

# FORUM LETTER

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## Consciously communal liturgy



As a pattern of corporate behavior, ritual is inevitable in any group. It helps combat group disintegration by providing a common life-style, a shared way of doing things, and an identity which comes from the outward expressions of group behavior. One is astounded at the sound ritual sense displayed by many modern secular cults with their symbols, gestures, slogans, insignia, rites, and heroes. If one were to analyze such groups as extremist political organizations, fraternal lodges, street gangs, one would surely notice an intensely corporate consciousness that does not permit individuals to “do their own thing” except insofar as these “actors” are contributing in an agreed way to the totality of the event; a hierarchical orientation toward authority-persons; a feeling for concrete values expressed in body gestures, appreciation for cosmic elements and forces, knowledge of special days, seasons, and places; and simple but aggressive ritual action. No “Kyrie eleison” ever came across as aggressively as “Push ‘em back, push ‘em back, way back” at a typical American football game. Yet this should be exactly the model for liturgical acclamation. These phenomenological observations would suggest that, whatever else Christian liturgy is, it is a *social* event. It is something done in a consciously communal way. It is never merely subjective or individualistic. Even when it is engaged in personally, it always remains social in derivation and reference. The prayer of the private closet is still “*Our Father*.” No Christian corporate worship is conducted without some kind of recognized leadership; and no Christian corporate worship is devoid of ritual acts, even if the ritual acts consist of nothing more than preaching and group singing. —Frank Senn, *The Pastor as Worship Leader: A Manual for Corporate Worship* (Augsburg, 1977), 16.

## This is not the ELCA

by Steven P. Tibbetts



“Holy is the Lord, the Almighty.” These were the first words spoken at the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) Convocation at Upper Arlington Lutheran Church, Hilliard (Columbus), Ohio, the afternoon of August 11, 2011. The voice was Pr. Amanda Grimmer’s, co-pastor at Holy Trinity, Abington, PA, following the opening hymn for the Service of the Word, “Come, Christians, Join to Sing.” The assembled congregation (which would include 397 clergy and lay delegates and 395 registered guests sitting together) responded, “He was, He is, and He is to come.”

“This is not the ELCA,” thought this observer, a thought that would come to mind several times over the next 25 hours. Not that anyone was overtly making that point; it just kept happening in little things. One should probably note

that this observer, while part of Lutheran CORE from its conception, continues to believe that the better response for those in the ELCA distressed by its actions of the last years is to remain as engaged as possible within the ELCA, while taking opportunities to challenge our leadership either to defend their actions by Scripture, Creed, and Confession or to repent of them. For those in the NALC, of course, that ship has sailed. And this observer's perceptions notwithstanding, this Convocation would not be about what the NALC is *not*, but what it *is* and what it intends to be.

### Fighting Goliath

So a few moments later the Rt. Rev. Ray Sutton, chairman of the Ecumenical Relations Task Force for the Anglican Church in North America and a Bishop in the Reformed Episcopal Church, was in the pulpit. The texts had been chosen years earlier for the *Lutheran Book of Worship's* daily lectionary—the appearance of the risen Jesus to his startled disciples at the conclusion of St. Luke's Gospel and the section of 1 Samuel where a young David enters the service of the tormented King Saul and Goliath challenges the Israelites. The preacher had been chosen weeks earlier by NALC bishop Paull Spring, who in response to a later inquiry didn't seem to think there was anything remarkable about an Anglican preacher opening the convocation of a Lutheran church.

"We know how terrible and wonderful it can be to deal with the spiritual blindness that pervades not only the world, but sadly, the jurisdictions from which we've come. . . . The depth of spiritual blindness has led us, and now you, to build again not a new church but continue the old one that has existed since the Apostles," preached Bishop Sutton, neatly describing what the NALC indeed intends to be.

### Upper tier

After the liturgy's concluding hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," Bishop Spring called "either the first or the second" convocation of the NALC to order. The church body had been launched a year earlier by the Lutheran CORE Convocation [see "A new Lutheran Church," *FL*, Oct. 2010], creating an alternative refuge for those departing the ELCA in the wake of its 2009 Churchwide Assembly. It was Lutheran CORE's convocation—except for those intent upon remaining in the ELCA who publicly ab-

stained—that had elected its outgoing chair as NALC bishop to serve for one year, elected an executive council to guide the new church in its initial year, and adopted a provisional constitution that was admittedly rough around some edges. At that point 18 congregations had "joined." Some observers thought that if the NALC had 100 congregations within a year, it would be off to a good start.

As this gathering came together, the NALC had 250 congregations and 270 clergy on its rolls, and a baptized membership of "over 100,000." That ranks it in the upper tier of the North American Lutheran "micro-synods" and is roughly the size of the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches at its peak. The delegates—each NALC pastor and at least one lay person from each NALC congregation (with adjustments aimed to make the convocation about 50-50 clergy-lay)—came to elect a bishop and other officers for full terms, to adopt a Statement on Ecumenism and approve full-communion relationships, to smooth out several of those constitutional rough edges, and to deal with the nuts-and-bolts of running a church body. A good many of the delegates and guests had arrived earlier in the week for the Lutheran CORE Convocation (attended by some 400 people) and the "Salvation Today" theological conference, which was sponsored jointly by CORE and NALC, organized by Carl Braaten, and drew some 600 attendees.

### Ecumenical openings

While at this point the NALC is largely ELCA refugees, its leaders were keen to demonstrate that this is no sectarian or schismatic body. The Convocation approved a statement on the "Ecumenical and Inter-Lutheran Commitment" of the NALC, committing the church to seeking membership in the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and working relationships with other Lutheran churches in the US and abroad. Official ecumenical guests were rather conspicuously present. Representatives of the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC), the Augsburg Lutheran Churches (both of whom would describe themselves as "sister" churches through their common association with Lutheran CORE), the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), the Anglican Church in North America, the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Columbus all greeted the Convocation.

Dr. Joel D. Lehenbauer of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s Commission on Theology and Church Relations and the Rev. Donald McCoid, ELCA Executive for Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations, were introduced, though neither addressed the delegates.

A full-communion agreement with the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), one of the largest churches in the LWF (as well as the World Alliance of Reformed Churches), was approved a few moments after EECMY General Secretary Dr. Berhanu Ofgaa brought greetings to the convocation. The two churches had already begun working together, with an NALC delegation participating earlier in the year at the EECMY’s International Theological and Mission Conference in Addis Ababa, and the approval came with no debate or discussion.

### **Ecumenical kerfuffle**

A full-communion agreement with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Uganda turned into a minor kerfuffle, though largely behind the scenes. Few at the convocation had heard of this body, and after Bp. Spring briefly (and somewhat vaguely) described what he knew of its roots, theological orthodoxy, and eagerness to enter into a relationship with the NALC, discussion revolved more around NALC’s ratification procedures. Constitutional amendments, ecumenical relationships, and social statements adopted by a convocation must be ratified by the NALC’s congregations before they take effect.

Meanwhile over on ALPB Forum Online, a former LCMS missionary in East Africa watching the proceedings online was expressing alarm over the checkered past of some of the Ugandan church’s leaders. Even as the convocation was approving full-communion, some following the online discussion were frantically contacting NALC officials, who quickly acknowledged that they did not know that church very well. According to a couple of members of the NALC Executive Council, the Rev. David Natema, the ELCU President, was a classmate of NALC Mission Director Pr. Gemechis Buba in theological school, but they had had no contact since then. It seems the agreement was proposed based on that low level of familiarity and trusting the Ugandans’ word. There had been a relationship between

this African church and the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, but that was discontinued earlier this year. The Ugandan church had a pretty nice and impressive website during the Convocation, but it has since disappeared. The end result: in a later session the NALC’s leaders reported that issues of concern had arisen about the ELCU, and the delegates voted to reconsider the agreement and refer the matter back to the Executive Council for further study.

### **Electing a bishop**

More important to the delegates were elections, addressing those constitutional rough edges, and getting to know each other better. Part of the latter included video “Mission Moments” at each of the plenary sessions. What they lacked in production quality was more than made up for by the variety of ministries highlighted, with looks at the life and worship in congregations of largely immigrant people—Oromo, Vietnamese, and Spanish-speaking—along with a more “typical Lutheran” suburban mission. Noteworthy was that while the convocation’s worship was largely and comfortably done according to the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, what was shown on the video screens often reflected the more “Holy Spirit-filled” worship found among many Global South Lutherans.

The NALC constitution instructs its nominating committee to “identify” candidates for bishop, including anyone nominated by an NALC congregation or the executive council. Four NALC pastors (Pr. James T. Lehmann, STS, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Thomasboro, IL; Pr. Paul A. Schultz, STS, First English Lutheran Church, Marysville, OH; Pr. J. Larry Yoder, STS, Grace Lutheran Church, Newton, NC and Lenoir-Rhyne College; and NALC General Secretary Pr. John F. Bradosky) had been so identified and introduced through the NALC’s monthly newsletter. While the convocation can nominate others, none were forthcoming. After short addresses from the four, voting commenced with the elections committee promising to post results as soon as it could—likely during the overnight recess. So it was that most of the delegates had left the church when the word started to spread that there had been, to the surprise of some, an election on the first ballot: Pr. John Bradosky, the NALC’s general secretary, who received 52.5% of the votes.

### Constitutional matters

In the meantime, the convocation dealt with NALC finances, which included thanking Thomas and Sandra Smith of Mount Union Lutheran Church of Elderton, PA, for their \$1 million gift to the NALC earlier in the year. The funds have been designated for theological education and “Great Commission Grants” for new congregation starts, missionaries, and “other initiatives to spread the Gospel and make disciples for Christ.”

The Friday sessions dealt with other elections and constitutional matters. A constitution task force recommended changes to the congregational ratification, particularly the provision that a congregation *not* voting within one year be counted as voting “yes.” That was replaced by a six-month deadline for congregations to vote, with ratification requiring at least half of the congregations voting, and 2/3rds of the voting congregations voting “yes.”

### Opting for mission

The task force also thought the provision on NALC pastors and “secret societies,” which had been a surprisingly controversial matter a year earlier, would be better located in the NALC ministerial standards than in its constitution. The convocation, after a brief discussion, left it in the constitution. The task force had also proposed an amendment empowering the executive council to remove the bishop (presumably as a matter of discipline), but after some debate the delegates decided removal was a matter for a convocation; instead the council will have the authority to suspend the bishop.

Neither the task force nor the executive committee could decide what to call geographical subdivisions, so they gave the convocation a choice: “deanery” or “mission district.” Those from the Carolinas noted that they had been calling themselves a “chapter.” “Mission District” carried the day. These amendments, along with the full-communion agreement with the EECMY and the ambitious statement on Ecumenism and Inter-Lutheran Commitment, now need to be ratified by the NALC’s congregations. And with all necessary business taken care of, the Convocation adjourned for the Holy Communion an hour ahead of schedule.

During the final “Mission Moment,” the suburban mission’s pastor noted that in the last ten years, 80% of LCMS and ELCA missions have either failed or have fewer than 70 people in worship. The NALC was born out of great distress, even a sense of betrayal, over the direction in which the ELCA’s leadership has been taking the ELCA. While much of that distress has centered in the debates on human sexuality, the NALC and its partners through Lutheran CORE—whether they be LCMC, Augsburg Lutheran Churches, ELCA, or other Lutherans—seem keen to address what should distress us all, a mission failure to preach Jesus Christ. Will the NALC help Lutherans to overcome the spiritual blindness that pervades the world? Stay tuned.

*The Rev. Steven P. Tibbetts, STS, is Pastor at Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA), Peoria, IL, and creator of “Pastor Zip’s Lutheran Web Links.”*

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## CORE values

by W. Stevens Shipman



*Editor’s note: In the October issue’s report on the ELCA Churchwide Assembly, I wondered if, in light of the developments of the past year, Lutheran CORE might be about to fade away. W. Stevens Shipman, newly appointed Director of Lutheran CORE, thinks not, naturally enough, and we are happy to let him explain why.*

“Rumors of my death are greatly exaggerated.” So Mark Twain reportedly said, and so I will

say on behalf of Lutheran CORE (the Lutheran Coalition for Renewal).

The evidence for our impending demise is based on mistaken assumptions. Our room at the Churchwide Assembly in Orlando was in the same general area as the Solid Rock Lutherans room in 2005, and in fact served better because it was closer to a main hallway. The location was not our choice; the ELCA churchwide office had used all the meeting space close to the main meeting area.

Lutheran CORE's first director, the Rev. Mark Chavez, has been appointed general secretary of the NALC. CORE hastened to appoint a new director (me), and I asked that I be permitted to complete my service in my present call through the end of the year. Pr. Chavez and I have already started to work toward an orderly transition.

### Now more than ever

More traditionalist ELCA Lutherans as well as those in other Lutheran groups in North America need Lutheran CORE more than ever. The pain of those who for many reasons remain in the ELCA is intense and only aggravated by constant cheerleading from certain voices in Chicago who seem out-of-touch with reality. Those who have left also need the sort of "pastoral care" Chavez reported that he found himself offering at Orlando.

Lutheran CORE is blessed with a competent and highly engaged board, which includes a chair (Lynn Kickingbird) whose professional skills involve helping groups such as ours to clarify and focus on a vision.

There is much work to be done, as Lutheran CORE needs to find its role in an ever-changing environment. Many of the leaders of constituent renewal groups have moved outside the ELCA, and we plan to work with these groups to rebuild. Congregations and pastors are asking for guidance and assistance. Already we are posting weekly intercessions online, and we are working with Sola Publishing to offer lectionary inserts that traditional Lutherans can use with confidence.

I can assure traditionalist Lutherans inside and outside the ELCA that Lutheran CORE has no intention of fading away just yet. With the prayers and faithful work of new and continuing leaders, who knows what God might accomplish for the re-configuration and renewal of North American Lutheranism?

*Pastor W. Stevens Shipman, STS, currently serves Southern Clinton County Lutheran Parish (ELCA) in Lock Haven, PA, but will shortly assume the position of Director of Lutheran Coalition for Reform.*

## The limits of a mean spirit



*Editor's note: The following contains some material originally included in a letter to the editor (who edited with gusto) of First Things and published in the August/September issue of that fine journal.*

The adjective "mean-spirited" is nearly always out of place. It is a word with a rather obvious and self-explanatory meaning. The boy who pushes the little kid into the mud or tortures small animals for fun really is mean-spirited. He enjoys being mean merely for the sake of being mean, which accounts for his behavior.

But that can't be the only meaning for the simple reason that the word comes up a lot to describe serious adults (especially politicians), and I simply have a difficult time believing that any major event in church or society happened because the leaders enjoyed being mean for the sake of being mean. So a second, more common and applicable meaning refers to a sort of petty vindictiveness or a

zest for justifying oneself by putting others down, which, sadly, is common enough. But generally the word, like so many good words that have gone before it, has come to be nothing more than a synonym for "bad."

### Explaining LCMS conflicts

Nearly every account I have ever read of the conflicts in the LCMS in the late 1960s and early 1970s is liberally peppered with the term "mean-spirited." Most accounts of that explosive and painful era have been written by people who personally knew many of the major players. They try to explain why people acted the way they did, and they usually bring in personalities, temperaments, ambitions, and a whole range of traits to let the reader in on the human side of the story. But in a broad sketch of this history and theology, relying on the term "mean-spirited" merely proves that the history is still too raw to be digested well. It is still too personal. We Lutherans are like the children of Benedict Arnold

and George Washington discussing the Revolutionary War. (Guess which side is mine.)

I suppose there is a certain human interest angle to that storyline—the story behind the story, so to speak—but the next generation does not inherit such things. The next generation inherits official statements, doctrines, positions, and policies. These things, and not anybody’s mean-spiritedness (if that even applies), are what remain relevant, especially when it is church history. When we look for what actually matters beyond any particular individual’s hurt feelings or bad temper, we see that the personal side of the story explains neither the theological issues nor the historical events.

### Who was more obnoxious?

The personal always claims to clarify history with little-known facts and details about the major players, but it actually just clouds history with loyalties and preferences that are ultimately beside the point. For example, I can speculate from their personal writing styles and demeanors that I would have much preferred the company of Erasmus over Luther, but that has little to do with the freedom or bondage of the will. Or ask yourself: who was the more obnoxious, Arius or Athanasius? Who had the better political machine working the councils? Who cares? It doesn’t matter in the slightest. I do care about the truth of the two natures of Christ and the Trinity, but I do not care how nice or mean-spirited Arius or Athanasius were. That aspect of the history is irrelevant, the stuff of *People* magazine. From this distance, it only matters who was right.

When it comes to church history, the human element, be it psychological or sociological, generally lacks any truly relevant explanatory power while always claiming to explain the “real” meaning behind everything. It would be like trying to understand a great movie by reading *People*’s dramatic accounts of the actors’ weddings. You come away knowing all kinds of things, but not anything that helps you understand the movie. It is similar with church history. Psychologizing St. Paul seems to explain a lot until you realize it doesn’t explain anything. The sociology of the Reformation is interesting as long as you don’t care about what matters.

### What does one need to know?

Consider an LCMS seminarian today. He has

to learn about the conflict of the 1970s, of course, but what, exactly, is relevant? What he needs to bring to the parish is a set of beliefs about the Scriptures, not a knowing attitude and some perception of “the real, insider’s perspective” into the personalities that fought about those beliefs in the past. It matters not one iota to me how mean or nice Herman Otten was or is. It does matter to me whether he was right or not, and I can argue that point without any reference to him whatsoever.

Until one can describe the turmoil in terms like, “A dispute arose among them concerning the nature of the Scriptures, whether they were the Word of God and therefore by definition inerrant in all matters, or whether they only contained the Word of God, the Gospel, and thus could be studied as human documents . . . ”; and until one can do this without mentioning a power-hungry president, a favorite professor, hurt feelings, etc., no presentation of the history will be accurate in the relevant ways. Instead, such history will simply be the theologically and historically irrelevant equivalent of a *People* exclusive.

### Don’t tell your children

As one young enough to know about my church’s past unpleasantness only secondhand, I urge you in the ELCA, NALC, LCMC, or whatever: do not bequeath to your next generation a telling of your church’s story that depends on knowing who was a jerk, who was mean-spirited, who treated whom shamefully at which meeting, who was dishonest, what dark grudges or fears for loss of scholarly reputation informed this or that professor’s articles. Leave aside the personal stories of the way you were shut out of the debate by procedural moves, of your patience and long-suffering, of the insults you absorbed. Don’t tell your children what might have happened if only old so-and-so hadn’t been cowed by public opinion, if only this or that group’s propaganda machine hadn’t been funded by this or that outside group. You won’t be telling them history or theology; you will simply be appalling them, amusing them, or keeping your personal battles and prejudices alive in them, as the case may be.

Instead, take the theological issues as foundational and tell the story this way: “A dispute arose among them concerning the Scriptures and morality . . . ” Discuss the theology, not the people and

politics. See if you can tell the whole story without using any proper names or obvious personal descriptions. Do it the way you might explain the Donatist controversy or some other conflict from the distant past that no doubt featured many interesting personalities but only remains relevant because of its theological arguments and conclusions.

You don't start a new church because the people in the old one were mean, and you don't explain the fracturing of your church by saying the people leaving were mean. That would be much more petty (one might even say mean-spirited) than

whatever mean things they did to you. Explain your church's position in terms you could stand on even if all your opponents were as nice as the day is long. This way leaves open the chance of reconciliation without betraying personal loyalties or labeling winners and losers, which in turn leaves open the possibility of future, less familiar Lutheran stories that aren't simply another recitation of "A dispute arose among them . . ." until we're all in micro-synods of one complaining about how mean-spirited everyone else is.

—by Peter Speckhard, associate editor

## From the archives:



*Editor's Note: This year Forum Letter celebrates 40 years of publication. We continue our series reprinting some tidbit from an earlier issue, something both of historical interest and contemporary applicability. This month's selection comes from the January 2002 issue, where your present editor—at that time associate editor—commented on a remarkable interfaith event in the Sierra Pacific Synod. When it was run in 2002, it was unsigned, but I'll 'fess up to being the primary author.*

The community Easter Sunrise Service is an annual event in many towns across the land. Many Lutherans are more prone these days to a late night Easter Vigil that preempts greeting the sun on the Day of Resurrection, but there are still plenty of us who like the early morning observance. Of course you never know what you will see by the dawn's early light. Take, for example, the Interfaith Sunrise Service last Easter in West Sacramento, CA. Listen to the description that ELCA Pr. Marjorie Beach, one of the participants, wrote for her Community Lutheran Church newsletter: "Those leading us in song, scripture, sermon, and prayer were of Native American, Religious Science, Christian, Wiccan, and Bahai faith traditions. It was the first time I had participated in such a service, and it was for me a dream come true."

### Gleeful emphasis

Pr. Beach went on to quote "one fun and inspiring hymn" that was part of this service. We can't share it all with you, but a few lines will give you

the idea: *We are flowers of one garden / We are leaves of one tree / We are drops of one ocean / We are waves of one sea / We are pieces of one pie / We are piggies of one sty / Come and join us, in our quest for unity / It's a way of life for you and me.* (Emphasis, we gleefully note, added.) This song, Pr. Beach promised her members, would soon be sung in Sunday morning worship at Community Lutheran Church. . . .

### Elastic orthodoxy

We will grant that the range of Lutheran orthodoxy in the ELCA is an increasingly elastic thing, and perhaps nowhere more than in the Sierra Pacific Synod. Nonetheless, one must wonder whether that range really is wide enough to embrace Wicca and Religious Science. It has been whispered around the synod—in reaction to the reactionary pastors [who complained to the bishop]—that those offended by Pr. Beach's antics are opposed to interfaith activity. Not quite. In an appropriate context, interfaith prayers can be a salutary thing. Who in the ELCA is not appalled at the charges recently filed against LCMS Atlantic District President David Benke for his participation in interfaith prayers at Yankee Stadium after the September 11 attacks? A Christian pastor offering a prayer to God "through Christ" is certainly permissible in any setting. But that context is quite obviously different from an Easter Sunday that is supposed to be a celebration of Christ's resurrection if all that comes from it is a half-hearted affirmation that "we are piggies of one sty." It seems incredible for a Christian pastor to worship at any time with outright pagans and spiritualists. Why

would anyone even want to do this? For that matter, why aren't the pagans and the Wiccans more choosy? . . .

### A thrilling scene

California old-timers tell a story about the late Gaylerd Falde, then president of the South Pacific District of the American Lutheran Church. It seems that Falde suspected that one of his pastors was preaching questionable doctrine, so he attended a service at the congregation. When he heard something he found inappropriate, he walked to the chancel and announced that the service was over. He then escorted the pastor out of the sanctuary and into some serious discussion. Of course this is legend, and it was many years ago if it happened at all, and time and nostalgia have surely embellished the

details. Nonetheless, for all the thrill the scene evokes, it is hard to imagine any current ELCA bishop feeling compelled to do any such thing. . . . Bp. [Robert] Mattheis—a not unrepresentative figure among the Conference of Bishops—has been reluctant to take action against anyone for anything. He now has at least five congregations that have called pastors not on the ELCA clergy roster. The message is clear in the Sierra Pacific Synod: there are no limits, and the majority of the synod's pastors seem to find it entirely satisfactory. Perhaps the next synod assembly's worship planners could find a use for Cole Porter's *Anything Goes*. Or maybe the synod should just take up Pr. Beach's favorite as its theme song— "We're all piggies of one sty." A sty, indeed. That may not be a bad image after all.

## Omnium gatherum



**New offerings from ALPB** • The American Lutheran Publicity Bureau offers a number of things besides *Forum*

*Letter* and *Lutheran Forum*. The latest publications are both well worth checking out. *A Little Book of Lutheran Canons* by Pr. Rod Ronneberg has been reissued in a new edition. This fine collection of Eucharistic prayers would be a good alternative for those who find the prayers in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* to be banal or heretical or both. Robert Jenson's *Lutheran Slogans: Use and Abuse* would make a great adult study. Jenson explains why "slogans" such as "*Sola Scriptura*" are both important and easily

abused. You can order both books, and several others as well, at [www.alpb.org](http://www.alpb.org).

**Prayers** • While we're talking alternative prayers, elsewhere in this issue Steve Shipman mentioned the weekly intercessions offered by Lutheran CORE. They are generally quite good, and can be found at [www.lutherancore.org](http://www.lutherancore.org). You will not likely find there any of the silliness that sometimes creeps into the prayers on [sundaysandseasons.com](http://sundaysandseasons.com)—you know, no prayers addressed to Mother or asking God to bless the tundra.

—roj

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