

Trinity Te Deum

The official newsletter for Trinity Lutheran Church

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The Fat Lady Hasn't Sung

Posted on July 18, 2022 by Rev. Paul R. Harris

Who knew that this saying is no older than 1976 and comes from Texas Tech sport's information director, Ralph Carpenter, when the Aggies tied the Red Raiders in the conference finals? The actual quote is: "The opera ain't over till the fat lady sings." (Based on my research, I think the jury is still out as to where, when, and who first said this.)

The overturning of Roe v. Wade is a big deal, but realize that now abortion is a fiercer political issue than ever. The votes of individuals carry much more clout than before. Now your votes. elect people at the state level who can effect Pro-Life change. For the last 49 years, your vote could help elect a President who was Pro-Life, who might have the opportunity to appoint a Pro-Life Supreme Court Justice, who then might actually make Pro-Life decisions. Can you see how all these 'mights' add up to precious little power?

Now things have changed, but the Fat Lady has by no means sung in the tragic opera called Abortion on Demand. And here I am presented with two theological pinch points.

First, just because we can vote directly on Pro-Life issues does not mean abortion is a political issue that can be decided by a 51% majority. No amount of voting or votes can make it moral to murder the unborn in the womb.

Second, is more controversial, and as I am wont to do in such cases, I begin with a joke. A leading Texas Democrat asks Farmer Caleb if all six of his boys are still voting democrat. He replies, "Yes sir; all but Elmer. He learned to read" (James Mitchener, *Texas*, 1124).

I have contended for 40 years with women who said other women couldn't go to a gynecologist who was Pro-Abortion, and with men who said you couldn't vote into office a man who was Pro-Abortion. I always responded, mostly ineffectually I think, with

the example of President Jimmy Carter. I was in the Army during his presidency. He, at that time, was a faithful Southern Baptist. But he was a lousy Commander and Chief. I would've rather had a pagan in office who supported and understood the military. The Lord raises up the likes of pagan court officials, Pharaohs, Babylonian monarchs, and pagan Cyrus to lead and even in the last case to shepherd(!) His people.

Now back to being able to read. The 1972 Democratic Platform, when abortion was a hot button issue, made no mention of it at the instruction of the Democratic Nominee, George McGovern. McGovern was characterized as "a left-wing extremists who would remake the Democrats as the party of 'amnesty [for draft dodgers], acid, and abortion...'" But even he thought abortion should be decided at the state level. In 1976 this is what you read in the Democratic Platform: it was "'undesirable'" to amend the Constitution to overturn Roe v. Wade. It also said, "Democrats 'fully recognize the religious and ethical nature of the concerns which many Americans have on the subject of abortion.'"

Jump to 1992 when the bottom fell out of American society, when an ignoble pagan, in contrast to the past noble ones, was elected to the President. That year the platform opined, "'Democrats stand behind the right of every woman to choose, consistent with *Roe v. Wade*, regardless of ability to pay, and support a national law to protect that right.'" Even then there was still language in the platform about respecting "'the individual conscience of each American on this difficult issue.'"

In 2016 the Democrats had a party pledge to eradicate the Hyde Amendment that, since 1977, had protected taxpayers from being forced to fund abortions except in limited cases. Then the 2020 convention had the Democrats "in effect hanging out a sign declaring 'pro-lifers not allowed before the

convention even started.”” (All quotes relating to the Democratic Platform from <https://www.ncregister.com/commentaries/democrats-history-on-abortion> August 21, 2020).

Here’s the rub. Those who don’t test politicians by their faithfulness to God’s revealed Word, whether in policies or life, go by things like fiscal conservativeness, foreign diplomacy ability, and/or economic policies. These vote the man not the party. Others believe you vote for the party not the man. Texas has a rich history of this. Look up “yellow dog Democrat” which is a Southern expression, but I’ve only heard it in Texas.

I was in Detroit when legalized gambling was on the ballot, twice. I never preached about the issue. I talked about it in Bible class. I was in Louisiana when the issue was legalizing river boat gaming and the lottery. I never preached about the issue till it was signed into law. Then I did preach about the lottery. I have preached every year on the Sanctity of Life since 1989. When I do, I’m not preaching politics but God’s revelation.

I’ve never told anyone how to vote. I would, however, ask you to read these statements from the 2020 Democratic Party Platform before you do: file:///C:/Users/pharris/Downloads/2020-Democratic-Party-Platform.pdf:

“Democrats are committed to protecting and advancing reproductive health, rights, and justice. We believe unequivocally, like the majority of Americans, that every woman should be able to access high-quality reproductive health care services, including safe and legal abortion.”

“Democrats oppose restrictions on medication abortion care that are inconsistent with the most recent medical and scientific evidence and that do not protect public health.”

“Like the majority of Americans, Democrats believe every woman should be able to access high-quality reproductive health care services, including safe and legal abortion.”

“Democrats will always protect sexual and reproductive health and rights. We believe that comprehensive health services, including access to

reproductive care and abortion services, are vital to the empowerment of women and girls.”

“We will support the repeal of the global gag rule (also known as the Mexico City Policy) and measures like the Helms Amendment, which limit safe access to abortion.”

If this is *not* the tune you wish to be heard singing not when the fat lady sings but when the trumpet does sound on the tragic opera of Abortion on Demand, think about what chorus you do wish to be heard in.

Web of deception

The “fake reality” and peer contagion of the internet are leading many teen girls into transgenderism.

Helena Kerschner was a socially awkward 13-year-old who struggled with an eating disorder and self-harming when she stumbled upon an online community of teenage girls who shared a similar interest: Elvis Presley.

Tumblr started out as a space where she fan-girled with other teens over old-time rock. It quickly turned into an obsession. The platform, a blend of microblogging and social media, was introduced on the internet in 2007. It boasted 13 billion global page views by 2013 and peaked the next year when users contributed 100 million blog posts daily.

Kerschner was one of them. She said she spent the majority of her days and evenings during high school scrolling and posting on Tumblr. She said that in between discussing fandom interests, she and other teenage girls on the platform would disclose intimate details about their lives. Many shared her social and body image struggles or experienced similar family dysfunction.

Kerschner’s fandom interests expanded from Elvis Presley to Harry Potter, Justin Bieber, and the boy band One Direction. With each new fandom, she was introduced to more teenagers, most of whom were anonymous, who exchanged elaborate fanfiction and art—photos, drawings, collages, and videos set to music—sometimes depicting romantic or erotic “ships” (short for relationship pairings). One famous “ship” was an imagined homosexual relationship between One Direction bandmates Harry Styles and

Louis Tomlinson. The ship was dubbed “Larry.” In reality, the two men shared a close friendship and dated girls. But on Tumblr, fans obsessively opined that they were secretly married. (One 2011 tweet in which Louis expressed affection for Harry was retweeted 2.6 million times. It remains the sixth most popular post on Twitter.)

Kerschner said Tumblr users also created “head canons,” deviations from the official canon of a novel, film, television show, or other storyline based on one’s personal perception. For example, one might have a head canon that Harry Potter is actually black, nonbinary, and abandoned wizard school to become a professional chef, she explained.

Immersed in this online fantasy world, Kerschner was introduced to the concept of gender identity. In a recent Substack piece, titled “By Any Other Name,” she described how she went from a girl who played with Barbies, dress-up, and toy makeup sets—never experiencing any gender distress—to identifying as nonbinary by age 15 and then transgender.

Kerschner’s Substack piece went viral. At age 23, she is one of a small number of detransitioners beginning to pull back the curtain on how fandom, Tumblr, and other online influences play a critical part in teens identifying as the opposite sex. The detransitioners see a need for more caution among parents and professionals to take seriously the threats posed by online influences. Their stories add to a growing chorus among researchers and parents addressing the role social media is playing in introducing teens to gender ideology and propelling the transgender phenomenon.

“There are a lot of prevailing narratives about how we got here … but they are not really answering the question, ‘Why are all these girls doing this?’” Kerschner said.

Today, children are increasingly introduced to transgenderism in public schools, in picture books and novels at the library, at doctor’s and counselor’s offices, in television programming and advertisements, and among family and friends.

Online, teens are exposed to hypersexualized women on the one hand and transgender individuals or “influencers” on the other who showcase (and

glamorize) their transitioning journeys—from “coming out” parties to taking cross-sex hormones or undergoing double mastectomies. Some have massive followings and feature prominently on TikTok, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram. On TikTok, one of the most popular social media platforms for teenagers, videos filed under #transgender have nearly 11 billion views. “Any teenager on social media now is going to be inundated with this ideology,” Kerschner said.

In 2018, physician and scientist Lisa Littman coined the term rapid-onset gender dysphoria (ROGD) after studying the spike in the number of teenage girls identifying as transgender who showed no previous signs of gender dysphoria. She presented the first academic study connecting teens’ peer circles and social media usage with the transgender phenomenon. Her study addressed the influence of peer contagion—the spread of ideas, attitudes, and behaviors by group imitation and conformity—among adolescent girls identifying as transgender.

Of the 256 parents Littman surveyed, more than 80 percent had transgender-identifying daughters. The daughters averaged 16-years-old. Littman’s study found that more than 65 percent of the teens increased their social media usage and time spent online immediately prior to announcing their transgender identity. Most of the parents Littman surveyed suspected their child used language they found online to describe their transgenderism. Nearly 70 percent of the teens belonged to a peer group in which at least one friend had come out as transgender.

Some parents in Littman’s study said they found posts on their child’s Tumblr, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram accounts disparaging “cis-gendered people,” heterosexuality, marriage, and nuclear families. “On my daughter’s Tumblr blog, she has liked or favorited or reposted disparaging comments about those who aren’t transgender or seem to misunderstand transgender identity,” one participant said. “Online, they are always swapping jokes and comments about cisgender and about transphobia,” another parent wrote.

IN THE EARLY 2010s, before transgenderism was mainstream (and before Instagram and TikTok became popular), teenagers on Tumblr and Reddit were already

adopting alternative identities—transgender, nonbinary, demisexual, and neopronouns—en masse due to its unchecked blend of fandom, fantasy, pornography, and so-called social justice. Tumblr's monthly traffic plummeted in December 2018 when the platform banned pornographic and adult content. Many users moved to Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok. (Twenty-two million teens now log onto Instagram in the U.S. each day.)

I spoke with one male detransitioner who goes by “Limpidă”—WORLD is using his pseudonym because of concerns over risks to his teaching position in a liberal state—about his experience with Tumblr beginning in 2014. Similar to Kerschner, he first learned about transgenderism on Tumblr. Limpidă was 14 when his girlfriend encouraged him to join the platform to share memes and fandom on their interest in the British television programs Doctor Who and Sherlock Holmes.

“A lot of our relationship from that point forward was completely mediated through Tumblr,” Limpidă said. The sexual politics and pornographic material began to play a large role in their dating relationship: “We got to where we didn’t have a life outside of Tumblr. We stopped taking advice from our families and started to see them as oppressive … part of the cis-hetero-patriarchy.”

Limpidă’s girlfriend, who experienced autism, anxiety, and an eating disorder, began to identify as a male. He began questioning his own gender identity and eventually believed he was a woman. He changed his name to “Liliana.” In August 2019, he started cross-sex hormones. He said no one prepared him for the physical, emotional, and mental effects. A clinician he visited suggested he pursue surgeries to further his transition. That is when Limpidă began to do his own research and discover other detransitioners who helped him question his trajectory.

Limpidă, now 24, chose his pseudonym because it means “clear” in Romanian, the native language of his immigrant parents. He stopped taking estrogen in January and no longer identifies as female: “I don’t know how I deluded myself. … I feel like I’m getting back on my feet.”

Limpidă says, “More people are beginning to talk about it and to realize what happened to them.”

At a virtual March 12 detransitioners conference hosted by a newly formed support group called Genspect, Kerschner, Limpidă, and other panelists discussed how fandom, pornography, and online influences contribute to young people identifying as transgender. They said medical professionals and clinicians pushed them further down the path by “affirming” them into hormonal and surgical interventions. “Everyone online was telling me at that time, ‘If you think you’re trans, you are,’ and really, they repeat it over and over,” said one panelist named Michelle. She said that as she struggled with gender dysphoria, she was repeatedly told online, “Cis people don’t question their gender.”

In a 2021 study of 100 detransitioners, Littman found that about half originally believed they would be treated better if they transitioned.

Kerschner said she earned adoration on the platform with each pronoun change or deviation from being a “cis white female,” which users viewed as oppressive and bad. One Tumblr friend gifted Kerschner with a breast binder. A handful of her real-life high school friends, who were also addicted to the platform, simultaneously transitioned to male pronouns and identities, she said.

In August 2016, shortly after Kerschner’s 18th birthday, she drove from Ohio to Chicago to a Planned Parenthood facility, where she obtained a prescription for a weekly regimen of 100 milligrams of testosterone. Kerschner describes a subsequent dark period of loneliness, rage, worsened mental illness, and “suffocating numbness” she now attributes to the high dosage of testosterone.

The reality of transitioning was far less attractive than the fantasy version Kerschner first envisioned on Tumblr. “It was an act of war against myself,” she wrote.

Kerschner detransitioned 18 months later in 2018. She has wrestled with regret and shame. In her Substack piece, she recounts one moment at a smoothie shop where she realized “not only was I not the only one going through this, but it was a full-fledged phenomenon.”

Janine McLean founded Parents of Rapid-Onset Gender Dysphoria Kids with 10 other parents in 2017. The group now has about 2,000 members who are skeptical of the “affirmative approach,” which fast-tracks vulnerable children into hormonal and surgical interventions. The group is intended to provide support for parents whose children “suddenly—seemingly out of the blue—decided they identify strongly with the opposite sex and are at various stages of transitioning,” the website states. McLean said she hears from about five parents daily.

McLean, of Ontario, uses a pseudonym to protect her identity from her estranged, transgender daughter, who is now 23. Her daughter struggled with social and emotional issues beginning at puberty. She preferred interacting with peers on Facebook Messenger and Tumblr over in-person communication at school. “It somehow felt safer for her, more protected,” McLean said.

McLean limited her daughter’s internet usage to one hour per day. But her daughter’s online activity became harder to monitor once she got a smartphone. At 15, she announced she was a boy. “She told us, ‘This is why I’m having so much trouble’ ... it was a cure-all,” McLean said. “Online and at school, she received all this affirmation.”

Two years later, McLean’s daughter asked to start taking testosterone. At the same time, a friend she had met on Tumblr who lived in New York was starting cross-sex hormones with her parents’ approval. McLean and her husband said no. McLean said she later found violent and erotic drawings and photos on her daughter’s Tumblr account. But she could not see what her daughter’s conversations were on the platform.

Kerschner and Limpidă said Littman’s ROGD study helped them understand their own experience with gender dysphoria and the ways fandom and Tumblr contributed to their intense desire to identify as the opposite sex. Still, Kerschner said Littman’s findings “barely scratched the surface.”

One interviewer recently asked Kerschner what would have made a difference for her as a teenager. She replied having a loving, trusting relationship with an adult who would have steered her toward valuing

her female body. She told me parents play a critical role in helping their children cultivate a life outside of the internet.

Kerschner said the emphasis on screens and devices creates “a fake reality” in which young people don’t form a connection to their bodies and nature. “It’s going to take a while for society to figure out what to do to mitigate this.”

Social Contagion on Social Media

Adolescent girls are known to experience social contagion effects when it comes to cutting and eating disorders. A growing body of evidence reveals how social media platforms have a similar effect of causing harm among teenagers.

Since the pandemic, teen girls who use TikTok are increasingly claiming to have Tourette syndrome, a nervous system disorder leading to repetitive movements or sounds. An article in the Archives of Disease in Childhood noted that some teen girls reported the onset of symptoms after visiting sites such as TikTok #tourettes. Others posted videos of their symptoms. “They report that they gain peer support, recognition and a sense of belonging from this exposure,” according to the article.

One recent study, published in Nature Communications, showed a negative link between social media usage and life satisfaction among girls ages 11-13 and boys 14-15. Increased social media use predicted lower life satisfaction at age 19.

All of this comes on top of a Wall Street Journal investigative report last year that found Facebook concealed from the public its own research showing the ways its photo-sharing app Instagram contributed to worsening body image issues and higher rates of anxiety and depression among teen girls.

The WSJ quotes a May 2020 slide presentation shared on Facebook’s internal message board, in which company researchers said, “We make body image issues worse for one in three teen girls.”

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“Faith worked Through these Means”

A 9-Part Advent-Lent Sermon Series on
The 4th, 5th, & 6th Chief Parts of Luther’s Small
Catechism

In the edition of *Aesop’s Fables*, illustrated by Arthur Rackham, G. K. Chesterton authored the introduction. He says that “it is universally known among other things ‘that there is such a thing as being too clever by half’” (xi). Since 1991 or perhaps 1992 I have devoted the midweek services during Advent and Lent to preaching on the Catechism. I point out each year that this was the practice during the Reformation. I have done it for my entire time here. Which means this year we are completing our 6th passage through Luther’s Small Catechism. And I fear that perhaps in my desire to be fresh, poignant, trenchant even, I ended up being too clever by half.

So, this year, I’m taking my title out of our Augsburg Confession Article V where we say this: “To obtain such faith, God instituted the office of the ministry, that is provided the Gospel and the Sacraments. Through these as through means, He gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where He pleases, in those who hear the Gospel” (Tappert, 31). In keeping with my desire to renounce my cleverness, I thought it would be good to just follow the Catechism’s questions for my sermon themes if not titles. So, this is what that looks like.

All service times are at 7:30 PM. With the exception of Ash Wednesday, if you don’t stay to visit, you can be walking to your car at 8:20 at the latest.

Nov. 30	What is Baptism?	Baptism 1
Dec. 07	What Benefits Does Baptism Give	Baptism 2
Dec. 14	How Can Water Do Such Great Things?	Baptism 3

Feb. 22	What is Confession?	Confession 1
Mar. 01	What Sins Should We Confess?	Confession 2
Mar. 08	What is the Sacrament of the Altar?	Sacrament of the Altar 1
Mar. 15	What is the Benefit of this Eating and Drinking?	Sacrament of the Altar 2
Mar. 22	How can Bodily Eating and Drinking do Such Things?	Sacrament of the Altar 3
Mar. 29	Who Receives This Sacrament Worthily?	Sacrament of the Altar 4

Objective Justification, The 1517 Project, and Gay Christians Rev. Paul Harris

(Published in *Christian News*, 1/24/22, pp. 8-9. Originally presented as a study to Trinity Elders, on 2 Nov 2021)

This study covers the subsections of Article IV, “We Obtain the Forgiveness of Sins Only by Faith in Christ” and “Love and the Keeping of the Law” (Paragraphs 75-182 in the Tappert edition of the *Book of Concord*). It’s important to remember that there is such an emphasis on justification through faith because Rome denies this. They say that justification is not through faith but through faith formed by love. Furthermore, stating that justification only gets to men through faith does not deny that there is such a thing as objective justification. Marquart’s illustration is this: If America was willing to take in all refugees from Cuba and the Cuban government declared all its citizens were free to leave, their declaration establishes the people’s objective freedom to leave. Travelling to America would be subjective application of that to oneself. One who didn’t leave would still be covered by the

objective declaration, but not believing it meant it was no good to him.

I keep harping on the reality of objective justification in reaction to 1517's promoting a gospel of "I'm sorry that's just the way I am" and "We're all sinners after all." This is going to lead to a denial of objective justification because the 1517 Project abuses objective justification. Living in or with sins impenitently is an abuse of objective justification, but as with most errors you don't solve the abuse by denying the truth of the thing being abused.

Under the statement "We Obtain the Forgiveness of Sins Only by Faith in Christ," there are 4 supporting statements. "First, forgiveness of sins is the same as justification according to Ps. 32:1, 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven'" (76). "Second, it is certain that sins are forgiven because of Christ, the propitiator, according to Rom. 3:25, 'Whom God put forward as an expiation,' and Paul adds, 'to be received by faith'" (82). "Third, in Acts 10:43, Peter says, 'To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name'" (83). "Fourth, the forgiveness of sins is a thing promised for Christ's sake. Therefore, it can be accepted only by faith since a promise can be accepted only on faith" (84).

The Lutherans don't deny that love should follow saving faith. What they deny is that faith saves because of love. "We obtain the forgiveness of sins only by faith in Christ, not through love, or because of love or works, *though love does follow faith*" (77, emphasis mine). See how often the Reformers come back to this: "Here he [Augustine] teaches that our hearts are terrified by the law but receive consolation by faith, and that before we try to keep the law, we should receive mercy by faith" (106). Don't misunderstand. You will make of this little more than "Little Engine that Could" positive thinking if you hear the Reformers saying: Faith by being positive, certain, confident consoles. No, faith in the proper object does. The proper object of faith is the objective Person and Work of Christ. Back to the argument that love's got nothing to do with receiving justification: "If faith receives the forgiveness of sins on account of love, the forgiveness

of sins will always be unsure, for we never love as much as we should" (110).

We are sensitive to the claim that we are against doing good works. "Our opponents slanderously claim that we do not require good works, whereas we not only require them but show how they can be done. ... So, it is clear that we require good works. In fact, we add that it is impossible to separate faith from love for God, be it ever so small" (136, 141). This is in contrast to Rome: "Selecting love, which is only one of the *effects of faith*, our opponents teach that love justifies" (145, my emphasis).

Next, we again say works follow faith, but that's not why faith justifies. "We do not receive the forgiveness of sins by other virtues of the law or on account of them (whether patience, chastity, or obedience to the government, etc.), even though these virtues must follow. Just as little do we receive the forgiveness of sins on account of love, though it, too, must follow" (151). At the very end of our reading, the Reformers come back to this: "...reconciliation or justification is something promised because of Christ, not because of the law. Therefore, it is received by faith alone, though the keeping of the law follows with the gifts of the Holy Spirit" (182).

Because Rome was no denier of the concept of objective justification, the Reformers don't specifically address it but it is here: "The law would seem to be harmful since it has made all men sinners, but when the Lord Jesus came he forgave all men the sin that none could escape and by shedding his blood canceled the bond that stood against us (Col. 2:14)....For after the whole world was subjected [to the law of sin and guilt], he took away the sin of the whole world, as John testified when he said (John 1:29), 'Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world'" (103). "Furthermore, the Gospel (that is, the promise that sins are forgiven freely for Christ's sake) must be retained in the church" (120). Again, "For Christ conquered the devil and gave us his promise and the Holy Spirit, so that with the help of God we, too, might conquer" (139). Speaking of the woman whom Rome thought was saved by much love we say, "The woman came, believing that she should seek the forgiveness of sins from Christ" (154). What is this saying but that the

forgiveness of sins was objectively in, with, and under Christ? Now, in the following, the Reformers are talking about ‘love’ but the deniers of objective justification can do the same thing. “We are debating about an important issue, the honor of Christ and the source of sure and firm consolation for pious minds – whether we should put our trust in Christ or in our own works” (156). We are no more saved by our ‘much believing’ than we are heard in prayer by our much speaking or the woman in Luke 7 was saved by her ‘much loving’.

Finally, the Reformers deny that any of the virtues that follow faith justify. So, when they admit that faith can be lost this also means that faith doesn’t justify because it is a virtue. Perhaps this will be clearer here: “If then, we must seek justification elsewhere, our love and works do not justify. Far above our purity – yes, far above the law itself [and our faith, our believing too] – should be placed the death and satisfaction of Christ, bestowed upon us to assure us that because of this satisfaction and not because our keeping of the law [or because of our faith, repentance, or love] we have a gracious God” (178).

In this reading, we also find the other side of emphasizing objective justification, the prospect of living in one’s sins. This is part of the argument of why our love can’t justify, but they flatly state that Rome imagines “That faith can exist with mortal sin” (109). This is what virtually everyone under the age of 30 or 40 now believes. They know nice homosexuals or lesbians. They are prominent and popular in media. I’m thinking of Ronan Farrow and David Sedaris. They write engagingly and happily. You can’t help but like them. The even more damaging ones are gay people they know personally or the famous ones who confidently say, “I’m a gay Christian.”

We must maintain what we have confessed for almost 500 years: “This faith is no idle knowledge, nor can it exist with mortal sin” (115). We’re real clear here: “The faith of which we are speaking, moreover, has its existence in penitence; that is, it is conceived in the terrors of conscience that feels God’s wrath against our sins and looks for forgiveness of sins and deliverance from sin. This faith ought to grow and be strengthened in these terrors and in other afflictions.

And so, *it cannot exist in those who live according to the flesh, who take pleasure in their lusts and obey them*” (142-3, emphasis mine). The next paragraph we again say, “Receiving the forgiveness of sins for a heart terrified and fleeing from sin, therefore, such a faith does not remain in those who obey their lusts, nor does it exist together with moral sin” (144).

But whenever we’re talking about saving faith being impossible to exist in mortal sin, sinning presumptuously, we have to talk about saved sinners, believing sinners who still do sin and how these are not to put one in doubt about their salvation let alone forfeit it. Here I quote Psalm 19:13 (EHV): “Restrain your servant also from deliberate sins. Do not let them rule over me. *Then I will be blameless*. Then I will be innocent of great rebellion.” We can also refer to our explanation of the 5th Petition of the Lord’s Prayer: “We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look at our sins, or deny our prayer because of them. ..., for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment.” Luther is even clearer on this score in his Short Form which predates his catechism by 9 years. “I believe that the forgiveness of sins exists in that selfsame community, and nowhere else; outside of that community nothing can help, no matter how many and great one’s good works might be, to accord one the forgiveness of sins. But within such a community nothing can bring harm, no matter how many, how large the sins, and how often one has sinned; this remains the reality wherever and as long as one remains in that same unique community” (Peters, *Creed*, 287). You can see how the Project 1517 can abuse this teaching of Luther. We want to use it as our Confessions do.

We say in this article: “For who loves or fears God enough? Who endures patiently enough the afflictions that God sends? Who does not often wonder whether history is governed by God’s counsels or by chance? Who does not often doubt whether God hears him? Who does not often complain because the wicked have better luck than the devout, because the wicked persecute the devout? Who lives up to the requirements of his calling? Who loves his neighbor as himself? Who is not tempted by lust” (167)? We then turn to Romans 7 and point out that Paul “openly says he

serves the law of sin.” And even David prays God to avert His judgment. The point being: “Therefore in our present weakness there is always sin that could be imputed to us” (168). But these sins don’t destroy saving faith. We say, “The Holy Spirit in our hearts battle against such feelings in order to suppress and destroy them and to give us new spiritual impulses (170). “Augustine says very clearly, ‘All the commandments of God are kept when what is not kept is forgiven’” (172). Standing in the flood of God’s grace in Christ in Word and Sacrament we stand redeemed, restored, forgiven. Step out of that flood, by sins that automatically drive out the Holy Spirit such as murder, fornication, defending sin, teaching sin is not sin, and you’re lost.

Rev. Paul R. Harris is pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Austin, Texas

Immunizations

(I meant for this article on immunizations to be published with the WELS statement on it. I thought it was good for compare and contrast. PRH)

A few fellow WELS members in our church choose not to immunize their children. I have some concerns because we have a Christian day school, and my children also attend there. Some of the members who choose not to immunize have made their beliefs public and one even went as far as using a website that says God does not want us to immunize. This website states that immunizations contain fetal parts from aborted fetuses. I am wondering if there is any direction from the WELS about immunizations. Thanks.

What I can do is refer you to the web site of Christian Life Resources. Searching “vaccination” and “immunization” will yield numerous results of reading material. Additionally, I can pass along the response to a previous question on this topic before I began service as the responder to questions. The question submitted was: “Is there anything stated in the Bible on vaccines? Some say that things that are added to some of these vaccines could be harmful. Is there anything in the

Bible that helps us decide whether it is right or wrong to vaccinate our children?”

The response was: “Vaccinations did not occur until the end of the 18th century, so it is not spoken of directly in Scripture. Scripture does provide principles that guide our view of vaccinations.

“Four objections to vaccinations are commonly raised:

“Objection # 1: Vaccinations represent a failure to trust the providence of God as the Great Physician and Protector.

Yes, we are to trust God (John 14:1), but we are also to be responsible stewards of God’s blessings (Matthew 25:31ff; Romans 2:6; 14:12). Vaccinations are one way we protect our lives. In the same way we protect our lives by looking both ways before crossing the street. We make decisions and take precautions to keep our lives and the lives of others safe. Does looking both ways represent no trust in God? Of course not!

“We make reasonable efforts to protect God’s blessing of life. If deemed safe and effective, vaccinations would be such a reasonable effort. Furthermore, as the Christian reflects his greater concern for others (Philippians 2:3-4) he or she will want to weigh the potential danger to others of contracting a disease or illness because we chose not to be vaccinated.

“Objection # 2: Immunizations were unethically developed.

It seems fairly certain that some immunizations were unethically developed and/or tested. For example, evidence suggests that the vaccines for Hepatitis A, chicken pox and MMR (mumps, measles, and rubella) were cultured in cells taken from children aborted in the 1960s. The concern is that by availing oneself of such an unethically developed vaccine we condone or lend credibility to the unethical way it was developed.

“Scripture teaches us that we are all sinful. Our righteous acts are comparable to filthy rags. For that reason, sin is a component in the development of anything in our world. A house may have been built 50 years ago by a builder who cheated a subcontractor out of some money. Do we see living in that house 50 years later as condoning the dishonesty? Our

automobile may have been designed by stealing secrets from another manufacturer years ago. Can we now not drive that vehicle?

“Sin taints everything in this world. The solution is not to cut ourselves off from all things but rather to work to right the wrongs. If vaccines were developed unethically, Christians will want to get into positions of influence to stop such unethical research. Speak against the sin not the results. If you cut yourself off from anything touched by sin what then do we have that has never been touched by sin?

“Objection # 3: Immunizations can be dangerous.

In most developed countries there are regulations requiring strict testing to assure the safety of vaccinations. Yet, there always seems to be exceptions. Thousands of people may have no negative effects from a vaccine and then someone gets seriously ill or dies from the same vaccine. Ever since statistical analysis caught foothold back in the early 1800s people “play the odds” on the safety of things. How safe is driving, flying, sailing, and walking? Everything has an element of danger. Christian freedom affords latitude for making such judgments on the relative safety of a vaccine. In this country statistics usually demonstrate a vaccine to be very safe before it goes to market. If you have an acquaintance, however, who had trouble with a particular vaccine your judgment will be skewed. In an imperfect world there is always the possibility of an error. Use your best judgment.

“Objection # 4: Immunizations can encourage irresponsible lifestyles.

In 2007 the Texas governor ordered all girls entering the sixth grade to have the HPV vaccine. The vaccine prevents the HPV virus which is a sexually transmitted infection that can lead to cervical cancer. The concern some people had was whether giving the vaccine to a young girl would encourage promiscuity. Will immunization enable ‘safe sinning?’

“Sinful people have an uncanny ability to twist what were meant as blessings into something reckless or sinful. We take more risks when we have a safety net or harness. We place our lives at greater risk if we feel we have a better car, better boat or better safety gear.

“As God provides ways to preserves our lives and well-being, those methods are genuine blessings. Hearts devoted to God receive those blessings with thankfulness and purity. Our sinful nature, however, will continue to find ways to corrupt God’s blessings for selfish pursuits. We appreciate God’s blessings, and we use His Word to hold the line on our wayward tendencies.”

<https://wels.net/faq/immunizations/>

Addendum to the June-July 2022 *Te Deum*

A couple of people asked me about that article which cites a fossil being 205 million years old. I ran the article because of how bamboozled these scientists were to find a sea creature on top of a mountain range. Since I was a child growing up, I was told, as most Bible-Believing Christians are, that sea shells and sea things on top of mountains or in deserts are indications of the Flood. I didn’t put a disclaimer to the ridiculous, unproveable age mentioned because I thought it made their foolishness stand out all the more! I didn’t mean to give the impression I accept, let alone endorse that dating. (PRH)

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Articles with no author are written by him.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3 HEBREWS BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM	4	5	6
7 CONFIRMATION PRE-TEST ADULT CLASS 12:15 PM	8	9	10 HEBREWS BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM	11	12	13
14 ADULT CLASS 12:15 PM	15	16	17 HEBREWS BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM	18	19	20
21 ADULT CLASS 12:15 PM	22	23	24 HEBREWS BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM	25	26	27
28 ADULT CLASS 12:15 PM LUNCH BUNCH	29	30	31 HEBREWS BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM			

September 2022

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2	3
4 ADULT CLASS 12:15 PM	5	6 ELDERS MEETING 6:30 PM	7 HEBREWS BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM	8	9	10
11 CONFIRMATION MEETING NOON ADULT CLASS 12:15 PM	12 CONFIRMATION 5:30 PM	13 VOTERS MEETING 7:00 PM	14 HEBREWS BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM	15	16	17 BEER, BRATS, & BRIDE
18 ADULT CLASS 12:15 PM	19 CONFIRMATION 5:30 PM	20	21 HEBREWS BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM	22	23	24

25 ADULT CLASS 12:15 PM	26 CONFIRMATION 5:30 PM	27	28 HEBREWS BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM	29	30	
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AUG. - SEPT. 2022