

FORUM LETTER

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Inside this issue:

Missouri's horse race 4

Omnium gatherum 8

The peace and function of suffering



How wonderful it is, is it not, that literally only Christianity has taught us the true peace and function of suffering. The Stoics tried the hopeless little game of denying its objective reality, or of declaring it a good in itself (which it never is), and the Pessimists attempted to revel in it, as a food to their melancholy, and as something that can no more be transformed than it can be avoided or explained. But Christ came, and he did not really explain it; He did far more, He met it, willed it, transformed it, and He taught us how to do all this, or rather He Himself does it within us, if we do not hinder the all-healing hands. —Baron Friedrich von Hügel, *Selected Letters* (Bernard Holland, ed., 1927)

Blue ribbon musings



Among the burning issues on the agenda of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod at its convention this July will be consideration of a host of recommendations from the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synodical Structure and Governance (BRTFSSG). Their charge was to propose ways to streamline the official structure of the LCMS, which is still functioning (in a manner of speaking) with its original and somewhat arcane 19th century constitution. Such topics as who should be eligible to vote in convention, whether there should be more or fewer districts and circuits, whether large congregations deserve proportional representation or whether such an idea flies in the face of the doctrine of the Church, how often the synod should meet and how much authority the president should have, and a host of related topics will all come up for some discussion. Probably a lot of discussion. Even the official name of our beloved synod is up for grabs.

Singing to the soul of Missouri

Ausländer might wonder what it is about such proposals that could possibly elicit an intense emotional reaction from anyone. But such wondering would only betray insensitivity to how all things technical and prosaic can sing to the embattled soul of the LCMS. Face it, this is no red or yellow ribbon task force we're talking about, and it is, after all, addressing structure and governance. All we need is a rousing speech from Dr. Braveheart or Rev. Aragorn and we'll draw our swords and die defending our section of Handbook Hill.

While the pure poetry of BRTFSSG and technical matters of structure and governance might be lost on the Philistines, the emotional nature of the inevitable debate in the LCMS is something not only defensible but good. It represents not some quirky, Missouri-ish penchant for arguments, but a heartfelt

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sense of anguish, on both sides (if clear sides there be) of the discussion.

Grandfather's church?

The anguish is about nothing less than the difficulty of being the church in the world. Taken as a whole, the recommendations address the real issue of whether or not this is your grandfather's church, to use President Kieschnick's adaptation of an Oldsmobile advertising slogan.

In defense of my thesis I will not address any specific recommendation of the BRTFSSG (all may genuflect) or even take sides in the general battle of whether or not the LCMS is your grandfather's church. I will merely defend the counterintuitive position that the visceral, emotional, and combat-inspiring reactions sure to be displayed by both sides are justified and bring glory to God. The coming bitter arguments actually reflect shared love and tremendous agreement among people who wish desperately for the LCMS to live long and prosper.

As a side note, the presidential election, of course, plays into this. In broad terms, President Kieschnick leads those who say this is not (or shouldn't be at any rate) your grandfather's church. What worked in the past doesn't work anymore and needs changing. The anti-incumbent side says it not only is your grandfather's church but would be a far cry better off if it acted like it more often. My thesis handily allows me to defend both sides, because, as I said, both sides express the same anguish over the condition of the church in the modern world.

Salvage operation

The LCMS still functions with its original constitution. Some have compared the effort to update it with the effort to salvage an old car; is it more cost effective to keep making repairs or to start from scratch with a new car? Can a 19th century document still be the most effective way to organize a 21st century church?

Some say stick with the tried and true, difficulties and all. Others say get with the times. But whether they defend the old or the new, they do it with a vague sense of a sort of slow-motion desperation about the worsening state of the LCMS.

I think a better analogy to describe the emotional debate about the BRTFSSG recommendations is that of a stately and beautiful Gothic church build-

ing in an urban, changing neighborhood. My vicarage congregation, Messiah on South Grand in St. Louis, is one such church, though the reader can probably picture any number of others. The sanctuary is beautiful—columned, heavy and dark, with deep blue stained glass above the altar. The building's exterior façade facing Tower Grove Park could attract artists to sketch it.

Shaking things up

When I arrived there, my supervisor, the Rev. Brad Beckman, who was only in his second year and who had caused some considerable controversy by shaking things up, pointed out that the congregation had experienced forty consecutive years of gradual membership decline. "Do people really think this will turn around if we do nothing?" he asked rhetorically.

The question, of course, was what to do about those numbers? The usual suspects were trotted out. The church was built back when people walked, so there was no parking lot; this made it hard for visitors, who had to know to park in the park (what a concept) and cross busy South Grand Avenue. It had no narthex to speak of, and now that the chit-chat before and after had become a part of the Sunday liturgy, the congregation came across as unfriendly for not offering a suitable place for it. The restrooms were down a narrow staircase. The remnants of the Sunday school were in a drab, drafty basement. For all its glory in worship, the building lacked utility for any other purpose. I suspected that was by design. But did the design still work or did it contribute to the inevitable decline of the congregation?

To the bitter end

The congregation consisted of some who loved Messiah and would love her to the bitter end, and who, not coincidentally, hated Pastor Beckman for wanting to fundamentally change Messiah. "Hate" is the right word; he actually showed me some of the vicious, anonymous hate mail he got from members (he suspected he knew who they were, but could not prove it) who had left Messiah because of him. In their eyes he was ruining Messiah. It also consisted of some who loved Messiah and would love her to the bitter end and who, not coincidentally, loved Pastor Beckman for also loving

Messiah enough to ruin it in order to save it.

Two images stand out for me. Pastor Beckman knew that I was perhaps less than keen about contemporary worship and asked that I just keep an open mind and a positive attitude about our once-a-month contemporary service led by a praise band. Not an easy assignment, but one I like to think I did pretty well. They plugged in the band on the stone steps, had a screen propped up, the whole schmeer.

I remember looking out from my seat in the chancel and thinking, "Do they really think the church will fill back up if they do this? And even if it does, will it be worth it?" After I left I heard they moved the contemporary service into the gym of the school, which merely confirmed some of my suspicions of the genre. Any "style of worship" that actually works better in a giant shoe-box than in Messiah's beautiful sanctuary represented an aesthetically and theologically suspect phenomenon.

Dancing in the aisle

The other image I retain is of a part-time associate pastor Messiah called while I was there, a middle-aged white man who had come back from the foreign mission field and was in St. Louis for a while. The first service he helped lead, we recessed out as usual to some upbeat song. After we all got to the back this new pastor began clapping to the rhythm and literally dancing back up the aisle trying to get people to clap along with him. He was by no means a natural at this sort of thing, though he was trying hard to look like it, so he looked ridiculous and every bit the middle-aged, middle-class, awkward white cross-cultural wannabe that he was. Nobody joined him and most politely looked away out of a sense of being embarrassed for him, but once he had started, what could he do? I really felt for him. It was pathetic in the best sense of the word. Did he really think the members of Messiah were going to start dancing in the aisle? And even if they did, would that really be a good thing in his eyes?

The thing is, I honestly think the people who were on opposite sides of the Pastor Beckman issue (full disclosure: I liked Pastor Beckman and we respected each other and got along well despite our differences on contemporary worship) and were willing to make fools of themselves for the sake of his vision of Messiah or write bitter letters against his vision of Messiah were actually peas in a pod.

The empty pews hurt them. They wanted what could not be, but only disagreed about whether to cling to the remnant or become something else.

In that way they were like two adult siblings disagreeing about whether their dying grandfather should go through another round of chemo or simply enjoy what little time he had left. Both sides can make a good case. Both sides are motivated by love for grandpa. But never will the argument between them be more heated and severe than when they're arguing about which kind of death is better. It would all be solved if they could just have Grandpa back.

Never be the same

The LCMS has gone through a tremendous number of years of gradual decline – probably about 40 or so. President Kieschnick is one to shake things up (did I mention Pastor Beckman was from Texas?). He is genuinely hated in some quarters. He is revered in others. But does he really think these task force recommendations or *Ablaze!* or anything else will turn the tide? Is it better to be what we are and dwindle or be something else and perhaps flourish? People taking opposite sides of that question are peas in a pod.

The LCMS in modern America is like that old brick and stone Gothic church on South Grand. It will never be what it was. Never. When I was a vicar, Vietnamese and other Asians were flocking to the area. We had a Bible study for Chinese and other Asian university students. After I left, 10,000 Bosnians moved to the neighborhood. Time to retool again, I guess. The effort to keep Messiah alive as an institution remains a labor of love.

I don't pretend to have an answer; I only have an apt analogy. The LCMS in modern America is like Messiah on South Grand. We have beauty and strength and history that don't match up to the culture. We are dwindling and feeling a slow-motion desperation about it. I think we will be at each other's throats over *Ablaze!* (of which I am no fan), over the BRTFSSG, over President Kieschnick, and a host of other things. That hardly makes me a prophet. I only say that we do terrible things out of love.

I believe in the resurrection

Oh yes, Pastor Beckman showed me one

other thing. The Pastor before him had done a massive presentation to the congregation about the future of Messiah. Page after page of demographics, charts, theological insights. His suggestion? Hold a celebratory funeral for the church. Honor the history, the great things, the beauty, but put an end date on it and say, "These are the years Messiah Lutheran Church lived, and what great years they were." Then celebrate a resurrection the next week with a new church. Don't force the institution beyond its lifespan. Let people look back and wish it were still that way without forcing them to try to make it so. I've seen variations on the same suggestion in other contexts, but I've never seen it implemented. Indeed, the idea never got off the ground at Messiah.

Perhaps the BRTFSSG proposals, if adopted, will streamline the LCMS and turn the tide. Perhaps my great-grandchildren will look at membership charts and wonder why the sag in the late 20th and

early 21st centuries in an otherwise upward trend. But does anyone really think so? Does anyone really think that in the year, say, 2150, a mere 140 years from now, there will even be an LCMS with a clergy roster and by-laws and task forces? Will anyone point to the BRTFSSG as the thing that turned it all around? Or even the thing that made any difference whatsoever?

God is in the business of resurrections, miracles, bringing life out of death, and other unexpected good things. So maybe there is a flavor of hope mixed into the overall melancholy feel of a stately Gothic church sitting mostly empty on a Sunday morning in a changing neighborhood. And maybe there is more to the infighting than mere pettiness and power lust. But I doubt a task force, no matter how blue the ribbon, can recommend anything beyond faithfulness and prayer that will make any difference.

— by Peter Speckhard, associate editor

Missouri's horse race



There are many items on the agenda of the 2010 Synodical Convention of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, set to convene this July in Houston. None is likely to generate more interest, however, than the election of a synodical president. Dr. Gerald Kieschnick, who has served for nine years now, is expected to be willing to serve again. But Missouri being what it is, nobody ever gets elected by acclamation.

The LCMS process is considerably different from the modified "ecclesiastical ballot" used by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. In Missouri, there are actual nominees, five of them, drawn from nominations submitted by congregations to the secretary of the Synod. The secretary is not required to make the results public prior to the publication of the convention handbook, but last time, at least, the names of the nominees were released in late March. The official LCMS policy is that "groups and individuals within and without the Synod are urged to refrain from circularizing the Synod . . . relative to favoritism in nominations for President." That advice seems to be widely ignored.

The last time there was a wide open race was 2001, when President Alvin Barry, who was ex-

pected to be easily re-elected, died after the nominations had been closed. It was in that chaotic situation that Dr. Kieschnick was first elected. He was generally thought to be a moderate, at least by Missouri lights. He was elected narrowly on the final ballot.

Dr. Kieschnick has been re-elected twice, each time on the first ballot, though by majorities of only 53% (2004) and 52% (2007). Note again the difference from ELCA elections, where a supermajority is required for election on early ballots.

The contest shapes up

This year, however, Dr. Kieschnick seems to be in for a bit of a race. There will be five nominees, but the real contest is shaping up to be between the incumbent and Pr. Matthew Harrison, Executive Director of LCMS World Relief and Human Care. Harrison seems to have captured the affection of some elements of Missouri, primarily those that outsiders might describe as "conservatives" (though these terms are even less useful than usual when speaking of the Missouri Synod). To the outsider's eye, one would have to say that Harrison has been "running hard" — publishing books and articles at a remarkable pace, making public statements on everything

from the Haiti earthquake (logically enough, given his job) to the ELCA sexuality decisions (somewhat less logically).

Mysterious Missouri

Dr. Kieschnick is hardly what one would call a raging liberal; his soberly chastising words to the ELCA Churchwide Assembly last year in the wake of their vote on sexuality were courageous and forthright, and he has been a strong advocate against abortion. But for some Missourians, his encouragement of evangelism (through the *Ablaze!* program) has smacked of everything that conservative confessional Missourians find distasteful.

Yet nothing is ever easily parsed in Missouri, and we know self-identified evangelical catholics who line up behind each of these men, and with some enthusiasm. We are probably violating, or encouraging the violation of, the Synod's admonition about "circularizing . . . relative to favoritism," but we're trying not to play favorites in doing so. We've asked two LCMS pastors, both of whom have good evangelical catholic credentials, to give an account of why they support one candidate or the other — and as you will see, they support different candidates. Our thanks to each of them for being willing to come out of the closet (figuratively speaking, of course, and to the extent that they were actually in the closet). — *roj*

An evangelical catholic for Matthew Harrison

by Pr. William Weedon

The question posed to me by the editor was this: Why should evangelical catholics support Pr. Matthew Harrison for synodical president? Okay, so I'm as uncomfortable with the wording as you are. It sounds so . . . political!

Which is truly odd, because one of the reasons I so favor Pr. Harrison is that he is so completely apolitical. I first met him in a class we took under Dr. Norman Nagel, "*Koinonia* and the Church." I'll never forget listening to Harrison deliver on St. Ignatius to us — from the Greek, of course. Since that day many moons ago, I've had the opportunity to hear him speak numerous times, and what always impresses me is how Pr. Harrison doesn't like to talk about Pr. Harrison or synodical

structure, and he's not interested in guiltling people into evangelism. What Pr. Harrison consistently talks about is our Lord and the great things he has done for us and the amazing life into which he has summoned us — a life shaped by mercy. It is mercy, first of all, that we receive from him, but then just as vital, it is mercy that must shape our lives as we pass it on to others.

What about him?

When he spoke at our district convention last year, an older pastor (and a dear friend of mine) came up to me afterward and with all earnestness looked me in the eye to ask: "Has anyone ever thought of *him* being elected synodical president?" My friend is not much into the electronic age; he doesn't do blogs or e-mail, which leaves him slightly out of touch with the latest news. I smiled and told him that yes, the thought had crossed a mind or two.

Why did my friend so gravitate to Pr. Harrison? Well, first, know that my friend is a true evangelical catholic. He is a pastor who has sought for many years to lead his beloved flock in living from the Eucharist as the very center of the Church's life, the deep wellspring of her hidden joy, and letting that Eucharist shape our mission as church in this world. As my friend listened to Pr. Harrison deliver high-octane Gospel to the assembly in a scholarly and yet utterly engaging, popular way, my friend realized the deepest truth about Harrison: "That man" he said to me "is a pastor at heart." And he was right.

What a pastor does

It was Holy Week when the radio program "Issues, Etc." was suddenly and inexplicably yanked off the air, and the producer of that show — a member of my parish, with a very sick wife — faced a most uncertain future. What would happen? I thought it typical Harrison for him to show up at our parish on Maundy Thursday, bringing with him the son of Walter Obare, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya. He was there to feast on the Word and on our Lord's Body and Blood, to be sure. But he was there also to be a friend to Jeff Schwarz, to speak a personal word of comfort to him in the time of his trial. He had driven some 30 miles through the cornfields from St. Louis,

just to worship with a hurting family and a hurting congregation that evening. It's the sort of thing he does. "A pastor at heart."

And besides this pastoral heart that rejoices in God's infinite mercy reaching and transforming us in the means of grace, he is a man who has consistently shown a deep concern for the church's mercy ministry. Before he ended up heading the mercy arm of the LCMS, he had led an absolutely stunning effort in Fort Wayne to reclaim a neighborhood for its citizens. Partnering with the local Roman Catholic parish, he and his beloved Zion Lutheran Church began buying and renovating burned out, trashed houses all around the neighborhood. They went into them with hammers and saws, with paint and nails. They enlisted the citizens' help and let them know that they were not alone and that those parishes were *not* abandoning their neighborhood. It was a time of rebirth in that part of Fort Wayne, and it was the success (a nationally noted success) of that work there that led directly to the Synod tapping Pr. Harrison to guide its mercy ministries throughout the world. That is a task he has handled with the same energy and zeal he showed in transforming a ghetto into a thriving neighborhood for love of Christ and the people there.

The Word of God must do it

As he's pondered the disarray in which we in Missouri find ourselves (the worship wars, the decline in evangelistic zeal among our people, the deterioration of our missionary work throughout the world, and so much more), he has proposed a plan for letting the Word of God do its work among us. He knows that true renewal will come in no other way. As Luther put it, "The Word of God must do this thing, and not we poor sinners." You can read Pr. Harrison's plan at <http://itistime.org>.

All of that and so much more is why I support for synodical president this banjo playing, hammer swinging, paintbrush wielding, masterful teaching servant of God, this man with a pastor's heart (and a scholar, to boot), who understands that the church literally lives from the Divine Service where the Gospel is preached and the Body and Blood of the Savior is delivered into mouths and hearts to strengthen and enliven God's people in faith toward the Blessed Trinity and in fervent love toward one another. Yes, I believe it is Matthew Harrison we

should elect as our next synodical president. It's time, Missouri. It's time.

William Weedon, SSP, is pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Hamel, IL.

An evangelical catholic for Gerald Kieschnick by Pr. David Poedel

I would describe myself as an evangelical catholic priest not very well disguised as a LCMS pastor, and I have made deliberate and strategic attempts to stay off the LCMS radar screen. On the surface, it would make little sense for an evangelical catholic like myself to support the leadership of Dr. Gerald Kieschnick. Despite being seen and photographed in a clerical collar much of the time, no one would likely identify Dr. Kieschnick as "high church" or "liturgical." In fact, the good president would instead be a suitable representative for the consummate confessing evangelical with a strong Lutheran identity. Truth be told, until Pr. Paul Sauer published his "A Field Guide to the LCMS" in *Lutheran Forum* (Summer, 2008; available at <http://www.lutheranforum.org/>), I might have been uncharacteristically inarticulate if asked to explain my support for Jerry Kieschnick.

Pr. Sauer helped me a great deal with his taxonomy of the LCMS. He divided the Synod into pro-incumbency and anti-incumbency camps, with the incumbent being Dr. Kieschnick. Recognizing a previous dichotomy identified some years ago by Dr. Gene Veith in *Touchstone*, he laid the template of "confessing evangelical" and "evangelical catholic" over his incumbency grid. So on the Sauer grid, I identify myself as a pro-incumbency evangelical catholic. The grid is very useful, indeed.

Sharing the gospel

I come down on the pro-incumbency side in part because, as Sauer noted, the Kieschnick administration tends to leave me alone, even though I am often at odds with their agenda. More positively, the part of Kieschnick's agenda that I appreciate most is that we are, for the first time in my 25 year tenure in the LCMS, coming out of our comfort zone to deliberately and strategically share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with those outside our Synod. Oh, I know we

have always advocated this, but with *Ablaze!* it is clearly our mission to share the good news of Jesus Christ with those outside our family and church. While I concede that the numerical goals and tallying are weird for Christians who believe that God alone calls us to faith through Word and Sacrament, the fact is that we're doing it! Even my people in downtown Phoenix, many of whom hadn't invited anyone to church in decades, are now inviting folks to church and telling them about Jesus. I love it!

Even more important for me personally, the Kieschnick administration is slowly but surely changing the culture of the LCMS. I have occasionally been on the receiving end of what I call the "mean streak" that runs through the Synod. Tragically, we are more known for this meanness than our zeal for the lost. By instituting changes in the dispute resolution process, we are no longer allowed to lob charges at each other over the internet or via the rumor mill. The new procedures have reduced the number of charges and complaints filed against clergy of the Synod by an amazing percentage. The atmosphere at our district and synodical conventions borders on evangelical and friendly.

The mean streak seems absent

A series of Model Theological Conferences have been held across the Synod on topics that have been neuralgic in the LCMS for generations. Though I've not attended them, it appears to me that, while there is rarely any mincing of strong words, the "mean streak" for which we are so famous is noticeably absent. One reason for that, in my judgment, is that those who are commonly called moderates are no longer written off simply as dissenters.

The confessing evangelicals often advocate and implement "big-box" sanctuaries with praise band up front, no identification as Lutheran in their signage and materials; their pastors tend to vest in the now omnipresent Hawaiian or polo shirt and khakis. I, on the other hand, wear a clerical collar every day and vest in a chasuble most Sundays. So why do I find myself supportive of the party and candidate who appear to be so unlike myself?

My difficulty with those who look like me (and with whom I am usually associated before folks know me) is that they represent a much narrower evangelical catholicity than the one I and those with me represent. Those whom Sauer identifies as "anti-incumbency evangelical catholics" represent the Lu-

theranism of another era that may or may not have actually existed in the LCMS. Theirs is an evangelical catholicism of precise doctrinal uniformity that is very sectarian, taking the period of Lutheran Orthodoxy as the norm. While that has much that is worthwhile to contribute to our teaching and practice today, it is often combined with a liturgical uniformity that has likely never existed before in American Lutheranism. Along with that uniformity comes a zeal to enforce it strenuously, which often seems to contribute to that "meanness" I wrote of above.

Perhaps the preceding paragraph is unnecessarily combative – maybe even an unfair caricature. It does, however, sincerely express the primary reason I am leery of LCMS "conservatives" being elected to Synodical leadership. I have been personally assured that if the anti-incumbency party comes to power there will be no "purges" of folks like me or those described as confessing evangelicals above. That is, frankly, of little comfort to me.

Ain't gonna go there

The past six or so years have been my most joyful years of ministry in the LCMS. I work zealously to reach out with the Gospel, to make my congregation open to all comers, to offer to our congregation and community a very inviting and reverent Mass each Sunday morning with traditional Lutheran hymnody. I preach Gospel-rich sermons in a relaxed and, I hope, winsome way; I have a rather irreverent sense of humor that tends to be self-deprecating. I have been told by visitors that it is a shame I am "stuck" in this little traditional church when my sermons could really "bring them in" if I just offered contemporary praise songs and got rid of the vestments and liturgy. It ain't gonna happen.

How much of my joy is the result of Jerry Kieschnick being the synodical president I really don't know. What I do know is that the *fact* that he is President lets me serve in the way I can be most effective and comfortable without looking over my shoulder to see who may be watching. If Dr. Kieschnick is not re-elected this summer, I will continue serving as God has called me; but it may no longer be with the confidence that I will be encouraged, or even just left alone.

David Poedel, STS, is pastor of Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church, Phoenix, AZ.

Omnium gatherum



Priorities • ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson issues plenty of statements, letters, messages (forgive me if

I've lost track of the distinctions between all these things). One theologian of the church, writing in an on-line conversation, wondered why there was nothing forthcoming from the PB regarding the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January? This was provoked by a Catholic News Service release which reported the 25th consecutive meeting of the Pope with representatives of the Church of Finland on the Feast of St. Henrik, which corresponds to the beginning of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (January 18). The Pope didn't say much that was new, but at least he acknowledged the importance of our continued prayer for the unity of Christ's church. From the ELCA Vatican, however, nothing was said. As far as I can tell from the archives, Bp. Hanson hasn't noted or promoted the WPCU during any January since his enthronement. Perhaps he's too busy praying for ELCA unity that he hasn't time even to note the venerable WPCU observance. He did find time in January to write the Secretary of State regarding the proposed homosexuality law in Uganda. Don't get me wrong, I think that proposed law stinks, and I'm sure the bishop's letter to Secretary Clinton will make all the difference in the world. I'm just thinking that as a parish pastor, some well-chosen words from Bishop Hanson some January about praying for Christian unity might even find its way into my church newsletter or a Sunday

bulletin. His letter to the Secretary of State, not as likely.

Contributions welcome • "You're getting some interesting new writers in the *Letter*," someone recently remarked, and I thanked him for noticing. The concept of "forum" being embedded in our title, it never hurts to mention that we are always happy to receive submissions for possible publication, especially from first-time contributors. We can't use everything, and we usually can't offer remuneration except the glory of seeing your name in print, but if you want to sound off about something Lutheran, we'll at least read it. Send submissions to the editor at roj@nccn.net.

I don't get no respect • Being *Forum Letter* editor sometimes affects family dynamics. When my daughter (currently on internship) read my remarks in the last issue about planetary justice for Pluto, she responded, "You're a real piece of work, Dad." Not sure just what she meant by that, but I doubt it was good. Then, when she was desperate for some resources about something or other and I sent her some books, it was, "You're my hero, Dad." I asked her how those two things related. The e-mail response was terse: "Multiple identities." Then, a day or so later, I walk into my wife's classroom wearing khaki pants and a cream-colored sweater. "My, you're looking neutral today," says she. "Maybe you should go work on *Forum Letter*." — roj

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