

Nbr. 81 – October, 2026

Don't be Conquered by Evil; Conquer it with Good

Francis of Assisi is perhaps best-known for his love of nature and his hymns, prayers, and poems concerning it. What is less known about him is his involvement in mission work to Muslims.

Once Francis was the guest of an Egyptian sultan who set a little spiritual trap for Francis. As he entered a room, Francis had to step on a carpet embroidered with crosses. After Francis stepped, the sultan jeered at him and said that Christians were supposed to revere the cross. Yet here Francis was, treading it underfoot!

Francis responded that on the day Jesus died, there were three crosses. If someone wanted to make representations of the other two and place them on the floor, he would go ahead and walk on them. Yet he still lifted high the cross of Christ.

A recent Epistle lesson reads: "Do not pay back evil for evil. Let your mind dwell on those things that everyone considers noble. . . . Do not take revenge. . . . Rather 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him a drink. If you do this, you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not let evil conquer you, but conquer evil with good" (Romans 12:17-21). Francis was exemplifying these eminently Christian and Christ-like traits. They are good for evangelism!

See? WOW! We do not have to seek our own vindication at any cost. Jesus bore our sin and paid the price for us. His resurrection vindication is *our* vindication. What other would we need?

C-WOWs, note the e-mail that brought you this issue. We need to schedule our annual meeting!

What Gen Z Really Wants to Know about God

This 2025 book by Tanita Tualla Maddox (IVP) is organized into chapters that delve into various questions on the minds of members of Gen Z. They were born from 1997 to 2012, so at this time they are anywhere from just starting high school through their twenties. They are the youth and young adults who are in, or could be in, our churches. Here are the questions from the book:

1. Is God good?
2. Am I enough?
3. Will you accept me?
4. Do all people matter to God?
5. Can I trust you?
6. What is true?
7. Am I safe?

Thinking of ways in which the Bible engages these questions can be good for preaching and teaching as well as one-on-one evangelism. How does the Good News about Jesus bear on each?

Specifically for C-WOWs: How might studies of even one of these questions begin in our various CID circuit Winkels? Might we collectively be able to help one another assemble some Biblical basics in response to each, perhaps highlighting relevant biblical narratives, to be shared throughout the District and maybe beyond? This might well be something for us to discuss when we meet next month. I'd love to hear what you think before then.

More Trust in Small Churches

Recent Gallup Poll data indexed by Barna shows the incidence of Americans placing trust in smaller churches at almost half again more than those who trust megachurches. Small can be good when people with problems need a place to go.



Circuit Witness and Outreach Workers

Worth considering:

You Found Me

This IVP book by Rick Richardson is a bit dated. It was published in 2019. Yet it still seems worth noting today.

It reported that just 6% of unchurched people responding to a survey said they thought that the Christian faith was harmful to society. On the other hand, close to half (42%) said it is good for society. This statistic might surprise us, since Christians already at that time were feeling beleaguered and marginalized. The caustic aroma of the “New Atheists” lingered in the air, in fact a lot more than it does today. Still, in 2019 one-third of unchurched respondents said they admired the faith of their Christian friends. Only 1.5% said they gave their friends a hard time about their faith. Perhaps things were not quite as forbidding as we may have feared.

In fact, nearly 80% of unchurched people said they did not mind Christians talking about their faith if they really valued it (45% “somewhat” so and 34% “strongly”). Yet fewer than a third (29%) of the unchurched respondents reported that a Christian had ever spoken with them one-on-one about how to become a Christian.

Unsurprisingly, the power of *personal* invitations showed itself in the data. Just over half (55% and 51%, respectively) of unchurched people responding said they would accept an invitation to church if it came from a family member or friend. These were much higher likely positive response rates than for other prospective invitations, such as those extended online through videos or Facebook ads. For the unchurched people who identified themselves as Christian (which came to 56% of

unchurched people overall), the likelihood of accepting an invitation to church from a family member or friend ran significantly higher.

By 2019, many churches had been conducting a variety of events and activities with which to connect with the unchurched. Yet the weekly church service still promised to be the most likely contact point where unchurched people could come into the life of the church.

On top of all that, in 2019 almost 50 million Americans – about one in three unchurched folks – said that they expected to be attending church regularly at some time in the future!

In hindsight, many of the “unchurched” in the study appear to have been more what we have been learning to call “de-churched” – that is, people who had previously been attending church at one time or another. They already have some familiarity with the Christian faith. They know something of what church services are like, and likely still consider themselves Christians. Many such people remain out there (Davis and Graham, *The Great De-Churching*, 2023). Let’s not forget about them, especially our family members or friends.

The importance of inviting these people to church services cannot be overstated. As Pres. Heath Curtis of SID told a recent Small Church Summit, ask family and friends to come with you to church. If they want to know why, at least one good way to answer is to say, “Well, I love it.”

As for our church services, they have to “own” being church services. Don’t try to become something else. Lean into time-tested liturgy, strong hymns, and pointed Law-and-Gospel preaching that mines the biblical text and engages the hearers.

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