

# FORUM LETTER

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## The reason for the teaching of the Creed

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Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, etc. . . .

[Col. 2.8] Vice mimics virtue, and the tares strive to be thought

wheat, growing like the wheat in appearance, but being detected by good judges from the taste. . . . Many wolves are going about *in sheep's clothing*. . . . This is the cause of the Church's admonitions, the cause of the present instructions, and of the lessons which are read. . . . For the method of godliness consists of these two things, pious doctrines, and virtuous practice: and neither are the doctrines acceptable to God apart from good works, nor does God accept the works which are not perfected with pious doctrines. For what profit is it, to know well the doctrines concerning God, and yet to be a vile fornicator? And again, what profit is it, to be nobly temperate, and an impious blasphemer? A most precious possession therefore is the knowledge of doctrines: also there is need of a wakeful soul, since there are many that make spoil through philosophy and vain deceit. The Greeks on the one hand draw men away by their smooth tongue, for honey droppeth from a harlot's lips: whereas they of the Circumcision deceive those who come to them by means of the Divine Scriptures, which they miserably misinterpret though studying them from childhood to old age, and growing old in ignorance. But the children of heretics, by their good words and smooth tongue, deceive the hearts of the innocent, disguising with the name of Christ as it were honey the poisoned arrows of their impious doctrines. . . . This is the reason for the teaching of the Creed and for expositions upon it. —Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* (ed. Paul A. Böer, Sr.; Veritas Splendor Publications, 2014), 216-217.

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## He was a sinner



I recently went to a funeral. This is a fairly new pastime for me; I've been to a lot of funerals, but usually I was the one presiding. It's a fascinating experience to sit in the pew. Sometimes things happen and I think, "Oh, I wish I'd thought of that when I was a parish pastor." Other times . . . well, you know.

This particular funeral — memorial service, really — was the first I'd attended at the Episcopal congregation where we worship. The fellow that died had been the choir director there for several years, and I had known him in that capacity when the choirs of our two congregations would do things together. But he was long retired, and had moved away quite some time ago. The family wanted to have the service in our community, and the rector agreed though he had not known the deceased and did not know the family (none of whom were local).

### Just in case

Truth be told, I had two reasons for attending. The first, and probably lesser, was that I had known the man, liked him, and wanted to honor him. The other was that I thought it would be a good idea for me to see what a memorial service looked like in this congregation; they call me one of their associate priests, and you never know when you might be called upon to step in if the rector is unavailable.

Of course the latter goal was subverted by the circumstances. I know only too well that when the family of the deceased has no personal connection to the parish, there's often a lot of compromise in planning the service. Usually the tension revolves around things the family wants to do to "personalize" the service. As a pastor I always tried to curtail anything that seemed to contradict the message of the resurrection. Nobody's singing "I Did It My Way" at a funeral where I'm presiding; they want to do that at the reception, OK, I can handle that.

### The dreaded eulogy

I also tried to discourage eulogies. In my best pastoral tone, I would tell them that having family members try to do this is VERY hard, and often leads to a complete breakdown. If they insisted, I generally suggested that one person be the designated eulogist, that this person write it all out so that if they became overwrought I could finish it for them, and that there was a time limit. I stressed that at the reception, we'd have an open microphone and people could talk about the deceased all day. And of course I always made sure that my homily came after the eulogy so that I could correct any problems.

I'm sure every pastor has stories about how quickly a memorial service can go south, in spite of all these precautions. I have a few of those myself, but I won't bore you with them. This particular memorial service was not dreadful, but in a way, that really helped me put my finger on the fundamental problem. In the best of circumstances, even if the deceased was a Christian, a person of great faith, it can quickly become all about the deceased.

### It's not the gospel

He was a high school music educator, and they went on and on and on about what an impact he had on students and colleagues. I'm sure it was all true. I've sung in a lot of choirs, and I know that

directors leave a powerful mark on one's life.

But that's not the gospel. As this continued (must have been a good 40 minutes), I sensed the discomfort of my rector (and remembered how often I'd been sitting where he was sitting). There's just not much you can do about it in the moment. He had, with great insight, asked a previous rector who had worked directly with the deceased to say a few words after the eulogists were finished, and that now-retired priest deftly steered things back in the right direction by speaking about the man's faith and commitment as a *church* musician. The current rector was then able to give his homily in the context of our hope as Christians. It ended well.

### God's inexplicable mercy

I disagreed with the late Supreme Court Justice Scalia about many things, but one of his writings really nailed it. After the funeral of Lewis Powell, the devoutly Catholic Scalia wrote to the Presbyterian pastor who had conducted it, thanking him for the "reverent and inspiring" service. He commented on how often at funerals, even in the Catholic Church, the eulogy is the central focus. He thought this should be prohibited, "not only because it spares from embarrassment or dissembling those of us about whom little good can truthfully be said, but also because, even when the deceased was an admirable person – indeed, especially when the deceased was an admirable person – praise for his virtues can cause us to forget that we are praying for, and giving thanks for, God's inexplicable mercy to a sinner."

He mused that many clergy take that route because they don't want to offend nonbelievers in attendance. "What a great mistake," he wrote. "Weddings and funerals (but especially funerals) are the principal occasions left in modern America when you can preach the Good News not just to the faithful, but to those who have never really heard it." I'll gladly sign on to that opinion.

### Tell them I was a sinner

After the service, I sought out my rector to tell him a story. Several years ago, I told him, I went with a much younger colleague to the memorial service of a well-regarded seminary professor. As we drove home, he asked me what I thought of the service. "Well," I said, "I thought it was too much about him and not enough about Jesus." He agreed.

After a moment's pause, he said, "I know

what I'm going to say at your funeral." I sputtered for a moment, and then he said, "Well, actuarially speaking, it's pretty likely, don't you think?" "Fine," I replied. "What are you going to say?"

"I'll say: Dick was a sinner. He knew he was a sinner. But he knew that Jesus loves and forgives sinners." "OK," said I, "you've got the gig."

My colleague now lives on the other side of the country, so he probably won't actually get the gig. Telling the rector the story was really a preemptive strike, just in case he should be the one who conducts my funeral. Fortunately, he and I are pret-

ty much on the same page.

In the end, I do hope people will say something nice about me—but let them say it to each other over a glass of wine or a cup of coffee. At my funeral, say that I was a sinner, and that I knew it. Say that Jesus loves sinners, and that at great cost he has saved and redeemed me so that I may be his own, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness. Say that this is most certainly true, and that it is all the truth I ever needed.

—by Richard O. Johnson, editor

## The death of my atheist

by Anonymous



In this post-Christian age it is lonely to be a believer at the deathbed of an atheist.

There is no comfort surrounding the deathbed. There are the words of his loved ones whispered in his ears. No eternal Word abiding.

His last words were "It is over."

When our Messiah spoke his last words, "It is finished," he spoke of one divine act for our salvation leading to another: His dying on the cross would be for the redemption of our souls from sin and his death would lead to his resurrection and, someday, ours. There was a divine plan, an abiding.

With my brother, when he used that phrase, "It is over," he used it habitually with a bitter tone in his voice, a tone which scattered ashes and rust. For example, you might ask this scientist about the consequences of global warming and he would respond, "It is over." That is, all hope is lost for our environment, for humanity. No more plan for anything. No abiding. We are done for.

When he was taken away his body was delivered to another city. His daughter looked at me in awe and said, "You know, it is weird. . . . He was just here and now he's in . . ." I was ready to hear "heaven," but she said, "He was just here—and now he's in Anaheim."

### Helpless, resentful feeling

What to think of this departure which seems to me so wide and empty? I remember our last talk. My brother's reading library closest at hand had four books: a work by Thomas Jefferson, *The Iliad*, and two books by Christopher Hitchens, that stri-

dent and clever atheist. On his upper bookshelf was another book titled *The Happy Atheist*. I wouldn't say my brother was happy, though he urged others to seek happiness (such seeking being Jeffersonian and thus heroic in his mind). He was muddling along in what Aquinas calls "imperfect happiness that can be had in this life, can be acquired by man by his natural powers, in the same way as virtue..." [*Summa Theologica* II.1.5.4] My brother was virtuous and dutiful. But happy?

The bookmark in *The Iliad* was in the part of the story where Athena commands warriors not to seek revenge but to use words. The warriors obey though still furious and when they turn to address the goddess she has already left them to join "the other immortals in Zeus's palace." [Book I. 220; Stephen Mitchell translation]

This part of the poem indicates the helpless, resentful feeling mortals have when they think they're addressing capricious or overbearing gods, or there is no god to deal with at all. Our Triune God is not capricious but actively wills and works for our good. *The Iliad's* warriors did not see this. My dying atheist did not see this or would not. An atheist must feel terribly alone; always somehow cheated unless, like Camus' Sisyphus, he consciously notes his absurd existence and heroically continues. Yet Sisyphus was immortal in his doom.

The closest I ever got to prying my brother's imagination open to the possibility of God was one of the many arguments Aquinas uses as a proof for God: the argument (Contingency and Necessity) that, given random chance and time in infinity, there

must have been a time and a chance when everything came to nothing. So if something did not exist which could not *not* exist, then there would be nothing to restart creation after it stopped. We, then, would not exist, nor would anything, and yet we do exist: *ergo* a proof of God's existence being his essence. I can't remember my atheist's exact response, but it began with an appreciative "Hmm . . ."

### Not up to me

During the week of his death, my daily office from *For All the Saints*, the reading of Friday of Lent 5, helped me to express my sadness with St. Paul's being "perplexed, but not driven to despair." [2 Cor. 4.8] Perplexing too, the realization in the same daily office, that "in their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God." [2 Cor. 4.4]

At his memorial gathering, I knew it was not up to me to save the day or his soul; that God is in charge of election is so nicely noted in Luther's *Small Catechism*, "I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him." Yet, even in this academic setting in his old lecture hall, as the only designated public Christian, I hoped to be, as my daily office noted on the day of the memorial, "...the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing..." as I was striving to be "sufficient for these things." [2 Cor. 2.15-16]

My careful reflection as a Christian eulogist bore some fruit: at the reception in his home, a Christian former student came up and spoke of her faith and the challenges of living with an atheist relative. A brother-in-law showed me a pectoral cross which had suddenly appeared on the dress of a grandniece. I was told of the crosses over the doorways of my home leading to the placement of a similar cross over the door of a relative. Christian words, signs and symbols of hope were appearing in the midst of death. One person said I had not "brought religion" into the eulogy and thought that strange. But I had, carefully, with Aquinas's concern, along with Jefferson's, that we be happy: "Let those with ears, hear..."

### At odds with God

He wrote books and I wrote books. His were scientific textbooks, mine were religious short sto-

ries, Christian plays with Bible studies and some sermon illustrations. Though I never told him, I often used him in my mind as a foil for my dramas and short stories. I even titled one book *At Odds with God*. I wanted to answer the non-believer questions he posed. I never told him that. It seemed too preachy.

I spoke of this existentially charged brotherly banter during my eulogy – though, as another Christian mourner had noted, such banter usually ended in, "You're stupid." "No, you're stupid." Sibling rivalry is a gift that keeps on giving. And sibling rivalry being what it is, I suppose that my main feeling with him his last month had been anger. I'm angry that he would think that he's able to choose to be an atheist. Certainly I was "...perplexed, but not driven to despair." I felt he had let down the team. Our parents were Christian, though Dad often stayed home to "guard the house because thieves know people go to church on Sundays."

It was a lack of something that allowed him to be an atheist. I remember a conversation I had with him crossing a street: We were talking about the faith and that he just didn't get it. And I told him, "It seems to me in my long pastorate that people either get it or they don't." He agreed.

### A nice poem

I guess he didn't get it. It is indeed a grace from a loving God. Like any gift, sometimes it's not recognized for what it is. Or the motives are mistaken. Or misinterpreted. Or the package is forgotten, or simply isn't opened, not seen or misplaced. But I think mainly it is pride, a lack of trust, which can't believe in a free gift from so merciful a God; or that one would need a merciful God; a lack of humility. Tunnel vision even for a visionary of science and teaching.

My brother had the typical atheist reasons for non-belief, but no excuses. Reasons such as the physical affliction of childhood polio, the philosophical affliction of Epicurean thought that a God who allows evil must be no God at all, the family affliction of a brooding fighter-pilot father right out of Pat Conroy's *The Great Santini*, and a mental-health balancing act teetering on the drugs of student adoration, alcohol and antidepressants.

When we were last together in a thin southern California twilight, he on his death bed and me

sitting next to him, we rested beneath the bookcase in his study. He looked up at his bookshelves and said, "There's so much to learn, so much to read, so much poetry." I quoted him a poem from Pablo Neruda, a Nobel prize-winning Chilean. It's entitled, "An Ode to Birdwatching" ("*Oda a Mirar Pájaros*"). In the poem the birdwatcher gets frustrated as he tears his pants on thorns and steps in mud, never quite glimpsing any birdseed. But he appreciates the birds are out there away from cages and shotguns. At the last he says, "I'm happy to have lived a minute with you in the wind." My brother said in response, "That's a nice poem." I was saying goodbye to him and he to me.

There is another poem that I often read, this one written by a professor of the University of Salamanca during the time of the Reformation. Frey Luis de León wrote the poem while frustrated in prison during the Inquisition. "At the Ascension" ("*En la Ascensión*") notes the despair that the disciples may have felt upon Christ leaving them for heaven. They are envious of the clouds receiving Jesus. They know that their Savior goes to a better place and they are left alone, "*cuan' ciegos, cuan' pobres,*" so blind, so poor. But the glory of Christ is not over. As

with the phrase, "It is finished," the Lord's Ascension takes place within a promise of continuance, of return, of God's abiding presence, seen and unseen until the promised day. We Christians long for our Savior's return and expect him anytime. It is not over.

### How my mother taught me to pray

I wish I would have had one more talk with him in the twilight. I would have told him that the only time I used the diminutive of his proper name was when I prayed for him the way our mother taught me to pray when I was small. I have prayed for him every night since childhood and will continue to pray for him with his little name to our great God.

I can pray that he was so intent on talking himself out of what little faith remained in him that, in fact, some little faith remained in him.

Lord have mercy. Christ have mercy. Lord have mercy.

*The writer, who wishes to remain anonymous, is a retired ELCA pastor and a member of the Society of the Holy Trinity.*

## Reminiscences: mercy, witness, life together

by Jeremy Loesch



Reminders are good and necessary things. They help us by bringing back to our mind the things that are supposed to be there. That's why they are called reminders in the first place. We may not want to have to be reminded of appointments and events, but being reminded of where to be at what time is better than not showing up at all. There is a lot of information that we are given on a daily basis, and I know that I do not always remember the important stuff (though trivial matters seem to stay in my mind forever).

It is good for me to remember that God has attached himself and remains connected to me through the blessed sacraments of his church. Thus he is never absent from my life. That doesn't mean I am always thinking of him the way I should, nor considering that he hears everything I say and sees

everything I do. No, I certainly do not thank him as I ought and, sadly, I do not thank him as I am able.

But this is not a confession of my sins, for my sins are as common as anyone's. This is a confession of God's goodness.

### A useful theme

I am a pastor who serves in the Missouri Synod. We have a long history of picking a theme and running with it for a time. After we get bored with it, we find a new theme and go with that for a while. I know that the ELCA likes themes and I imagine if you serve in the NALC, LCMC, WELS, ELS, CLB, AFLC (insert your own letters here) you can find something relatable in your own church body.

Our current LCMS theme is "Witness, Mercy, Life Together." That seems like a pretty good theme, and a genuinely Biblical one. In thinking about love, especially in light of God's perpetual

reminder of his divine love, I am going to use that theme, because more than the love I am able to express, it is the love of God that is his enduring expression to his church.

### **The mercy of Concordia**

Pastors, do you remember your first congregation? I'm sure you do. Going to your first congregation is a wonderful thing, though some of the wide-eyed wonder may have been of the terrifying kind. Some of your memories may have been of your missteps and things you wish you hadn't said or done. But I hope your memories are of a more pleasant variety. My first congregation was Concordia in Columbus, OH. It was a merciful place.

The congregation was grieving, and that was before I even showed up! The previous pastor had died in office as the result of a botched medical procedure. He was young, married, and had some children. The pastor and people had made some plans and begun to implement them before his death. They were thrown for a loop. So yes, the congregation was grieving. After the skilled work of a vacancy pastor whose full time ministry was as a hospice chaplain, they got me.

As people of God who had been through a terribly difficult time, and as people who had been shown mercy through those difficulties, they still managed to welcome me. They managed to guide me through those early days where my thoughts were mostly, "Now what do I do?" They hungered for the Word. They were eager for ministry to take place, and ministry happens where the Gospel is present and prevalent. The helpfulness and kindness of the people gave evidence to the blessed reality of God's presence. God doesn't show favor or grace only when it is convenient for him; he reveals his grace and love because that is who he is.

God showed his love for me by putting me in that congregation at that time. I'd like to think it was mutually beneficial. We had a lot of fun. We celebrated God's love. They welcomed me in and helped me at that formative time in my life and my ministry. They rejoiced when I got married and when our first child was born. They loved us (and I think they still do). And when the time came that I was called to another congregation, they let me go.

### **The witness of Our Redeemer**

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Newark, DE, was the second congregation I was called to

serve, and my tenure there was several months shy of a decade. Many things can be learned, forgotten, and relearned in ten years' time. I believe that in this place I was taught the joy of witnessing.

Sometimes we witness with our eyes. We see things and make a mental note of them. That may simply be the definition of observation, but a witness is important. Our judicial system would be in even worse shape without people who tell with their mouths what they have witnessed with their eyes.

There is an element of truth-telling in the act of witnessing. St. Stephen was the first witness, the first martyr, a faithful follower of Jesus who died with Jesus' name on his lips. St. Stephen witnessed to the truth.

Much witnessing was done at this congregation. As in a lot of congregations throughout American Lutheranism, there were a number of older members who were either unable to leave their homes without great difficulty or were in a nursing home or had limited mobility in a retirement community. One witness I was given was the necessity of visitation. This maintained the connection that God had created through the church in his sons and daughters. And perhaps you have observed this about visitation with church members: I think I gained as much, if not more, from those visits as the people I called on.

They witnessed to me the matchless fidelity of God. The people exhibited various burdens, which were physical, emotional, and spiritual and some of them were quite severe. It was very apparent they craved a visit from one of God's servants. I didn't come bearing flowers or simple small talk. I came bearing the Word; I came with the Sacrament of the Altar as I was a steward of the mysteries of God. We sang the hymns of the church. We prayed the Psalms. We listened to what God the Lord had to say through his Word. We prayed for ourselves, our family related to us by blood and our family related to us through the blood of the Lamb.

I was every bit as much the beneficiary of the visits as those on whom I called. We were together as pastor and people. We were together as the children of God. We were together to receive the witness of God's enduring presence. It was a witness both of us needed to receive.

Pastoral visitation is by no means a glamorous endeavor, a lesson quickly learned by God's pastors. But what endeavor, what striving, what attempt really is glamorous?

God gives the right gift at the right time. I needed the witness of God through his people at Our Redeemer and that was the gift he freely gave.

### Holy Trinity's life together

Accepting the divine call to Holy Trinity in Grandview brought my time at Our Redeemer to an end. The transition from the Sandbar with Chickens to Paris on the Plains (that would be Delaware to Kansas City) has been good yet there have been, shall we say, "moments." My family and I left something very familiar; a decade of roots extend fairly deep. But I received a call to a church filled with Christians. So I find myself in a new place, and in the best sense, much of what has been experienced has been blessedly average. There is worship. There is service. There is teaching. There is visitation. There is a preschool. Volunteers cut the grass, serve on the altar guild, and play in the bell choir. There are youth group activities and there is time spent with older members. There is a new church council to interact with and a group of elders that are (happily) involved in the life of the congregation. I hope that many of you read that and think, "What's so special about that?"

The answer would be "nothing," for it is a church, and I hope the above paragraph offered a familiar view of your own congregation.

Our congregation had its church picnic last June. It was a picnic with hamburgers, hot dogs, various salads, Jello, a couple of hot dishes, plentiful

desserts, and a wiffle ball game. There was also a tribute song sung. The president of our Lutheran Women's Missionary League chapter was retiring after several decades of service. Her name happens to be LaVonne. A tribute song was composed to the Elton John song "Levon." It was pretty hilarious. I stood in the back of the hall smiling at all the members because they were smiling and laughing. I was also pleased with how amused LaVonne was at this high honor she was receiving. It was life together. It was beautiful. And I think it was a gift from God to me reminding me that he loves me and gives me what I need when I need it. It was a love letter of laughter.

### Let God determine the theme

Themes come and themes go. I suppose that is okay. If our respective church bodies didn't come up with themes, the makers of three-ring binders would be in dire straits. If a theme is good, it'll stick around. If the theme has a shortfall, that will be revealed eventually. So let God determine the theme. He has already given us his Word – inspired, inerrant, infallible. He has revealed the one doctrine of the Bible that is seen in two parts: Law and Gospel. That sounds like a theme that will endure countless conventions and churchwide assemblies.

*Jeremy Loesch serves as pastor at Holy Trinity (LCMS), Grandview, MO. He resides with his wife and five children in Lee's Summit, MO.*

## Omnium gatherum



**Telling it like it is** • The *Chicago Tribune* reported that the First Congregational United Church of Christ in Elgin, IL, on Maundy Thursday combined "a new tradition, drive-up communion, with an ancient tradition, the Last Supper." The senior pastor explained: "We have not done this before, this is our first experiment with this. We wanted to try this because we want to offer it to the community. Hopefully, it will mean something special for their Holy Week. It's very indicative of who we are as a congregation." Yes, I would say this is most certainly true, at least the last part.

*Living Lutheran* • I seem to have missed the an-

nouncement in *The Lutheran* that with the retirement of Daniel Lehmann as editor, they were changing the name to *Living Lutheran*. Kind of seems like odd timing to me, the sort of thing that might have waited until there's a new editor on board rather than an interim. But that's neither here nor there. The real question is, why a new name? Is this another one of those market-driven campaigns to "rebrand"? If that's what it is, I guess we can be grateful they're not calling it "*Periodica*" or "*Communitatis*" or "*Ecolutheranum*." As it is, having missed the announcement, I nearly tossed the latest issue in recycling. Then I noticed the little message on the back cover: "*Support the ministry of The Lutheran [sic] with a gift subscription for a relative or friend, or underwrite*

*your congregation's subscription.*" Don't these people talk to each other?

**Speaking of which** • I haven't seen anybody making a big deal out of this, and I'm not, either, but it was interesting to note that virtually the entire staff of *Living Lutheran* right now is female. Of the nine names listed on the masthead, only the advertising guy is a man.

**Richard Caemmerer, Jr.** • *Living Lutheran* notes the recent death of Richard Caemmerer, Jr., liturgical artist. It says that he was "liturgical consultant and designer for more than 600 churches throughout the U.S., Canada and Europe." Mine was one of them. I will never forget, when our building committee was discussing with him whether to have movable seating or anchored pews, his very perceptive question: "Who's going to move the seats?" He had picked up on the idea that in our fairly conservative, demographically tending toward older congregation, it would probably end up being the pastor who moved the seats. There was nervous laughter, but the decision was immediately clear. (He also designed a processional cross that is so heavy that about the only person in the congregation that could easily manage it was a professional weight lifter, but that's another story.) Anyway, he was a creative and visionary man whose gifts were well used by many congregations. *Let light perpetual shine upon him.*

**Reconciling at Luther** • There's apparently a movement afoot to declare Luther Seminary a Reconciling in Christ seminary. It wouldn't be the first;

the ELCA seminaries in Chicago, Berkeley, Gettysburg, and Philadelphia have all signed on to the designation, which proclaims that they officially welcome LGBT students (and whatever other initials are *de rigueur* this week). While Luther has had the reputation of being one of the more "conservative" ELCA seminaries (in the old ALC Midwestern denominational Lutheran sense of the word), that hasn't really been the case for quite a while now. The question some are asking, if quietly, is what such a designation might mean for fundraising. Rumor has it that donations for the current year are probably going to be down about 10% – not good news at an institution that's had to make some difficult financial decisions in recent years. It seems unlikely that an RIC designation is going to turn that donation problem around.

**There's always a back story** • A couple of months back Brad Everett wrote about Concordia University in Edmonton and its decision to end its self-identification as a "Christian school." Sources close to the story tell us that really it was the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (predecessor in Canada to the Lutheran Church – Canada) who pushed Concordia away. As Pr. Everett noted, this began in 1978 when the LCMS encouraged the school to incorporate as an independent organization – largely, our sources say, because the school was facing a lawsuit and the LCMS district wanted a firewall that would protect it in case the suit went the wrong way. All ancient history now, but a reminder that there are often factors not obvious on the surface.

– roj

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