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Editor: Pr. Richard O. Johnson
<roj@nccn.net>

Associate Editor: Pr. Peter Speckhard
<pspeckhard@hotmail.com>

Member: Associated Church Press.

EDITORIAL OFFICE: P. O. Box 1394,
Grass Valley, CA 95945. <roj@nccn.net>

SUBSCRIPTION OFFICE: American
Lutheran Publicity Bureau, P. O. Box 327,
Delhi, NY 13753-0327 <dkralpb@aol.com>
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The clean sea breeze of the centuries



“Every age has its own outlook. It is specially good at seeing certain truths and specially liable to make certain mistakes. We all, therefore, need the books that will correct the characteristic mistakes of our own period. And that means the old books. All contemporary writers share to some extent the contemporary outlook—even those, like myself, who seem most opposed to it. Nothing strikes me more when I read the controversies of past ages than the fact that both sides were usually assuming without question a good deal which we should now absolutely deny. They thought that they were as completely opposed as two sides could be, but in fact they were all the time secretly united—united with each other and against earlier and later ages—by a great mass of common assumptions. We may be sure that the characteristic blindness of the twentieth century—the blindness about which posterity will ask, ‘But how could they have thought that?’—lies where we have never suspected it. . . . None of us can fully escape this blindness, but we shall certainly increase it, and weaken our guard against it, if we read only modern books. Where they are true they will give us truths which we half knew already. Where they are false they will aggravate the error with which we are already dangerously ill. The only palliative is to keep the clean sea breeze of the centuries blowing through our minds, and this can be done only by reading old books. Not, of course, that there is any magic about the past. People were no cleverer then than they are now; they made as many mistakes as we. But not the same mistakes. They will not flatter us in the errors we are already committing; and their own errors, being now open and palpable, will not endanger us. Two heads are better than one, not because either is infallible, but because they are unlikely to go wrong in the same direction. To be sure, the books of the future would be just as good a corrective as the books of the past, but unfortunately we cannot get at them.” —C. S. Lewis, in his “Introduction” to *Incarnation of the Word of God, Being the Treatise of St. Athanasius De Incarnatione Verbi Dei* (translated by Sister Penelope Lawson, Macmillan, 1951)

The JLE dust-up



The online *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* is an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America publication that has usually been pretty well-balanced in its discussion of a plethora of ethical issues. During the extensive debate over sexuality, *JLE* published reasonable and thoughtful expressions of a wide variety of opinion by a diverse group of writers.

That’s what made it disappointing to some that *JLE* published in its May issue a screed by Jon Pahl, Ph.D. (as his byline has it) entitled, “The Core of Lu-

theran CORE: American Civil Religion and White Male Backlash." The article accuses CORE of "abandon[ing] historic Lutheranism . . . in favor of an American civil religion" as well as exhibiting "more than a whiff of Docetism, Donatism, and Pelagianism." Serious analysis is one thing; hysterical accusations are quite another. Pahl's article is much closer to the latter.

A professor of church history at Lutheran School of Theology in Philadelphia, Pahl claims that "a millennialist rhetoric of declension and dualism runs like a red thread throughout the [Lutheran CORE] movement." Taking along the way the opportunity to plug his latest book, Pahl piles footnote upon footnote to suggest to the unwary that what he is writing here is somehow "scholarly."

No paragon of dispassionate scholarship

Scholars, though, generally try to be dispassionate in their scholarly writing. An assertion such as Pahl's that "all in all, the core of Lutheran CORE is rotten" is hardly the objective evaluation of a scholar. Pahl gives himself away even more dramatically with this zinger: "So, while I hope to remain in dialogue and fellowship with individuals who oppose full inclusion of faithful LGBT people in the church or society, I can no longer tolerate the violent policies and practices, and the heretical leanings, which justify homophobia." (He left out the requisite apology for having actually tolerated these things for so many years.)

Yeah, that's conducive to dialogue all right. Since Pahl takes a particular swipe at Robert Benne, *JLE* provided him an opportunity to respond. "Ah, how to respond to a rant," Benne begins. His response is civilized and articulate, though one may think of the old saw about wrestling with a pig.

Seems like Docetism

But let's consider for a moment just what validity Pahl's rant might have. Take, for example, his accusation of Docetism. Well, that's not quite right; he doesn't actually accuse Lutheran CORE of Docetism. He just raises the question: "Doesn't this anti-institutional animus betray a subtly *docetic* understanding of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, rendering moot his death and new life *in the body*?"

This heresy, if you're not up on your heresies, was taught by the Gnostics (and some others as

well) who denigrated the material world and who therefore believed that God did not *really* take on human flesh in Jesus of Nazareth but it only *seemed* that way. What's that got to do with Lutheran CORE? Well, Pahl seems to think CORE members are "anti-institutional" because of their resistance to some decisions of the ELCA. But "all human institutions are extensions of the body; indeed, we call them 'corporations,' which literally means 'bodies.'"

And so opposition to the institution that is the ELCA, in Pahl's universe, constitutes "Docetism." It is, to say the least, an odd appropriation of the theological understanding of the docetic heresy. But even if one grants his use of the term, he seems to forget that Lutheran CORE is actually taking steps to form a new church body, the North American Lutheran Church, precisely because they are convinced of the significance of institutional forms. So the answer to his question, since he expresses it as a question, is "no," as in "No, there is nothing in Lutheran CORE that betrays a subtly docetic understanding."

Pure Donatism

Pahl goes on to make another accusation disguised as a question: "Does not Lutheran CORE fall into the Donatist heresy – which imagines that only visibly 'pure' Christians (i.e., according to humanly-devised traditions) deserve the name, privileges and offices of being identified with Christ?" (His penchant for interrogatories sort of reminds one of that ancient question: "Has God said . . .?")

That is another very peculiar understanding of a significant early church heresy. The issue for the Donatists was not moral purity, but apostasy. In early 4th century North Africa, there were some folks known as *traditores* – they had "handed over" copies of the Scriptures to the Roman authorities to avoid arrest or worse. The Donatists were rigorists, not eager to forgive these *traditores* who, they believed (and with justification), had apostasized. But the issue came to a head over the validity of sacraments administered by *traditores*, or by priests who had been ordained by bishops who were *traditores*. The decision of the "Great Church" was to reassure Christians that the faithlessness of the priest did not invalidate the sacrament.

Pahl's allegation of Donatism seems so far afield from anything that Lutheran CORE has said

that it is truly breathtaking. Who, exactly, has advocated the idea that only the “pure . . . deserve the name . . . of being identified with Christ” (whatever that might mean)? If that were the case, none of us could claim the name of Christian, let alone serve in the ordained ministry. But of course no one in Lutheran CORE has said such a thing, and Pahl’s allegation is ludicrous.

Pelagius lurking

Pahl also accuses CORE of Pelagianism. That suggestion is somewhat harder to tackle, since he doesn’t actually make any case for it whatsoever beyond saying that “to elevate a ‘sin’ of homosexual behavior, or its toleration, to church-dividing status, and to ignore and tolerate the sin of self-righteous behavior by a privileged majority, is the very model of a schismatic and Pelagian judgment, substituting one’s own judgment for the entire law of God.”

Pelagianism is a serious accusation against Lutherans, who pride themselves on standing in the tradition of Augustine, Pelagius’s archenemy. But this heresy really is about whether or not humans can, by their own efforts, take fundamental steps toward salvation. What exactly that has to do with anything said by Lutheran CORE is obscure to me; I’ve never heard any traditionalist argue that proper sexual morality gains salvation. But hey, if you’re accusing people of early heresies, might as well throw Pelagianism into the mix. I’m surprised he forgot to mention Marcionism and Patripassionism.

Who can be saved?

Somewhat more interesting is Pahl’s assertion that Lutheran CORE engages in “millennialist rhetoric.” I say “interesting” because millennialism (unlike Docetism or Donatism) is at least a theological aberration that actually has some significant presence in American religious history. But Pahl’s hysterical accusation holds little water here either. He thinks that Mark Chavez’s characterization of the churchwide assembly’s decisions as “grievous” qualifies. And Jaynan Clark’s observation that the actions caused “confusion.” This, he says, is “typical millennialist (if not apocalypticist) rhetoric of a certain, radio-talk show stripe [*sic*].” He must not get out much among the millennialists, the apocalypticists, and the radio talk show hosts.

Pahl is on somewhat firmer ground when he

takes on Robert Benne, at least in some minor ways. He cites Benne as saying that “skewed commitments [of the ELCA leadership] led to dramatic membership losses.” (One of Pahl’s multitudinous footnotes is a little confused here; the note cites two Benne articles, first in *Christianity Today*, where the quoted phrase does not appear, and then in *The Cresset*, where it does.) Pahl calls this “lousy history,” and he has a point insofar as it will take considerably more historical perspective to say that one thing led to the other. Of course Benne’s comment isn’t really intended to be “history” at all, but an opinion, to which he is entitled. Unlike Pahl, Benne isn’t claiming to be a historian.

“The real question,” Pahl writes, “is whether homophobes can be saved.” Unfortunately, he offers no answer. All us homophobes are waiting anxiously and with bated breath.

In the meantime, one wonders why an official ELCA publication would allow this kind of name-calling to be published and posted on the ELCA web site. Critique and analysis? Fine. That’s healthy, and helpful, and appropriate. But name-calling, directed against fellow members of the Body of Christ, and of the ELCA? It doesn’t say much for “journeying together,” now does it?

Both sides of Dr. Pahl’s mouth

In addition to publishing Benne’s response, the next issue of *JLE* printed a response by Pr. Cathy Ammlung. (Full disclosure: both Benne and Ammlung have been *FL* contributors in the past, and Benne is an ALPB board member.) As an ordained woman involved in Lutheran CORE, she has some sharp things to say about Pahl’s analysis, and I will leave it to you to read it; you can access it through www.elca.org.

My own favorite line, however, was almost an aside. Observing Pahl’s scrupulous avoidance of masculine pronouns for God and yet his accepting as “not a problem” Lutheran CORE’s confession of God as “Father, Son and Holy Spirit,” Pr. Ammlung quips that “Dr. Pahl is talking out of both sides of Dr. Pahl’s mouth.”

Friends of Herb

But the icing on the cake in this whole affair is that Herbert Chilstrom, onetime presiding bishop of the ELCA, has taken it upon himself to rescue

Pahl's writing from the relative obscurity of *JLE*. He's sent Pahl's rant around to his wide circle of friends, with the endorsement, "If you haven't seen it, I think you'll agree that the following article by Dr. Jon Pahl . . . is an excellent, in-depth look at some of the divisive movements in the church to-

day. Many of you will want to share it with others."

Yes indeed, I suppose if someone hasn't seen it, he or she might agree with that assessment. But if you have seen it — well, many of you, dear readers of *FL*, will more likely want to gag.

— by Richard O. Johnson, editor

Synodical silly season



My predecessor Russ Saltzman used to call it "synodical silly season" — the phenomenon each spring of synod assemblies doing really silly things, particularly in the form of resolutions. Thankfully, most of these are actually harmless. They do nothing of significance, though they do make those who vote on them feel self-important and often self-righteous. The only downside comes when one tries to interpret them to the parishioners back home, who often wonder (and justifiably) why on earth the church is spending time and money even debating such a thing.

One example came this year in the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Synod, where a resolution was proposed entitled "Encroachment of NFL Football Schedule upon the Worship Life of the Christian Community." It consisted of a long litany of "resolveds," tracing the history of the National Football League and outlining, after a fashion, the significance of church attendance (quoting along the way from the Gospel of Matthew, the Augsburg Confession, and Paul Tillich, among others).

It finally got to the point: a request that the NFL set kickoff time for its games at 2 p.m. EST, so as not to interfere with church services.

A quixotic venture

The Lutheran reported that this resolution passed; the Synod's web site, on the other hand, says it failed. One would hope (and expect) the latter is the accurate report, for there are so many silly things about the resolution that one hardly knows where to begin.

For starters, and just to cut to the chase in terms of pragmatism, did it occur to the drafter of the resolution (whose name I know, but will not report, not wanting to subject him or her to public ridicule) that there are actually Christian church ser-

vices in the Pacific time zone, and a 2 p.m. EST kick-off would coincide with the start of many of those liturgies? No, I guess not.

The theological basis of the resolution is quite "unLutheran," despite the quote from the Augustana. One "resolved" noted that "the history of Christian worship reflects the honor of God's commandment to keep the Sabbath holy including Sunday morning as sacred worship time." One would be hard pressed to find any such principle in the Lutheran confessions, which are distinctly uninterested in "Sunday morning as sacred worship time" and certainly don't understand that to be the meaning of the third commandment.

I know that football is a big deal in Texas, and probably Louisiana too, but if it really impacts church attendance that much, maybe the churches ought to contemplate changing their worship times. Or how about teaching their members that God has precedence over football? Taking it up with the NFL seems a quixotic task. Not to say silly.

The Central/Southern Illinois Synod is also concerned about infringement on time for church activities. Their assembly voted to ask congregations to "have conversation with" local school boards, in an effort to avoid scheduling school events (including sports practices) on Sundays and on Wednesday evenings. As the spouse of a public school teacher, I'm pretty sure that conversations with the NFL are more likely to be successful than conversations with local school boards.

Usury under God

The Northeastern Minnesota Synod approved a resolution opposing usury, which it defined as more than 36% APR. It's apparently talking about so-called payday loans here, not mortgages or credit cards or car loans. Still, 36% seems like a

pretty generous allowance. If you're going to try to stop usury, one would think you'd stop it a little more dramatically than that.

The St. Paul Area Synod adopted a similar resolution. Apparently usury is particularly problematic in Minnesota. But at the same time, that synod tabled a resolution resisting efforts to remove the words "under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance, and "In God We Trust" from U. S. currency — "all existing and future forms" of currency, the resolution said, showing that at least some Lutherans are really thinking futuristically. The synod tabled these on the grounds that there are no ELCA social statements relating thereto, and so they just didn't know what to think.

Creator, Redeemer, Living Presence

The Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod has officially endorsed the "Clergy Letter Project," an effort to bring the full weight of the Christian Church to the support of teaching Darwinian evolution in the public schools. It calls Darwin's theory "a core component of human knowledge" and affirms "our God-given curiosity through the pursuit of credible science as a means by which reason can work in concert with faith to further celebrate our Creator and to discover God's hidden gifts yet to be revealed."

Now I'm not personally in the camp of those who think that the earth is only a few thousand years old. I don't break out in hives at the mention of "evolution," and I wouldn't be sympathetic to teaching "creationism" in the public schools. But really, now. Reason works "in concert with faith to further celebrate our Creator"? What on earth does that even mean? And talk of "hidden gifts yet to be revealed" sounds like something that should be referred to those folks working on an ELCA social statement on genetics.

The "Clergy Letter Project," near as I can tell, is the brainstorm of a biologist at Butler University, and has been endorsed by a plethora of theological liberals (12,538 have signed to date, the web site says, and that doesn't even count Jews and Unitarians). One could have guessed as much from the opening "Resolved" of the EWI Synod resolution, which says that "God is Creator, Redeemer, and Living Presence" (one of the more bizarre attempts to de-gender the Holy Trinity) and is "revealed in the

Bible, our Lutheran Confessions, our personal experiences, and the natural processes of our material world." Any resolution that starts like that, I'd vote "no" regardless of what the bottom line says.

And this is of synodical concern how?

The Southwest California Synod adopted a resolution "advocating support for the (nonpartisan) Proposition 15" on the California primary ballot. This proposition would have established a system of public financing for the office of Secretary of State; why that obscure office is more worthy of public financing than some other escapes me; with the GOP gubernatorial primary winner having spent \$70 million of her own fortune to get the nomination, you'd think concern for the corrupt influence of money might be more significantly directed elsewhere.

Still, it is peculiar that a synod thinks this is an urgent issue of Christian social ethics. The resolution cites the ELCA statement *The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective*, which "commits us to 'work with and on behalf of the poor, the powerless, and those who suffer.'" I don't quite get how campaign finance schemes actually do that, unless the idea is to encourage and enable the poor and powerless to run for Secretary of State against the rich and powerful. In the end the voters decisively spurned the synod's advice, and rejected Proposition 15. The synod assembly convened only five days before the election, so there wasn't much time to publicize their advocacy; maybe that explains the voters' failure to fall in line. Or maybe too many had already voted by mail, and so they couldn't know the synod's position. It's a classic example of an assembly wasting its time on an utterly meaningless resolution, on a completely inappropriate topic.

Unity and harmony

Many synod assemblies this year faced resolutions either calling for repeal or expressing thanks for the sexuality decisions of last summer. The Southeastern Synod youth, however, decided to be more proactive in dealing with dissension in the Body of Christ. They proposed a resolution calling on all synod assembly voting members to "go out and promote unity within the church and their congregations." Reference and Counsel endorsed it, and it would be hard to argue against it. Especially when it comes from the youth. One wonders whether it

will be any more successful than the Sierra Pacific Synod's request that every confirmed member give \$5 more a month so that the synod can meet its grossly out of balance budget. No, probably not.

The Metro New York Synod offered a somewhat more sober suggestion, calling on "all members . . . to commit to a year of working towards forgiving past offenses and injuries that individuals and groups have suffered at the hands of the synod" and to "refrain from cultivating and harboring the pain that inhibits our life together in Christ." I would have thought those things were sort of part and parcel of the Christian life most all the time; I also wonder how effective a synod resolution will be in accomplishing these noble aspirations.

There will likely be more silly things coming out of the gaggle of assemblies in June. I note in passing that at least a couple of synod assemblies took action to study the possibility of meeting less frequently than annually. I used to think that was a bad idea; in recent years, I've changed my tune. The less often synod assemblies meet, the better it would be for all of us—for congregational budgets, for pastors' blood pressure, for the ecology of our world (think smaller carbon footprint), for the well-being of the church of God. The only people negatively impacted would be the drafters of silly resolutions, and that in itself would be of no small benefit.

—by Richard O. Johnson, editor

Omnium gatherum



What to do • In the ELCA's efforts to "journey together faithfully," the emphasis is more and more on the "together" part—as in, "you will stay 'together' with us, damn it, no matter what you want." Last time we cited the refusal of the Florida Bahamas Synod Council to grant "peaceful release" (as it used to be called, and still is in some circles) to St. Peter Lutheran Church in Ft. Pierce, FL, which wanted to withdraw from the ELCA but required synod permission because it is a former LCA congregation, and that was their rule, carried over into the merger for their congregations. Other synods are trying other tactics to inhibit congregations from leaving, no matter what their antecedent church body affiliation. One is to demand that the congregation, if they want to leave, pay back every penny of mission funds that they received from the ELCA or its predecessors when the congregation was established—sometimes decades ago. Many of these congregations have long been financially independent. The congregations have generally said something along the lines of "No, we're not going to do that." One, St. Luke's in Colorado Springs, CO, has asked the ELCA to produce signed documents showing that they ever agreed to such a thing. Others have argued that they have paid many times the original grant amount to the ELCA over the years in their own benevolence giving. Still others have pointed out that the meaning of the term "grant" is that the "grantor" doesn't expect or require the money to be paid back. It's all

very depressing; if an adult child were to decide to sever his ties with his parents for whatever reason, would the parents send him a bill for services rendered in prior years? For goodness sake, if a congregation jumps through all the constitutional hoops to leave, just say farewell and godspeed.

Corrections • People are still correcting my Latin—an easy task, since my Latin is virtually non-existent. This time it was Marie Meyer's comment about congregational offices that "exist by *iuro humano*." Our sharp-eyed grammarian reader says, in the first place, it should be *iure*, not *iuro*; and furthermore, the "by" is superfluous, and it should just be "exist *iure humano*." He actually wrote *iure divino*, which just goes to show that even sharp-eyed grammarians can make mistakes. At least this time the Latin error wasn't in something I wrote, so I can only cop to editorial malfeasance. But it isn't just Latin. I'm told by someone who "has had experience with harness racing horses" (let's leave it at that) that the proper term is not "*chomping* at the bit," but "*champing* at the bit" (though he allows that it is misused often enough that the wrong usage has actually made it into the dictionary). He explains: "It's when an impatient horse plays with the bit in his mouth with his tongue—the bit lies on the gums in a space between the teeth and the horse does not really take the bit with his teeth. If he gets the bit in his teeth, the driver/rider loses all control and is in BIG trouble." The misuse in question had to do with the ea-

gerness of irregularly ordained persons to get themselves added to the ELCA roster; I leave it to you, dear readers, to ponder how that definition might apply in this situation, but I would focus your reflection on the phrases “loses all control” and “BIG trouble.”

Constitutionally questionable • The Sierra Pacific synod recently elected Jeff Johnson to a clergy seat on its synod council, despite the fact that he was not yet on the clergy roster of the ELCA. Johnson was one of the famous three who were illicitly ordained back in the late 1980s. He’s run for various offices in the synod for some years, but has always gotten tripped up by the thorny question of whether he is actually ordained (in which case he’s not eligible for an office that requires a lay person) or not (in which case he’s ineligible for a clergy seat). This time the synod’s powers-that-be had consulted with ELCA Secretary David Swartling ahead of time, who ruled that Johnson could be elected to a clergy seat “pending” his reception onto the roster of the ELCA. Swartling suggested that his name be asterisked, with a note that he could be elected but not installed until such time as he came onto the roster. The synod’s bylaws state quite explicitly that the assembly “shall elect to the Council one ordained minister *on the roster of this Synod* . . . from each electoral district.” Notice it doesn’t say “who may some day in the future be on the roster.” But in the ELCA, Secretary Swartling is the final authority, both on what the ELCA constitution means and what individual synod bylaws mean. He’s a lawyer, you know, though I don’t know that he’s ever practiced constitutional law. Seems unlikely. At any rate, Johnson was subsequently approved for “addition to the roster” or whatever we’re calling it, so he will take the seat, in spite of his constitutionally questionable election.

Constitutionally ambiguous • There have now been at least two instances where the results of a congregation’s vote to leave the ELCA has been clouded by an odd provision in the ELCA constitution. That provision requires the congregation to vote to leave (twice) by a “two-thirds majority of those present,” which, some say, is different from “present and voting” and in effect makes any person choosing not to vote into a negative voter. Even *Rob-*

erts’ Rules cautions that this is not an advisable provision, but there it is, in the *ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations*. Seems to me there’s an easy solution. Neither the constitution nor *Roberts’ Rules* specifies how the number present is to be determined, and there are numerous possibilities (head count, sign-in sheet, etc.) and lots of room for error (people going out to use the restroom and missing the vote, people arriving late and missing the sign-in sheet). Even determining with certainty who is legally a voting member can be dicey. So what would stop a presider from simply ruling that the number of votes cast (including blank ballots, if any, so that abstentions would be valid) is, in fact, the number of people present? If you want to be counted “present,” you cast a ballot, period—even if blank. If it’s too much authority to give the presider, have someone make a motion before the ballot that this is how the assembly is going to understand the constitution. That would be a solution that is logical, clear, and irrefutable. Which is why it probably won’t happen.

Insularity • The LCMS has the reputation of being, shall we say, a bit more insular than the ELCA. That’s not always a bad thing, mind you. Still, I found it interesting to compare how the news agencies of the two churches handled the recent Associated Church Press awards. The ELCA news story mentioned *all* the Lutheran publications that got awards—even the independent ones like us. In fact, *FL’s* “best in class” achievement award was noted near the top of the story. The LCMS news story only mentioned the LCMS publications that got awards—and in great detail, every award, every piece by name. It reminds me of a story I once heard told by Prof. Nils Dahl about the international conference on the elephant, at which scholars from all over the world presented papers. The British scholar was erudite and informative on the topic of “The Economic Impact of the Elephant.” The German scholar delivered a somewhat obtuse paper, “The Philosophical Dimensions of the Elephant.” The French scholar’s presentation was more lively—“The Sexual Life of the Elephant.” The Norwegian scholar’s paper was “Norway and the Norwegians.” Anyway, you’d have thought they could *at least* have mentioned the award garnered by associate editor and LCMS pastor Peter Speckhard, writing in *FL* on temple prostitution. But maybe they were afraid that

listing the title of his piece would raise some eyebrows in insular and conservative Missouri.

Historical congregation • Pr. Philip Pfatteicher has recently published a new book, a departure of sorts from his large liturgical *corpus* (that's Latin, but I looked it up; I'm pretty sure it's OK). This one is *Last on Grant: the History of the First Evangelical Lutheran Church in the City of Pittsburgh*. Congregational histories are seldom of interest to anyone but congregational members, but this one is worth a look by anyone interested in American Lutheran history. Pfatteicher is a good scholar, and the congregation about which he writes (and which he has served as associate pastor) is an important one. Founded in 1837 by the very impressive missionary Father Carl Friedrich Heyer, its pastors have also included William Passavant and Charles Porterfield Krauth, names that will need no introduction to anyone who was paying attention in their American Lutheran history course (if they were lucky enough to go to seminary at a time and a place where American Lutheran history was actually still taught). Pfatteicher has his opinions, such as his comment that it was "fortunate" that a call extended to Samuel Sprecher, a disciple of S. S. Schmucker, was declined, but they often serve to enliven the narrative. Particularly interesting is his discussion of how the American Lutheran/confessional Lutheran controversies of the mid-19th century played out in one congregation—sobering reading in the current situation where many congregations are again facing dissension and division over decisions made at the national level. The book can be ordered from the parish directly

(First Lutheran Church, 615 Grant Street, Pittsburgh PA 15219) or from the publisher, Lutheran University Press <lutheranupress.org>.

Heating up • The presidential race in the LCMS is heating up. A lot of folks were taken by surprise when LCMS Secretary Raymond Hartwig announced the persons who had received the most votes for president. It was known that incumbent President Gerald Kieschnick might be in a bit of a race, as we've noted before in these pages. But when the nominations were in, Pr. Matthew Harrison, executive director of the LCMS World Relief and Human Care agency, had 1,332 nominations to Kieschnick's 755—a remarkably big gap. And not all that far behind Kieschnick was Rev. Herbert Mueller, president of the synod's Southern Illinois District. To put that in perspective, three years ago Kieschnick led in the process with 1,055 nominations, while the second place guy had 607. Or, to look at it another way, in 2007 Kieschnick (then, as now, the incumbent) had a bare majority (51%) of the total votes received by the top five nominees; this time he has less than a third (29%). One must say that there has been something of a campaign going for Harrison (there's even a web site called harrisonforpresident.org/). The whole process is more political than in the ELCA—or perhaps it would be more accurate to say it is more *overtly* political. Should make for a hot time in Houston this July. You'll surely want to follow the course of events with our on-the-scene correspondent Pr. Scott Yakimow at www.alpb.org/forum/ beginning July 10.

—roj

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