

The Pure and Powerful Word

I was a young Pastor, quite “green behind the ears,” serving in my first parish, St. Peter in Gilberts, Illinois. Everything was new, an adventure, and while my seminary education was great, I was learning a great deal from experience and the dear lay people. They were patient and long-suffering.

I was asked to visit a congregation member’s relative at St. Joseph Hospital in Elgin. I visited on several occasions and in one of them left some devotional material. The person transitioned and we lost contact. Then suddenly the family reached out to me and said their loved one had passed, and they asked whether I would do a memorial service at a local funeral home. I consented. We met to plan the service, and the daughter asked me to read something from a book the family “had read to Mom.” They were uncertain what the book was, and I was a bit concerned.

The day of the memorial service arrived, and as I walked into the building, they handed me the booklet. A great sense of peace came over me when I saw it. In fact, I rejoiced! The daughter of the deceased had handed me a... **Portals of Prayer!** Our own daily devotional published by our own Concordia Publishing House. That family had delivered to their loved one solid, Biblical devotions where God’s Law and Gospel were shared daily! The real Jesus was delivered in all His beauty and with His salvation.

“Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word of Christ” (Romans 10:17).

The Word of God works in our church buildings and in the Divine Service! Every, yes, every service I have attended or been a part of in my tenure as District President has been rich in the Word of God! Join me in thanking God for that! Let’s keep that a common bond, emphasizing Law/Gospel preaching and teaching with rich application!

But the Word of God works in the lives of God’s people inside as well as outside of public worship! It works as I read my Bible and devotional literature. Last year part of my reflection time was a small but thoughtful devotional entitled *Day by Day We Magnify Thee*, based on Scripture and teaching by Martin Luther! Rich and thoughtful!

My point is simple. The Word of God works wherever it is present because it is a “mighty, Spirit-filled Word.”

We can read, reflect, and discuss what God is giving in the Word. One of the Lutheran Church fathers said, “There is a perpetual union between the Word of God and the Spirit of God.”

Many of our church business agendas begin with prayer, and that is good! What about a vigorous, even if short, reading and discussion of the Word? A place and time where we listen to God and engage with each other. Jesus is “full of grace and truth,” and so is your Bible!

Might we be missing the direction and voice of Christ when we do our work and business without Him at the beginning and during a meeting? God’s Word is more

powerful and significant than our feelings, opinions, or our favorite tradition. The Word of God forms and fills us, and we then pour what we received into the lives of others. #Witness

As you read this, you probably know that we are focusing on the 3 W's: **Word, Wellness, and Witness.** The most "pushback" I have received has been on the Word segment. Maybe that is because we take it for granted, so for granted that we miss what God wants to give abundantly!

I invite you and challenge you personally to be more deeply in the Word of God! I invite and challenge you to help someone you know to be in Scripture, to make Scripture-based devotion a regular part of life. A friend of mine texts me a Scripture passage every Monday like clockwork. He says, "It's good for you, but it is also good for me." Encourage your meetings and gatherings in church and other places where Christians gather to be engaged in the Word!

One last thing. Due to the generosity of a member of a Northern Illinois District congregation, we have several financial grants for congregations and ministries who are looking to engage and help those not in the Word to be in the Word. We are looking for innovative ideas to expand the number of people in Bible study or discussion groups that gather around the Word. It's a grant for "research and development" as we engage new people beyond our traditional gatherings, or expand traditional gatherings. We'd like to share thoughts and ideas that may be transferable to others, or maybe "spark" a new idea.

Simply, in many places, although not all, traditional Bible class attendance is down. What new things can we do to engage people in new ways in the pure and powerful Word of God that fills, feeds, and leads?

I am grateful for you! Join your sisters and brothers in engaging the resources that are available to us in Scripture and even Luther's Small Catechism. Check out CPH.org. Questions, confusion, doubts, check with your pastor. He will have some good ideas too, I am sure!

"Lord, we thank you for your Word and we thank you for each other! Especially, we thank you for Jesus, the center and focus of the Word!"

Blessings,
Rev. Dr. Allan R. Buss
District President