

Nbr. 77 – March, 2026

Receiving God's Powerful Word

"We also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you *accepted* it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers" (1 Thess. 2:13).

This verse tells about the impact made by God's saving Word in the lives of real people, converts in Thessalonica near and dear to Paul's heart. It was God's own Word, so it had His own power. No mere human word could match this!

The italicized word above is *dechomai* in Greek, a word used for receiving a guest. The Word did not merely pass by the Thessalonians' ears. It made itself welcome in their inmost being. It made the Lord Himself their Guest and Friend and Savior.

At times the Good News falls on deaf ears, as in Paul's day. Let's never assume in advance, though, that it will be rejected. This Word packs the gracious power of the crucified and risen Christ.

See? WOW! When the church and her members speak the Gospel, who knows when non-churched people will – as a miracle wrought by the Holy Spirit! – receive it like the Thessalonians did: as a welcome guest in their hearts and in their lives?

Re-Scheduling Zoom Conferences with C-WOWs

As a result of recent events, my schedule was somewhat disrupted during February. However, now I am in a position to try to reschedule the half-hour zoom meetings that Evangelism Commission wanted me to conduct with each C-WOW.

So for those of you who are C-WOWs – others receive this newsletter, but I am not

addressing myself to them at present – please note the following list of times and dates when I could be available within the first three weeks of March. Let me know your *top 2 choices by Monday, March 2.*

THURSDAY, March 5

9:00 a.m.
10:00 a.m.
11:00 a.m.
Noon

WEDNESDAY, March 11

9:00 a.m.
10:00 a.m.
11:00 a.m.
Noon

THURSDAY, March 12

9:00 a.m.
10:00 a.m.
11:00 a.m.
Noon

TUESDAY, March 17

9:00 a.m.
10:00 a.m.
11:00 a.m.
Noon

WEDNESDAY, March 18

9:00 a.m.
10:00 a.m.
11:00 a.m.
Noon

The purpose of our half-hour zoom is mainly to discuss the contents of my "Talking Turkey" article in the January issue of this newsletter and to apply it to your role as a C-WOW. Can't find your January issue? Remember, all of these newsletters are archived at <https://cidlcms.org/outreach-cwow.html>



Worth considering:

Outreach in the Small Town Church

Our keynote speaker at the Winter, 2026 Small Church Summit was SID President Heath Curtis. He spoke on “The Small-Town Lutheran Church.” Here are some evangelism-related nuggets gleaned from his presentation – with a few comments added by yours truly:

Stop beating yourself up. It’s not necessarily that you or your congregation are doing anything “wrong.” Churches across the board are facing declining numbers. For the LCMS, another factor is that a majority of the members of our congregations are located in states where the population is declining. Small-town churches may well be in towns that are getting smaller, not larger. It is hard to grow a church amidst a shrinking number of people. Don’t beat yourself up over this.

Watch your aim. Aiming at membership growth may actually hurt a congregation’s membership growth. Like happiness in the life of an individual, membership growth is a by-product. So don’t try to aim directly at it. Instead, be about doing what the church does. The Lord may well send membership growth your way.

The first step in outreach. No one wants to join a congregation where everyone is miserable. Love your church. Don’t complain about it, but always speak well of it. This is the first step.

I am reminded of what LCMS Evangelism Director Jerry Kosberg said 30 years ago: people will invite their friends to church if they feel good about their Lord, their church, and their pastor.

Invite! Growth in evangelistic skills is always possible, and it is a good thing. (See CID’s Witnessing Helps, for example.) But the church does

not necessarily need a stable of world-class evangelists. What we do need is for people actively to invite their non-churched friends, relatives, and neighbors to come along with them to church. If anyone asks why, a good initial answer is “Well, I can tell you that I love it.” If you love it, and they know you, that alone will get their attention.

Retention of members. Our goal is for our congregations to be filled with lifelong faithfully worshipping Lutherans. Every child who enters our churches via baptism is someone the Lord is giving us to care for. If the LCMS had retained every child our churches baptized this century, we would be a growing church body – even if we did nothing else. So it behooves us to take note of the times and circumstances in life where baptized people often leave the church and give special attention to caring for them with God’s Word at these key points.

Strong assimilation or incorporation of new adult members into our congregations also stands out in importance. If they go out the “back door,” we will need to reach out to them all over again. We eagerly await the imminent release of the Synod’s *re:Vitality* module “Members of One Body.”

Plus One: Every congregation is to make disciples of Christ by preaching His Gospel and administering His sacraments. Usually, thriving congregations, even in small towns, also have one other distinctive feature about them: a “plus one.” Perhaps they run clothing or food banks for their communities. Some operate schools or preschools. Whatever the “plus one,” it gives church members a project on which to work together. It also provides something for which the church can be known in the area.

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