

# FORUM LETTER

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## Inside this issue:

CORE responds to Benne 4

*Ubi caritas et amor, Deus  
ibi est* 6

*Omnium gatherum* 7

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## Like fighting the hydra



What worries me much more is *Pride* – my besetting sin, as yours is *indolence*. During my afternoon ‘meditations’ – which I at least attempt quite regularly now – I have found out ludicrous and terrible things about my own character. Sitting by, watching the rising thoughts to break their necks as they pop up, one learns to know the sort of thoughts that do come. And, will you believe it, one out of every three is a thought of self-admiration: when everything else fails, having had its neck broken, up comes the thought, ‘What an admirable fellow I am to have broken their necks!’ I catch myself posturing before the mirror, so to speak, all day long. I pretend I am carefully thinking out what to say to the next pupil (for *his* good, of course) and then suddenly realise I am really thinking how frightfully clever I’m going to be and how he will admire me. I pretend I am remembering an evening of good fellowship in a really friendly and charitable spirit – and all the time I’m really remembering how good a fellow I am and how well I talked. And then when you force yourself to stop it, you admire yourself for doing *that*. Its like fighting the hydra (you remember, when you cut off one head another grew). There seems to be no end to it. Depth under depth of self-love and self-admiration. Closely connected with this is the difficulty I find in making even the faintest approach to giving up my own will: which as everyone has told us is the only thing to do. – C. S. Lewis, *They Stand Together: The Letters of C. S. Lewis to Arthur Greeves (1914-1963)* [letter of 30 Jan 1930] (Macmillan, 1979), 339.

## An episcopal visit in Manhattan



Immanuel Lutheran Church is an historic congregation in Manhattan, established in 1863, with a distinguished record of ministry and mission in New York. (As an aside, it was the location of the organizational meeting of the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau back in 1914.) A Missouri Synod congregation, it went with the AELC back in 1976 and thus passed into the ELCA. Now it is having conversations about whether to disaffiliate from the ELCA and join the North American Lutheran Church – a move that has been recommended by Immanuel’s pastor, Gregory Fryer.

The congregation is going through a responsible process of discernment. There have been a series of congregational forums, some led by congregation members advocating for or against the change, one with representatives of the NALC, one with Bp. Rimbo and other synod officials. Videos of these presentations have been posted on the congregation’s website ([www.immanuelnyc.org](http://www.immanuelnyc.org)). A vote is scheduled for November. As has often been the case in congregations contemplating this kind of change, there are strong feelings on both sides, and

Immanuel can hardly hope to emerge from this process without some losses.

When Bp. Rimbo & Co. visited Immanuel on October 11, he had been alerted to several of the concerns of the congregation and came ready to respond. What he said provides some remarkable insight into some of the problems that continue to plague the ELCA.

The first issue Bp. Rimbo addressed was that of “where do pastors come from?” This starting point was perhaps prompted by the stated fears of some at Immanuel about a limited pool of potential future pastors should the congregation leave the ELCA; or perhaps it was that some seemed to think that there are some ELCA pastors who shouldn’t have gotten through the candidacy process. Whatever the reason, Rimbo asked Pr. Jonathan Linman, his assistant responsible for leadership formation, to respond; Linman briefly and rather innocuously explained how the discernment and candidacy process works.

### **A notorious congregation**

Then the bishop turned abruptly to the matter of Ebenezer Lutheran Church in San Francisco — the notorious “herchurch” where feminist theology run amok has led to what amounts to an abandonment of Christianity in favor of goddess worship. It seems rather remarkable that what is happening in a congregation in San Francisco would be a major concern in New York. But the congregation had been made aware of “herchurch” by Pr. Fryer, who had been particularly moved by a photo on the “herchurch” website showing a young girl, perhaps eight years old or so, lighting a candle before a collection of quite non-Christian images. “What chance does this child have?” Pr. Fryer had lamented. “She comes to a Christian Church. She comes to a *Lutheran* church, and she is taught to worship an idol.” The pastor’s consternation had clearly been shared by many in his congregation, and they had raised Ebenezer as an issue to which they wanted their bishop to respond.

Rimbo first turned the question over to the Manhattan Conference Dean, Pr. Elise Brown. She claimed to have only recently been made aware of “herchurch” when she had visited Immanuel a few months ago. (Apparently she isn’t a reader of *Forum Letter*; we first wrote about “herchurch” back in

2005.) She described them as “a group loosely affiliated with the ELCA,” which seems an odd description of what is in fact an ELCA congregation — though perhaps it suggests that the whole ELCA is several thousand “loosely affiliated” congregations, which may have more truth to it than synod officials usually admit.

Pr. Brown had done her research. She had looked at the “herchurch” website, and she admitted to being “quite concerned and offended myself.” What is happening in San Francisco is not “in any way, shape or form representative of our denomination.”

### **It’s not my business**

The bishop then took the microphone and assured the people of Immanuel that he had just last week spoken with the bishop of that synod (Sierra Pacific Synod’s Bp. Mark Holmerud). “He tells me that that congregation has been reprimanded by him and that they are under investigation.” That was quite a revelation, and probably an inappropriate one. I’m a member of that synod, and it was news to me. In ELCA polity, bishops have a range of possible actions they can take against problematic congregations and pastors, some of them private and confidential. Bp. Rimbo was making public what his colleague has apparently not chosen to make public.

But he went on to say that in the ELCA’s polity, what happens in San Francisco is not really his business. It’s the business of the bishop of the Sierra Pacific Synod. Pr. Brown rather boldly chimed in that she actually does consider it her business as an ELCA pastor and member, because the San Francisco congregation is a part of the ELCA, but she again assured the New York parishioners that what’s happening in San Francisco is not representative of the ELCA. Pr. Linman then immediately jumped in to reiterate that in ELCA polity, with its vaunted interdependent “three expressions” of the church, it isn’t the responsibility of the bishop of Metropolitan New York to meddle in affairs in California.

### **What is a bishop, anyway?**

This led to Pr. Fryer asking a rather pointed question: Is the ELCA in fact a confederation of 65 small and independent churches, or is there any sense in which the bishops — as has been historically true of the office — represent the unity of the church,

so that there is a mutual responsibility and accountability? Bp. Rimbo tied to punt on that one, saying it is “both” – but then actually admitted that the ELCA is really more like a loose confederation of synods.

When asked if something like “herchurch” could happen in the Metro New York Synod, the bishop was adamant. “They would be out,” he exclaimed. “We don’t fool around with that kind of foolishness when we hear about it. If there is misconduct of such a nature as that, it’s heresy. We would bring charges against them.”

All in all, a fascinating exchange. A congregation member asked why something like this is allowed to continue, and that, of course, is the appropriate question. The disciplinary action of “private reprimand” is, truth be told, one that some bishops have utilized, perhaps so that they can convince themselves that they’ve taken action, or perhaps so that they can tell other bishops that they’ve taken action. Perhaps it is even a response that bishops convince themselves is “pastoral.” It does have the virtue of not making a public scene (something no bishop wants), and it seems to have been a not uncommon way to deal with gay pastors prior to 2009.

### ChristSophia

But of course in the end, it is no action at all. In a case like “herchurch,” it allows a congregation whose teaching is about as blatantly heretical as you’re likely to find to continue both to teach its fallacies and to represent itself as part of the ELCA. Pr. Brown is, one would hope, correct in saying that this is an aberration, that you won’t find anything else like this anywhere in the ELCA. If you want to evaluate for yourself, go to the congregation’s website ([www.herchurch.org](http://www.herchurch.org)) and watch the clip of the ChristSophia Mass from last December. For a while you might think it looks like a pretty ordinary service; after all, they light candles and join in singing “Silent Night.” At least it starts out as “Silent Night,” until it gets to the part where orthodox Christians would sing “Christ the Savior is born.” At Ebenezer they sing “Christ Sophia is born.” To steal a line from J. D. Salinger, Jesus would have puked. There’s not much on the website that would make you proud to be “interdependent” with “herchurch.” You’re more likely to think you need to go out for some fresh air.

Sometimes, when the question of

“herchurch” comes up, one hears the response, “Well, what difference does it make for you if that congregation wants to do things that way? You don’t have to do it, and it’s really none of your business.” (Sort of like the response one hears about same-sex marriage, isn’t it?) “None of your business” – gosh, just what Bp. Rimbo said. It’s none of his business; he’s not the bishop in California. At least the conference dean got it right: “It is my business, because I’m part of the ELCA.” So does “interdependence” really mean “none of my business,” or is it more like that old John Donne thing about no one being an island? If a congregation in New York, 3,000 miles from San Francisco, sees what’s happening in Baghdad by the Bay as one reason to jump from the ELCA ship, then it seems clear that the nonsense at “herchurch” is, in fact, the business of Christians beyond the Sierra Pacific Synod.

### How long, O Lord?

It’s heartening to know that one bishop has had the nerve at least to discuss the matter with his colleague. Maybe there have been others. But the problem goes on, and in fact gets worse. Pr. Brown, in what she called her “little research” on Ebenezer, told Immanuel that “herchurch” didn’t start out that way, that it started as a commitment to increasing the role of women in the church and had only relatively recently gotten into goddess worship.

She needs to work on her research. Already ten years ago “herchurch” was well into the goddess; the “Goddess Rosary” was on their website even back then. This is nothing new. It’s gone on through the administrations of two Sierra Pacific bishops; one would think that by now it would be apparent that “private reprimand” isn’t cutting the mustard. Other ELCA bishops cannot hide behind the “not my business” defense. It is true enough that the ELCA’s constitution doesn’t give them much juridical authority; it is also true that they could have a great deal of moral authority if they had the gumption to exercise it. Five dozen bishops telling one of their colleagues that he simply must take stronger action, public action, against a heretical pastor and congregation would not likely be ignored.

### A bishop’s confusion

The other astonishing part of the conversa-

tion between Bp. Rimbo and Immanuel is how he responded to a question about abortion – and specifically about the ELCA health plan’s provision for paying for abortions. It’s hard to know whether the good bishop’s answer was disingenuous or just plain ignorant. In the first place, he described Portico (which used to be known as the ELCA Board of Pensions) as “our insurance company” – certainly an odd phrase. A few moments later he said that Portico is “a totally independent organization that provides insurance for the ELCA.” Somebody better tell the folks at Portico, since their website claims that they are “a ministry of the ELCA.”

Then Bp. Rimbo claimed that the only abortions covered by the ELCA health plan are those performed to save the life of the mother, or in cases of rape and incest. That is just simply not the case. The plan will cover abortion for any reason prior to 20 weeks; after that it will cover an abortion “when the life of the mother is threatened or the fetus has lethal abnormalities indicating death is imminent.”

Now the bishop wasn’t quite making this up out of whole cloth; he was just confused. What he described was pretty much the gist of the ELCA’s social statement on abortion, approved back in 1991. But the ELCA’s social statement is one thing, the Portico health plan policy is another. There is an unsavory history here, one that casts a rather bad light on the ELCA. In 1995, what was then the Board of Pensions decided to amend the policy (which at that time allowed coverage of abortion without restriction) to conform to the social statement. But when that proposed change came to the ELCA Church Council, they rather quickly told the Board that, no, they didn’t want the health plan policy to

be governed by the ELCA social statement. So the health plan continued to cover abortions before 20 weeks without restriction. (See *FL* Dec. 1995.)

### Making things up

The bishop apparently forgot this history, however, and so he had to come up with another reason for the Portico policy. He blamed (I guess that’s the right word) abortion coverage on the fact that “there are so many members [of the plan] who are not Lutherans.” He was referring here to the fact that employees of Lutheran congregations and agencies can be covered, regardless of their personal religious affiliation, and no doubt there are some of those. He made it sound, however, as if a large percentage of those covered by the ELCA health plan are not Lutheran – a dubious claim, seems to me – and that therefore Portico couldn’t “impose” the ELCA’s official view of abortion on them.

I know that serving as a denominational representative visiting a congregation considering withdrawing from the denomination can be a stressful experience, even – or especially – for a bishop. I had a taste of that as an ALC conference dean back when some congregations were voting to leave the ALC so as not to have to enter the ELCA. It’s hard to think on your feet, and sometimes you misunderstand a question. Still, a bishop ought to know better than to offer answers when he really doesn’t know what he’s talking about. Just making things up isn’t helpful, it certainly isn’t encouraging, and it’s not likely to go very far in persuading a congregation to stay in the ELCA.

– by Richard O. Johnson, editor

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## CORE responds to Benne

by Dennis Nelson



I am very grateful to the editor for the opportunity to respond to certain statements made by Dr. Robert Benne about Lutheran

CORE in the September 2015 issue of *Forum Letter*. His article, “Remonstrating with Hinlicky,” responded to an earlier article by Paul Hinlicky regarding current trends among Lutherans in America. Benne and Hinlicky have both been faithful warriors in the battles for orthodoxy, and their debate

over whether or not to stay in the ELCA mirrors the anguish of so many who see their denominational affiliations challenged by actions of both the ELCA and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

Dr. Benne’s article repeated some comments about Lutheran CORE that he had made in ALPB’s *Forum Online* in July 2015. We regret to say that these statements reflect misunderstandings of the situation. First, Dr. Benne states that a point came

when “the funds to support CORE were drying up.” We thank God, who has blessed Lutheran CORE with a steady stream of supporters through its history, that Lutheran CORE remains financially solvent and secure to this day. Earlier in our mission, Lutheran CORE did rely on redirected mission support from congregations that eventually left the ELCA, and it was only natural and expected that some of our supporting congregations would eventually redirect their funds to their new denominations. We therefore announced in Charleston at our Convocation in 2014 that we would need to restructure our ministry to fit our income. But thanks to faithful financial support of its donors, Lutheran CORE has continued to serve as a voice and shelter for confessing Lutherans, and will be able to do so into the future.

### Operational changes

Because of the reduced income, Lutheran CORE has made some operational changes in the past several months. In late 2014 and early 2015, our director, Pr. Steve Shipman, moved up his retirement date, and our volunteer board took on more responsibilities; we moved our office from New Brighton, MN, to a supporting congregation in Wausau, WI; and we decided that we could no longer hold an annual convocation or co-sponsor the theological conference. As a shelter for confessing Lutherans, we now seek to support and sponsor local gatherings, such as the Spanish-language *Encuentro* event in the Chicago area this last October; as a voice for Biblical truth, we communicate our message through both written and electronic means.

These changes are similar to what other renewal groups in American Christianity have recently experienced. Since accomplishing these changes, we have been making new friends and gaining new supporters every week. We are, as we have always been, financially solvent, and therefore we are able to continue the work that God has given us.

### Paid in full

Another inaccuracy appears in Dr. Benne’s statement, “The NALC had to pick up the bill for some of CORE’s functions, including the Theological Lectures held between its Convocation and the NALC Convocation.” Phrasing the sentence in that way could make it sound as though Lutheran CORE

did not pay for its part in the theological conference, and even suggest that the NALC had to pay other obligations for Lutheran CORE. Neither is correct.

For several years Lutheran CORE and the NALC shared the same office and the same office personnel. This arrangement occurred naturally because Lutheran CORE gave birth to the NALC in 2010. As sometimes happens in such an arrangement, especially where events are co-sponsored or held at the same time, some expenses would originally be paid by one entity, which would then be reimbursed by the other. We are very grateful that in a letter dated September 22, 2015 the leadership of the NALC has confirmed our understanding that “Lutheran CORE paid the NALC all the funds that it owed the NALC” and “Lutheran CORE paid half of the expenses for the theological conferences up through and including the 2014 conference.”

Lutheran CORE is also grateful to the NALC for understanding the structural changes that we have made in this past year. When it became apparent that Lutheran CORE would no longer hold an annual convocation in 2015, serve as co-sponsor of the 2015 theological conference, or continue to share office space and personnel with the NALC, the NALC readily agreed to accept responsibility for those functions. At the same time, Lutheran CORE was able to reimburse the NALC for already incurred costs. These facts testify to the financial health of both Lutheran CORE and the NALC, and the confirmation that our two organizations agree on these financial matters clarifies any confusion that may linger.

### Lutheran CORE’s purpose

Third, Dr. Benne makes the regrettable comment, “Little energy has been given to helping churches find their way out of the ELCA into the NALC. . . . Since Lutheran CORE has morphed back into a reform and renewal movement within the ELCA and has abjured its role in helping congregations leave, there is little reason for the NALC to subsidize the organization.”

“Abjured” is a very strong word. The dictionary defines it as “to renounce upon oath, to reject or withdraw from with solemnity, to abandon, to recant or retract.” Lutheran CORE has never existed, in any of its “morphings,” primarily as a conduit for congregations leaving the ELCA. When

asked or invited, Lutheran CORE has helped congregations determine the right course of action for them and then supported them in the process. In this regard, Lutheran CORE has helped some congregations find their way into the NALC, and it continues to remain a recognized Ministry Partner of the NALC.

The original "Vision and Plan" for the NALC and Lutheran CORE adopted at Grove City in 2010 sets forth this vision: "[The NALC] will . . . be a church body bigger than itself, for it will work in close partnership and cooperation with the community of Lutheran CORE. For confessing Lutherans who will remain within the ELCA and ELCIC, Lutheran CORE will offer an alternate ecclesial family, where they can connect with each other and with confessing Lutherans in the NALC and other church bodies." When in July 2014 the Steering Committee of Lutheran CORE and the Executive Council of the NALC met together, it became clear that the relationship between the two groups needed to be revised to reflect the changing context both faced. Leadership of both groups met in November 2014 in Columbus, OH, and agreed to an organizational separation of the two, while they would remain partners in mission who would support one another as each would work in the ways they believed most appropriate to uphold their shared convictions expressed in the Common Confession.

### A shelter and a voice

Lutheran CORE has defined its mission as being a "Shelter for Confessing Lutherans" and a "Voice for Biblical Truth." While we all know that many of the confessing Lutherans who need shelter are within the ELCA, and many of the issues that

need the voice of Biblical truth have to do with the ELCA, we are not just a "reform and renewal movement within the ELCA." Our constitution does not limit our scope to any particular Lutheran church body; our seven-member board of directors includes two members of the NALC, a large number of our supporters are not ELCA, and many who turn to us for assistance with such things as finding a new pastor or a lay staff member are not ELCA. We respond to everyone who comes to us, no matter what their church body affiliation.

CORE is very grateful for having been recognized as a Ministry Partner at the recent NALC convocation. I am very grateful for having been so warmly welcomed and given the opportunity to connect or reconnect with so many people at that gathering. CORE is also thankful for the gifts of financial support from the NALC as a church body through the years, as we were honored to be able to support the NALC by providing for its start-up costs. We appreciate the faithful and generous support from many NALC congregations, pastors, and lay people. But we certainly would never expect the NALC to subsidize us. We are very grateful to the editor of the *Forum Letter* for the opportunity to clear up any confusion. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me by email at [dennisnelsonaz@yahoo.com](mailto:dennisnelsonaz@yahoo.com).

*Pr. Dennis Nelson is President of the Board of Directors of Lutheran CORE. He is a retired ELCA pastor; his entire 40 years of ministry was at Christ Lutheran Church in West Covina, CA. He now lives in Scottsdale, AZ. For more information about the organization, visit [www.lutherancore.org](http://www.lutherancore.org).*

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## Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est

by Jeremy Loesch



Another August 10th has passed, because obviously the calendar says that it is August 14th as I write this and I'm smart enough to do the math.

All days are significant, since all days are gifts from our gracious Lord. Why would I note August 10th? The Church tells me it's different, and I

try to listen to what the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ has to say. I know about the Church's warts and the bags under the Church's eyes and the age spots and the spider veins that the Church deals with, but I also know that the Church still is beautiful and radiant and splendid and magnificent. The Church has been given fine and lovely clothes to

wear and the Church can appear to be the most beautiful creation on earth.

August 10th is the commemoration of St. Lawrence, Deacon. And his story is one of beauty and magnificence. It appears that St. Lawrence was born in Spain and ended up in Rome. He was appointed chief of the seven deacons and had the responsibility of managing the property and finances of the church. The emperor Valerian was in need of some money, so he ordered Lawrence to turn over the treasures of the Church. Lawrence appeared before Valerian with the treasures of the Church: the poor whose lives had been touched by Christian charity. He was jailed and then executed 10 Aug. 258 by being roasted on a gridiron. Almost immediately the date of his death was added to the Church's calendar.

### **Valerian wasn't wrong**

Lawrence brought the poor before Valerian since the poor were the treasures of the Church. The emperor expected vessels of gold and silver, tapestries and mosaics, statues, things that could be sold; he was under the impression that the Church had items of worth.

He wasn't wrong. The Church was and is incredibly rich. The Eucharistic vessels and vestments are costly. Pipe organs, even electronic organs, cost money. Our buildings are of some monetary worth. If your congregation runs a school, plenty is spent on the technological equipment that assists the teaching and the learning. How much does the insurance cost for fielding a soccer, softball, baseball, football, or basketball team? What is the expense for a Lutheran college musical group to take their gifts on the road? The answer is a lot. And the Church has money.

### **Valerian could not have been more wrong**

I'm guessing that Lawrence felt some fear when he heard of Valerian's demand. But he kept his wits about him and revealed his knowledge of treasure. What is treasure? For many people that are not connected with the Church, treasure may have to do with wealth and costly goods; but for Christians, treasure is something quite different.

Communion vessels will come and go. As one flagon and chalice and ciborium and paten and pyx become worn, they aren't simply retired; they

are decommissioned, and the next set is dedicated for use in God's house. The value is in its use. These vessels will hold the bread and the wine of Holy Communion, which are in fact what our Lord Jesus says they are – his body and blood given and shed for the forgiveness of our sin.

It is in the use of earthly things that we are given heavenly treasure. While I have had many Bibles through the years, the one that is most precious to me is the Bible I received in third grade Sunday School. It is a *Good News Bible* ("Today's English Version"). It is not a scholarly Bible, but it is where a boy read for himself the Gospel truth of Jesus Christ. Heavenly treasure was given through those thin pages to an eager young reader.

The treasure of God is placed into gold and silver and bronze and bound items. Then the treasure in those delivery packages is put into the people of God. Lawrence was absolutely right to bring the human treasures of God to Valerian. God loves his creation so much that he lavishly pours out his treasure for all people to receive. And it is the Church's absolute delight to give those treasures away. As a steward of the mysteries of God, I feel a mixture of joy and humility to see someone hunger and thirst for the Lord's Supper and to note the relief and happiness as they depart from the communion rail. After all, life is lived for the Eucharist and life is lived from the Eucharist. What treasure! But the treasure is not the paten and the chalice; it is the grace of God that is delivered at God's desiring!

### **The treasures of God**

People are people and things are things. I do not denigrate things, because I possess some things that I love. A Lou Brock autograph. A coffee mug with my grandparents' picture on it. My wedding ring that is part of a matched set. There are many other things which I would have a hard time giving up; I'm sure you have items you can list. Material things help us to enjoy this life that God has given us, this life that God lives with us. We all have things that we love, things that we treasure

But things are not our treasure. "Where charity and love are found, there God is." Jesus, the eternal Son of the eternal Father, is the treasure. And in the wisdom of the fullness of God, this treasure has been put into clay jars. These jars are both fragile and strong, weak and resilient. They are seated next

to you in the pew, at the family dinner table, in the next cubicle, on the street corner, and they are your roommate in the nursing home. Those are the treasures of God. They always have been and they always will be. God knows exactly where his treasure is located. And God revealed it to his servant St. Lawrence the Deacon.

Another August 10th has passed, another reminder of where the treasure of God is located.

“Produce the treasures of the Church!” God put his treasure in his only Son Jesus. That treasure is given through the Church to the people that God has created and loves to this very day.

*Pr. Jeremy Loesch is pastor of Holy Trinity (LCMS) in Grandview MO. He resides with his wife and five children in Lee's Summit MO. You can reach him at jloesch03@msn.com.*

## Omnium gatherum



**Culture of death** • California has now become the fifth state to allow doctors to prescribe poisonous drugs to terminally ill patients who want to end their lives. The legislature approved the measure during National Suicide Prevention Week, and after a month of giving no indication which way he was leaning, former Jesuit seminarian Governor Jerry Brown signed the thing into law. No doubt it's coming soon to a state near you.

**Blessing abortion** • Just when you think the terrible confusion of supposedly Christian people who not only condone but celebrate abortion can't get any more astonishing, the story comes along of a group of clergy gathering to “bless” a Planned Parenthood abortion clinic in Cleveland. The Rev. Laura Young, a UMC clergywoman who is executive director of the Ohio Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, explains: “There is a reverence for life that happens in this clinic. . . . The decision to get an abortion is often a really, really, spiritual de-

cision. Even if someone personally wouldn't get an abortion, they should at least understand this.” [LifeNews.com] I would say that Ms. Young is really, really misguided.

**Society change** • The Society of the Holy Trinity, at its General Retreat at Mundelein, IL, elected the Rev. Patrick Rooney as new Senior of the Society, succeeding Dr. Frank Senn who had served since 2003. Pr. Rooney has appointed Dr. Nathan Yoder as Society Vicar and Pr. Pari Bailey as Secretary. The Society is a Lutheran Ministerium dedicated to the renewal of the Ministry and the Church. For more information, visit [www.societyholyltrinity.org](http://www.societyholyltrinity.org).

**Christmas is coming** • And that means another opportunity to give the gift of the *Forum* package to a colleague or to your pastor. You might also prayerfully think about a year-end tax-deductible gift to the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau. You'll be keeping alive this still very much needed independent American Lutheran voice! —roj

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