

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

The Upcoming Cliff

I see it for me at January 1st. You can't do something six days a week for forty years and not be at a loss when that ends. If you want to know what I'm going to do next, I'm stuck between the Luther-ism "if a pastor quits being a pastor, he returns to being a layman" and the view that ordination is not something from which one can retire.

As for you, you might feel like you're at a cliff. But you're not. Word and Sacrament ministry will go on here. Confessional Lutheran services will continue here with barely a hiccup. Your leaders have seen to this and will see to it.

LCMS retirement material – and I've read it in all three districts I have served in - says that when a pastor retires, he must say from the pulpit: I will do no weddings, funerals, or pastoral functions for my former members. I feel that gauche to say from the pulpit, so I said it above.

Furthermore, I will not be leaving any contact info. In the past when I have taken a call from a church, members followed me in the name of friendship. (Read this blog <https://blog.trinityaustin.com/2023/05/22/buy-this-book/> for more info.) Every few months, former members would call. This did not let up until I just stopped answering or calling back. So now I'm not going to even start. I think that after your new pastor has been well established here, you could see me in Divine Service. I'll be the one hanging on every word the pastor preaches.

That's what I want to leave you with. I have never been able to listen to myself preach or teach. Ask Cheryl, for the decade or more she taught Sunday School here, she got CD's of Sunday morning Bible Class. She had to turn them off when I got home. I feared I would hear only garbled speech, what is called "word salad". I still have that fear. And I have a weariness. I'm pretty sure most faithful pastors have this. I say this because circa 1993, I played Gordon Lightfoot's "Don Quixote" at a Confessional Lutheran pastor's conference in Louisiana. Virtually all knew these lyrics, resonated to them, and sang them robustly: "He takes a battered book into his hand/ Standing like a prophet bold/ He shouts across the ocean to the shore/ Till he can shout no more".

Looking for something to take notes on during my recent hunting trip, I could only find a newsletter from August - September 2012 in Cheryl's bag. I reread it. I thought it great, worth hanging on to, helpful, memorable, graceful. Then I began to think of this last newsletter article and what I wanted to say to you. This led me to two illustrations to leave you with.

Demosthenes, 4th century BC, was speaking and noticed the Athenian assembly nodding off. So, he said in a lower voice, "I have a tale to tell you." The assembly fell silent.

Demosthenes continues: One man had bought an ass from another. While on a journey, both men tried to find respite from the sun in the ass's shadow. The man who sold the animal maintained he didn't sell the shadow. The man who bought the beast held that he had bought the shadow too. So on they journeyed, bickering...." Demosthenes voice trailed off to silence. The assembly demanded to hear the end. "Oh I see," says Demosthenes. "You will listen attentively when I talk to you of an ass and its shadow but not when I discuss more profound things."

Ever been to the reading of a will? *Everyone* listens very attentively to hear what their loved one has left them. That's how attentively you should listen to your pastor's preaching and teaching. You can't wait to find out what your Lord Jesus has left to you for time and eternity.

In congregations I've left, one person – sometimes more – says, "Well, you're leaving us better than when you found us." Of Trinity, I can truly say, "I'm leaving better than when you found me." For that, the Lord has my praise and you have my thanks.

Important Notes For You From the Elders

Two Churches Seeking Fellowship

At the November 14 voters meeting, we learned that these two churches are seeking to declare altar and pulpit fellowship with Trinity and with all the other ULMA churches:

- Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Litchfield, Illinois
- St. Timothy Evangelical Lutheran Church, Williamsburg, Iowa

These churches have been talking with ULMA for a few years, so they are well known to Pastor Abbott and the other ULMA pastors, and Pastor Harris has recommended that we join in fellowship with them. These churches are the only two remaining from the group ACLC, (Association of Confessional Lutheran Churches). We expect to vote on this at the January voters meeting.

Call Committee Update

The Call Committee has received the names of 16 pastoral candidates to consider, and nominations are closed as of November 12. We have not discussed any individual candidates yet, but now that the nominations are closed, we will begin vetting candidates.

Through the end of this year, the committee will do some initial vetting of these candidates by reviewing sermons, papers, etc. If we conclude that any should be removed from the list, we will report on that at a future voters meeting.

For all other candidates, we will send a packet (electronically) with a cover letter and our Pastoral Candidate Information Form. This includes 31 questions for each candidate covering issues of theology, practice, teaching, etc.

These will be sent out in early January. There are two reasons to wait until January: 1) We need some time to identify and remove any obviously disqualified candidates, and 2) this means we will not send out call-related questions until we are truly in a vacancy.

We will ask the candidates to return these forms to us by the end of that month. Then we will begin reviewing their responses carefully. We intend to include weekly updates about our progress in the church bulletin, so check there for the latest.

“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 they 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.

From Fox News – Thousands of churches raise alarm about scope of new Canadian ‘conversion therapy’ ban

Posted on October 2, 2023 by Rev. Paul R. Harris

This was the title of an email recently sent to me. It was based on a Fox News headline of January 16, 2022 which said in part, “An initiative begun by Liberty Coalition Canada and promulgated in the United States by Pastor John MacArthur of Los Angeles, secured the support of more than 4,000 Christian pastors who publicly expressed their willingness to protest from the pulpit regarding” this. Here is my response below. If you attend Bible Class, and the sender of this email does, you’ve heard my answer to this many, many times.

Well, most Christian churches, including Lutheran and Confessional ones, needed no law to stop them from preaching first about divorce, than about abortion, then about living together, then about homosexuality, then about gay marriage, and finally about transgenderism. They were silent all by themselves.

In all these issues, however, the Reformed approach is wrong and not helpful. On all these matters, we don’t expect the government to do what is Biblically correct but what Natural Law knows: there must be a law above men that norms laws men make up. Without this concept, the Nuremberg war criminals couldn’t have been prosecuted because they were following the laws of their government at the time.

Luther said a people get the government they deserve. Our silence, our being co-opted in all the above mentioned matters by friends, neighbors, relatives and our own sinfulness are now reaping what we have sowed.

Here are the two flashpoints: As I said in the case of the Colorado cake people, what shut their business was not homosexuals, but the former customers who didn’t want to cross the protester. This is what will happen here. When Stop Patriarchy Now, an Austin group, stumbles upon our website, or, one of the many LGBTQ groups find one of my newsletter articles or sermons on these topics. they will be outside picketing. How many will choose to attend another church then? I have witnessed how men in particular actually cower in the face of a shrill, screaming woman.

The second flash point is going to be lit by guys like John MacArthur. In the First Gulf War, the active duty Army chaplains preached our certain victory in this religious crusade for Christianity. That was no different than the Imam’s preaching jihad or their holy war. The truth is all of God’s enemies were defeated on the cross. The truth is, men can start war, famine, pestilence, and anarchy, but they can stop none of them. Enflaming people religiously will lead to anarchy.

In many ways, this is exactly how the Evangelicals deal with prayer in public schools. They want it. Confessional Lutherans never have. We don’t want the State in charge of praying. If we argue the above issues on Biblical grounds with

those who do not recognize the Bible as an authority, they will haul out their holy books. There is after all a Church of Satan, the Metropolitan Church, and Liberal churches. These have their sources saying we're wrong.

So we will continue to hold those in Christ to the only rule and authority, Holy Scripture, and preach and teach accordingly. We will tell civil authorities that going against Natural Law is neither safe nor wise. The one thing we won't do is stop preaching the truth about these issues.

Effeminate Gospel, Effeminate Christians

July 2005 By Aaron Wolf

Every definition of masculinity into which our Lord Jesus Christ does not fit belongs in the rubbish heap. Indeed, there could be no greater example of a man than He. Contrary to modern portrayals, Jesus was neither a sensitive metrosexual nor a macho-macho man. The tenderness that He displayed toward those whom He loved (including His enemies) was paternal and sacrificial, focused not on self-gratification or expression but on the real needs of those He came to save. The Son of Man did not strut about flexing His muscles or cursing at His enemies, because He possessed the quiet confidence of One absolutely certain of His mission and did not need the approval of others in order to maintain that certainty. Nor did He need to "be His own boss" in order to be a man (Isaiah called Him "God's slave"), insisting, instead, that He came not to do His own will but the "will of Him Who sent Me"—His Father. He resisted the temptation of Satan to perform a spectacular feat of strength by casting Himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple, choosing, rather, the way of the Cross. This Man wept—for Jerusalem, for the family of Lazarus—not out of hypersensitivity or fear but because of His great love for a people languishing under the weight of their own sin. Even in the hour of His torment in Gethsemane, He prayed for those entrusted to His care while battling the Old Serpent, whose head He crushed in the greatest battle ever fought by a man. And He emerged from the grave a King, still bearing the wounds of battle. There will be no democracy on Judgment Day when "the Man comes around," because only one vote will count: that of the God Who humbled Himself in order to save the ones He loves.

This is not the language of the American Christian man, who strolls, rosy-cheeked and all aflutter, "in the garden alone,"

while the dew is still on the roses.

And the voice I hear falling on my ear—
the Son of God—discloses.

And He walks with me and He talks with me.

And He tells me I am His own.

And the joy we share as we tarry there—
none other has ever known.

These familiar strains from the popular hymn "In the Garden" represent the modern American imagination of the essence of Christianity: a romantic fantasy in which a chivalric Jesus rescues me from my own loneliness and despair and fills all of my emotional needs. This effeminate picture of the Christian life, from the dramatic conversion experience to the long walks in the garden alone with "Jesus," has produced generations of effeminate Christian men who either allow themselves to be consumed by their imaginary "walks with Jesus" or else drift away from church altogether, knowing that their best efforts at spiritual courtship will fall well short of

those of the women who now, more than ever, fill the pews of America's churches.

When the West was Christian, Church and society encouraged men to follow the example of the Son of Man: Endowed with headship yet obedient to higher authorities, a man must use his physical abilities and natural strength and demeanor to provide for and protect his family, his people, laying down his life if necessary. This requires the cultivation of courage, discipline, and honor in boys, which used to be the goal of the education that our churches used to provide.

Today, American culture presents boys with icons of "masculinity," such as Arnold Schwarzenegger, who glory in sodomizing women while pumping iron in a gym. Ideally, physical strength is to be put into the service of self-gratification, not of protecting and providing for "weaker vessels." The macho American man is a "selfish hedonist," who lives fast, plays hard, and beds women at will. Loving a wife, rearing children, and serving others are the least of his concerns.

The flip-side of this concept of manhood is the homosexual, another sodomizer, whose very label means self-gratification. Adam and Steve cannot properly assume the mantle of responsibility that God calls marriage, because homosexual sex, devoid of the divinely instituted roles of man and wife—chief among them, the possibility of and openness to procreation—is nothing more than mutual self-gratification. Saint Paul calls it "that which is unseemly," "vile affections," "dishonouring the body," and "against nature." The homosexual's "orientation" is open rebellion against God and His created order. Furthermore, a society that celebrates this (or any other) sort of hedonistic masculinity is warring against the very essence of Christianity.

Jesus taught us to pray "Our Father" not because He lived in a male-dominated society but because His saving mission involved granting us a share in His Divine Sonship through the "adoption of sons." Therefore, the very essence of Christianity is masculine, an expression of patriarchal authority and the place and inheritance enjoyed by the Firstborn Son. Such authority has long been maligned by the liberal mainline churches in America, which are happy to ordain women and, now, open homosexuals. Yet it is not merely the Scripture-denying mainlines who have been infected by this disease. The image of the effeminate clergyman is nearly universal in America—not just among liberals but among self-identified conservatives. The myriad queer priests on the Catholic side have as their counterpart the femmy Protestant pastor who must rely on silly stories and Dr. Phil psychobabble to carry his sermons. Vasectomized fathers of 1.5 children make their vestments look like dresses as they tug at the heart-strings of men and women. Evangelical megachurch pastors, with their khakis and polo shirts, take up the role of vicar of Jesus-the-Boyfriend, as their sermons or chats insist on fanning the flames of passion for Christ instead of proclaiming the Passion of Christ. One popular conservative pastor even champions something he calls "Christian hedonism," in a book entitled, appropriately, *Desiring God*.

Gone are the liturgies that place the crucified Christ and His Body and Blood at the center, and gone are hymns that call God "a bulwark never failing." In their place are the ubiquitous and repetitive choruses that distort the message of historic Christianity and replace it with a celebration of feminine emotions: "The simplest of all love songs / I want to

bring to you / So I let my words be few / Jesus I am so in love with you.”

The modern “praise and worship” experience resembles a soft-rock concert (a genre made for women), where the “worship leader” and his swooning sidekicks, the praise band, take center stage. Each stands gazing into the middle distance (where the Spirit of God seems to be hovering above the congregation), his (or, more often, her) heels tapping while one hand grips the wireless microphone and the other is lifted toward the ceiling, as if serving as a conduit of sacramental grace.

This campy environment is supplemented by something called “small groups,” a method of spiritual cognitive dissonance perfected by Bill Hybels at suburban Chicago’s Willow Creek Community Church. Unlike the authoritarian “I-talk-and-you-listen” environment in which Christians traditionally learned the Scriptures and teachings of the Church, small groups are a “safe” environment in which believers can take turns interpreting the Bible and sharing all of their deepest traumas and experiences while a leader guides the conversation. The emphasis here is on vulnerability and openness, which, when coupled with group “accountability,” have always been the hallmarks of behavior-modification therapy.

What happens when the self-identified “conservative” churches encourage men to behave as women, swooning “in the garden” and “knowing” Jesus in an imaginary romance, or in “safe” small groups, or in effeminate “praise and worship” experiences? What happens to families when a church professes belief in the authority of the Bible and in the undeniable fact that marriage is between one man and one woman, then teaches husbands and fathers that the essence of the Faith is found within, in the desires of their own hearts?

The answer is all around us. Christian churches in America have long lost their authority to speak prophetically both to the culture and to their own children. Christian fathers no longer see themselves as heads of households. And, as concerned women rise up and try to fill the void that these men leave, they often end up forsaking their own natural roles as childbearers, childrearers, and “keepers at home,” as Saint Paul called them. In conservative churches, in which homosexuality is still called sin, Christian men forsake the natural use of their wives not for other men but for contracepted sex, which Martin Luther called “sodomy.” They, too, become “God haters.”

Today’s Christian man struggles to be a real father to his children. Once, as I stood out in front of a church before the service, talking with another father, one of the young members of the church youth group walked by, her skirt too small to measure. “Where in the world is her father!” I remarked, “and why does he let her own a skirt like that, let alone wear it to church?”

“Uh, I dunno,” the other man replied. “You know, Britney is 14 now. If Pastor told her she couldn’t wear that, she’d probably leave and never come back. Besides, what’s her dad supposed to do, lock her in a closet?”

Perplexed, I explained the Britney situation to the pastor: “Isn’t it about time that we had some kind of general policy about proper attire in the service? Nothing too specific, but just a gentle admonition to young ladies that they refrain from wearing shorts, miniskirts, and the like to church?”

Chuckling (after realizing I was serious), the pastor said, “I’m not sure of how well that would go over. Besides, I’m not certain that that would be the best thing for Britney or anyone

else. They’ve got to want to be modest, because God looks at our hearts. He’s not caught up in externals.”

This all-too-common response to spiritual problems in churches reinforces a particularly insidious moral disorder: Since God looks on the heart, we need not have any rules. No sex distinctions, no modesty, no “Yes, Sir,” and “Yes, Ma’am,” no “You may not behave that way while you’re at our house” —in short, no protection against the “better angels of our nature” which, being sinful and lacking any moral formation, are really little demons. And neither the state nor society nor, in most cases, the Church will support a father who lays down the law, puts his foot down, acts like a man. The same goes for pastors, who so often must walk the line when it comes to the preaching of God’s law, lest they offend the sensibilities of a morally unformed congregation. Preach all you want about incivility, greed, and unkindness, but mention divorce, contraception, immodesty, or anything else that hits too close to home, and you might just find yourself transferred or your salary cut in half.

In her insightful work, *The Feminization of American Culture*, Ann Douglas traces the problem of the effeminacy of the American Christian man to the disestablishment of churches. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the Congregationalist and Episcopalian churches that were established in the states along the East Coast were disestablished, and all of the civil benefits that those churches had enjoyed—the power to levy taxes to support the pastor and the church facilities, the social status for pastors that this system required and protected, the necessity of church membership for those who wished to enjoy certain social benefits—were stripped away. She is quick to point out that disestablishment had its own intellectual antecedents—in particular, the democratizing Yankee spirit known today as the American Way, the culture that ultimately produced television advertising and “Rock the Vote!” Outside of clerical circles, the leading lights of this age were averse to the idea of any sort of enforced religion. Thomas Jefferson, for example, supported the disestablishment of the Episcopal Church in Virginia.

Before disestablishment, masculine Christianity was already being gutted by the so-called Great Awakening of the 18th century. In his defense of these controversial “revivals” (for example, his treatise on the Religious Affections), Jonathan Edwards insisted that “Gracious affections . . . arise from the mind’s being enlightened, richly and spiritually to understand or apprehend divine things.” Edwards, a speculative thinker, also redefined sin as “selfishness” and holiness as “disinterested benevolence.” When God causes a sinner to be born again (apart from Baptism), He realigns the mind, will, and affections: The mind is then free to exercise pure reason, ascertaining the truth of Scripture; the will is free to pursue God and not the self; and the heart is filled with love for divine light. The “religious affections,” then, become evidence that God is at work. “If we be not in good earnest in religion, and our wills and inclinations be not strongly exercised, we are nothing.”

This Edwardsean perspective came to be the guiding force of New England’s “New Divinity School,” which influenced large segments of churches in America, particularly in the North. Samuel Hopkins, Edwards’ intellectual successor, placed increasing emphasis on “heart religion” and even went as far as to say that ours is the “best of all possible worlds,” because God is required to work for the greater good for the majority of His creatures. For Hopkins, the Cross of Christ

was not an objective, vicarious substitution but a public declaration of divine justice designed to stimulate sinners to choose to follow God (a teaching Edwards would have abhorred). This was a reworking of the Gospel in the spirit of the Enlightenment, a new, baptized form of individualism centered on the emotions, which fit nicely with the democratizing effort to disestablish the churches. Since the masculine idea of “forced religion” became anathema, Yankee pastors increasingly turned into salesmen, and women, not heads of households, began to play dominant roles in churches, trading authority for “influence.”

By the early 19th century, another Edwardian thinker, Nathaniel Taylor, a close friend of Lyman Beecher (father of Harriet Beecher Stowe), was denying the historic Christian understanding of Original Sin (he defined sin as the acquired habit of selfishness) and proclaiming the effeminate “moral influence” theory of the Atonement: that Christ’s Passion was a placard of just how much God cares—an invitation for a heartfelt response of faith. This led to the Second Great Awakening (1830’s), in which Charles Finney applied Taylor’s teachings by creating a travelling-circus atmosphere designed to garner conversions. After all, if man is capable of being wooed to “accept Christ,” why not pull out all of the stops in order to accomplish that? This thinking led to the institutionalization of Finney’s “anxious bench,” now known as the “altar call.” Audience members whose emotions have been stirred could come down to the “altar” and place themselves on it, making a decision to follow Jesus. This feminized version of “church” was accompanied by soul-stirring songs, whose theme was not the objective work of Christ but the feelings that Christ engenders within. The North and, after Reconstruction, the South became increasingly dominated by this “decision theology,” in which men were taught that an effeminate “Christ” wants them to act just like him: wooing, begging, pleading, offering—not ruling, protecting, giving, saving.

While failing to recognize that an effeminate Gospel produces effeminate Christians, and that a democratized church polity means that those whom God has entrusted with responsibility and authority can be easily outvoted, Christian leaders have not failed to notice the problem of wussy Christian men. A century ago, evangelist (and former baseball star) Billy Sunday screamed and hollered about the sin of being a sissy man, yet he carried the feminists’ torch of Prohibitionism. The late fundamentalist preacher Jack Hyles was fond of thundering, “Listen here, faggot. You’d better think twice if you think you’re going to be admitted into my Bible college!” Yet he claimed that his entire ministry was founded on the night that he spent lying on his father’s grave, blubbering and demanding that Jesus fill him with power. The Promise Keepers, perhaps the most popular “men’s” movement, decry illegitimacy, pornography, and divorce while promoting the same sort of you-need-a-hug mentality that has helped men to find ample excuses for eschewing responsibility. Such movements are doomed to failure from the beginning because they proclaim a masculinity apart from the natural order and traditional Christian dogma. None of them challenges contraception. None of them questions the emphasis on heart religion. None of them demands that pastors preach a masculine Christ.

Traditionalist Christian denominations that do not hold “altar calls” and mass men’s meetings are not immune to this form of effete Christianity. The marketplace mentality so permeates every facet of American culture that resistance is

nearly futile. The traditionalists often walk a few paces behind, insisting that the methods of the feminized churches—which garner great attendance on Sunday morning—can be used as long as the message is orthodox. Don’t we still have Sacraments at the guitar Mass? Can’t we replace the old Lutheran Hymnal with “Jesus I Am So In Love With You,” as long as we say the Nicene Creed—provided, of course, that we change “men” to “humans”? Shouldn’t we be willing to do whatever it takes to woo people to come to church? If these questions are even asked, emasculation has already occurred. Men who are lured to church through such methods will only return if they feel that their needs are being met.

Men—pastors, fathers—do not need permission to take up their mantles of authority, any more than Our Lord did. God is still the Father of the baptized, no matter what their feelings or felt-needs are. And those earthly and spiritual fathers will answer to the ultimate Man for what they have done for those under their authority, no matter what the culture said. Boys still need fathers who are willing to teach them by example how to have courage, respect, and honor, and how to treat a lady; girls still need daddies who will keep them from dressing like harlots and stop any boy in his tracks who would harm their reputations; and wives—and congregations—still need men who will stand before them and say, with Joshua, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

This article first appeared in the July 2005 issue of *Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture*.

Effeminacy and the Liturgy – Part II

Posted on August 21, 2023 by Rev. Paul R. Harris

This was first posted here on July 27, 2009, but I’m doing more than emphasizing. I’ve added more thoughts and documentation.

Reading *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, I discovered I might not know the real meaning of effeminacy. It doesn’t mean weak or even sissified to the author of that work. Several of the emperors Gibbon styles as effeminate he notes for prowess in battle, but interestingly, he also notes their savageness apparently confirming that with extreme sentimentality goes extreme brutality. Elizabeth Robbins, from what I can find, first said this in reference to the World War I Germans. She has a character in *The Messenger* say of them, “Trouble with the ruck of ‘em is, they go from the extreme of sentimentality at one end to the extreme of brutality at the other.” Think of the Mafia don cooing tenderly over his pet cat one moment to gunning down a snitch the next.

So effeminacy doesn’t equal weakness, but according to Webster’s it means “1: having feminine qualities untypical of a man: not manly in appearance or manner. 2: marked by an unbecoming delicacy or over-refinement.” Having attended three Higher Things conferences (I did not attend this year’s gathering. I will next year.), I noted what I considered effeminacy in the second sense in the conduct of the liturgy, particularly the chanting. Gibbon might not have labeled it as such, but it was definitely “marked by unbecoming delicacy.” It was excessively sweet which sounded feminine and wimpish to me.

This might say more about my ears than their lips, but I am relieved to discover I’m not the only one who finds this not appealing. Indeed, the Archbishop of Lyons during the time of Charlemagne found it downright dangerous. “Agobard [Why

don't we have good names like that anymore?] denounced cantors who, thinking themselves at a theatrical performance, affected an exaggerated sweetness in their singing: "They say that music makes demons flee, but we should be aware that such songs welcome them into the heart" (Riche, Pierre, *Daily Life in the World of Charlemagne*, 194). Did the good archbishop think such effeminate chanting made demons an offer they couldn't refuse?

The above I wrote in 2009. Today I'm fresh from a meeting with the brothers of the United Lutheran Mission Association. There a paper was presented from the July 2005 *Chronicles* magazine entitled *Effeminate Gospel, Effeminate Christians*. It moved me to add as follows.

"As early as 1132 a statue of the Cistercian Order attempted to combat the change [in singing]. Men, it complained should cease singing 'in a womanish manner with tinkling...as if imitating the wantonness of minstrels.' ... 'Music was originally discreet, seemly, simple, masculine, and of good morals,' agreed Jacques de Liege [1260-1330], author of the most extensive extant medieval treatise on music; 'have not the moderns rendered it lascivious beyond measure'" (*Temperament*, 50, 51)?

And this from the same file: There is an age old adage "Never trust a theologian who is not also a musician." Though this certainly censures me, I see the point. I've observed that few there are who are both. Luther was.

Finally, I haven't been to Higher Things since 2018, but at that conference the chanting was not womanish at all. And, if you want to read the entire paper from *Chronicles*, you can find it here: <https://chroniclesmagazine.org/news/effeminate-gospel-effeminate-christians-2/> or in this newsletter.

Of Popular Music and Unpopular Crime

Posted on May 31, 2022 by Rev. Paul R. Harris

I'm breaking my 10-year rule. This blog is not quite 9-years-old, so I'm repeating myself rather than citing. In a discussion over the recent shooting, I was reminded that I wrote something after Sandy Hook. Actually, I wrote right after a senseless shooting in Oklahoma. It's worth another read.

Apparently, "senseless" or "random" crime bothers us more than crimes for which there is motive. Killing someone just to see what it feels like is appalling, but it has always been celebrated in popular music.

Here I don't speak of rap or hip hop or even rock music. Johnny Cash sung of the man in Folsom Prison who "shot a man in Reno just to watch him die." Jim Reeves sung of the gold miner who killed his partner because "what else was there to do?" However, in both these songs the killer suffers, and it seems justly so.

To my knowledge Jim Reeves' *Partners* was released in 1959 and Johnny Cash's *Folsom Prison Blues* was first recorded in 1956. The recording made at Folsom prison in 1968 made it famous. But it didn't spark a wave of thrill-killing. Indeed, outside of wartime atrocities, you rarely hear of "waves" of thrill-killing.

Just as with the killings in Sandy Hook, *too* much can be made of the "senseless" "random" brutality of 3 teens in Oklahoma shooting a college student out jogging just "for the fun of it." Though I am loath to quote Nietzsche, he warned about gazing into the abyss because you'll find it gazes into you (*Beyond Good and Evil*, IV, 146). No matter how long

you look at this terrible murder, you won't understand it, but the more the darkness of it will penetrate you.

In the Rich Man and Lazarus, the Rich Man stares out of the abyss but Lazarus doesn't stare into it. He is content in and with the Bosom of Abraham. Each day has sufficient evil (Matthew 6:34), there is no need to import the evils of past days into your present.

If in Scripture we find times so abominable that a whole town would be complicit in homosexual (Genesis 19) or heterosexual rape (Judges 19), if women could be so debased as to cook and eat their own children (2 Kings 6:29), should we be surprised at the deepness of the darkness in this present evil age (Galatians 1:4)? If Paul in circa 60 A.D. could respond to the evil days by admonishing the Ephesians to make the most of every opportunity (5:16), shouldn't we focus on what opportunities we have rather than on the evil of our days? The abyss is not going to overcome us; in Christ we have overcome the abyss. Vanquished foes can be and should be forgotten.

Beyond the cloud

There can be no substitute for the written word. (*It really will be amazing and I suspect the judgement of the Almighty for how we have misused, underappreciated, and undervalued words in general and His Holy Word in particular, if instead of like Fahrenheit 451 prophesied, we throw our own books into the fire, whether metaphorically or really.*)

by Andrée Seu Peterson

Post Date: June 8, 2023; Issue Date: June 24, 2023

I am thinking about written words, as they're going out of style. I know they're going out of style because in Brooklyn I ransacked my millennial daughter's long, dog-leggy apartment for paper and pen to leave her a note, and ended up fishing an Aldi receipt and crayon from the bottom of my purse.

I know they're going out of style because they killed cursive in schools, and my Gen Z grandchildren are unable to read the framed Declaration of Independence and preamble to the Constitution mounted on the wall ascending my staircase. I believe that was murder, not accidental.

Are we counting on the "cloud"? Franklin Graham isn't. At the May 22 National Religious Broadcasters convention, the evangelist warned Christians to build parallel data storage structures, as his Samaritan's Purse is doing in Denver, and not to entrust our words and info to Amazon, which hates us.

Tucker Carlson contributes his own idea: "Don't throw away your hard copy books, because they are the enduring repository ... because they can't be disappeared because they exist physically."

Sorry, but they *can* be disappeared. German students disappeared disfavored books in 1817, choosing the ironic 300th anniversary of Martin Luther's posting of the 95 Theses on the Wittenberg door. The Nazis disappeared books at their own grand book-burning event on May 10, 1933.

The aforementioned deposed Fox newsman also said, when asked what is the biggest cultural change in Americans' everyday lives: "The lack of information. The core promise of the internet was as much information as we've ever had at your fingertips, and the result has been a centralization of information (this is deliberate, needless to say, but not noticed by most people) that results in more controlled information. ... So a lot of information just is not available."

Clouds are cool. God sent a cloud in the wilderness (Exodus 13:21). But when it came to preserving testimony, He favored the written word: "Take a scroll of a book and write on it all the words that I have spoken to you against . . . all the nations" (Jeremiah 36:2). It won't be a cloud but a scroll that the Lamb opens seal by seal to unleash our destiny (Revelation 5:1-8). And on Judgment Day we will confront a book, not an iPhone: "The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books" (Revelation 20:12).

George Orwell saw it coming in 1949: "Every record has been destroyed or falsified, every book rewritten, every picture has been repainted, every statue and street building has been renamed, every date has been altered" (*Nineteen Eighty-Four*).

But God is adaptable. When a certain king of Israel took the scroll of the Lord and sliced three or four columns at a time in pique, throwing them into the fireplace, God simply had Jeremiah write the prophecy down again on another parchment (Jeremiah 36:23-28).

In the late 1940s God used a Bedouin shepherd boy searching for a goat near the Dead Sea to stumble into a desert cave and give the world the oldest extant Old Testament manuscripts confirming the Bible's historicity.

In 1866 He used a 26-year-old Welshman named Robert Jermain Thomas on an American trade ship on Korea's Taedong River, who had arrived to evangelize the "hermit kingdom." In his last act before being summarily executed, Thomas hands off a Bible to his executioners, and a government official named Pak Yung Sik wallpapers his house with its pages. Pak later sells his house to one Choe Chi Ryang. People come from miles around to read his wall, and a church is established in Pyongyang (*Chosen for Choson*, Stella Price, 2007).

And hats off to the Irish monks in the Dark Ages who furiously copied and recopied Bible manuscripts for posterity, as fast as the Huns and the Visigoths could torch them. <https://wng.org/articles/beyond-the-cloud-1686117845>

"I Support Rick Sawyer"

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

That's the title I saved this under in 2011. I think this is the writing of his I am referencing: <https://steadfastlutherans.org/2011/03/ancelc-conference-the-divine-service-and-daily-offices-by-rev-rick-sawyer/>. As always from the original *Seelsorger* of the web, good stuff.

Having followed the discussion at the Steadfast site, I say thanks be to God for Rev. Rick Sawyer's faithfulness, patience, and boldness. I also say that it looks like ACELC does have a place at the table in the current configuration of LCMS, INC. It's **on** the table. They're having us for lunch!

We have, as we are duty bound to do, called our brothers and sisters in Christ to repentance, and we are being answered with, "If you can do better, do it." Yes, that's how I respond when someone calls me to repent, and I accept that answer from those I must confront in the parish. I say, "You're living in fornication." And he says, "If you can do better, do it." Then I'm rebuked, silenced; he has won.

And it turns out I've been misunderstanding Paul for decades. It's not required for a steward to be found faithful but successful. I've done the same with Jesus' words. The kingdom of heaven is as a man who plants his field, and

he *does* know how it grows. I've misunderstood Peter too. He didn't say that we are to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ but in numbers, in giving, in church plants.

Dear brothers I've seen many a grown pastor cowed by someone playing the "numbers" card. Thanks be to God our Lord speaks of two or three gathered in His name and not two or three hundred. Thanks be to God that when we gather, though we gather with no more than a handful of sinners, we gather with angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven. Thanks be to God that we don't go to Divine Service to worship people, many or few, but to be served by Divinity, gracious and merciful.

The argument over numbers will never be won by the faithful in any generation. The numbers weren't with Noah, Elijah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Peter, Paul, or Jesus. As Jesus focused on the one not the 99, the widow and her mite not the rich and their riches, the one worshipping leper not the 9 who didn't, so He focuses today on the one parish pastor struggling to get into the pulpit each Sunday to preach the Gospel not the four district and eight Synodical officials rubbing his face in the poor return his preaching of the Gospel brings.

So to those who would have us for lunch for all that we aren't (numerical successes) but really it's for all that we are (defenders of the truth the Synod at one time confessed), let us say bon appetite!

Great Book Cheaply Bound

Posted on July 31, 2023 by Rev. Paul R. Harris

Concordia Publishing House published the book (*Dis*)ordered: *Lies about Human Nature and the Truth that sets us Free*. This will upset many. The last point I record him as making does me. But overall Rev. Esget is that guy who is willing to say, "Hey the Emperor has no clothes on!" and then point out the errors of conventional wisdom. If you love getting your theology from the internet, Reformed theology, and you think psychology is part of God's truth, get ready to be a hater. But if you had this creeping suspicions that these three are linked, you will be glad. Oh what's with my title? This is a very cheaply bound book. It's not 'bound' to last, but in point of fact, it is bound to last.

Pride – Simple but memorable way to evaluate the various 'pride' movements

"Whereas God's Word sees pride as the chief vice, the teaching of the world makes pride the chief virtue" (Esget, (*Dis*)ordered, 16).

Epistemology – 3 kinds

There are those who combine natural knowledge of the world via observation with deductions gotten from the scientific method with a trust in the revealed knowledge of God in the Bible. This is classical Christianity. Those who rely on only natural knowledge [*and, I say Esget doesn't have a scientism that denies anything beyond measurable reality*]. This is the Rationalists. Finally, those today who believe that the only truth that can be known is via feelings. This group Esget terms "emotivists." They speak of your truth, my truth (Esget, (*Dis*)ordered, 18-19). (*Let the woke wake to this.*)

Reformed – purpose of man vs Confessional Lutheran (*Westminster Shorter Catechism's first Q&A is "What is the chief end of man? A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, [a*

and to enjoy him for ever.” If it’s understood that we glorify God best and enjoy Him rightly when we receive His good gifts and grace as unworthy, this is fine. But this is not how Reformed people have explained it to me.) Esget sums up the Lutheran approach. “God wanted someone to love, someone to receive His gifts, someone to share His joy in all His works” (Esget, *(Dis)ordered*, 24).

Transgenderism – eerie link to Transubstantiation

The argument is similar. Transgender ideology claims that a person’s biological characteristics, every outward appearance can be male, but their true essence or substance can be female. In Catholicism, the power of the priests changes the substance of the bread and wine into Jesus’ body and blood, but the accidents, i.e. outward appearance of bread and wine remain. (I add, but think Esget implies: that in transgenderism the individual’s decision does it.) (Esget, *(Dis)ordered*, 29).

Psychology – The truth has finally outed

We subjectively interpret our lives and world with psychology more than the “objective criteria of creation (science) and the Creator (theology). It is imperative to ground personal, family, and church life in the primary relationship between the Maker and the made (*the vertical more than the horizontal*). The problems we label psychological are more properly understood as stemming from the cosmic problem of corruption. God’s Word calls this ‘the fear of death,’...” – “... human anxiety, mental illness, and grasping for power and possessions all originate in what the Bible calls ‘the fear of death,’ which hold humans in bondage (Hebrews 2:15)” (Esget, *(Dis)ordered*, 29-30; 33). (*We ain’t at the year 2525 but Zager and Evans are right. “Everything you think, do and say/ Is in the pill you took today.”*)

Internet Preaching –

“Some pastors have left congregations to move into full-time video ministry.... While their teaching may be scriptural, their message has subtly shifted from the Word to the icon (not the face of Christ but the face of the video preacher). While self-preaching, the face of the preacher becomes the message, potentially wreaking havoc on the messenger’s soul in the process.... Avoid self-preachers and disincarnate churches where one cannot have a personal relationship with the pastor” (Esget, *(Dis)ordered*, 72). (*N.B. He warns both the preacher and hearer.*)

Christian Education – saying too much

The author is in favor of Christian Day schools. He says because often the day schools are in parts of town where property is expensive, it means a long commute. Then says: “These parents trade a serious Christian upbringing for a comfortable, luxurious dwelling at a lower cost. It seems like a lifestyle choice, but only later, after seeing the effects, did I fully realize it is sin” (Esget, *(Dis)ordered*, 111). (*We homeschooled till high school and then public high school after that. The Lutheran high school being operated by Lutherans but not Lutheran. Still, you know which pig hit with the rock by the one that squeals. Oink. Oink.*)

Esget for Synodical President in 2026! Meanwhile, give his book a decent binding.

Faith: New Generation is Looking Back

By Uwe Stemon-Nerro

Washington, April 18, **2001** (UPI) - - A new generation of worshipers is confounding pastors and church musicians alike. No sooner had the got used to sometimes nerve-wrecking new forms of worship smacking of trivial entertainment, than a youthful thirst for tradition seems to be the liturgical aroma of the day.

Meet the Millennials who are succeeding the Baby Boomers and the GenExers. The Millennials are young people born between 1981 and 2000. They are called that way because they will presumably live most of their lives in the new millennium, explained Robert Olsavicky, an organist and graduate student at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. Olsavicky has become a specialist of the roller coaster changes in worship preferences, changes that parallel developments in society at large. According to Olsavicky, today’s young Christians often desire the exact opposite of what the Rev. Rick Warren, a Californian church growth promoter, preaches. Warren shouts at fellow pastors, “Why are you still using that pipe organ people hate?”

What is happening in the religion of teenagers is nothing short of astounding, wrote Robert Webber in the current issue of *Reformed Worship*, a theological journal. They want to return to a more stable time, a period of tradition. Not the tradition of the fifties, but of a much earlier time, the tradition of the old, very old time. Webber is director of the Institute of Worship Studies at Northern Baptist Seminary in Lombard, Ill. He sees in a tradition emerging among Millennials, Generation X and some Boomers a tradition of classical Christianity filtered through the grid of postmodern, post-Christian, neo-pagan society.

Olsavicky, who is also the musical director of First United Methodist Church in Butler, Pa., concurred: They are looking back to the Reformation era.

In his article, Webber quoted a youth director: What appeals to this new generation is the cathedral and the stained-glass window. Take the pews out, let them sit on the floor, burn incense, have Scripture readings, lots of music, chants even, and have communion, and they say “Wow, this is me.” Webber reminded his readers that sociologist Francis Fukuyama called the period between 1960 and 1990 the great disruption, a shift from modernity to postmodernity. Webber added, “The Millennials appear to be the first generation of people coming out on the other side of the crisis.”

This is not to say that the post-sixties onslaught against tradition is over. There is church growth promoter Jeffrey Patton who tells congregations, “If you do not introduce contemporary service your church will be vacant, with an organ for sale,” said Olsavicky. And Rick Warren laughs at references to kings, crowns and diadems in our old hymns. Yet the Promise Keepers sing them. Rick laughs at the antiquated lyrics. But just try to replace “How great thou art” with “How great you are,” and you destroy the poetry.

Of course, the Millennials sing, “How great thou art.” And they would not dream of attending communion services administering potato chips and soda pop, as happened in some progressive churches in recent American history. They receive hosts and wine instead.

Conflicting field reports emerge from America=s worship war, however. In the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, for example, the church growth movement is still throwing overboard this orthodox denomination=s liturgical tradition.

At the same time, this correspondent has encountered in the Washington area young and energetic LCMS members passionately promoting a return to old, high forms of liturgy and the Lutheran confessions.

True, the LCMS church growth faction is busy planting new congregations, but so is the young liturgical and confessional wing. Wherever you look, you find divergent trends literally side by side, in the Church as in society at large. In fact, worship trends often mirror society.

The shortage of organists is a case in point. ASometimes we wonder if there will be enough organists to fill the demand,@ said Prof. John Ferguson of St. Olaf College Northfield, Minn. But this seems to be chiefly a problem of secular schools training concert organists, for whom there are not too many jobs. At the same time, though, Ferguson=s organ class of 20 undergraduate students is full. Ann Lebowski, who chairs the church music department at Duquesne University, reports the same about her school. But then both schools are church-related; St. Olaf is Lutheran, Duquesne, Catholic. They prepare students for music ministry in congregational life B in other words, for paying jobs, something secular schools cannot do.

And these are increasingly well-paying jobs, according to Ferguson. AOne of our problems in the past was that churches used to treat organist very badly. They underpaid them. In the hinterland most organists were women, who got married and had children. The assumption was that they didn=t need much

money. But then women entered the workforce. They stopped becoming organists because better-paying jobs became available.

As society changed, so did this profession. AChurches were finding it more and more difficult to hire good organists, so the salaries went up.@ Two churches in Minneapolis pay their organists more than \$100,000 per year. Said Ferguson: AOne of my former students, who only has a bachelor=s degree, was offered \$38,000 plus a house in Indiana. An entry-level instructor with a Ph.D. at St. Olaf does not earn that much.@ And now guess who attends Ferguson=s classes? ATwo thirds of my students are men. It used to be exactly the other way around,@ he told United Press International Wednesday.

It is one of the most impressive aspects of worship in America that, with the anti-historical follies of the post-sixties era still present, it seems to be straightening itself out. To be sure, organs still get ripped out, but there is an Organ Clearing House in Lexington, Mass., that rescues, stores and offers these instruments to other churches. Many churches consider replacing their old pipe organs with electronic ones. But there is Richard G. Pelland of Derry, N.H., shouting at them via the Internet: "Don't do it! Don't replace the King of the instruments with an appliance! I'll repair it for you. It will probably cost you less than a new electronic machine, which won't last you longer than 20 years. A pipe organ can live for centuries."

True, like other movements in the society, developments in church are never clear-cut. Even in Robert Olsavicky's First United Methodist Church in Butler there are some services with contemporary bands, and the pastor is using skits, drama, video clips, charts and pointers to make a homiletic point.

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December 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2

3	4 JR. CONFIRMATION 5:30 PM	5	6 Advent Vespers 7:30	7	8	9
10	11 JR. CONFIRMATION 5:30 PM	12	13 Advent Vespers 7:30	14	15	16
17	18 JR. CONFIRMATION 5:30 PM	19	20	21	22	23
24	25 CHRISTMAS DAY FESTIVAL SERVICE 10:00 AM	26	27	28	29	30
31						
	NOON PARTY LIKE IT'S 1999!					

January 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7 PR. KEISTMAN EPIPHANY PAGEANT & SOUP AFTER SERVICE	8	9	10	11	12	13
14 PR. KEISTMAN	15	16 ELDERS MEETING 7 PM	17	18	19	20
21 PR. ABBOTT	22	23 VOTERS MEETING 7 PM	24	25	26	27
28 SEMINARIAN JOSH KILLIAN, <u>NO COMMUNION</u>	29	30	31			