



*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*  
Matthew 28:19-20

Dear Siblings in Christ,

At the Fall Governance Board Retreat, your church representatives engaged in an intentional conversation surrounding the topic of what it means to be a welcoming and inviting church. After our conversation, Matthew 28:19-20, *otherwise known as the Great Commission*, kept popping into my head. God is calling us to do what? And during a pandemic?! *Surely not I, Lord!* But this got me to thinking, what does the Great Commission mean and look like in a time of COVID-19?

As we consider the year ahead, I am reminded that the need for clear and direct communication are forevermore a cultural and ecclesiastical necessity. The terms "ZOOM" and "Online-Presence" have been burned into our lexicon. As such, the church has embraced technology to not only engage with our siblings in Christ, but also to evangelize beyond our walls. Friends - even with the challenges of COVID-19, the harvest is plentiful, perhaps more so than ever. And whether you realize it or not, God is calling us to be a part of the harvest.

Starting on October 4, 2020, the Governance Board and I are cordially inviting the members of Christ Lutheran Church to engage in an intentional conversation about what it means to be an *Invitational Church*. This will occur through group conversation, sermons, and videos posted on our Facebook Page - but most importantly, through your participation.

On September 12, 19, and 26 your *free copy of Invitational Christianity* - by Dave Daubert (*the same author of Lutheran Trump Cards!*), will be available for pick-up before or after the 10:30 worship service. Please only one copy per household. Information regarding special pick-ups will be forthcoming in our weekly e-news. Stay tuned.

Beginning October 4 and ending on November 8, each week's sermon will be dedicated to a specific chapter of *Invitational Christianity*. After each Sunday, a brief video will be posted to the church Facebook page. These videos will offer talking points to help you both engage and unpack the week's theme and their implication for our lives together with your family and other members of the CLC family. Again, more information to come.

(OVER)



Matthew's Gospel ends with Jesus charging the disciples with the *Great Commission* - to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and to teach and observe all that had been taught. These words end the Gospel in an intentional (*and literal*) way and offer us an invitation.

Jesus spent his whole ministry, in life and in death, equipping the disciples for road that lay ahead. By ending the Gospel with these words, the writer of Matthew is imploring *us- Jesus is imploring us* -to continue Christ's work and ministry in the world. In short, we are called to pick up where Jesus left off, knowing that the Holy Spirit is guiding us every step of the way. *But*, as we embark on this journey of discovery together, I would like to make one thing clear:

*There is little in scripture that point to simply growing the church's size as a goal in and of itself. (Invitational Christianity p.9)*

Basically - God's children are called to make disciples, *not* members. The next few months are meant to help us look inward, so that we might increase our understanding of what it means to be both invitational and welcoming as Christ invites and welcomes us. The story does not end there, but it is where it begins, and I for one, am excited to see how the Holy Spirit will move.

Friends, now more than ever, it is important that we have common places to gather. We can gather on Sunday via Zoom or at Church, but we can also gather around a common idea and goal. By reading and engaging with *Invitational Christianity*, my hope is that we, the members of Christ Lutheran Church, will be able to more fully identify what it means to be the church in a world of masks and social distancing while also granting us permission and the courage to reach beyond ourselves to share God's Good News.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wesley Smith III", written over a horizontal line.

Pastor Wesley Smith III