

Trinity Te Deum

The official newsletter for Trinity Lutheran Church

1207 West 45 Street Austin, Texas 78756

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

What Are We For?

Soon after leaving the LCMS, a classmate of mine, still in the LCMS, said that he found churches or groups of churches that left the LCMS let you know what they are against but rarely what they are for. He thought the latter was just as important if not more important. So what are we for?

We are for communing based on a person's confession of faith, not whether or not they have the same letters (LCMS, ELS, or WELS) after their name. This proves real challenging when it comes to ELCA. We do not commune them if they are still in communion with that heretical sect.

We are for spreading the Gospel using Word and Sacrament not gimmicks, bait and switch, programs, or appealing to people's felt needs.

We are for actually teaching the Small Catechism in both junior and adult instruction and not some "Love and Serve Jesus" curriculum. And we are for doing this in depth over years for kids and months for adults.

We are for reverence in Divine Services. We do not mandate that you cross yourself, kneel, or bow, but we do require reverence, respect, and worship of the holy things.

We are for teaching the local church is Church. We are not lacking anything by not being a member of a synod, association, or federation. We may choose to do any one of those things but we are not required to do so by Scripture.

We are for following the Order of Creation revealed in Scripture regarding it as applicable to all creation and not just home or church. As I recently said to the Elders, I do not understand why the 2012 legalizing of gay marriage and the subsequent rejection of the Order of Creation manifested in the body, (i.e. you can choose to be or become either a man or a woman no matter which God has created you) has not led those confessional churches who have women voting and girls acolyting running to repentance.

We are for teaching that while men can start wars, famines, and pandemics, only God in His mercy can ultimately stop them. We make use of medicine, doctors, and sanitation. We do as Proverbs 21:31 says, "The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the Lord."

We are for the one holy Christian church. We don't think we're the only ones going to heaven. We do not think the holy Christian Church is limited to certain denominations, countries, or even to those living. The holy Christian Church can't be seen in any one place, but it is found wherever people are gathered around the Gospel

purely preached and the Sacraments are administered according to Christ's institution.

We are for teaching our kids the actual Bible stories as opposed to how do they feel about them or how they should apply them. The latter will come in time. What they need to know now, backwards and forwards, is the actual stories.

We are for standing up and being counted among those who actively oppose abortion. We are for rejecting the stance that it is okay to be personally opposed to killing children in the womb but allowing that choice to others. We are for rejecting the distinction now being made between being Pro-Choice but not Pro-Abortion.

We are for properly distinguishing Law and Gospel with the Gospel predominating in preaching and teaching. We are for teaching justification and assuming sanctification along with our Lord who taught in Matthew 12:33, "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good." By the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we are made 'good trees'; therefore, the good fruit will follow.

We are for understanding that God gave us the revelation of Himself in Scripture ultimately for our comfort, and we use that right understanding to interpret Scripture. This is what we say: "For, as the apostle testifies, Rom. 15:4: Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. But when this consolation and hope are weakened or entirely removed by Scripture, it is certain that it is understood and explained contrary to the will and meaning of the Holy Ghost" (FC, SD, XI, 92).

You can turn this question around on those believing there is no church outside of some sort of man-made institution. Ask them what is their institution for? And the answer at the end of the day is going to be: for perpetuating itself.

The History and Meaning of Ash Wednesday

By Dr. Richard P. Bucher, Pastor

Ash Wednesday is the name given to the first day of the season of Lent, in which the Pastor applies ashes to the foreheads of Christians to signify an inner repentance. But what is the history and the meaning of this Christian holy day?

Ash Wednesday, originally called *dies cinerum* (day of ashes) is mentioned in the earliest copies of the Gregorian Sacramentary, and probably dates from at least the 8th Century. One of the earliest descriptions of Ash Wednesday is found in the writings of the Anglo-Saxon abbot Aelfric (955-1020). In his *Lives of the Saints*, he writes, "We read in the books both in the Old Law and in the New that the men who repented of their sins bestrewed themselves with ashes and clothed their bodies with sackcloth. Now let us do this little at the beginning of our Lent that we strew ashes upon our heads to signify that we ought to repent of our sins during the Lenten fast." Aelfric then proceeds to tell the tale of a man who refused to go to church for the ashes and was accidentally killed several days later in a boar hunt! This quotation confirms what we know from other sources, that throughout the Middle Ages ashes were sprinkled on the head, rather than anointed on the forehead as in our day.

As Aelfric suggests, the pouring of ashes on one's body (and dressing in sackcloth, a very rough material) as an outer manifestation of inner repentance or mourning is an ancient practice. It is mentioned several times in the Old Testament. What is probably the earliest occurrence is found at the very end of the book of Job. Job, having been rebuked by God, confesses, "Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6). Other examples are found in 2 Samuel 13:19, Esther 4:1,3, Isaiah 61:3, Jeremiah 6:26, Ezekiel 27:30, and Daniel 9:3. In the New Testament, Jesus alludes to the practice in Matthew 11:21: "Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes."

In the typical Ash Wednesday observance, Christians are invited to the altar to receive the imposition of ashes, prior to receiving the holy Supper. The Pastor applies ashes in the shape of the cross on the forehead of each, while speaking the words, "For dust you are and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). This is of course what God spoke to Adam and Eve after they eaten of the forbidden fruit and fallen into sin. These words indicated to our first parents the bitterest fruit of their sin, namely death. In the context of the Ash Wednesday imposition of ashes, they remind each penitent of their sinfulness and mortality, and, thus, their need to repent and get right with God before it is too late. The cross reminds each penitent of the good news that through Jesus Christ crucified there is forgiveness for all sins, all guilt, and all punishment.

Many Christians choose to leave the ashes on their forehead for the remainder of the day, not to be showy and boastful (see Matthew 6:16-18). Rather, they do it as a witness that all people are sinners in need of repentance AND that through Jesus all sins are forgiven through faith.

Ash Wednesday, like the season of Lent, is never mentioned in Scripture and is not commanded by God. Christians are free to either observe or not observe it. It also should be

obvious that the imposition of ashes, like similar external practices, are meaningless, even hypocritical, unless there is a corresponding inner repentance and change of behavior. This is made clear in Isaiah 58:5-7 when God says,

Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for a man to humble himself? Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying on sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD? 6 "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? 7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter-- when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

With this in mind, however, the rite of ashes on Ash Wednesday is heartily recommended to the Christian as a grand opportunity for repentance and spiritual renewal within the framework of confession and absolution. A blessed Ash Wednesday observance to all.

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.

Top Ten Reasons Why We Use the Liturgy

by The Rev. William Cwirla

(As with my own writing, if something is at least 10 years old, it's not repeating, it's reenforcing. I published this article in 2012. It's worthwhile to hear it again for the first time. Prh)

Why the Liturgy? First a definition and a disclaimer. By "liturgy" I mean the western catholic mass form as it has been handed down by way of the Lutheran Reformation consisting of the five fixed canticles - Kyrie, Gloria in Excelsis, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei. Pardon the Greek and Latin, but it sounds cool and we still use 'em. "Liturgy" also includes the assigned Scripture texts for the Sundays, feast days, and seasons. Most of what I will say about the liturgy of the Divine Service will pertain to "liturgical worship" in general. Now, why do we worship according to the western, catholic liturgy?

1. It shows our historic roots. Some parts of the liturgy go back to the apostolic period. Even the apostolic church did not start with a blank liturgical slate but adapted and reformed the liturgies of the synagogue and the Sabbath. The western mass shows our western catholic roots, of which we as Lutherans are not ashamed. (I'd rather be confused with a Roman Catholic than anything else.) We're not the first Christians to walk the face of the planet, nor, should Jesus tarry, will we be the last. The race of faith is a relay race, one generation handing on ("traditioning") to the next the faith once delivered to the saints. The historic liturgy underscores and highlights this fact. It is also "traditionable," that is, it can be handed on.

2. It serves as a distinguishing mark. The liturgy distinguishes us from those who do not believe, teach, and confess the same as we do. What we believe determines how we worship, and how we worship confesses what we believe.

3. It is both Theocentric and Christocentric. From the invocation of the Triune Name in remembrance of Baptism to the three-fold benediction at the end, the liturgy is focused on the activity of the Triune God centered in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. Worship is not primarily about "me" or "we" but about God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself and my baptismal inclusion in His saving work.

4. It teaches. The liturgy teaches the whole counsel of God - creation, redemption, sanctification, Christ's

incarnation, passion, resurrection, and reign, the Spirit's outpouring and the new life of faith. Every liturgical year cycles through these themes so that the hearer receives the "whole counsel of God" on a regular basis.

5. It is transcultural. One of the greatest experiences of my worship life was to be in the Divine Service in Siberia with the Siberian Lutheran Church. Though I spoke only a smattering of Russian, I knew enough to recognize the liturgy, know what was being said (except for the sermon, which was translated for us), and be able to participate knowledgeably across language and cultural barriers. I have the same experience with our Chinese mission congregation.

6. It is repetitive in a good way. Repetition is, after all, the mother of learning. Fixed texts and annual cycles of readings lend to deep learning. Obviously, mindless repetition does not accomplish anything; nor does endless variety.

7. It is corporate. Worship is a corporate activity. "Let us go to the house of the Lord." The liturgy draws us out of ourselves into Christ by faith and the neighbor by love. We are all in this together. Worship is not simply about what "I get out of it," but I am there also for my fellow worshippers to receive the gifts of Christ that bind us together and to encourage each other to love and good works (Heb 10:25). We are drawn into the dialogue of confession and absolution, hearing and confessing, corporate song and prayer. To borrow a phrase from a favored teacher of mine, in church we are "worded, bodied, and bloodied" all together as one.

8. It rescues us from the tyranny of the "here and now." When the Roman world was going to hell in a hand basket, the church was debating the two natures of Christ. In the liturgy, the Word sets the agenda, defining our needs and shaping our questions. The temptation is for us to turn stones into bread to satisfy an immediate hunger and scratch a nagging spiritual itch, but the liturgy teaches us to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

9. It is external and objective. The liturgical goal is not that everyone feel as certain way or have an identical "spiritual" experience. Feelings vary even as they come and go. The liturgy supplies a concrete, external, objective anchor in the death and resurrection of Jesus through Word, bread, and wine. Faith comes by hearing the objective, external Word of Christ.

10. It is the Word of God. This is often overlooked by critics of liturgical worship. Most of the sentences and songs of the liturgy are direct quotations or allusions from Scripture or summaries, such as the Creed. In other words, the liturgy is itself the Word of God, not simply a packaging for the Word. Many times the liturgy will rescue a bad sermon and deliver what the preacher has failed to deliver. I know; I've been there.

Ten is one of those good numbers in the Bible signifying completeness, so I'll stop at ten. I'm sure there are more.

<http://higherthings.org/myht/articles/catechesis/10reasons-liturgy.html>

How is Easter Sunday Date Determined?

SUMMARY

Easter Sunday is the Sunday following the Paschal Full Moon (PFM) date for the year. (Paschal is pronounced "PAS-KUL", not "pas-chal"). See Christian Prayer Books for proof of this concise definition.

In June 325 A.D. astronomers approximated astronomical full moon dates for the Christian church, calling them Ecclesiastical Full Moon (EFM) dates. From 326 A.D. the PFM date has always been the EFM date after March 20 (which was the equinox date in 325 A.D.)

From 1583, each PFM date differs from an Astronomical Full Moon (AFM) date usually by no more than 1 date, and never by more than 3 dates. (Each AFM is a two-dates event due to world time zones. Each PFM is a one-date event world-wide).

HISTORY

Easter Sunday is the date of the annual celebration of Christ's resurrection. The aim of the Easter Dating Method is to maintain, for each Easter Sunday, the same season of the year and the same relationship to the preceding astronomical full moon that occurred at the time of his resurrection in 30 A.D.

This was achieved in 1583 A.D. using skill and common-sense by Pope Gregory the 13th, and his astronomers and mathematicians, predominantly Lilius and Clavius, by introducing their new larger (revised) PFM Gregorian dates table. This replaced the (original) 326 A.D. "19 PFM dates" table in the Julian calendar.

Easter Sunday, from 326 A.D., is always one of the 35 dates March 22 to April 25.

From 31 A.D. to 325 A.D. Easter Day was celebrated either: (a) on or just after the first day of the Jewish Passover (no matter on which day of the week that Easter Day occurred), or (b) on a Sunday close to or on the first Passover Day. Both of these methods existed continuously throughout this period.

From 326 A.D. to 1582 A.D. Easter Sunday date was based on the Julian calendar in use at that time. It became defined as the Sunday following the Paschal Full Moon date for the year, using a simple "19 PFM dates" table. Precise information on this subject can be found on pages 415 to 425 of the Explanatory Supplement to the 1961 Astronomical Ephemeris.

The Julian calendar was replaced by the Gregorian calendar in October 1582 to re-align March 20 (and therefore Easter) with the seasons by removing 10 dates October 5 to 14, 1582. This replacement did not occur until later in many countries e.g. in September 1752 in England. See [GM Arts Easter Date Calculations](#) for more information. ENGLISH Easter Sunday dates for 1583 to

1752 can be calculated using information near the end of this Easter Dating Method document.

The Gregorian calendar very closely maintains the alignment of seasons and calendar dates by having leap years in only 1 of every 4 century years, namely, those divisible exactly by 400. One additional February 29 date will need to be removed in about 4140 A.D., therefore Easter calculations will need to use the changed Days of Week of PFM dates when the exact year for this removal is decided.

From 326 A.D., the Easter Sunday Date for any given year is NOT determined by the March Equinox date for that year.

March 20 (not March 21) is the most common Gregorian Equinox date from 1583 to 4099 A.D.

Historically, references to March 21 have caused mistakes in calculating Easter Sunday dates. March 20 has become the important date in recent Easter dating methods. Despite frequent references to March 21, this date has no special significance to any recent Easter dating methods.

The present method describing the Easter Dating Procedure can be found in Christian Prayer Books. This procedure has been dramatically simplified by Ronald W. Mallen, Adelaide, South Australia. See [Finding Easter Sunday Dates with a Calculator](#) for a clear and unique explanation of this procedure.

<http://www.assa.org.au/edm.html#List20>

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Breathing

A 9-Part Advent-Lent Sermon Series on the 3rd Chief Part of Luther's Small Catechism
The Lord's Prayer

Our 2021 Vacation Catechetical School had the theme "Breathe," which was a collaboration between myself and three volunteers. This sermon series is an extension of that. Both themes grew out of this line from the hymn *Prayer is the Soul's Sincere Desire*: "Prayer is the Christian's vital breath, the Christian's native air," (TLH 454:5). As usual, the Wednesday services start at 7:30 PM. With the exception of Ash Wednesday, you can be heading to the parking lot by 8:30.

Dec. 01	A Deep Breath	Introduction
Dec. 08	A Breath of Holiness	1 st Petition
Dec. 15	Guest Pastor	
Mar. 02	Breathed Into	2 nd Petition
Mar. 09	Controlling Breathing	3 rd Petition
Mar. 16	Breathtaking	4 th Petition
Mar. 23	Holding Your Breath	5 th Petition
Mar. 30	Catching Your Breath	6 th Petition
Apr. 06	Breathe Your Last	7 th Petition

Okay Boomer

Posted on [November 15, 2021](#) by [Rev. Paul R. Harris](#)

I always wanted to write something like “The Sunscreen Song” (1999) or better still Gordon Sinclair’s 1973 “The Americans.” However, I would be greeted with the platitudinous insult, “Okay Boomer.” Okay, then, I’ll let someone else do it.

To millennials I would say: “You have to be happy in those quiet moments when you remember that you are alive; not in those noisy moments when you forget.” Perhaps what is depicted in shows and movies is not accurate, but a standard activity of millennials seems to be jumping up and down in a group to raucous music.

“What we have to teach the young man of the future is how to enjoy himself. Until he can enjoy himself, he will grow more and more tired of enjoying everything else.”

Here the author must be interpreted by himself. He says elsewhere, p. 357, above all things *don’t* enjoy yourself meaning me, myself, and I. In our quote he is saying learn to be alone. Today it would be: Learn to live without the reward cycle social media gets us addicted to.

“If you consider what are the things poured into him, what are the things he receives, then indeed they are colossal cataracts of things, cosmic Niagaras that have never before poured into any human being are pouring into him. But if you consider what comes out of him, as a result of all this absorption [by him], the result we have to record is rather serious. In the vast majority of cases, nothing. Not even conversation, as it used to be. He does not conduct long arguments, as young men did when I was young. The first and startling effect of all this noise is silence. Second, when he does have the itch to write or say something, it is always an itch in the sense of irritation.” Surely, millennials notice this too. At least in the internet interactions. So much emotion, so little thought. My generation was warned of writing poison pen letters. We were told to give it at least a day before mailing a letter. Well, a day is forever in a 24-hour news cycle and even longer on social media which is ever moving.

“It used to be thought impudent for a boy to criticize an old gentleman, it now requires far more sublime impudence for an older man to criticize a younger.” I wouldn’t dare talk as casually, in form, topic, and address, in my 20’s and 30’s to my elders as is done today. And I was/am surely as full of self, vinegar, and another yellow substance as anyone today.

You know where the quotes above come from? G.K. Chesterton in a 1936 essay “The Spice of Life.” You know what that means? He wasn’t writing of my generation but that of World War II. The generation behind his. This confirms what I have suspected for some time now. This view, my view, of the generation 1-1 ½ generations behind you recurs. For Boomers it can be summed up thusly: Just as virtually all ailments during the pandemic are attributed to Covid-19, so my generation is in error in assuming that what we find at least trying if not distasteful in the

millennials is due to technology. Nope, it’s generational. [The quotes are from a book entitled *In Defense of Sanity*, pages 378, 379, 380, 381 respectively.]

The Re-Forming of Lutheranism

Posted on [December 13, 2021](#) by [Rev. Paul R. Harris](#)

Every time I think I’m taking a swipe at Reformed theology, I find I’m hitting the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. Since I come from the land of LCMS-dom, I may be hitting other conservative synods and not knowing it. This started with my Reformation 2020 sermon.

I noted how Luther wrote and *The Lutheran Hymnal* sings of Jesus “And there’s none other God” (262:2), while the Reformed translation has “From age to age the same” (*Book of Worship for United States Forces*, 114:2). *Hymns for the Family of God*, a popular contemporary, Evangelical, and Reformed hymnbook of the late 70’s and 80’s has the same translation (118:2). In my Reformation sermon, I referenced the fact that Luther liked such statements as, “We know of no God apart from Jesus Christ” and how such statements bother Reformed, Protestant, Nondenom’s, etc. They do their theology from the First Article. God in His power and might. Lutheranism emphasizes the Second Article of the Creed. God revealed in the Person and Work of Christ.

I thought this was a good, fair point. Then on the Monday following Reformation Sunday I recalled that following the 1982 *Lutheran Worship* the 2006 *Lutheran Service Book* has two versions of *A Mighty Fortress*. Say it isn’t so! Afraid so. LW 297, given pride of place, is the same as LSB 657 at least there in second place, both have: “God’s only Son, adored.” Try to find that thought in the German and ponder, why “And there’s none other God” is so bothersome today? Because it grates against the Reformed, Protestant, Evangelical theology that is natural to our flesh.

I’ll give you another example of the *LW* and *LSB* Protestantizing confessional Lutheran Theology. August 15 is marked as “Mary, Mother of our Lord.” This is an improvement over *TLH* which had no such feast day. However, historically this day is “Mary, Mother of God.” And this confession, central to orthodox theology on the Person and Work of Christ, even bothers some of you. But it is Confessional Lutheranism. Formula of Concord, Epitome, VIII, 12 says, “Hence we believe, teach, and confess that Mary conceived and bore not a mere man and no more, but the true Son of God; therefore she also is rightly called and truly is the mother of God.”

Why the hesitancy to have the feast day if our confession is that plain? The committees who created *LW* and *LSB* were concerned with getting conservative Lutheranism back to her liturgical roots, neither *TLH* or the 1958 *Service Book and Hymnal* had a Feast Day for Mary at all. So, they swung for the fences putting a feast for Mary on their calendars. However, they ended up hitting a ground ball. Mary, Mother of God

confesses the radical truth of Scripture that Jesus, True God was born of the Virgin Mary. Mary, Mother of our Lord, does not.

I'll give you another example where *TLH* Protestantized. Hymn 167 is *O Darkest Woe*. Verse two is, "O sorrow dread! God's Son is dead!" All Protestants, Calvinists, Baptists, Pentecostals, and Heinz 57 Nondenom's can and do confess this. But remember as Luther said, If God's Blood is not shed on the cross it can't redeem one person let alone the whole world, but because it is the Blood of God one drop is sufficient to redeem the world. The precursor to *TLH* is the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book*. There the line is, "O sorrow dread, Our God is dead!" If Google translator is right (Yes, I'm ashamed to admit that's all I have.), it's "God's self is dead." The difference between God's Son and our God being dead on the cross is the difference between beef soup and beefsteak.

What is published in hymnals and catechisms de facto is the actual confession of a church. What's in yours?

Theology is Everywhere – Crucifixes and More

(This came up in a December 2021 Bible Class. I couldn't remember where I had addressed this before. It was in a December 2009 blog. However, I don't address here the Russian Orthodox cross with the second titled crossbeam. I have one in my office from my Russian Orthodox great-grandmother. It's pointed up to signify the thief on the cross, on the right who was saved, and points down on the left side for the impenitent thief who wasn't. PRH)

A hospital is not a strange place to find theology. Where men are suffering and dying is a good place to find theology. What is remarkable to me is that the theology of the theologians is expressed so clearly.

I was at a hospital owned and operated by the 7th Day Adventists. I didn't know this when I went in. I saw on the surgery floor a nurse's computer displaying a page "Bread of Life Café." I thought this strange, but reasoned it might be a personal site. When I walked into the waiting room there was Christian art, so I knew this was no ordinary hospital. Then the hospital chaplain came up to me and the whole cat came out of the bag. After talking to him, I further explored the art and literature. It was all about natural healing, wholistic living, the mind body connection. This is as it should be at a 7th Day Adventist hospital.

In a local Catholic hospital I noticed how every pre and post surgery room has what sometimes is called a Christus Victor crucifix. This is a cross with the corpus on it, but the corpus is attached only at the back and the arms are upraised in triumph. This is Christ the victor over our sins, Death, and the power of the Devil. Not a bad image to go into or come out of surgery with. (This is to be distinguished from the Jansenist crucifix which has the arms of Christ pointing straight up because as a Catholic influenced by Calvinism Bishop Jansen (1585-1638) didn't see an open-armed Savior welcoming all.)

In some ICU rooms of that same Catholic hospital it's different. Before the patient's eyes, on the wall directly opposite him, is the crucifix. No Christus Victor here to confront the suffering perhaps dying man. No, here is Jesus crucified for sins and sinners. Here is Jesus suffering for your sins, ergo, your suffering can't be for those sins. Here is Jesus abandoned by His Father who chose you over Him. Here is Jesus at one with the sufferer.

What do we find at Lutheran hospitals? It's been years since I've been in one, so I don't know. I do know what is found in many Lutheran Churches. More bare crosses than crucifixes. Walther in 1885 said the crucifix was on the altars of our churches, and while a person was free to have one or not, we would not permit it to be called a sin to have one (*The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, 167).

It's amazing how bare cross have replaced crucifixes in our churches. This is the influence of Protestantism which is funny because they started out not even liking bare crosses. Their objection to crucifixes is usually because it's an image or because it's focusing on the wrong point. I can't remember where I read this story, but a woman accosts another woman for wearing a crucifix saying, "Would you wear around your neck the bullet that killed your son?" To which the other woman replied, "I sure would if he rose from the dead."

This is good theology for a church that claims to preach Christ and Him crucified (not risen) ([I Cor. 2:2](#)) and proclaims His death (not life) as often as we eat His Body and drink His Blood ([I Cor. 11:26](#)). We focus and embrace His death that His life might be manifested in us.

Theology is everywhere, but on our altars, in our churches, and in our liturgy it ought to at least be as clear as it is in the hospitals of 7th Day Adventists and Roman Catholics.

Halfway to Concord

Posted on [January 11, 2022](#) by [Rev. Paul R. Harris](#)

Concord is a Lutheran word. We have the Book of Concord of 1580 and the Formula of Concord of 1577, and yet we never seem more than halfway there. Despite having a *formula* for it and *book* of it. Something is askew here.

Having left the soft middle of Confessional Lutheranism in the United States (the LCMS), I have talked enough to

others outside that comfortable, pliable, broad-church middle to know the divisive issues coalesce around Church and Ministry, the Lord's Supper, Worship, and the Order of Creation. And outside the mushy walls of LCMS has something of the flavor of the Wild West. Everyone is armed and ready to draw on any and every point of doctrine. One pastor, outside the LCMS for some years, says that he feels the pull back to the accepting, broad-church, soft middle of the road Missouri because no two pastors can agree on anything. Apparently, we've lost the formula and can't find the book that concord is in.

With all of the confessional synods essentially punting on these issues, fellowship is determined not by agreement but by law. You know whom you're in fellowship with by the letters following your name. Even if you know someone believes, teaches, or confesses differently than you do, you are in fellowship with them based on those letters. Conversely, you're not in fellowship with anyone not having those letters even if you do believe, teach, and confess the same things.

This fellowship by law rather than by actual confession is why many of us left, and it won't change; it can't change. Because though made by man, the system of fellowship by letters is confessed by all the guilty parties involved to be divine. It is always a problem when you identify a teaching of men as a precept of God. Who wants to be found fighting against God? Not me. Pass the synodical Kool-Aid, I need another hit.

I've talked to some who say we need a 21st century Formula of Concord. The Sainted Herman Otten said that back when it was still the 20th century. I suspect it will be said even if we get to Zager and Evans fabled year. (Look it up.) I too use to be of this mind. Then I remembered the 1932 Brief Statement. You think it's called 'Brief' for it's brevity of expression. Nope, it's named that because of how briefly it impacted Missouri's slip-sliding away.

So, methinks if we're ever going to get more than halfway to concord we have to go back to those who wrote the formula and the book. These men were the Concordists. They didn't take the so-called Gnesio-Lutheran position, which were usually more right than wrong, and they certainly didn't take the Philippists' (followers of Philip Melancthon's errors) positions which were almost all totally wrong, they took a position which rejected the errors on both sides and tempered the extremes on the Genuine Lutheran side.

They didn't do what FDR (Look it up.) did. He would ask two different staffers to write two different positions on a policy and then have a third write one paper using both. The Concordists were firm and clear where Scripture was and put the kibosh on debate that wasn't helpful (See Paul Raabe's article, "'Daddy, Will Animals Be in Heaven?': The Future New Earth" (<https://www.csl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/DaddyWillAnimalsBeInHeaven.pdf>)). Concordists are big-brained, theological, pastoral, and wise. There are few in any generation. Confessional Lutheranism needs one now.

"Halfway to Concord" is where Confessional Lutherans have been mired for perhaps 100 years, but the expression originated with Ben Franklin. He coined it as a term for drunkenness. (Offerman, Nick, *Gumption*, 29-30). And I feel the room rolling as I hear or read of another Philippists position being adopted (We practice neither open nor closed Communion.), or another Gnesio-Lutheran position being championed (You must use only one cup).

Luther said that we tended to be like drunken peasants. When put on the horse from one side, we fall off on the other. I've been halfway to concord long enough. I refuse to believe the heirs of those who wrote the formula *of* and the book *on* concord can't get back on the horse that threw us.

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FEBRUARY 2022

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2 DANIEL BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM	3	4	5 CHURCH WORK DAY 8:00 – NOON
6 ADULT CLASS 12:15 PM	7 JR. CONFIRMATION 5:30 PM	8	9 HEBREWS BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM	10	11	12
13	14 JR. CONFIRMATION 5:30 PM	15	16 HEBREWS BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM	17	18	19
20 AUSTIN MARATHON	21 JR. CONFIRMATION 5:30 PM	22	23 HEBREWS BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM	24	25	26
27 HAPPY HOUR 12:30 DINNER 2:30	28 JR. CONFIRMATION 5:30 PM					

MARCH 2022

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 ELDERS 6:30	2 IMPOSITION OF ASHES 7:30 PM	3	4	5
6 PRAYER FOR LIFE SERVICE 1:30 PM	7	8 VOTERS 7:00	9 LENTEN VESPERS 7:30 PM	10	11	12
13 MCKINNEY FALLS CAMPOUT	14	15	16 LENTEN VESPERS 7:30 PM	17	18	19

20	21	22	23	24	25	26
NEW ADULT CLASS 12:15 PM			LENTEN VESPERS 7:30 PM			
27	28	29	30	31		
ADULT CLASS 12:15 PM			LENTEN VESPERS 7:30 PM			

FEB-MAR 2022