

# *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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## **Now This...**

If you believe NPR the above is the site where 60% of Millennials get their news. It is a series of video shorts. It takes its name from what Baby Boomers ought to be familiar with. The news anchor segue from story to story with “Now this...”

The Synod Exit Review Committee is wrapping things up. Now this... The SERC will bring draft resolutions to the March 2019 Voters Assembly which will need to be passed if Trinity is going to leave The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and become an Independent Lutheran Congregation. The vote will NOT take place at that meeting. It should take place in the June meeting. This means any male member 18 or over who wants to be able to vote on the resolutions must be in attendance at or excused from the March 2019 Voters Meeting being held on March 5. This means anyone who wants to know exactly what will be voted on should get a copy of them; they will be available on the reading table.

While a member of the Voters myself, I won't be voting on these resolutions. This is because I individually am a member of Synod and have to decide for myself. Of course, what each of us (the congregation through the Voters Assembly and myself) does affects the other. If Trinity should elect to stay and I elect to go, then the Synod would ask Trinity to decide between staying in the Synod and keeping me as pastor. If Trinity elects to go and I to stay, then the Synod would ask me to decide between continuing to pastor Trinity and remaining on the Synod's clergy roster. Synod's Bylaws 2.5.1-4 legislate this arrangement where we sink or swim together.

I was asked recently a wise question: was leaving Synod a goal I had and then led Trinity toward? No, I could truly answer. In fact, I arrived here in 1999 fully determined to embrace all things LCMS as I had never before. I went to circuit meetings. I went to the 2003 and 2006 District Conventions. I went to the 2003 “Kiss and Make up” conference for pastors where we were to work out our differences about praying with pagans and other divides, like open and closed Communion, civilly. We did nothing but share our views among 10-12 other pastors while the Synod elites, with one exception, outlined for us how to accept our differences gladly. Really what threw a wrench in my determination to

embrace LCMS was that pagan prayer service which followed 911. A member emailed me, I hadn't seen it, asking, “Should I be concerned that a Missouri Synod District President participated with pagans?”

And that's how it has been all along: Should I be concerned that Bethany Lutheran in south Austin is practicing open Communion? Should I be concerned that a Lutheran pastor did a wedding with a Baptist pastor? Should I be concerned that the pastor of Redeemer officiated at my grandson's wedding and gave communion to his Methodist bride? Should I be concerned that Concordia University gave a Christian Leadership Award to the most pro-abortion state legislator?

No, I don't believe I led Trinity to this decision; I believe you led me to it by the literally countless cases where you made me confess the truth that the Missouri Synod is not being faithful to her own confession of faith and is not disciplining pastors and congregations who depart from it. Now this... What happens the Sunday following if the Voters do resolve to leave? Nothing. The Gospel will still be preached purely and the Sacraments administered according to Christ's institution. Our Communion policy won't change. Those who could be communed before the vote will still be able to commune. What might change, and I have no control or influence over this, is where you as Independent Lutherans will be able to Commune. Of course, you don't Commune at open Communion churches, but some LCMS congregations that practice closed Communion might not be willing to commune you if you're in a church that is no longer Missouri Synod. We will respect their decision. Right now the Wisconsin and Evangelical Lutheran Synods don't commune members of the LCMS because they broke fellowship with us in 1962 when we entered into Altar and Pulpit fellowship with the liberal ALC. It's not likely either the WELS or the ELS would commune an Independent Lutheran, but it's not wrong to ask.

One thing to keep in mind God's people have been here before. When the Lutherans were called on to give their confession before Charles V in 1530, they did the faithful thing and confessed though it was uncertain exactly what would follow. When the forefathers of the LCMS sailed from Germany, leaving the German Lutheran Church, for America, they did the faithful thing and confessed though it was uncertain exactly what

would follow. When many of our older members left the old ALC church, which was very close in confession to the LCMS, to go through Adult Instruction and join Trinity and the LCMS, they did the faithful thing and confessed though it was uncertain exactly what would follow. When most of our current members went through Adult Instruction leaving the Protestant, Reformed, or Catholic churches of their childhood to join the LCMS they did the faithful thing and confessed though it was uncertain exactly what would follow. Uncertainty about what will, might, could happen, can't be reason enough not to take faithful action.

Now this...

## **He Promises, We Believe**

**(A Nine-Part Sermon Series on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup>  
Chief Parts of Luther's Small Catechism)  
Advent 2018 – Lent 2019**

I was going to go with the title "I Promise" from a life insurance commercial depicting a father saying, "I promise" to his daughter throughout her life. It shows them aging as he says it. Of course, his final one is as a gray-haired man. He can keep his promise by having life insurance. I thought the ad poignant. The words, "I promise" call forth the response, "I believe it. I trust you." But I thought the "I" looms too large in the theme. Even though it refers to God's promising, we think of me, myself, and I. So, I was going to go with "Promises, Promises." But all I heard in my head was Dionne Warwick singing the song by that name from 1968. Promises aren't worth much in that song. So, I landed on "He Promises, We Believe."

Promise is a consistent thought across the last three Chief Parts. In fact, when the Means of Grace are considered as a promise of forgiveness Absolution is counted as a third Sacrament. Baptism, Confession, and the Sacrament of the Altar were the parts specifically added by Luther. The Medieval catechism has the first three parts but not in the order Luther has put them. He added the last three.

The Sacraments are God's promise to you, today! The more you use them, study them, remember them, the more faith, trust, and certainty grow in you. As much as pastors, myself included, have ragged on "Just as I Am", there is powerful, good theology in the line "Because Thy promise, I believe."

Finally, a word of thanks to all of you who come to the midweek services. Years ago, not at this church, I predicted the end of first Advent and then eventually the much older Lent. Now I don't think so. Now that the world – to use a Stephen King phrase – has moved on from having any roots in Christianity, divine revelation,

or in anything outside our fallen little hearts, my sense is that people can't find anything remotely like the divine, or truth, or certainty. And they value those places that still have them. All Service times are at 7:30.

**Wednesday November 28**  
"Baptism is not Simple Water Only"

**Wednesday December 05**  
"Baptism Benefits You Three Ways"

**Wednesday December 12**  
"Baptism is Indicative of More Than You Think"

**Ash Wed March 06**  
"You Should Confess"

**Wednesday March 13**  
"God has a Franchise on Earth"

**Wednesday March 20**  
"Communion is For You"

**Wednesday March 27**  
"More Than Forgiveness is Being Communicated"

**Wednesday April 03**  
"There Are No Benefits Apart from Faith"

**Wednesday April 10**  
"You Can Be Worthy and Well Prepared"

## **Lenten factoids**

***Lenten Factoids:** The original period of Lent was 3 days: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. By the 3rd century, it was extended to 6 days and called Holy Week which is the week before Easter. Around 800 AD during the reign of the great Christian emperor, Charlemagne it was increased to 40 days. The Sundays in Lent are **not** included. The 40 days correspond to the 40 days in which Jesus fasted in the wilderness in preparation for His battle with Satan...a battle He won by the way.*

*The earliest Lent can begin is February 5. That last happened in 1818 and it won't happen again at least through 2100. The latest that it can begin is March 10. That will not happen again until 2038.*

*The day before Ash Wednesday is called Shrove Tuesday. The word "shrive" means to cut off, and it means to forgive sins. It was the custom on Shrove Tuesday to go to confession and have one's sins forgiven*

*in preparation for Lent. The day was also one of “saying farewell to meat,” which is the meaning of the Latin word “carnival.” So the custom was to use up all the fat in the house by making jelly rolls or pancakes, and to feast on a roast of fat meat. “Mardi Gras” is the French name for the day, and it means “Fat Tuesday.”*

*Originally, no meat was eaten during Lent, but this was gradually reduced to only Fridays and Wednesdays when fish was eaten instead.*

*“Giving up something for Lent” is not done to do something for Jesus, the One who did it all for us, but to purposely focus on spiritual things more than on physical things.*

*The most important thing about Lent is that it is the time we consider more closely the last week of Christ’s life, actually the last two days, where He suffered the most intensely for our sins. This time in Christ’s life is called the Passion. Every year for Lent we read the account of Jesus’s Passion. Over the six Wednesdays of Lent we read it from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. On Good Friday, we hear it from St. John. By following Christ on His way to the cross, we identify closely with His suffering. When Easter comes, we celebrate with great joy His Resurrection.*

## **Planned Parenthood Admits Unborn Are Babies — in Preschool Sex Ed**

By KATIE YODER

December 14, 2018 6:30 AM

Planned Parenthood’s “How Do I Talk With My Kid About Where Babies Come From?”

A new animated film from the abortion provider highlights its terminology discrepancy.

The nation’s largest abortion provider described an unborn human being as both a “pregnancy” and as a “baby.” The only difference was in the audience: The former was the term used for women seeking an abortion, while the latter was for preschoolers.

Planned Parenthood used the b-word in a November 14 video for parents. The three-minute animated film — “How Do I Talk With My Kid About Where Babies Come From?” — has gone largely unnoticed by the media, even though an earlier video for parents about gender made headlines recently. This one proved just as newsworthy, if only because of Planned Parenthood’s discrepancy.

At the film’s beginning, a female narrator recommends that parents “keep it simple and direct” with younger children. A parent might say that a “baby grows in a

parent’s belly and comes out their vagina.” Or, if that’s not enough information for little ones, parents can add that “if sperm and egg meet, they can grow into a baby.”

But while the narrator was ready and willing to mention birth — and even birth-control — in the video meant for children’s education, she didn’t mention the issue of abortion.

Online, in its resources for pregnant women, Planned Parenthood calls abortion the “ending of a pregnancy.” But for children, abortion would be the ending of a “baby” if they learn, as Planned Parenthood instructs, that it is a baby that grows inside their mother’s belly.

Avoiding the topic of abortion appears to be a trend under Planned Parenthood’s new president, Leana Wen. As Alexandra DeSanctis pointed out last month on National Review, Wen “did not say the word ‘abortion’ a single time” during a CBS interview she gave her first day as president.

Supreme Court Refuses To Hear States’ Case To Defund Planned Parenthood

At the same time, Planned Parenthood is responsible for performing millions of abortions since Roe v. Wade, the 1973 Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion in America. According to its most recent annual report, for 2016 to 2017, Planned Parenthood performed 321,384 abortions in just one year.

In its online resources for parents, recommended by the video, Planned Parenthood continues to avoid abortion while telling parents “how to be your kid’s go-to resource for answers and advice, from pre-K to college” on “sex, puberty, bodies, and relationships.”

Preschool isn’t too early, Planned Parenthood’s site argues, even though “your child is a long way off from deciding whether or not to having a baby.” While five-year-olds might be content to hear that a “baby grows in a mother’s belly,” children in elementary school might want more detail, Planned Parenthood advises. For example, “If the sperm and egg meet up, it can start to grow into a baby” which “grows in the uterus for 9 months.”

It’s not until discussing middle school that Planned Parenthood’s site brings up abortion. But instead of telling parents how to describe abortion, it states:

Preteens need to know that pregnant people have 3 options: abortion, adoption, and parenting.

This is also a good opportunity to provide basic factual information, like that legal abortion is very safe and common, and that being a teen parent can make it harder (but certainly not impossible) to achieve your future goals.

Parenting, never mind teen parenting, is difficult. But abortion is never safe. That's because, with every pregnancy, there's more than one person's future at stake — regardless of the terminology.

**KATIE YODER** — Katie Yoder is a content manager for National Review Online and a columnist for Townhall and CatholicVote.org.  
<https://www.nationalreview.com/2018/12/planned-parenthood-film-confuses-terms-ignores-abortion/>

## **A Dark Consensus About Screens and Kids Begins to Emerge in Silicon Valley**

“I am convinced the devil lives in our phones.”

By Nellie Bowles, **New York Times**  
Oct. 26, 2018

**SAN FRANCISCO** — The people who are closest to a thing are often the most wary of it. Technologists know how phones really work, and many have decided they don't want their own children anywhere near them.

A wariness that has been slowly brewing is turning into a regionwide consensus: The benefits of screens as a learning tool are overblown, and the risks for addiction and stunting development seem high. The debate in Silicon Valley now is about how much exposure to phones is O.K.

“Doing no screen time is almost easier than doing a little,” said Kristin Stecher, a former social computing researcher married to a Facebook engineer. “If my kids do get it at all, they just want it more.”

Ms. Stecher, 37, and her husband, Rushabh Doshi, researched screen time and came to a simple conclusion: they wanted almost none of it in their house. Their daughters, ages 5 and 3, have no screen time “budget,” no regular hours they are allowed to be on screens. The only time a screen can be used is during the travel portion of a long car ride (the four-hour drive to Tahoe counts) or during a plane trip.

Recently she has softened this approach. Every Friday evening the family watches one movie.

## *The Digital Gap Between Rich and Poor Kids Is Not What We Expected*

America's public schools are still promoting devices with screens — even offering digital-only preschools. The rich are banning screens from class altogether.

There is a looming issue Ms. Stecher sees in the future: Her husband, who is 39, loves video games and thinks they can be educational and entertaining. She does not.

Some of the people who built video programs are now horrified by how many places a child can now watch a video.

Asked about limiting screen time for children, Hunter Walk, a venture capitalist who for years directed product for YouTube at Google, sent a photo of a potty training toilet with an iPad attached and wrote: “Hashtag ‘products we didn't buy.’”

Kristin Stecher, a former social computing researcher married to a Facebook engineer in Menlo Park, Calif., said their daughters, ages 5 and 3, have no screen time “budget,” no regular hours they are allowed to be on screens.

Kristin Stecher, a former social computing researcher married to a Facebook engineer in Menlo Park, Calif., said their daughters, ages 5 and 3, have no screen time “budget,” no regular hours they are allowed to be on screens. Credit Peter Prato for The New York Times  
Athena Chavarria, who worked as an executive assistant at Facebook and is now at Mark Zuckerberg's philanthropic arm, the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, said: “I am convinced the devil lives in our phones and is wreaking havoc on our children.”

Ms. Chavarria did not let her children have cellphones until high school, and even now bans phone use in the car and severely limits it at home.

She said she lives by the mantra that the last child in the class to get a phone wins. Her daughter did not get a phone until she started ninth grade.

“Other parents are like, ‘Aren't you worried you don't know where your kids are when you can't find them?’” Ms. Chavarria said. “And I'm like, ‘No, I do not need to know where my kids are every second of the day.’”

For longtime tech leaders, watching how the tools they built affect their children has felt like a reckoning on their life and work. Among those is Chris Anderson, the former editor of Wired and now the chief executive of a

robotics and drone company. He is also the founder of GeekDad.com. On the scale between candy and crack cocaine, it's closer to crack cocaine," Mr. Anderson said of screens.

Technologists building these products and writers observing the tech revolution were naïve, he said. We thought we could control it," Mr. Anderson said. "And this is beyond our power to control. This is going straight to the pleasure centers of the developing brain. This is beyond our capacity as regular parents to understand."

He has five children and 12 tech rules. They include: no phones until the summer before high school, no screens in bedrooms, network-level content blocking, no social media until age 13, no iPads at all and screen time schedules enforced by Google Wifi that he controls from his phone. Bad behavior? The child goes offline for 24 hours. "I didn't know what we were doing to their brains until I started to observe the symptoms and the consequences," Mr. Anderson said.

"This is scar tissue talking. We've made every mistake in the book, and I think we got it wrong with some of my kids," Mr. Anderson said. "We glimpsed into the chasm of addiction, and there were some lost years, which we feel bad about." His children attended private elementary school, where he saw the administration introduce iPads and smart whiteboards, only to "descend into chaos and then pull back from it all."

This idea that Silicon Valley parents are wary about tech is not new. The godfathers of tech expressed these concerns years ago, and concern has been loudest from the top.

Tim Cook, the C.E.O. of Apple, [said earlier this year](#) that he would not let his nephew join social networks. Bill Gates banned cellphones until his children were teenagers, and Melinda Gates wrote that [she wished they had waited even longer](#). Steve Jobs [would not let his young children near iPads](#).

But in the last year, a fleet of high-profile Silicon Valley defectors have been sounding alarms in increasingly dire terms about what these gadgets do to the human brain. Suddenly rank-and-file Silicon Valley workers are obsessed. No-tech homes are cropping up across the region. [Nannies are being asked to sign no-phone contracts](#).

Those who have exposed their children to screens try to talk them out of addiction by explaining how the tech works.

John Lilly, a Silicon Valley-based venture capitalist with Greylock Partners and the former C.E.O. of Mozilla, said he tries to help his 13-year-old son understand that he is being manipulated by those who built the technology.

"I try to tell him somebody wrote code to make you feel this way — I'm trying to help him understand how things are made, the values that are going into things and what people are doing to create that feeling," Mr. Lilly said. "And he's like, 'I just want to spend my 20 bucks to get my Fortnite skins.'"

And there are those in tech who disagree that screens are dangerous. Jason Toff, 32, who ran the video platform Vine and now works for Google, lets his 3-year-old play on an iPad, which he believes is no better or worse than a book. This opinion is unpopular enough with his fellow tech workers that he feels there is now "a stigma."

"One reaction I got just yesterday was, 'Doesn't it worry you that all the major tech execs are limiting screen time?'" Mr. Toff said. "And I was like, 'Maybe it should, but I guess I've always been skeptical of norms.' People are just scared of the unknown."

"It's contrarian," Mr. Toff said. "But I feel like I'm speaking for a lot of parents that are afraid of speaking out loud for fear of judgment."

He said he thinks back to his own childhood growing up watching a lot of TV. "I think I turned out O.K.," Mr. Toff said.

Other Silicon Valley parents say there are ways to make some limited screen time slightly less toxic.

Renee DiResta, a security researcher on the board of the Center for Humane Tech, won't allow passive screen time, but will allow short amounts of time on challenging games.

She wants her 2- and 4-year-old children to learn how to code young, so she embraces their awareness of gadgets. But she distinguishes between these types of screen use. Playing a building game is allowed, but watching a YouTube video is not, unless it is as a family.

And Frank Barbieri, a San Francisco-based executive at the start-up PebblePost that tracks online activity to send direct mail advertising, tries to limit his 5-year-old daughter's screen time to Italian language content.

“We have friends who are screen abolitionists, and we have friends who are screen liberalists,” Mr. Barbieri said.

He had read studies on how learning a second language at a young age is good for the developing mind, so his daughter watches Italian-language movies and TV shows.

“For us, honestly, me and my wife were like, ‘Where would we like to visit?’” Mr. Barbieri said.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/26/style/phones-children-silicon-valley.html>

## You find the Funnies Things on the Internet

Well, I don't but a former member did, and a present member shared it with me, and now I share it with you. The post below is from an orthodox Lutheran group based in Germany. I never had heard of Nathan MacPherson he visited our church after he posted this. It is our SETI team that makes our presence on the internet possible. (PS. I don't know why it says he is at Trinity because he wasn't when he wrote this.)

 **Nathan MacPherson** is at **Trinity Lutheran Church.** ...  
5 mins · Austin · 

As I shop for churches during our travels, I'm sometimes saddened (parishes alleging to be Confessional Lutheran yet having no liturgy or hymnody...I would not even consider taking my wife and children to the closest "LCMS church" to our present location...) but often overjoyed, such as when I navigate the Website of such faithful congregations as Trinity Lutheran Church in Austin, Texas. Note the statements re CTCR, not only by the pastor but also by the entire congregation. What a faithful flock! Praise God for such men and women!

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*This op ed is from the Washington Examiner. It warns of the next step to silence the voice of conservative Christianity in America. I agree with the author in that I don't think most socially conservative Christians (as the media labels them) have any idea this is coming. PH.*

OPINION

## As religious freedom law turns 25, vast majority of Democrats oppose what Bill Clinton signed into law

by Ernest Istook

November 14, 2018 12:00 AM

Twenty-five years after President Bill Clinton signed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, most Americans don't know about current aggressive efforts to amend RFRA into oblivion.

In the last two months before the election, 50 House Democrats became new cosponsors on a bill gutting the 25-year-old Religious Freedom Restoration Act. That brought the total to 172 House Democrats, a solid majority of their party, who now support H.R. 3222. They are ready to undo RFRA as a prominent part of the agenda as their party takes control of the House.

H.R. 3222 would declare that religious freedoms must yield when they run counter to the LGBTQ agenda or to other progressive causes such as abortion rights. Pushing this are progressive groups which claim that religious beliefs are just a cover for discrimination, bigotry, and hate.

It's all an about-face from Nov. 16, 1993, when President Bill Clinton signed RFRA after almost-unanimous approval by Congress. Only three nay votes had been cast.

The turnaround dramatizes how culture and politics have changed in 25 years. Secular values have been given priority and religious freedoms have been narrowed.

RFRA states that no federal law or policy can be allowed to substantially burden anyone's exercise of religious freedom — unless government can prove a compelling interest to justify the interference. That forms a barrier against laws and policies that undercut religion.

Lawmakers now working to negate RFRA want to avoid accusations that they would fully repeal it. Instead, they would create a long list of policies and priorities to which RFRA does not apply, thus shrinking its protection of religious freedom.

This is embodied in H.R. 3222, sponsored by Rep. Joseph Kennedy, D-Mass., and 170 other House members, all Democrats, plus the companion Senate bill (S. 2918), authored by Sen. Kamala Harris, D-Calif., with 28 more Democrat senators as cosponsors. They call both of these the “Do No Harm Act.”



One of the cosponsors is the anticipated incoming chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y. That committee would be in charge of approving the undoing of RFRA.

Both House and Senate versions create an itemized list of exemptions from RFRA's protection. Instead of directly attacking the First Amendment's freedom of religion, they would designate that RFRA's religious safeguards are inferior to multiple things including protections for sexual orientation, gender identity, and abortion.

In short, an explicit constitutional right would be declared less important than other claims never mentioned in the Constitution and often not even legislated by elected officials.

This repeal-in-all-but-name of RFRA, according to advocates, also will reverse the Supreme Court's Hobby Lobby and Masterpiece Cakeshop decisions. Endorsing groups include the American Civil Liberties Union, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the Human Rights Campaign, Center for American Progress, Lambda Legal, NAACP, NARAL, National Center for Transgender Equality, National Organization of Women, and Planned Parenthood.

Many are reversing their original 1993 support for RFRA. An example is the ACLU. As its deputy legal director now writes, "today RFRA is being used as a vehicle for institutions and individuals to argue that their faith justifies myriad harms — to equality, to dignity, to health, and to core American values."

State-level versions of RFRA are also being attacked. Those were enacted in 21 states after the U.S. Supreme Court in 1997 ruled that RFRA protects only against intrusive laws on the federal level.

As RFRA reaches its 25th anniversary, most Americans don't know about this aggressive effort to amend RFRA into oblivion. One consequence of this year's elections is that the threat has become very real.

Fortunately, RFRA's silver anniversary has a silver lining, namely that the Senate is very unlikely to approve any legislation gutting it. But the dark cloud remains because those who oppose RFRA will be emboldened by action in the House, and they will keep trying.

Former Rep. Ernest Istook, R-Okla., now teaches political science at Utah Valley University.

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/as-religious-freedom-law-turns-25-vast-majority-of-democrats-oppose-what-bill-clinton-signed-into-law>

## **JOHN OLIVER EXPLAINS WHY YOU SHOULD THINK TWICE ABOUT 'SCIENTIFIC STUDIES'**

BY RYAN BORT ON 5/9/16 AT 10:26 AM

Last month, TV stations and internet outlets got hold of a piece of news positing that most dogs do not like being hugged by their owners. It was reported as a "study," meaning, at least in the minds of consumers, that it was fact. Science, after all, is infallible, right? Because so many of us have dogs, and because so many of us like to hug said dogs, the news was relevant and shocking and everything else that makes for a great, eye-catching headline. The only problem was that there was nothing scientific about it; it was just an animal expert giving his opinion after seeing photos of a bunch of dogs being hugged. This very website even had to run a correction clarifying this point.

This is only one example of the countless "scientific studies" the media reports as fact. On Sunday's episode of *Last Week Tonight*, John Oliver dove into all of the different ways these studies deceive consumers, and how dangerous it can be to ignore the nuances of how a study is conducted. Here are some examples—the results may shock you.

### **Chocolate Is Good for Pregnant Women**

In 2016, a double-blind study was published in the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* testing the effect different kinds of chocolate have on "placental function" and "risk of preeclampsia." There was no control group of women who didn't eat chocolate. Ultimately, the study found there was "no significant difference...in the rate of pre-eclampsia."

But a press release touted the "benefits of chocolate during pregnancy," which was all media outlets needed to produce a story. Yes, they could report, eating chocolate while pregnant is good. It was on TV. It was on the internet. We watched, and we clicked and, presumably, pregnant women ate, to no particular health benefit.

### **Champagne Prevents Dementia**

Again, this was a widely reported story, as seems to always be the case when anything resembling a "drinking = good for you" conclusion can be

extrapolated. The only problem with this one is that it was only performed on rats.

### **Women Are More Open to Romance When They Are Full Instead of Hungry**

Do we really need a study to tell us that someone is going to be more open to something if they aren't hungry? Of course not, but even if we did, this wouldn't be the study to do it as it only sampled 20 women. As Oliver says, "You cannot presume that 20 women can speak for all women. This is science, not the United States Senate."

Nevertheless, the study garnered a segment on Fox News, as well as coverage across the internet. *The Today Show's* headline read, "Science proves it: Women who are hungry don't care about romance."

### **Smelling Farts Prevents Cancer**

In 2014, *Time* published a story about how "smelling farts might prevent cancer." So did several other media outlets. But in reality, as Oliver points out, the study merely said that "certain sulfide compounds are useful pharmacological tools to study mitochondrial dysfunction." The story in *Time* was later edited, with a correction noting that the initial article "incorrectly summarized the findings and implications of this study."

The scientists who conducted the study told *Last Week Tonight* that they still get phone calls and emails from radio and TV shows wanting them to talk about farts.

### **Driving While Dehydrated Is Just as Dangerous as Driving Drunk**

This is ridiculous, obviously, but it was reported on Fox News and elsewhere. Not only was this study based on data from only 11 men, it was funded by the European Hydration Institution as well as, yes, Coca-Cola.

So why does this happen? Scientists are under constant pressure to publish findings and for those findings to be new and exciting. They need funding and they need tenure—this is what gets them. They will use something called p-hacking, which Oliver summarizes as, "collecting lots of variables and then playing with your data until you find something that counts as statistically significant but is probably meaningless." In short, science can be used to prove just about anything and, as the endless deluge of questionable "studies" shows, it has been.

Regardless of how dubious a study may be, news media gladly accept the baton and report the findings as groundbreaking. Outlets are under just as much pressure to generate new and exciting headlines. Oliver's

conclusion is that the media need to be diligent about letting their consumers know the details of the studies they report as fact—like if a study is only based on data from a handful of people, or if the tests were conducted on rats or whatever other inconvenient nuances might make people think twice before loading up on red wine, champagne and chocolate as part of a quest for eternal youth.

Unfortunately, this is unlikely to happen. Consumers will need to be aware of what lies beneath the headlines, and know to take study findings with a grain of salt—which, as it turns out, both causes and cures cancer. <https://www.newsweek.com/john-oliver-last-week-tonight-scientific-studies-457343>

## **Young Christians are leaving the church – Here's why**

J. Warner Wallace By J. Warner Wallace | Fox News

A new, 2018 Pew Research Center Report polled a growing group in America: "religious nones." This group describes themselves as "nothing in particular" when asked if they identify with a specific religious group. The vast majority are ex-Christians, and most are under the age of 35. Pew asked a representative sample of these "religious nones" why they now reject any religious affiliation and provided respondents with six possible responses.

According to the Pew report, most "religious nones" left because they "question a lot of religious teaching" (51 percent agreed with this statement), or because they "don't like the positions churches take on social/political issues" (46 percent agreed with this statement). To a lesser extent, "nones" agreed with the statements, "I don't like religious organizations" (34 percent), "I don't like religious leaders" (31 percent), or "Religion is irrelevant to me" (26 percent).

From this data, one might infer that Christians leave the faith because they no longer agree with the teaching of the Church or that they don't like religious organizations or leaders.

But this is not why young Christians are leaving the church.

One glaring statistic was largely overlooked in the latest data collected by the Pew Research Center. When religious "nones" were asked to identify the most important reason for not affiliating with a religion, the largest response was that none of the six responses provided by Pew were actually very important. In this poll, Pew did not allow respondents to answer in their own words. So, even though respondents searched for an answer that approximated their experience, most didn't believe that any of the reasons offered by Pew were very



important to them when deciding to abandon their religious identity.

What, then, is the real reason young Christians (and other religious believers) leave the faith? The answer lies in a prior, 2016 Pew Research Center survey which allowed respondents to answer in their own words. In this study, most “nones” said they no longer identified with a religious group because they no longer believed it was true. When asked why they didn’t believe, many said their views about God had “evolved” and some reported having a “crisis of faith.” Their specific explanations included the following statements:

“Learning about evolution when I went away to college”  
“Religion is the opiate of the people”  
“Rational thought makes religion go out the window”  
“Lack of any sort of scientific or specific evidence of a creator”  
“I just realized somewhere along the line that I didn’t really believe it”  
“I’m doing a lot more learning, studying and kind of making decisions myself rather than listening to someone else.”

The data from this 2016 study may explain why ex-Christians “question a lot of religious teaching,” as reported in the 2018 study. The teaching they question seems to be about the existence of God, and this is consistent with the explanations offered by ex-Christians in a variety of other recent studies. When Christians walk away from the faith, more often than not, it’s due to some form of intellectual skepticism. Ex-Christians often describe religious beliefs as innately blind or unreasonable.

But that doesn’t accurately reflect the rich, evidential history of Christianity. The psalmist appealed to the design and fine-tuning of the universe to demonstrate the existence of God (Psalm 19:1). Jesus appealed to both eyewitness testimony (John 16:8) and the indirect evidence of his miracles (John 10:38) to argue for the authority of his statements. The disciples identified themselves as eyewitnesses and appealed to their observations of the Resurrection to make the case for the Deity of Jesus (Acts 4:33).

Ex-Christians often leave the Church because they don’t think anyone in the Church can answer their questions or make a case. It’s time for believers to accept their responsibility to explain what Christianity proposes and why these propositions are true, especially when interacting with young people who have legitimate questions. Rather than embracing a blind or unreasonable faith, Christians must develop an informed, forensic faith that can stand up in the marketplace of ideas.

We know why young Christians are leaving. Now it’s time to give them a reason to stay.

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<http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2018/09/09/young-christians-are-leaving-church-here-s-why.html>

*PRH – This is a perspective of the problem from a Reformed point of view. More apologetics is their answer. What it fails to take into account is that postmodernism completely rejects that truth is propositional. Truth is subjective and as broad as whatever moves you strongly, passionately, authentically, or disruptively (To use but a view of today’s buzz words.). It’s true; 1 Peter 3:15 says “always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you.” But don’t think because your defense fails to convince someone, it’s not a defense. See Acts 17 for how Paul explains the faith. See how some wanted to hear more and some sneered. It is true; many who fall away from the Christian faith are frequently drawn back by apologetics. However, it’s only the Spirit working through the Means of Grace that works faith in a person. Luther saw this relationship between apologetics and faith too saying that if man doesn’t believe in the forgiveness of sins for Jesus’ sake it doesn’t matter if he believes in a 6-day creation or not.*

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All articles must be approved by Rev. Paul R. Harris. Articles with no author are written by him.

## FEBRUARY 2019

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

## MARCH 2019

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
12:15 PM Bowling @ Dart Bowl NO Adult Confirmation	5 PM Jr. Confirmation	7:00 PM Voters Meeting	7:30 PM Imposition of Ashes w/Communion			
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
NO Adult Confirmation	5 PM Jr. Confirmation	6:30 PM Elders Meeting	7:30 PM Lenten Vespers II		Wedding Rehearsal	Wedding
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
NO Adult Confirmation	No JR Confirmation		7:30 PM Lenten Vespers III			
Trinity Camps @ McKinney Falls						
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
NO Adult Confirmation	5 PM Jr. Confirmation		7:30 PM Lenten Vespers IV		Wedding Rehearsal	Wedding
31						
NO Adult Confirmation						