

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
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Pastor Harris to Lead Prayer Service at Planned Parenthood Clinic March 26

I went to the 40 Days of Life in the fall. I wanted to get a feel for what was going on. I met other Christians. I experienced the honks, waves, and hollers of support, and a few, very few, jeers. The thing that impressed me the most is that the sidewalk counselor there told me that when the clinic was opened they had no wall around it. Now because of the presence of people praying there for 40 days at a time, they put up a rock wall seven feet tall. This shows they can't stand the scrutiny of the light of day.

The other Christians there were Catholics and seemed genuinely surprised we, my wife and I, were Lutheran. I didn't wear my collar because I wanted to know how it felt from a layman's perspective. I think it's high time our community knows that confessional Lutherans are publicly, proudly, boldly Pro-Life.

It is true; your Lord's Prayer prayed from the privacy of your own home is no less effective than a public prayer in front of an abortion clinic. It is true; having a prayer service is a public demonstration by Trinity Lutheran Church that we are for the pre-born. It is true; such a position is contrary to the flavor of the city our church is located in. We are righteous Lot in the midst of Sodom. He spoke out and was hated for it.

I told the Elders of my plans in November 2016. To a man, they were supportive. I told the Voters Assembly of my plans in January 2017. I told them that while they could not prevent me as a pastor from leading a prayer service, they could prevent me from using Trinity Lutheran Church's name. I gave them the opportunity to discuss the matter. No

one brought it up. I don't view that as consent, or even ascent, but it's not descent. So, the bulletin will be labeled Trinity Lutheran Church.

Here are the details. **It will take place Sunday, May 26, at 2 PM at the Planned Parenthood Clinic on East Ben White.** It is okay to park in the Wendy's parking lot. I will have a sign-up sheet. I will have two of our ladies provide sandwiches and chips after service for all who will be going. I chose Sunday because the head of 40 Days says that's the least likely day to run into another church having a prayer service. There would be nothing wrong with having two prayer services going on, but it is likely the other church would not understand why we can't combine the two. However, this will be a public prayer service. As anyone is welcomed in our Sunday service, so anyone would be welcomed there.

I told the Elders these sorts of public acts can be flashpoints. In Louisiana for 9 years we put up a mock cemetery for the unborn populated by about 1,000 crosses representing the number of babies aborted each month in Louisiana. We had a prayer service inside and a candlelight service outside. Sometimes the press would show up. Sometimes notes positive and negative were left. What I am telling you is that I don't know exactly what will happen. As long as I get another person other than myself there, I will lead a prayer service. If no one but myself shows, I will pray silently. The main thing I want to accomplish is to make a public statement that confessional Lutherans are Pro-Life. This should be headed by our District President or our Circuit Counselor. I have served in 3 districts. In none of them have the elected leaders lead the way on this issue.

You may invite others to this prayer service. The area we have to work with is shallow but long. We will be spread out, but thanks be to God His ear is as close to our lips as His Body and Blood are.

Der Kinder Glaube

Der Kinder Glaube was one of Luther's favorite titles for the Apostles' Creed (LW 13, 296). The title translates "The Children's Creed" and when it comes to the faith we are all to have it such as the children do, says Jesus (Luke 18: 15-17). So this Advent/ Lenten sermon series, devoted to the Apostles' Creed, will be titled *Der Kinder Glaube* and subtitled "Be a Kid Again." The nine sermon dates and themes are listed below. They are broken down into three groups of three. All services start at 7:30 and with the exception of Ash Wednesday you can be on your way to your car at 8:15.

Der Kinder Glaube Be a Kid Again

The First Article – Kids Get Little Books

November 30th - The Little Book of Instruction

December 7th - The Little Book of Confession

December 15th - The Little Book of Prayer

The Second Article – Most Kids Are Fascinated by Fish

March 1st - IXTHUS

March 8th - Fish Spaghetti

March 15th - More Incredible than Mr. Limpet

The Third Article - What Kid Doesn't Like A Ghost Story?

March 22nd - The Holy Ghost as *Vivificator*

March 29th - The Holy Ghost as *Sanctificator*

April 5th - The Holy Ghost as *Renovator*

Want millennials back in the pews? Stop trying to make church 'cool.'

Rachel Held Evans is a blogger and the author of *“Searching for Sunday: Loving, Leaving, and Finding the Church.”*

Bass reverberates through the auditorium floor as a heavily bearded worship leader pauses to invite the congregation, bathed in the light of two giant screens, to tweet using #JesusLives. The scent of freshly brewed coffee wafts in from the lobby, where you can order macchiato and purchase mugs boasting a sleek church logo. The chairs are comfortable, and the music sounds like something from the top of the charts. At the end of the service, someone will win an iPad.

This, in the view of many churches, is what millennials like me want. And no wonder pastors think so. Church attendance has plummeted among young adults. In the United States, 59 percent of people ages 18 to 29 with a Christian background have, at some point, dropped out. According to the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, among those of us who came of age around the year 2000, a solid quarter claim no religious affiliation at all, making my generation significantly more disconnected from faith than members of Generation X were at a comparable point in their lives and twice as detached as baby boomers were as young adults.

In response, many churches have sought to lure millennials back by focusing on style points: cooler bands, hipper worship, edgier programming, impressive technology. Yet while these aren't inherently bad ideas and might in some cases be effective, they are not the key to drawing millennials back to God in a lasting and meaningful way. Young people don't simply want a better show. And trying to be cool might be making things worse.

You're just as likely to hear the words "market share" and "branding" in church staff meetings these days as you are in any corporate office.

Megachurches such as Saddleback in Lake Forest, Calif., and Lakewood in Houston have entire marketing departments devoted to enticing new members. Kent Shaffer of ChurchRelevance.com routinely ranks the best logos and Web sites and offers strategic counsel to organizations like Saddleback and LifeChurch.tv.

Increasingly, churches offer sermon series on iTunes and concert-style worship services with names like "Vine" or "Gather." The young-adult group at Ed Young's Dallas-based Fellowship Church is called Prime, and one of the singles groups at his father's congregation in Houston is called Vertical. Churches have made news in recent years for giving away tablet computers, TVs and even cars at Easter. Still, attendance among young people remains flat.

Recent research from Barna Group and the Cornerstone Knowledge Network found that 67 percent of millennials prefer a "classic" church over a "trendy" one, and 77 percent would choose a "sanctuary" over an "auditorium." While we have yet to warm to the word "traditional" (only 40 percent favor it over "modern"), millennials exhibit an increasing aversion to exclusive, closed-minded religious communities masquerading as the hip new places in town. For a generation bombarded with advertising and sales pitches, and for whom the charge of "inauthentic" is as cutting an insult as any, church rebranding efforts can actually backfire, especially when young people sense that there is more emphasis on marketing Jesus than actually following Him. Millennials "are not disillusioned with tradition; they are frustrated with slick or shallow expressions of religion," argues David Kinnaman, who interviewed hundreds of them for Barna Group and compiled his research in *“You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church . . . and Rethinking Faith.”*

My friend and blogger Amy Peterson put it this way: "I want a service that is not sensational, flashy, or particularly 'relevant.' I can be entertained anywhere. At church, I do not want to be entertained. I do not want to be the target of anyone's marketing. I want to be asked to partici-

pate in the life of an ancient-future community."

Millennial blogger Ben Irwin wrote: "When a church tells me how I should feel ('Clap if you're excited about Jesus!'), it smacks of inauthenticity. Sometimes I don't feel like clapping. Sometimes I need to worship in the midst of my brokenness and confusion — not in spite of it and certainly not in denial of it."

When I left church at age 29, full of doubt and disillusionment, I wasn't looking for a better-produced Christianity. I was looking for a truer Christianity, a more authentic Christianity: I didn't like how gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people were being treated by my evangelical faith community. I had questions about science and faith, biblical interpretation and theology. I felt lonely in my doubts. And, contrary to popular belief, the fog machines and light shows at those slick evangelical conferences didn't make things better for me. They made the whole endeavor feel shallow, forced and fake.

While no two faith stories are exactly the same, I'm not the only millennial whose faith couldn't be saved by lacquering on a hipper veneer. According to Barna Group, among young people who don't go to church, 87 percent say they see Christians as judgmental, and 85 percent see them as hypocritical. A similar study found that "only 8% say they don't attend because church is 'out of date,' undercutting the notion that all churches need to do for Millennials is to make worship 'cooler.'"

In other words, a church can have a sleek logo and Web site, but if it's judgmental and exclusive, if it fails to show the love of Jesus to all, millennials will sniff it out. Our reasons for leaving have less to do with style and image and more to do with substantive questions about life, faith and community. We're not as shallow as you might think.

If young people are looking for congregations that authentically practice the teachings of Jesus in an open and inclusive way, then the good news is the church already knows how to do that.

The trick isn't to make church cool; it's to keep worship weird.

You can get a cup of coffee with your friends anywhere, but church is the only place you can get ashes smudged on your forehead as a reminder of your mortality. You can be dazzled by a light show at a concert on any given weekend, but church is the only place that fills a sanctuary with candlelight and hymns on Christmas Eve. You can snag all sorts of free swag for brand loyalty online, but church is the only place where you are named a beloved child of God with a cold plunge into the water. You can share food with the hungry at any homeless shelter, but only the church teaches that a shared meal brings us into the very presence of God.

What finally brought me back, after years of running away, wasn't lattes or skinny jeans; it was the sacraments. Baptism, confession, Communion, preaching the Word, anointing the sick — you know, those strange rituals and traditions Christians have been practicing for the past 2,000 years. The sacraments are what make the church relevant, no matter the culture or era. They don't need to be repackaged or rebranded; they just need to be practiced, offered and explained in the context of a loving, authentic and inclusive community.

My search has led me to the Episcopal Church, where every week I find myself, at age 33, kneeling next to a gray-haired lady to my left and a gay couple to my right as I confess my sins and recite the Lord's Prayer. No one's trying to sell me anything. No one's desperately trying to make the Gospel hip or relevant or cool. They're just joining me in proclaiming the great mystery of the faith — that Christ has died, Christ has risen, and Christ will come again — which, in spite of my persistent doubts and knee-jerk cynicism, I still believe most days.

One need not be an Episcopalian to practice sacramental Christianity. [PRH — *Episcopalians have the outward form but they deny the substance, i.e. that forgiveness, life, and salvation are found in the Sacraments much less the*

Body and Blood of Christ. Also, if this millennial is right, our Biblical stance on LGBTQ issues makes our Christianity inauthentic.] Even in Christian communities that don't use sacramental language to describe their activities, you see people baptizing sinners, sharing meals, confessing sins and helping one another through difficult times. Those services with big screens and professional bands can offer the sacraments, too.

But I believe that the sacraments are most powerful when they are extended not simply to the religious and the privileged, but to the poor, the marginalized, the lonely and the left out. This is the inclusivity so many millennials long for in their churches, and it's the inclusivity that eventually drew me to the Episcopal Church, whose big red doors are open to all — conservatives, liberals, rich, poor, gay, straight and even perpetual doubters like me.

Church attendance may be dipping, but God can survive the Internet age. After all, He knows a thing or two about resurrection.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/jesus-doesnt-tweet/2015/04/30/fb07ef1a-cd01-11e4-8666-a1d756d0218e_story.html?utm_term=.6b36d2a1e91c

Psychiatry Professor: 'Transgenderism' Is Mass Hysteria Similar To 1980s-Era Junk Science

The movement's philosophy qualifies it as a popular delusion similar to the multiple-personality craze, and the 'satanic ritual abuse' and 'recovered memory' hysterias of the 1980s and 90s.

By Richard B. Corradi
NOVEMBER 17, 2016

Consider the remarkable phenomenon of transgenderism. A disorder of gender identity that afflicts a minuscule number of Americans has become a polarizing cultural cause celebre. Its influence—in capturing public attention and demanding social change—has been extraordinary, out of all proportion to the numbers of the gender-dissatisfied.

While the political left has fully embraced the transgender agenda as a “civil right” opposed by only the bigoted and hateful, many people see the movement as a concerted attack on traditional social mores and customs, an “in your face” as-

sault on conventional standards, practices, and morality.

Clearly, the transgender phenomenon is the tip of the spear of the LGBT movement, greatly energized by the Supreme Court decision on same-sex marriage that includes in the definition of liberty the right of people to “define and express their identity.” For the LGBT movement this literally includes the right to decide one's gender, to claim the rights of an alternative gender (since gender is malleable, there are choices other than simply male or female), have the choice acknowledged by society as a civil right, and ultimately become accepted as a conventional lifestyle.

However, transgenderism as a normative lifestyle may be a hard sell. While fair-minded people can agree that gays or people with gender confusion should not be discriminated against, the general public doesn't appear to be ready to accept gender as simply a social construct or that people can be whatever gender they choose. These contentions, the conceptual foundation of transgenderism, fly in the face of reality: the biological difference between the sexes.

The Contagion of Mass Delusion

Transgenderism would refute the natural laws of biology and transmute human nature. The movement's philosophical foundation qualifies it as a popular delusion similar to the multiple-personality craze, and the widespread “satanic ritual abuse” and “recovered memory” hysterias of the 1980s and '90s. These last two involved bizarre accusations of child abuse and resulted in the prosecution and ruined lives of the falsely accused.

Such popular delusions are characterized by a false belief unsupported by any scientific or empirical evidence and have a contagious quality that overrides rational thinking and even common sense. This all-too-human tendency to suspend individual critical judgment and go along with the crowd is greatly facilitated by social media. Most important, however, the cause has received the imprimatur of “experts.” The very people who should know better have bought into the hysteria. Just as “mental health professionals”

a generation ago supported the child abuse delusions, and even participated in prosecuting the unjustly accused, so too have they fueled the fire of the transgender delusion.

The transgender movement was greatly energized when The American Psychiatric Association (APA) in its 2013 revised edition of the “Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Psychiatric Disorders” (DSM-5) delisted “Gender Identity Disorder” as a psychiatric “disorder,” reclassifying it as “Gender Dysphoria.” However, rather than providing a scientific validation of the transgender agenda, the APA’s action was a remarkable abrogation of professional responsibility in the interest of political correctness.

Unlike medical diseases, psychiatric disorders have no diagnostic biologic markers—no physical findings, laboratory tests, or imaging studies. Psychiatric diagnoses consist of symptom checklists determined by committee consensus. It should come as no surprise that the process is exquisitely reactive to prevailing cultural and political winds. Absent biomarkers that define illnesses, there is no end to the mental and emotional conditions that can be called psychiatric disorders. It can be extremely profitable for an activist special-interest movement to succeed in getting its cause legitimized as a mental disorder, not least for a pharmaceutical industry poised to retarget psychotropic drugs to treat any new mental illness.

Activist Science Plus

Relativism Equals Insanity

However, the process works both ways. Psychiatric “disorders” both come and go in response to contemporary cultural fads and determined special interests. For the sexual liberation movement the political advantage lay in having offending disorders removed. In 1973 it succeeded in getting the APA to remove homosexuality from its lexicon of disorders simply by vote of the membership.

The tragedy, of course, is that people suffering from identity issues do not receive the help they need. Subsequent-

ly the movement conflated with postmodern relativism, in which there are no universal or transcendent values, only social and cultural conventions. The doctrine as applied to gender asserts that gender—male or female sex—is merely a social construct, not a biologic fact, and subject to change according to one’s desire. People can be of any gender they choose, an “alternate gender,” or even opt out of the entire gender construct.

Such was the agenda that the APA bought into when it dropped “Gender Identity Disorder” from the DSM-5. However, rather than simply eliminating the concept of gender identity since officially it was no longer a disorder, it created a “new diagnostic class” called “gender dysphoria.” This carried the assault on common sense even further, since now psychiatrists, the purported experts on distinguishing between fantasy and reality, put their stamp of approval on the transgender hysteria.

Only prelogical children and psychotic adults believe in magical thinking, that “wishing can make it so.” Yet “gender dysphoria” is characterized as “gender incongruence:” a feeling of dissatisfaction with one’s “assigned” (birth) gender, and a wish to be otherwise-gendered, makes one a different person. To reclaim one’s true (desired) gender identity may require sex-reassignment surgery, a treatment for the “new diagnostic class” of gender dysphoria sanctioned by the APA. The torturous vocabulary the DSM manufactured to label the possible gender spectrum variations would be laughable were it not so tragic.

Refusing to Diagnose Withholds Needed Treatment

The tragedy, of course, is that people suffering from identity issues do not receive the help they need. Anorexia nervosa is another disorder characterized by a distortion of body image. However, in contrast to the transgendered, who are aided in acting out a delusion with hormones and “sex-reassignment,” people with a morbid and unrealistic perception of themselves as being obese or too heavy are not put on weight-reducing diets. Rather, anorexia is diagnosed as a psychiatric

disorder and treated appropriately with psychotherapy.

Anorexia and “gender dysphoria” are among the many manifestations of psychological conflict that may occur during the “identity crisis” of adolescence, an important developmental milestone in identity formation. It is a time of rapid physical changes and strong sexual urges. Gender confusion—the wish to be the opposite sex, or even to be no sex at all (non-gendered)—can simply be a young person’s temporary pause in resolving the conflict between the safety of secure parental attachments and the compelling but frightening urges of adult sexuality and autonomy.

Asceticism—a renunciation of sexuality and sensual pleasures generally, in effect becoming asexual and anhedonic—is another coping device young people sometimes use. It is remarkably similar to gender dysphoria in its purpose of achieving a temporary respite from confusion about one’s emerging sexuality and anxiety about the demands of adulthood.

The vast majority of such defense mechanisms are transient, useful when the storms of adolescence are most intense, but no longer necessary as a more stable sense of self emerges. (Most common perhaps is the adolescent idealization of celebrities. That many of these popular figures are androgynous illustrates the nature of these identifications as a respite from sexual and gender conflict.) Very few young people who diet severely become lifelong anorexics. Not many adolescent ascetics become cloistered monks. In contrast, some gender-dissatisfied youths are given hormones and even undergo sex-reassignment surgery. A transient developmental conflict is subjected to life-changing and sometimes irreversible treatment.

Reinforcing Delusions Hurts People

More lamentable still is the use of these “treatments” in prepubescent children whose prelogical thinking blurs the boundaries between fantasy and reality. Young parents with concerns about their children need to seek the counsel of people with knowledge about normal child development. Unfortunately, good advice

is sometimes hard to come by. Afraid of being seen as “behind the times,” “ignorant,” or “bigoted,” people who should know better are unwilling to rely on their own common sense and the wisdom of generations.

Middle-aged men and women who feel dissatisfied with their lives may act out unrealistic romantic fantasies in an attempt to remake themselves. If a four-year-old girl, who, afraid of being displaced in her parents’ affection by a new baby brother, announces that she is a boy, wise parents do not begin treating her as a boy. They do not assume she is transgendered. Instead, they embrace her and assure her that she is their precious little girl whom they love. Parents who allow prepubescent children to choose whether they want to be male or female have relinquished their role as rational adults, and are themselves in need of psychiatric consultation.

Clearly forming a stable personal identity is a complicated business. For some people it is prolonged, and some never achieve it. While adolescence and young adulthood can be a pivotal time in shaping one’s personal identity, identity is subject to inevitable challenges during the life cycle, as well as to unique individual stressors.

Midlife is a challenging time for many people. Middle-aged men and women who feel dissatisfied with their lives may act out unrealistic romantic fantasies in an attempt to remake themselves. Often this leads to the tragedy of divorce and the destruction of families. The transgender movement has fostered the most unrealistic fantasy imaginable—that one can solve what is always a multidimensional dissatisfaction with one’s self by changing one’s sex.

Why Some People Want to Believe They’re Transgender

The characteristics that define one’s personal identity are the nuclear elements of personality. People with a chronically unstable self-image, poor self-esteem, and an ill-defined sense of self are poorly equipped to deal with the stresses of ordinary life. This group constitutes the vast majority of the self-

identified transgendered who undertake the full sex-change regimen of hormone treatment and “sex-reassignment” surgery.

However, most people suffering from such common personality disorders do not focus on gender dissatisfaction as the cause of their global dysfunction and do not regard sex change as the remedy. Why would a few people with a complex and multidimensional disorder of personal identity decide that their problem consists in having been “assigned” the wrong sex? The answer lies both in the nature of the personality disorder itself, and in powerful social, cultural, and political influences.

The LGBT movement has achieved enormous success in exploiting the psychological vulnerabilities of people who lack a coherent sense of self, providing both activist leaders and a “noble” cause with which to identify. Flush with success following the Supreme Court’s same-sex marriage decision, the movement has taken on an aura of invincibility.

The success of the transgender rights crusade, based as it is on the cultural delusion of denying biologic difference between the sexes, would suggest there are no limits to the movement’s goal of reshaping American culture and its institutions. Attaching oneself to such a powerful force can be a heady experience for someone whose self-identity is largely defined by the people and causes with which he or she identifies.

Transgenderism Is Identity Politics

The transgender movement has made clever use of the powerful force of identity politics. Clearly, personal identity, the totality of one’s sense of self, does not consist simply of gender any more than it does of one’s race, ethnicity, religion, or class. Such, however, are the categories upon which identity politics are built. To be politically effective, identity politics depend upon lumping people into groups that obliterate personal identities and characteristics. There are no individuals in identity politics, only amorphous masses of people with a common and defining property, one exploited for a political purpose.

All this is with the credulous support of people and institutions who have succumbed to the contagion of a cultural de-

lusion. This process exploits differences between people (cultural, social, ethnic, religious, etc.) to build constituencies of the aggrieved, the marginalized, and those led to believe they’re marginalized. They are assured redress of their grievances by a special interest group—commonly a political party that profits at the polls from activating them as a victimized group. The victimized must of course have victimizers, who are vilified as oppressors of the community of aggrieved.

This bitterly polarizing formula casts the “transgendered” as an amorphous lot of hatefully oppressed people. No distinction is made among highly disparate groups of the “gender dysphoric.” As has been described, these range from transient expressions of gender “incongruence” that occur in the normal developmental process, to those that are surface expressions of common life-stage conflicts, and to those more deeply rooted problems of personal identity that are symptomatic of personality disorders.

Ironically, individuals are robbed of their personal identity and become anonymous members of the gender identity community—the “transgendered.” Rather than the individual assessments and personalized psychotherapy that the sufficiently distressed should receive, the remedy is one-size-fits-all. A transgender person can become any gender he or she chooses, or be no gender at all. They can call themselves any names they choose, take hormones, and have their sex surgically “reassigned.” All this is with the credulous support of people and institutions who have succumbed to the contagion of a cultural delusion.

Individuals are further stripped of their personal identity as they become pawns in the broader LGBT agenda. As it has gained judicial and political power, the LGBT goal appears to be no less than full public acceptance of any variety of sexual expression it chooses, with no tolerance for dissent. Transgenderism is the vanguard of the current offensive. The bitter social strife it has fostered indicates the lengths to which the movement will go in destroying the opposition.

Demonizing the Opposition

Who are the opposition? True to identity politics, they are cast as a mob of bigoted haters who would deny the transgendered their basic human rights. There can be no other explanation for why someone might believe that transgenderism defies both reason and the laws of biology.

The liberal mainstream media is chief among the institutions in lock-step with the divisive tactics of identity politics.

The demonized, of course, are those of religious faith. Much of the Western world has become secularized and anti-religious, but a strain of strong religious belief still remains in the United States. These adherents to a code of sexual morality that differs from the LGBT sexual liberation agenda, albeit foundational to the Judeo-Christian value system for millennia, are seen as the last bastion of opposition. Consequently, expressions of sincerely held religious belief are attacked as hateful and bigoted. Believers are mocked as unsophisticated rubes and rednecks, desperately clinging to their guns and religion while resisting the inevitable triumph of rational modernity.

The liberal mainstream media is chief among the institutions in lock-step with the divisive tactics of identity politics. Glowing anecdotal accounts and individual testimonies of people who have had sex-change surgery regularly appear in fawning media reports that support and encourage the transgender craze. Transgendered celebrities in particular are commended, and the person's preferred gender pronoun always dutifully applied.

Any religious or moral opposition to the movement is reflexively characterized as hateful and discriminatory. Nowhere to be seen are the accounts of disillusionment and depression by those who regret having had surgery. In neglecting compelling clinical evidence and research in support of the common-sense notion that surgery is not a treatment for a psychological disorder, the psychiatric profession is certainly most culpable (although one wonders what

has become of responsible reporting and the honored tradition of investigative journalism).

The Long March Through Institutions

Along with the media, the political left has warmly embraced the LGBT movement's apparent goal to reshape the social fabric and cultural traditions of American life and to reconstruct society to suit its demands. There appears to be no limit to efforts to silence dissenters. Religious believers are being demonized, and many fear even freedom of the pulpit is in jeopardy. There is no hesitation in using courts to impose the will of a tiny minority on the general public, even to the extent of changing the bathroom practices of the entire nation.

The effect the transgender delusion will have on our society and its institutions, including the military, remains to be seen. Objections of the majority, even on grounds of privacy or to protect young children from premature exposure to sexual issues, are simply ignored. Many of our elite academic institutions willingly comply with efforts to alter our basic language, promoting use of the many neologisms invented to label the new varieties of gender.

The federal government's decision to allow transgendered people to serve openly in the military, women to serve in combat roles, and eventually to have a fully sexually integrated military, illustrates the extent to which political correctness has triumphed. That men and women in the intense and intimate daily contact military service demands could become a highly effective fighting force, a band not of men and women but of generic soldiers, would prove that gender is simply a social construct. It would also refute the laws of human nature. The belief that men and women will not behave in accordance with their biology is precisely the delusion.

The effect the transgender delusion will have on our society and its institutions, including the military, remains to be seen. In contrast, the destructive influence of identity politics is immediate and very personal for the transgendered. As faceless members of a political special interest group, they are robbed not only of their

distinctness as individuals but also of their chance for effective treatment.

The vicissitudes of life—developmental conflicts, life-cycle stressors, personality disorders—that express themselves in gender dissatisfaction or confusion are the same as those that can challenge a secure sense of self and cause emotional distress in anyone. Indeed, such distress is what most commonly causes people to consult psychiatrists and clinical psychologists. People labeled “transgendered” or “gender dysphoric” are no less entitled to individual psychological assessment and personalized counseling or psychotherapy.

Historically, contagious popular delusions that deny common sense and fly in the face of reality eventually run their course. This will likely be the fate of the transgender craze. But before it collapses under its own weight, many people will suffer irreparable harm.

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Consumer Reports is Inaccurate

Posted on November 28, 2016

by Rev. Paul R. Harris

If you know anything about *Consumer Reports*, the magazine and the research group that supports them, you know they are fiercely independent. They accept no advertisement so that they can't be accused of bias. Well I'm here to tell you they are.

This magazine that prides itself in details, in numbers, in percentages has an article on mattresses in the February 2016 issue. (As an aside, where did all these mattress stores come from? Have they, as Listerine did, succeeded not in selling us a product but an idea? Listerine sold us the notion of bad breath. They've sold us the notion that mattresses go bad after 8 years. And how do they make the link between buying a mattress and celebrating President's Day? Is it an oblique reference to philandering presidents or perhaps to the plaques boasting a presi-

dent slept here?) But I digress, but not that far.

Consumer Reports evaluation of mattresses, true to form and principle, is detailed and supported by research. There is one page that is detailed but unsupported in fact and even runs counter to the facts. It's a picture taken from above of sixteen couples in bed, and of course you know where I'm going with this. They had one single sleeper, 15 couples, and of the 15 couples, 4 were same sex.

A couple of things: I have only one time shared a bed with another man. Actually I shared it with 4 other men and it wasn't a bed but a poncho. It was in the Sierra Blanca mountains on an Army training exercise. The temperature dipped to 25 degrees and we were in jungle fatigues. I gladly spent that night sandwiched between two males. However, since then, not only don't I share a bed I won't even share a room with another man.

Most men don't share beds with other men unless they are a couple, and that's the point of the picture. *Consumer Reports* is inclusive, open-minded, accepting, modern or whatever other big-hearted saying you want to use. However, they are inaccurate according to a definitive 2015 Gallup poll showing that 3.6% of Americans are gay. The Consumer Report picture implies that over 26% are which, not by coincidence, is exactly what Millennials when polled say they think the percentage of gays in the U.S. population is.

How we have fallen! And while the society around you and most mainline churches and many Christians think we have somehow fallen upward we have not. It's down, down, to a burning ring of fire.

How we have gone from the network TV of the mid-50s not daring to depict husband and wife Desi and Lucy as sleeping in the same bed to a magazine of "science" depicting same-sex couples in the same bed? How come the numbers and facts matter to *Consumer Reports* when it comes to products people use but not when it comes to the reality they live in? Because homosexu-

ality and gay marriage are denials of God-given realities, and to maintain a fiction you must constantly reinforce it.

When a Good Host Says "No"

We are the hosts of the most wonderful meal of all whenever we celebrate the Lord's Supper. As good hosts, we recognize that there are many "Susans" for whom Holy Communion can be a danger. The Sacrament Jesus instituted in which He gives us His true body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins is harmful to those who are not properly prepared to receive it. St. Paul warns, "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord" (1. Cor. 11:27). He then explains what he means by "unworthy:" "For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself" (1Cor. 11:29). We would be poor – indeed, wicked – hosts if we knowingly allowed our unprepared guests to be harmed. This is a main reason that we in the LCMS have consistently insisted upon the Church's historic practice of closed Communion, that is, restricting participation in the Lord's Supper only to those who have been correctly taught and examined.

When "is means "is"

Christians in most Protestant denominations are taught that the Lord's Supper is merely a symbolic ritual by which the death of Jesus is remembered. They are taught that Jesus is not truly present in the sacramental elements. In other words, they do not discern the body (or blood) of Christ in Holy Communion. As good hosts, we dare not serve them what we know will not be good for them and cause them to sin.

Because the Sacrament can be harmful to some, it is not sufficient to simply place a statement in the bulletin that outlines our Lutheran teaching concerning the Sacrament and then invites only those who agree with it to join us at the altar. There are several reasons for this. How many visitors actually read the statement? And if they think of Communion as only sym-

bolic, how many will truly understand it or heed it if they do? It's also a way to burden the guest with what is our responsibility as the hosts. It's like we know that Susan has an allergy to what's on the table, but she is unaware of it. We don't leave the decision whether to commune up to those who, because of improper instruction, are the least qualified to make it.

And there is yet another main reason we practice closed Communion. It's the matter of corporate confession. Partaking in the Lord's Supper is not an individual act. It's a communion with Christ and all who are gathered at His table. Those who commune at our altars are giving public testimony to their faith, that they are in full agreement with our church's doctrine – all of it, not just our teaching on the Lord's Supper. God's Word further commands us to avoid church fellowship with those who hold to false doctrines (Rom. 16:17). We confuse our confession of faith and that of our guests when we allow anyone but properly taught and confessing Lutherans to commune at our altars.

So it is that with Christian love and concern for our non-Lutheran guests, we kindly say "no" when they ask to commune with us. And we encourage them to learn more about our Lutheran understanding of the Christian faith with the hope that having been rightly taught and examined, they may join us in celebrating the fullness of the Gospel and in receiving Jesus' gifts of His body and blood.

Nathan Dudley, *Lutheran Witness*,
August 2016

Agreement Between Fake Lutherans and the Roman Pope

Pastor Phil Hale, Zion Lutheran, Omaha, NE

The media made a big deal of a recent agreement signed at Lund, Sweden between a liberal, non-confessional Lutheran organization and the Roman pope: "Pope Francis and the global Lutheran leader have jointly pledged to remove the obstacles to full unity between their Churches, leading eventually to shared Eucharist." Who is *the* global Lutheran leader? The Lutheran Church Missouri

Synod does not have a pope or global leader. We in the LCMS claim to be ruled by the Word of God, which is correctly interpreted for us in the 1580 Book of Concord. It is composed of documents (including the Small Catechism) written by men such as Martin Luther and by others of a generation later.

The media cannot conceive that not all Lutherans follow this “global leader,” who is currently Bishop Munib Younan from Jerusalem. It is like saying “The Iowans are in the College Football Playoff.” But Iowa State and the University of Iowa are quite different teams and the fate of one has nothing to do with the other. This global leader heads the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), comprised of some 145 churches from 79 countries. Of the many denominations in the U.S. using the name Lutheran, it includes only one: the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA). While the word “Lutheran” looks good, a word does not make a church orthodox, or even Christian. We know churches, however, by their teaching.

What does the ELCA believe? They are in full altar and pulpit fellowship with the Presbyterian Church (USA), Reformed Church in America, United Church of Christ, The Episcopal Church, and United Methodist Church. There is no meaningful confessional difference between any of these churches, according to their own agreements. To commune at one (even the “Lutheran” ELCA) is to commune at and confess unity with all of them. Agreeing to communion fellowship is tacit agreement of unity in doctrine, though in practice that is rarely the case. Most of the churches in fellowship with the ELCA have never held that Baptism saves, or that the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper is in reality the same body that died and blood that was shed on the cross for the sins of the world. But from a doctrinal perspective these different churches are exactly the same. Their agreements are a sham, or else confess that the ELCA and its partner churches believe nothing. Is this really

the kind of unity and teaching the Roman church seeks to recognize? Perhaps the Roman global leader wants to believe nothing like these Lutherans of the LWF.

Don't be fooled by the word “Lutheran,” it does not cover a multitude of sins. What exactly has the ELCA taken a stand on recently? In 2009 they made a momentous decision to allow its pastors (including females, who have been accepted as pastors from its inception, contrary to 1 Cor. 14:34-35 and 1 Tim. 2:11-12) to be practicing homosexuals, as long as they are in “committed same-sex relationships.” All its partner churches agree on this, or else they would not have made a public agreement of unity and joint communion. The ELCA and all its partner churches agree that the right to murder is important. Their own health benefits plan pays for abortions, with no stipulations. In the ELCA's “A Social Statement on: Abortion,” approved by assembly vote in 1991, it states: “A developing life in the womb does not have an absolute right to be born, nor does a pregnant woman have an absolute right to terminate a pregnancy. ... This requires that we move beyond the usual ‘pro-life’ versus ‘pro-choice’ language in discussing abortion.” There is no absolute position: the ELCA officially states no baby has an absolute right to live (to not be murdered), if the mother decides against it. Conversely, a mother does not have the right to murder *all the time*. This is not a Christian stance, no matter how many times the words “Luther” or “Lutheran” are used. Murder cannot be both good and bad at the same time.

Those who take communion in the ELCA, even in a local congregation that seems more conservative than its official statements, makes a positive confession of the entire doctrinal position of the ELCA. To commune at a church is to state that you believe all that its fellowship teaches and holds. A synod, or group of congregations, by definition, implies unity. The radical nature of the ELCA is difficult to comprehend for those in the LCMS who do not think of doctrine as changing and man-based. We believe that the truth from God is no different than it was in 1580 or at the creation of the world, because Christ and His Word do not change. The ELCA

was formed in 1988 from several Lutheran synods. When mergers and communion agreements are made to impress the world, Christ's saving teaching is what gets left on the cutting room floor. While divisions are sad, if they are real, we must follow and confess Christ, even if it means being separated from others visibly. To ignore real division at the expense of confessing Christ is to deny Him, by failing to speak His truth. We should fear and love nothing more than the Word of God, which is what Scripture is. There is no other way to receive life, than in the words which tell us who Christ is and what He has done for us. His Word is life itself.

So what does this agreement between the LWF and the Roman leader mean? Nothing to those who rely on Christ's Word. Does anyone really think the Roman pontiff will give up his privilege to speak for God and supersede Scripture? Will all Catholics be forced to stop praying to saints and to deny purgatory? Or will the liberal Lutheran churches repent of accepting homosexual acts, murder, and not preaching any real law? No, the agreement deals only with the social issues of this visible world, not the teaching of Christ.

Visible unity is the goal—merely to look united, but not actually to be united on the basis of scriptural teaching. The Lund agreement states: “We also confess and lament before Christ that Lutherans and Catholics have wounded the visible unity of the Church.” But is it only a superficial matter when Luther said that we are saved without works of the Law only by faith in Christ's blood, against the Roman church's position? No, it is a spiritual, doctrinal disagreement that is not healed by wimpy agreements or pretending to be united. But to “celebrate” (or rather, deny) the Reformation, the LWF and the Pope want to “cast off the historical disagreements and conflicts that impede the ministry of reconciliation.” The actual preaching of the ministry must be judged by the position taken on these historical disagreements. Faith, dependance on Christ's grace won by the real death of God's Son, is central to any Christian “ministry of reconciliation.”

The doctrinal differences Martin Luther identified define exactly how God receives sinners and we can know that we are forgiven. This teaching of justification before the Father on account of Christ's works is never obsolete for churches which preach a real Gospel to those who have offended God and His holy law.

It is a sin to disobey Christ's Word by not confessing it. Embracing palatable, gospel-sounding words does not lead to the forgiveness Christ earned. The Lund Roman-Lutheran agreement states: "Christ desires that we be one, so that the world may believe." But the world cannot believe, it is of the evil one. Christ calls people out of the world through the Gospel. Bigger churches, extensive fellowship agreements, and splashy announcements of unity do not give eternal comfort. Nothing of man can give divine certainty of salvation. Modern churches long for differences and divisions to be resolved—without actually confessing the truth though. The meat of the recent Lund agreement reads:

"We pray to God for inspiration, encouragement and strength so that we may stand together in service, upholding human dignity and rights, especially for the poor, working for justice, and rejecting all forms of violence. God summons us to be close to all those who yearn for dignity, justice, peace and reconciliation. Today in particular, we raise our voices for an end to the violence and extremism which affect so many countries and communities, and countless sisters and brothers in Christ. We urge Lutherans and Catholics to work together to welcome the stranger, to come to the aid of those forced to flee because of war and persecution, and to defend the rights of refugees and those who seek asylum."

Our self-chosen rights are nil and worthless before God. Sinners do not deserve anything but death. Helping refugees and the poor can

be done wisely and in Christian love, but our deeds have nothing to do with the forgiveness of Christ and our trust in what Christ says. Note that there is nothing about helping the unborn or the elderly in this fake agreement. This is simply the social justice language the ELCA has long used to allow any aberrant behavior.

The other major thrust of the *Joint Statement on the Occasion of the Joint Catholic-Lutheran Commemoration of the Reformation* is environmental: "our joint service in this world must extend to God's creation, which suffers exploitation and the effects of insatiable greed. We recognize the right of future generations to enjoy God's world in all its potential and beauty. We pray for a change of hearts and minds that leads to a loving and responsible way to care for creation." It would be hard to find an atheist who would find this offensive. It says nothing essentially Christian. Man's works in "saving the world" become more significant than Christ's glorious death on the cross. This is simply the false religion of the world. We know that this world in bondage to decay is passing away, along with the sinful desires of man. But the churches seeking to look good before the world find it easier to talk about recycling paper than preaching sinners into heaven through the flesh of Christ.

Real doctrinal discussion is important. But too often theological "dialogue" simply means compromise and re-crucifying Christ so the media can celebrate divisions being signed away. But the doctrine, what we say of Christ that is measured by Scripture, is the heart of Christianity that actually makes Christians. Take away that and nothing is left to believe, confess, or preach. But the faithful minister of Christ has a far more difficult task than ignoring past disagreements: "He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contra-

dict it" (Tit. 1:9). Until the doctrinal substance of the rebukes made by Luther against the Roman church are dealt with, every attempt at visible unity is a hypocrisy and minimization of Christ, the Lord. To move past the issues the Reformation highlighted, is to move past Christianity itself, since they revolve around the blessed reception of Christ's forgiveness.

To commune together is to receive Christ the Lord in His body and blood. It is also a visible confession and public statement of unity. It is to be done only where the public confession of Christ is true and united. This cannot be solidly done between individuals or based on personal whims and relationships, but takes place officially between churches and fellowships on the basis of Scripture. In this way we uplift Christ, since it is His Supper and doctrine, not ours. We should take the particular church we belong to and receive His precious body and blood at extremely seriously, since it voices what we believe about the Lord, who will judge the living and the dead. It is a matter of life and death—God the Son's death to be exact.

The teaching of our God conceived and born in order to be sacrificed for sins is more important than the feelings and acceptance of our family, neighbors, and the world. A false unity, a vague agreement that says nothing, or a false confession of fellowship is not of Christ, it is of Satan, who is quite impressed with visible things. However, true Christians do not confess for positive media coverage or to make sinners (even relatives) happy. Believers who follow the crucified God must suffer and be persecuted, just as their Lord was humbled. A true confession of Jesus, in accordance with Scripture, is not revealed by flesh and blood, but the Father who is in heaven (Mt. 16). It is worth more than the whole world and our earthly existence. Amen.

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February 2017

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
			6:15 PM Choir 7:15 Romans			
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Adult Class 12:30 PM			6:15 PM Choir 7:15 Romans			
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Adult Class 12:30 PM			6:15 PM Choir 7:15 Romans			
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Adult Class 12:30 PM			6:15 PM Choir 7:15 Romans			
26	27	28				
Adult Class 12:30 PM						

March 2017

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
			7:30 PM Imposition of Ashes w/ Communion			
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Adult Class 12:30 PM		Voters Meeting 6:30 PM	Lenten Vespers 7:30			
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
NO Adult Class ←————→	CAMP OUT		Lenten Vespers 7:30			
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Adult Class 12:30 PM		Elders Meeting 6:30 PM	Lenten Vespers 7:30			
26	27	28	29	30	31	
NO Adult Class 2 PM Prayer Service @ Planned Parenthood			Lenten Vespers 7:30			

Feb. - March 2017