

FORUM LETTER

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The City of God must bear in mind that among her very enemies are hidden her future citizens; and when confronted with them she must not think it a fruitless task to bear with their hostility until she finds them confessing the faith. In the same way, while the City of God is on pilgrimage in this world, she has in her midst some who are united with her in participation in the sacraments, but who will not join with her in the eternal destiny of the saints. Some of these are hidden; some are well known, for they do not hesitate to murmur against God, whose sacramental sign they bear, even in the company of his acknowledged enemies. At one time they join his enemies in filling the theaters, at another they join with us in filling the churches. But, such as they are, we have less right to despair of the reformation of some of them, when some predestined friends, as yet unknown even to themselves, are concealed among our most open enemies. In truth, those two cities are interwoven and intermixed in this era, and await separation at the last judgment. My task, as far as I shall receive divine assistance, will be to say what I think necessary in explanation of the origin, development, and appointed end of those two cities. And this I shall do to enhance the glory of the City of God, which will shine the more brightly when set in contrast with cities of other allegiance. It is therefore God, the author and giver of felicity, who, being the one true God, gives earthly dominion both to good people and to evil. And he does this not at random or, as one may say, fortuitously, because he is God, not Fortune. Rather he gives in accordance with the order of events in history, an order completely hidden from us, but perfectly known to God himself. Yet God is not bound in subjection to this order of events. He is himself in control . . . — Augustine of Hippo, *City of God* (cited in J. Robert Wright, *Readings for the Daily Office from the Early Church*, Church Hymnal Corp., 1991, 412-13).

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Is there a Lutheran ethos?



Over the years I've had occasion to criticize (in *FL* and elsewhere) my *alma mater*, Valparaiso University, for seeming to embrace the same secularizing trend that has rendered so many formerly Christian institutions largely non-religious in character or, if still overtly Christian, at least singing in tune with the politically correct liberalism that dominates academia generally. I'm on two VU mailing lists, as an alumnus and as a Lutheran pastor, and I really do understand that it can be a tricky balancing act to market the university as a religious institution without alienating the non-religious and non-Lutheran constituencies of the wider VU community.

Feel-good phrases

The key to walking the line successfully seems to be peppering the mailings with vague, feel-good phrases like “make a difference” or “faith-based,” phrases that throw a bone to religious folks without really making the non-religious folks mad. When it comes to acknowledging that Valpo is a Lutheran university, my complaint with the balancing act has been that every mention of Lutheranism seems to be in the phrase “Lutheran heritage,” thus acknowledging the warm fuzzies many older and wealthier potential donors have for the place while liberating the university’s purpose going forward from any of the constraints of Lutheranism. When I visit Valpo (which is still home) and the conversation with my dad (a retired VU professor) turns to university matters, we’ve taken to using “Lutheran heritage” as a shorthand phrase for all the ways VU seems to keep Lutheranism, and especially any residual LCMS-ishness, firmly in the past.

Recently my dad called to say that perhaps there had been an encouraging shift. VU’s President Heckler has been promoting the next phase in the master plan of development of the university, including some major building projects, and was quoted in the local newspaper as saying, “Its [the master plan’s] principles position the university to meet unknown future needs while respecting our Lutheran ethos.”

From heritage to ethos

“Respecting our Lutheran ethos.” This certainly seems like a more present tense thing than “heritage,” so just that much is encouraging. It still falls short of “Lutheran mission” or “Lutheran purpose,” but “ethos” seems like a step in the right direction from “heritage.”

To be sure, there are still a couple of minor red flags in the otherwise positive quote. For example, to point out the plan does one thing while still doing another thing implies that the two things in question oppose each other somehow. Can one lose weight while eating pizza every night? Take a big vacation while saving for retirement? Sure, there might be a plan to do both, but the very existence of the plan implies a *prima facie* conflict that the plan hopes to resolve.

In this case, what “unknown future need” could even in theory conflict with having a Lutheran ethos? Why does a Lutheran ethos have to be held in

tension with something else? To say we can do this while still respecting a Lutheran ethos implies that such an ethos is an obstacle of some kind that we have to fit into the larger plan.

Then there is that word “respecting.” It sounds like a set-aside program, as though the university certainly plans to go beyond the Lutheran thing, but promises not to leave it behind. But be that as it may, the upgrade from heritage to ethos is encouraging and worthy of some sustained reflection.

Jell-O jokes

What does a university with a Lutheran ethos look like? How is it different from any other university? Is it just a matter of making Garrison Keillor-esque jokes about potluck Jell-O in the cafeteria? It is bad enough that “ethos” itself isn’t the easiest word in the world to define—I’ll go with “character” as a close synonym for purposes of this article—but when you multiply it by the vagueness of what exactly constitutes “Lutheran” in a university setting, “Lutheran ethos” becomes something almost impossible to pin down. You can have a Lutheran heritage pretty much by default and preserve it fairly easily with a bunch of old yearbooks and memorabilia, but what does one do to respect (if not promote) a Lutheran ethos?

There are a few gimme’s in the list of potential ideas. I suppose a Lutheran university would be a place where a sizable chunk of the student body was familiar with the *Small Catechism*, where a lot of people know they are “to fear and love God,” and where most people at least recognize the phrase “this is most certainly true,” even if it sounds too dogmatic for the more academically fashionable of the open-minded, inclusive, and multi-cultural undergraduates. There would be more Bach there than in some music programs, probably more German majors than at a typical university, and a general acquaintance with the church calendar (though it has always bugged my dad that the baseball team sometimes schedules games on Good Friday and Easter; maybe a good place to begin respecting a Lutheran ethos would be to establish once and for all that celebrating the death and resurrection of Christ takes priority over playing baseball). But those are mostly small, outward things, not far removed from the Jell-O jokes, the sorts of things that are simply bound to happen wherever you have good numbers

of Lutherans collected in one place.

Something deeper

But then how to apply the definition to a university? If it is just a matter of having a lot of Lutherans around, then so what? Does the University of Minnesota fulfill its mission “while respecting a Lutheran ethos” simply because a lot of the students there are Lutheran? If so, what is the difference between VU and any public university with a good number of Lutheran undergrads? No, the ethos—the character—has to refer to something deeper. The outward manifestations of ethos must flow from some inner core where ethos meets purpose, where we don’t just promise to respect something but seek to promote it.

And it is here—beneath the skin of Lutheran phrases and Teutonic genealogy—that we encounter a stark divide between two incompatible ways of being Lutheran. Representatives of both ways will know “A Mighty Fortress” and joke fondly (or not so fondly) about our confirmation instructors, but if we want to know what inspires a Lutheran university, we’ll have contradictory answers that will ultimately divide us outwardly as well.

The Reformation: two values

To boil it way down to simplicity, I think many Lutherans inherit from the Reformation the value of questioning authority. Others inherit the value of insisting on getting things right. Those two

ways of interpreting the nature of the Reformation will result, ultimately, in drastically different “Lutheran ethos” [what exactly is the plural of ethos?] in a university setting. One will value the search for truth, while the other will value the application of Truth. “This is most certainly true” will be a way of looking at it for one group, *the* way of looking at it for the other group. And to “respect” both approaches is to declare the former approach correct.

Thus while the change from “Lutheran heritage” to “Lutheran ethos” is a big step in the right direction and gives me hope for Valpo’s future, I think it merely postpones or papers over the bigger issue that will still need to be addressed. Revisionist and conservative forms of Lutheranism are getting less and less compatible over time, and the common ethos that Lutherans from both camps still share will not last more than another generation.

The goal of being an independent Lutheran university cannot settle for respecting or even promoting a Lutheran ethos. No university will bridge the widening chasm that increasingly divides all of Christendom. But the good news, I guess, is that VU will not, as I and many others had been fearing, soon become a secular university with a Lutheran heritage. Instead, it will soon be the flagship university of the ELCA (though not officially, just as it was never officially LCMS) with a Lutheran ethos. And ELCA insiders will insist there is a difference.

--by Peter Speckhard, associate editor

Of copy machines and holding a church together

by William A. Hartfelder, Jr.



The church has long advocated that congregations provide sabbatical or extended study leave opportunities every six or seven years for their clergy. I have been blessed to experience two sabbaticals over the course of more than 25 years of parish ministry. The first was a three-month sabbatical in the fall of 2001 supported by a Lilly Foundation Clergy Renewal Grant. It included a two-week “In the Footsteps of St. Paul” journey in Turkey (I was in Antalya, Turkey on September 11th) followed by a two-month stay at the Collegio Sant’Anselmo, a Benedictine

community on the Aventine Hill overlooking the Tiber River in Rome. My most recent experience was a six-week return to the Collegio Sant’Anselmo in the fall of 2010. In addition to time for extensive reading and study, both stays at the Collegio provided ample opportunity not only to explore the wonders of Rome past and present, but also to work on personal growth in the areas of prayer and meditation. I also experienced unanticipated opportunities to hear about the ELCA from the perspective of “the other.”

One evening during my first stay in Rome, I

was enjoying a classic *cena* (supper) in one of the myriad restaurants found in Rome. This one was just outside the wall of the Vatican. I was with two Benedictines, both Americans. The fellow from Kansas was pursuing his doctorate in liturgics. The fellow from Florida was studying for a doctorate in canon law. Interestingly, in his youth the Floridian Benedictine had attended a Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod high school.

Honest ecumenism

It was an evening of wide-ranging conversation and what I call “honest ecumenism,” enjoyed over good food and drink. At one point I asked my dinner companions, “You both know the American religious scene. What is your opinion of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America?” After a thoughtful pause, the fellow from Florida answered, “Will, I’ve listened to you at table and heard you talk about the ELCA in other conversations and all I can say is this: it sounds to me as if you belong more to a corporation than a church. Why don’t you Lutherans try the gospel?”

I have to admit I was taken aback by my dinner companion’s bluntness! After collecting my thoughts I responded, “You’re not alone in that observation. In fact, many of us within the ELCA are concerned that we’ve allowed North American corporate culture to have too great an influence on us as a church.” I was also very aware of the irony of our exchange. There I was, an ELCA pastor sitting just outside the Vatican being chided by a Benedictine priest that we Lutherans ought to “try the gospel”!

A priest, a rabbi, and a Lutheran pastor

When I turned to the fellow from Kansas, he responded with a story about a priest, a rabbi and a Lutheran pastor. No, they were not entering a bar! He said, “All three clergy were good friends in a small town whose houses of worship were right next to one another. One day during a fierce storm, a bolt of lightning set all three houses of worship on fire. At great personal risk Father O’Malley ran into St. Mary’s. Dodging flames and falling debris he emerged clutching the tabernacle containing the reserved *Corpus Christi*. At the same time Rabbi Abramovitz, also at great personal risk, ran into Temple Shalom. After what felt like forever the Rab-

bi emerged from the synagogue clutching the Torah scroll he had rescued from the *Aron ha-Kodesh*, the Torah Ark.

The rabbi and the priest were consoling one another when their colleague Pr. Will (my friend used my name) from St. John’s Lutheran Church stumbled over to them sweat-streaked, smoke-stained and gasping for breath. Pr. Will sat down on the curb. When his concerned colleagues asked if he was OK, Pr. Will looked up and blurted, “Do you guys have any idea how much a copy machine weighs?” My friend followed up his story with a question. “Will,” he asked, “what is the sacred center of the ELCA?”

The remainder of our evening was an interesting, at times uncomfortable, but genuinely honest give-and-take conversation about the many challenges both our churches face as we seek to be relevant while remaining faithful to the core beliefs and traditions of the one holy, catholic and apostolic faith. The two responses I heard that night in Rome to what I intended as a simple question have stayed with me not only as an example of the “serendipitous” positives one can gain from a sabbatical, but also as questions worth asking as I continue to seek to be faithful in my service as a pastor in the ELCA.

Another perspective

My first sabbatical was such a positive experience, not only for me but also for my congregation, that when a sabbatical opportunity arose at my current congregation I knew immediately I wanted to return to Rome and the Collegio Sant’Anselmo. I was not disappointed. My first sabbatical had taught me that I do have a quiet side and it had been grossly overlooked and malnourished. My return trip to Rome had two foci: a self-directed study of our Lutheran Confessions and time for renewing prayer and meditation practices I had learned on my first sabbatical. And on this trip I had another opportunity to see the ELCA from the perspective of another. Not surprisingly (it was Rome, after all), it again happened over a meal. (I have been blessed with opportunities to travel extensively outside the United States, and when it comes to food I describe the difference between us and Europeans thusly: In Europe it takes twice as long to eat half as much!)

That fall of 2010 I was enjoying a multi-

course *pranzo* (lunch) after Sunday Mass with several companions at a Tuscan restaurant not far from the Pantheon. As usual the conversation was far ranging. At one point I was asked about the process by which the ELCA had made its momentous decision the previous year about gay and lesbian clergy at its churchwide assembly. I tried my best to describe a polity that sounds quite alien to Roman Catholic ears. When I stated that two-thirds of those assembled as voting members of the assembly were laity, there were immediate expressions of approval that so many lay people would participate in such a complex and historic decision involving Scripture, church doctrine and tradition.

Perplexity

A companion from Germany asked me, "What were the criteria used by which these lay members were selected to make such an important decision?" I answered, "They were elected at their local judicatory level, what we call a synod." My companion pressed, "But what were the criteria used to identify them? What level of biblical, theological and doctrinal formation was expected of them to be eligible for election?" My friend was perplexed, to say the least, when all I could say was that they were elected by their local judicatories to "vote their conscience" at the churchwide assembly solely as members of the church.

Not surprisingly, our group entered into a conversation on the "formation of a person's con-

science" (a high concern for spiritual and intellectual formation is characteristic of Roman Catholics) as a Christian and member of the Body of Christ, the church. My companions were totally perplexed and, I detected, bemused when my repeated response was "they were duly elected to vote their individual conscience." As an example I described what happened at my own synod assembly at which a lay member went to the microphone and moved that those elected to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly be asked where they stood on the question of ordaining gay and lesbian clergy in homosexual relationships. I told them my bishop had to rule the motion out of order. Finally, my initial questioner asked, "How can you expect to hold a church like that together?" In the fall of 2010 my answer was, "We are finding out."

Since that sabbatical conversation in Rome, every time I learn of another congregation's successful or failed vote to leave the ELCA and the inevitable fallout from those votes, I hear my companion's question voiced over a wonderful lunch in Rome, "How can you hold a church like that together?"

I also wonder how much a copy machine weighs!

William A. Hartfelder, Jr. is senior pastor of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA), Westerville, OH. This is his first contribution to Forum Letter. You can contact him at w.hartfelder@grace43081.org.

Bags of sand

by Nathan Howard Yoder



[Editor's note: The following is a slightly edited version of a sermon preached at the 2012 General Retreat of the Society of the Holy Trinity.]

Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers,

so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. (2 Corinthians 4.1-6)

There is a house in Ocean Isle, NC, situated precisely on the point of a peninsula separating the sea from the intercoastal waterway, and thus hemmed in on two sides by perpetually pounding surf. To look at it is to see folly, for it is impossible to make out any form of foundation whatsoever past

the man-made mountain of sandbags holding it up. Obstinace and inevitability: "The last decade has averaged over 15 hurricanes per year capable of striking the eastern seaboard. But I will make my home where I wish, and the devil take storm and sea." Standing at the foot of that sandbag Babel with my feet in the surf, I was reminded sharply of our Lord's parable of the foolish builders who scorned rock for sand.

Prayers of sand

Two prayers of sand warrant comparison, both written as so-called alternatives to the Lord's Prayer (*Kyrie eleison*). The "Thuringian Student Prayer" was popular among the ranks of the "Deutsche Christen," those churchmen who during the Third Reich were supportive of Hitler's regime, and it thus reflects that organization's demonic and pseudo-scholarly attempts to conflate racial ideology with Christian doctrine:

Father in Heaven,
I believe in your almighty hand,
I believe in nation and Fatherland,
I believe on the might and honor of the ancestors,
I believe, you are our sword and shield,
You punish the treason of our land,
and bless the deed that frees our home.
Germany, awaken to freedom.
Father in Heaven,
I believe on your power, justice and love,
I believe on my dear German People
and Fatherland.
I know that godlessness and treason
tears our People and rips it asunder.
I know that nevertheless the longing and the power
of freedom dwells in the best [of us].
I believe that this freedom will come through the
love of the Father in heaven,
when we believe in our own power.
[trans. by Walter Kunneth]

The second prayer was one of five options to be prayed alongside the Lord's Prayer in an ELCA "Rite of Reception" Service in July 2010, and it is no less an attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable:

Our Mother who is within us
we celebrate your many names.

Your wisdom come,
your will be done,
unfolding from the depths
within us.

Each day you give us all that we need.

You remind us of our limits
and we let go.

You support us in our power
and we act in courage.

For you are the dwelling place within us,
the empowerment around us,

and the celebration among us, now and forever.

Twisted lies, twisted souls

In every way that matters, these two prayers are the same simple apostasy, the futile products of foolish hearts. *Support us in our power . . . unfolding from the depths within us.* We will call God what we wish. We will pray for "truth" and "freedom" as we define it, divine knowledge unfolding in secret, hidden in our inward nature. *We believe in our own power.* In the words of Jeremiah 14.14: lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds. Bags and bags of sand.

This is the reality of distortion with which we in the church are faced in this age: abject autonomy hailed as the good, and co-option of Scripture for ideological self-gratification. To define the Holy in language of our own choosing. To build a foundation for, make a name for, and thus make a god of the self, swallowing the hook of the prince of this world. The fallacy of power, to come to God on *my own terms*, to re-interpret fundamental articles of faith as I see fit, appealing to *my* conscience and the hidden thoughts of *my* heart as part and parcel of God's holy will. This is the same old deceitful, diabolical declaration, "You will not die." Twisted lies that form twisted souls.

Conscience will betray us

Those who appeal to the prowess of conscience would do well to remember Luther at Worms, with the lord electors and the Holy Roman Emperor as witnesses. Without being halted, held and honed by the Word, conscience is beset by and besotted with sin, and it can and will betray us. Christ Jesus, the Word of God in law and gospel, is the rock, the center of who we are. Those two pagan overtures, blood-mythological muscle and goddess

navel-gazing, are equally far from Christ the center, and the Christian conscience that knows it is entirely bound up in Christ and must take his Word as the one standard in faith and life.

The bedrock of our faith is that in Jesus Christ, God's saving Word *comes from outside us*. The Spirit conforms our minds and lives to him, builds us on the rock. The inception, nurture, and reinforcement of our faith do not originate in us. We do not have the power to free ourselves. We do not have the power to declare what is good and what is evil, and make it so. We do not have the authority to alter the name of God to suit our fragile sensibilities. In baptism, conscience belongs to Christ Jesus. Separated from the Rock, consciences afford less protection than a sandbag; they are distorted dreams blind to looming disaster. The tide is in, hell and high water are crashing down, sins are celebrated and blessed, and the devil delights.

Run with perseverance

How do we respond to apostasy? Rage, despair, apathy? These options dance to the tune of the prince of this world, all symptomatic of the sinful pride that uses scripture for its own gain and thus puts up more than a few sandbags of its own. We are not "peddling" Christ like so much insurance, trivializing cross and resurrection as if law and gospel were our own product, our own bushel-bound plaything, the abuse of which should warrant either revenge or depression. In the Holy Spirit, our response to apostasy is courage. Our response is determined peace. Our response is hope and perseverance.

And that is because it is not our own power that we believe in, and the truth we proclaim is not a sandbox construction someone can kick over. We have a Lord. We labor for him, out of love for the faithful and the ungodly alike, and the Spirit will not allow our mileage spent in his service to make us faith-weary and heart-heavy. We will not let go

of his Word. We will not lose heart. The Letter to the Hebrews states it plainly: "Let us lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God" (12.1-2).

Hearts enthralled by nothingness

So we run. And to paraphrase a famous runner: When we get tired, we sleep. When we get hungry, we eat. And when we have to go . . . well, we go. We do our work, and we go to bed, praying as the quiet night settles in, knowing that, day and night, we remain in the sight of God, commending into our Lord's hands our bodies and souls, and all that is ours. In this we follow our Lord, who commended his spirit to the Father at his death—that death to which we are joined in baptism. And in the unity of the Holy Spirit, standing on the Rock, we commend our faith to the conscience of fallen humanity. We set the gospel before sinners and trust that the Word which spoke forth light out of darkness, spoke worlds from *nothing*, can break through hearts ensconced and enthralled by *nothingness*.

The Holy Spirit has not abandoned the church of Jesus Christ, and never will. He will support us by *his* power until Christ ushers in the everlasting kingdom and the church that is struggling, running, completes the marathon and receives the imperishable crown. Until then we commend our lives to Christ, and we commend the purity of his Word and the sacred ordinances of his house to every conscience in the sight of God. In the name of the Father, and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit, and in no other name.

Nathan Howard Yoder is pastor of St. Martin's Lutheran Church (NALC), Maiden, NC. This is his first contribution to Forum Letter.

Omnium gatherum



Friendly admonition • In the September issue, I poked a little fun at our Episcopalian brethren and sistern over their many minor orders of clergy. Actually, I was talking about

the *Brand Guidelines for the Episcopal Church*, speculating that one reason for the length of the document (or maybe for my trouble downloading it) had to do with the space it takes to spell out all those

minor orders. I seem to have offended The Rev. Canon J. Robert Wright at General Theological Seminary in New York, who writes a “friendly admonition” expressing sadness at what he calls my “snide comments upon nomenclature and beliefs that are common not only to Anglicans but also to the largest churches in the world.” I was, he suggests, simply “fanning the flames.” I’m not quite sure what is burning, and I rather thought my remarks a bit less significant than that; our Lutheran readers don’t generally take things quite so seriously. For the record, I wish we Lutherans had a few *more* “orders of clergy” than we do, though three would be enough to satisfy me. And also for the record, not all of our Episcopalian readers (of whom I now know there are at least two) felt offended; another Episcopal priest wrote that he enjoyed the “swipe at the *Brand Guidelines*,” which, he said, “needs swiping at.” In any event, I fervently hope that my remarks, whether they qualify as “snide,” “swiping,” or just “poking fun,” haven’t permanently damaged the relationship between the ELCA and The Episcopal Church. (But on the other hand, I don’t think I will follow Canon Wright’s suggestion that I ask the coordinating commission between these two full communion partners to discuss the matter. I would really hope they have better things to talk about. Not that they’d take up the minor orders on my suggestion anyway.)

Good preaching • The Society of the Holy Trinity held its annual General Retreat at Mundelein, IL, in September, and as usual there was some outstanding preaching. One of the sermons by the Rev. Dr.

Nathan Howard Yoder is included in this issue; the others, by the Rev. Dr. Amy Schifrin and the Rev. Dr. Brian Peterson, will eventually be posted on the Society’s website, www.societyholymtrinity.org. Well worth a read. The sermons were preached in the context of an election for Senior of the Society. The Rev. Dr. Frank Senn was chosen to serve again in this capacity, a happy and Spirit-led choice indeed.

Where’s Peter? • Our intrepid associate editor will be one of the speakers at the 36th annual Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions at Concordia Seminary, Ft. Wayne, January 23-25, 2013. The symposium theme this year is “Morality and Ethics in the Public Square – the Lutheran Challenge,” and Pr. Speckhard’s topic will be “Can the Shoes of Richard John Neuhaus Be Filled?” Neuhaus, as most readers know, was a long-time editor of *Forum Letter*; some readers may also know that Associate Editor Speckhard is RJN’s nephew. Sounds like an interesting symposium, all in all, and while we don’t have registration information available yet, my guess is that it will be posted soon on the seminary website.

Tardy • I know this issue is a little tardy; I was out of town for several days, first at the biennial meeting of the Lutheran Historical Conference and then on a brief vacation to visit our daughter in Rochester, NY. Sometimes tardiness is unavoidable. It must not be so with you; there’s still plenty of time to give the *Forum* package as a Christmas gift to your pastor, your colleague, or anyone else who would enjoy it or who, in any event, needs to read it. A \$2 discount if you subscribe online at alpb.org. – roj

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