

Trinity Te Deum

The official newsletter for Trinity Lutheran Church

1207 West 45 Street Austin, Texas 78756

Rev. Paul R. Harris – 512-453-3835 Church

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

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Trinity Lutheran Church

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Dear Members of Trinity:

21 July 2019 A.D.

As of 3 September 2019, the letterhead above will not say Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. We have officially parted ways with the LCMS as of that date. In truth, it is not that we departed from what I was taught in seminary or what the LCMS, and Trinity when they installed me as pastor, made me vow to teach. No, the LCMS officially departed from this confession as of the 2004 Synodical Convention. See our website, Statement of Confession, and Explanation of Dissent which have been on our website for well over a decade in some cases.

What happens now? In one sense, not a thing. When you come to Bible Classes and Divine Service, the Law will still be the Law, the Gospel the Gospel, and Holy Communion the Body and Blood of Christ. The Absolution will still send your sins as far away from you as east is from west, and Baptism will still forgive your sins, rescue you from death and the devil, and give eternal salvation to all who believe this.

But what will our Communion policy be? The same as it has been since I got here and have been articulating since September 2010. We will still commune members of the LCMS who believe Closed Communion is biblical, faithful, and Lutheran doctrine and practice. We will still not commune those who support, accept, or advocate Open Communion. We will continue to commune members of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the Wisconsin Synod who wish to commune with us as long as they confess what we do about Closed Communion. We will not commune those who commune at Evangelical Lutheran Church in America altars. The difficult cases will be those belonging to one of the several groups who have separated from the ELCA. They all, as far as I know, practice Open Communion and all but one that I know of accept women's ordination and are pro-choice or at least tolerate that position. There could be cases where an individual is trying to separate from these errors. I can't promise you what I will do in every case, but I do promise to be faithful to my ordination vows and our Lutheran Confessions.

What about you? First, as of 3 September 2019 you may no longer identify yourself as a member of the Missouri Synod. You may still be able to commune at their altars. You should not if they practice Open Communion as that denies your own confession. If they practice Closed Communion, you may but it will be up to that pastor. You should not assume that Confessional LCMS pastors, even the sons of our congregation, will automatically commune you. You must talk to them and abide by their decision. I purposely asked the Voters Assembly not to officially leave the LCMS right away so as to give members of Trinity as opportunity to transfer to another LCMS church if that's what they wanted. As it happens, St. Paul, Austin just installed a confessional Lutheran pastor. He is the best of the best. You could not find a more confessional Lutheran pastor, myself included. So, if you want a confessional Lutheran pastor AND the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, just ask me and I will transfer you. After 3 September, I can still send a transfer, but St. Paul might not accept it.

One more thing, after September 3, 2019, the letterhead will read "An independent confessional Lutheran church". We will be seeking fellowship with likeminded pastors and churches, but this needs to be done carefully. We have just left a fellowship we could no longer be a part of in good conscience. We don't want to be quick to join another only to be disappointed later.

In Christ,

Pastor Harris

An Anniversary Worth Remembering not Celebrating

Eighteen years ago a district president of the LCMS participated in a unionistic, syncretistic prayer service after 9/11. This public denial of our public doctrine has never been disciplined, repented of, and has been repeated. Here is an essay from the Spring, 2011 Issues, Etc. Journal that addresses the consequences of this public sin.

From Exception to Rule: How Error Replaces Truth in the Church

by Rev. Todd Wilken, Issue's Etc.

As I write this, the largest Presbyterian denomination in America has just officially permitted non-celibate homosexuals to serve as pastors.

The Presbyterian Church USA joins three other US Protestant denominations in doing so. The United Church of Christ was the earliest in 1985, declaring itself "open and affirming." The Episcopal Church USA and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America followed suit in 2009. The United Methodist Church will likely be next.

Each of these denominations once held a Biblical view of homosexuality. Each of them now repudiate the Bible's teaching on homosexuality. None of this happened overnight. No denomination suddenly reverses itself on a clear Biblical teaching. It happens gradually, yet intentionally. It is no accident that some of the largest Protestant denominations have replaced a once all-male, celibate or married clergy with non-celibate gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered clergy. This change didn't happen overnight.

This change didn't happen by accident. What began as an exception to the rule, is now the rule.

The Exception-Mentality

The exception-mentality is an intellectual hallmark of postmodern churchmanship. Its reasoning is as simple as it is dangerous: If some rules have an exception, then every rule (even one based on Biblical truth) has an exception.

We even have a saying to this effect: "there is an exception to every rule." And, it is true that many rules in life allow for exceptions. Not every rule applies in every circumstance, not every rule applies to everyone and some rules are mere conventions. But does every rule have an exception?

Think about it. "There is an exception to every rule," IS a rule. This rule, if true, must also have an exception. The rule "there is an exception to every rule" has an exception, namely, some rules have no exceptions.

Of course, "there is an exception to every rule" is logically selfrefuting, therefore untrue. Some rules have no exceptions. The only question that remains is, which rules have exceptions and which don't? In particular, do Biblical teachings have exceptions? The exception-mentality in the Church assumes they do.

In every denomination that has approved of homosexual clergy, the advocates for this change began by seeking an exception to the existing, Biblical rule against such

things. But the exception-mentality is common in conservative Churches too.

Once-In-A-Lifetime

Permit an example from my own denomination's recent history of how this exception-mentality works in the Church.

The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) is a famously conservative denomination. In matters of Church fellowship, the LCMS constitution lays down a rule. It requires the "renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description." Unionism is the mixing of different Christian confessions; Syncretism is the mixing of different religions. This constitutional rule is based on the exclusive truth claims of Christianity and the Bible's clear warnings against false teaching.

But there is an exception in the LCMS that actually permits unionism or syncretism: The "once-in-a-life-time situation." And, there's a story behind it.

In 2001, in the weeks following the 9-11 terrorist attacks, Dr. David Benke, president of the Atlantic District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod found himself at the center of a debate over inter-religious prayer. As Christianity Today reported the story, *Twelve days after the September 11 attacks, David Benke followed Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, and Hindu clerics to the podium of a Yankee Stadium event to honor the missing and the dead. Benke asked attendees to join hands and pray with him "on this field of dreams turned into God's house of prayer." He prayed "in the precious name of Jesus" and sat down. That prayer has led to Benke's suspension from the clergy roster of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. (Todd Hertz, "Benke Suspended for 'Syncretism' after 9/11 Event Interfaith prayer exposes divisions in LCMS," Christianity Today, July 2002)*

Benke's suspension and what followed in the LCMS made history, literally. Philip and Carol Zaleski cited the Benke case as one raising "important issues about interfaith prayer" in their 2005 book, *Prayer: a History*. They report the conclusion of the case in this way: *On April 11, 2003, the panel dismissed all charges against Benke, citing an obscure LCMS regulation that allowed ministers to participate in a "once in a lifetime" event such as the Yankee Stadium affair. (Philip & Carol Zaleski, Prayer: A History, Houghton Mifflin: 2005, p. 305)*

What was this "obscure LCMS regulation"? It began as a 2001 report summarizing church-wide responses to a 2000 study document titled, "The Lutheran Understanding of Church Fellowship." The study materials and the report had been prepared by the office of the LCMS President and LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations. Both the study materials and the report had been commended by the 2001 LCMS Convention (Resolution 3-07A) a few months before Benke's participation in the inter-religious prayer service.

Then, just prior to the April 2003 panel hearing on Benke's case, both the study materials and the report were ruled to be doctrinally binding on "all members of synod" by the LCMS Commission on Constitutional Matters. The relevant section of the original document read, regarding interfaith and inter-religious prayer and worship: *There are*

also 'once-in-a-life-time' situations. It is virtually impossible to anticipate all such situations or to establish rules in advance. Specific answers cannot be given to cover every type of situation pastors and congregations face. These situations can be evaluated only on a case-by-case basis and may evoke different responses from different pastors who may be equally committed to LCMS fellowship principles. The LCMS has always recognized this. ("The Lutheran Understanding of Church Fellowship: *A Report on Synodical Discussions*," CTCR, February 16, 2001)

Here's the point. The charges of syncretism and unionism against Benke were dismissed --not because he didn't engage in syncretism and unionism-- but because his participation at Yankee Stadium was ruled to be a "once-in-a-life-time" situation, an exception.

Of course, this exception raises more questions than it answers: Is the "once-in-a-life-time" exception a freebee for pastors and church leaders who find themselves in an awkward ecumenical spot? Does everyone get only one, or can you have more than one "once-in-a-life-time" exception? For that matter, whose lifetime are we talking about? For the attentive reader, this exception should raise more substantive concerns.

First, the "once-in-a-life-time" exception is not rooted in any Scriptural teaching, but in pragmatism. Scripture provides no permission for, or example of a "once-in-a-life-time" exception in matters of Church Fellowship.

Second, the logic of the "once-in-a-life-time" exception is unclear at best. Why would a once in a lifetime situation require or permit an exception in ordinary Church fellowship practice? Would any once in a lifetime situation permit an exception, or only a certain kind of once in a lifetime situation (like a massive terrorist attack on the US)?

Third, strictly speaking, any situation can be said to occur only "once in-a-life-time." Even similar situations are only similar; not identical. So there is quite literally no end of situations where the "once-in-a-life-time" exception could apply.

Fourth, ethically the "once-in-a-life-time" exception is Situational Ethics. Joseph Fletcher, the father of this dubious ethical theory wrote: *The situationist enters into every decision-making situation fully armed with the ethical maxims of his community and its heritage, and he treats them with respect as illuminators of his problems. Just the same he is prepared in any situation to compromise them or set them aside in the situation if love seems better served by doing so.* (Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics: The New Morality*, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), p. 26)

Situation ethics says that what would otherwise be wrong, is right, depending on the situation. This is exactly what the "once-in-a-life-time" exception says as well.

Finally, one must ask, why would the "once-in-a-life-time" exception apply only to matters of Church fellowship, unionism and syncretism? Why couldn't it apply to other matters of faith and morals as well? Why couldn't a missionary, threatened with his life unless he deny Christ, be permitted a "once-in-a-life-time" exception? Why couldn't a Christian mother, under familial and financial pressure to abort her unborn child, be permitted a "once-in-a-life-time" exception?

The LCMS constitution (not to mention the Bible) forbids unionism and syncretism of every description. The LCMS "once-in-a-life-time" exception permits it. And, please note the irony that the "once-in-a-life-time" exception is now "binding" LCMS doctrine. The exception is now a rule.

Many other recent changes in the LCMS began as exceptions: entertainment worship, open communion, lay ministry and an unordained "clergy," academic freedom permitting advocacy of evolution, homosexuality, etc. The exception-mentality provides a fertile seedbed for error to begin its progress and eventual domination in the Church.

Toleration, Equality, Supremacy

Nineteenth century Lutheran theologian Charles Porterfield Krauth describes error's plea for an exception as only the beginning of a three stage advance. Krauth writes: *...it works in one unvarying way. When error is admitted into the Church, it will be found that the stages of its progress are always three. It begins by asking toleration. Its friends say to the majority: "You need not be afraid of us; we are few, and weak; only let us alone; we shall not disturb the faith of others. The church has her standards of doctrine; of course we shall never interfere with them; we ask only for ourselves to be spared interference with our private opinions."*

Again, my own denomination provides another example of this first stage, error's plea for tolerance. Very recently, the liberal group "Daystar" resurfaced in the LCMS, lamenting the election of Pastor Matt Harrison as the denomination's president. Under previous administrations, Daystar had privately and publicly promoted the teaching of evolution, open communion, the ordination of women and the affirmation of homosexuality. In an editorial for their Daystar Journal, Dr. Robert Schmidt begins: "The election of Matt Harrison and his conservative comrades have left LCMS moderates concerned about the future of the Synod and their place in it." He continues, *What is a moderate to do? The Bible is full of stories how God's good servants are on the losing side of conflicts. Under threat of his life Elijah flees to Mt. Horeb in the wilderness, Discouraged he wonders of he is the only one left to care about God and God's covenant with his people. Yes, 7000 are left but what are they against the royal house, the bureaucracy, and the army? ...Like Elijah, God's good servants are a diminishing minority in the public sphere. Of course, like always, there are the sycophantic religious voices of support for the powers that be. Those, however, seeking economic justice for the poor, for immigrants, and for the victims of war are vastly outnumbered...Moderates in the LCMS are part of that first remnant.* (Robert Schmidt, "The Remnant," *Daystar Journal*, Spring 2011)

Daystar's plea for tolerance follows Krauth's description of error's first stage exactly. "Moderate" is a term preferred by liberal groups in and outside the Church. It gives the impression that Daystar's positions are reasonable and mainstream --certainly not a challenge to the Truth. Daystar presents itself as "on the losing side," "a diminishing minority," and "vastly outnumbered." This also fits Krauth's description of error's initial plea for toleration.

Error first asks only for toleration as a beleaguered minority. But, it doesn't stop there. Krauth continues: *Indulged in this for a time, error goes on to assert equal rights. Truth and error are two balancing forces. The Church shall do nothing which looks like deciding between them; that would be partiality. It is bigotry to assert any superior right for the truth. We are to agree to differ, and any favoring of the truth, because it is truth, is partisanship. What the friends of truth and error hold in common is fundamental. Anything on which they differ is ipso facto non-essential. Anybody who makes account of such a thing is a disturber of the peace of the church. Truth and error are two coordinate powers and the great secret of churchstatesmanship is to preserve the balance between them.*

This stage of error's progress may sound very familiar. That's because this is where much of mainline Protestantism finds itself today. Be it a congregation or an entire church body, the rule today is: "Don't rock the boat! Agree to disagree. Live and let live." I have called it *laissez-faire* Christianity.

This second stage of error's progress is often characterized by denial. The advocates of error deny that any real disagreement exists. These denials range from the outright: "Our differences are political, practical or personal; not doctrinal," to the more subtle, "We have unity within our diversity." For their part, the advocates of Truth find it easier to keep their heads down and their mouths shut. They retreat to their own corner where they can, for a time, deny error's progress in the Church.

Krauth rightly observes that at this stage in error's progress, doctrinal minimalism replaces doctrinal agreement. "What the friends of truth and error hold in common is fundamental. Anything on which they differ is ipso facto non-essential."

Doctrinal minimalism is a juggernaut of circular reasoning: Christians are united on all the important things, therefore if Christians disagree about something, it must be unimportant. This doctrinal minimalism allows both sides to maintain the illusion of unity, even while error continues to replace Truth, point by point, doctrine by doctrine. Taken to its illogical conclusion, doctrinal minimalism reduces every point of Christian doctrine to a nonessential. This obviously perpetuates error's progress, first pleading for toleration, then later for equality.

Krauth also says that at this stage in error's progress "peace" is maintained by avoiding any discussion of error's progress. Elsewhere, Krauth observes that at this stage the Church will be attracted to leaders who are skilled as impartial referees between the error and Truth. They are put into place to keep the peace. The progress of error thrives on this false "peace" and on church leaders who are uncommitted to either side. So, Krauth concludes: *From this point error soon goes on to its natural end, which is to assert supremacy. Truth started with tolerating, it comes to be merely tolerated, and that, only for a time. Error claims a preference for its judgments on all disputed points. (C.P. Krauth, The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology, Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1872, pp. 195-96)*

Four mainline Protestant denominations in America now officially approve of non-celibate gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people serving as pastors. How did it happen? How did this error replace the Truth in these churches? Toleration, equality, supremacy. In every denomination that has approved of homosexual clergy, the advocates for this change began by seeking an exception to the existing rule. Once the exception was made, they began to question the rule itself. Finally, they abolish the rule altogether. For now in these denominations, Christians who still believe in the rule are still tolerated --merely tolerated-- "and that, only for a time."

Of course, we really don't need C.P. Krauth to explain this to us, do we? St. Paul said the same thing 2,000 years ago: "Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" (1 Corinthians 5:6; Galatians 5:9)

Not Even a Little

The late Father Richard John Neuhaus famously said, "Wherever orthodoxy is optional, it sooner or later will be proscribed." The exceptionmentality in the Church has made orthodoxy optional. Sooner or later, if error's progress goes unchecked, orthodoxy won't even be an option. Truth and error cannot peacefully coexist in the life of the Church. One or the other will always prevail. And, what have we learned? If error is tolerated in the Church, it will eventually replace the Truth in the Church. If error is tolerated, the exception inevitably becomes the rule.

We have watched exception-minded churches and denominations "exception" their way into apostasy. The exception-mentality in the Church must be replaced with a Truth-mentality.

How? Intolerance --patient, careful, loving but total intolerance of error in the Church. **There is no exception to the Truth.** In the Church, Truth should make no exception for error.

Really?! Am I saying that absolutely nothing contrary to God's Word should be tolerated in the Church? Yes, absolutely nothing, no exceptions. Again, St. Paul says, "a little leaven leavens the whole lump." Tolerating a little error in the Church is like tolerating a little infidelity in a marriage, a little child abuse in a family, or a little terrorism in society.

You might object, "Didn't Jesus Himself make many exceptions to the Biblical Sabbath and other ceremonial laws?" No, He didn't, not at all. What He did do was refute and correct His opponents' misconceptions about the nature of the Sabbath and ritual cleanliness.

You might say, "But there's no such thing as a perfect Church, without error of any kind." I agree. But even so, that isn't an argument for tolerating even a little error in the Church. Paul doesn't say, "A lot of yeast leavens the whole lump, but a little is just fine." No. Even a little is enough to leaven everything; even a little is dangerous.

You might worry, "You're calling for theological witch hunts and a purge of the Church." Not at all. I'm calling for repentance from those who teach and practice contrary to God's Word. Is that too much to ask?

I'm calling for us to stop creating exceptions to God's Word under the pretense of obeying the Great

Commission, and actually obey Jesus when he says there, “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

I’m calling for us to stop creating exceptions to God’s Word under the pretense of being “loving.” Instead, I’m calling for us to so love God’s Word, that we would never want to see it ignored in favor of exceptions or compromise. I’m calling for us to so love one another, that we would never want to see a Christian brother or sister believe, teach or practice anything contrary to God’s Word. I’m calling for us to so love the lost, that we would never want to present them with anything but the pure, saving Gospel and Word of Jesus Christ.

“The Lonely Way”

A Lutheran pastor, Rev. Sasse, wrote at the beginning of the twentieth century that to be a Lutheran is to walk on the lonely path between Roman Catholicism and Spiritualism (Reformed).¹ I agree, especially in the Bible-belt, that it gets a bit lonely as a real (Bible-believing) Lutheran. However, the twenty-first century is different than the one before. To a greater degree, whether you were Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist, Methodist, etc. a century ago, while you may not agree on salvation, you could agree on basic Biblical morality. There was agreement on the clear Words of Scripture and common sense that some activities were clearly sinful and unnatural. Not so today. As our culture drifts further away from the Word of God, I find that the path gets lonelier and lonelier. Many denominations on both sides of the path, and even nominal Lutherans, have quickly bowed the knee to the immoral statues that our world is quickly building.

Take for example a 2019 Graduation ‘prayer’ at *Baylor University* in Waco, historically a morally conservative Southern Baptist university. The ‘minister’ ‘prayed’, “*God, give them the moral imagination to reject the old keys we are trying to give them to a planet that we are poisoning by running it on fossil fuels and misplaced priorities – a planet with too many straight, white men like me behind the steering wheel while others have been expected to sit quietly in the back of the bus.*”² This should be scandalous and shocking, but, the crowd didn’t boo, it cheered. This should sober you up to the kind of minds that are being shaped and sent into our world, even the ones coming out of a ‘christian’ environment. Now, to be fair to *Baylor*, this ‘minister’ isn’t in their official fellowship via convention. And, I know that alumni and faculty have spoken out against this prayer.³ I hope the University issues a public statement too.

Allow me to quickly point out the heresy in the ‘prayer’ and then I’ll return to my thesis of our path is getting lonelier by the day. First, fossil fuels aren’t sinful and neither is rejecting recycling and all the pharisaical environmentalism. As many have shown, it uses more energy to recycle than to not. We are free to pick a side in this argument and not call the other side sinful. Second, denouncing someone for the color of his [not her] skin is sinful. This is reverse racism and sexism at its finest. All racism is wrong. So much for judging a man by the content of his character and not the color of his skin. It also rejects God’s Order of Creation that men are to “steer the wheel” for the benefit of the women and children “on the bus.” The demonic doctrine of feminism isn’t winning the cultural war, it has won.⁴ And, I am not even to the worst part of the ‘prayer.’ He not only denounces whites. He not only denounces men. He denounces “strait, white men.” I wish he would have taken Logic 101 at Baylor, which I’m guessing might not be offered.

To compare the color of ones’ skin to a sexual desire and behavior is not apples to apples (maybe the orange has self-identified as an apple?). It isn’t sinful to be white or black, but it is sinful to be racist. It isn’t sinful to be male or female, as God has made you, but it is sinful not to treat both (not 99) sexes with equal value, dignity, and respect, and as an aside, this includes in the womb and outside of it. Male and female, child and parent, in the womb or outside, should all be treated with equal value, as God’s creation, even though there are distinctions in responsibilities and duties.⁵ But, to try to compare sodomy and other sinful and unnatural acts to race and sex is illogical. It is a state of being compared to an action in thought, word, or deed. But, this bus that he and most of academia are driving has already fallen off the cliff, including some within the LCMS.⁶ I’m sure you have seen the groups that are forming, like, “Pedophiles are people too.” “Why not? What is truth? Who’s to judge?” You are sorely mistaken if you don’t think things like pedophilia could become common, so thought your grandparents about sodomy. The devil’s logical weeds have already been sown and taken root in the hearts of men and women. Lord, have mercy!

⁴ <https://www.amazon.com/Why-Feminism-so-Hard-Resist/dp/1891469479>

⁵ Even the comparison between race and sex isn’t equal. Men and women, child and parent, have different Biblical roles, but there are no pronouncements about different duties based on the shade of your skin or the amount of Native American blood you have.

⁶ While many of our Concordia Universities have remained faithful, not all have. Evolution and the gay agenda have been embraced by some. Read through our Synodical Convention minutes over the last decade and the overtures for this upcoming convention. <https://steadfastlutherans.org/2019/03/concordia-portland-continues-doing-its-thing/>

¹ <https://www.cph.org/p-2904-the-lonely-way-selected-essays-and-letters-volume-1.aspx>

² <https://www.toddstarnes.com/campus/baylor-university-denounces-straight-white-men-in-graduation-prayer/>

³ <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/dreher/baylor-prayer-straight-white-men/>

NPR Memo Instructs Writers How to Frame Abortion Debate with Biased Language

By Tré Goins-Phillips

May 22, 2019

After reading a “guidance reminder” posted last week by NPR, it’s become even more obvious why those in favor of abortion and those opposed to it are increasingly at odds with one another.

Mark Memmott, supervising senior editor of standards and practices for NPR, put together the guide after Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey (R) signed into law the most stringently pro-life legislation in the country and not long after Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp (R) signed a bill into law barring abortion after a heartbeat is detectable, which usually occurs around six weeks into pregnancy.

The style guide makes one thing abundantly, painstakingly clear: NPR writers are to go out of their way to make sure it never, ever sounds like the collection of cells inside a mother’s womb is a human life.

Perhaps the most absurd — and absurdly bias — rule in the NPR manual is the injunction against the word “unborn,” which journalists are to avoid like the plague, according to Memmott, because it “implies that there is a baby inside a pregnant woman.”

“They’re fetuses,” he lectured. “Incorrectly calling a fetus a ‘baby’ or ‘the unborn’ is part of the strategy used by antiabortion groups to shift language/legality/public opinion.” (Just FYI: Even the Mayo Clinic refers to fetuses who have, according to Memmott, not yet turned into humans as babies.)

The moratorium on the sinister words can only be lifted “when referring to the title of the bill.” The fact he used the word “strategy” only to refer to those opposed to abortion should be telling, as if there’s a clandestine plan by pro-lifers, but those who support abortion are just trying to protect some inalienable right.

Memmott also takes issue with “pro-life” and “pro-choice” descriptors. Instead, he said those who are opposed to abortion should be referred to as “abortion rights opponents” or people who are “anti-abortion rights.” Both of those phrases, of course, are clearly editorialized. By unnecessarily inserting the word “rights” into the descriptors, it sends the message pro-lifers are opposed to “rights.”

By contrast, those who are in favor of abortion are to be called “abortion rights supporter(s)/advocate(s).” The upside in those titles is obvious.

The language Memmott selected for NPR journalists reveals two things: (1) Many in the media have already chosen their side and (2) those in the pro-abortion camp have a fundamental misunderstanding of the pro-life movement. It

Is it any wonder that the Church is shrinking to a remnant? Is it any wonder that our children are no longer Lutheran and dismiss parts of the Bible? Is it any wonder that even some in our Synod are falling off the path? Not to me. And, friends, this ‘prayer’ was at a ‘christian’ university. During my visit to Austin last month for the TX District pastors’ conference, I visited *The University of Texas*. It has rainbow flags everywhere. There are posters with LGBTQ, plus about 10 more letters that I still have no idea what they even mean. There were those advocating for infanticide and the like.

Yes, remaining steadfast in the faith is only going to get harder as the bus is coming to run us over. The devil and world attack the Church. What are we to do? We could flee. We could join them and sit at the back of the bus as they drive us to hell. Or, we can wake-up and realize that we are in a warzone and fight with the weapons the Lord has provided, chiefly His Word and Sacraments in the communion of saints, that will strengthen our faith.⁷ We should keep on preaching repentance and the forgiveness of sins. We should realize that we cannot serve two masters and be friends with the world and Jesus. Holding to and confessing all of God’s Word is hard and lonely, always has been (Rom. 1).

May the Lord strengthen our faith and give us strength to confess and die as lonely martyrs, if He so wills. Choose this day and century whom you will serve. May we say with Joshua and reach the Promised Land of heaven, “As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord (Josh. 24).” Christ, have mercy. Amen.

June 2019 Newsletter Article – Pastor Stark, St. John LCMS, Frisco, TX

⁷ Listen to this for food for thought on what Christians might do in a post-Christian world: <https://issuesetc.org/tag/the-benedict-option/>

has nothing to do with suppressing a woman's — a mother's — "rights." Rather, the pro-life movement is about protecting the rights of the child who has not yet been born and is unable to defend his or her inalienable rights.

Anything else?

The NPR editor encouraged journalists not to use the phrase "abortion clinic" because the facilities "perform other procedures and not just abortions." Memmott also took issue with the title "abortion doctor." Instead, abortionists should be referred to people who operate clinics "where abortions are performed."

Memmott is also not a big fan of the phrase "late-term abortion." "Though we initially believed this term carried less ideological baggage when compared with partial-birth," he explained, "it still conveys the sense that the fetus is viable when the abortion is performed." He said late-term abortion should be referred to only as "a procedure known medically as intact dilation and extraction."

All of this language achieves one goal: Making the human inside a mother's womb sound as nonhuman as possible. <https://www.faithwire.com/2019/05/22/npr-reminds-writers-how-to-frame-abortion-debate-with-biased-language/>

Sermon on Mothers, Women, and Men

Rev. Philip Hale, Omaha, NE

It's career day at school—what will all the little kids want to be when they grow up? An astronaut, a fireman, a president—or maybe even a dinosaur? Many of these are not practical or realistic. Our world teaches that worth is tied to income producing, public jobs. This is almost always implicitly gender-less and denies the realities of marriage.

My daughter recently had a career day at school. She went as a mother—which surprised me. There is not much sizzle in this position. There is no impressive uniform to wear. But how many little girls will actually become mothers? Most—but our world teaches this is not real, adult work.

I often joke with my wife who stays home, caring for our 9 children, that she doesn't have a job—because it is not career work. It is not optional or by choice. It is God's will and what women were built to do—to be mothers. They should be praised when they embrace this role and do not try to escape it. But mothers are minimized today because children impede career and worldly success. Motherhood is an optional tack on to real success—which is acting like a man in a public role, without the incessant demands of home life.

But this calling of motherhood is expressive of women's inner nature. Every girl is made to be a mother—it shows forth in her entire design: body, mind, emotions. Christians must praise this role and give it priority. There is nothing more important than bringing forth life and raising believing, respectful children.

While the world thinks we put down women by not asking them to be pastors and leaders in the church—it is actually the opposite. Complete equality of woman with man is a very limited equality—that is harmful to females. It never encompasses the fullness of God's will and creation—that male and female are intentionally different. One is not less than the other—they are different in purpose. So purpose must factor into how we live in this world. Equality today is a sledge hammer that destroys the essential differences that God created.

The strength of devoted women makes the world go round. They are behind every leader and every public action—mothers made them, literally. Every person on TV and on the podium had to be formed in a mother's womb. They were helpless infants—when mothers were doing the dirty work behind the scenes. Domestic duties do not pay well, but these sacrifices necessary for the future of the race. They determine directly the health of family and church and nation. A society which does not honor, protect, and respect women as the bearers of life—not for how much skin they expose—is dying and has no real future.

So what lies in the wake of feminism and fake equality? The destruction of families, marriages, and Christian faith. Without a clear distinction between male and female—which is ridiculed in our time—marriage is just about impossible, children are devalued, and sexual immorality will reign. That is why the love for God has grown cold—most can't even love as fathers and mothers. But you are the basic building blocks of the church, people and society itself. It is not congressional laws or the next president which really determine the future of our country, but the care and attention needed to form the character of a child—fathers and mothers. This requires the nurturing of a mother and authority of a father.

I read an old account of a mother who died with a baby. It said her child "did not long enjoy the tenderness of his mother." How strange to our ears. What is weakness in sports, business, and career success—is necessary to bring up functioning adults. Mothers are to be praised—by children, husbands, and the church, as they are by God Himself: **Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come. She**

opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: "Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all (Pr. 31).

Women are to be praised who aspire to God's will for them. Children and motherhood spring from female role God made. Even without children or marriage, all women still have a holy design and role within God's ordering. This is not to be mangled or ignored—but honored and loved.

When people go away from God's design—sin is always the result. Women deserve better than equality—much better. Men are to honor women—all of them—for sake of the Creator. You, men, are called to be respectful and live with your wives in an understanding way. Husbands are to be patient and love in their leadership, carrying burdens and taking responsibility—because your wife is part of you, since Christ made you one flesh.

Feminists hate above all that all girls and young women are potential mothers—and that this determines their life and course in this world. But who created men and women differently for this purpose (of marriage)? Our blessed Lord Jesus Christ who loves us dearly. His will we love as holy, even as it is manifested in creation. Despite the sin and difficulties surrounding marriage and children—the holiness of mothers still shines through. This is God's work and there is nothing more significant.

A poet wrote: "An ounce of mother is worth a pound of clergy." He's right. Without mothers and women, we would be animals. Mothers humanize us. Weakness and tenderness are not career impediments here. Scripture says: **"Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you."** There is no earning a mother's love—it is given. A baby gets to eat even when he cries all night and does not say please or thank you. Why? Love, compassion, and nurturing are things that women excel in and should be praised for.

But don't we weed out this maternal instinct today? It's not good for competitive sports, being the best at something, or climbing the career ladder. But mothers make home a safe place—a refuge for her family. Not to say she shouldn't earn a pay check. She will even when she doesn't want to—for the good of her family. This

sacrificial role we cannot measure or put dollar amount on—that would be to devalue it. God gives us His will: mothers possess a holy position.

All men and women relate to one another in this world through the pattern of divine marriage. How many are technically mothers, but have murdered their children for the sake of false gods? Or how many claim that being fruitful—God's express will and intent—would ruin their lives? In historic times to be a woman was to be motherly and to show tenderness was feminine. Only God makes biological mothers, but to be a woman is always a divine role. It is never less important than public actions—though it might get less attention and pay raises.

Our world simply doesn't understand scriptural submission and headship, because it doesn't understand male and female—and that Christ is the head of all. The world is basically homosexual and transgender in its thinking—biological sex doesn't determine one's role or path in life. It treats girls and boys the same and prepares them for adulthood the exact same way. God forbid this foolishness in the church.

Our very nature dictates that most boys will be fathers and most girls will be mothers. Male and female only makes sense in the pattern of marriage—the one flesh union God Himself forms. This is the place God designated to bring forth life. When people talk of surprise or unwanted children, I want to laugh—and cry. Children occur only through the marital act—the evidence of what God does through male and female is abundant and intended. But how many want some of the blessings of marriage, without all of them that God bestows?

We need both roles—women to be women and men to be men. Women today often have to do both roles, because many men are just boys. But mothers do what needs be done—even when it means incredible sacrifice. This does not mean that fathers are not important. When mothers domineeringly rule the home and society, permissiveness rules—and not God's set order—and life itself is devalued. Men are needed to set limits, be firm, and rule their families in love. They are called to be like God the Father. We are a nurturing, feminine world—even when it comes to sin—but fathers are to lead and be feared, just like God the Father. Fathers are not to be pushovers and let mothers be the head—this is unloving and goes against creation—God's own work.

Fathers are to be the head of their wives—which is not an easy job. They are to be responsible and lead,

especially when it requires self-sacrifice and unpleasantness. Men are to do what best and godly for their family—to be uncompromising, firm, and stand up for God’s Word. Only then can women be truly feminine and motherly as God has designated. Only a husband who rules his family as God the Father, allows women to be mothers first and foremost—since this is an all-encompassing role. God makes mothers, but men are to help women live as godly women and possible mothers.

It is a sad reality that, at times, women must be like men, when it comes to leading the family. And they should, if the father is unwilling or unable. Someone has to lead—or else Satan or the children will (which is basically the same thing). This is not how God wanted it to be—to play another's role in this cursed world. But it is done out of necessity—not to domineer or prove she is better—it is an act of love in this evil world. Women must do what needs to be done—so the Word and will of God primary. Married women still, however, have command of our Lord in Eph. 5 to respect her husband—even if he is unbelieving and a poor husband and father. The Christian women sees this as a true act of love: submission to the Lord and His ordering.

Submit to role and marriage He gives you. Live out His earthly ordering in the freedom of Christ—He forgives all transgressions of marriage and family. Not one of you have really been a good mother or father—our sin disallows it. We have all failed and rebelled against God’s will. This guilt was placed on His Son—to kill it with his death.

Your God demonstrated sacrificial love—all the way Jesus’ own death. All your guilt, dissatisfaction, and frustration at God’s role for you—has been crucified. Your God took charge and was a husband to us unfaithful people. Today, you are raised in baptism pure and clean—holy to God.

So listen to your Lord—His call is what counts. Only knowing His salvation, can we be free to love as God designed. Men and Women have different ways to show love—and Christ’s forgiveness clothes and unites you all. This is the source of divine love. The greatest act of love is be in a subordinate position, yet not be angry or upset about it—not trying to be what you are not meant to be, but to live in peace under God, who is good to you.

Trust your Father’s gracious will in Christ—that He will provide you with all you need and bless your particular role on earth. And all fathers and mothers are to submit

to God’s will, despite how we are called to show our love differently. We are all united in God’s grace—who loves us and gives us a righteous status based on Christ, not what we do. Serve the Lord in what you do and honor Him.

Mothers are necessary, praiseworthy, precious to God. This is why the church covers women in modesty, giving them greater honor, to free them to be godly women and mothers. This protection is to be clothed with love, which forces and pushes men to be godly leaders at home, in church, and in the world. There is no more special and apt role for a women than to be a mother. This is God’s exalted position—that one must be put into by Christ. May the Lord bless all you women, so all trust in His holy will and earthly works. The love of a mother is great indeed—one of the greatest things we can know on earth, but God the Father's acceptance and love is perfect—and it’s for all for you. Amen.

Confirmation Memory

I don’t remember how many articles I have written on kids having Luther’s Small Catechism memorized BEFORE junior confirmation begins when they are in 6th grade, but I began pre-testing 3 years ago.

The Catechism was written by Luther in 1529 for “the head of the family” to “teach them in a simple way to his household.” The Catechism was not written, so I could teach your kids but so you could.

I do not have my classes memorize all six Chief Parts. For my own children, I did and recommend you do the same. But because of time constraints I don’t test the class on the Lord’s Prayer and a few other parts. What exactly I will test your children prior to their starting confirmation class is in my Catechism Memory Work booklet which you can get from the secretary either electronically or in good old fashion paper.

It is well within most children’s capability to have all their memory work memorized by 10-years-old. Children and grandchildren of mine have had it done much sooner than that. But for them to do that it takes nightly work on your part.

Two closing things. First, the fly in the ointment is when families transfer in or join who have not been working on memory for the years prior to junior confirmation. I take the kids as they are and do the best I can. Second, some kids are able to memorize on the fly, but they seldom retain what they memorize long-term.

The Catechism has been known for centuries as the Layman’s Bible. This brings to mind Psalm 119:11, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee.”

AUGUST 2019

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
12:00 PM Adult Class			7:15 PM Bible Class			
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
12:00 PM Adult Class			7:15 PM Bible Class			
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
12:00 PM Adult Class			7:15 PM Bible Class			
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
12:00 PM Adult Class			7:15 PM Bible Class		TIME TBD Karaoke (Adults) at Common Interest	3:00 PM Karaoke (all ages) and Game day

SEPTEMBER 2019

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
		7 PM Voters Meeting	7:15 PM Bible Class			
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	5 PM Jr Confirmation		7:15 PM Bible Class			
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	5 PM Jr Confirmation	6:30 PM Elders Meeting	7:15 PM Bible Class			3:00 PM Beer, Brats & Bride
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
	5 PM Jr Confirmation		7:15 PM Bible Class			
29	30					
	5 PM Jr Confirmation					

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