 2025

This newsletter has recently reported on two trends noted by the Barna organization in 2025. Maybe the most interesting one – perhaps the most surprising, too – is the uptick, over the last three or four years, of adults who claim to be following Jesus in the U.S. (see issue 71 for September). Together with that comes a less happy trend among women, some of whom seem to be giving up on church, even prayer and faith itself (as noted in issue 74 for December).

Now here are a couple of other trends over which we might linger. These were mentioned in Barna's year-end report for 2025.

One is further privatization of faith among Christians in the U.S. Barna reports that 56% of adult Christians look upon their faith as totally private. It comes out that these folks are less likely to say they spend time with God regularly, nor do they very strongly sense the importance of their faith to their daily lives. (How many of these people might be inactive members within our churches?)

Another trend has to do with reading of the Bible. Fully half of Millennials now indicate that they read it on a weekly basis. Gen Z lies a mere one percentage point behind the Millennials in this regard. Some of these people may identify themselves as Christians, others perhaps not.

A prospect that arises from these two trends, taken together, is that of enticing people who have a curiosity about the Bible into some sort of Bible study. This might be a particularly promising prospect for those in their 20s and 30s. Perhaps they are not coming to church, but they might be reading the Bible and wondering, like the

Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8, how to understand what they are reading. We can help them.

Yet this may not be the place to break out our accustomed adult catechetical instruction curricula and approaches. Here we may need to take what will amount to a prior step, preliminary to that sort of study, which may well follow later.

One possibility would be to conduct a class on the Bible's big picture over just a few weeks. Or start with the big New Testament picture for a few weeks, followed by tracing back into the Old Testament for a few more.

Another alternative might be to do deep dives on particular pericopes. A selection of passages recently offered by Dr. Chad Kendall of Concordia University Chicago is available at <https://www.cidlcms.org/resources/witnessing/InquirySchedule.pdf>

Still another option, perhaps especially during the festival half of the Church Year, might be to utilize the structure provided by the liturgical times and seasons to suggest particular biblical events and texts to examine. A series of audio studies going through the Old Testament story and keyed to a single church year is available at <https://www.cidlcms.org/resources-studies-through-the-old-testament.html>

Lutheran churches and Lutheran pastors are generally good at teaching the Bible, perhaps better than we are at a lot of evangelistic aspects. Here is a place where teaching can be put into the service of outreach, both to the unchurched and the de-churched. If people are interested in the Bible and curious about it, we definitely have some things to tell them . . . about it and about the Christ to whom it points! — Ken Schurb kschurb@cidlcms.org



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