

Trinity Te Deum

The official newsletter for Trinity Lutheran Church

1207 West 45 Street Austin, Texas 78756

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

Pulling the Pin, Turning out the Light, Passing the Baton

C. S. Lewis said, "Seeing people off is always folly. It's neither good mirth nor good sorrow" (*Hideous Strength*, 376). One pastor says, "There's no retiring from Jesus." That's right. Also in proper usage we don't retire *from* but *to* someplace. As in retiring to your bed; retiring to the smoking room. So I'm retiring to Jesus. I really am open to anything. After 40 years a parish pastor, I'm pulling the pin.

I thought the expression "pull the pin" came from law enforcement because the badge was secured on the chest by a pin. Google's info traces it to railroads. When you pulled the pin, you decided on which tract you were going. Google further tells me it means to quit, to resign. In military terms, you pull the pin on a grenade. Doing that there is no turning back and there's about to be an explosion. A pastor retiring, particularly after a long and mutually beneficial pastorate, is like that. It explodes church and ministry at a local church. But not forever, and on the scale of eternity, not for long.

But it does seem rather a *downer*. As Willie sang, "Turn out the lights, the party's over/ They say that all good things must end/ Call it a night, the party's over". But Willie makes it a *downer* with the last lines of that verse: "And tomorrow starts the same old thing again". That's not true, tomorrow starts a new thing. From pastoring in Detroit where 'white-flight' had left huge church buildings bereft of people, I observed that the lifespan of a church is about 50 years. Trinity's 50th anniversary was 1988. It was almost dead when I arrived in 1999. By God's grace she was reborn.

And so it is now. A new chapter for both of us. When I emailed my kids and said that after 40 years I was saying "uncle".¹ In response, one of my in-laws wrote back: "I don't really see it as you saying uncle, so much as handing off the baton after having run with it for a very long time. It will go on being carried once out of your hand until that day when no one will be running or carrying anything." That's profound and comforting. When I first talked to a brother pastor and expressed Ecclesiastes 8:8, "no one is discharged in time of war." That's the NIV, but the way KJV translates, it's about there being no discharge from death: "*There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war;*" In any case when I quoted or misquoted that verse, the pastor laughed and said, "The war is always going on and will go on whether your pastoring a congregation or not." Good point.

You have been great comrades in arms. We've fought arm in arm against Sin, Death, and the Devil. There have been casualties. Covid provided a ready and acceptable excuse for those who were never regular, faithful in Word and Sacrament to neglect them. Once Covid ended, their staying away didn't. But you stayed; you fought the Unholy Three with me. I was not disappointed. I hope you weren't. The baton will pass, and almost certainly the next shepherd will be a faster runner. You know in relay races the point of failure is in the baton pass. That's what we're working on now.

PS. Since my last Sunday is December 31, that means a dinner will be after service. I realize that's New Year's Eve; you could have plans. Please don't feel you have to attend. There are few things about

me that could be described as “easy-going”.

Attendance at optional events is one of them.

Elsewhere there is an article ‘Say Uncle’. It’s a piece of flotsam that I dug up in writing a sermon.

Speaking for his son

(With technology issues, I fear I’m too late to the party at best and clueless at worst. I republish this because I see how scammers use a Christian boy’s own consciousness against him. The real solution is not the things found in the article, but to letting your kids know they can and should talk to you about anything. I have never been in favor of those MAAD contracts, look it up. It seemed to give the child prior permission. The same with putting your teen girl on birth control. However, this is something different. Online predators can trap your child in an embarrassing situation so bad, shameful, and hopeless to them, they would take their own life rather than face you. Let them know they can face you with anything, and that it is ‘you,’ the family, against the world in all things. Prh)

TECHNOLOGY | One Mississippi father is warning of the deadly dangers that online sextortion schemes pose to teen boys.

Walker Montgomery, 16, of Starkville, Miss., was scrolling Instagram at midnight in his bedroom last December when a message popped up: “Hey, what’s up?” The sender’s profile displayed an attractive teen girl who claimed to live locally and share mutual friends.

The messaging lasted hours and turned flirtatious, then sexual. By 3 a.m., Walker agreed to a video chat on the photo-sharing platform and engaged in a sexual act. Minutes later, the person on the other end said the act had been recorded. The perpetrator threatened to share the video with Walker’s friends and family and demanded \$1,000, which the teen didn’t have.

That same morning, Walker took his own life.

“I can’t even imagine the tremendous fear and panic he was under,” his father, Brian Montgomery, told me in a phone conversation. “Walker stepped right into a trap.”

Brian wants to help other teen boys avoid similar traps. On Feb. 7, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and international law enforcement agencies warned of a “global financial sextortion crisis” affecting primarily boys. Last year, the FBI saw more than 7,000 reports of online sextortion of

minors, an “exponential increase from previous years,” it said. More than a dozen of those incidents ended with the victim committing suicide.

According to information federal investigators gleaned from Walker’s phone, the scheme that targeted the teen involved escalating threats. After Walker insisted he did not have \$1,000, the perpetrator demanded he steal from his parents and sent him screenshots appearing to show the explicit video recording being shared with Walker’s Instagram contacts. Despite the boy’s pleadings, the perpetrator threatened to send the video to Walker’s mother. When the teen warned he would kill himself, the extortioner allegedly replied, “You’re already dead anyway.”

In recent months, Brian has shared Walker’s story at dozens of Mississippi schools and with parents, school administrators, and some state lawmakers. He said he has already heard from about 50 parents whose children have experienced similar blackmail schemes.

Brian has little hope that Walker’s perpetrators—or Meta, the social media company that owns Instagram—will be held accountable. Federal investigators pinpointed the origin of the sextortion scheme in Nigeria, he said, and issued a warrant for Instagram to release the internet protocol address. “You’ve got a tech business that is giving a tool to criminals without any protections; ... they have no incentive to block those interactions until we have enough public opinion telling our politicians, ‘Enough.’”

Some lawmakers are seeking to hold tech companies more accountable. On Mar. 23, Utah Gov. Spencer Cox, a Republican, signed first-in-the-nation legislation requiring social media users younger than 18 to have parental consent and barring them from using social media platforms between 10:30 p.m. and 6:30 a.m. Utah’s laws take effect in March 2024. Last year, California passed a bill that establishes design and data privacy standards for tech companies providing online services likely to be accessed by children.

Social media companies have largely avoided responsibility for online harms due to Section 230, a 1996 federal telecommunications law protecting them from being sued over harmful content posted

on their platforms by third-party users. Last year, a bill that would have reformed Section 230 with the intent of holding tech companies more accountable for protecting kids failed in the U.S. Senate. Civil liberties and tech industry groups have pushed back against state and federal legislative efforts, citing privacy and free speech concerns.

Social media companies have largely avoided responsibility for online harms. Amid growing public scrutiny, some social media companies—such as Instagram and TikTok—have responded by offering more parental controls, including time restrictions and messaging limits. But many say that is not enough.

“It’s putting a lot of responsibility on kids and parents to know how these different apps work in the day and age when parents didn’t grow up with tech like this,” said Victoria Rousay of the National Center on Sexual Exploitation. She notes that some apps, such as the video chat app Discord, still feature no parental controls.

Brian hopes that Walker’s story serves as a wake-up call. For now, he is focusing on talking with parents about what he wishes he had done differently: taking Walker’s phone at night, prohibiting him from having it in his bedroom, checking his online activity, and talking more about the dangers.

Brian says speaking publicly about Walker’s life and sudden death does not alleviate his grief. But as a professing Christian, he says, “the background . . . is our faith in Christ. He has a plan, and it may be that we’re His vessels for this particular change.”

Mary Jackson is a book reviewer and senior writer for WORLD. She is a World Journalism Institute and Greenville University graduate who previously worked for the Lansing (Mich.) State Journal. Mary resides with her family in the San Francisco Bay area.

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(<https://wng.org/articles/speaking-for-his-son-1681617491>)

“Say Uncle”

Dear Word Detective: I was recently watching an old *Little Rascals* short in which Alfalfa was bested in a wrestling match by Porky. Since Porky is much smaller and younger than Alfalfa, this was rather

humorous. As Porky sat on Alfalfa's chest he told Alfalfa to say "Uncle" before he would let him up. How did the word "Uncle" come to mean "I surrender?" -- B. Kent, via the internet.

Revisiting the Golden Age of American Culture, are we? Count me in. As a matter of fact, I am seriously considering writing a book entitled "Everything I Need to Know I Learned from the Three Stooges." Nyuk nyuk. Anyway, your question struck a chord with me because I recall spending the better part of my childhood "saying uncle" to a seemingly endless series of larger, stronger opponents. And that was just in my immediate family.

The exact origin of "say uncle" or "cry uncle," an American invention first appearing in written English around 1918, is unclear, but there are, as usual, some interesting theories. One theory posits that "uncle" is actually a mangled form of the Irish word "*anacol*," meaning "protection" or "safety," making a demand from an aggressor to "cry uncle" equivalent to the thug demanding that his victim "cry for help" as a signal of surrender. There's no real evidence to support this theory, but there certainly was no lack of recent Irish immigrants in the U.S. around the turn of the century, so it's not entirely implausible.

The other popular theory about "cry uncle" suggests that the phrase may actually be thousands of years old, and that its origins go all the way back to the Roman Empire. According to this theory, Roman children, when beset by a bully, would be forced to say "Patruē, mi Patruissimo," or "Uncle, my best Uncle," in order to surrender and be freed. As to precisely why Ancient Roman bullies forced their victims to "cry uncle," opinions vary. It may be that the ritual was simply a way of making the victim call out for help from a grownup, thus proving his or her helplessness. Alternatively, it may have started as a way of forcing the victim to grant the bully a title of respect -- in Roman times, your father's brother was accorded nearly the same power and status as your father. The form of "uncle" used in the Latin phrase ("patruē") tends to support this theory, inasmuch as it specifically denoted your paternal uncle, as opposed to the brother of your

mother ("avunculus"), who occupied a somewhat lower rung in patrilineal Roman society.

Dave Wilton, Sunday, March 11, 2007:

To say or cry uncle is to call for mercy, to acknowledge that one is defeated. It's American playground slang dating back to the early 20th century. From the Chicago Herald-Examiner of 1 October 1918:

Sic him Jenny Jinx—make him say 'Uncle'.

The phrase may come from the punchline of a joke that was popular in the 1890s. Douglas Wilson (one of this site's regulars) discovered this version of the joke in the Iowa Citizen, 9 October 1891:

A gentleman was boasting that his parrot would repeat anything he told him. For example, he told him several times, before some friends, to say "Uncle," but the parrot would not repeat it. In anger he seized the bird, and half-twisting his neck, said: "Say 'uncle,' you beggar!" and threw him into the fowl pen, in which he had ten prize fowls. Shortly afterward, thinking he had killed the parrot, he went to the pen. To his surprise he found nine of the fowls dead on the floor with their necks wrung, and the parrot standing on the tenth twisting his neck and screaming: "Say 'uncle,' you beggar! say uncle.'[sic]".

Say uncle is sometimes claimed to come from the Irish *anacol*, meaning mercy or quarter, brought to America by Irish immigrants. Despite the similarity in sound and meaning, there is no strong evidence to support this conjecture.

"How Then Shall We Live?"

A 9-Part Advent-Lent Sermon Series on
The First Chief Parts of Luther's Small Catechism
The Ten Commandments

The theme for this sermon series on the Ten Commandments comes from the New Testament. 2 Peter 3:11: "Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be?" The title, it's true, is a take off from a 1976 Francis Schaeffer book, "How Should We Then Live?". But rest assured this is not a sermon series copped from

that book, fine read though it is. I'm basing my series on how the Lord Himself introduces His Commandments to the Old Testament Church the second time He gives them as the are about to enter the Promised Land. Deuteronomy 5:6: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. And then in Deuteronomy 5:7 the Lord launches right into them: "You shall have no other gods before Me." He gives His Church the Commandments based on the fact that He rescued them from slavery. And we no less than them. So then:

How Then Shall We Live?

Knowing...

- Nov. 29 ...a God Big Enough and Merciful Enough
1st Commandment
- Dec. 06 ...what's Worse than Satanic Arts
2nd Commandment
- Dec. 13 ...what This Commandment Has to with
Church Going
3rd Commandment
- Feb. 14 ...authority is not a 4-Letter Word
4th Commandment
- Feb. 21 ...it's Murder
5th Commandment
- Feb. 28 ...the Sore Spot of Every Human Heart
6th Commandment
- Mar. 06 ...God is not a Communist
7th Commandment
- Mar. 13 ...it's not about White Lies
8th Commandment
- Mar. 20 ...there are Two Things Being Exposed
9th and 10th Commandments

All services 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 7:20 at the latest.

Myths about Closed Communion

(The main issue we have with the LCMS. They claim they believe, teach, and practice it, but don't. Here is a neat summary provided by an LCMS pastor who does all three. Perhaps it will help you explain this ancient Church practice to someone else. prh)

The Seven Myths of Close Communion

by Rev. Bernard Worrall

Immanuel Lutheran Church Fargo, North Dakota 58102

MYTH # 1.

When we refuse Holy Communion to someone at our altar, which is a member of another Christian denomination, we are bringing into question their Christian faith.

MYTH # 2.

Close Communion is a recent church practice.

MYTH #3.

The pastor is not accountable for the spiritual well-being of those who commune or do not commune. He is merely to offer the sacrament to those who come forward.

MYTH #4.

We are judging the hearts of people to whom we deny the Sacrament of the Altar.

MYTH #5.

Members of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod are considered “worthy” of the Sacrament by right of their membership in the church body. One must “belong” but not necessarily believe.

MYTH #6.

Close Communion is a loveless act of judgment and condemnation.

MYTH # 7.

What everyone else at the Table of the Lord believes is not important. It is only what I believe that matters.

Find the complete paper here: <https://www.cos-lutheran.org/mythsofclosecommunion/>

AFTERWORD

This year’s National Book Award finalists dealt with an array of contemporary issues: race, broken

families, immigration, and sexuality. The authors tell these stories in a way that betrays a deep ambivalence to any kind of standards, morals, or duties (other than the duty to cast off outside expectations). Most were full of gratuitous cursing, casual attitudes toward sex, and careful genuflecting to modern sensibilities and obsessions. Counseling – useful in its place – replaces forgiveness, reconciliation, and character growth.

All this is most apparent in the last finalist, *What Girls Are Made Of* (Carolrhoda Lab, 2017) by Elana K. Arnold. It justifies and even wallows in the worst parts of being a young woman today – casual sex, abortion, and broken families. It blames everything on men, religion, and other cultural forces. It tells girls the way to survive is to throw off any guilt, restraints, or responsibilities toward others and embrace it all. -R.A.

World Magazine. December 9, 2017.

You Wanna Bet?

(This letter by me was published in the Holy Trinity 1999 issue of Logia. I'm resurrecting it now as a word of warning. The Reformed magazine, WORLD, warned probably a year or more ago, that as pornography crept on us without seeing the huge problem it would be, so gambling is the next onslaught. I'll say. You can't tune in sport's radio without the host talking about lines, point spread, over under. You can bet as little as 5.00 and they will give 200.00 credit on their betting website. They follow this tried and true method used by pornography and drug dealers alike, with a ridiculous listing of all the places you can go to if you have a gambling problem. If you can't see this, it's the equivalent of giving a free beer to an addict to get him to use your bar. Again, forewarned is forearmed. PRH)

To the editors:

I wish to respond to Mr. Glen Zweck’s article *Gambling: Scriptural Principles* in *LOGIA* 8, no. 1 (Epiphany 1999). The author did a fine job of showing the legalistic and biblicistic pitfalls of gambling. I applaud him for properly distinguishing between playing games of chance and playing games of skill. I believe, however, that he totally missed the most serious error gambling promotes: the lie that random chance – also known

as the Lady Luck – rules, rather than Christ our Lord.

Nobody gambles who does not believe that random chance rules, because nobody gambles on a fixed game. But is it true that chance determines Powerball numbers or rolls of the dice? Things men perceive as happening by chance such as rainfall, sparrows falling, or the casting of a lot, God says are directed by Him. “I sent rain on one town, but withheld it from another. One field had rain; another had none and dried up” (Am 4:7). Even a sparrow does not fall to the ground apart from the will of the Father (Mt 10:29). “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every answer is from the Lord” (Prv 16:33). What “chance” did Peter have of finding a coin in the first fish he caught, or in any fish for that matter? What “chance” did a man drawing and releasing his bow “at random” have of hitting King Ahab in a joint of the armor?

Randomness is a powerful “theology” in our day. The Christian confession is that we are not in her hands. Is not this a point made most strenuously by Luther in *Bondage of the Will*? Luther has a warning elsewhere to people who would be lulled to theological sleep by the apparent randomness of things: “But watch out when God seems to be utterly weak and closes His eyes as though He could neither see nor do anything at all! They are in the most imminent danger of being destroyed by Him at the moment when they formulate their best plans and possess their greatest might. While they are at their game, He reaches down and grabs their dice” (AE, 13: 255).

This is not to say that I believe anything can be done in regard to turning the tide of gambling. As Luther, quoting Seneca, observes, “There is no room for remedy where what once were vices have become customs” (AE 7: 34). I just think we ought to be pointing out at whose feet we are rolling the dice.

Paul R. Harris, Harvey, Louisiana

This old house

Janie B. Cheaney

(It was pointed out to me that the article I republished “The Twisted Self” was probably not the first to link the unholy-three of Darwin, Nietzsche, and Freud. Francis Schaeffer did years before in “Escape from Reason”. Here’s another article that is probably not the first to show how the house the West built has been deconstructed in steps rather than all at once. But when it did ‘go’ it seemed to be all at once. Prh)

Exchanging the rickety house of the West with the unshakable house of God.

Is it just me, or is our house falling apart?

That’s a rhetorical question—of course it isn’t just me. “Falling apart” has become a rising chorus on both ends of the political spectrum and everywhere in between. “I’ve never seen it this bad” is a continuing refrain. From my perspective of 70-plus years, the 1970s may have been objectively worse, but seeds sown then appear to be reseeding and reinventing themselves now. How do we understand it?

Carl Trueman’s latest book, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, steps back to take a long look at how we got to the point where “what it means to be an authentic, fulfilled human self” became the be-all and end-all of life. Aggressive self-definition extends to inventing pronouns and grievances, all in search of authenticity. It’s self-evident (to use an antiquated compound) that true freedom means being free to follow every desire and even momentary impulse. But that wasn’t always the case. To track that monumental shift in public thinking, Trueman goes back to the Enlightenment and Rousseau.

I’ve always been interested in history, and this kind of thing is my meat, but try to explain big philosophical or worldview trends to a group of Christian writers or at a ladies’ retreat, much less a secular audience. It’s gaseous and abstract and hard to wrap one’s mind around. Is there a concrete image that can help us understand what’s happening?

If social realities can be constructed, they can also be deconstructed.

Imagine Western civilization as a house built on the ruins of Athens and Jerusalem. The foundation is quarried of Biblical truth applied to a civic understanding of all things in subjection to God.

These truths are not quite self-evident, and human selfishness and cruelty means they'll be applied haphazardly at best. Nevertheless, islands of mercy dot the landscape: hospitals and monasteries. Universities spring up, offering knowledge to anyone lucky enough to get there.

By the time of the Renaissance, the house is solid and ready to expand. With the Reformation, literacy explodes. The foundation is still Biblical truth, the roof is God's abiding presence, and the walls are geographical boundaries: almost all of Europe, soon expanded to North America.

Revolutions begin to hammer on the roof: scientific, rational, romantic. None, I propose (and I'm not the only one), could have come about without some unifying sense of spiritual reality, but by the time Darwin arrives, the roof timbers are splintered. If matter is enough to create and sustain itself, who needs God? Marx and Nietzsche concur, and by the end of the 19th century the roof is gone, leaving the West open to the blinding sun of modernist materialism.

Materialists deny supernatural reality, but not objective reality. All that's needed, they believe, is for science to discover and define reality, and then of course everyone will recognize it and abandon their superstitions. On we go to a bright new world. Only it didn't play out that way: Two world wars, massive destruction, and killing on a scale that called for a new word (genocide) led to the disenchantment of reality. What if everything we took to be real is only a social construct? Postmodernism began simmering in academic circles. If social realities can be constructed, they can also be deconstructed.

Modernism removed the roof. Postmodernism took away the floor.

What about the walls? The house of the West now looks like rickety walls surrounding rickety platforms built by warring tribes. The woke, the unwoke, the privileged, the marginalized, are all feverishly trying to reinforce their scaffolds with timbers taken from other scaffolds. It's no way to build. In fact, it looks a lot like collapse.

But there's another house. "As you come to Him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living

stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:4-5). It has a sure foundation, leakproof timbers, solid walls. Can you see it?

November 3, 2021

<https://wng.org/articles/this-old-house-1635824223>

Buy This Book

Posted on May 22, 2023 by Rev. Paul R. Harris

In 1971, Abbie Hoffman's book titled, *Steal This Book*, was published. It was a call and guide to "fighting against the man." When I came to Trinity, Austin in 1999, Gene Veith's *Spirituality of the Cross* was all the rage. This was the book to give to the non-Lutheran, particularly those coming from Reformed Christianity, to introduce them to Lutheranism.

After reading it, I did that, but I never got it. I didn't see what I regarded as the gems of true Lutheranism in this book. Most people I gave it to when finished didn't rave about it; most seem nonplused. When someone never returned it before moving on, I never bothered to replace it.

I have had Harold Senkbeil's 1994 book, *Dying to Live*, probably longer than I had Veith's book. I recently read this book, and this book describes, conveys, wallows in the Lutheranism that I know as genuine, Confessional, and in the Spirit of Luther.

Here are just a few gems from this work. On the merits of Private Confession: The trouble with self-medicating with the Gospel is that we can see the sins of others but we can't see our own. If we don't properly identify the sin, the sinner goes on living and getting stronger (86). On the miracle of the Real Presence: "Some things are too important to be left to the eyes. Sometimes simple eyesight can't take in all there is to see. ... Other people might see just another baby, but when we see our own flesh and blood, we see things you can't detect with simple lenses and retinas – things like love and affection" (91). On discussing Contemporary Worship: "We'll never resolve issues revolving around the how of public worship until we tackle the what of public worship." Is it just another public assembly of like-minded people or is the worshipping congregation

itself God's own creation called into being by God Himself (116)?

The following is my favorite and I've found 1 in a 100 lay people who understand why this should be so and needs to be so about your pastor: "The pastor who leads us in worship needs no introduction... For we have called him to be a spokesman for God to perform the sacred duties of God's holy ministry among us. Therefore we have little interest in personal rapport with him" (127).

Now envision using these gems to explain to someone liturgical worship: "The liturgy strikes some people as cold and impersonal, but that's because it is an extraordinary situation. Ritual for its own sake is idolatry, but even secular society has certain revered rituals....No one calls the soldiers of the honor guard [at the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington] hypocrites because they act differently at those tombs than they would, say, at the beach or the movies. Solemn assembly calls for solemn actions. ...Our ears are so jaded by the discord of modern life that the harmonious texts of the ancient liturgy seem stilted. Our voices are so attuned to the music of this age that the liturgy's timeless music seems awkward. ...Changing ever so slowly through the centuries, it has borrowed something from every culture it has touched, and yet it has never been bound by any one of them" (128).

A few closing remarks. Don't buy this book through Concordia Publishing, you will overpay. You can get it used off the internet for a 1/3 of the cover price. Second, Gene Veith is quoted on the back as recommending this book, and I suspect that Senkbeil would do the same for his. I'm not saying: Don't read *Spirituality of the Cross* or don't give it to a non-Lutheran. I am saying that Senkbeil's book resonated, taught, and edified me in a way that Veith's did not. So much so, that while I can count the number of times on one hand that I have recommended a congregation "Buy this book," this is another one.

Charles Darwin letter repudiating the Bible heads to auction

(Let's be as clear as Darwin was about what the man behind the theory of evolution really believed. Prh)

Rebecca Rego Barry, 16 Sep 2015

In November 1880, Charles Darwin received a request from a young barrister named FA McDermott. "If I am to have the pleasure of reading your books," McDermott wrote, "I must feel that at the end I shall not have lost my faith in the New Testament. My reason in writing to you therefore is to ask you to give me a Yes or No to the question Do you believe in the New Testament."

Darwin's reply, penned on 24 November 1880 – exactly 21 years after the publication of *On the Origin of Species* – was blunt:

Dear Sir,

I am sorry to have to inform you that I do not believe in the Bible as a divine revelation & therefore not in Jesus Christ as the son of God.

Yours faithfully

Ch. Darwin

That letter is headed to auction at Bonhams on 21 September in New York, where it is expected to fetch \$70,000-\$90,000. (<https://www.theguardian.com/>)

From Synod, to Corporation, to Bodily Function, to a Typo

Posted on July 10, 2023 by Rev. Paul R. Harris

It starts with the synod not being a church. Congregational polity rules the day. Then the Synod incorporates and must function as one. Synodical president, District presidents, and even Circuit Counselors – oops now visitors – as officers of a corporation can't hear, or keep confidential anyway, anything that they hear in Private Confession. Can't get any more unchurchly than that. Watch.

President of the Texas District, LCMS, Rev. Michael Newman, published a book in 2016 titled *Gospel DNA Five Markers of a Flourishing Church*. My first reaction was the 1980s church growth movement is calling and they want their title back. My second reaction was to the subtitle. I wasn't going to write about it because Pastor Newman is a nice guy, but I did share the subtitle

with my Sunday Morning Bible Class and they thought what I did. So, it is funny.

The subtitle is: "Learning from a movement called 'Missouri'". See? That's where the bodily function comes in. When it was proposed in the 90s that the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod drop "Missouri" from her name. My friend, benefactor, and now saint, Harvey said: "Why? That's the only part of her name she lives up to."

Now the name that once stood for bold, confessional stances that preserved Lutheranism of the mid-19th century from being completely Americanized and therefore Protestantized, is reduced to a movement. Something that passes through the Body of Christ. Missouri doesn't stand for anything she moves.

What the LCMS of late has been is nothing but a typo. Actually, it's *Typos*. This was the imperial decree issued by Constantine II in the 7th century A.D. With an eye toward establishing peace between the East and West of the empire, it forbade anyone to assert either that Christ had only one will or that He had two, one divine, one human (*ODCC*, 1401). The emperor didn't claim to be deciding the issue, and insisted the pope agree to the *Typos*. In part it reads: "Wherefore, we decree that all our subjects henceforth are forbidden to dispute about the one or two wills of Christ" (Rahner, *Church and State in Early Christianity*, 233). What's at stake was whether a fully operational human nature was in Christ. The emperor said just agree to disagree.

This is the *Typos* of the LCMS. Her presidents and floor committees assiduously work so that rarely is anything divisive or decisive brought up let alone decided. Remember Harrison's plan to unite the LCMS? Remember him saying, "Why it could take as many as 10 years?" That was 11 years ago, and there has been no movement. O right there has. The Body politic has moved and the same old do-do has resulted.

As long as synodical, district, and circuit Communion services continue to bring together opposing faiths at one altar, the LCMS will not even be a footnote in Confessional Lutheranism. She will be a typo, a bodily function execrated by all who realize what she could have been had she had men to lead her.

Visit to Our Savior Lutheran, Austin, Texas – Theology in a Time of Pandemic

Posted on December 3, 2022 by Rev. Paul R. Harris

Right off the bat, let me say that I heard the Vicarious Atonement, Universal Atonement, and the Bible is the Word of God mentioned. The Nicene Creed was confessed and the Lord's Prayer prayed. So, an unbeliever could have entered this church and walked out a Christian, but it is doubtful anyone could come out or stay a Lutheran here. Why? It's the little things.

The "liturgy" here was a modified Page 15, which has a first person indicative absolution. Those words were on the screen but that's not what the pastor said. He said, "We are forgiven in the Name of the Father..." As much as Evangelicals look down on liturgy and the Reformed on Closed Communion, these two groups equally despise a pastor pronouncing an indicative absolution. Evidently, Our Savior doesn't want to say that, but our Savior surely left it to His Church to be said (See Matthew 16; 18 and John 20).

Already in the 80's, I knew of Lutheran congregations having mood music during the distribution. Our Savior had piano mood music playing in the background throughout the prayer of the church. The pastor knows, because he preached it, that feelings aren't the be-all and end-all of discipleship. Then again, incense, lighting, stained glass, paraments do indeed set a mood.

Going one step beyond Welches. Read the history of "grape juice communions" as they were spoken of in the Army chaplaincy. Once Welch was able to pasteurize grape juice (1869), the Temperance movement could proceed with getting that demon alcohol out of Communion. Then followed the introduction of the individual cups circa 1890's. They really came into prominence after WW I when both TB and the Spanish Flu were rampant. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communion_cup#:~:text=It%20was%20first%20approved%20in,the%20Spanish%20flu%20were%20rampant). Great changes come with technology, World Wars, and fear.

Our Savior uses individual, hermetically sealed, bread and wine. The pastor directs all those present to open their individual packets. He says the Words of Institution and then the words of distribution and communes himself. I have no problem with the pastor communing himself, but I'm betting this conservative Lutheran church would find this problematic except for the world being at war with a pandemic. But because we are, these Lutherans can do Communion

like the Reformed and Evangelicals have always done. At least the churches I attended pre-pandemic did.

This method of consecration raises all sorts of questions, but in the minds of these Christians the protection it affords them outweigh other concerns. This method of distribution fits with their Open Communion policy. The Reformed, Evangelicals, and Non-demons leave it to the individual to decide if they commune, so Communion can be passed down the aisle or distributed to each individual.

Here's Our Savior's Communion policy as of 18 April 21:

We believe in Jesus and His Word when He says, "This is My Body" and "This is My Blood given and shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins." We believe that we receive the true body and blood of Jesus when we eat the bread and drink the wine of the Lord's Supper.

If you:

- Believe in Jesus as your Lord and Savior
- Believe in the true presence of His body and blood
- Examine your life, confess your sins and see your need for the forgiveness He offers you in the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:27-29), and
- Desire to receive the strengthening of your faith to live a new life

Then come, for these are the gifts of God prepared for the people of God!

(<https://www.oslaustin.org/who-we-are/#our-beliefs>)

See other blogs for why a Fox News Communion statement: we report you decide, is not Closed Communion and how the Large Catechism's "We

don't intend to give the Lord's Supper to anyone who does not know what it is and why they come" is about worthy Communion not who should commune together. The questions to ask here, is it contrary to the apostolic doctrine taught at this altar not to baptize infants, only to baptize believers, abort the unborn, live together, embrace the LGBTQ agenda? Is not believing God said something He did say or saying He says something He didn't sinful or not?

When the AIDS epidemic was in high gear, an openly gay congregation decided for the sake of their physical health to discontinue the use of the Common Cup and go to individual cups. You see the irony, don't you? They thought they were securing themselves against the First Death while running headlong with their sin and sinfulness into the Second Death.

And so Our Savior Lutheran Church by their hermitically sealed Communion packets are protecting themselves from the physical disease of Covid while ignoring the Bible's warnings about pretending that light can have fellowship with darkness or the Truth with the father of lies. You think my using 2 Cor. 6:13-15 against fellow Christians is too sharp? True, not every sin de facto drives out the Holy Spirit, some do. But every departure from the Truth is a lie, every step away from the Light is into darkness. Insofar as a fellow Christians maintains a teaching contrary to Scripture he's in the dark holding on to a lie.

This really isn't a little thing even in a time of pandemic.

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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2 JR. CONFIRMATION 5:30 PM	3	4 HEBREWS BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM	5	6	7
8	9 JR. CONFIRMATION 5:30 PM	10	11	12	13	14

15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25 HEBREWS BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM	26	27	28
29 REFORMATION DINNER 1:30 PM	30 JR. CONFIRMATION 5:30 PM	31				

November 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 HEBREWS BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM	2	3	4
5	6 JR. CONFIRMATION 5:30 PM	7 ELDERS MEETING 6:30 PM	8 HEBREWS BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM	9	10	11
12	13 JR. CONFIRMATION BEGINS 5:30 PM	14 7:00 PM VOTERS MEETING	15 HEBREWS BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM	16	17	18
19	20 JR. CONFIRMATION 5:30 PM	21	22 THANKSGIVING EVE COMMUNION SERVICE 7:30 PM	23	24	25
26	27 JR. CONFIRMATION 5:30 PM	28	29 ADVENT I 7:30 PM	30		