



The ELCA's Presiding Bishop Tiptoes through the Abortion Minefield

by [Pr. Steve Shipman](#), Former CORE Director

Pastor Steve Shipman wants to be clear that the political statements below are his opinions and do not represent official positions of Lutheran CORE. He served as a pastor in the ELCA for more than 45 years including as Director of Lutheran CORE. He is now an NALC pastor serving an interim pastorate in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania. You can contact him at prsteveshipman@gmail.com.

One could almost feel sympathy for ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton as she tries to navigate the minefield that is the current political debate over legislation permitting or restricting abortions.

As I noted in a [previous article](#), the ELCA published a social statement

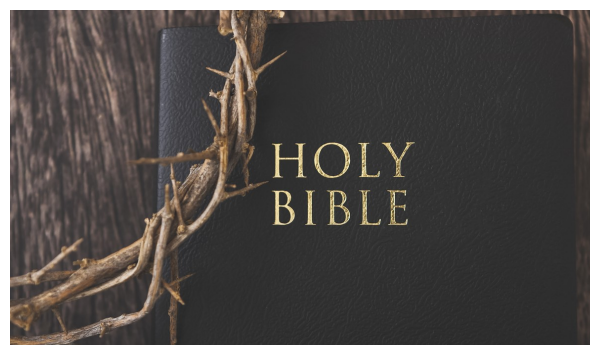
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Postmodernism Gone Viral, Part 2: Sloppy, Tentative Exegesis

by Pr. [Brett Jenkins](#), Lutheran CORE Board Member

I originally intended my *Postmodernism Gone Viral* article as a one-off, but the response (both positive and negative) has been so strong that I realized there was a bit more to say on the subject. Furthermore, that article was based on the draft

document, and since I wrote it, the final proposal that the ELCA will consider for adoption has been issued. Before my brother and sister Lutherans in the ELCA adopt *Faith, Sexism, and Justice (FSJ)*, there is another issue that could have immediate, direct ripple effects into the other Lutheran bodies. I will address this most serious issue in this article and then take on



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The reality is that nobody in the ELCA officialdom seems willing or able to challenge the radical feminist cabal who are evidently the power behind the crozier. The ELCA has become what Secretary Almen warned against when it was being formed: It is the far left wing of a certain political party at prayer.

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What Will It Be Next?

by [Dennis Nelson](#), Executive Director, Lutheran CORE

In an article in the June letter from the director I outlined some of the ways in which the ELCA is fully embracing and constantly promoting and empowering the entire LGBTQIA+ agenda. A link to that article can be found [here](#). One of the ways is the fact that the ELCA Church Council declined to consider the document, “Trustworthy Servants of the People of God,” even though it had been recommended to them by the ELCA Conference of Bishops. Instead they referred it back to the Domestic Mission Unit for revision. We all know that the process for writing and revising this statement of what the ELCA expects of its rostered ministers will not be complete until it fully conforms with everything desired and demanded by the relentless LGBTQIA+ agenda.



Too Conservative

We also have been wondering all along when the ELCA would decide that the Human Sexuality social statement, which was approved by the Churchwide Assembly in 2009, is just too conservative in its allowing for and even giving a place of respect to traditional views. Lo and behold. It looks like that time is coming.

Update on the Revision Process

By going to <https://elca.org/rosteredlife> you can find an update on the revision process for the

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Seeking Survey Input

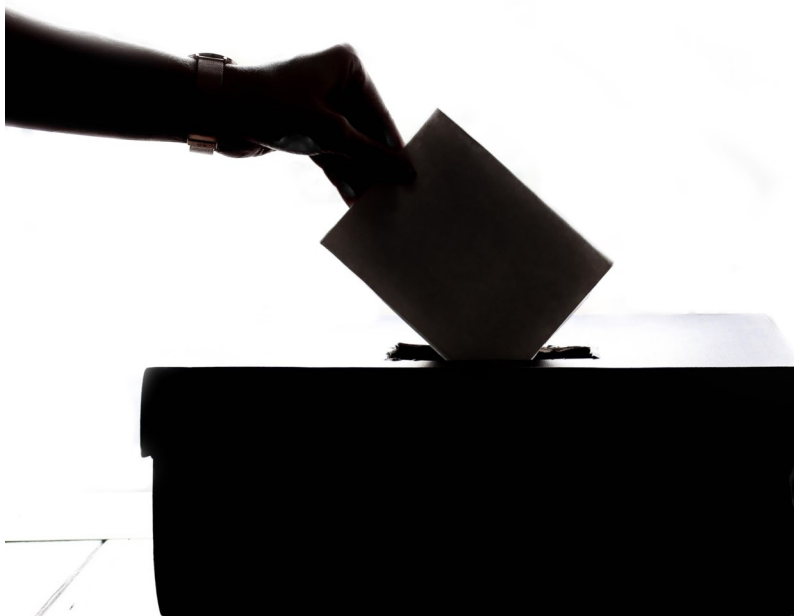
by [Dennis Nelson](#), Executive Director, Lutheran CORE

Many thanks to all who have responded to the survey in which we are asking faithful, orthodox ELCA pastors how we can be of help and support to them.

These survey results will inform CORE's yearly in-person board meeting, which will be held in August.

More Connections

Among the concerns that we are hearing is a desire for more connection with other orthodox ELCA pastors, a sense of urgency that Lutheran CORE find ways to more effectively connect with younger, orthodox pastors, and a deep, sincere hope that Lutheran CORE will be able to help orthodox ELCA congregations find an orthodox ELCA pastor to be their next pastor.



Need a Survey?

If you have not yet received a survey, or would like another copy of the survey, please contact me at dennisnelsonaz@yahoo.com.

Appeal for Prayers and Mission Partners

by [Dennis D. Nelson](#), Executive Director of Lutheran CORE

Many thanks to those who have already responded to the appeal for prayer and mission partners for a faithful, orthodox ELCA pastor and his Spanish-speaking ELCA congregation – Pastor Samuel Nieva and Pueblo de Dios Lutheran Church in Compton, California. Compton is one of the poorest and most violence-prone cities in California. A link to the article, which was part of the June letter from the director, can be found [here](#).



At the current time Pueblo de Dios is receiving \$24,000 a year from the ELCA Churchwide and \$5,000 per year from the Southwest California Synod, in support of an annual budget of \$75,000. But these amounts are at risk of being reduced, plus Pastor Nieva would like to not be financially dependent upon the ELCA. Combining the donations from the congregation's current mission partners, plus the amounts that have been given or pledged in the last few weeks, *we are about one-fourth of the way towards meeting the goal of \$50,000 per year from mission partners*. If you feel that God is speaking to you and/or your congregation about the needs of this most effective, faithful, and powerful orthodox ministry, please contact me at dennisdnelsonaz@yahoo.com.

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CiT Helps Churches

by [Dennis D. Nelson](#), Executive Director of Lutheran CORE

Some startling statistics were included in a newsletter article by the president of an ELCA seminary. According to the president, there are currently 2,776 vacancies in the nearly 10,000 congregations of the ELCA. *That is over one out of every four*. One thousand of those vacancies are for a full-time position. What makes these statistics even more startling is the fact that the majority of the baby boomer pastors have yet to retire. No wonder there is such an extreme urgency about what Lutheran CORE's [Congregations in Transition \(CiT\)](#) ministry initiative is doing.

CiT is a new ministry, sponsored by Lutheran CORE, to assist churches facing the departure or retirement of their solo pastor. CiT can be especially helpful in two kinds of ministry scenarios: 1. When the pastor has recently announced — or is planning to announce — his or her upcoming retirement; and 2. When congregational leaders who are already dealing with a vacancy have found the search and call process to be longer (and perhaps more frustrating) than they had anticipated.

Each congregation that “signs on” is assigned their own trained coach/consultant to provide customized counsel to the church for up to six to eight months. These trained coaches are mostly recently retired Lutheran pastors, which means that they are volunteering their time. This is a pan-Lutheran effort. We have pastor/coaches who are rostered with ELCA, LCMC, NALC, and AALC. The only costs to the congregation are the



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Save the Date!

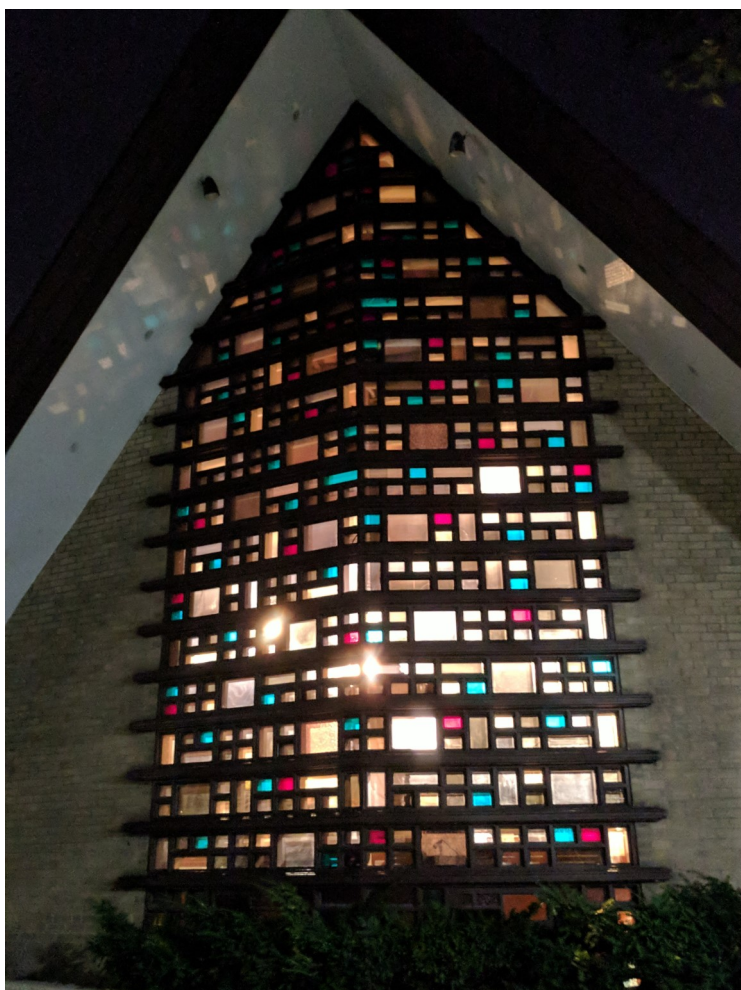
By [Keith Forni](#), Lutheran CORE Board Member

Please save the date! Encuentro is an annual meeting that includes presentations, prayers, feasting, fellowship, outreach and encouragement for those involved in bilingual and Spanish language ministry or exploring such ministry.

To read about Encuentro 2018, click [here](#).

To read CORE's brochure created for Encuentro 2018, click [here](#).

Encuentro 2019 is on Saturday, September 14th, Holy Cross Day.



The ELCA's Presiding Bishop Tiptoes through the Abortion Minefield

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on abortion a number of years ago, probably the last such statement that truly included a variety of opinions and was not simply stacked on one side along with a token “conservative” or two to make the outcome look legitimate.

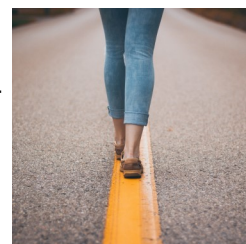
Radical Feminist Cabal

The reality is that nobody in the ELCA officialdom seems willing or able to challenge the radical feminist cabal who are evidently the power behind the crozier. The ELCA has become what Secretary Almen warned against when it was being formed: It is the far left wing of a certain political party at prayer.

Correction

At the end of May poor Bp. Eaton issued a letter on abortion, followed swiftly by a “correction.” Obviously she stepped over a line on the first try, which did fairly accurately represent the statement. The original letter from the Bishop said, “Through this social teaching and policy statement, this church seeks to travel a moderating path by supporting abortion as a last resort for pregnancies that are unsafe or a result of rape or incest.” And that is basically true. But less than an hour later she issued a correction, dropping “for pregnancies that are unsafe or a result of rape or incest.”

But less than an hour later she issued a correction, dropping “for pregnancies that are unsafe or a result of rape or incest.”



Bp. Eaton's Political Issue

Let's review what the ELCA Abortion Statement actually said. It was quite clear: “...this church supports legislation that prohibits abortions that are performed after the fetus is determined to be viable, except when the mother's life is threatened or when lethal abnormalities indicate the prospective newborn will die very soon.” And of course the political issue which Bp. Eaton cannot or will not address is that laws are being passed and celebrated in shameful ways which permit any and all abortions up to the moment the baby emerges from the birth canal. Some political figures even leave it up to the mother to decide whether doctors should be permitted to treat a baby born after a botched abortion.

... the political issue which Bp. Eaton cannot or will not address is that laws are being passed and celebrated in shameful ways which permit any and all abortions up to the moment the baby emerges from the birth canal.

Abortion and Slavery

I personally believe that the abortion issue in our time is the moral equivalent of the issue of human slavery two centuries ago. If the Lord tarries, in another century the ELCA and the other oldline churches will be seen much as we view those Christian groups that justified slavery, often on biblical grounds.

Incapable of Biblical Truth

It is ironic that while the ELCA eagerly accuses every white person of being a horrible racist who needs to be re-educated to give up our “white privilege,” (which is even worse if you are a male), it is incapable of speaking a word of biblical truth in defense of vulnerable life unless it serves a certain political agenda.

The Science is Clear

And while on other issues the ELCA champions truths of science to support its political lobbying, the science is very clear that the unborn child has a very different DNA from its mother. The unborn child clearly has a higher moral claim than a spleen or an appendix.

So what can you do?

Goddess Choice

First, pray. Pray because just as we are still experiencing what the prophets would call God's judgment over the practice of human slavery, God will not be mocked over the sacrifice of innocent life on the altar of

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The ELCA's Presiding Bishop Tiptoes ...

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the goddess Choice.

Second, join [Lutherans for Life](#), support them with your prayers and financial gifts, sign the [petition](#) they have recently posted (links are also on our Facebook page), and learn more about what they are doing.

Nothing is More Important

And third, I'm sorry to say this, but please reflect on this issue when you cast your vote. I am unapologetically a single-issue voter. I believe that nothing is more important today as a political issue than the protection of all life from conception to natural death. Yes, there can be a few squishy areas on the extremes. But I cannot support any politician or political party that advocates and even celebrates abortion without any restrictions whatever.

March for Life 2020

So maybe that brings up a fourth point. I have gotten involved again in political campaigns to support some strong pro-life candidates. And they know why I support them (although they aren't about to pander to the abortion lobby to save their political careers). Politics may not be for everybody. But at the very least, I hope to see many of you at the [March for Life](#) on January 24, 2020 in Washington (or you can look for a local march). We need some ELCA folks too, since I can no longer hold one end of the "ELCA for Life" banner.

Photo of baby in the womb on page 1 courtesy of Life Issues Institute

**God will not be mocked
over the sacrifice of innocent
life on the altar of
the goddess Choice.**



What Will It Be Next ...

Continued from [page 2](#)

"Trustworthy Servants" document. At the bottom of the page you can find a link to FAQ's – Frequently Asked Questions. One of the Frequently Asked Questions is as follows –

"Does 'Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust' need updating too? The Northwest Washington Synod Assembly has submitted a memorial to revise the social statement on sexuality, and the proposal to reopen this social statement will come before the [2019 Churchwide Assembly](#)."

What Next?

Did any of us actually believe that what was approved in 2009 would be where it would stay? Were any of us actually naïve enough to believe that the "bound conscience" argument that was used to gain support for the human sexuality social statement would actually provide for the protection of the bound conscience of those with traditional views? After the ELCA human sexuality social statement and the document describing the ELCA's expectations for its rostered leaders fully conform to the desires and demands of the radical, relentless LGBTQIA+ agenda, what will it be next? Will the ELCA then rewrite and revise its doctrinal statement – its confession of faith – so that it actually conforms to what the ELCA actually believes and what the ELCA allows its pastors to believe and teach?

Photo by Robert Vergeson on [Unsplash](#)

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Postmodernism Gone Viral, Part 2: Sloppy, Tendentious Exegesis

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some of the criticisms I have received in a final installment, which won't be published until after the die is cast regarding the adoption of *FSJ*.

Despite a few obligatory pious gestures to convince us that it is in fact “drawing on the deepest strands” of the faith tradition it largely critiques, it is clear that *FSJ* views the Christian and Jewish traditions as primarily providing impediments and challenges to its objectives. It is therefore unsurprising that the document is significantly out of step with the Christian (and Jewish) traditions of 2000+ years.

Goodbye to Sound Doctrine

A ready example is provided in the document's first treatment of Scripture; here what is jettisoned is the tradition of sound exegesis guiding doctrine. Since poor exegesis can take on a life of its own, getting copied and re-used by others beyond the bounds of the ELCA, I felt that this should be addressed prior to the ELCA's deciding whether to give *FSJ* canonical status.

Proof?

Some rather dubious translation and exegetical footwork is engaged in to “prove” that the text of Genesis 2:7 shows God originally forming an un-sexed human being. The proposed social statement uses a translation of this text rendered by Phyllis Trible in her book *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*:

“then Yahweh God formed the earth creature [hā-'ādām] dust from the earth [hā-'dāmā] and breathed into its nostrils the breath of life, and the earth creature [hā-'ādām] became a living *nephesh* [being]”

[*FSJ* 419-422: I will reference excerpts from *Faith, Sexism, and Justice* using its own study numbers.]

Relying on Ms. Trible's work based upon this [tendentious](#) rendering of the text, the document goes on to assert that:

In Hebrew, the word for “Adam” means “earth creature;” it is not a proper name but a poetic play upon the Hebrew word for earth. English translations of Genesis refer to “Adam” being formed first and refer to this earth creature as a male, but the original language never suggests that a man was created first. Rather, it recounts the creation of all humanity. Only later does the text refer to distinct bodies, called “Adam” and “Eve.”

[*FSJ* 423-427]

New Assertion

Of course, noting the relationship between the words *hā-'ādām* and *hā-'dāmā* is covering no new exegetical ground, but the assertion that *hā-'ādām* refers to “the creation of all humanity” is new... and it ignores several striking contra-indicators about the canonical text. First, it ignores that in its canonical position, this story serves as a *complement* to Genesis 1:27, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them,” which clearly refers to the creation of all humanity. In its canonical position, the Genesis 2 account adds a layer of narrative detail to the rather sparse account of Genesis 1.

***FSJ* is significantly out of step with the Christian (and Jewish) traditions of 2000+ years.**

Poetic Word Play

The assertion that *hā-'ādām* is, of course, “not a proper name but [only] a poetic play upon the Hebrew word for earth” is not sustainable in the face of the remainder of the Genesis 2 narrative. It ignores that *hā-'ādām* never undergoes a formal naming as does his wife in verse 3:20. A consistent use of Dr. Trible's hermeneutic should then have us logically declare that Eve is not a proper name, but rather only a poetic trope upon the Hebrew word for life. Are we to believe Adam (and the rest of the creatures in the Genesis story) are not alive until Eve receives her name in verse 3:20? The proposition is ludicrous in the extreme.

Adam

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Postmodernism Gone Viral, Part 2: Sloppy, Tendentious Exegesis

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All of this means that *hā-’ādām* [Adam] is the *name* of the first human, and that this name is apt precisely because it is *descriptive*. This last point is especially important given the dramatic contours that happen next; Adam goes on to name “every living creature,” a task that requires that apt, descriptive names be found for each even as his own name is apt and descriptive. The dramatic significance of Adam’s name crescendos to a climax when the Lord pronounces His judgment over the disobedience of Adam and his wife (not yet named) by proclaiming “By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground [*hā-’dāmā*], for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” (Genesis 3:19)

Clearly Male

That the first human in the Genesis 2 story is clearly male is indicated by the manner of the woman’s creation in verses 2:21-25. The creation of the woman from Adam’s bone indicates (among many other things) that Adam is male and his as-yet unnamed wife is female. The narrative climax comes in Adam’s doxological hymn, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; *she shall be called Woman* (’iš-šā(h), *because she was taken out of Man* (’iš).” (Genesis 2:23) That the woman is different from the man sexually is the very basis of her identification and clearly marks out Adam as different from her—that is already, prior to his wife’s creation, male. Furthermore, Adam’s thanks is proffered because the woman is the essential “helper” that Adam needs. Hence the apt, descriptive naming of her in accord with her creation; a naming after the same manner as Adam. However, what the text pushes us to recognize is that her *telos* as “helper” is made possible by the very fact of her *sexual* differentiation from Adam, whose sex is already determined and unchanged by her creation.

Far from the social statement’s contention that Genesis 2:7 portrays the creation of humanity in general, the actual text of this verse shows the creation of a singular human *nephesh* (being), while the creation of *humanity* (human community and a species capable of being “fruitful and multiplying”) is not accomplished in the Genesis 2 story until verse 22.

Sexually Differentiated Humanity

Both the Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 accounts therefore show God creating humanity in a *sexually* differentiated complementarity, a fact that the document wishes at all costs to avoid recognizing because it wishes to achieve a “reading of the Scriptures [that] promotes an understanding of human diversity that is not limited by either a binary or a hierarchical view of gender.” [FSJ 457-458] The authors of the document must have realized the evident meaning of the original texts, because one of the things that changed from the earlier draft provided for commentary and the one to be considered for adoption at the ELCA’s upcoming churchwide assembly is the next line of analysis: “The differentiation of humankind into male and female, expressed in Genesis 2, communicates the joy found in humans having true partners, true peers” of the earlier draft document has become in the text proposed for adoption, “The differentiation of *humankind* expressed in *the creation stories* communicates...” In the original draft statement, the authors had inadvertently fallen back into exegesis—reading the text according to its clearly intended meaning—something that needed to be course-corrected in the document to be adopted by the church as official teaching.

FSJ hypocritically attempts to use privileged internal mechanisms of that faith — Biblical exegesis and church governance structures — to establish a *purportedly* egalitarian ideology.

Conflagration of Influences

Such unadulterated *eisegesis* of the most ham-fisted variety should be expected in any document that is deeply influenced by the conflagration of deconstructionism, post-structuralism, Marxism, and reactive, sophomoric cultural analysis that fits under the umbrella of postmodernism. This is because, as I asserted in my last article, postmodernism views integrity to the data—coherence—as utterly superfluous to the true purposes of communication.

Course Correction

And this gives me the chance to course-correct a failure of my first article—my failure to state explicitly

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the observation that led me to draft the article in the first place. *FSJ* is more than disingenuous, it is *hypocritical* because it uses privileged communication from a position of hierarchical advantage to promote the ideology of [egalitarianism](#). In a technocratic meritocracy like our own, positions purportedly based upon “scholarship” or “expert testimony” like the aforementioned work of Dr. Phyllis Tribble carry undue weight and have disproportionate influence. The inclusion of the transliterated Hebrew words helps bamboozle the nominally educated and those who “just want fairness” (a noble predisposition) into thinking that the contentions of the social statement are supported by solid, relatively incontrovertible scholarship. This leads inexorably to the conviction that there can be no principled reason to oppose the social statement, and that those so opposed must be of bad character, prompted by despicable (dare one say, deplorable?) motives.

We All Suffer

I have had the opportunity to experience firsthand this resultant dynamic in the less-than-thoughtful, reactionary responses to some of my articles over the years. I will address some of the correspondence I received over part 1 of this article in the next issue of *CORE Voice*, but I end this article by noting that all of us suffer when the methodologies employed by *FSJ* are utilized. Many have bemoaned the current state of political discourse in America, but few have noted that postmodernism, by removing all objective reference points and reducing all social interactions to mere exercises of power, *necessarily* forces our philosophical, moral, political, and theological discourse to this extremity. For a *Sola Scriptura* tradition like Lutheranism, solid exegesis is the objective touchpoint that prevents our theology from becoming mere tribalism and enables it to retain its character as an expression of the “one holy catholic and apostolic faith.” On these terms, *FSJ* not only fails to be an aspect of this faith, but it hypocritically attempts to use privileged internal mechanisms of that faith—Biblical exegesis and church governance structures—to establish a *purportedly* egalitarian ideology. These are just two more reasons for its rejection by any church that hopes to remain part of *the* Church of Jesus Christ.

CiT Helps Churches

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reimbursement of actual travel expenses incurred by the coach, plus a nominal \$150 administrative-cost fee paid to Lutheran CORE. CiT is not designed to replace the ministry support and resources available to your congregation from your own church body. Instead it is designed to supplement those resources. de-

Chuck Amdahl, retired LCMC and NALC pastor and one of the trained coaches, describes CiT in this way:

“It is all about people whose hearts are great for the people of God, for the life of the congregation. . . . As coaches they come alongside of congregations in transition, encouraging and equipping – *empowering* leaders whose responsibilities include navigating the congregation through uncertain transitions. These coaches are building awareness, strength, and confidence among its members, renewing purpose (mission) and vitality all the while.

“I am privileged to work alongside of these coaches. They are brothers and sisters serving the Lord Jesus and His Church – your congregation, and the very Church which as Samuel Stone so rightly reminds us in that old and favorite hymn composed well over a century ago: ‘...with His own blood He bought her, and for her life He died.’”



For more information contact Don Brandt at pastordonbrandt@gmail.com or Dennis Nelson at dennisdnelson@yahoo.com. You can also read more about Congregations in Transition by visiting the Lutheran CORE website. A link to that portion of the website can be found [here](#).

Appeal for Prayers

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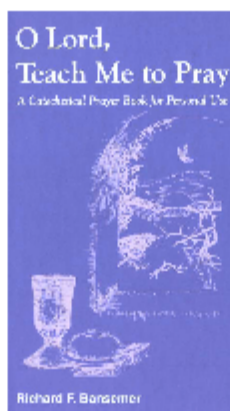
Are you familiar with the ALPB's Richard F. Bansemer Collection?

These small volumes of Prayers for the Church by Richard F. Bansemer invite us to combine the question known and beloved by Lutherans everywhere, "what does this mean?," with the bold declaration of the Lutheran Confessions, "we believe, teach, and confess." Former Bishop of the Virginia Synod, ELCA, he has become known for his gift of prayer and his ability to draw the reader into honest relationship with God.

O Lord, Teach Me to Pray: A Catechetical Prayer Book for Personal Use

In this book Richard F. Bansemer takes the teachings of Luther's Small Catechism before God in prayer to encourage and inspire the reader in the basics of Christian faith. This helpful volume is suitable for both youth and adults.

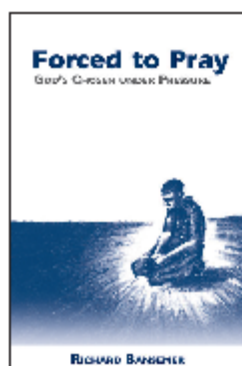
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We Believe: A Prayer Book Based on the Augsburg Confession with reflections by Walter R. Bouman

This volume contains prayers and reflections based on the articles of the Augsburg Confession that seek to use the confessions devotionally "in order that theology and prayer may enliven faith."

Hardcover 96 pp. \$9.50 + shipping
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Forced To Pray: God's Chosen under Pressure

This volume approaches prayer from a different angle and looks at the prayer of the person who finds himself in difficult circumstances, with a heavy burden thrust upon him, and literally forced to pray by what has befallen him. He examines the lives and prayers of five persons in the Bible, Jonah, Job, Mary, Jesus and Paul, and considers how God might likewise drive us to pray by choosing us for some "hard heavenly work on earth."

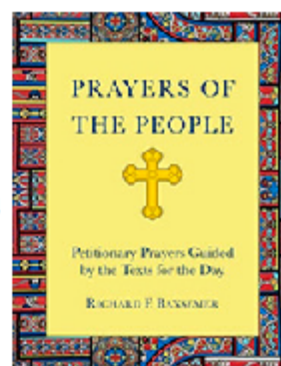
Paper, 144 pp., \$12.50 + postage

Prayers of the People: Petitionary Prayers Guided by the Texts for the Day

Here Richard F. Bansemer has collected prayers for every Sunday of the church year as well as a number of additional holy days. His intention is that these Prayers of the People might help congregations each week to engage in the conversation with God that is true prayer. The scripture lessons to which the prayers relate are those in the three-

year Revised Common Lectionary (RCL). All prayers within this volume are available in digital form free of charge to owners of the book to facilitate such adaptation and may be requested via email.

Paper, 8.5 x 11 inches, 206 pp., \$11.00 + postage



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Sponsoring an Event?

We Would Love to Help You Get the Word Out

If you are planning an event that you believe Lutheran CORE members would want to know about and that is consistent with the [Common Confession](#), please let us know. **Brief articles and pictures are always welcome.** We also can share them via our website, Facebook and Twitter feeds. Contact CORE's editor, Kim Smith, at kss01ohio@gmail.com.

Coming Events

ELCA Churchwide Assembly	Milwaukee, WI	August 5-10, 2019	"We are Church"	Click here
NALC Lutheran Week	Indianapolis, IN	August 5-9, 2019	"Walking by the Spirit with the Fruit of the Spirit"	Click here
2019 Encuentro (Encounter)	Chicago, IL	September 14, 2019	Save the date!	Click here
LCMC Annual Gathering	Omaha, NE	Sept. 29 - Oct. 2, 2019	"Listen Up!"	Click here.
2019 Lutherans for Life Regional Conferences	Events are coming up in Colorado, Minnesota, Maryland and	Final conference is Nov. 16th	"Did God Really Say ...?"	Click here
March for Life 2020	Washington, D.C.	January 24, 2020	TBD	Click here

Website Features

- * Check out our [Worship](#) page to see all the worship resources Pastor Cathy Ammlung has posted including [Prayers of the Church](#).
- * CORE's [Transitions \(CiT\) page](#) is for congregations in transition. Learn how a trained coach can be assigned to help your congregation!
- * CORE connects confessing congregations and pastors on its [Clergy Connect](#) page. We have created several new posts for churches seeking pastors since the last newsletter was published.
- * CORE posts a [daily devotion](#).
- * CORE's [Communications](#) page includes newsletters, Letters from the Director and many Other letters of interest.
- * CORE posts a short list of blog friends under [Friends of Lutheran CORE](#).



Thank you!

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Published by Lutheran CORE

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