

FORUM LETTER

Volume 48 Number 7

July 2019

Useful reminders for the spiritual life

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Be watchful and diligent in God's service, and often think over why you chose to serve Christ in the first place. Was it not that you might live for God and become a spiritual person? Be fervent, then, in going forward. ... There is one thing that keeps many people from gaining ground and from fervently striving to improve: the dread of difficulty, or more accurately, the effort of the struggle. Those people progress most in virtue—truly, they progress beyond all others—who make a valiant effort to overcome the things that are most troublesome to them, that work most against them. ... But not everyone has the same amount to overcome and cleanse. Nevertheless, a person striving diligently to excel will make greater progress—even if he has more to overcome—than will another who is more even-tempered but less keen for virtues.

Two things especially lead to great improvement: the will to drag yourself from the things that will naturally harm you and the desire to pursue the good things that you need the most. You should also watch out for those things that irritate you in other people; when you see them in yourself, get rid of them. Turn everything to your advantage. If you see or hear good examples, imitate them. If you think something is reprehensible, be careful that you do not do the same thing; if you have done it, try to correct yourself quickly. As you watch others, so do they watch you. How joyful and sweet it is to see fervent and devout friends living together agreeably and being well-disciplined. How sad it is—and what a burden!—to see people stumbling along in confusion, not practicing their own vocation. How harmful it is for those same people to neglect the purpose of their calling and to shift their attention to affairs that are none of their concern. —Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ: A Timeless Classic for Contemporary Readers*, trans. and ed. by William C. Creasy (Ave Maria Press, 1989); from Book 1, "Useful Reminders for the Spiritual Life," p. 60.

FORUM LETTER is published monthly by the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau (www.alpb.org) with LUTHERAN FORUM, a quarterly journal, in a combined subscription for \$28.45 (U.S.) a year, \$51.95 (U.S.) for two years, in the United States and Canada. Retirees and students, \$23.00 a year. Add \$8.00 per year for Canadian, \$12.00 for overseas delivery. Write to the Subscription Office for special rates for groups. Single copy, \$2.50.

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POSTMASTER: Send changes of address to P. O. Box 327, Delhi, NY 13753-0327.

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ISSN 0046-4732

Ecumenical tangles



As most *Forum Letter* readers will probably recall, I was baptized, raised and ordained in what is now the United Methodist Church. My first appointment as a United Methodist pastor was to a congregation in the East Bay of Northern California which, a couple of years prior to my coming, had entered into a "joint use agreement" with an Episcopal mission start. This was a boon to both congregations. The church building, constructed back in the 1960s, could comfortably seat over 250 people, but the Methodist congregation had fallen on hard times and dwindled dramatically so that Sun-

day attendance seldom exceeded 90 or so, and the rental income from the Episcopalians was a financial lifeline. The Episcopal congregation was a relatively newly organized congregation that had been casting about for a proper place to worship, and they brought not only their rent but a lovely little tracker pipe organ. Everybody was happy.

I was happy, too, because since the Episcopalians had services at 8 and 9:30 (not that they needed two services, but they had them anyway), and the Methodist service was at 11, I could go to church as a worshiper. I generally did so, at least until I got married, and so became familiar with the Episcopal liturgy. This has come in handy during my current sojourn with Episcopalians.

Unauthorized and illicit

The vicar at the Episcopal church (that's what they call the pastor when it's a mission congregation; technically the bishop is the pastor, and the priest is his vicar) was not much older than I, and we hit it off well. We once in a while did joint services with our two congregations. There were occasions when he asked me to fill in for him when he had to be away, and he had no problem with me presiding at the Eucharist. This was, to be sure, absolutely unauthorized and illicit, but those were heady ecumenical days and it didn't really occur to either of us that it was anyone else's business (though that was probably a riskier stance for him than for me).

Now, forty years later, it appears that our past ecclesiastical sins are about to be wiped away. The Episcopal Church and the United Methodist Church are in the final stages of declaring themselves to be in full communion with one another. This should be of some interest to ELCA Lutherans, who are already in full communion with both churches. When I was a kid, we'd visit my cousin, and he would have other cousins who were not actually related to me at all. I guess ecumenical relationships are a little bit like that. We're in full communion with the Methodists and the Episcopalians, but they're not in full communion with each other. Kind of strange, but families are like that. To make matters even more confusing, the Moravian Church is in full communion with all three bodies (ELCA, UMC, TEC).

About time

Perhaps one could say of this about-to-become relationship that it's about time. Historically speaking, Episcopalians and Methodists have a closer relationship than either of them have with Lutherans or Moravians. And in fact Methodist/Episcopal bilateral dialogues began way back in the 1950s, before such things were even fashionable. These talks were set aside when both groups joined the ill-fated Consultation on Church Union, but after that attempt at a wider unity fizzled, the bilateral approach was taken up again; the two churches have now been in serious conversation since 2000. They have had a relationship of "interim Eucharistic sharing" since 2006. The proposal for full communion (entitled "A Gift to the World: Co-Laborers for the Healing of Brokenness"; kind of makes the ELCA/TEC's "Called to Common Mission" look elegant, doesn't it?) is expected to come to the UMC General Conference in 2020, and the Episcopal General Convention in 2021.

With such a long courtship, one would expect that the consummation of the relationship would be relatively easy, and in some ways that is true. The role of bishops, such a problem in bringing about full communion between Episcopalians and Lutherans, is much less contentious in this case. There are differences, to be sure, between the role of bishops in the two churches and how they are elected, but they are relatively minor, more differences of polity than ecclesiology.

A more difficult issue, at least on the ground, might be the very different styles of worship—an issue not addressed at all in "A Gift to the World." While there are United Methodists who are more liturgical than a lot of Lutherans (I was one), they are a small minority. The UMC has a perfectly respectable liturgy, but good luck finding a congregation that actually uses it. Then there's the whole grape juice thing.

Interchangeability and reciprocity

Still, as we all know, these full communion agreements generally deal with things as they ought to be rather than things as they are. The proposal doesn't require the average congregation to change much of anything. It focuses on commonalities in understanding ministry (both ordained and lay), and concludes that "the threefold ministry of

Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons in historic succession will be the future pattern of the one ordained ministry shared corporately within the two Churches in full communion." It provides for mutual recognition of the ordained of both churches, authorizing service of the clergy of each in the congregations of the other — "full interchangeability and reciprocity of all United Methodist elders in full connection as priests and all United Methodist deacons in full connection as deacons in the Episcopal Church without any further ordination or re-ordination or supplemental ordination whatsoever, subject always to canonically or constitutionally approved invitation." It works in the other direction as well.

The proposal also has a provision like that in "Called to Common Mission" pledging that all future ordinations or consecrations (the two churches use different words here) of bishops will include the participation of bishops from the other church body (or, interestingly, from the ELCA or Moravian churches, since both are in full communion with both the UMC and Episcopal Church).

All of this is well and good, and cause for rejoicing. On a personal level, I'm relieved that my and my colleague's acts of ecclesiastical disobedience back in the 1970s may now be legitimized (not that I've lost any sleep over this, understand). It also relieves my conscience in a more immediate way. When I was applying to be licensed to serve in the Episcopal Diocese of Northern California so that I could help out at my now congregation, I wondered whether "Called to Common Mission" would allow the Episcopalians to accept an ELCA pastor who actually was ordained in the United Methodist Church. I decided the best course was "don't ask, don't tell."

Stormy weather ahead

The cloud on the horizon is the potential break-up of the United Methodist Church. This is an ecumenical dilemma that is not much talked about, but it will likely come up eventually. Indeed, nearly two years ago the independent Episcopal magazine *The Living Church* raised the issue, in an article entitled "Obstacles to Full Communion." There was a time when such obstacles might have been theological or liturgical, but now it's mostly about sex.

Consider the possibilities. As we discussed in the last issue ["Methodists untied," *FL* June 2019],

the United Methodists have stood fast on their official traditionalist position on homosexuality. They still officially teach that homosexual practice is incompatible with Christianity, that sexually active gay persons may not serve as pastors, and that pastors may not preside at same-sex marriages. That is decidedly not the official position of the Episcopal Church. Would liberal Episcopalians oppose declaring full communion with the UMC as a way of expressing their disdain for the Methodist failure to follow the lead of the rest of mainline Protestantism in accepting gay pastors and gay marriage?

Or, conversely, would the United Methodist General Conference, increasingly influenced by African delegates, balk at declaring full communion with what is arguably the most liberal of denominations on sexuality? Would those African delegates perhaps act in solidarity with their Anglican colleagues in Africa, who have been among the sharpest critics within the Anglican communion of the directions of the Episcopal church?

A tangled mess

Even if such opposition on either side did not materialize, will there even be a United Methodist Church by the time the Episcopal General Convention meets in 2021? If the UMC splits into two or three different institutional manifestations, what does that mean for considering a full communion agreement? Would the Episcopalians (and for that matter, the ELCA and the Moravians) now be in full communion with both or all of the UMC successors? Or would full communion be a dead letter?

And what of those, like the ELCA, who are already in full communion with the United Methodists? Will there be a move to reconsider that agreement? The ELCA/UMC pact was approved in 2009, by the same churchwide assembly which approved the sexuality changes. I don't recall that the UMC's more conservative stance was raised at that time as an issue that might impede communion, but the revisionist voices in the ELCA have grown ever louder and more powerful. It would not be a big surprise if some started agitating for a withdrawal from full communion as a way of "punishing" the Methodist conservatives who have continued to resist the revisionist forces in the UMC.

What a tangled mess, so completely unforeseen by those who, a century ago, launched what

came to be known as the ecumenical movement! "A Gift to the World" closes, logically and rather brilliantly, by quoting a hymn by that great Anglican/Methodist poet Charles Wesley: "Partakers of the Savior's grace,/ the same in mind and heart,/ nor

joy, nor grief, nor time, nor place,/ nor life, nor death can part." Given the current strife within and among churches, the words ring strangely hollow.

—by Richard O. Johnson, editor

Return to Milwaukee



When the ELCA churchwide assembly convenes in Milwaukee August 5, it will be the second time that city has hosted the event (the previous one was in 2003), making Milwaukee only the third city to win the privilege of welcoming the ELCA more than once. (The others, if you were wondering, are Orlando, three times, and Minneapolis, twice.) That assembly sixteen years ago was dubbed by *Forum Letter* "the Mark Hanson Show." Hanson had been elected presiding bishop two years earlier, and he showed himself to be very much in charge in Milwaukee, for good or for ill (and there was some of each).

That Milwaukee assembly probably won't go down in history as one of the defining moments of the ELCA. An evangelism plan was adopted, but it apparently didn't have much success; ELCA membership has declined by about 30% over those sixteen years. A "strategic plan" was adopted, which was really a way to streamline the churchwide operation in the face of unsustainable deficits. As was true of all ELCA assemblies in that era, there was a lot of talk about sex, which mostly amounted to postponing decisions. No, it wasn't a high point in ELCA history.

A very different church

Sixteen years later, it is a very different church in so many ways. I doubt we'll be calling this assembly "the Elizabeth Eaton show," though the presiding bishop will indeed be the star. She has proven to be an effective and responsible leader, with little of the need for control often exhibited by her predecessor. Despite an occasional misstep, she continues to be a popular and inspirational presiding bishop. There will be an election this year, and it would be shocking if she were not re-elected handily, maybe even on the first ballot.

More interesting will be the election for ELCA secretary. Bp. Chris Boerger has held the post

for six years. I haven't heard any formal announcement of his retirement, but his name does not appear in the list of "possible nominees for secretary." This list, with accompanying biographical information, is the way the churchwide planners try to do something of an end run around the ecclesiastical ballot required by the constitution. Voting members were "asked to identify up to three individuals who they believed could be possible candidates" and those people were then invited to submit biographical information. The assembly material emphasizes, though, that these names "may or may not appear on the ecclesiastical ballot" and that additional names may appear. Still, "the Spirit will be present" and this odd process "allows preparation while also being open to how the Spirit may move." I know we're all relieved.

Anyway, Boerger's name does not appear on the list, and he is of an age where he's probably ready to retire. Either that, or nobody thought to suggest his name. The list includes fourteen names, eight pastors (including one bishop), one deacon, and five lay people. I'm familiar with only four of them, but that doesn't mean much. In an assembly that is predominately laity and likely with a large majority who have never been to a churchwide assembly before, most voting members will know fewer of these names than I do, so what might happen is totally unpredictable. It will all hang on which seven get enough votes on the second ballot to "make the cut" to address the assembly. Then it will depend on how well they come across.

Uninformed prediction

My completely uninformed prediction is that one who will make the cut is the deacon, Sue Rothmeyer of Chicago. She is on staff at Immanuel Lutheran Church in the Windy City, and she has an impressive resume. More important in this context is that she's the only woman among the fourteen

“possible nominees.” And the fact that she’s a deacon, at a time when the ELCA is still trying to sort out what it actually thinks a deacon is, and when deacons (and those who held the other offices that only recently got folded into the newly defined diaconate) have been a sort of forgotten minority in the church – not oppressed, exactly, but regarded as neither fish nor fowl in terms of ecclesiastical status – well, it’s a big plus. So I’d expect her to get a lot of votes for those reasons alone.

The bishop is Matthew Riegel, currently serving the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod. Being the only bishop on the list might mean he’ll get some significant support, though why one would want to give up the bishop’s miter for the office of secretary is beyond me. If he thinks bishops have headaches, I’d guess the secretary has even more. Even worse, you’d have to work at Higgins Road. Seriously, though, Riegel is well respected and is known to be among the more orthodox of the bishops. A background in campus ministry would serve him well in dealing with Higgins Road bureaucrats.

Paul Baglyos appears to be the only “possible nominee” with a PhD, which would be totally useless in the Office of the Secretary. But he’s currently the Candidacy and Leadership Manager for Regions 7 and 8, and was before that Region 3 Coordinator, which gives him experience both with the churchwide organization and the candidacy process, both useful in a prospective secretary. It also gives him name recognition across a fairly wide swath of Lutheranism. Like Riegel, he has some campus ministry experience on his resume.

Most of the lay people on the list are employed with various non-profits, church or secular. Most have been active in a variety of church organizations; a couple of them are current or past synodical officers. The other pastors are mostly serving parishes, though one is a synod staff member.

So it will be an interesting election to watch; the ELCA Secretary is an influential officer with a magisterial role. It is the Secretary who interprets the constitution and who tells synods how they have to interpret their constitutions. It is thus a powerful position. And, don’t forget, other names could appear on the ballot. When the Spirit is present, you just never can tell.

Social statement and a commitment

There will be other issues debated and determined. The biggest will be the proposed social statement “Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Lutheran Call to Action.” It was originally supposed to be a statement on “women and justice,” but somehow the title shifted a bit. Eileen Smith offered a lengthy evaluation of the first draft of this statement in *Forum Letter* (“Women and justice: this draft falls short,” *FL* June 2018), concluding that, while there is much to commend in the statement, it is ultimately unsatisfactory. But *Forum Letter’s* track record in getting the churchwide assembly to make substantive changes in social statements isn’t that great, so you can probably assume that the statement as it now stands (and it is so long that I haven’t had time to compare it section by section with the first draft, other than to see that the word “sexism” got stuck into the title in place of “women”; this speaks volumes about the direction the statement has taken).

The other major statement on the agenda, “A Declaration of Inter-Religious Commitment,” was also reviewed, mostly negatively, by *Forum Letter* (“Inter-religious policy: the ELCA proposal,” *FL* April 2018). I’m happy to say that some of our specific objections have been addressed, and the final proposal is therefore an improvement. It still, in my view, falls short of what it might have been. It is likely to engender less debate than “Faith, Sexism, and Justice” because it’s not as, well, sexy. My prediction is that it will pass, with only minor changes, by at least an 85% majority.

There will be other things on the agenda: daily worship, celebrations of various kinds, lots of elections for positions of which voting members know little, between candidates of whom they know less. That’s how it works. Perhaps the best we can expect is something like *Forum Letter’s* evaluation of that earlier Milwaukee assembly: “It was not a disaster, but it will not qualify for greatness either.”

[As at the past several assemblies, we expect that *Forum Letter* will be present, offering real time commentary on what is going on. You can access that at “Forum Online” at www.alpb.org. Paul Sauer will report on the LCMS convention, though the rules there may make it impossible for real time commentary. But if we find a way around that, you can also check it out at alpb.org.]

– by Richard O. Johnson, editor

This isn't the gig: a response to Staneck

By Mark Brown



In a recent *Lutheran Forum* article ["Pastoral Care: This is the Gig," *Lutheran Forum*, Spring 2019], Pr. Matthew Staneck shared a story that was familiar to me, but maybe with a wider application. Staneck was being called to do a funeral for a man who he knew was an active member and attender at another church. I have likewise called the pastors of folks like this and asked how exactly funerals work in their fellowship, and why was this family calling me. The answers I have collected boil down to two things.

If they are at all aware, they attempt to say "we aren't good at that type of thing and people know it. You guys with your liturgy are much better at these things and know how to do it right." If they are unaware, they tell the truth, which is some version of "we assign funerals to the intern-doofus from Parochial Bible College who usually babysits the youth group, because funerals just aren't on brand for us, and most of our people know that and just call you guys." I'll leave to your imagination the rough percentages of aware and unaware.

The wider application is not just these folks who were good enough to worship at the local Shake Shack, but not good enough for the pastor to spend time with and bury, but also their cousins: Mr. Life-Long-Lutheran, Mrs. Mom-was-a-member, and Ms. The-Funeral-Home-Director-gave-me-your-name. At least twice a year I am confronted with someone who is a lifelong Lutheran, yet the last time anyone can remember them being even at Christmas Eve Service is in the Reagan administration. How do you respond to these requests?

That's the gig

Like Pr. Staneck, my first response as a young pastor was to ask the grizzled veterans, who generally said something akin to "that's the gig." And so you dump 10 hours and probably your Saturday as well to give these people a modicum of respect. And you repeat the line that "at least you had a chance to share the gospel." After a few of these, those old canards just didn't cut it for me. Maybe at some time in the murky past, when everyone had a church they could name, it was the right

call. Maybe it really was a liminal moment and people would reconnect through the kindness of the minister and the congregation shown in such a time. But I never knew that time. All I have known is the feeling of standing up here and saying what I could honestly say, usually not much more than "Mr. Life-Long-Lutheran was baptized." Indeed, the very fact of my burying Mr. Life-Long-Lutheran with everyone knowing it is a big joke, says more than any message of the gospel I could bring. My act of granting a Christian burial to this person was confirming people in their sin and error much more than any five minute call to the cross. I have had more people join the church from the funeral I rejected than from any of these "it's the gig" funerals.

I don't get to that point without some angst. As much as I take pride in being a contrarian curmudgeon, both going contrary to received wisdom and being "not nice" are against my midwestern rearing. So I turned to an older source to see if this type of situation was ever addressed before the great civic religion embrace. Fortunately, there is a new translation of C. F. W. Walther's *Pastoral Theology* [Concordia Publishing House, 2017]. This is less a formal unitary work than a collection of responses to letters from early frontier pastors. In article 37 Walther addresses "The Obligation of the Preacher Regarding Burial." I found in Walther exactly what I often find so useful in him. He stands at a time where he feels the pressures of the onrushing civic religion, he knows how the state churches did things, and he also knows an older practice. Walther is able to address modern pastoral problems, with a fresh supply of solid advice.

Honorable solemn, less solemn, dishonorable

In this case Walther quotes someone he names Deyling from the Saxon General Articles of 1580, presumably Salomon Deyling, Professor of Theology and Superintendent of Leipzig. Deyling divided burials into three types: honorable solemn, honorable less solemn, and dishonorable—to be decided at the discretion of the minister. The honorable solemn case would be the full Christian funeral mass for the member in good standing. This good

standing, Deyling goes out of his way to say, has nothing to do with economics. The trouble at the time for Deyling was people seeking quickie burials of even saints to avoid any charges. The minister needed to offer the honorable ceremonies for rich and poor members in good standing alike.

The honorable less solemn burial would, in the modern frame, be a simple graveside committal service. Allowable reasons for this included “poverty, pestilential air or danger of contagion, or death by suicide or by reason of melancholy. ... [N]either excluded would be children who die without baptism, women who die in the six weeks after childbirth [a reference to post-partum depression, or simply effects of birth?], neither those who die in an accident, are murdered or found dead.” In this you can see the mix of practical and theological reasons.

The last category of dishonorable would have been a simple burial “either outside a Christian cemetery or in a special place within one by a regular gravedigger.” It might also include those specifically set aside as outside of the Christian burial: “those convicted of a capital crime and die unrepentant, heretics, heathens, Muslims, Jews and even Socinians. ... Papist and Reformed are not to be treated in this way.” This is all interesting and probably expected, but then Deyling adds, “For it is established by holy and ancient canons that for one ‘with whom we did not maintain fellowship in life, we also do not retain fellowship when he is dead ... [so] included here are manifest despisers of the word and sacraments.” If you know your *Small Catechism*, that is commandment three.

Walther’s first words after this lengthy quote from Deyling (who himself is quoting ancient canons) is: “Some preachers believe they must grant the request to hold a funeral sermon for the deceased in every case, since this would certainly present an opportunity to preach God’s Word; however, they do not bear in mind that a burial with Christian rites is a privilege only for those of whom one can believe

in love that they fell asleep in the Lord, and that despisers of the divine Word who remained such until their deaths should not be shown this last honor according to God’s Word.”

That’s not the gig

Walther’s advice on the cusp of the civic religion’s “every American is a Christian” is to just say no. It is not the gig to bury everyone. It is not the gig to speak words of comfort when there is no good reason to believe that they are called for. Walther goes so far as to say that such a minister “not only commits a self-contradiction but also in general does not achieve his goal, but instead the exact opposite: instead of awakening repentance, he effects only bitterness or the people are so dull that they are still content to have provided one who departed as a non-Christian with a Christian honorable burial.”

Some of us in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod get all upset and cry unionism when at a terrible civic moment others of us join together in a prayer service with non-Christians. Arguably those moments are less actual prayer service than simply akin to standing with your hand over your heart for the anthem at the baseball game. They are pure moments of civic religion which, by their inclusion of everyone, are a joint reiteration of the natural law: what was done here was wrong by any standing. And the law belongs to everyone. In that law, there would be no unionism. But all of us are probably guilty of saying yes to a funeral when we should not. All of us have taken the gig which ends up being a mockery of the Christian funeral. And many of us probably have felt exactly that self-contradiction afterwards. In the midst of the dull “thanks for doing this,” we know that we have been united with something wrong.

Mark Brown is pastor of St. Mark Lutheran Church (LCMS) in West Henrietta, NY.

Omnium gatherum



Athanasian Creed • On an ELCA clergy Facebook page, someone asked, on Trinity Sunday, who had used the Athanasian Creed in worship that day. Let me preface this by

saying that I think it is meet, right and salutary to expose a congregation to the *Quicumque vult*, and I did so sometimes on Trinity Sunday but not always. In response to the question, a small handful replied

in the affirmative. A good number politely said no, though several of them said they had referred to it in their sermon or in some other way. A disturbing number made rather sharp comments, such as these samples: "No way." "Forbidden." "Never ever." "Ain't nobody got time for that." "Nope and I suggested that the congregation thank me for not doing so." "I would rather poke my eyes out with hot sticks." "It was Trinity Sunday? We're using the narrative lectionary which doesn't do Holy Trinity Sunday." "The what?" But the responses that really upset me were those like this: "We actually don't usually use a traditional creed so using the apostles creed was our special selection for trinity" [sic]. "No creed at all actually." Seems to me that "not using a traditional creed" and "no creed at all" are pretty much the same thing, and appalling from Lutheran pastors. But maybe even worse was this one: "No but I did read the first paragraph of the Wikipedia definition of the Holy Trinity." Have we really reached the point where Wikipedia is one of our confessions? But out of curiosity, I looked up said Wikipedia article. The first paragraph isn't actually heretical, far as I can see in a quick reading, but it's not really any clearer than the Athanasian Creed. A couple of years ago my congregation did a Lenten series on the creeds, and it fell to me to teach on the *Quincunque vult*. After the session, one woman came to me. "I read the Athanasian Creed this week," she said, "and I hated it. But now that you've explained it, I think it's my favorite creed." I wouldn't go that far, but it does demonstrate that a clear explanation of a difficult text goes a long way. Unfortunately, it would seem that such a clear explanation is beyond a lot of ELCA pastors. Especially those for whom the

Apostles' Creed is a "special selection for trinity."

Xenophobia alive and well • ELCA clergy Facebook pages aren't the only ones that are discouraging. Somebody recently posted a poll on a Facebook page dedicated to my local community, asking whether American children should be required to learn Arabic numerals. As I report this, 97 had voted "yes" and 245 had voted "no." Someone suggested, appropriately, that all those who voted no ought to go back to elementary school and start over.

It's in the stars • My wife and I won a lottery for some tickets to attend the Sacramento session of PBS's "Antique Road Show." I took a copy of a 1522 pamphlet of a Luther sermon. The appraiser thought it quite interesting and unusual. "The good news," he said, "is that it is authentic. The bad news is that it is theology. Not much of a market for it. Now if it had been something by Copernicus . . ."

A correction • In the May issue, I referred to a sermon that had been posted "on the Lutheran CORE website." That was incorrect. A link to the sermon was posted on a closed Lutheran CORE Facebook page, which of course means that it was not officially or unofficially endorsed by Lutheran CORE. I apologize for the misstatement.

An apology • You're likely receiving this issue a tad late. Forces conspired against me: a wedding in Hawaii, the end of the quarter at Fuller Seminary with a whole pile of papers and exams to read, etc. We'll strive for better next time. — roj

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