

Wow! (say it with me) Wow!

- The other day, I was visiting in the hospital when suddenly Brahms' lullaby was playing on the loudspeaker.
 - At Memorial Hospital, this means a baby was just born –
 - and the whole hospital gets to know **what God has just done in bringing a new life into being.** Wow!
- Did you know that God uses the local Starbucks
 - to share daily leftovers with homeless people
 - and regularly supply Our Daily Bread soup kitchen with coffee? Wow!
- At our Community meals, we generally provide over 100 meals for less than \$3/per/person. Wow!
- Our shopping cart of food for the York County Food Bank recently donated the most food in one donation – over 160 pounds. Wow!

Then there was the day when someone came with a bag of food for the cart saying – “You helped me when I needed it, now I want to give back”.

Another time, some of our community meal neighbors brought clothes for the clothing ministry.

Recently, some guests told me what a difference it makes to them to come into our fellowship. “I feel Jesus here.” One said. Wow!

One day when Jesus was in the synagogue in Capernaum, a man was there shouting and jumping around in agitation.

The Bible doesn't give details, but let's imagine he was yelling obscenities and behaving in a very disruptive way

– maybe even pushing and shoving people,
getting in their faces – getting in Jesus' face.

The Bible says the man had an “unclean spirit” and was shouting at Jesus – even betraying Jesus’ secret that he is the Holy one of God.

But the ushers didn’t haul the man out of the synagogue.

They didn’t call the police

or tell the man he shouldn’t be there.

The man was not himself

– he was under the control of the evil one

—he was afflicted in a way that no prison or hospital could heal.

But **Jesus spoke to the evil spirit** and commanded it to come out of the man – to stop controlling him.

The unclean spirit obeyed Jesus. Wow!

Jesus – God among us – has power and authority over our greatest enemy.

By defeating sin, death, and evil in his death and resurrection,

Jesus has authority over all things,

to bring life and healing and reconciliation to what is broken and unclean in our lives. Wow!

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As we renew our life as a congregation, it is important

- to **recognize Jesus** doing this life-giving, healing and reconciling work.
- **acting in ways that make us and others say Wow!**

Not only is it important so that we can worship and exalt the Lord,

but also so that we can join in with what God is doing.

You see, **God wants us to work with him to renew the world**

- in fact, since Jesus has a human body – the church
- God needs us to work with him.

And God is always ahead of us

- **calling us to join him where he already is.**

For instance, God does not show up here because we step through the door

- He is already here,
 - already working in our hearts to gather us here,
 - already revealing the needs of our neighbors and filling them.
- Wow!

What we are to do is pay attention and say yes when the Lord beckons to us – Hey! Come over here and help me with this.

As our church's tag line says: it is **God's work and our hands** and voices.

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Today's PAWN renewal theme is Wows! The Good stuff God is already up to

The questions we will talk about aim at helping us to pay attention to what God is doing all around us and to identify how we will answer God's call to participate in his work.

[ushers pass out questions]

So once again, take a few minutes individually to write responses to the questions and then get into groups of 3 or 4 and talk about the questions. Be sure to write down the responses and then pass in the question sheets.

Questions Wows! – The Good Stuff God is Already Up To

A. What work is this congregation currently doing that brings a smile to God's face?

B. Other than this congregation, what other charities do you regularly support personally and why do you give to them?

C. In addition to this congregation, what organizations do you think are doing good work to improve life for people in the local area

Wrap up:

Dear God, thank you for this time of sharing our faith and for the discoveries of your presence in our lives. Keep our eyes and hearts open to see you every day – in small and large things. Give us the will to share in your healing and reconciling work here in our community. As we answer your call, work through us so that others might see your life-changing power and say Wow! Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen