

FORUM LETTER

Volume 45 Number 9

September 2016

Inside this issue:

ELCA in New Orleans: a
welcome new tone 4

Omnium gatherum 8

By the cross death was slain



How precious the gift of the cross, how splendid to contemplate! In the cross there is no mingling of good and evil, as in the tree of paradise: it is wholly beautiful to behold and good to taste. The fruit of this tree is not death but life, not darkness but light. This tree does not cast us out of paradise, but opens the way for our return. . . .

The wonders accomplished through this tree were foreshadowed clearly even by the mere types and figures that existed in the past. Meditate on these, if you are eager to learn. Was it not the wood of a tree that enabled Noah, at God's command, to escape the destruction of the flood together with his sons, his wife, his sons' wives and every kind of animal? And surely the rod of Moses prefigured the cross when it changed water into blood, swallowed up the false serpents of Pharaoh's magicians, divided the sea at one stroke and then restored the waters to their normal course, drowning the enemy and saving God's own people? Aaron's rod, which blossomed in one day in proof of his true priesthood, was another figure of the cross, and did not Abraham foreshadow the cross when he bound his son Isaac and placed him on the pile of wood?

By the cross death was slain and Adam was restored to life. The cross is the glory of all the apostles, the crown of the martyrs, the sanctification of the saints. By the cross we put on Christ and cast aside our former self. By the cross we, the sheep of Christ, have been gathered into one flock, destined for the sheepfolds of heaven. — Theodore of Studios, "Oration for the Adoration of the Cross," in J. Robert Wright, *Readings for the Daily Office from the Early Church* (Church Hymnal Corporation, 1991), 488-489.

LCMS in Milwaukee: ain't misbehavin'



The 2016 convention of the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod began under the theme "Upon This Rock," and the hermeneutical emphasis within the theme would be apparent from the outset. From the president's report, to the convention essayists, and even to the worship services, "the church engaged in a war with the culture around us" took center stage. The secondary message was that the LCMS needs to centralize into a genuine synod (instead of its current status as a "confederation of districts"), protect itself, and streamline the processes by which "false doctrine" (i.e., capitulation to the culture) can be addressed in a definitive and expeditious way.

Solving the Wichita problem

Most resolutions at Missouri Synod conventions pass by overwhelming majorities (think 90%+), and they address many of the same themes convention

The American
Lutheran Publicity
Bureau is on the web
www.alpb.org

FORUM LETTER is published monthly by the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau (www.alpb.org) with LUTHERAN FORUM, a quarterly journal, in a combined subscription for \$28.45 (U.S.) a year, \$51.95 (U.S.) for two years, in the United States and Canada. Retirees and students, \$23.00 a year. Add \$8.00 per year for Canadian, \$12.00 for overseas delivery. Write to the Subscription Office for special rates for groups. Single copy, \$2.50.

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

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

Member: Associated Church Press.

EDITORIAL OFFICE: P. O. Box 235, Grass Valley, CA 95945. <roj@nccn.net>

SUBSCRIPTION OFFICE: American Lutheran Publicity Bureau, P. O. Box 327, Delhi, NY 13753-0327 <dkralpb@aol.com> Telephone 607-746-7511. Postage paid at Delhi, NY and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send changes of address to P. O. Box 327, Delhi, NY 13753-0327.

Copyright © 2016 by the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau.
ISSN 0046-4732

after convention (respect for human life in all its stages, subservience of science to faith, thanking various auxiliary organizations, etc.). Heading into this convention, the resolution that seemed likely to be the most contentious was the one which sought to address the status of licensed lay deacons within the church (see John Hannah's excellent analysis of this in "The Wichita problem," *FL* June 2016). For some 25 years, opinion on this issue has been almost evenly divided.

The product of two years of discussion and a listening tour by the head of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR), the resolution brought to Milwaukee sought a way to return to the Augustana's insistence that only those rightly called and ordained may serve as pastors. Yet the resolution also incorporated concern for those who were already serving irregularly in that office and for those congregations whose pastoral care could potentially be affected by the resolution. The task force had done an outstanding job in listening to stakeholders, and what was expected to be a contentious issue passed with nearly 75% of the vote. It was a model for what the much maligned *Koinonia* process of working through doctrinal issues together can accomplish.

Disputing disputes

The debate on a proposed change to the dispute resolution process demonstrated what happens when the opposite approach is taken. Many district presidents first received word of a task force appointed by President Matthew Harrison to propose modification of the dispute resolution process by reading about it in the convention workbook. No district presidents were included on the task force, in spite of the fact that they have the primary role in the current process. The task force brought forth resolution 12-01A, which sought to give those who file charges against an individual a right of appeal to the LCMS president if the district president fails to act on the charges. The legal interpretation of the phrase "fails to act" means "fails to substantiate the charges." In other words, any time a district president might investigate and find the filed charges to be without merit, the individual filing the charges would be able to appeal to the president of the Synod. Many district presidents were led to wonder aloud why they should hear charges at all if every

dissatisfied accuser can appeal their finding. It was also noted by some that in the secular arena, only guilty verdicts can be appealed; when the charges against an accused are not sustained, that ends the matter.

As if leaving the district presidents out of the discussion didn't create enough suspicion, on the morning of the first day of the convention the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) released a response to a question about the current dispute resolution process. The commission found that the system under which Synod had been operating since 2004 has been unconstitutional, and thus delegates need to pass *some* resolution to put in place a new system which would pass constitutional muster. Those inclined to suspicion (and perhaps lacking the requisite charity) were stunned by the timing of it all. Left unquestioned was what it meant that the Synod had been operating under an unconstitutional system for the last twelve years. Do those who were removed from the roster of synod by that unconstitutional system have grounds for appeal — or even a lawsuit? And how exactly had synod allowed unconstitutional bylaws on the books to begin with, given that all bylaw changes have to be vetted by the CCM?

De facto delay

With all of this in the background, 12-01A was brought before the convention. Immediately there was a procedural attempt to refer it to the Council of Presidents (COP) so that they, as the primary body of ecclesiastical supervisors, could have time to assess its practical implications. With cries both of "they have had two months to look at this" and "we have to do something now that our current process is unconstitutional," the motion to refer failed with only 45% of the vote. Another motion was made to delay the vote until the convention heard from the COP, who under the rules of the convention have to queue to the microphone just like everyone else. That vote also failed with 49% of the vote. Eventually debate ended as the orders of the day arrived without a vote being taken. Thus what the assembly couldn't bring itself to do, time itself accomplished: the debate was postponed.

While it was clear that about 60% of the delegates were supportive of President Harrison, maneuvering now began behind the scenes. District

presidents met with members of the CCM, Synod's Board of Directors and the Praesidium to try and work out a compromise. What was behind all this debate (and indeed, what was probably behind the resolution itself) was the way that Northwest District President Linnemann handled the case of Matthew Becker. Rumors began to circulate that Linnemann and a number of other sympathetic district presidents were going to address the convention about the poor way that Linnemann had been treated by the synod president in that situation. On the other hand, the president's office was rumored to be making demands that all of the district presidents who signed a letter of concern about inappropriate presidential interference in the Becker case be first made to apologize before the convention before any compromise would be made.

Fickle trust

In the end cooler heads prevailed, and despite probably having the votes to pass 12-01A, President Harrison agreed to bring forward a compromise resolution, 12-01B, which referred the whole matter to the Board of Directors, who will consult with the Council of Presidents. The Board was then authorized to adopt a new bylaw, presumably within six months of the convention. This act of compromise passed with 93% of the vote and was followed by a very gracious speech from the floor by Linnemann, echoing the churchmanship exhibited by Harrison. In what is all too often a rarity in the LCMS, politics and personalities were put aside for the sake of dialog and *koinonia*.

Perhaps buoyed by the optimism of 12-01B, the convention passed resolution 12-07A, clarifying what it means to "dissent" in the LCMS. The revised language to Bylaw 1.8 emphasizes the importance of discussing disagreement first "among the fellowship of peers . . . privately and confidentially . . . rather than [in] a public forum." It also specifically states that "this right of brotherly dissent does not allow a member of the Synod publicly to teach or practice contrary to the established doctrinal position of the Synod. Any such public teaching shall place in jeopardy membership in the Synod."

After the resolution passed a number of folks on both sides of Missouri's political spectrum expressed concern about its practical implications. Would, for example, those who opposed the li-

censed lay deacon program begun in the LCMS in 1989 have even been able to bring forward to this convention the resolution which effectively ended that program, or would that have been dissent from LCMS teaching? Centralization of power is a good thing, as long as you trust the people in power, and while President Harrison's churchmanship no doubt earned him some trust at this convention, trust in Missouri is always a fickle thing.

Finding compromise

The other resolution that had potential for controversy on the floor dealt with university and college boards of regents. Resolution 7-02 called for the Praesidium to be able to appoint two regents to each college's governing board. This was an effort to give the Praesidium better representation at each college. A number of district presidents took this as yet another attack on their authority, as the president of the district where each college is geographically located is already on the board of regents of that college, and he presumably represents Synod's interests there. Of course if you don't trust the district presidents you might desire additional representation, and if you don't trust Synod you might worry about it trying to gain control of local boards. (See how fickle trust is in Missouri?) In the end a deal was struck reducing the number of appointed regents from two to one, which was enough of a compromise to get those university and college presidents present to endorse the resolution; it then passed by a large margin.

Another rather "under-the-radar" resolution was 6-02, "To Uphold the Scriptural Qualifications for Ministry," which for the first time created a working definition of pastor. Debate brought some humorous moments when delegates questioned the way that things were worded only to find out that the words they were disputing were direct quotes from Scripture or the Lutheran confessions. The chair noted that "this resolution simply affirms what scripture and the confessions affirm about the pastoral office." In theory it is a simple approach. The complexity of the issue, however, was highlighted when a delegate asked how our current policy of allowing divorced clergy fit into our clear reading of scripture. Perspicuity is in the eye of the beholder, and it may depend on whatever particular issue the beholder deems important.

Behaving as the church

If there was one thing to which all factions in Missouri could agree, it was that the lead-up to the 2016 convention was devoid of much of the traditional pre-convention politicking. Perhaps that is a result of the presidential election taking place prior to the convention, so one potentially contentious item was already settled. Perhaps it is due to the apparent demise of “Jesus First,” the “moderate” group within Missouri, which has left the Synod with a one party system controlled by the “United List” (over 90% of the United List candidates were elected to office this time). While it quickly became apparent that the elections were by and large a for-

gone conclusion, it was perhaps remarkable that President Harrison did not use his majority to push through controversial issues. Instead he opted for dialog and a more churchly approach. In the end, this convention may be remembered less for the resolutions that were passed than for the change in the way that the church handles controversy and disagreement, behaving as the church ought to behave.

Paul Sauer is pastor and executive minister of Our Saviour Lutheran Church and School in the Bronx (LCMS), assistant professor of religion at Concordia College, Bronxville, and executive director of the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau.

ELCA in New Orleans: a welcome new tone



A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, *Forum Letter* referred to a churchwide assembly as “The Mark Hanson Show.”

The former presiding bishop put in a brief appearance in New Orleans for the 2016 episode, but it was his successor, Elizabeth Eaton, who was clearly in charge. She was more emcee than star, perhaps, but very appropriately so. The tone set by Bp. Eaton in her first churchwide assembly was graceful, gentle, filled with often self-deprecating humor – in almost every way a marked and welcome contrast with the last several assemblies. She got high marks from just about everybody.

As is typical at ELCA assemblies, most of the voting members (more than 2/3) were there for the first time. I talked to one recently elected synod bishop who reported that not one of his synod’s representatives – including himself – had been to a churchwide assembly before. This means that a good deal of time has to be spent giving orientations, instructions and guidance. This assembly was fully mechanized; voting members were provided with an iPad on which the *Guidebook* with all the reports had been downloaded. These reports were then updated regularly, with revisions automatically sent to the iPads. The only people with the traditional thick binders were the bishops – apparently a backup in case the digital provisions should fail.

Voting problems

Voting was also done electronically, but not

very well. Nearly every vote took longer than would have been the case if it had been done with a show of hands (or even a voice vote). Members had yellow cards to raise if their machine was giving them trouble, and there were yellow-shirted aids prepared to help them. But the vote couldn’t be “closed” until all yellow issues had been fixed, so sometimes a vote took three or four minutes to complete.

This had the advantage of giving an accurate and precise count, but on a lot of the votes (especially procedural motions) where the “ayes” might exceed 90%, one was left wondering whether the electronic voting actually saved any time. Troubles increased later in the week. At one point voting members complained that their machines seemed to be voting for them before they even pushed a button. “That’s kind of frightening,” the bishop quipped. By the last day, she announced they would vote with their red and green cards – “it’s just faster,” she sighed.

Another glitch early on demonstrated Eaton’s dry sense of humor. A voting member names Ralph Jones reported that his machine was calling him Randy Jones. “That’s our pet name for you,” the bishop said. Turned out there were, among the members, both a Ralph and a Randy, and they had been given the wrong machines. They were brought together and exchanged them, and as they did so, Eaton asked, “Shall we play the theme from ‘Romeo and Juliet’?”

Electing a vice president

The major election on the docket was that of vice president. The process begins with an ecclesiastical ballot on which any eligible person (that is, any lay person in the ELCA) can receive votes. In an effort to facilitate this, a number of individuals had been “suggested” ahead of time and they were invited to fill out a biographical information form which was included in the *Guidebook*. Imagine the surprise of the voting members when they discovered that those bios had been removed several days before the assembly began – apparently because the powers that be (I guess that’s the ELCA Church Council) wanted to be sure that nobody mistook these for “nominations.” “It would have been nice to know that ahead of time,” one member complained. “Noted,” the bishop acknowledged.

This also led to some confusion on the first ballot. The top vote getter was William Horne, but there were also votes for “William Horn” – no doubt intended for Mr. Horne, but they had to be counted separately since there is likely a “William Horn” somewhere in the ELCA (who would be astonished if he knew he’d gotten votes for vice president).

Gravitas

The election went to the fourth ballot, when Mr. Horne was elected with 565 votes; the other two on that ballot were Cheryl Stuart (175) and Becky Blue (161). Horne had led all the way. He is African American, for the past 15 years the city manager of Clearwater, FL, a former vice president of the Florida-Bahamas Synod and a former ELCA Church Council member. He struck the voting members as an eloquent and experienced leader who will bring some *gravitas* to the task. The other two on the final ballot presented different interests and gifts; Cheryl Stuart seemed much more the “public church” / social concerns kind of candidate, while Becky Blue had more the solid but pietistic Midwestern aspect.

Retiring vice president Carlos Peña was effusively and genuinely thanked for his 13 years of service – “a genuinely good guy,” one observer commented. He has served the ELCA well and energetically. A resolution that came to the floor the final morning asked the ELCA Church Council to look at the possibility of making the vice presidency a paid position (the vice president is currently the only non-salaried officer) on the grounds that “the level of

commitment without any stipend, salary or compensation creates economic barriers to service for people living in situations of economic poverty, people dependent on full-time income or work, people working jobs without paid vacation, and people who are sole caregivers to children or elders.” Coming on the last morning, it didn’t get much debate; it will be interesting to see how the council deals with it.

All in favor . . .

The astonishing thing about this assembly is that what were arguably the two most significant matters on the agenda got virtually no discussion; the voting members preferred to spend floor time debating the ELCA’s foreign policy or procedural matters that had virtually no significance whatsoever. Let’s take the two most important matters first.

As reported in the June *Forum Letter*, the assembly was asked to make a significant change in the so-called “lay rosters” in the ELCA – associates in ministry, diaconal ministers and deaconesses – by unifying the three different groups into a single category of “deacons” who are considered “Ministers of Word and Service.” The unification was generally considered a good idea (one that probably should have been done at the beginning of the ELCA), but there were some unresolved or problematic questions. Notably, the task force that worked on this kicked down the road the question of what to call the entrance rite to this ministry. Are these persons to be “ordained” – and if so, does that imply that they are to be considered “clergy” when counting them in the ELCA’s quota allocations? And does it imply that we now have a “twofold ministry”?

Is there a pastor in the house?

Some pastors were also concerned that the proposed constitutional amendments to effect the recommendations virtually eliminated the word “pastor” from the ELCA documents. Instead, the church would have “Ministers of Word and Sacrament” (along with “Ministers of Word and Service”). Also nearly eliminated was the word “ordained.” In explaining this, advocates of the changes (notably ELCA Secretary Chris Boerger) explained that they were trying to identify people by title rather than by function or process, and to set up a neat parallelism between the two kinds of “ministers.”

The problem with this is that people need a

shorthand way to refer to the church's ministers. No one is going to start saying, "Hello, my name is Linda. I'm a Lutheran Minister of Word and Sacrament." If Linda is a Minister of Word and Service, she can just call herself a deacon; but what of us poor Ministers of Word and Sacrament?

Some of these issues were brought up at the two hearings on the proposal held on Tuesday, and the task force representatives had a chance to respond. Apparently they did so effectively, because when the report came to the floor later in the week, it was approved on a vote of 834-32 – with only one speaker, a deaconess who mostly wanted to talk about the history of the deaconess movement. The constitution and bylaws amendments were likewise overwhelmingly adopted with no debate whatsoever. The controversial elimination of the word "pastor" got the biggest negative vote, but even that one passed 819-84.

On the way

The other big item approved with no floor discussion was the approval of "Declaration on the Way," a significant Lutheran/Roman Catholic agreement. The product of several years of discussion between Lutherans and Catholics in the United States, the document offers 32 statements on the church, the ministry, and the Eucharist on which there are "no longer church-dividing issues." As with the Minister of Word and Service proposal, there had been hearings that were well attended with some good conversation. When the proposal was introduced on Tuesday, there was time for a question or two from voting members. But when the matter came to the assembly for action, Bp. Eaton opened the floor for debate – and there was none. After prayer, the vote was taken and the recommendation approved 931-9. There was loud applause, a lengthy standing ovation.

In response, Bp. Eaton issued a mild word of caution: "We have not yet arrived. We are still on the way." She presented a gift to Bishop Denis J. Madden, the Roman Catholic co-chair of the dialogue group (with former presiding bishop Mark Hanson). It was a chalice, and Madden's response was warm: "I will wait for that day, which will not be long in coming I'm sure, when we can share this chalice of the precious blood together." Another ovation. "I am grateful to have shared these days

with you . . . praying with you. The Eucharistic celebrations have been a great joy, and a reminder that soon we will be sharing this together. . . . We are moving in that direction. It will be a wonderful day for all of us to share at the Table of the Lord. . . . We have work to do, God has work for us to do, to bring Christ to the world. Together we can do great things. . . . What a joy to share that ministry together. We are 'on the way.' . . . To God be the glory!"

No debate

It was a moving moment, but it left one wondering how such a significant statement could (as with the ministry changes) be approved so overwhelmingly with no floor debate. There were several theories floating around. One was that the spade-work done ahead of time was so effective that the members were just ready to vote; that seems unlikely to me, since neither of these matters has been particularly high profile. Another was that the hearings answered any questions members may have had – a nice idea, and probably a factor, but probably no more than a third of the voting members attended the hearings on each of these issues. At any church meeting, there's almost always somebody who thinks he or she simply must say *something*.

Another factor may be that the bishops were not too subtly encouraged not to be the first to the microphones (not just on these issues, but in general), and to let others speak first. It is the bishops, however, who generally are best informed about such ecclesiological or theological matters, and if they don't speak, others may be reluctant. In any event, longtime assembly observers were astonished that such significant matters were approved so overwhelmingly with no floor debate.

ELCA foreign policy

The debate was lengthy, however, on some other matters. The most controversial memorials had to do with U. S. policy in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. They took a predictably pro-Palestinian slant. An attempt to modify the language critical of Israel was made, but defeated on one of the closest votes of the week, 416-500. This was actually a rather disjointed discussion; the vote on the amendment was just about to be taken when the orders of the day were called, and it was a couple of days later when the matter came back up to be voted upon

with no further discussion. Not such a helpful process, seems to me. In the end, the memorial (without the softening amendment) was approved 751-162. Elsewhere in the ELCA foreign policy portfolio, there was a resolution calling for a process “to promote robust examination of the expanded US war efforts since 1990.” Certainly whoever is elected president in November will be anxious to know what the ELCA thinks on this matter.

Much ado about nothing

Another debate that went on way too long was over a recommendation to change the continuing resolution (part of the constitution for synods) setting a goal that 10% of assemblies, councils and committees be comprised of youth and young adults to a bylaw. There was lots of speaking for and against, with most speakers not quite realizing that this had absolutely no real world significance but had come about because of constitutional questions being raised over whether synods can be required to include a continuing resolution in their documents. But youth and young adults have to have their say, and so the debate went on and the change was approved.

There was much else, of course. The assembly approved the ELCA’s strategy to Accompany Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO). The clever acronym is meant to suggest a Spanish word, *amparo*, which means “refuge” or “shelter”). A 2017-2019 budget was approved, again with little debate. A resolution encouraging regular anti-racism training for ministers and others was approved. Members of various councils, boards and committees were elected on a single ballot (only one run off required, out of sixty elections).

Sing a Him of praise

Regular *Forum Letter* readers probably know that I’ve got a few strong feelings about liturgy and worship. At this assembly, I’ll have to say the worship (at least the daily Eucharist liturgies) were generally good – better than I’ve come to expect. The music in particular was outstanding. A couple (not all) of the liturgies were a little odd. The preaching was uneven, but there were excellent sermons by Bp. Eaton, Gordon Lathrop, and Deaconess Louise Williams.

Of course the plague of non-male language for God was very evident (though not quite as univocally as is sometimes the case). My biggest laugh of the week came with the close captioning of a hymn one morning (in the *very* minimal “morning prayer” that began each day). It was right there on the screen: “Oh, sing to God above a Him of praise and blessing.”

Eaton: a fine leader

It was generally agreed that Bp. Eaton acquitted herself well in her first assembly. Her presiding was competent and helpful. Her official report was upbeat – “we’ve done a lot in the last three years,” she began. She emphasized the need for evangelism: “How is it that we have so much reverence for the name of the Lord that we don’t even speak it out loud?” She spoke of the importance of understanding what is authentically Lutheran – it’s our theology, not our culture. “I never had *lefse* until I was 60 years old,” she confessed, “and . . . if you put enough butter and sugar on anything, it’s really good.” She mentioned an event being planned for “rostered leaders” which will be “sort of like a youth gathering, but I’m thinking we’ll need more supervision.” She spoke of the need for racial justice and reconciliation, and asked why the church can’t take the lead in this. “We’ve already died in Christ; why can’t we have these conversations?”

Add to this her frequent comparing of the assembly to “band camp,” including a regular leading of the old camp song “Announcements” to introduce Secretary Chris Boerger at the end of each session, and you can see that her spirit has brought a different tone to the ELCA – to the churchwide assembly, to be sure, but also to Higgins Road. “She’s definitely in charge,” one executive staff person told me, “but she doesn’t try to micromanage, which wasn’t always true with her predecessor.”

In conclusion

The first “Grace Gathering” seems to have been a success. This event brought a few hundred ELCA members to join in three days of workshops, attend some sessions of the assembly, and take part in Thursday afternoon service projects (with assembly members also participating). A good time was had by all.

In sum, this was the least contentious

churchwide assembly in many years. Things aren't entirely rosy, of course; Secretary Boerger noted that baptized membership has declined 31% since the beginning of the ELCA in 1988. But there was a sense in New Orleans that the church is now on a more promising path, and also a sense that Bishop Elizabeth

Eaton was a good choice to lead us to wherever that path is taking us.

— by Richard O. Johnson, editor

[You can still read our on-the-scene reports from New Orleans at alpb.org/Forum.]

Omnium gatherum



Well, what can I say? • I know, I know. I promised that the report on the churchwide assembly would be in the October issue, and here it is in September. Well, the issue was going to be a few days late anyway, see, and so I thought, "What the heck, what's another day. I'll just get it ready for September." Who knows, maybe we'll scoop the *Living Lutheran*.

A day of pure joy • If you thought that referred to, oh, Easter or some other festival of the church, think again. From an assistant to the bishop of the Sierra Pacific Synod: "Pride Parade was a beautiful day in San Francisco that I truly enjoyed! It was tremendously enjoying [*sic*] basking in the sun, driving the parade route of downtown San Francisco in a convertible with Acting Bishop Nancy Nelson. I was swept to joyful enthusiasm as we participated with the huge crowds of humanity that were in full celebration. It was wonderfully uplifting to observe our sisters and brothers in full frolic and friskiness. I was moved to a great optimism observing the sights and sounds of cavorting humanity of all colors and genders gathered in interactive community, togetherness and unity! It was a day of pure joy!"

Parish ministry 'encuentro' • This is a little late for most, but Lutheran CORE is sponsoring a Parish Ministry Encounter or "Encuentro" (Sept. 13-15 in Chicago) designed to consider how individuals and congregations can experience healing and renewal, especially in the context of Hispanic-Latino Lutheran ministry. Particularly interesting: a presentation by liturgical scholar Frank Senn on "Holy Cross Day: In Legend, Life and Ministry" (on Sept. 14, of course). For more information, contact Pr. Keith Forni, <Keith.L.Forni@gmail.com>. If it's already too late when you read this, you must still be reading the paper version of *Forum Letter*. To switch to the pdf version, contact Donna at dkralpb@aol.com.

Back stateside • Our colleague Sarah Hinlicky Wilson, editor of *Lutheran Forum*, has recently moved back to the United States after nearly eight years in Strasbourg, France. She continues to serve as adjunct professor at the Institute for Ecumenical Research, and in particular will serve as the consultant to the International Lutheran-Classical Pentecostal dialogue which begins this fall; and of course she will continue to edit *Lutheran Forum*. She and her family will be making their home in St. Paul, MN. — roj

Address Service Requested

DELHI, NY 13753-0327
POST OFFICE BOX 327

LUTHERAN FORUM / FORUM LETTER
AMERICAN LUTHERAN PUBLICITY BUREAU

NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
MASON CITY, IA 50401
PERMIT #429