

Trinity Te Deum

The official newsletter for Trinity Lutheran Church

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Bringing it Altogether

In the June-July 2008 *Te Deum* I said that it was very hard to say what we reject about contemporary worship without saying something un-Lutheran about worship. Our Statement of Confession says that we reject revivalistic worship practices, but we didn't specify what those practices are. Because it is difficult to speak clearly as a Lutheran about worship practices, I was looking forward to the conference on worship the Association of Confessing Evangelical Lutheran Churches put on at our church April 16-18, 2013. We had a pastor presenting on contemporary worship, traditional worship, high church worship, and a pastor trying to bring it all together. Several of our members have asked me what I thought of the presentations, here is my two cents.

The advocate for contemporary worship said that the main reason for having it was to "meet people where they are," so he has a variety of worship styles. When asked if he intends to bring people along from contemporary to liturgical worship, he just said that "we teach them about worship." When asked about his Communion practice, he was evasive. When asked if he thought that churches with contempo-

rary worship practices were on a path away from traditional ones, he said that was not his intent. When asked specifically how he reconciles his diverse worship styles with the Synod's specific statement that we agree to use only used doctrinally approved hymnals, he said that no one stated what those were. This is tap-dancing around the truth that are hymnals are considered doctrinally approved once the Synod in convention adopts them. The contemporary worship presenter was allowed to skate on several key points. This is probably due to the fact that we recognized he was as Daniel in the lion's den.

The presentation on traditional worship correctly stated that as Lutherans we do not believe that ceremonies are a matter of justification. We don't get the righteousness of Christ by going through certain outward ceremonies. The Church, according to the Gospel, is free to use or not use ceremonies. Luther, coming out of the Catholic church which required ceremonies, was very free in regard to them. They can serve the fallen flesh by bringing much needed order, yet this same fallen flesh will always have a tendency to misuse them, to put trust in them. However, our Lutheran confessions do say that we Lutherans worship the way the historic church does minus the errors that crept in;

that uniformity in worship is desirable but never for the sake of righteousness. We don't worship the way we do by divine command but by agreement among men.

The high church presenter while stopping short of saying that we worship the way we do by divine command said that the way we worship - liturgically, with vestments, with music that serves the words and does not drive them as in rock music, with pulpits and altars - best serves the delivery of the gifts of Christ. It keeps the Sacrament, and therefore Christ and His gifts central in the Christian's life. The traditional presenter pointed out, correctly, that even the most formal worship forms are not able to guarantee that Christ and His gifts are at the center. Luther protested against the worship of his day because of this. In our day, Catholics, Episcopalians, and ELCA Lutherans preserve high forms of worship but true doctrine has not been preserved and even has been gutted by them.

One of the best points made in the presentations, and I think it was by the high church presenter, was that in contemporary worship the Word is used *primarily* for education not *proclamation*. This has always been a basic difference between the Reformed and Lutheran theology. Calvin had clergymen

clothed in a Geneva gown, an academic robe not an ecclesiastical one. The Reformed have always been big on “how to” Christianity. Lutherans have emphasized the proclamation of the Gospel.

The presenter who was to bring it all together pointed out what should be familiar to those of you who avail yourself of Bible study opportunities a Trinity: the two ditches. On the one side is the Catholic ditch which says ceremonies are necessary and they give righteousness, grace, and forgiveness apart from faith. On the other side is the Reformed ditch, think Protestant, which says ceremonies are not only not necessary but they are harmful to faith. The truth is in the middle. Ceremonies are useful to order, emphasize, and focus the sinful human mind on the right things, but they are useless and even harmful apart from faith. We don't have them because we *have* to but because we *want* to. This “two ditches” view is straight from Luther. “He rejected the ceremonial laws of the Roman church, not only because held consciences in bondage, but also because they were contrary to the law of love. On the other hand, and quite as decisively, he rejected the antiliturgical biblicism of the Enthusiasts. They condemned every ecclesiastical tradition as such and would allow no liturgical form unless it could be traced right to the Bible.” (*Luther on Worship*, 179)

Are we free *not* to have them? Yes the Gospel gives us that freedom, but as members of

the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod we have agreed to walk together. We're not doing this when we worship as the Baptists, Pentecostals, or the Community Church does. In fact as the presenter who brought it all together said. When we worship the way other denominations have historically but claim our doctrine is Lutheran (This was the contemporary worship presenters claim.), at best we are baiting and switching. As the same presenter pointed out, we are being “good” salesman. We are showing them enough of the product called “Lutheranism,” but not too much that they reject it. In other words, we will talk about Jesus, salvation by grace, forgiveness for all sins, but we don't tell them about infant baptism, closed Communion, male only clergy, etc.

As a Synod we have answered “which forms are permissible for worshipping” the same way we have answered “who can be a pastor.” Biblically, a local church can Call and ordain any man they want as their pastor. But synodically, we agree to only Call and ordain those who have been certified by the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod.

Although I have not done so intentionally, it is possible that I have put words in the mouths of the presenters. You can read their presentations here <http://www.acelc.net/>. Printed copies are available on the reading table.

“The lady doth protest too much, methinks.”

Posted on [March 19, 2013](#) by [Rev. Paul R. Harris](#)

This of course is from Hamlet. The one I'm thinking from is also from England, and is no lady, but then he isn't a man either. Or at least not what God intended man to be. Likewise, when I don't fear, love, or trust in God above all things or when I hate, lust, or lie, I'm not the man the Lord would have me be either.

Who I speak of is British actor Ian McKellen of Gandalf fame. In an interview in *Time* magazine (December 2012, 62), the “longtime advocate for gay rights” and proud homosexual is asked, “Do you still rip Leviticus 18 out of hotel Bibles?” He does, and the man doth protest too much, methinks.

I don't rip pages from the *Book of Mormon* or the *Koran*. Why does this unapologetic homosexual feel the need to play Thomas Jefferson or Maricon with the Bible? Does he really think ripping out pages changes anything? More importantly why does he *care* that they are in there? Because he's not so far gone as to care what the Bible says. He wants some of the Bible just not all of the Bible.

That would be me too.

When my parents were on this side of heaven, I wished there wasn't a Fourth Commandment. When I'm paying my

taxes, I wish I could rip out Paul's admonition to pay your taxes. The evolutionist, feminist, abortionist, want to rip out the passages that bother them.

Funny no one to my knowledge wants to rip out the Passion of Christ, "It is finished." "He is not here; He is risen." We only want to rip out the Law, but the only answer to the Law is the perfect life and innocent death of Christ. We can't deal with the condemnation of the Law, whether written in our hearts or on the printed page, by ripping out pages, by doing better, by trying harder, or by punishing ourselves.

God's Word is going to have the last say. It both bespeaks us guilty in ourselves and righteous in Christ. You can't have one without the other.

In America you can rip out as many pages of the Bible as you want. If you try it with other books you'll be accused of un-American censorship. If you try it with the *Koran*, you'll be decried by politicians. You're safe tearing pages out of the Bible, but methinks when you protest that much you're saying more about yourself than about God or His Word.

Unsolicited Letter from a Member

"Finally Brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure,

whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable---if anything is excellent or praiseworthy---think about such things." Philippians 4:8

This is Paul's exhortation to the church in Philippi at the close of his Philippians epistle. In today's world this is quite difficult with news full of doom, death, and calamity. Magazines and newspaper headlines scream of scandal. The radio and TV are full of obscenities and lewdness. Small wonder it's so hard to keep your mind focused on the noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, praiseworthy, or excellent. Even if you don't watch TV, read the paper, or listen to the radio, the mind tends to want to turn inwards and focus on the petty cares and irritations of this life and the injustices we feel are done to us. Did you know that most Wednesdays our faithful pastor offers a way to bring your mind back to focusing on the pure and lovely Word of God? There are two separate Bible studies offered; a morning and evening class to fit your hectic schedule.

The morning class meets at 10:00a.m. This class is currently studying the main Bible stories of the Old and New Testaments. In a few more weeks we should be farther along than the Sunday morning Genesis study, so you could come to the Wednesday morning class and get a sneak peak at what you'll be learning Sunday mornings down the road. With this new found knowledge you can make intellectual comments in the

Sunday class and awe your fellow church goers with your grasp of Old Testament knowledge.

If you haven't studied the Old Testament since your young days in VBS or Sunday School, you might just be startled to learn how much they don't teach you as a child, and if you weren't raised in the Lutheran church you probably missed out on all kinds details that most Protestant churches don't focus on because they are weak on their Church history. I was raised Baptist and thought I knew the book of Genesis pretty well. Before attending Pastor Harris' classes though, I had never heard that Adam and Eve not partaking of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was their way of worshipping God. Or that Adam was the first pastor, and he preached to Eve and his children. I didn't know that Nimrod was "a might hunter against the Lord" which led the church fathers to believe he hunted God's people. I am continually blown away by how much the faith of the translators impacts how you read the Bible. If they're Reformed Protestant they have a way of changing the gifts of God into works for you to do. If you want to get a picture of this yourself, bring a thumb drive to church and ask Pastor or Liz to copy the mp3 files of the Galatians study for you to listen to. The faith of Christ that saves you in many versions becomes your faith in Christ that saves you. This is monstrous, and it's all from changing the word of to the word in. The Galatians study

was the first class I attended and I was hooked on hearing Pastor Harris teach since then!

The evening class is reading through Revelation, and you may be somewhat confused coming in the middle, but the thing about Revelation that I've learned from this class is that the book repeats itself. It shows you the end of the world five different times, so come join us, we're about to get to the second ending of the world. One of the beautiful things about the book of Revelation is that while it shows the chaos and discord of the world, and the persecution of the church, it also clearly shows again and again that God is in His Heaven. If the violence of this past year has left you shaken, come hear and believe that the Lamb is reigning and the day is coming when the Lord will wipe away every tear from our eyes.

If you've never attended any of Pastor Harris' classes prepare to be awed at his knowledge of the Greek language. The Book of Revelation almost everyone agrees is a very confusing book. Pastor keeps a copy of the Greek Bible in the class and is able to interpret on the fly to help clarify the parts where in failed attempts to make things clearer the English Bible translations made things obscure, or out right added to the text. If you're worried about not having time for dinner when you get home from work before heading out to Bible Study, good news: the class doesn't meet until 7:15 so you don't have to rush so much. There's also a group that

heads down to the Draught House after class, so if you don't have time to grab a bite before Bible study, you can get a pint of beer, or glass of wine, and try out the various food truck vendors that pull up to the Draught House to ply their wares.

I cannot urge you strongly enough to come to the Bible studies that are offered. Aside from learning Biblical facts, you hear again and again the treasured message of the Gospel. Our pastor puts a great amount of time and effort into preparing the classes so you get the best of the best in what the previous church fathers thought and taught. He has an abundance of maps to show you where things were taking place as well as a wealth of knowledge about the other events going on at the time the writers were writing that impacted their readers, and us. Don't sell yourself short thinking you can read the Scriptures at home just as well. We have an excellent teacher in Pastor Harris, and we have comfy chairs to sit in, so you don't have to sit at his feet :) Hope to see you in class! Sincerely,
Darcy Geu

A War of Words

Posted on February 18, 2013 by Rev. Paul R. Harris

Do you consciously say “chairwoman” or “spokeswoman?” How about making sure you refer to him or her and al-

ways having to follow up with he and she? You could resort to what Anthony Burgess does in his book 1985. He uses “heesh” instead of he/she (162). To such lengths we will go to prove we're really not sexist that we will prove we are stupid.

Jacques Barzun in his *Dawn to Decadence* gives four reasons for using man when speaking of men and women: etymology, convenience, the unsuspected incompleteness of ‘man and woman,’ and literary tradition.

The Sanskrit root man, *manu* means human being. In the compounds ‘spokesman’ and ‘chairman,’ man keeps the original sense of human being. This is proved by the word ‘woman’ which etymologically is the ‘wife-human being.’

It is not just inconvenient but clumsy to use “man and woman” repeatedly and then have to follow it just as frequently with ‘his and her.’ “It destroys sentence rhythm and smoothness, besides creating emphasis where it is not wanted.” In this regard the feminists give us contradicting signals. You have to say ‘woman’ when men are mentioned, but you are sexist if you say actor and actress.

If you discipline yourself to say woman every time you say man in the name of completeness or fairness, you are being neither. What about teenagers? What about anyone not yet considered an adult?

Finally, “[I]t is unwise to give up a long-established prac-

tice, familiar to all, without reviewing the purpose it has served.” From prehistoric times Genesis 1 informs us, “And God created Man, male and female.” Even if you don’t regard the Bible as God’s word, at least in 1611 when the King James was published, ‘man’ meant human being. For centuries, zoologists have without apology spoken of the species Man. Philosophers have spoken of “Man’s unconquerable mind.” Poet Webster could say, “And man does flourish but his time.” “In all these uses man cannot possibly mean male only. The coupling of woman to those statements would add nothing and sound absurd” (Adapted from *Dawn to Decadence*, pp. 82-83).

Yet most people are willing to sound absurd rather than be accused of sexism, misogyny, or worse. Check pastors on this. See how many of them studiously are “men and women-ing,” “he and she-ing”, till heesh, I mean till sheesh, they have made so much of a distinction between them that their younger listeners think they are two different species.

See it’s not a war of words. It’s a war being won one word at a time. Firemen are firefighters. Policemen are cops. Waitresses are servers. Stewardesses are flight attendants, but female pastors aren’t pastoreesses; female priests are never priestesses, and female rabbis aren’t rabbits. The first does not happen because the name change would highlight that something new has been created. The se-

cond does not happen because only paganism has priestesses. The third doesn’t happen because you can’t say it without laughing.

Serendipitously after writing the above I read the article “Away with Words” in the February 18, 2013 issue of *Time*. It notes that half the states have taken steps toward using gender-neutral language in official documents. However, they are finding it difficult to remove some “gender specific words.” Here are the offending words that must remain: airman, man-hole, man lock. They have been successful at changing penmanship to handwriting, freshman to first-year student, and sportsman to outdoor enthusiast (p.12).

As offensive as the silly reasoning of the states is, even more so was the light airy manner of the story. It was the tone of a human interest puff-piece; the tone they never have when speaking about serious things like climate change or assault rifles or gay marriage. Hey, they’re only talking about doing away with words, and abortion only does away with fetuses, and doublethink was only a problem in a novel.

The Proper Use and the Inappropriate Abuse of Ecclesiastical Supervision

Properly speaking ecclesiastical (churchly) supervision

happens primarily within the context of a Christian congregation. In this fundamental unit of the Church, it is the primary responsibility of the divinely called pastor to be the ecclesiastical supervisor within the congregation. It is the pastor's first responsibility to supervise himself - his doctrine and life. As a called servant of the Word, the pastor is obligated by his sacred ordination/installation vows to preach or teach nothing that is not in accord with the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, and to adorn his life with holy living with the help of God.

It is the called pastor's sacred responsibility to ensure that no false doctrine be presented in any venue within the congregation whether it be in his sermon, the hymns, the choir anthem, the Bible class, and especially in public worship. But what if the pastor (who is also a sinner), fails in this responsibility? Who is to provide churchly supervision for him? Primarily this must fall to the members of the congregation. This is one reason Lutherans have always thoroughly instructed catechumens prior to becoming adult members of a congregation. God's sheep must be able to know the difference between true and false doctrine and, if necessary, judge the doctrine of their shepherd if he should stray into error.

But doesn't all this talk about "supervision" and "judging" sound legalistic, loveless, or intolerant? First, there is absolutely nothing loving about

error! False doctrine or teaching is simply the most loveless thing that can occur within a congregation. Why? Because false teaching always “profanes the name of God among us” (1st Petition meaning, LP, SC) diminishes the believers’ assurance of his salvation, and always points to something or someone other than Christ crucified and risen for the confidence that our sins are fully forgiven. That is the nature of false teaching (heterodoxy). Therefore, it is the most loving thing to do to help a fellow Christian understand the truth of the Gospel of Christ and to avoid the false teaching that diminishes Christ's teaching. There is really no virtue in error! There is no benefit to false teaching and it does not deserve to be tolerated within the Church.

As St. Paul says in I Corinthians 13:4-6: "Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth."

A phenomenon that is far too often seen within our beloved Synod is that some folks falsely pit the retention of pure doctrine against Christian "love". This is a false division. Christian love rejoices and insists in the truth of God's Word being preserved. Christian love helps a brother or sister see their error clearly so that they may rejoice in the truth and preserve the unity of the one, true faith and the unity of the

Church. In reality, false teaching/doctrine divides us and erodes our assurance of forgiveness and salvation. Love rejoices in the truth, and does ***not*** rejoice in error!

So, what about ecclesiastical supervision within The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod?

While Synodical ecclesiastical supervision on paper has the very same goal spoken about by St. Paul in the text cited above: Loving correction to prevent losing the assurance of forgiveness and eternal life so as to preserve the unity of the Church; in our day ecclesiastical supervision has evolved into being primarily concerned with maintaining or forfeiting membership in the Synod.

Perhaps it would be well to remember the very first objective of the Synod in our Constitution: "The Synod, under Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, shall - 1. Conserve and promote the unity of the true faith (Ephesians 4:3-6; I Cor. 1:10)...and provide a united defense against schism, sectarianism (Rom. 16:17), and heresy..." (Constitution of the LCMS, Article III - Objectives)

The first objective of the Synod is the first objective because it is the most important objective. After all, a Synod is formed so that those of like mind might gather together to retain and promote biblical, Confessional theology purely so that the fullness of the Gospel is not hindered by error. Therefore, ecclesiastical supervision

is most grievously abused when it is not done!

Those who have been elected to serve our Synod as ecclesiastical supervisors have demonstrated rather consistently, that they frequently make their judgments based on the Constitution and Bylaws. The problem with this is that Churchly (ecclesiastical) supervision must be based primarily on Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions and if the Constitution – and if the Bylaws do not conform to Scripture and the Confessions, then no judgment contrary to them is to be considered. Time and again we have witnessed our elected ecclesiastical supervisors make determinations on the basis of the best interest of the institution of the Synod, rather than be primarily guided by the Holy Scripture and our Confessions. Therefore, ecclesiastical supervision is grievously abused when the institution is given precedence over Scripture and the Confessions.

Case in point: Rev. Dr. Matthew Becker. Rev. Becker is a rostered LCMS clergyman who is also a professor at Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana. Dr. Becker is also an outspoken promoter of the ordination of women into the pastoral office and a staunch defender of evolution as an adequate explanation of God's creative activity. Both these positions are patently unbiblical and at odds with the Lutheran Confessions. Despite repeated publications by Dr. Becker respecting both these errors, inadequate

ecclesiastical supervision has left him on our Synod's clergy roster and eligible for a call to any congregation, university, or seminary of our Synod. Thus, his loveless errors continue to do damage within our Synod by dividing us, lessening our Christian unity, and promoting a "theology" which erodes the authority of the Holy Scriptures.

Case in point: The toleration of open communion in many of our Synodical congregations. In accord with Holy Scripture our Synod officially holds to the practice of Closed Communion in which those who celebrate the Lord's Supper are in agreement in every article of Christian doctrine and that this agreement is the standard of admission to the Lord's Table.

Case in point: The continuing practice of using laymen to perform Word and Sacrament ministry within LCMS congregations which is a direct contradiction of Augsburg Confession, Article XIV which says: "Our churches teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church, or administer the Sacraments, without a rightly ordered call." (Dau/Bente, second edition, p. 39.) Despite clear directions from our Confessions, multiple districts still train and place laymen into Word and Sacrament ministries within their own districts, and our Synod still retains laymen who also serve in these capacities.

The examples noted above are just a few illustrations of the many failures of proper ecclesiastical supervision which are

more thoroughly listed out in the ACELC's "Evidence of Errors" Documents..

Ecclesiastical supervision is essential to maintaining the theological integrity of our congregations and Synod. If not done, or if done based on "Institutional" concerns rather than Holy Scripture and our Lutheran Confessions, then our Synod suffers and is in terrible trouble. If such abuses of ecclesiastical supervision continue unabated, then the only Lutheran Synod still in existence since 1840's will either crumble or become a church body that has lost its Lutheran character altogether. There is no virtue to being Lutheran in name only.

Please join the congregations of the ACELC in continually praying for those who have been elected as our Synod's ecclesiastical supervisors: The President of the Synod, Matthew Harrison; our five Synodical Vice Presidents, the 35 District Presidents, and the Circuit Counselors who serve under them. Pray that each of these men may steadfastly prize our doctrine and its practice over the "peace" of the institution – for institutional unity secured with the price of the inclusion of error is simply an illusion of unity. Pray that they will let Holy Scripture speak and that they will act accordingly. And if you share the concerns cited here, please consider joining our cause by becoming a member of the ACELC.

Let the words of C.F.W.

Walther in the Fourth Evening Lecture of his great work, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, serve as guidance for us all:

"When a theologian is asked to yield and make concessions in order that peace may at last be established in the Church, but refuses to do so even in a single point of doctrine, such an action looks to human reason like intolerable stubbornness, yea, like down-right malice. That is the reason why such theologians are loved and praised by few men during their lifetime. Most men rather revile them as disturbers of the peace, yea, as destroyers of the kingdom of God. They are regarded as men worthy of contempt. But in the end it becomes manifest that this very determined, inexorable tenacity in clinging to the pure teaching of the divine Word by no means tears down the Church; on the contrary, it is just this which, in the midst of greatest dissension, builds up the Church and ultimately brings about genuine peace. Therefore, woe to the Church which has no men of this stripe, men who stand as watchmen on the walls of Zion, sound the alarm whenever a foe threatens to rush the walls, and rally to the banner of Jesus Christ for a holy war!"... Let us, then, my friends, likewise hold fast the treasure of the pure doctrine. Do not consider it strange if on that account you must bear reproach the same as they did. Consider that the word of Sirach, chap. 4,33: 'even unto death fight for justice, and God will overthrow thy enemies for thee,' will come

true in our case too. Let this be your slogan: Fight unto death in behalf of the truth, and the Lord will fight for you!" (*The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, C. F. W. Walther, page 28.)

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We're Emerging but into Where, What, Whom?

Posted on [April 1, 2013](#) by [Rev. Paul R. Harris](#)

The January 2013 Texas District Supplement to the *Lutheran Witness* trumpets the 25th annual Church Extension Fund conference in April. The keynote speaker is Dr. Leonard Sweet. He is a world renowned leader of the Emergent Church movement, and that's not even the downside of the soiree.

Found at the bottom of page Q is this: "Val Hennings will serve as worship leader. An additional presenter will be the LCMS Texas District President Ken Hennings." We don't need any help emerging. We're already there.

I know that even as I type this that LCMS Ecclesiastical Supervisors are supervising this. Even as you read this, the CEF is penning a letter of apol-

ogy or explaining there was a typo.

Okay, so they're not, but you know the problem is me because I think St. Paul has the answer to "Why can't the District President's wife serve as worship leader?" In short he says in I Timothy 2 that Mrs. Hennings can't serve as worship leader for the same reason that President Hennings could not give birth to their daughter, Erika, who by the by is the banquet entertainer.

As there is no such thing as a male mother, so there is no such thing as a female worship leader. As the former is not qualified physically, the latter is not qualified spiritually. No, it's not because women are more sinful, less gifted, more irritable. St. Paul says it's because the man was first formed then the woman, and the man was not deceived at all and the woman was incredibly deceived by Satan (I Timothy 2). (This makes Adam's fall all the more egregious and Eve's all the more understandable.) It's because God is the head of Christ and Christ is the head of man and man is the head of woman (I Corinthians 11).

This is all first year seminary stuff, but it's not Emergent Church certified. In fact, this old time religion is downright embarrassing. You still believe that the husband is to be head in home, church, and world? You still believe that a woman ought not to teach OR have authority over a man? Yup, and I have no earthly idea why. These teach-

ings that have never been accepted in the world are now rejected by large groups in the church.

I'm probably just overreacting, but I wonder why no one else reacts at all? Anyway, I'm sure Mrs. Hennings is not preaching. She's probably not teaching. She probably just took the lead in lining up the men to do the preaching and teaching – maybe including the non-Lutheran ever emerging Sweet. She probably led in the same sense elementary school female teachers lead their boys. Nothing wrong with that. Unless you're not a boy and it's not elementary school but Divine Service, worship.

I have always thought Church Extension Fund was an irresponsible "investment." What responsible investor puts his money in an institution that is totally unsecured? Now I see that CEF's brazenness to ask people to invest their money with no guarantee against loss of principle is only exceeded by their willingness to sit at the feet of un-Lutheran teachers and be led by woman. Ironic that their theme is "Come Follow Me."

American Lying

Posted on March 4, 2013 by Rev. Paul R. Harris

"I do not believe that any who shall be so fortunate as to be received into heaven through the atonement of our blessed

Savior will be asked whether they belonged to the Presbyterian, the Methodist, the Episcopalian, the Baptist, or the Roman Catholic [faith]” (*American Lion*, 206-7). Thus spoke President Andrew Jackson, the American Lion, while in the White House, and I agree with him.

Those of us who practice closed Communion are maligned as if we believed only we were going to heaven. None of us have ever said anything like this. But neither have we said what the open Communion crowd frequently says: Since we will be in heaven together, we ought to share Communion on earth.

Admittedly our position can seem contradictory. It’s like our position on abortion and the death penalty. On Biblical grounds we are opposed to the first but not to the second. The Fifth Commandment forbids the former but not the latter. Likewise, Scripture calls all those saved by grace for Christ’s sake through faith brothers and sisters in Christ, but it doesn’t call all Christians to the same Communion table.

When you’re in discussions with those who practice open Communion, they defend it in the name of love never in the name of truth. Why? Because truth is precisely the point at

issue. We can’t pretend to agree when we disagree. We won’t do this in sports or politics why would we do it in religion?

I spoke too soon. The open Communion crowd does defend their practice in the name of truth. They say: The truth can’t be known this side of heaven. Who are we to say we have it? Though St. Paul says it’s possible for all to speak the same things (I Cor. 1:10), they say that it’s not. Though Jesus says you will know the truth, they say no we can’t. Though St. Paul says a little leaven leavens the whole lump, they say, “We agree on more than we disagree on. There are only small differences between us.”

Though truth doesn’t admit of degrees, the open Communion crowd always speaks in those terms: More and less faithfulness; better or worse doctrine. Even President Harrison slips into these categories. In his November 2012 *Witness* article he speaks of LCMS congregations communing non-LCMS members at their altars for decades. He recommends that “the circuit counselor, vacancy pastor, or even district president let the congregation know (very charitably, to be sure) that its practice needs to improve before it calls a new pastor” (“Pastor and Congregation 101”. Emphasis mine, han-

dling of ecclesiastical supervisors and confronting those in error with kid gloves, all his).

This is a call to more faithfulness and better doctrine rather than a call to repent. Rather than speaking with the boldness of the American Lion, Andrew Jackson, we are engaging in American lying: all faiths are equal; there are no false doctrines; no one needs to repent; we all need to improve.

Sabbatical Update

This is an update on my potential sabbatical. I have applied to the Lilly Foundation for a sabbatical from June 9, 2014 through August 31, 2014. The total cost is \$30,417. \$13,888.00 of this is for congregational expenses. The center of my proposal is taking a class in Hebrew at the seminary and an extended retreat at a Lutheran monastery in Michigan. The deadline for submitting the proposal was April 19, 2013. I will be notified one way or the other at the end of August 2013. I am deeply grateful that Trinity agreed to let me apply. Even if I don’t get the sabbatical, this in itself is refreshing.

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| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THURS | FRI | SAT |
|-----|-----|-----------------------|--|-------|-----|-----|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| | | PASTOR | | | | |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| | | ON | | | | |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| | | VACATION | | | | |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| | | Voters Meeting 7PM | 10 AM Bible Stories 7:15 PM Revelation II | | | |
| 30 | | | | | | |

July 2013

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THURS | FRI | SAT |
|-----|-----|---------------------------|--|-------|-----|-----|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| | | | 10 AM Bible Stories 7:15 PM Revelation II | | | |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| | | | 10 AM Bible Stories 7:15 PM Revelation II | | | |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| | | 6:30 PM Elders Meeting | 10 AM Bible Stories 7:15 PM Revelation II | | | |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| | | | 10 AM Bible Stories 7:15 PM Revelation II | | | |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | |
| | | | 10 AM Bible Stories 7:15 PM Revelation II | | | |