

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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It's Overtime

Most people look forward to an overtime period in sports. They even like them in music concert encores. The only place, in my limited experience, that people don't like overtime is in church services. I have to say, here at Trinity in over 22 years, not once has someone complained to me in the semi-joking, full-serious way lay people do about these things, "Ran a little long didn't we?" "What happened to hour long services?" "Going to have to rush to get dinner on." "Might miss the kickoff." I have never heard such things here, and God bless you for that. I don't know how it is in any other line of work, but it's little things like that in which over time wear you down and out.

But it's overtime now. In last December-January *Te Deum*, my article was entitled "It's Time." The message was it was time for you to join the Texas Rally for Life march at the capital. I told you then they sure don't need to see another clerical collar there. The Catholics have that covered. Some places you looked, it was like a flock of blackbirds. What needs to be demonstrated is that all walks of life, all colors of life, all ages of life recognize, value, and are ready now to be counted as being on the side of life in the womb.

Last year that in-person event was canceled for Covid. This year it's scheduled for January 22 at 1 PM. This is fitting, it's the 49th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court deciding that it was lawful to commit a crime against humanity. Many of you were up in arms circa 2019 or so when you heard states were legalizing abortion ever later. The truth of the matter is that until recent state laws trying to put restrictions on when abortions could be performed, a woman could choose to kill her child right up 'till the moment of birth. Look up the history of late-term abortions. It's quite graphic, so be prepared if you don't know what that term means.

Through the decades I've gone to thinking there is nothing left but the judgment of God, so hardened were people. "In 1968, only 15 percent of Americans favored liberalizing abortion laws; by 1972, 64 percent did" (<https://www.aclu.org/other/right-choose-25->

looking-back-and-ahead). Even conservative publications like *WORLD* magazine say that in 1995 only 33% of Americans identified as pro-life. Then the late term abortion horror became public and Gallop reported 61 % of Americans supported banning them. Also, the 33% who would identify themselves as pro-life in 1995 grew to 44% in 2008 and then 51% in 2012. Another bright side, says *WORLD*, is that the last year we have the numbers for surgical abortions, 2017, are almost half of what they were from the all time high in 1990 (Leah Savas, "Life and New Life", *WORLD*, 51-63, 08-14-21). The dark side is murdering the unborn by pill. It's really dark because no one is sure exactly how many that is. Covid has given the pro-death crowd the excuse to get the death pills prescribed and delivered without a face-to-face meeting with anyone.

Do I think showing up at a rally once a year is enough? Of course not, but it's a start. So would be attending the Trinity sponsored prayer service at Planned Parenthood, Sunday March 6 at 1 PM. I have been somewhat surprised at the vehemence with which some people have talked about their position relative to Covid related things. Where is that passion, that enthusiasm, that willingness to speak your mind, to be counted, to let people know what side you stand on in regard to abortion? It's overtime for that to happen for it is very clear-cut on what side our Lord Jesus, who entered a virgin's womb, stands on.

Understanding religious exemptions

by Jenny Rough, *WORLD Post Date*: October 7, 2021

COVID-19 vaccine mandates are increasing, and the legal issues surrounding religious exemptions are complicated.

When Brad and J.J. Jacob adopted their youngest daughter, Joy, at age 4, doctors expected her only to survive for one year. Joy has the rare medical disability late infantile metachromatic leukodystrophy, which only about 300 people on the planet have. "It basically

means that the white matter of her brain is dissolving,” explains Brad Jacob, who is also a constitutional law professor at Regent University School of Law.

Today Joy is 9 years old. She takes formula and medications through an intestinal tube because she can’t swallow. She can’t speak. She can’t move much except to wiggle her hands a bit, Jacob said. But she can smile and laugh. She knows her family, including the four big dogs. And she’s very happy. That’s why they named her Joy, Jacob said: “She’s a delight.” Joy can’t be vaccinated against COVID-19 because she is under 12. Even if she were old enough, her parents aren’t sure they would get her the shots due to her fragile condition (they did vaccinate their two other special needs kids.)

“We can’t take risks with her,” Jacob said. “So, we try to keep her safe.” Joy has a team of caregivers who assist from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. every day. They prefer to hire fully vaccinated caregivers, but the tough labor market limits their options. Some of Joy’s caregivers have been vaccinated, some have not.

The Jacobs are firm with masking rules and trust their caregivers to track possible exposure to the virus. Even though the Jacobs have chosen to vaccinate themselves and their older children, Jacob said he understands some people have legitimate concerns or convictions. As the world navigates the uncharted waters of this pandemic, he believes Christians need to extend one another a lot of grace and a lot of love.

One Christian with concerns is Whitney Buck, an OB-GYN in Michigan. When her employer mandated the COVID-19 vaccine, she and her husband, Taylor, a physician at the same hospital system, sought a religious exemption. “As believers, we trust the leading of the Holy Spirit and decided it was medically not indicated or necessary for us.” They are young, healthy, and low risk for morbidity or mortality if infected. She said they didn’t want to take on the risk of side effects, no matter how infrequently they are reported. She also said the push for mandates by the media and politicians gives them pause.

Both Whitney and Taylor received an automated email response from their employer denying the exemption. They requested an explanation, but have not received one. The Bucks are praying about what to do next. “I felt from a very young age that the Lord prepared me and equipped me to be a physician,” she said. “I do not want it to be my pride that costs me my vocation.”

As Christians make decisions about how to keep their families safe while respecting others’ decisions, these struggles are playing out all over the United States, especially as the government and businesses begin to require workers to get the vaccine or risk losing their jobs. Some, like the Bucks, have sought religious exemptions to vaccine mandates, while those who have been denied are filing lawsuits against schools, hospitals, and state governments.

To help navigate the complexities of religious exemptions and vaccine mandates, WORLD has compiled an explainer examining what legally qualifies as a religious exemption and how government employers and private companies may respond.

What vaccine mandates has the Biden administration announced? On Sept. 9, President Joe Biden signed an order mandating the COVID-19 vaccine for executive branch federal workers “subject to such exceptions as required by law.” According to the Biden administration, those exceptions include religious exemptions.

Biden also announced the U.S. Department of Labor’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) will issue a rule on vaccine mandates for the private sector requiring businesses with more than 100 employees to mandate that their workers get the vaccine or submit to regular testing.

Has the OSHA rule gone into effect yet? No, but some employers have already taken the step on their own. In the private sector, many healthcare facilities and restaurants—where workers come in contact with large numbers of people—require employees to get a vaccine, said Mark Chumley, a partner at Keating Muething & Klekamp who specializes in labor and employment law. In the public sector, state universities have been leading the way.

Before this directive, OSHA had recommended, but not required, employees get vaccinated. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has said employers that do issue mandates must comply with discrimination laws.

For those working for the federal, state, or local government, what determines whether an employer will grant a religious exemption? Legally, a constitutional law analysis will apply. The First Amendment states: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” Courts have interpreted the word “religion” to mean a sincerely held belief. “You have to demonstrate you have a system of moral or

ethical beliefs that are important to your life,” said Barry McDonald, a constitutional law professor at Pepperdine University Caruso School of Law.

That doesn’t mean a person needs to believe in the God of the Bible, adds Jacob. You don’t even have to be part of a group that shares your belief, he said. “It’s not a question of whether your belief is right or wrong. It’s whether you really in your heart of hearts hold it and believe it.”

Can that encompass any beliefs? If a -religious belief is too far-fetched, the government will have trouble accepting it. For instance, Universal Life Church ordained millions of people as ministers by mail request and encouraged them to declare themselves tax exempt. The courts denied the exemption and held that such a claim was simply a tax dodge. On the other hand, a 1972 Supreme Court case allowed the Amish to claim a religious exemption from a state law that required kids to attend public school until age 16. The Amish parents sincerely believed their kids should leave school to work on the family farm after eighth grade.

Ultimately, the employers will be the ones tasked with discerning if an individual’s religious belief is asserted in good faith, McDonald said. A note from a pastor or documentation pointing to principles of faith shouldn’t be required. But many people use that type of evidence for support as tangible proof that getting a vaccine goes against their religious beliefs. “You can kind of build a case and say, ‘Look, here are these well-respected Christian writers who have made the same arguments,’” Jacob said.

If a government employer denies a religious exemption, does that violate the free exercise clause in the First Amendment? The Supreme Court has decided only two cases challenging the denial of objections to vaccine mandates. The court upheld the vaccine requirement in both instances, but neither case specifically addressed religious exemptions. Instead, they involved a bodily integrity objection—the right to self-determination of the body—under the due process clause. Also, the cases date to the 1920s, decades before the development of modern-day religious liberty law.

By the 1980s, courts took religious exemption claims to secular laws more seriously. The court applied a tough standard of review known as strict scrutiny: Under strict scrutiny, the government must prove there is a compelling state interest to deny the exemption,

and even if it finds one, it must then apply the law by the least restrictive means.

But the free exercise clause has been on shaky ground since 1990 when the U.S. Supreme Court heard a case raised by two members of a Native American church who sought a religious exemption from a law banning the use of peyote, a plant classified as a hallucinogen. Instead of applying the strict scrutiny test, the court held that religious beliefs don’t excuse a person from compliance with a generally applicable secular law.

But the law continued to evolve. And a few years later, Congress enacted the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), which restored the Supreme Court’s strict scrutiny approach to the free exercise clause. Only the federal government is bound by RFRA, while state laws vary.

“A pandemic is a pretty decent argument about compelling state interest, so even if we’re playing the strict scrutiny game it’s not a sure thing,” Jacob said. Still, he adds, the least restrictive means may translate to offering testing opt-outs or other alternatives.

What about the legalities of a religious exemption in the private sector? Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 governs most employers. That prevents religious discrimination in the workplace. Again, the first step will require the employer to determine the sincerity of an employee’s belief, said Chumley, the labor law expert. “The EEOC views religious belief very, very broadly, so it doesn’t necessarily have to follow the established tenets of a religion.”

For example, a member of the Catholic Church doesn’t have to be in line with Catholic doctrine. Even though Pope Francis has encouraged the vaccine, a Catholic can still have a different legitimate religious belief, which the legal standard could still cover. Chumley says it’s difficult for an employer to say an employee’s belief is not genuine except in cases of fraud.

But even if a private employer determines the belief is sincere, Title VII only requires the organization to make a reasonable accommodation (an employer doesn’t have to accommodate if doing so would be an undue burden). That requires case-by-case evaluations, Chumley said. An employee who objects to the vaccine mandate might prefer an accommodation to work from home. The employer may reject the request and require the employee to come into the office, submit to weekly testing, wear a mask, and practice social distancing.

What should employers do? Chumley said some employers have taken the position that there are no reasonable accommodations for not getting the vaccine. Chumley, who advises employers, believes that's a mistake. "All the regulation and guidance from the EEOC contemplates a one-on-one dialogue, meaning let's analyze this for each individual person." He encourages employers to engage, look for feasible alternatives, and document the process.

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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	Breathed Into	2 nd Petition
Mar. 02	Controlling Breathing	3 rd Petition
Mar. 09	Breathtaking	4 th Petition
Mar. 16	Holding Your Breath	5 th Petition
Mar. 23	Catching Your Breath	6 th Petition
Mar. 30	Breathe Your Last	7 th Petition
Apr. 06	The Last Breath	Conclusion

Pro-life Pregnancy Centers and Contraceptives or 21st Century Bread and Circuses

Recently Trinity stopped funding a local pro-life pregnancy center because they provide birth control to

the unmarried. When I told this to the center this is how they responded:

You are correct. The Source currently provides contraceptive care. We believe God's gift of sex is intended only for the context of biblical marriage. The best option for women and men is to practice abstinence, or to have sexual intercourse only within a marital relationship in which the couple is willing to love and raise any children who may be conceived from that union. Local churches, pregnancy resource centers, and women's health clinics must continue to promote God's plan for human sexuality by encouraging these actions.

Yet, because we do not live in a world in which every couple is willing to follow God's commands—commands he lovingly gives us to maximize human flourishing and his glory—we should pragmatically do the best we can to love our neighbors and help women avoid the crisis of an unintended pregnancy and the frequent resulting trauma of abortion.

Some make the argument that providing contraception is encouraging sexual behavior. However, we have to keep in mind that the women who are coming to us are already sexually active and will likely continue to be sexually active regardless of if we intervene or not.

Consider it this way... If a person is diabetic and in need of intervention, does their doctor simply tell them "Take better care of yourself. Stop eating junk and get some exercise," and send them way? Of course not! The doctor prescribes them insulin and then helps support them in making the necessary lifestyle changes to improve their health and manage their diabetes.

Our goal is to provide an intervention (contraception) that will help our patient avoid an unplanned pregnancy, while we work with her and walk alongside her providing support to help her make healthier lifestyle choices that impact her sexual health as well as her mental, emotional, and spiritual health.

Contraceptives are an important tool in the fight against abortion: they help save unborn lives and protect women from the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual complications that so often follow an abortion.

Sounds like a reasoned, rational, if not Biblical approach, but it is the way of the world in matters of right and wrong, in moral matters, to say 'half a loaf is better than no loaf'. However, if the whole loaf is available, that policy convicts you. Rome provided 'bread and circuses' to keep their population sated and

docile as they were. That's not what the Church wants for people living in fornication.

Here's the response by Roland Warren, the president and CEO of Care Net, the largest network of pregnancy resources in America. He was interviewed in *WORLD Magazine's* 12-26-20 issue by Marvin Olasky.

Care Net affiliates do not encourage behavior that is not Biblical. Jesus never violated a principle to do a good. I understand the relationships argument, but violating a Biblical principle to support a Biblical principle is a house divided against itself. If you think maintaining the relationship is more important than upholding the Biblical principle about sex outside of marriage, you're making an idol out of a relationship.

When they were coming to you not to get pregnant, they're unlikely to come back to you to help them bring the child into the world. Say you have a friend who's an alcoholic. Other friends have been giving the person alcohol to preserve the relationship. Will people who don't want to drink anymore go to the person who's been giving them alcohol? No, they'll go to that one friend who made the Word of God, truth, primary. Jesus didn't value relationship above truth when the rich young ruler asked a question (32).

Of Killing Snakes and not Kids

Posted on August 9, 2021 by Rev. Paul R. Harris

The story begins either with an outdoor writer, a district president, or a secretary but culminates with a journalist and an organist.

First, *Field & Stream* editor-at-large, Bill Heavey, had an op-ed about how to handle the anti-hunter. I haven't run across them much in my ministry, but they are the ones that ask, "How can you kill Bambi?" or the like. Bill Heavey, because of his occupation, gets a lot more of this. He decided the best way to handle it was to respond with, "I see your point." Or "You know killing isn't the part I hunt for."

Then, district president Brian Saunders said at the 2012 ACELC conference that whenever someone asks you about receiving Communion the first word out of your mouth should be, "Yes!" I was among other pastors there who wouldn't move on from, "But sometimes you *have* to say, 'No!'" Later, I started thinking then Saunders was more along the lines of Bill Heavey than Open Communion.

Time passes. I don't know how long, but I happen to see the secretary's emails to a non-member's enquiring about having her marriage service here. It was a hoot. It didn't say a flat 'no' right off the bat but started with, "Yeah it's a bummer trying to get everything lined up for your wedding." She gets to no, but it's not harsh or personal. The person responds back in a friendly, understanding way like she was responding to a friend.

By now the process has been going on about 9 years. Then a sort of mental Rubicon was crossed. (And these are the hardest to cross and usually are done so involuntarily.) I was reading Marvin Olasky's op-ed in *WORLD*, 05.22.21 (72). I'm not telling the Lincoln story exactly as he did, but all credit goes to him for gelling or birthing my gestating idea.

Lincoln was explaining the need to be careful in making policy pronouncements. He said, "If I saw a venomous snake crawling in the road, any man would say I might seize the nearest stick and kill it; but if I found that snake in bed with my children, that would be another question. I might hurt the children more than the snake, and it might bite them."

An apparition of an idea started to rise, but it wouldn't have formed without Olasky's next paragraph which I give in full: "The slogans of the political left are now in bed with our children, and older Christians need to battle those snakes with compassion rather than contempt."

The final piece to this process of maturation is the organist. I was talking over these things with her. She said, wisely to this wizened one, "The left has succeeded in making the plain speech that was spoken in the past and you are use to" i.e. calling a spade a spade "say something derogatory about you and nothing about the matter at hand."

Booyah! The scales fell off. The fruit has yet to bear; now I'm just marking my ditches. The one ditch is to avoid is speaking like Dr. Wither in Lewis' *That Hideous Strength*. He speaks politely, calmly and says nothing at all definite, and means to do that. The other ditch to stay out of is speaking like Archie Bunker. That identifies and maybe kills a few snakes, but it wounds or worsens the kids in bed with their language, worldview, and outlook.

Suspicion of the messenger. . .

Who says it is just as important as what is said? We all know that. In the world there are certain folks who have authority not of office elected nor of appointment but simply by virtue of their stature. When Warren Buffet speaks on business or the economy, people pay attention. Even in a congregation there are non-elected people who can sway the opinion and vote of others. The media decided that when Trump spoke, it was a lie and so everything he said was suspicious. Biden says the same thing and there is no inherent suspicion. It is not the content but the speaker that changes how things are heard.

For some time now the media has become the voice of science and medicine and morality. Instead of simply reporting the facts, the media has insisted upon coloring those facts according to a political and ideological bias. Everyone knows this except the media, it seems. They sit in their ivory towers at NBC, Fox, CNN, etc., and presume that the world looks at them with respect -- so much respect that they take what they say as truth. But that is the problem. The media have less credibility than hawkers of used cars or today's TV special value. That means that we are, as a nation, suspicious of what we hear even when what is spoken is fact.

The media has taken on certain causes as their pet projects and climate change is one of them. It would seem that every one of them had to read Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in high school and from then on have only read what accords with her view of the coming destiny to the planet. Anyone who deviates from the sacred truth of climate change is either a fool or a lunatic or a Trumper and none of them have any credibility in the media.

So, it was interesting that I read (in the New York Times no less) that the chief scientist in the Obama administration's Energy Department (and a professor of physics at Cal Tech) wrote a book that challenges the gospel according to Al Gore, the inventor of the internet. He has the real science to suggest that while climate change is real, just about everything we have been told about it is not.

In his book, *Unsettled: What Climate Science Tells Us, What It Doesn't, and Why It Matters*, Steven E. Koonin puts the science against the claims of the media that have dominated our thinking and driven our policies for many years. He writes, tornado frequency

and severity are . . . not trending up; nor are the number and severity of droughts. The extent of global fires has been trending significantly down. The rate of sea-level rise has not accelerated. Global crop yields are rising, not falling. And while global CO2 levels are obviously higher now than two centuries ago, they're not at any record planetary high—they're at a low that has only been seen once before in the past 500 million years.

And

Heat waves in the U.S. are now no more common than they were in 1900 . . . the warmest temperatures in the U.S. have not risen in the past 50 years. . . . Humans have had no detectible impact on hurricanes over the past century. . . . Greenland's ice sheet isn't shrinking any more rapidly today than it was 80 years ago . . . The net economic impact of human-induced climate change will be minimal through at least the end of this century.

You can read him for yourself. He has the credentials and data to make his claims. But this is not about him. It is about how media can color how we see things -- this is just as important as whether or not they are true. So, for example, the whole coverage of the pandemic has presumed that science is saying one thing when science is saying many things, but the media chose what to report and challenges every other viewpoint. The media thinks it is being objective, but it is arbitrarily choosing sides for us and then telling us what supports this side while *debunking* every other voice that challenges this side. Is it no wonder we are not what to think about masks, social distancing, shutting down businesses and churches, vaccines, and the like? We are not given facts as much as we have been given the story that the media wants to tell. I have every confidence that some of what they say is true but how is the person listening to the radio, watching TV, reading papers, or perusing the internet supposed to know fact facts from uncertain facts -- or worse, whether the conclusions drawn from the facts are reliable, credible, and trustworthy?

When climate science or pandemic policy or religious claims are colored by blindness to fact and truth, how is anyone supposed to know what to believe? When climate change cannot stand up to real debate, is it truth? When pandemic policy cannot stand up to opposing opinions and facts, what are we to think and do? When the media has decided that skeptics are the only true voices of Christianity, is it no wonder that the Church is bleeding off members? I am

very certain that God can stand up to His critics and He does not need us to defend Him -- only to speak the truth in love! I am quite confident that whatever is true about climate change can stand up to a real debate and all we need are facts and the disputing voices interpreting those facts -- not someone to think for us. I am sure that after a year of information that is sometimes contradictory and sometimes incoherent, most of us will do the right thing if we are given real facts and a real debate of substance on what those facts mean.

But my point is that the media will not do this. Our politicians will not do this. And so, we will continue to be hesitant about what and who to believe and instead choose to listen only to those who say what we think. The messenger can make the message and they can kill it, too.

Rev. Larry Peters

(<http://pastoralmeanderings.blogspot.com/2021/07/suspicion-of-messenger.html>)

Why Missouri Will Never Move from the Fence

Posted on August 28, 2021, by Rev. Paul R. Harris

I don't know the pastor who said this about me, but you do. He is all over the LCMS. He is a fence-sitter, posing as pastoral, compassionate, Gospel-oriented to cover his ambiguous confession. I really don't know the man, so I'm taking out any identifying characteristics of the email concerning him, which another man I never met sent me.

The layman wrote me: "The email I sent Pastor X was a copy of your letter dated 12 September 2019 asking that your name be removed from the clergy roster. I sent this to Pastor X to inform him that there are those who still want the LCMS that was, that they want a church more like Martin Luther believed what the church should be. I pray that I didn't use your letter in a manner that would offend you. If I did, I apologize. I really did not expect a response, as he, Pastor X, most times never puts his answers to me in writing [emphasis mine]. Below is a copy of his response as I received it."

"I am familiar with Paul Harris, he has been pastor at Trinity in Austin a long time, probably for most of his ministry. He has always been known as an ultra-orthodox, ultra-traditionalist pastor in the LCMS.

Without knowing what specific issues of open communion, syncretism, unionism, feminism, and LGBTQ he is referring to, I really can't fully respond to his accusations. It has been my experience that pastors like Harris throw out these broad accusations when another pastor or congregation doesn't operate or act like they would in a given situation. They confuse the word "synod" ("walk together") to mean that we must walk in goose step. The synod has always acknowledged congregational autonomy when it comes to church leadership structure. For some pastors, allowing women to vote in congregational meetings is a form of feminism. For others, it means allowing them to serve in positions of leadership on the Church Council. The LCMS officially endorses traditional Biblical marriage; however, some congregations may not be addressing the issue of same sex marriage in their midst. Given that Pastor Harris is in Austin, he is in the center of liberal progressivism in the state of Texas. It would be like combining this city [] in our state and this one []. Academic and political progressive activism abounds in Austin. If Harris' congregation has gone independent, I don't know why he wants to remain on synod's roster as emeritus since he disagrees with official doctrines and practices in the LCMS. It sounds to me that he doesn't want to take any responsibility for his congregation's choice to go independent. However, you and I both know that doesn't happen without guidance and direction from the under shepherd of the Lord's flock. I hope you and Joanne are doing well and staying healthy.

Pastor [first name only]"

The man who sent me this email closes with, "If he calls Austin the 'center of liberal progressivism,' I don't know what he thinks about our Florida-Georgia District."

The responding pastor obviously didn't read the pages of documentation concerning why we left. Neither did he read the letter where I specifically resigned from the clergy roster. Styling the expectation that people actually walk together in doctrine and practice as requiring people to goose step is a reference at best to the 20th century Soviet Union and at worse to Nazism.

Two things have been constant in 38 years of dealing with LCMS churchmen, bureaucrats, moderates, fence-sitters. 1) They abhor taking a definite position and anyone being disciplined for a doctrine or practice contrary to the agreed-on

confession. Anything other than their fence-sitting is 'ultra'. 2) They don't refute confessors; they make fun of them.

When that doesn't work, and the confessors continue to confess, guess which one goose steps the other out the door?

Boomers vs. Digital Natives

Posted on October 25, 2021, by Rev. Paul R. Harris

You know the brackets for the various named generations fluctuate depending on who's doing the categorizing. I think we can go with the Bellamy Brother's definition of "Kids of the Baby Boom." If you didn't watch John Kennedy die one afternoon, you're not a Boomer. And according to the Internet – and my sourcing of this is telling (see below) – if you grew up with the Internet, you are a "Digital Native." My kids are not this. They were all born pre-1995. They just might be able to rescue both DN's and Boomers.

The difference between the two is like the joke about the difference between cats and dogs. The dog thinks: My owner feeds me, houses me, plays with me, and loves me. He must be god. The cat thinks my owner feeds me, houses me, plays with me, and loves me. I must be god.

Boomers, or at least this one, are continually amazed on what they can find on the Internet. You want to read an epistle of a church father, how about the short story the "Monkey's Paw"? It's on the Internet. You don't know how to compute compound interest, compare interest rates, or the amount of topsoil to cover 300 square feet? Go to the Internet old man. It's there. You want to find out what happened to John Smith from the 50's western "Laramie"? The Internet will tell you more than you want to know. You want to find out how to break down your 1911 .45 caliber pistol (It's embarrassing but I forgot.)? The Internet can 'save' you.

You get why I used 'saved'? That's right. I sometimes find myself thinking of the Internet in terms of the omni's that only rightly belong to God. So, I'm the dog. The Internet must be god.

Of course, that means the Digital Natives are cats. I hear this hubris in them. They can find absolutely anything they want to know, i.e. *they* can know everything and anything. Ergo, they must be god. Who

knows more than they do? A Boomer like me who isn't native to anything digital? Their parents? Their teachers? No, they think because they have all of this information at their fingertips, at the command of their voice, or in their digital world, they don't need to rely on anyone for guidance. Sure, maybe some Internet influencer, a creator of groundbreaking technology, or an app that "everyone" is using gets their props. But their parents? They don't deserve it. They get the disdain of the cat not even the loyalty of a dog.

Yup, in this, our "Brave New World," it's not the State as much as Big Tech that is raising kids. As soon as practicable, plug those kids in. Hook them up to the streaming information, pictures, games, opinions, worldviews, and assumptions.

How could this go wrong? See the 1968 episode of "Star Trek" entitled, "And The Children Shall Lead". This show isn't for kids, and this warning isn't either.

Oz, not the Doctor, and Bacon, not the Food

Posted on September 20, 2021, by Rev. Paul R. Harris

When teaching on the three ways Man tries to know the True God and fails, philosophy, mysticism, and moralism, I appeal to Oz and Zhivago. Perhaps I should substitute or at least add bacon to the latter.

First, I refer to this as the *Wizard of Oz* lesson. Philosophy seeks to find God as the Scarecrow does with a brain. Mysticism seeks to find God like the Tin Man did with his heart. (Can't you see his tears now?) And, my personal favorite, the Cowardly Lion seeks to find God with his brave deeds. Oz of course purports to help them. I show, however, these are doomed to failure because man is by nature, since the Fall, spiritually blind (I Cor. 2:14), so his intellect and rationality are blind to true spiritual things. He's an enemy of God (Rom. 5:6-10), so he can't feel good toward the true God, but on the contrary can only hate Him. And he's spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1-5), so not all the self-control and moral discipline in the world will bring him back to spiritual life.

Second, I refer to a quote from *Doctor Zhivago*, "I think a little philosophy should be added to life and art by way of seasoning, but to make it one's specialty seems to me as strange as eating nothing but horseradish" (407). Actually, I paraphrase it saying: philosophy makes a great condiment but a lousy

entrée. However, I find myself redirected, as I often am, by Chesterton.

Well, it's a reference of his to Francis Bacon, and perhaps it's not too much to say that by it, he has saved my bacon. He references this Baconian gem: "It is true, that a little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism; but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion" (Francis Bacon, "The Essays Or Counsels, Civil And Moral").

You see the problem, don't you? I'm championing a little philosophy being okay while much is not. Chesterton approves of the Baconian principle that a little is the dangerous thing. And what virtually 99.9% of even college graduates have is a little philosophy. Say, just enough to make us aberrant or at least unclear thinkers.

Chesterton would treat the rejectors of Christianity based on philosophy the same way he does those rejecting based on doubts. "In dealing with the arrogant asserter of doubt, it is not the right method to tell him to stop doubting. It is rather, the right method to tell him to go on doubting, to doubt a little more, to doubt every day newer and wilder things in the universe, until at last, by some strange enlightenment, he may begin to doubt himself" (*In Defense of Sanity*, 99).

So, with the philosopher: push him deeper and deeper into the harsh horseradish of philosophy till he comes up gasping and gurgling for something firm,

certain, satisfying. And it won't be the Bible until he has plumbed the depths of what Paul tells Pastor Timothy to turn away from: "godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge" (1 Timothy 6:20). It's kind of like warning children of deep water. It doesn't really take till they've stepped off thinking they could, would touch bottom, but don't.

Elder's Report

The elders met on October 19 with Pastor Roth from Grace Lutheran in Elgin. Pastor Roth went over details of the Call process, to help us identify areas where we can be better prepared whenever the time comes to call our next pastor.

We met again on November 2 and continued our study of Article IV of the Apology to the Augsburg Confession. We discussed the upcoming presentation in Trinity's speaker series; Pastor Brock Abbott from Pilgrim Lutheran Church in Decatur, IL will be here to present after lunch on January 16, 2022.

And we reviewed elder duties for Sunday mornings. To date, we have not received any applications for our seminary scholarship; our deadline has passed, but we would still be open to considering applications. And the Community First tour has been postponed again, but Pastor hopes to tour it in January.

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DECEMBER 2021

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 7:30 ADVENT VESPERS	2	3	4
5 ADULT CLASS 12:15 PM	6 JR. CONFIRMATION 5:30 PM	7	8 7:30 ADVENT VESPERS	9	10	11
12 BUS CAROLING & CHILI 1:00 – 6:00 NO ADULT CLASS	13 JR. CONFIRMATION 5:30 PM	14	15 7:30 ADVENT VESPERS	16	17	18
19 CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PAGEANT 12:15 NO ADULT CLASS	20 JR. CONFIRMATION 5:30 PM	21	22	23	24 CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE 7:30 PM	25 CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE 10:00 AM
26 NO ADULT CLASS	27 NO JR. CONFIRMATION	28	29	30	31	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> PASTOR ON VACATION/SABBATICAL </div>						

JANUARY 2022

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
						1 <hr style="width: 100%;"/>	
2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> PASTOR ON VACATION/SABBATICAL </div>					7	8
9	10 JR. CONFIRMATION 5:30PM	11 ELDERS 6:30	12 DANIEL BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM	13	14	15	
16 2 ND GUEST SPEAKER LUNCH 12:15	17 JR. CONFIRMATION 5:30PM	18	19 DANIEL BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM	20	21	22 TEXAS RALLY FOR LIFE 1:00	
23 3M HALF MARATHON	24 JR. CONFIRMATION 5:30PM	25	26 DANIEL BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM	27	28	29	
30	31 JR. CONFIRMATION 5:30PM						

DEC - JAN 2022