

Trinity Te Deum

The official newsletter for Trinity Lutheran Church

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Sunday School and Bible Study 9:15 AM – Divine Service 10:30 AM

September 25, 2016 Volume 18 Issue 5

October 2016 – November 2016

We're Not Alone: A Brief Summary of the 2016 Synod Convention

Posted on JULY 29, 2016

by Pastor Roberto Rojas Jr.

After being elected as the Pastoral Delegate for the Orlando-West Circuit of the Florida-Georgia District (FL/GA) in 2015, I attended the 2016 LCMS Synodical Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Being a Lutheran Pastor for less than two years, I needed to learn quite a lot about the Constitution, By-Laws, and voting procedures of our Synod. However, I quickly learned from faithful pastors that these things are meant to serve the Word of God, and to protect congregations from any spiritual harm or scandal from a deviant pastor, Circuit, District, or, even, Synod! What a comfort to realize that the purpose of these Conventions is to be faithful to God's Word for the sake of the members in our churches!

Before the Convention, the pastoral and lay-delegates received a good amount of paperwork. Those elected to attend were expected to read, study, and then vote according to their conscience. A number of the resolutions presented were decisive, and, if adopted or rejected, would change the face of our Synod. Therefore, you can imagine how nerve-racking it was as these proposed Resolutions were read aloud at the Convention. Even more, as a pastor in Florida, I am not surrounded by many people who believe, teach, and confess the Word of God in the same way! Being unin-

dated and surrounded by many unbiblical teachings, I began to think that my congregation and I were stranded and alone! Yet, something encouraging occurred: Through His Word, God led the majority of our Synod to make the same confession! The faithful preaching and teaching of God's Word over the past six years bore fruit! Here are a few of the most decisive Resolutions which were adopted, passing with a majority vote. Consider the following:

- 95% voted in favor to uphold the Biblical and historically Christian understanding, order, and liturgy of Christian worship, and to urge congregations to seek uniformity by following the Common Service and singing doctrinally pure hymns (Resolution 4-04A, Yes: 795; No: 146);
- 83% voted in favor to uphold the Biblical teaching and practice of Closed Communion, which the Lutheran Confessions affirm, and to reject the unbiblical practices of Open Communion (sometimes referred to as "Close" Communion), infant communion, and intinction (Resolution 5-15, Yes: 821; No: 167);
- 67% voted in favor to uphold the Biblical teaching of man and woman, and to reject the unbiblical, and confusing practice of women distributing the Lord's Supper (Resolution 5-14, Yes: 683; No: 167);
- 74% voted in favor of restoring the Biblical teaching of the Pastoral Office in our

Synod, and to eliminate the unbiblical, and recently man-made innovation of "Licensed Lay Deacons" (Resolution 13-02A, Yes: 809; No:277);

- 97% voted in favor to uphold the Biblical teaching of marriage as a life-long commitment between one man and one woman (Resolution 14-03A, Yes: 1004; No: 25);
- 91% voted in favor to protect Christian consciences by not subjecting women to be drafted to fight in war (Resolution 5-11A, Yes: 946; No:89).

What does this mean? This all means that we are not alone! Even though the church I serve, Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, might be one of the only churches believing, teaching, and confessing these things in our area, they are in fact not the minority! In fact, being faithful to God and His Word in these things is now what the majority of our Synod is doing! This goes for all pastors and congregations who are faithful to God's Word, no matter where they might be. When a congregation follows the historic liturgy, and the Divine Service from the hymnal, know that 95% of the Synod upholds the same practice! When a congregation practices Closed Communion (rejecting Open Communion, infant communion, and intinction), that church not only agrees with Holy Scripture, but is also supported by 83% of pastors and laymen in this Synod! When a congregation upholds the biblical teaching concerning man and woman (rejecting the practice of women distributing the Lord's Supper), their practice is favored by a great ma-

majority of the Synod (67%)! When a congregation upholds the pastoral office, and rejects anything that undermines or despises it, 74% of the Synod has their back! When congregations uphold the Biblical teaching of marriage (97%), and when they protect their women from being subjected to a military draft (91%), even though these ideas are unpopular in the sight of the world, know that the overwhelming majority of the Synod believes, teaches, and confesses the same truth! We are not alone!

The small minority of pastors and congregations who fail to teach or practice these things have disagreed with Holy Scripture. They have voluntarily departed from the unity of the Church's confession which God has so graciously given! They, instead, have separated themselves from what the majority of our Synod believes. Rather than believing what the Bible says, a small few have decided to believe the newest scholarship, fads, and ideas. Beware of those who teach falsely (See Matthew 7:15). Mark and avoid them (See Romans 16:17-18).

This reveals the sad reality that we do not, in fact, have true unity, or complete altar and pulpit fellowship with every pastor and congregation in our Synod. We should not assume that we do.

The numbers reveal our division. Yet, rather than give up, we must continue believing, teaching, and confessing the truth! God alone grants true unity in His Church! Since He does this through His Word, we must, therefore, continue to preach, instruct our children, and correct and discipline false teachers who wish to separate and destroy what God has joined together! For now, we rejoice that there are many more who confess God's Word faithfully, rather than not. For now, we rejoice because we are not alone in

this fight. This fight for True Doctrine is what it means to fight the good fight (See 1 Timothy 6:12). Even more than having numbers on our side, God is on our side. We are not alone, and we never will be. It is better to trust in God than to take refuge in man (Psalm 118:8). If God is for us, who can be against us? (Romans 8:31) Even if Circuit, District, and Synod are to depart from God's Word, we will not. Since God will never leave us nor forsake us, we can gladly preach and teach God's Word even if we are the only ones in the world doing so; but, thanks be to God, right now, we're not. There are many more who walk with us; we are not alone.

Look What They've Done to Our Brain

Posted on August 15, 2016
by Rev. Paul R. Harris

"Look What They've Done to My Song Ma" is a 1971 hit by Melanie Safka. Listen to it. It's painful. She complains not only look what they have done to her song but what they've done to her brain. Let us look at what the feminists have – be they radical or conservative, egalitarian or even the complementarian – done to our brains.

As one whose congregation in 2001, 2004, and 2007 submitted resolutions asking the Synod to declare herself opposed to women in combat so as to give women a basis for conscientiously objecting to registering for a military draft; as one whose own congregation passed such a resolution in 2008; as one who has served in the military completing Airborne and Ranger training 40 years ago (okay so my perspective is dated); as one who served as an Army Reserve Chaplain from 1983-1995, I have been asked to give my perspective

on Resolution 5-11A "To Protect Christian Consciences and Address Conscriptation of Women" adopted in the last Synodical convention.

My paragraph above is my first insight. Why must we make our resolutions so torturous? Dr. David Scaer's test was whether an Iowa West hog farmer could follow it. I could barely follow it and I have read a great deal on this matter.

I wished the resolution had cited our Augsburg Confession, Article XX, Good Works, paragraph 2 which says "They [Lutheran teachers] have taught what well what is pleasing to God in every station and vocation in life." At no time did our Lutheran teachers teach that women have a vocation to defend men. Men are called on to defend women and children. One wonders if the Christian freedom referred to in lines 30-31 of the resolution includes her talking up the vocation of defending men.

Read the book *Ashley's War* which is a Te Deum for woman in combat. It's how the U.S. Army in 2010 covertly got women into combat and why they did so. It was to ameliorate our enemies disgust at having their females interacting with our male soldiers. Spoiler alert – Ashley is blown to bits from the waist down, and dying right next to a Special Forces soldier is proof that women have arrived.

In principle I am not opposed to women serving in the military. I went through Airborne School with Army female nurses. I could see why it would be advantageous to have women who were qualified to jump. Of course, in the 40 years since, the wages of nurses have skyrocketed and men go where the money is, so there is no shortage of male nurses.

The problem with having women in the military in general is that the military makes no promise to keep them out of combat. The

modern battlefield in some cases makes this hard to do. In other cases, there are women and men in the military looking for ways to put women in combat. Before the nightmare of women in combat became a reality, the Military Police was already known as “the chick infantry.” In none of these scenarios do the women involved have to meet the same standards of fitness or training as combat soldiers which makes them a liability to themselves and others.

My final perspective is: it’s about time the sleeping giant of the LCMS awoke to what feminists have been doing to our brains. They have made us defensive about opening doors, guilty for not having women acolytes, and troglodytes for not having women voting. And all of this was leading us down the garden path of seeing women suffer, be humiliated and die like men in combat. It’s about time we woke up and started singing our song rather than theirs.

Thanks should be given to Robert H. Miller, CAPT, USN (ret.). After reading my book *Why is Feminism so Hard to Resist?*, he brought to my attention the issue of women in combat. He worked tirelessly, interdemonationally, and thanklessly to see this come to fruition. He tried approaching LCMS leadership and professors. He was greeted for the most part with limp handshakes and even limper enthusiasm. Credit is to be given him and the Young Turks who would not give up on this issue and finally started the LCMS singing a new tune that’s very old indeed.

Bad Assumptions Confuse Geological Ages and Processes

Posted on July 8, 2016

The best models in a scientific field can be overturned at any time when someone takes a critical look at the underlying assumptions.

Geologists have trouble understanding events that happen right before their eyes. *Live Science* shows them struggling to understand the effects of water on lava. *Science Daily* says that scientists don’t understand why lightning bolts tend to be more powerful over salt water. How much harder is it to explain processes taking thousands or millions of years? Geologists can build models, but their assumptions can make the best models subject to ruin.

California dreaming: A river in southern California was thought to show slow, periodic buildup of terraces along its banks over many years. A paper in the *GSA Bulletin* tells the tale:

In the North Fork of the San Gabriel River, an arid bedrock landscape in the San Gabriel Mountains, California, a series of prominent fill terraces was previously related to climate-change-induced pulses of hillslope sediment supply that temporarily and repeatedly overwhelmed river transport capacity during the Quaternary.

That was then. Geologists took a closer look and changed that tale completely.

Based on field observations, digital topographic analysis, and dating of Quaternary deposits, we suggest instead that valley aggradation was spatially confined to the North Fork San Gabriel Canyon and was a consequence of the sudden supply of unconsolidated material to upstream reaches by one of the largest known landslides in the San Gabriel Mountains.

It could have happened in one day or one hour. Does this have implications for the interpretation of other locales? You bet. “Our study highlights the potential for valley aggradation by debris flows

in arid bedrock landscapes downstream of landslides that occupy headwater areas.”

Positive feedback: When you picture a mountain arising slowly, you might overlook an important fact. The strain on the rock makes it weaker. Other geologists writing in the *GSA Bulletin* started to take that into consideration, and found that the strain dramatically speeds up erosion. It speeds up detachment of blocks of material, making them easier for rivers to carry away. More strain produces more strain, and more erosion.

The subsequent rapid erosion of exposed shear zones reforms the topographic stress field in a way that encourages continued accommodation of strain, a positive feedback response that becomes more prominent with greater shear damage.

A cautionary tale: Seashells are a “mainstay for reconstructing ocean-climate change and carbon cycle dynamics,” three geologists explain in the *GSA Bulletin*. Noticing the assumption that the white, opaque shells are best for dating, they wondered if the effects of diagenesis (rock formation) had been taken into consideration. They hadn’t. The geologists decided to compare dates of opaque shells with translucent shells:

Results support a diagenetic mechanism as opaque shells yield ¹⁴C ages invariably older and trace element ratios consistently higher than those of translucent shells.

The radiocarbon dates of shells taken from the same horizon, in fact, differed by as much as 22,000 years. What will this do to climate change models?

These results demonstrate that the use of translucent foraminifera enhances reproducibility and accuracy of ¹⁴C ages by minimizing the deleterious effects of diagenesis. This study serves as a cautionary tale since white, opaque

foraminifera are common in pelagic sediments, and ^{14}C ages derived from their ostensibly well-preserved shells can lead to discrepancies in the timing of Quaternary climate events and ocean circulation reconstructions.

These geologists now think that the translucent shells give better dates, but why? Do the new assumptions give a better fit to preferred models? It seems so. They say that the translucent-shell dates are “congruent with the established age ranges for these climate events,” such as the accepted “Last Glacial Maximum” (LGM).

Not that it matters, but the acronym LGM appeared in another case of scientific reversal back in 1967, this time in astronomy. Antony Hewish and Jocelyn Bell discovered regular pulses coming from a star in space, later identified as a new class of star called a pulsar. They thought they had discovered “Little Green Men” and called the star LGM-1.

Geologists are too smart to be fooled by that kind of thing. Now they know all about diagenesis, orogeny and radiocarbon for good. It won't happen again.

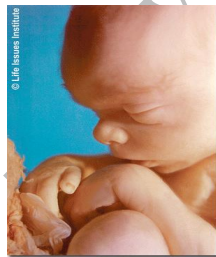
Scientists need to be constantly reminded of the vulnerability of their models to bad assumptions. It's not as bad for repeatable observations like Faraday made in the physics lab as it is for unrepeatable, unobservable events from prehistory, where the best you can do is compare present processes with similar-looking effects in the field. In over 15 years of reporting, we have seen many, many assumptions overturned, sometimes to very significant models. We remember one case where a rock that had been dated to the oldest end of the geologic column was reassigned to the youngest!

Even if these three cases are not that damaging – even if they allow geologists to maintain their evolutionary timeline with a few

well-placed tweaks – they illustrate the problem that there are usually more unknowns than scientists like to acknowledge. “Now we know” are the famous last words of many a failed paradigm. You can rearrange the deck chairs for a better fit, but that doesn't mean the deck of underlying assumptions is robust. Nor does it mean that the ship of your underlying worldview assumptions can withstand the blows of the next iceberg. Just remember that collapsing decks and sinking ships tend to carry a lot of other baggage down with them. (<http://crev.info/2016/07/bad-assumptions-geology/>)

Just look: Cardinal Egan compares abortion crimes to those of Hitler, Stalin...

By Edward Cardinal Egan, Archbishop of New York



The picture on this page is an untouched photograph of a being that has been within its mother for 20 weeks. Please do me the favor of looking at it carefully.

Have you any doubt that it is a human being?

If you do not have any such doubt, have you any doubt that it is an innocent human being?

If you have no doubt about this either, have you any doubt that the authorities in a civilized society are duty-bound to protect this innocent human being if anyone were to wish to kill it?

If your answer to this last query is negative, that is, if you have no doubt that the authorities in a civilized society would be duty-bound to protect this innocent hu-

man being if someone were to wish to kill it, I would suggest—even insist—that there is not a lot more to be said about the issue of abortion in our society. It is wrong, and it cannot—must not—be tolerated.

But you might protest that all of this is too easy. Why, you might inquire, have I not delved into the opinion of philosophers and theologians about the matter? And even worse: Why have I not raised the usual questions about what a “human being” is, what a “person” is, what it means to be “living,” and such? People who write books and articles about abortion always concern themselves with these kinds of things. Even the justices of the Supreme Court who gave us “Roe v. Wade” address them. Why do I neglect philosophers and theologians? Why do I not get into defining “human being,” defining “person,” defining “living,” and the rest? Because, I respond, I am sound of mind and endowed with a fine set of eyes, into which I do not believe it is well to cast sand. I looked at the photograph, and I have no doubt about what I saw and what are the duties of a civilized society if what I saw is in danger of being killed by someone who wishes to kill it or, if you prefer, someone who “chooses” to kill it. In brief: I looked, and I know what I saw.

But what about the being that has been in its mother for only 15 weeks or only 10? Have you photographs of that too? Yes, I do. However, I hardly think it necessary to show them. For if we agree that the being in the photograph printed on this page is an innocent human being, you have no choice but to admit that it may not be legitimately killed even before 20 weeks unless you can indicate with scientific proof the point in the development of the being before which it was other than an innocent human being and, therefore,

available to be legitimately killed. Nor have Aristotle, Aquinas or even the most brilliant embryologists of our era or any other era been able to do so. If there is a time when something less than a human being in a mother morphs into a human being, it is not a time that anyone has ever been able to identify, though many have made guesses. However, guesses are of no help. A man with a shotgun who decides to shoot a being that he believes may be a human being is properly hauled before a judge. And hopefully, the judge in question knows what a "human being" is and what the implications of someone's wishing to kill it are. The word "incarceration" comes to mind.

However, we must not stop here. The matter becomes even clearer and simpler if you obtain from the National Geographic Society two extraordinary DVDs. One is entitled "In the Womb" and illustrates in color and in motion the development of one innocent human being within its mother. The other is entitled "In the Womb—Multiples" and in color and motion shows the development of two innocent human beings—twin boys—within their mother. If you have ever allowed yourself to wonder, for example, what "living" means, these two DVDs will be a great help. The one innocent human being squirms about, waves its arms, sucks its thumb, smiles broadly and even yawns; and the two innocent human beings do all of that and more: They fight each other. One gives his brother a kick, and the other responds with a sock to the jaw. If you can convince yourself that these beings are something other than living and innocent human beings, something, for example, such as "mere clusters of tissues," you have a problem far more basic than merely not appreciating the wrongness of abortion. And that problem is—

forgive me—self-deceit in a most extreme form.

Adolf Hitler convinced himself and his subjects that Jews and homosexuals were other than human beings. Joseph Stalin did the same as regards Cossacks and Russian aristocrats. And this despite the fact that Hitler and his subjects had seen both Jews and homosexuals with their own eyes, and Stalin and his subjects had seen both Cossacks and Russian aristocrats with theirs. Happily, there are few today who would hesitate to condemn in the roundest terms the self-deceit of Hitler, Stalin or even their subjects to the extent that the subjects could have done something to end the madness and protect living, innocent human beings.

It is high time to stop pretending that we do not know what this nation of ours is allowing—and approving—with the killing each year of more than 1,600,000 innocent human beings within their mothers. We know full well that to kill what is clearly seen to be an innocent human being or what cannot be proved to be other than an innocent human being is as wrong as wrong gets. Nor can we honorably cover our shame (1) by appealing to the thoughts of Aristotle or Aquinas on the subject, inasmuch as we are all well aware that their understanding of matters embryological was hopelessly mistaken, (2) by suggesting that "killing" and "choosing to kill" are somehow distinct ethically, morally or criminally, (3) by feigning ignorance of the meaning of "human being," "person," "living," and such, (4) by maintaining that among the acts covered by the right to privacy is the act of killing an innocent human being, and (5) by claiming that the being within the mother is "part" of the mother, so as to sustain the oft-repeated slogan that a mother may kill or authorize the killing of the being within her "because she is free to

do as she wishes with her own body."

One day, please God, when the stranglehold on public opinion in the United States has been released by the extremists for whom abortion is the center of their political and moral life, our nation will, in my judgment, look back on what we have been doing to innocent human beings within their mothers as a crime no less heinous than what was approved by the Supreme Court in the "Dred Scott Case" in the 19th century, and no less heinous than what was perpetrated by Hitler and Stalin in the 20th. There is nothing at all complicated about the utter wrongness of abortion, and making it all seem complicated mitigates that wrongness not at all. On the contrary, it intensifies it.

Do me a favor. Look at the photograph again. Look and decide with honesty and decency what the Lord expects of you and me as the horror of "legalized" abortion continues to erode the honor of our nation. Look, and do not absolve yourself if you refuse to act.

Edward Cardinal Egan

Archbishop of New York

LifeSiteNews.com reported on October 27, 2008:

Protect Mothers and Children from Abortion with 40 Days For Life

In 2007, members of the Coalition for Life in College Station came up with a new way to reach out to abortion-minded mothers. They designed a 40-day campaign of constant peaceful presence and prayer in front of their local abortion facility, praying for the children, the mothers, the abortion workers, and for an end to legal abortion in America. Since then, the organization has seen 11,796

lives rescued from abortion (that we know of) in 636 cities in 36 countries. In addition, 133 abortion workers quit their jobs and left the abortion industry, and 73 abortion facilities closed.

I have participated in five 40 Days for Life campaigns, three in California and two here in the Austin area. This year, I would like to invite members of Trinity to join me on the sidewalk for the Fall 2016 Campaign. First, however, I want to take some time to explain what it means to volunteer, and what this campaign is not.

This campaign is not a prayer service. 40 Days for Life was founded and is still run by a mix of Catholics and Protestants, and so prayer is individual and generally silent. Occasionally, a group from a particular congregation may come out to the sidewalk to hold a prayer service, but other volunteers can easily stand apart from the group and pray individually. It is not confrontational. We do call public attention to the problem of abortion in our country, and specifically to the existence of abortion facilities in our communities, but we are primarily there to pray peacefully.

40 Days for Life is a legal expression of our First Amendment rights. We stand on the public right-of-way (the sidewalk) in front of the facility, and we don't need any special permission or permit to be there. At the facility, the boundary of the public property where we can stand is marked by a yellow rope. This means you can stand in the grass with-

out trespassing on the facility's property, thereby leaving the sidewalk unobstructed.

Volunteers sign up for 1-hour slots, often committing to one hour one day a week. For instance, I will be participating at 7:00am on Saturdays. The campaign runs every day of the week from 7:00am to 7:00pm, starting September 28th and ending November 6th. Please feel free to bring your Bible or any helpful devotional materials. Volunteers are encouraged to spend their hour in silent prayer, understanding that abortions may be happening during their hour, especially in the mornings.

To sign up for a weekly slot (and for the address and parking instructions), please visit CentralTexasCoalition.com and click the link for 40 Days for Life under "Get Involved". If you can't commit to a weekly hour but still want to volunteer, you can come on your own when you are able. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at mrskatiemartin711@gmail.com or (512) 705-4523. See you on the sidewalk! ~Katie Martin

"Religion must either modernize or face obsolescence" is the title of an article written by a feminist and published in an Australian newspaper. You need to read such arguments from the world, so that you can spot them when they appear in the church (and they inevitably will). The response to her title is the church that marries herself to the spirit of the times soon finds herself a widower since in the words of Dylan "The times they are a changin'" (RPH).

Religion must either modernise or face obsolescence

Dina Brawer

Published: August 13, 2016 - 12:05AM

In the United States the Democratic Party recently nominated Hillary Clinton as its presidential candidate. If the results of the latest polls hold true at election time, America will swear in its first female president in January. The previous week, across the pond, British Prime Minister Theresa May was negotiating the terms of Britain's exit from Europe with Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Women living in Western society have been raised to believe they can be competent and successful in any professional role through education, ambition and hard work. And young girls today can point at several living role models operating at the highest levels of leadership. So is the long and hard battle for women's equality finally over?

Well, not entirely. In the religious sphere women's leadership remains a contentious issue. Last week Pope Francis announced a new commission to consider whether women should be made deacons in the Catholic Church. The Anglican Church consecrated Libby Lane as its first female bishop in January 2015, but this was only after a failed attempt in 2012.

While the Jewish Reform movement has been ordaining female rabbis since the early 1970s, and the Conservative movement since the early 1980s, in Orthodox Judaism the notion of female rabbis is still hotly contested. In November 2015, the Orthodox Rabbinical Council of America – in its third attempt to stem the growing tide of support for Orthodox women's rabbinical ordination – published a stern proclamation declaring the illegitimacy of female rab-

bis. Not without irony, as Hillary Clinton wrapped up the democratic presidential nomination a group of leading American Orthodox rabbis opposed to women's ordination launched a series of "hearings" on this disputed subject.

Why is there such disparity between the secular realm and the sacred? Orthodox Judaism, like most religions, seeks stability in what it considers enduring traditional values. This finds expression in resisting the pressure to conform to a changing society. Those who oppose women's ordination do so on the basis that it is not "traditional". But the obsession with maintaining tradition in this way is not without a cost. And the cost of such single-mindedness can paradoxically be the undermining of tradition itself by depriving the traditional community of the oxygen it needs to remain vibrant.

In *The Guns of August*, a military history of the First World War, Barbara Tuchman highlights the danger of prioritising tradition in what has become known as the "tragedy of the red trousers". In the lead up to WWI, as warfare shifted from fighting at close quarters to heavier artillery fired from greater distance, it became advantageous to conceal soldiers for as long as possible. The British and German armies reacted to this change by exchanging their bright coloured uniforms for drab greys and browns. The French soldiers, however, still wore the same red caps and trousers, marking them out as easy targets. The suggestion of the French war minister Adolphe Messimy that his armies do likewise was met with ridicule and resistance. The red trousers represented army pride and prestige and military traditionalists were not prepared to give it up. At a parliamentary hearing, a former war minister, Eugene Etienne, spoke for France. "Eliminate the

red trousers?" he cried. "Never! Le pantalon rouge, c'est la France!"

"That blind and imbecile attachment to the most visible of all colours," wrote Messimy afterwards, "was to have cruel consequences."

Faith leaders grappling with women's inclusion in religious leadership roles are in danger of the same pitfall. By focusing exclusively on "what is traditional" for their religion rather than asking the crucial question: "What change is necessary for religion to thrive?" they risk alienating 50 per cent of their flock. They also deprive the entire community of the talent, skills and enthusiasm that women would otherwise contribute. Insisting that men continue to wear the trousers when it comes to religion might be traditional, but, as the pantalon rouge debacle illustrates, it may not be worth the price.

Dina Brawer is founder of JOFA, the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance, in the UK and an Orthodox rabbinical student at Yeshivat Maharat in New York.

This story was found at: <http://www.smh.com.au/comment/religion-must-either-modernise-or-face-obsolescence-20160811-gqq8hp.html> Sydney Morning Herald

The Ordination of Daniel Burfiend

New Hope Lutheran Church –
Ossian, Indiana
June 19, 2016 A+D
1 Cor. 1:18-31

In the Name of the Father and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

The Jews demand signs and the Greeks seek wisdom, but the Missouri Synod just wants something that works.

Pastor Burfiend here is a talented man, well-educated and

good looking. St. Paul may not have been eloquent, but Pastor Burfiend is. Jesus may have lacked the comeliness that men should be attracted to Him, but Pastor Burfiend doesn't. There has never been a family, wife and children, more suited for the Ministry, more full of promise, more able to make the district execs swoon.

And yet, despite all those advantages, I will tell you an unpopular reality: this church is not going to grow. It isn't. You're not in the right place. You don't have the demographics.

You might be thinking that there could be a miracle. That is true and we should pray for miracles. We should be bold in our prayers. There is nothing wrong in asking that God bless this church with a hundred new members.

You farmers should also pray for miracles. You should pray for a healthy and profitable crop, for deliverance from market fluctuations and regulations and nature itself. But while praying you should also work, and you should bring to bear the knowledge and skills that God has given you about how plants grow. Don't boast to me about your vision of a farm where nothing was planted and call that faith. And don't you dare tell me that you are smarter and better farmers than those who are laboring in the Sahara desert. Your yields are better, but how much of that is your wisdom and how much is the rich soil and abundant rain?

No man knows the future. I could be wrong about the future of New Hope, but there is currently no dramatic housing shortage here. The public school district is shrinking because we haven't been having babies like we used to and because farms are getting bigger while the number of farmers is getting smaller. Perhaps something we can't foresee will happen and Ossian will become a major metropolitan area and a center for Lu-

theran Orthodoxy and a revitalizing influence on America. But barring a miracle, there is no reason, nor is there any article of faith, that would cause us to expect the trajectory of this congregation's Sunday morning attendance to deviate in any statistically significant way.

You've got a new pastor. You love this place and so you should. But this church isn't going to grow while Ossian shrinks and the Church suffers in the midst a culture war it seems to have lost 25 years ago.

If that sounds like bad news to you, if it makes you sad or mad, that there is no promise that your church will grow even though you want it to, then you should repent. Because you have in mind not the things of God, but the things of men.

The Jews demand signs and the Greeks seek wisdom. Americans want success in the marketplace, prestige in the world, and a big building. But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles and a rebuke to Americans. We preach Christ crucified, and though it is folly to the world to those who are called—both Jews and Greeks, and even to Americans—Christ and His cross are the power of God and the wisdom of God.

So why do I tell you this unhappy reality that your church won't grow? Because God loves the truth, even though it is hard for us to face. And also because even if it weren't true—even if this was a booming suburb of affluent people where they couldn't build Tim Hortons fast enough and your church was destined to double in size in the next couple of years—that still wouldn't bring any comfort or be any kind of fulfillment of the mission of God.

Our goal is not to get a bigger piece of the market. It is not to be successful religious entrepreneurs. It is not even to change the world.

Our goal is the preach Christ crucified and let the Holy Spirit take care of it all.

The mission of God was completed on the cross of Jesus Christ. There He reconciled the world to Himself. He ended the accusations against us by taking our sins and guilt onto Himself. So there is no desperation, no back room plotting and strategizing in heaven. It is finished. God knows what He is doing. There no hand-wringing despair or fear either. For the Lord has purchased and won the world for Himself. He has opened heaven to all believers. There is nothing left to pay. We reap where we did not sow and we live in houses we did not build. And it is not our job to convince people to believe in Jesus.

The mission of God continues now when we preach to save those who believe—not to create believers, not to save the lost, but to save those who believe. That is what Paul says in today's text. We have often gotten this mixed up. We have often been misled and deceived so that we thought the fate of the elect rested upon our efforts, that we needed to save them, that we could make heaven bigger and get more people in by our efforts. At times, sadly, we have even been harangued with the demonic doctrine that it was our fault people were going to hell because we didn't do enough or try hard enough and apparently God couldn't do it without us.

In contrast to this St. Paul writes:
For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. (1 Cor. 1:21, ESV)

So when your pastor stands in this pulpit and preaches Christ crucified to you, to those who believe, you are saved. That is what happens and the angels rejoice. God is

pleased even though the world sees it as folly and trivial. God is no respecter of persons. He doesn't get a buzz off of a big crowd. He isn't awed by the dignity and beauty of a fancy service at the seminary. He is into the individuals. He cares about every hair on your head. He is pleased when you come to receive from Him what He desires to give: His forgiveness, His peace, His Word, His body and blood. He doesn't care that there are only 2 or 3 of you, or that you aren't rich and powerful, or even that there aren't as many as there used to be. The divine Bridegroom is not looking wistfully at the waitress and wondering what that would have been like. He is focused on His Bride, on you. He has promised to work here, to be your God, to be present for you here—no matter how foolish it seems to the world or to the district execs or to the seminary.

You don't have to get new members to please God. You don't have to grow and in fact you aren't going to, but you could learn to count differently. Because the Christians who die are not lost to the Church.

The people transferred from the Church Militant to glory keeps the numbers growing where it counts. The people transferred to glory aren't losses because they are still with us in the great cloud of witnesses and they gather with us around the risen body and blood of Jesus. That is what we mean by "the whole company of heaven." We mean your grandma and the funny guy who used to sit in the front pew and the old bachelor farmer who grunted more than he spoke are here with us. We mean Christ's people—from this place, from history, and from all over the world—join us along with angels and archangels around the risen body of Jesus. And they never miss. They aren't as stupid as we are so they never get the idea that

there is something better or more important to do. They're always here when the Sacrament is offered. Nor do they ever stop praying for you and this place. They are now in the nearer presence of God so they are more aware of you than they were when they were here in their fallen bodies, and they also recognize better the true significance of what happens in this place.

I am also telling you this—that your church isn't going to grow in the conventional sense—because the number one reason that pastors crash and burn is because of the stress and isolation that comes from unrealistic expectations. If you try to foist your unrealistic, and possibly even unbiblical, fantasies of this church magically becoming revitalized and exciting and growing by his efforts and willpower and personality, you will harm Pastor Burfiend. You might even harm him deeply. He might never recover on this side of glory. And I don't want you to do that to him or to any of us or to each other.

You have a very talented man here. It is remarkable that he has chosen to devote his life to the Church. He could have easily gone to law school or medical school or become a politician. Now just about every pastor in the Missouri Synod thinks that about himself and we all like to pretend that we've gone to "grad school," but we haven't. We've gone to seminary. That is not the same thing. Few of us really have the chops to make it anywhere else. But in this

case, it is true. Pastor Burfiend could have done those things, but he has chosen to forgo them in order to spend his days and nights, the entire rest of his life, serving God's people exclusively with his study, his prayers, and his time. That is no small thing and you ought to stand in awe of it, in gratitude to God that He raises up such men and sends them to Ossian.

You ought to also know that it is kind of stupid, folly in the eyes of the world, and even with an extra year of remedial training at the seminary, Pastor Burfiend here is an amateur. Most things in life, most professions, have to be lived. That is certainly true of the ministry. So he has a lot to learn and he will need a lot of support and encouragement. If I could trade places with him, I most certainly would not. I am no Messiah. I don't envy him. He has some very hard months and years ahead of him. Even if you behave yourselves, he has his own unrealistic expectations plus what the seminary has filled his head with, and there is little hope that the district or synod won't make those things worse. So I am asking you to comfort him, pray for him, and remind him of his vow to preach Christ crucified and risen for sinners and that he leave the prosperity of the Church in the hands of God—that is, that he be a Christian.

So the world will little note what happens here today, but that doesn't matter. You note it because this is a significant day. It is a significant day in the history of this congregation and also in the king-

dom of God. You want a miracle? Here is a miracle: God has sent you a pastor. He has sent His Word. He has promised to be here in the preaching and in the Sacraments—whether that means earthly success and measurable growth or not. Bethlehem and Nazareth were also small farming towns. God does great things in little places through His Word without the world's notice, or at least without the world's noticing at the time. Who knows? Maybe 2000 years from now congregations in Africa will name themselves Ossian Lutheran Church in your memory.

God is with you. He has not left you without a shepherd.

"For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are,²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.³⁰ And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,³¹ so that, as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord' " (1 Cor 1:26-31, ESV).
In the Name of +Jesus. Amen.

Rev. David Peterson
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Trinity Te Deum is published bi-monthly.
Deadline for all articles is the 15th of the odd months.
All articles must be approved by Rev. Paul R. Harris.
Articles with no author are written by him.

October 2016

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THURS | FRI | SAT |
|---------------|-----------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------|-----------|-----------------|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| | | | | | | |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| | | | 6:15 PM Choir 7:15 PM Romans | | | |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| | | ← | 6:15 PM Choir <u>NO</u> Romans | PASTOR | ON | VACATION |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| PASTOR | ON | VACATION | 6:15 PM Choir 7:15 PM Romans | | | |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| | | Budget Meeting 6:30 PM | 6:15 PM Choir 7:15 PM Romans | | | |
| 30 | 31 | | | | | |
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November 2016

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THURS | FRI | SAT |
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| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | | Voters Meeting 6:30 PM | 6:15 PM Choir 7:15 PM Romans | | | |
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| All Saints' Day Dinner 5 PM | | Elders Meeting 6:30 PM | 6:15 PM Choir 7:15 PM Romans | | | |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| | | | 6:15 PM Choir 7:15 PM Romans | | | |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| | | | 6:15 PM Choir Thanksgiving Eve 7:30 PM | | | |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | | | |
| | | | 6:15 PM Choir Advent Vespers 7:30 PM | | | |

Oct. - Nov. 2016