

Trinity Te Deum

The official newsletter for Trinity Lutheran Church

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

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You Won't Believe What Happened After a Pastor Said this...

Nothing. Absolutely nothing happened. More crickets. After nine weeks of saying the following in the bulletin: *Resolved to direct the Pastor and Elders to have a congregational meeting, prior to the March voters meeting, on our continued dissent over against doctrinal errors in the LCMS: where we've been; where we are; and what are our options for the future.* No one asked about it. Commented about it. Wondered about it, and it is a big deal.

Perhaps, it is self-explanatory. Perhaps everyone knows that since June 2005 we have been in official dissent over against the church body we belong to – The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. Perhaps everyone knows that since September 2010 we don't commune people based on them being members of the LCMS. If they believe Communion should be open to all believers, all Christians, all baptized Christians, all who believe in the Real Presence, or all Lutherans, we tell them if they commune at our altar they are hypocrites and if we knowingly commune them, we are. Perhaps people are waiting to see how the president of the LCMS or any of the three other officers of the Synod we copied will respond to our 12 September 2017 letter calling on the president of Synod to discipline our district president and to repent.

Then again, you couldn't know the background of the resolution cited

above. It stems from my telling the November 7, 2017 Voters Assembly that I could only think of two people that I actually knew what they thought we should do in regard to our longstanding dissent. So, I conducted an unofficial poll of the Voters Assembly. A poll is NOT a vote. It has no standing or force. It is a survey. I wanted to know where people were.

I have reproduced the survey below. I know that you can influence responses to a survey based on how you ask a question, where a question is in relation to other questions, and a host of other manipulative variables. I did not intentionally do any of these. I also gave the option to write in a 4th choice. Finally, I gave no speech, no plea, no indication of what I thought other than I desperately wanted to know what they did. Here's the survey:

Options for continued involvement in the LCMS and/or ACELC

- 1) _____ *Stay the course. Continue to be a member in the ACELC and of LCMS while going to the former conferences and not the latter.*
- 2) _____ *Leave the LCMS and become an independent Confessional Lutheran Congregation sometime in 2018.*
- 3) _____ *Leave the ACELC and become an active participant in LCMS conventions.*
- 4) _____ *Other* _____

The results? I was shocked, and so were others. 13 of the 15 assembled voters picked option 2: "Leave the LCMS and become an independent Confessional Lutheran Congregation sometime in 2018." Two others picked option 3: "Leave the ACELC and become an active participant in LCMS conventions."

Because these results were so one-sided, the suggestion was made, not by me, to have congregational meetings – not Voters Assembly meetings – sponsored by the Elders where these matters could be discussed. **The first such meeting is immediately after church on Sunday, March 4th at noon.** In this meeting we will cover where we've been, where we are, and what our options are for the future. This meeting is open to all members of Trinity and all are encouraged to attend.

Two things you should know going into this meeting. According to LCMS constitution and bylaws, Trinity Lutheran Church, Inc. and myself are members of Synod. Individual laymen are not. Second, if one or the other of us notifies the LCMS that we are leaving, the other will get a letter telling them they have to make a choice: either leave the Synod with the other or leave the other and stay in the Synod. The goal, in my mind, is that neither one of us make a unilateral decision, i.e. neither one of us forces the other to make a choice, but we come to the same choice together.

I know even the prospect of change is frightening. But let us remember that none of us have ever said, "I

believe in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod.” We have all said and do say, “I believe in the Holy Christian Church.” The real issue is can one stay in the former without jeopardizing their membership in the latter.

Not one of you would say, and you’d be correct, that I’m a particularly patient person. But one thing I can tell you in advance that I won’t have patience for is the suggestion, the plea, the advice that “what we need is more education on this subject.” That ALWAYS comes up whenever any of the issues troubling the LCMS comes up. I will not have patience with such recommendations because I believe I have done it faithfully, consistently, and comprehensively.

Three years ago, this subject came up in an email with a former member who has since moved away for work. She wrote, “After many, many discussions, you [meaning me] finally said, ‘This has been debated and re-debated over the past 15 years.... it’s all in the newsletters.’ I read the more than 50 newsletters on Trinity’s website that have been posted since the summer of 2005. Of the ones that make reference to the problems with the LCMS, I stopped counting after 30.”

That this issue – whether to stay or leave the LCMS – has been an issue has not been kept a secret by me. The time to resolve this issue which has really been going on since the fall of 2001 has come. See you at the meeting!

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. 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 Ashrive 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 Asaying farewell to meat, which is the meaning of the Latin word Acarnival. 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. AMardi Gras is the French name for the day, and it means AFat Tuesday.

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

AGiving 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.

Pastor Goes ‘Postal’ with New Email Usage Policy

I have been following the usage I outlined in the October – November *Te Deum*, and it has changed my life, for the better. I am continuing it. I check my email once a day. Usually at 5 on Monday’s through Thursdays, at 4 on Saturday’s, and at 8 AM on Sunday’s. I answer email and then I shut it off.

I realize the younger the congregation becomes the more my policy may seem out of touch and even irritating. I ask your indulgence. I have noted over the years that some people are hyper sensitive to smells, to sounds, to temperature, to taste, to touch. I think the last one is me.

AT&T had a commercial years ago with the tagline “Reach Out and Touch Someone.” The campaign was to combat the pervasive fear that a call in the night or at an unexpected time was always a bad thing. They wished to make it a good thing.

To me carrying a cell phone is like having a means to be reached out and touched 24/7. Having email on all day all the time is the same thing. In the words of Bob Dylan, “It ain’t me.” You can always call me. I don’t screen calls except when I’m having a difficult time writing a sermon and almost always when I’m meeting with someone. But even when I don’t

answer, I will call you back if you leave a message.

My policy is not very Pauline, i.e. being all things to all men, but it is very John the Baptist. I'm not into eating locusts or wild honey, but I'm into the desert. And just so you know I'm the same way with my own family. Ask my kids how much I communicate with them by phone or email. It's not very much. It's not personal. Well, it is in a way. But in the words of George Costanza, "It's not you; it's me."

You won't believe what Pastor Harris Said about the Pope in Bible Class

This is another example of "Click bait." I know it well and I succumbed to it recently. A member brought to my attention the news story that Pope Francis wished to change the Lord's Prayer. I went on line and clicked the story below from the *Los Angeles Times*. I brought it into Bible Class without reading it, and taking the 'click bait' headline at its word. A member pointed out that perhaps we should give our Catholic brothers and sisters the benefit of going by what they say not what the inflammatory press says about them. I took the point. Since I told the Bible Class I would be reprinting the story, I am. But I want to point a few things out.

First, the article itself quotes a Catholic professor saying, "Despite what some headline writers suggest, Francis is not suggesting changing Jesus' words, but just giving a better translation from the Greek." In a way, that is what our Small Catechism does when it treats this Petition. We say:

"Lead us not into temptation. What does this Mean? God tempts no one. We pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our sinful nature may not deceive us or mislead us..."

Pope Francis wants to change the translation of the Lord's Prayer to say that. He advocates the new French translation, "Do not let us enter into temptation." The Spanish have already changed it to "Don't let us fall into temptation" which to me is what "lead us not into temptation" has always said. In 2008 the Italian's bishop's conference switched to "Don't abandon us to temptation" which to me is stronger than what the Lord actually says.

Second, when dealing with the wording of Scripture, we who confess it is "God-breathed"; we who believe in verbal inspiration, that God gave, guided or reminded the writers of Scripture the very thoughts *and words*, should be very, very careful about messing with the words. Peter warns of twisting Paul's words and other Scripture to our own destruction. 2 Peter 3:15-16 says, "Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction." When His disciples ask Jesus to pray He answers in Luke 11:4, "Whenever you pray, you must say..."

Third, this article makes two important points without meaning to. The Catholic professor defending Francis says what's the big deal? The now "sainted" John Paul II added to the rosary. This equates Scripture with Tradition and subjecting both of them to the current Pope. This is in

accordance with Catholic doctrine, and shows their principal of authority is not Holy Scripture but the Pope. The article quotes unnamed "scholars" who say the Conclusion to the Lord's Prayer was added because scribes felt ending it on "Deliver us from evil" was too abrupt. No, the church added "for thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory," as fitting

ascription of praise. Later scribes out of habit added it to the Biblical text. In the Small Catechism Luther didn't explain anything but the "amen."

Fourth, as to the translation "lead us not into temptation". It is more literally translated "bring in" which perhaps to you is weaker and makes God's "role" less problematic. However, the Greek form of the words "lead us not" is very strong. It is a prayer not to at all do it, don't even begin to do it, don't make a step toward doing it. All the English translations reflect the above understanding.

Five, for the three of you who are still reading, this is the most important point. We don't say prayers for God's sake but for our own. This truth is reflected in that many of the Small Catechism explanations say God does what we're asking for without our prayer. We pray "lead us not into temptation" to confess how open to temptation we know we are and to be comforted by being reminded the heavenly Father knows that.

Finally, for the last person reading, when a turn of phrase is an accurate translation of the original language, and it pricks us, pokes us, moves us to modify it, that is an indication that there is gold in keeping it. The Lord is drawing our attention to some particular point. We don't want to file down the point by changing the word(s) that bother us.

Pope Francis has called for a re-writing of the Lord's Prayer, saying the current translation gives God a bad name and, essentially, does not give the devil his due.

By Tom Kington, December 8, 2017 | Reporting from Rome

Described in the Bible as a prayer taught by Jesus, the Lord's Prayer is viewed in the catechism of the Roman Catholic Church as "the summary of the whole gospel."

Used by Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox Christians, the prayer is common ground for churches, which have historically fought over theology, and it can be recited by heart by millions around the world.

But in a TV interview this week, Pope Francis said that the line asking God to "Lead us not into temptation," or in Italian, "*non induci in tentazione*," should be changed because it has been translated badly.

"It's not a good translation," he told TV2000, a channel belonging to Italy's conference of bishops, because it implies God actively pushes people into temptation.

"I am the one who falls," Francis said. "It's not Him pushing me into temptation to then see how I have fallen. A father doesn't do that; a father helps you to get up immediately," he added.

"It's Satan who leads us into temptation — that's his department," he said.

The interview gave a stamp of papal approval to moves already afoot in the church to change the line in the prayer.

Last month, the Catholic Church in France agreed to switch from the French equivalent of "Do not submit us to temptation" to "Do not let us enter into temptation." The pope said he was impressed with the new wording.

The Lord's Prayer, also commonly called the Our Father, appears in two gospels: Matthew 6: 9-13 and Luke 11: 2-4.

Down the centuries, the short prayer has been through the wringer, linguistically speaking, after being translated from Aramaic — the language Jesus spoke — to Greek and to Latin and to other languages.

The problem stems from the translation of one Greek word, "*eisenènkes*," said Massimo Grilli, a professor of New Testament studies at Gregorian University in Rome.

"The Greek verb '*eisfèro*' means 'take inside,' and the form used in the prayer, '*eisenènkes*,' literally means 'don't take us inside,'" he added.

"But that's a very literal translation, which must be interpreted," Grilli said.

A 4th century Latin translation of the Bible by St. Jerome, which was adopted by the Catholic Church, sticks to the literal meaning, using the Latin "*inducere*," which means "bring in."

"Despite what some headline writers might suggest, Francis is not suggesting changing Jesus' words, but just giving a better translation from the original Greek," said the Rev. James Martin, a Jesuit priest and editor at large of America, a Jesuit magazine.

"Before we criticize the pope for inserting his own opinion into traditional prayer, we should recall that St. John Paul added an entire new series of mysteries to the rosary," he added.

Pope seeks to mend fences on three-day trip to Egypt Pope John Paul II, who was canonized in 2014, added mysteries to the recitation of the rosary in 2002. (Plinio Lepri / Associated Press) Grilli said the line "Lead us not into temptation" in the Lord's Prayer was already being reevaluated throughout the Catholic Church.

"The Spanish have already switched to 'Don't let us fall into temptation,'" he said.

In 2008, the Italian bishop's conference switched to "Don't abandon us to temptation," although many priests have stuck with the old version during their services.

Francis' emphasis on the role of the devil leading believers toward temptation reflects his firm belief that Satan exists, after years in which the church played down the idea of the devil as a person.

Adjusting the translation of the prayer may appear groundbreaking, but pales in comparison to the tinkering that has happened in the past. Today the King James version of the prayer ends:

And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil:

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.

But scholars say the last two lines were added by scribes. The reason? They felt that wrapping up the prayer with talk of evil was too abrupt, and it needed a more polished ending.

(<http://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-vatican-our-father-20171208-story.html>)

THE CHARISMATIC THREAT

[For years I have been warning that the charismatic threat would be back. Here is an article from the July 1977 Concordia Theological Journal, the seminary I matriculated at in September 1979. It's found on pages 52-54) What it says about the threat 40 years ago is applicable today.]

One prominent Missouri Synod theologian has identified three types of charismatics: first, the Spirit-driven fanatics of the Reformation period, like Thomas Mlinzer; second, those who belong to churches which are overtly 'Pentecostal'; third, those who are open to the sovereign working of the Holy Spirit. The first two types are not real problems for the Lutheran Church today. Sixteenth-century iconoclasts are not roving around looking for statues and windows to break in our churches. Members of avowed Pentecostal groups are not applying for membership in our churches. The third type of charismatic deserves further attention. Persons in this group do not like to identify themselves with persons they sometimes call "hardcore Pentecostals." Also they do not join denominations limited to those who have some type of Pentecostal experience.

Charismatics of the third type are transdenominational.

The Missouri Synod seems to be seeing the light at the end of the tunnel in regard to the' conservative-liberal controversy. But before we get to the end of the tunnel, the charismatic issue, as understood in this third sense, looms ever larger.

Central to this particular type of charismatic thinking is the idea that the Holy Spirit is sovereign and works anywhere and anytime He pleases. At face value such phraseology seems pious enough. But to speak about the sovereign working of the Holy Spirit is not as acceptable as it sounds at first. Let us consider some of the following points. First, God-Father, Son and Holy Spirit is not free to act contrary to His own nature. God cannot annihilate Himself. He cannot offend against His own justice. The list could be expanded. Absolute freedom is a philosophical hypothesis that exists neither for God nor man. The Holy Spirit has a given place within the Trinity and no freedom to assume the place or functions of the Father and the Son. Secondly, the Spirit as He operates in the world does not have absolute freedom. Since the Spirit comes forth from the Son, the Spirit must testify about the Son and from what the Son gives Him, just as the Son receives His message from the Father. The Holy Spirit has taken the words spoken by Jesus to His disciples and has preserved them in the inerrant written words of the apostles. The Holy Spirit does not have a sovereignty that permits Him to go and give messages which He has not received from the Son. So-called testimonials which testify to God's working in the lives of Christians have none of the markings of the Spirit's work. It is regrettable that some Christians have been led to believe that such testimonials come from the Holy

Spirit. To summarize, the Holy Spirit works within the boundaries of the Deity and speaks words prescribed by the Son, just as the Son speaks words prescribed by the Father. These words of the Father and the Son are conveyed to the church by the words of the Holy Spirit which compose the Bible. Lutherans have always understood this fact and have denied a special work of the Holy Spirit outside of the apostolic word. Lutherans object to a special giving of the Holy Spirit in the priestly ordination of the Roman Church and to the Calvinistic idea that the Holy Spirit works alongside of the apostolic word and not through it.

The tendency has always existed among Christians to postulate a working of the Holy Spirit outside of the words of the prophets and apostles. What some have called the sovereign working of the Holy Spirit is not more than an amputation of the Holy Spirit's working from the words of Jesus. To amputate the Spirit from the words of Jesus by postulating an independent and sovereign working of the Spirit results in an amputation of the Spirit from the Trinity-at least, a temporary suspension.

Many Christians are now allowing for special workings of the Holy Spirit. They fear that if they do not approve of such autonomous actions, they would be putting a straight-jacket on the Holy Spirit. Before Lutherans adopt such a false posture, they should realize that the Spirit always works through the Word and is Himself no fanatic. Those who object to these special manifestations are not putting the Spirit in a box, but they are understanding the Holy Spirit according to terms which He Himself has set down in the Bible. The Holy Spirit can neither contradict Himself nor act contrary to His

essence. Just as He comes from the Son and receives His place within the Trinity from the Son, so He also testifies of the Son.

The Christological controversies occupied the attention of the church's first millennium. The church is now in the middle of the controversies of the Holy Spirit. The liberal denial of the Holy Scriptures as the Word of God is a controversy concerning the Holy Spirit. Essential to the charismatic misunderstanding is the separation of the Spirit from the apostolic word. Rationalism already in the eighteenth century began their separation by denying the Spirit's inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. They thus began treating these writings as ordinary writings. The Spirit and the Word were divorced. Missouri Synod moderates associate the Spirit's working with coming to faith and not with the actual words of Scripture themselves. Their position belongs to the heritage of eighteenth-century Rationalism. Also, influential for moderates is Karl Barth with his concept of the sovereign God who can use the Bible to bring someone to faith, but who is free and independent of that word.

While liberal theologians seem to be at the opposite side of the spectrum from charismatics, these two groups share at least one philosophical premise in common. Liberal theology divorces the Spirit from the Word or Scripture and the charismatics theology attaches the Spirit to persons outside of the Word. After the liberal theologian separates the Spirit from the Word he begins looking for a working of the Spirit outside of the Word, generally in the Christian community. The charismatic as he sees the Spirit working in himself and others begins relying less on the

Scriptures for the Holy Spirit. The liberal theologian first divorces the Spirit from the Word and then finds another locale for the Spirit's activity. With the charismatic the process is reversed. Liberal theologians and charismatics are ships sailing from two different ports, but their path through the sea is the same, and each travels to the other's port of embarkation.

Symptomatic of the current misunderstanding of the Holy Spirit for both liberal theologians and charismatics is the ordination of women. The liberal theologians simply do not find the Scriptural prohibitions binding. St. Paul's words are not commands of the Spirit but only words intended for one culture and limited by that culture. For the charismatic the Spirit is more vital in the lives of people than He is in the letters of the Scriptures. The sovereign Spirit is not limited by sexual distinctions and can speak through a woman just as He can through a male. The twentieth century is not the first time that the denial of the inspiration of the Scriptures, the charismatic movement, and the ordination of women have all appeared simultaneously. All these problems appeared in the Corinthian congregation in the first century. Some were rising up and questioning St. Paul's apostolic authority. Some were allegedly filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. Some women were taking charge of the church services. The parallel to the twentieth century is striking.

Dr. Harry Huth has frequently remarked that the Lutheran Reformation had a fourth sola, solo verbo, the word alone. Of course, the solo verbo is contained in the so/a scriptura, but this fact has not impressed itself upon those who consider themselves charismatics in the "third sense" mentioned above. The Missouri Synod and the

Norwegian Synod in the nineteenth century objected to the Haugeans who held that some could be exempted from formal study of the Bible and theology and be received into the ministry. The objection was well-founded. Confessional Lutherans in the twentieth century should be careful not to give any recognition to those who come as special messengers of the Holy Spirit. Such messengers follow not in the steps of Paul and Luther but in the steps of Montanus and Thomas Mlntzer. dps (Dr. David P. Scaer).

Look at All the Needy People

(A 9-part Sermon Series on the 3rd Chief Part of Luther's Small Catechism – The Lord's Prayer)

One of my favorite Beatles' songs is the 1966 song "Eleanor Rigby" it begins with the haunting, captivating line "Ah, look at all the lonely people." What does that have to do with the Lord's Prayer?

For decades now, I have wondered why I don't think, speak, or use prayer in general the way the New Testament speaks of it and the Lord's Prayer the way Luther did. My goal every four years is that we would come away from the sermon series on the Lord's Prayer more a people of prayer than we go in. Perhaps that's true for some. The Lord be praised if it is. However, by and large I think I have failed.

Then I read this from Luther. "The Lord's Prayer, which most completely contains all our tribulations and is through the cross most replete." And he didn't originate this view. The early church father Cyprian (d. 258 A.D) said that the petitions are "seven

announcements of our misery and indigence through which a person led to self-recognition may see what a treacherous and miserable life he leads here on earth.” Luther never backed away from this thesis that the Lord’s Prayer “desires to open our eyes to the abyss in which normally we carelessly and foolishly live from day to day.” The term “need”

is inculcated in each individual petition. “In seven successive articles or petitions, all the needs are comprehended that continually beset us, each one so great that it should impel us to keep praying about it all our lives” (Large Catechism, III. 34). “The Lord’s Prayer wants to open our eyes not primarily for our human needs, but for the necessity of God with us” See Large Catechism, III, 68 (Peters, *Lord’s Prayer*, 9, 10).

Here is where the scales fell off my eyes. Here is the reason I have always resonated to the joke I tell when teaching the Lord’s Prayer. The punchline is from the telephone lineman (Millennials and younger will have to Google this.) who says that he found he prayed best not at home, not at church, but when hanging upside down from a telephone pole by his safety belt.

Yes, my “great” prayer times have always come in times of great need. My problem was that I didn’t see that I was constantly in need. “Needy people” is a pejorative phrase in our society. No one wants to be that! But that’s what we are over against God in the face of the devil, the fallen world, and our own sinful flesh.

So, come to church on Wednesday’s during Lent to “Look at All the Needy People.” Services start at 7:30 and with the exception of Ash

Wednesday if you don’t stop to visit you can be on your way to the parking lot by about 8:15.

Look at All the Needy People
(A 9-part Sermon Series on the 3rd Chief Part of Luther’s Small Catechism – The Lord’s Prayer)

Nov. 29 Needy People Need a Father in Heaven

Dec. 06 Needy People Need a God on Earth

Dec. 13 Needy People Need a Light at the End of the Tunnel

Ash Wed. Needy People Need to be Acted on Not to Act

Feb. 21 Needy People Need more than Bread for Today

Feb. 28 Needy People Need Continual Forgiveness

Mar. 07 Needy People Need to be Lead out of *Anfechtung*

Mar. 14 Needy People Need to be Delivered from Evil

Mar. 21 Needy People Need Double Amens

Recusant - Derived forms
recusance ('recusance)
or recusancy
('recusancy) noun
1: an English Roman Catholic of the time from about 1570 to 1791 who refused to attend services of the

Church of England and thereby committed a statutory offense 2: one who refuses to accept or obey established authority
(<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/recusant>)
New Series – Treating You Like Family

In the middle of my 4th decade of ministry, I am purposely doing things differently. The same happened when in my 2nd decade of ministry my own children started confirmation instruction. I realized I had been wronging parishioners. I had been accepting poor effort, poor learning, poor memory work from their kids which I would never, ever let my own kids get away with.

It dawned on me about 20 years later that I have been doing so with adult members. I haven’t been always speaking the truth, let alone in love. I had very often told people what they wanted to hear. Most make it very obvious what that is particularly in the matter of not attending divine service and/or Bible class.

This is my first article in a new series: Treating You Like Family.

The Poles of Church Attendance

Some think one pole is like the joke about what Roman Catholic priests are told about nuns. They can be around them all they want just don’t get in the habit. You can miss church anytime you ‘feel’ like it, ‘need’ to, just don’t get in the habit. This comes from Hebrews 10:25 “Let us not give up meeting together [i.e. going to church], as some are in the **habit** of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” As long as you don’t get in the *habit* of doing that, it’s okay. I’ve taught over and over and over again that if you can’t say it about every Commandment, you can’t say it about any. So, can you say, lust, fornicate, adulterate when

you ‘feel’ like it, when you ‘need’ to? How about misusing the name of God? Just don’t make it a habit and you’re fine. Furthermore, Hebrews 10:26, the very next verse, puts makes staying away from church in the deadliest, the damnedest of light. “If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left,”

So, I don’t think “habit” is a proper pole. That brings us to recusancy.

Below you will find a joke about reasons not to go to church. The Missouri Synod once published a pamphlet titled “Reasons Not to Go to Church.” You opened it up, and it was blank.

There are no reasons, short of sickness or having to work, not to go to church. But if you want an excuse not to go, they are all over the place. It is funny – actually funny to me – how people proffer me these excuses and somehow think I concur they’re legitimate.

There are many excuses not to go church, and then there is one step beyond excuses. Being so jaded, so self-assured in your salvation, that you don’t think you even need to make a pretext of giving an excuse.

If you’re interested in learning more, read Luke 14: 15-24. The first two feel guilty enough for not attending the banquet they had already committed on going to that they gave excuses and asked to be excused. Not the third. He is so hardened he doesn’t offer an excuse or ask to be excused. “I just got married, so I can’t come.”

So, quit fooling yourself, you know who you are, and God knows who you are. You can no more give or not give an excuse for not attending divine service that you committed to going to when you joined, than I can give an excuse for not preaching or teaching on

Sunday morning. If you think, “That would be a very big sin if that pastor just didn’t show up,” you’re right. And that’s exactly the truth about you when you don’t.

O let me take the edge off that. Here is the kind of thing I would have published in my first 34 years.

TEN REASONS I NEVER WASH

“*I was made to wash as a child. * People who wash are hypocrites. They reckon they are cleaner than other people. *There are so many different kinds of soap, I could never decide which one was right. *I used to wash, but it got boring so I stopped. *I still wash on special occasions, like Easter and Christmas. *None of my friends wash. *I’m still young. When I’m older and have got a bit dirtier I might start washing. *I really don’t have time. *The bathroom is never warm enough. *People who make soap are only after your money.” Rev. Sidney Lang, Dublin, Ireland, (*Holy Humor*, 58)

Ever learning, but...

Posted on March 9, 2015 by [Rev. Paul R. Harris](#)

You know when a person says something and then says “but” that he is about to modify, and usually in a bad way, what he has just said. You would think “ever learning” has *got* to be a good thing. Not so says St. Paul in [2 Timothy 3:7](#). He speaks of those “ever learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth.”

Luther too regularly railed against those who knew no more of the Faith at the end of the year than they did at the beginning and at those who having read the Catechism through once thought they had mastered it. He spoke of how even though he had writ-

ten it, he still read and prayed it regularly. How about us?

I think the Synod’s devotional series *Portals of Prayer* has done a lot to inculcate people with a one and done mentality. It’s a different devotion for every single day of the year. I admit that the devotions are better now than they were 30 years ago when virtually everyone ended with what you were supposed to do. However, a different devotion every day doesn’t inculcate anything but change. When people comment about a good devotion in this resource it’s always about some funny, different, or new factoid they learned.

It wasn’t always this way. Before *Portals of Prayer* began publishing 75 years ago the Synod’s publishing house produced *The Family Altar*. It was a book of devotions to be used year after year. This is how you learn things: going over good information again and again. The men in Athens are not being praised when Scripture says they delighted in nothing but hearing something “new” ([Acts 17:21](#)).

I am not on the warpath against *Portals of Prayer* but against the falsehood that believes it can only learn, or even learns better, if the information comes in a new form with new stories. This attitude is inconsistent with liturgical worship and catechetical education.

Ever learning only comes to the knowledge of the truth if the truth is what you are ever learning. Ever learning cute or interesting stories is fun, but it doesn’t arrive at knowledge of the truth but of more stories.

Playing First Century in Red Pantaloons

Posted on December 11, 2017 by
Rev. Paul R. Harris

Krister Stendahl, a Swedish Lutheran theologian, gave a lecture at an Episcopalian seminary in 1982. It was on Romans. I was in attendance. I remember thinking either this man is too smart for me to understand or so stupid he ought not to be believed.

He coined the phrase “to play First Century” in his 1958 work *The Bible and Role of Women*. This was published in America by the liberal Fortress Press in 1966 (N.B. the date). According to Stendahl you are playing First Century if you take what the New Testament said about the roles of women and translate it directly to your century. “The correct description of first-century Christianity is not automatically the authoritative and intended standard for the church through the ages. It has no means by which it can account for the ensuing centuries of church history as God’s history” (36).

“Isn’t that special?” queries the Church Lady. “Doesn’t that sound pious?” says the open-minded among us. So much then for the Scripture being the norm which norms all other things. So much for Scripture being the inspired Word of God. So long *sola Scriptura*.

Stendahl’s work is the launchpad for Helmut Thielicke *Theological Ethics* from which comes the modern Lutheran understanding, defense, and acceptance of

homosexuality (viz., Volume 3: Sex, pp 269 – 292). And it is the launch pad for the trajectory argument for women pastors advanced by self-titled evangelical feminists. Jesus started the trajectory and Paul advanced it as far as he could. It is left to our day to bring the church to God’s goal of total equality (See *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*, 345 – 350).

In case you might not be getting what I’m saying and they’re selling, let me sum it up the way a seminary professor did over 30 years ago. “The theological liberal says that if you want to know the direction the Holy Spirit is leading the church just look where the world around you is heading. That’s where He is leading you.”

After accepting this premise, a decidedly evolutionary perspective is added. Organisms that don’t adapt to current conditions die. This is the position of Dina Brawer, founder of the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance, and this is where the red pantaloons come in.

Just the title of the August 13, 2016 article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* “Religion Must Either Modernise or Face Obsolescence” says it all. But this wasn’t at all said/admitted by us when in 1969 – at the high tide of the feminist movement – the Missouri Synod suddenly discovered that women voting wasn’t contrary to Scripture. This wasn’t at all said by us when little girls were made acolytes in the 70s, and this wasn’t at all admitted by us when women were given the presidency, the eldership, and any other office short of pastor at the 2004 convention. We were modernizing so as not to become obsolete, but we wouldn’t admit it then and we’re not owning it now. Ask the Roman

Catholics how modernizing the liturgy worked out for them after Vatican II.

How it works out for Ms. Brawer is in red pantaloons. O she isn’t wearing them, not that I know of anyway, but she is using them. The reference comes from World War I. Warfare had shifted from fighting at close quarters to at a distance with artillery and machine guns. The Brits and the Krauts (I can say this because I’m 1/8 German.) saw this change and went from bright colored uniforms to drab colors. However, the bright red pants stood for France’s pride and prestige of her military traditions. A former war minister said, “Le pantalon rouge, c’est la France!” “The Red Pants is France!”

The militant feminist (and there are no other kind) Brawer is quoting from non-feminist Barbara Tuchman’s 1962 book *Guns of August* which is said to be the best history of World War I. Brawer quotes Tuchman’s judgment on the red pantaloons and applies it to all who won’t modernize, especially in having women in the ministry. We have as the French did to their red pantaloons a “blind and imbecile attachment” to old traditions about the roles of men and women that is going to insure we die off.

Those of us who don’t have women voting, leading, acolyting, ushering, distributing, reading, or chairing are playing first century. We’re wearing red pantaloons that long ago went out of style and, in fact, make us easy targets for the worldly, the educated, and the sophisticated. Being so bold or stupid (depending on whom you ask) to do this has Ms. Brawer’s panties in a knot as well as many feminists (men and women) in our own denomination, and for that I’m glad.

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February 2018

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Adult Class 12:30 PM	Jr. Confirmation 5 PM		Romans 7:15 PM			
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Adult Class 12:30 PM	Jr. Confirmation 5 PM		Imposition of Ashes with Holy Communion 7:30 PM			
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Prayer Service @ Planned Parenthood 1:30 PM	Jr. Confirmation 5 PM		Lenten Vespers 7:30 PM			
25	26	27	28			
	Jr. Confirmation 5 PM		Lenten Vespers 7:30 PM			

March 2018

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Congregational Meeting What Next? NOON	Jr. Confirmation 5 PM	Voters Meeting 7 PM	Lenten Vespers 7:30 PM			
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
YOUTH	GROUP	CAMPOUT	Lenten Vespers 7:30 PM	Deadline for April-May Newsletter Articles		
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
	Jr. Confirmation 5 PM	Elders Meeting 6:30 PM	Lenten Vespers 7:30 PM			
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
	Jr. Confirmation 5 PM			Maundy Thursday 7:30 PM	Good Friday Service of Darkness 7:30 PM	