

Caring Connections

An Inter-Lutheran Journal for Practitioners and Teachers of Pastoral Care and Counseling



Ministering to a Diverse and Polarized Culture

The Purpose of Caring Connections

Caring Connections: An Inter-Lutheran Journal for Practitioners and Teachers of Pastoral Care and Counseling is written by and for Lutheran practitioners and educators in the fields of pastoral care, counseling, and education. Seeking to promote both breadth and depth of reflection on the theology and practice of ministry in the Lutheran tradition, *Caring Connections* intends to be academically informed, yet readable; solidly grounded in the practice of ministry; and theologically probing. *Caring Connections* seeks to reach a broad readership, including chaplains, pastoral counselors, seminary faculty and other teachers in academic settings, clinical educators, synod and district leaders, others in specialized ministries and — not least — concerned congregational pastors and laity.

Caring Connections also provides news and information about activities, events and opportunities of interest to diverse constituencies in specialized ministries.

Scholarships

When the Inter Lutheran Coordinating Committee disbanded a few years ago, the money from the “Give Something Back” Scholarship Fund was divided between the ELCA and the LCMS. The ELCA has retained the name “Give Something Back” for their fund, and the LCMS calls theirs “The SPM Scholarship Endowment Fund.” These endowments make a limited number of financial awards available to individuals seeking ecclesiastical endorsement and certification/credentialing in ministries of chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical education.

Applicants must:

- have completed one [1] unit of CPE.
- be rostered or eligible for active roster status in the ELCA or the LCMS.
- not already be receiving funds from either the ELCA or LCMS national offices.
- submit an application, along with a financial data form, for committee review.

Applicants must complete the Scholarship Application forms that are available from Ruth Hamilton [ELCA] or Bob Zagore [LCMS]. Consideration is given to scholarship requests after each application deadline. LCMS deadlines are April 1, July 1 and November 1, with awards generally made by the end of the month. ELCA deadline is December 31. Email items to Ruth Hamilton at ruth.hamilton@elca.org and to David Ficken ESC@lcms.org.

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Call for Articles

Caring Connections seeks to provide Lutheran Pastoral Care Providers the opportunity to share expertise and insight with the wider community. We want to invite anyone interested in writing an article to please contact one of the co-editors, Diane Greve at dkgreve@gmail.com or Lee Joesten at lee.joesten@gmail.com. Please consider writing an article for us. We sincerely want to hear from you! And, as always, if you haven't already done so, we hope you will subscribe online to *Caring Connections*. Remember, a subscription is free! By subscribing, you are assured that you will receive prompt notification when each issue of the journal appears on the *Caring Connections* website. This also helps the editors and the editorial board to get a sense of how much interest is being generated by each issue. We are delighted that the number of those who check in is increasing with each new issue. Please visit www.lutherservices.org/newsletters#cc and click on "Click here to subscribe to the *Caring Connections Journal*." to receive automatic notification of new issues.

Editorial

Lee Joesten

WE ARE WELL-AWARE of our nation's cultural diversity. We take pride in the fact that we are a country of immigrants. Unfortunately in recent years we have grown increasingly polarized in our diversity. Views about a host of issues swirl around us and tend to separate us: race, immigration, gender identity and inequality, women's health, environment, and the United States' role in the global community. Specialized pastoral ministers serve in settings that reflect the entire spectrum of differing views and convictions. Sometimes our personal views conflict with the views of those we serve as well as the institutions on which we depend for employment, endorsement, and certification. How do those in specialized pastoral ministry navigate these tensions and potentially conflicted relationships? How do we manage to minister effectively to others whose views differ from our own? How do we maintain open and honest communication with those we serve and those with whom we work? These were the questions our editorial board decided to address in this first *Caring Connections* issue of 2020.

Now this issue comes in the throes of a global pandemic unprecedented in our lifetime. The coronavirus intensifies the strain specialized pastoral ministers are already feeling. In some sections of the country hospitals are overwhelmed with patients while staff work increased hours, balancing heavy workloads with fears for their own health and the health of their families. Those serving in nursing homes, long term care facilities, hospice programs and correctional institutions care for residents or inmates who, for safety reasons, are separated from each other and isolated from their families.

The *CC* editorial board decided to move forward with its original theme for this issue while directing our readers to other resources that can be helpful during this pandemic. I encourage our readers to [click here](#) to be linked to the Volume 5, 2008 #1 issue of *Caring Connections* that focused on ministering in a pandemic. The coronavirus pandemic has many unique features, but our readers may still find this previous issue to be relevant and helpful. I also encourage you to go to our respective national church body websites for their guidance and supportive resources during this critical time in history. [Click here](#) to be linked to the LCMS website and [here](#) for the ELCA's.

I also ask our readers to help us with forthcoming issues for this year. Share your experiences and stories with us in real time as to what you and those you serve are going through during the coronavirus pandemic. Send your reflections and stories to either me at lee.joesten@gmail.com or my co-editor Diane Greve at

dkgreve@gmail.com for possible use in future issues. As painful as this crisis is, it can also be rich for learning.

I am grateful to the following for their contributions to this issue:

- **Arthur Werzner** talks about how he shares the good news of Jesus Christ given the restrictions placed on chaplains by certifying and institutional officials.
- **Dave Wurster** writes from the perspective of a pastoral counselor and describes his approach when his beliefs conflict with the beliefs of clients and credentialing bodies.
- **Glenn Palmer** is a military chaplain. He writes about personal experiences where his pastoral approaches to ministry conflict with the beliefs and practices of his peer military chaplains.
- **Nancy Wigdahl**, a clinical pastoral educator, writes about growing pluralism within CPE groups and strategies that pastoral educators can use to facilitate growth rather than dysfunction in the learning process.
- **Phil Kuehnert** reflects on the unique role of specialized pastoral ministers in trying to bridge the gap between opposing views. He concludes it is both daunting and encouraging.

Finally in the News and Announcement section there is sad news and good news. Sadly we inform you about the deaths of our colleagues Gary Wunrow and Terry Germann. We pray for the comfort and strength of their families as they adjust to their painful loss. At the same time we congratulate James McDaniels and Dave Wurster, LCMS recipients of the *Christus in Mundo* award. News about the ELCA recipients will appear in our next issue.

Institutional Barriers to Sharing the Good News

Arthur Werzner

CHAPLAINS WHO SERVE IN HOSPITALS agree to abide by institutional and professional standards that prohibit imposing one's own beliefs on someone else. It is a foundational rule.

As a Lutheran chaplain (LCMS), I have wrestled with a desire to tell people what brings me hope and joy and peace when facing life's trials, i.e. the Gospel (1 Peter 3:15), and the institutional and professional standards that tell me not to impose my beliefs on someone else. For a long time, I envisioned that tension as two ends of a pendulum's arc. On one end is throwing institutional and professional standards "to the wind" and preaching to all, "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand" (Matthew 4:17b). On the opposite end is abandoning one's post as a disciple of Jesus — essentially being ashamed of the Lord (Mark 8:38). With that line of thinking, the goal would be to operate "somewhere in the middle."

When wrestling with the tension described above, I go back to a concept I learned in CPE. Namely, as a Christian chaplain, I embody the Good News of God's love in Christ Jesus. To put it another way, when I minister to someone — regardless of who they are — I bring myself, and I bring Jesus. It is a simple concept but not new. Am I saying anything you, the reader, haven't encountered before? Probably not. Is that concept easy to live out? I'll let you answer that question for yourself. For me, the tension hasn't entirely gone away. I'm okay with that.

"Bringing myself and bringing Jesus" means praying that through my interaction with a patient "God's name will be hallowed; that His kingdom will come; and that His will be done on earth as it is in heaven." I also pray and trust that God will follow through on that prayer. Every now and then, I get to see how God works things out in the lives of those I meet. Most of the time I don't. However, it is a blessing when I see evidence of God's work.

Here's an example: After introducing myself to a patient, the patient's gruff response was, "Are you Judeo / Christian?" I answered, "I am a Christian."

"Well, I'm not!" was the reply — hostility apparent.

Given the hostility, I started to question why I got the consult request in the first place and why at least two caregivers on that floor said, "oh good" when they learned that this patient was on my list. I thought about how to end the visit positively after the patient's apparent show of hostility, but a conversation unfolded. As that happened, I did what chaplains do. I listened attentively. I didn't argue or debate the patient. As the patient's personal story unfolded and our dialogue progressed, I

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remember asking, “What brings you peace?” The question was a natural one based on things the patient had said.

The patient responded, “I haven’t found any peace.” We had a brief exchange after that, but the conversation soon ended. I left the room after a cordial handshake initiated by the patient. I remember saying a short prayer to myself when leaving the room and made a note not to go back.

Some time later, I received a message saying that the patient wanted to see me. I didn’t know what to expect. I said a prayer and stopped by the room. This time upon introduction, the patient said, “I’m rededicating my life to Christ!” What a joy. I learned during that second visit that all along the patient had been crying out to God while in the throes of pain. That was why the staff had given me “thumbs up” during that initial visit. Never underestimate the Holy Spirit’s work. “The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound but cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (John 3:8, NIV).



Rev. Arthur Werzner was called to Lutheran Ministry Services Northwest in April of 2001, after completing M.Div. Studies at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis and 4 Units of Clinical Pastoral Education. Today he serves as LMSN's Senior Chaplain and ministers to people at Seattle area hospitals and care centers. Chp. Werzner, his wife Sarah, and daughter Elizabeth are members of Pilgrim Lutheran Church in Bellevue, Wash.

Room to Talk In a Very Tight World: Words of Grace and Truth for Believing, Living, and Loving

Dave Wurster

BASIC GROUNDS for conversation:

1. Your belief defines you
2. The issues are not *the* issue
3. Conflict is a fact of life, faith, and family so sin boldly but trust more boldly (pecca fortiter sed crede fortius) Luther and Paul

I began ordained ministry fifty years ago thinking that if I just worked hard, kept my nose clean, and did a nice ministry for nice people I'd be rewarded with recognition and a sense of significance. It worked in college and seminary. Any conflict that appeared could be easily managed or denied. Before long I realized I was in the middle of more conflict than I had ever imagined could exist. There was conflict in the parish, in marriage, graduate study, parenthood, the church, and inside me.

I soon found myself making two vows. One was that I would not step into a pulpit and say words that I did not believe. It was then I realized that I did not have a very deep or broad knowledge of what I said in my oath of office or ordination vow. That led to the second vow: As a Lutheran I would learn more deeply the meaning of holy scripture and the Book of Concord. This led to a good conflict and a good resolution for me. I found that I am not a denominational Lutheran but a catholic Lutheran understanding the Book of Concord to be a catholic book in distinction from a denominational book.

A blessing beyond that, yet complimentary to it, was advanced training in specialized pastoral care. That training included much clinical and academic work to the level of a PhD from a Jesuit university and becoming a Diplomate in the American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC). I also discovered much about life and tension points and grace and truth in a family that was bigger and a lot less nice than my mother tried to get me to believe.

We were not all nice Lutherans with an occasional designated pagan. We had different streams of religious traditions, divorces, adulteries, and addictions, as well as many talents and strengths. We go from an aunt, WWII nurse in the Philippines dying from alcohol addiction, to an uncle, a scientist, who worked on the Manhattan

As a Lutheran I would learn more deeply the meaning of holy scripture and the Book of Concord. This led to a good conflict and a good resolution for me.

Project (the Bomb), to a brother with a purple heart from the landing at Iwo Jima in 1945.

As time went on I began poking around in the Psalms with the Hebrew text handy and found two words that are often paired together: grace and truth (chesed and emeth in Hebrew). As is often the case with biblical concepts they hang together in a paradoxical way: if you fudge truth you necessarily fudge grace, and if you fudge grace you necessarily fudge truth. It is no surprise then that they come together in the first chapter of John's gospel: "The word was made flesh and dwelt among us ... and we saw his glory full of grace and truth."

I have written this introduction to address some things I think are important for maintaining ongoing conversation among Christian people and citizens about many tension points we find

present in today's polarized culture. We really cannot enter the arena well without facing self and also reflecting on the life structures that make space for real ongoing conversation. Robert Frost said, "Good fences make good neighbors." A slight twist for conversation: good fences make good spaces for good neighbors. The poem, "Mending Wall," is about people from different worlds being good neighbors in conversation. I plan continue by stating some basic beliefs, some questions that don't go away, and thoughts about the structure needed for conversation. I will add case material and life stories in the process showing the conversation in the flesh.

For over fifty years I have been blessed with good mentors, colleagues, friends, clients, parishioners, and family. One mentor, Carl Whitaker, M.D., family psychiatrist, told us more than once, "Your belief defines you." I agree. Whitaker echoes Luther and Jesus himself. A belief results in a creedal statement in words and deeds. This can be verbally explicit or implicit, but it is there. Two conflicting creeds among Christians in our world today have been there since the fall and are in mortal conflict. One is captured in the Apostles' Creed identifying Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This creed portrays a relational God. The prayer emanating from this creed is "Thy will be done." Freedom is discovering how to be in tune with "nature and nature's god" by coming to trust in the forgiveness of God in Jesus Christ.

The contrary creed dates back to the fall and is at the center of the modern sexual ethic. It was written up by Anthony Kennedy in *Casey vs. Planned Parenthood* in the "mystery clause." "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and the mystery of human life." The hymn of freedom here is "I did it my way." Freedom is to remove all limits and constraints from my vision of life. The rest of the world gets in tune with me.

We cannot duck questions about the consequences of these creeds. We cannot duck the fact that they are contradictory. We cannot duck the fact that both creeds are deep in the heart of every Christian and Christian pastor and Christian leader.

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One creed may make a martyr, and one can and does cause death. There is no way out of this conflict. The conflict can appear in very vivid and concrete ways. I have been in the high Rocky Mountains when the “did it my way with my reality” resulted in body bags. You can define your universe with a bison as a nice gentle pet to cuddle with. However the bison has a different vision. Following the “creedal conflict” he goes on down the Hayden Valley looking for grass and love, and you go home in a bag. I think you can say that person’s belief killed him or her. Rabbi Ed Friedman used to say, “If you get into a conflict of wills with mother nature, you lose!” In conversation with Christians in the hard sciences — physics, math, engineering, and space science — the scientists second the Rabbi. I have found it enjoyable and inspiring to get into conversations about grace and truth with hard scientists. The mystery clause doesn’t work when one is building an aviation guidance system or a bridge.

On the heels of these creeds is another big conflict: our view of conflict itself and how we live in it. There are those who dream of finding a partner, a church, a group or place where they will have only sweet peace. Carl Whitaker said simply, “All’s fair in love and war, and marriage is both.”

There are those who dream of finding a partner, a church, a group or place where they will have only sweet peace.

As a pastor and theologian I make a slight amendment to my mentor: “All’s fair in love and war; marriage, life, and faith are both.” So says Luther and Jesus himself. The sign of the cross says the same as well as the whole message of grace and truth. If we think that a perfect human being will have wonderful peace we are in a utopian dream. Jesus was the only one with complete human dignity, and he was in the center of the most primal conflict of all time. A read through of Mark’s gospel reveals this in the rule of thirds.

In the presence of a good leader with integrity, three elements will appear in a group to varying degrees with the following elements: 1. those who love the leader, but don’t agree all the time but in crisis will have the leader’s back; 2. those who dislike, resist, or even hate the leader and will discredit the leader to the point of doing the leader in, even to the point of death; 3. those who just don’t give a damn as long as they generally have the broad personal peace Jeremiah talks about in chapters six and eight.

This has practical application for all of ministry and pastoral care. Does the leader who has many talents but appeases others all the time really make peace, or does that leader weaken the body and make more conflict in the long run? Does an obsession with “political correctness” get peace and strength or make more conflict and create more oppression in the attempt to not be oppressive.

This leads to another important life fact and truth regarding leadership and ongoing conversation. Dan Paperoe was Director of Georgetown Family Center and consultant to families, business, and religious groups. When asked about a common

thread in dysfunctional conflicted groups, Dan said, “There is a peace monger at the head of every one of them.” A peace monger is a perpetually nice person who denies and avoids conflict by any means. They sweep much under the rug and avoid naming the elephant in the room. Jeremiah had their number when he reported them with the message of “Peace, Peace but there is no peace.” (Read chapters six and eight.) Jesus was a peace maker, not a peace monger.

Let’s apply this with a current issue in mind. A family comes to see me, and Mom presents the issue which she thinks is the main issue for the family. She reports that her fourteen-year-old son is gay. She is on his side and has a full catechism of gay literature. Her sixteen-year-old daughter thinks he’s weird and that the whole family is screwed up. Dad appears sullen and angry. It is easy to notice the parents marriage is full of stress and conflict. Over time I discover some of their story and the roots of their emotional and even faith life in their families of origin. In time the son seemed freed up to live life without having to act out his anger and anxiety and could explore how things would unfold. This does not mean gay issues are not important in our time, but they are not *the* issue. To make them *the* issue in this family would be a betrayal to members of this family.

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Working with this family and staying in conversation with all of them and not imposing my own beliefs about conflict in life and what it means to be gay meant patience and an ability to live in tension with them and with the echoes from my own family story. It also meant knowing what role I was in at the time and how that role impacted each relationship involved. Because of my basic beliefs I am going to try to not get hooked on the “gay issue” as the big issue in the family. In counseling the family I found it important that space be given to hear from the son who chilled when his fearful angry mother would scream, “God, I hope you never grow up to be like your father!” It was also helpful for all to discover in story and metaphor some of the reasons for the father’s fearful passivity which felt like a betrayal to the son. There was also a closed box in the family story about an ugly suicide that, when allowed to come out, led to more light and freedom.

As a pastor of a congregation I have worshipped and communed with gays and trans people. But I would not perform a wedding for them because of my own beliefs and conscience. This is not just because I am Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). Of course being part of an organization raises important points and issues, but for me LCMS is a denomination and by its own confessions acknowledges a higher power and standard than denominations which come and go in the cycles of history.

As a pastor for fifty years there have been times that I have confronted persons and called them to account for certain behavior offensive to the body of faith. If they

persisted I would pass them by at the altar. If the behavior was sexual in nature the same applied whether homosexual or heterosexual. I have said to individuals, “You come to the altar in repentance for forgiveness and not to make a political statement.” I have never done such a thing without discussing it thoroughly with good leaders, with which I have been blessed. In one case I and they said we would continue the communion journey in spite of the behavior because the person involved had been on the streets and was afflicted with serious mental and emotional conflicts and limitations.

I must also add that I have seen an occasion when a pastor — unaware of his or her anger issues — used a person like this as a weapon against the “insensitive” people in parish conflict. This kind of tragic behavior most often occurs when the leader is not only out of touch with self but with other leaders as well.

If I chair a certification committee with AAPC and the person applying for Fellow level certification is gay or lesbian, I process his or her material and conduct the interview with the focus on their integrity in their system and their ability at the professional level being sought. If they meet all the standards applicable I lead gently but openly for the vote to accept them and to certify them for this level of professional competence. I then congratulate them and welcome them into the group at Fellow level.

While considering the above, what do I believe? Frankly I believe St. Paul in the book of Romans is right, but not by cherry picking a couple of verses from chapter one instead of looking at the whole book. He does speak to the issue of homosexuality, but that issue is not the issue. The issue from verse one is always about his calling from God in Christ and the core of God’s righteousness in our lives. A gay person recently said, “Paul makes me mad.” I say, “Yes. I can appreciate that, but you also have to go to chapter two. There he says that religious, self righteous people are committing the same sin as the list in chapter one. If we get it, Paul will make us all mad but will also grace us in the process.”

In the civil world I believe that all people including all minority groups of late be given equal protection and due process of law under the constitution in civil and criminal law. I do not believe any of us should ignore or violate the first amendment — freedom of religious expression, speech, press, and assembly. This amendment assumes there is conflict inherent in the human being and the community necessitating some very unpleasant speech. We dare not legislate our brand of niceness onto others.

A couple quick case examples: A successful physician gets addicted to coke. He knows this will ruin his career and life. He gets off the chemical in a program and comes in and says, “This is more than chemistry; it’s got to do with my family and

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faith. Can we talk about this.” We did talk for a couple of years. The issue of cocaine is real but in this case was not *the* issue.

A high powered black woman asks to go on a faith journey. Is race an issue in her six figure corporate world? Of course. Is it *the* issue for her? No. She was always concerned about the will of God in her life. She has struggled with her success in a family that put down women and success. She was even told by family that her deep shade of dark skin must be a curse. In the course of time I just commented once that her dark skin could have been a gift of God for her calling. She looked shocked and said, I never saw it that way. It really could be.” She walked through the tough road of parents’ death — parents she had wished dead at times. Race was an issue but not *the* issue.

So where and how do we find good fences making good space for good neighbors to have continuing conversation knowing that the conversation is full of conflict and tension points?

Too often it seems our denominations go right into denominationalism or left into social justice crusades. Both are real and important, but they are not the core. They end up too small to allow talk beyond their own borders. The walls for conversation and wonder close in.

Our professional organizations can end up reaching for glory, relevance, and significance in the world and become conflict avoidant and narrow echo chambers for one segment of the politicized culture around them. Twenty years ago AAPC shifted from a professional group into a narrow political action group. This was a multifaceted event. In doing so they lost excellence, relevance, and life. Four of us diplomats (with 70 plus years of membership) wrote a letter asking if there was room for us in AAPC if we were pro-life and believed marriage is between a man and a woman. We never received an answer. We also pointed out the fact that in spite of AAPC’s position in the bylaws that members should not compromise their conscience and ordination oaths, their published position on social issues put AAPC at odds with Roman Catholics and Evangelicals, the two largest religious groups on the continent. Our very presence and questions were upsetting to the narrowing room in the organization. This is a serious issue for some people in specialized ministry who need certification. For the four of us, timing was on our side. We were all in sight of retirement and could carry on our ministry on the edge, so to speak, and then go to the bleachers to watch the conflict on the field. Sadly many cannot do that.

Our Lutheran heritage connects us to creation and to redemption in the dialogue of the two reigns of God by sword and cup. But teachings on paper are not enough. We need to see how our culture at this time is destroying leaders in both reigns who are real peace makers with vision beyond the box and beyond the issues to the issue where there is room for conversation and grace and truth. I think I have

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noticed a special challenge for people in specialized ministry in the form of two gaps. One gap is between patient and disciplined theological thinking people and their ministry. Sometimes we trade in our theology for some psychological or social theory we have found in clinical training, and we cherry pick some Bible verses to tack on. For pastoral counselors the temptation is to go from PASTORAL counselor to pastoral COUNSELOR. The other gap is between the specialized minister and the congregational ministry. Both gaps involve tensions and frustrations. I have no quick or easy solution for either — just conversation.

I conclude with examples of four people with a vision for conversation:

Alan Dershowitz: He does not like the president and won't vote for him, but ended up on his defense team. Why? As a premier constitutional scholar in America, a bona fide liberal, and a democrat he defends due process and truth of law. He defends space for conversation.

Fr. Richard John Neuhaus and Rabbi David Novak: these men were good friends, and when asked how this could be since one was Jewish and one Christian, Fr. Neuhaus said that they knew they disagree on a life and death issue of who Jesus Christ is. But they dare not try to manipulate each other to agree with the other's faith position. To do so would violate trust, the basis of their friendship.

Helmut Thielicke: I was in a meeting room with a group talking with Pastor Thielicke about different issues. One young man stood up with his answer to conflict and war: "We just put down our weapons and the other side will then do the same." Pastor Thielicke, who lived through WWII on the inside of Germany, said, "I have a pistol pointed at you, and you have a pistol pointed at me, and we are talking. If I put down my pistol, we will no longer be talking."

These people are examples of those who made good fences for good spaces for good neighbors for good conversation.

Please see the section in this issue of Caring Connections about LCMS's Christs in Mundo award recipients for a picture and brief biography of Dave Wurster.

Why Soldiers Love Jesus but not Army Chapels: Doing Inclusive Specialized Ministry in a Polarized Environment

Glenn Palmer

PRIOR TO RESPONDING TO GOD'S CALL to come on active duty, I served as the pastor of Nativity Lutheran Church in Rockland, Maine from 1995–2002. From 1998–2002 I also served as a chaplain in the Maine Army National Guard. There were no Navy chaplains in the area so we worked out an agreement with the Navy for me to provide chaplain coverage and pastoral care for USCG Station Rockland, Maine. I had the honor one day of providing the opening prayer at an awards ceremony for the outgoing commander of the United States Coast Guard Cutter “Tackle”, a man by the name of Chief Petty Officer David Pierce. The Tackle was named the best Cutter in the USCG a few years before, and CPO Pierce was awarded a medal for his actions on the Tackle. One summer day, in Boston harbor, during what’s called Operation Sail (OP SAIL), a tall ship was leaving the harbor with seven tall-masted ships following in her wake. However, the lead vessel was on the wrong side of the buoy leaving Boston Harbor, which meant she and the seven other ships following her would soon run hard aground. But thanks to the sharp and watchful eye of CPO David Pierce of the Cutter Tackle, all the ships were redirected back inside the buoy and were able to chart a new course. Without Pierce’s redirection these ships would have run aground and become stuck, unable to move ahead.

The Army chaplain corps is “polarized” between the eighty-five percent of chaplains who are “restricted” and the fifteen percent of us who are “unrestricted” in our ability to provide pastoral care services for all soldiers and families. If unable to move past a male, conservative, evangelical dominated chapel system which marginalizes and excludes female chaplains, gay and lesbian chaplains, gay and lesbian soldiers, and soldiers in same-sex marriages, the chaplain corps will veer off course and run hard aground on the shores of irrelevancy to the Army. A male, conservative, evangelical dominated branch of the military will show itself to be disconnected from the culture we are called to serve. If it is obsessed with answering questions the Army is no longer asking it will run hard aground and find itself more “polarized” and focused on its own needs rather than on those we are called to serve. It is time for the Chaplain Corps to listen to the sacred stories of those whom we are called and blessed to serve; those who volunteer to serve during a time of war and are created in God’s image, even if it means our own religious liberty takes a back seat. As Isak Denison once said, “To be a person is to have a story to tell.”

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It is the call and mission of the chaplain corps to listen to and to bear witness to the stories of all soldiers and their families.

It is well documented that the single largest demographic in the Army is “No Religious Preference (NRP).” Among younger adults aged 18–29, thirty-nine percent describe themselves as religiously unaffiliated.¹ Based on my observations at a basic training installation this demographic represents America’s ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity more than our chaplain corps which is primarily white, male, conservative Christian. This does not mean they are closed to or opposed to thinking theologically, critically, and spiritually about issues related to God, Jesus, and faith. They know the story and love of Jesus.

In this article I will describe how I have found practical and direct ministry success with young soldiers and families, i.e. millennials and mosaics, in this polarized environment by focusing on the fact that they often “love Jesus but not the chapel/church.” In addition I will show how they demonstrate their love for Jesus in and through authentic and transparent relationships and by serving and participating in creative servant-based ministries and opportunities. They respond to doing the actual work of being the hands and feet of Jesus, offering hope to the hopeless, providing food to the hungry and clothing to the naked, and forming the deep connections with others that all humans need.²

While serving as a brigade chaplain at Fort Bliss I started a brigade outreach ministry to the local homeless shelter on the border between Juarez and El Paso. Once a week I took five to six soldiers and family members to serve the evening meal. We helped prepare and serve the meal. Typically 125 people showed up to be fed. They were evenly split between Hispanics, African-Americans, and Caucasians and were deeply appreciative of the soldiers in uniform serving their evening meal. This ministry provided the soldiers the opportunity to connect with and serve their homeless “neighbor.” Many of the soldiers were dealing with issues related to combat stress and found healing for their “moral injury.” Through this opportunity to serve others they developed a sense of perspective as they were drawn out of themselves and as they served others who literally had nothing to offer and nothing to give; those who Jesus referred to as “the least of these.”

The majority of these soldiers was either un-churched or registered as “No Religious Preference.” They loved Jesus but not the church. They were open to being part of the Jesus movement if that movement was outwardly focused on mission and service to their human neighbor. As selfless servants, they understood and embraced

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1 Christy Thomas, *Millennials Flee the Church Because of Lies and Discrimination* (Patheos: July 6th, 2018)

2 *Ibid*

Saint Augustine's dictum: "What does love look like? It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. That is what love looks like."

One chaplain that assisted me on a regular basis was a Duke educated gay female Episcopal Priest. She has since left the Army after "kicking against the goads" for four years of having her ordination questioned and being marginalized by peers because she is gay. She was universally loved by her soldiers and her battalion leadership, all of whom responded positively to the opportunity to serve others. They also knew that because she was gay she was not always treated well by her chaplain peers. Her unit literally did not care that she was gay. She taught about Matthew 25 in a tangible manner. She demonstrated an incarnational ministry, modeling the belief that for followers of Jesus "love shows up." Our visible and tangible ministry together focused more on what joins us than on what separates us. She left active duty at the end of her second assignment, tired of fighting for acceptance, not within the Army but within the chaplain corps.

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Sadly, her story is more the rule than the exception. A female ELCA chaplain peer, in a same-gendered marriage is currently being denied communion and excluded from a "collective" Protestant worship service on post. Her commander, leaders, and soldiers love her. Other soldiers and families witness the discrimination against her by our chaplain corps and chapel community which appear to be out of sync with the rest of the Army. Why would they want to bring their sacred story into the place where God's story is told when they see their chaplain (who has every legal and constitutional right as any other soldier) and her story rejected? To many soldiers and leaders of today's generation "today's church is far better known for telling people what to think and how to be right, than it is known for transforming the world through the work of service."³ Instead of being places where soldiers need to get "right," our chapels have the opportunity to be places gathered around Word and Sacrament, places of pastoral care, and places for generous welcome for ALL soldiers and families, with an internal focus of solid worship and fellowship and an external focus on serving others. That is a story soldiers are willing to embrace and integrate into their lives. That is a story calling soldiers and families to move in the direction of Jesus which naturally expands their capacity to love. That is a story which allows soldiers to place Jesus at the center of their lives and to spend their lives moving toward him, the ultimate expression of love.⁴

3 C. Andrew Doyle, Bishop of the Episcopal of Texas, *Church: A Generous Community Amplified for the Future*, p.209. Virginia Theological Seminary Press. 2015

4 Benjamin L. Corey, *Unafraid: Moving Beyond Fear-Based Faith*, p. 219. Harper One Press 2017

After we served the homeless shelter's evening meal we would gather and celebrate the Eucharist with the team that served and our homeless brothers and sisters. I would welcome and invite them saying, "We are doing what Jesus calls us to do. As we eat and drink together we receive a snapshot of the heavenly feast when all of us will be gathered together in God's Kingdom." The soldiers all came to communion. Many of our homeless brothers upon receiving the bread and the cup would simply say, "Thank You." Around the Lord's table all human boundaries and divisions came tumbling down. Grace abounded, and the young soldiers and family members responded positively to the expansive and inclusive love of Jesus freely shared. That is also the inclusive and expansive model of grace that our Army chapel communities must provide if we want to attract young soldiers and families who come to us from increasingly diverse and multicultural backgrounds reflective of the great American "salad bowl."

The chaplain corps keeps answering questions that the Army is no longer asking regarding the integration of female soldiers and gay and lesbian soldiers and families. I was recently asked by one of our well-respected career senior non-commissioned officers to baptize her child. She also participated in the Habitat for Humanity outreach events I led on a regular basis. Soldiers and families who were mostly un-churched understood when I said, "We are doing what Jesus calls us to do." The other soldiers who served with and for her literally did not care that she was in a same-sex marriage. She and her wife had attended every worship service on post, but it was made clear to them that they were not truly welcomed. They are African-American, and they were told that even at the Gospel service attended primarily by other African-Americans that people were not comfortable with their presence.

They asked me if I would baptize their little girl. I met with them to discuss the importance of baptism, and they assured me that they would keep their baptismal promises. My wife made some fine crafted knitted wear for their little girl. We baptized the child at the next evening chapel service. Eight of the ten chaplains stayed home that evening. One of the chaplains said to me, "We have a policy at this chapel that marriage is between one man and one woman. Can't they go somewhere else?" I replied, "This is a collective Protestant worship service. We have no policies regarding marriage. They are an Army family. The soldier has served in combat twice. They also are entitled to the same legal, regulatory, and constitutional right to the free exercise of religion as all soldiers and families are. We aren't talking about marriage. We're talking about the sacrament of baptism for the child, the means of God's grace for the child. I am a Lutheran pastor, ordained into the ministry of word and sacrament. I am baptizing the child."

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One chaplain who chose not to stay home was a female chaplain who knows what it is like to be discriminated against. After hearing God's Word, singing, praying, praising, and being fed with the body and blood of Jesus, the congregation, comprised of young soldiers and families, rallied around this Army family with love, grace, care, acceptance, gifts, and a feast. Those who attended the baptism were friends and battle buddies with this family. They represent a generation that supports the presence of gay and lesbian soldiers, as well as same-sex married couples and families.

The constitutional justification for the chaplain corps' existence is to provide for the free exercise of religion for all soldiers. Those soldiers in same-sex marriages also serve and put their lives on the line for their country. When we exclude one particular group of soldiers, including female chaplains, from the Army chapel family and community, we fail the Army chapel community. We constrict the scope of our constitutional mandate to provide for the "free exercise thereof" for all, without one established or sanctioned religion. By so doing, we risk losing the privilege of serving God and country and forfeiting the very reason for our existence. We risk losing the right to tell our story. In God's house that evening, I, my wife, and one female chaplain, the oldest people in the room, were gathered together with other followers of Jesus. There was more that joined us than separated us. A deep theologically based, grace centered, inclusive, and expansive welcome for the "other" was modeled. The story of Jesus was lived out amongst the stories of all those gathered.

Commanders, leaders, soldiers, and families watch us. If they see chaplains and chapel communities being unwelcoming to all who serve, they will go elsewhere for religious support or turn away from the life of the chapel community. The Gospel isn't offensive because of who it keeps out but because of who it lets in. (Rachel Held Evans). Too many chaplains treat female chaplains as "less-than" and same-sex marriage as the unforgiveable sin in front of a generation and an Army that now fully integrates both groups. I believe we see the results in the lack of attendance at Army chapels. That story of increasing irrelevance is not a story we want to tell.

In a "polarized" environment a focus on practical inclusive ministry experiences, born out of opportunity and relationships, will lead soldiers and families who embody the diversity of our great nation to Army chapels where they will find people who look like them and those they serve beside. 1 Corinthians 12 tells us, "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are varieties of services, but the same Lord. There are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone." The opportunity to provide for a more comprehensive form for the

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free exercise of religion, inclusive of female and gay and lesbian chaplains, without an established, sanctioned, or preferred religion, will recognize publicly the gifts of all chaplains. It will lead to the common good of the Army chapel community. In addition, prompted and led by the Holy Spirit, it will lead to a generation that has already “answered these questions” and welcome them into the life of the Army chapel community. Together we can follow Jesus who is the living, breathing breath of what God looks like.⁵ That is a story worth telling.



Chaplain (LTC) Glenn Palmer is the Chief of the Training Development Division at the US Army Chaplain Center and School.

He is a native of Bath, Maine. Palmer served as an enlisted Marine prior to graduating from the University of Maine with a B.S. in Political Science. He is a graduate of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg (1995) with honors in Biblical Languages and Studies. Endorsed by the ELCA, he served as the pastor of Nativity Lutheran Church in Rockland, Maine for seven years prior to his call to serve as an active duty Army chaplain.

He has served as a combat arms battalion chaplain with tours to Iraq, as a Chaplain Resource Manager and as an Observer, Coach, Trainer. In his current position he supervises the Army Chaplain Corps Subject Matter Experts in Homiletics, Ethics, World Religions, and Marriage and Family Therapy. He also oversees the development of all officer and enlisted training in the Army Chaplain Corps. In addition he serves as the chaplain for the Chaplain Officer Basic Leader Course (the Army's newest Chaplains and chaplain candidates).

His military awards include the Bronze Star, the Combat Action Badge (for coming under direct fire), and four Meritorious Service Medals.

Chaplain Palmer has been married to Pamela for 30 years. They have three grown children and a seven year old grandson. He is passionate about incarnational ministry, being a grandfather, all things New England Patriots, reading, mountain biking, and weight lifting. He plans to retire in October and start a one-year CPE residency at the Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center in Augusta, Ga.

⁵ Rachel Held Evans, *Inspired: Slaying Giants, Walking on Water, and Loving the Bible Again*, p. 55. Nelson Books. 2018

Pluralism and Polarizing Dynamics in the CPE Learning Process

Nancy Wigdahl

THE CPE LEARNING GROUP understandably becomes a microcosm of the increasingly polarized culture that has nurtured the students who make up the group. When I began as a clinical educator in the late 1980s, almost all of the students in my groups were mainline Christians: a few Roman Catholics, many Lutherans, and a smattering of other Protestant denominations, including, among others, Presbyterian, Methodist, Nazarene, Episcopalian, Assembly of God, and Pentecostal. Almost all openly identified as straight. Ethnically, there were a few African Americans, foreign born Africans, and sometimes an Asian. Even having a student from the Jewish faith was rare. Many educators had no experience with a Buddhist or a Unitarian Universalist applicant. I averaged maybe one LGBTQ in each group, most of whom were slow to reveal their gender identity to their peers. Disagreements were based on obscure theological differences, often within the same denominational group. Since that time, members of CPE groups have become increasingly diverse in many ways: religion, ethnicity, philosophy, and gender identity. In this article I offer observations, reflections, and recommendations from my experience as a CPE educator who has encountered these increasingly diverse learning group compositions. They are often more enriching than challenging.

A few years ago, I had one of my most denominationally and philosophically diverse CPE groups. There was one ELCA Lutheran, two Roman Catholics, and three Unitarian Universalists, some of whom identified as Christian and some who did not. Half of the group identified as LGBTQ. I was incredibly anxious as I prepared the curriculum for this group realizing I would be a cultural and denominational minority amid a dominant culture of difference. The group was remarkably gracious toward me as a straight Lutheran Christian and willing to gently teach me about the breadth of their respective beliefs and perspectives. Ultimately this group identified as homogeneously liberal, which made for little conflict between them, although conflict was often stirred up in their pastoral relationships with patients and sometimes with other professionals.

Recently, my CPE groups have become more polarized, being either religiously and politically conservative or religiously and politically liberal. Sometimes group members are other than Christian and reflective of the current societal trend toward being spiritual but not religious. There has arisen a characteristic of either polarity which can make for the difference between open and closed communication. I have

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observed that this difference occurs when either liberals or conservatives are rigid in their respective stances. In such circumstances, the road to open communication can be fraught with conflict and a destructive desire to change the other.

In 2007, Eboo Patel wrote *Acts of Faith: The Story of an American Muslim, the Struggle for the Soul of a Generation*. He wrote this book to describe the evolution of the Interfaith Youth Core movement in Chicago, post 9-11. Three pillars serve as the heart of the Interfaith Youth Core: intercultural encounter, social action, and interfaith reflection.¹ This movement toward religious pluralism among youth from Christianity, Judaism, and Islam supported healthy dialogue in contrast to religious totalitarianism. Religious totalitarians are of the conviction that only one interpretation of one religion is a legitimate way of being, believing, and belonging on earth. On the other hand, “religious pluralism is neither mere coexistence nor forced consensus. It is a form of proactive cooperation that affirms the identity of the constituent communities while emphasizing that the wellbeing of each and all depends on the health of the whole. It is the belief that the common good is best served when each community has a chance to make its unique contribution.”²

One idea supporting this movement was a commitment to one’s own faith tradition while empathizing with another person’s perspective. To see the other side, to defend another people, not despite one’s tradition but because of it, is the heart of pluralism.³ Youth engaged in open dialogue and service projects which aimed to build relationships while also serving the community. Each faith group has teachings which support respectful interfaith dialogue. Judeo Christian scriptures implore the faithful to “love the stranger for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” Deut. 10:19.⁴ Writings in the Quran seem to invite the faithful to establish relationships with one another: “We created you from a male and female, and made you races and tribes, that you may know one another.”⁵ Being merciful is a common value in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. One memorable and illustrative vignette in Patel’s book describes how members of this group returned from the bathroom one day laughing hysterically as they had been trading the prayers that Jews and Muslims say when using the bathroom.⁶



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1 Patel, E. *Acts of Faith: The Story of an American Muslim, the Struggle for the Soul of a Generation*, p. 115. Boston: Beacon Press. 2007.

2 Patel, p. xv

3 Patel, p. 179

4 *Lutheran Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, p. 321. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2009.

5 Itani, (n.d.). *ClearQuran*, p. 49:13. Retrieved from www.helloquan.com

6 Patel, p. 178

I daresay that religious and spiritual beliefs, as well as political beliefs, reside in the heart and emotions. As such, emotions can evade rational thought unless one is able to sufficiently delineate between thought and emotion and develop empathy for the other. In both today's CPE groups and in chaplaincy, the nurture of empathy for the other must be balanced by maintaining one's identity. Simultaneously, one must practice a well-integrated empathy for self and the other. This takes nurture of open communication, articulation of one's respective beliefs, and a covenant of deep listening and respect for each other. Creating a learning space where such open communication may take place requires hospitality. Parker Palmer notes that hospitality offers both risks and benefits to host and stranger when we invite the stranger

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“...into our private space whether that be the space of our own home or the space of our personal awareness and concern. And when we do so, some important transformations occur. Our private space is suddenly enlarged; no longer tight and cramped and restricted, but open and expansive and free. And our space may also be illumined... Hospitality to the stranger gives us a chance to see our own lives afresh, through different eyes.”⁷

In reality, CPE peers who tend toward religious and political totalitarianism will clash with peers who are disposed toward pluralism. As an educator, my goal is to first select candidates who have a capacity toward dialogue and empathy for the other. Via behavioral interviewing, I explore candidates' capacity to risk hospitality for the other while not diminishing their personal beliefs. At the same time I explore their openness to being changed by encountering difference and introduce my expectation of hospitality in the peer group. Then I nurture that hospitality by modeling and affirming behaviors that support hospitality; inclusion of prompts in verbatims and evaluations that help students reflect on the spirit of hospitality in interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships; encouragement to students to identify hospitality in the context of their pastoral care relationships; and when necessary, slowing down the group process in order to help students develop the self-awareness and self confidence in refining the practice of hospitality.

Jonathan Sacks in *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations* writes

Pluralism is a form of hope, because it is founded on the understanding that precisely because we are different, each of us has something unique to contribute to the shared project of which we are a part. In the short term, our desires and needs may clash; but the very realization that difference is a source of blessing

7 Palmer, P. *The Company of Strangers: Christians and the Renewal of America's Public Life*, p. 69. New York: Crossroad. 1981.

leads us to seek mediation, conflict resolution, conciliation and peace — the peace that is predicated on diversity, not on uniformity.⁸

Pluralism is a necessary competence among CPE students and chaplains. Competent pluralism and the practice of hospitality for the other is essential for the nurture of growth throughout the CPE experience as well as effective spiritual care of persons experiencing a life crisis. The goal of pluralism is hope for a hospitable, relational, and respectful community as well as empathy for the other, whether it is a peer or a subject of spiritual care. The intention of pluralism is not loss of self and identity. Rather, it is an enrichment of self and solidification of religious and spiritual identity as one respectfully encounters difference in the context of hospitality. Pluralism at its best enriches the diversity of community and respects all that the diversity of self and others contributes to the good of all.



Nancy Wigdahl, an ELCA rostered minister of word and sacrament, has recently retired from a position as an ACPE Certified Educator with Fairview Health Services, Minneapolis. She spends a good bit of her time volunteering for ACPE Certification and Accreditation besides enjoying the freedom of a flexible schedule. Nancy also serves on the editorial board for Caring Connections.

8 Sacks, J. *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations*, p. 203. London, New York: Continuum. 2003.

Reflections on the Role of Specialized Pastoral Ministers (SPM) in a Polarized, Politicized, and Polemical Culture

Phil Kuehnert

“TO WHAT DOES GOD NOW CALL ME?” This statement by Martin Luther stuck in that part of my brain where there is no Teflon. As I remember, the phrase was quoted in the context of his teaching about prayer; if we trust God to guide us, this may be the only legitimate prayer of the Christian.

For the past 19 years I have set before me a list of personal and professional goals all under the personal motto, “To What Does God Now Call me.” Some of the goals have changed little over the years, but others have disappeared and been replaced by new ones, all driven by the incessant “... now ...” necessary because of changed personal and external circumstances.

This piece asks the question, “What is the role of SPMs in our polarized, politicized, and political culture?” The question is daunting enough on a personal and citizen basis. Applying the question to the unique role of the SPM adds another dimension to the challenge, determined in part by the setting in which pastoral ministry is lived.

Daunting ... but also exciting! The question necessitates a re-examination of what our “specialized” calling means. We carry the identity (calling?) “Lutheran ordained/commissioned by the Church, endorsed by our respective judicatory.”

For the past four years I have been part of a team that teaches the Adult Sunday Morning Bible Classes at the congregation where I worship. About a year ago, I asked the team if we had a responsibility to address the role of the Christian in the face of the brewing fractious and contemptuous political situation as we approached the next presidential election, at that point two years away. The team reacted quite negatively, citing the wide spectrum of political persuasions in our congregation. Typical of the reactions: “This would be explosive in our congregation.” I had just read Jonathan Haidt’s *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Religion and Politics*. I offered to review the book and share that with the team. Haidt helped me understand the “why” of the dilemma.

Then I also read Arthur C. Brooks’ *Love your Enemies – How decent People Can save America from the Culture of Contempt*. Brooks convinced me that understanding is not enough. He offers a way forward. As we consider in 2020

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that to which God now calls us, what is the mandate of Maundy Thursday’s “new commandment” in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis? At this “now,” what specifically is the mandate of the new commandment for the SPM?

I think it is necessary to ask a prior question to the one about the role of the SPM in the present culture. Do we understand “why good people are divided?” I think Haidt’s and Brooks’ books provide guidance, if not solutions, to these questions. The subtitles “...*why good people are divided*...” and “...*can decent people save America*...” give clear direction to the authors’ intent. For all Christians, but especially for ministers of the Gospel, the challenge presented by our polarized, politicized, and extremely polemical culture is unique. For pastors in specialized settings this challenge can easily be (should be?) ignored. However, our ordination/commissioning and the endorsement by our respective judicatories prevent that option.

Do we understand “why good people are divided?”

Haidt’s explanation of why good people are divided is compelling. He has no small ambition for his book: “I’m going to take you on a tour of human nature and history from the perspective of moral psychology.... My hope is that this book will make conversations about morality, politics, and religion more common, more civil, and more fun, even in mixed company.”

Haidt confesses, “As a lifelong liberal, I had assumed that conservatism = orthodoxy = religion = faith = rejection of science. It followed therefore, that as an atheist and a scientist, I was obligated to be a liberal.” Years of rigorous research, grounded in his academic background, led to his own humbling odyssey culminating in his “conversion experience.” The result was a deep appreciation for the conservative perspective. Years of focused research led to identifying the moral matrix of liberals and conservatives, captured in his “moral taste receptors theory” (the moral values that drive our lives). These are the six moral taste receptors: 1. Care/Harm; 2. Liberty/Oppression; 3. Fairness/Cheating; 4. Loyalty/Betrayal; 5. Authority/Subversion; 6. Sanctity/Degradation. The first two make up the liberal moral matrix while conservatives generally use all six, thereby creating “the conservative advantage.”

Haidt’s book made sense to me. I saw it as a way to address the extreme political polarities of the congregation where I worship as we approached an election year. I received at best a tepid response when I pitched my idea to the Adult Sunday Morning Bible Class Leadership Team. Understanding is important, but not enough. I imagine that the typical SPM would give a similar response to Haidt’s brilliant and compelling explanation of why people have different moral matrixes that isolate them into political or religious silos. So what? A critical element was missing.

Arthur C. Brooks is a conservative columnist for the Washington Post and author of books defining and defending the conservative point of view. He captures the

polarity with a word that resonates negatively with most people: contempt. Bypassing the word anger because of its self-limiting nature, he chooses “contempt” because of its chronic nature. Brooks not only diagnoses the illness but also provides interesting approaches to “save America” from the toxic effects of contempt. Brooks is no less ambitious than Haidt in setting out his goal for the book. In bracing chapter after chapter, he helps the reader see the destructive scope of the culture of contempt but also presents interesting and doable ways that contempt can be neutralized. Brooks, more than Haidt, provides a way forward with five suggested rules:

1. “Stand up to the Man.” “The Man” are people who use us; who always affirm our views; who never challenge our biases. They say with contempt that the other side is terrible, deviant, and unintelligent. The solution: 1. Tune them out; 2. Stand up to people on your side who trash people on the other side.
2. “Escape the bubble. Go where you are not invited, and say things people don’t expect.”
3. “Say “No” to contempt. Treat others with love and respect even when it’s difficult.”
4. “Disagree better. Be part of a healthy competition of ideas.”
5. “Tune out. Disconnect from unproductive debates.”

They say with contempt that the other side is terrible, deviant, and unintelligent.

His concluding comments commission his readers to be missionaries; to go into the world knowing that “our world needs more love and less contempt.”

So what is the role of the SPM in our polarized, highly politicized, and tragically polemical culture? Is there a role, and if not a role, then a pre-requisite for engagement?

Our role will be determined by our understanding of our unique vocation as SPMs. Being endorsed by our respective judicatories, means that we are more than a person filling the requirements of an institutional, business job description. Being ordained/commissioned means that we are called to serve in the name of the one who named us at our baptism and whose name we carry, even if anonymously. It means that we represent and live the values of the one we call “Lord.” It means that we must understand what is going on. It means that we must be willing to see how our “confirmation bias” blinds us to the humanity of the persons we consider helplessly and hopelessly different. We need to understand who we are; what our moral matrix is; and what moral taste receptors are active in our living. Haidt does that in a way that humbles us and in a way that helps us understand those who have different moral matrixes.

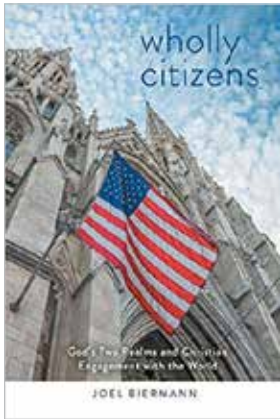
I suggest that the unique role of the SPM in the present polarized, politicized, and polemical culture is our primary asset in ministry: our highly refined ability to

listen. Using listening as a primary way to apply Brook's Five Rules gives clarity to our role.

Jesus said a lot about those who persecute us and whom we find despicable. More importantly, in the Beatitudes he said a lot about who we are. And above all that he demonstrated in unmistakable ways how to relate to our adversaries and to those on the margins of society. Brooks provides the SPM with more than understanding. He provides a powerful message of how to think about and how to "love our enemies."



Phil Kuehnert is a retired (for 10 years) LCMS pastor/pastoral counselor who lives in Williamsburg, Va. He did his clinical training at The Georgia Association of Pastoral Care and his academic work at Candler School of Theology, Emory University. He served as part time staff at GAPC for 16 years and another 16 years at the Samaritan Counseling Center of Fairbanks, Ark. An occasional essayist, he enjoys making jam, biking, and people.



Book Review: *Wholly Citizens: God's Two Realms and Christian Engagement with the World*

by Joel Biermann, Published by Fortress Press

Reviewed by Lee Joesten

IN 2015 REV. DR. JOEL BIERMANN, professor at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, was the main presenter at an LCMS continuing education event conducted for specialized pastoral ministers. This book under review was the foundation for his presentation. Well-grounded in Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions Dr Biermann's presentation shed new light on my understanding of Luther's "two kingdom doctrine", often referred to as the kingdoms of God's left and right hands. Beirmann describes his motivation for writing this book with the following quote:

I am convinced that within much of the Lutheranism that is practiced in North America, the duality of Luther's teaching on the two realms has been obscured, neglected, and largely abandoned. The church and her people and the world around them all suffer mightily for this loss. My objective, then, is to offer Luther's teaching on God's left and right hands of activity to a church that sorely needs to hear and learn again this insightful and fruitful dynamic. (p. xx)

As inspired as I am with Biermann's book, I'm unclear on how the church or world "suffers mightily". I do see the church and pastors floundering and at odds with each other as to how best to engage the world. I also see the church divided around issues of sexual identity, gender equality, and cultural diversity. Whether or not Biermann's treatment of Luther's teaching will help narrow these divisions remains to be seen. I can say that his book is helpful to me personally.

Biermann prefers the terms "spheres" or "realms" to the terms left and right hands of God. He further labels these two realms of God's activity as "temporal" and "spiritual," temporal corresponding to God's left hand and spiritual to God's right hand. The temporal realm pertains to the relationships between creatures, where God's Law is central and the government is the responsible institution. This realm focuses on the preservation of this world and the promotion of peace and justice. The spiritual realm pertains to humans'

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relationship to the Creator, where the Gospel is central and the church the responsible institution. This realm centers on the proclamation of the gospel and the delivery of justifying grace. The distinction between these realms is fundamental to Biermann's message. In addition the distinction must be understood as a duality and never as a polarity (not that one is bad and the other good, but that they are simply different). Biermann stresses this point several times throughout the book. Near the end he again writes, "...true Christians need to learn what it means to live fully in both realms of God's reign, and then they must do it". (p. 178)

Reassuringly Biermann reminds readers of other dualities with which Lutherans are familiar if not comfortable: Law and Gospel, Christians being saints and sinners simultaneously, and Jesus being both human and divine. Lutherans understand that such dualities describe two aspects of one reality that are distinct but that hang closely together. This is also true of the temporal and spiritual aspects of our existence. Neither of these aspects can be dismissed or diminished in favor of the other. I think I have unwittingly obscured, if not abandoned, this duality (in terms of applying law and gospel) in my own ministry over the years. Dr. Biermann's book has brought back a much stronger balance for me.

To the two realms duality Biermann adds the duality of two kinds of righteousness. This duality describes how creatures live all of life both before God and before other fellow creatures. Righteousness in the temporal realm is evaluated by adherence to the Law and the practice of ethics. In this realm humans actively engage in either right or wrong behavior in relation to God's intentions for his creation. Righteousness in the spiritual realm is dependent entirely on God's activity in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this realm humans are completely passive. All well-educated Lutherans understand that they cannot earn God's favor. However they also know they have an obligation to live in accordance with God's revealed word. Compliance is our individual and collective downfall.

With these dualities clearly delineated Biermann applies them to everyday life in the 21st century, including a "fresh expedition into the perilous waters of church and state relations". (p. xxiii). Biermann ventures into the arena of politics and issues that every person faces in our diverse and often polarized culture. He says that on the one hand Luther's concept of the two realms is deceptively simple, as evidenced by a helpful chart depicting the comparison of the two realms. (p. 110) At the same time, he says that applying the teaching to everyday life is "bewilderingly complex". One might expect Biermann to resort to clear rules and guidelines, but he does not. Instead he states that the "objective of the paradigm is to provide a clear and complete principle for thinking and acting in every situation – a principle based

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not on theory or the thinking of a man or men, but a principle based on God's truth as revealed in his Word". (p. 141) He writes that "faithful theology practiced well is often quite resistant to neat rules or universal guidelines". (p. 112) The church's unity, he adds, should be in her Lord, her confession, and in faithful practice that is bound to that confession. Readers who need clear rules will likely be dissatisfied with Biermann's approach. Others may flatly disagree with his approach altogether. I personally find his clear articulation of God's reign in the world through the two realms refreshingly helpful.

Biermann spends a chapter elaborating on how Luther applied the two realms to his day and how, much later, Dietrich Bonhoeffer applied them in his day. Both found God's activity in the world mandatory for the way we live. Luther categorized life into three estates: the home, state, and church. Bonhoeffer's categories were slightly different but comparable. He labeled them four mandates: work, marriage, government, and the church. Both Luther and Bonhoeffer rejected the notion that Christians should shun the world. Instead they talked about God's activity in the world via the temporal and spiritual realms guiding Christians' full engagement with the world. The proper distinction between the two realms will lead Christians to enter the world in committed service. This inevitably includes the believer's obligations toward their families and neighbors and their work. It also addresses their interaction with the government and the rest of the world. (p. 148) The underlying justification for this assertion is what Biermann calls "Luther's other breakthrough", namely his grasp of vocation. We're familiar with his first breakthrough of being right with God through grace alone. It was his second breakthrough on the meaning of vocation that drove Luther out of a cloistered setting and catapulted him into the world and the temporal realm of God's reign. Biermann summarizes the implications of this second breakthrough by writing "the foundation for understanding and fulfilling a vocation must be the realities of birth, marriage, work, and community". (p. 150) As mandatory as service is, Biermann disagrees that God-pleasing acts of service need to be given a "spiritual veneer". He says, "Such thinking entirely misses the point of the two realms." (p. 153) This may be unsettling for some church community outreach boards that conduct service activities as means of drawing others to Christ. He says that any service rendered in love can be God-pleasing because it fulfills God's original intent for creation, even if it is not done in the name of Jesus. That is why loving service done by unbelievers is still God-pleasing.

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Biermann is not writing specifically to those in specialized pastoral ministry. However, those in specialized settings should find his "degree of revelation principle" relevant. This principle says that we can speak about God in the civic arena to the

extent he has made himself known in the place where we are speaking. (p. 134)
Specialized pastoral ministers spend much of their time and energy interacting with populations that are neither Lutheran nor Christian. We may fear that an overtly Christian message will be offensive to a culturally and religiously diverse gathering of people. At the same time, we may fear being unfaithful to our calling if we do not overtly invoke the name of Jesus. Biermann argues that in a secular setting a prayer for justice or peace may be enough since these are expectations God has for all leaders in the temporal realm. This example underscores how a proper distinction between the temporal and spiritual realm can provide helpful guidance for such situations.

In separate chapters Biermann applies the two realms teaching to the church and her pastors and to individual Christian believers. These chapters deal with themes such as patriotism in church, politics in the pulpit, living a confessional life, being a responsible voter, being Christian in America, and pitfalls of America's practice of separation of church and state. Specific topics range from the church's tax exempt status, whether to display an American flag in the sanctuary of a church, and whether or not Christians can lay claim to individual rights. Throughout I think Dr. Biermann remains true to his effort to avoid neat rules or universal guidelines. Instead he persistently brings the reader back to the distinction between God's reign in creation through the temporal and spiritual realms (or the kingdoms of God's left and right hands). I suspect his consistency in this regard will be frustrating to some readers. However, he effectively illustrates how both realms remain distinct and inseparable, true to being a genuine Lutheran duality.

Whether the reader identifies as a liberal, moderate, or conservative, he or she will find areas of agreement and strong disagreement, areas of reassurance and unsettling discomfort, areas of affirmation and challenge. For me *Wholly Citizens* captured my interest, increased my faith, expanded my understanding about Lutheran theology, and helpfully informed my pastoral practice.



Lee Joesten is a 1967 graduate of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. Following graduation he served a parish in rural Iowa for three years, after which he entered a two-year CPE residency at St. Luke's Hospital in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He held various clinical and administrative positions at Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge, Illinois for forty-two years prior to his retirement in 2014. He is a certified supervisor in the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education and a board certified chaplain in the Association of Professional Chaplains. Lee now lives with his wife Carolyn in Park Ridge. They have three adult children and five grandchildren.

News and Announcements

Letters to the Editors

The *Caring Connections* editorial board welcomes comments from all our readers. We ask that Letters not exceed 500 words. Submissions may be edited for length but not for content. All Letters will be responded to but may not appear in a *Caring Connections* issue. Letters should be submitted electronically to either Diane Greve (dkgreve@gmail.com) or Lee Joesten (lee.joesten@gmail.com).

Christus In Mundo Awards

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod *Christus In Mundo Awards* were presented to Rev. James McDaniels and Rev. Dr. David Wurster on Monday, Nov. 4, 2019 at the International Center during a 10 a.m. chapel service.



Rev. James McDaniels

The Rev. James McDaniels is a native of Philadelphia, where he attended public schools before entering Concordia College, Bronxville, N.Y. After graduating with an Associate of Arts degree, he transferred to Concordia College, St. Paul, Minn., where he studied elementary education. McDaniels later attended Christ Seminary (now part of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago), where he received his Master of Divinity degree. During his career, he served in congregations in New York City; Omaha, Neb.; St. Louis; and Greensboro, N.C. He also worked for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the LCMS Nebraska District on the executive staff.

During his 40 years in ministry, he has served with many boards, committees and ministries in the church. He is a member of the Interim Ministry Network, Inc., and during the past 15 years has worked with seven congregations in transition. In 2002, he completed a two-year residency in Clinical Pastoral Education at Alamance Regional Medical Center in Burlington, N.C. He then worked at the Lutheran Nursing Home (now Trinity Glen) as a chaplain before retiring from there. He currently serves as pastor of St. Luke Lutheran Church in High Point, N.C.

He is married to Janis McDaniels, past vice-president of Gospel Outreach for the Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) and current public relations director for the Carolinas District LWML. She was recently elected to the LCMS Board for National Mission. Their son, William, is deceased. Their daughter-in-law, Bridget, and granddaughter Robin live in Portage, Ind.



Rev. Dr. David Wurster

The Rev. Dr. David Wurster is one of only a few who have maintained a continual dialogue between congregation and clinic throughout their ministry. In the process, he has made significant contributions to both. For almost 40 years, he lived two lives, serving both rural and urban parishes while he was a pastoral counselor. For a time, he also served as director of training at the Samaritan Counseling Center of the Niagara Frontier.

After graduating from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (CSL), in 1969, he was a Wheat Ridge Fellow and was accepted into the STM program in Pastoral Counseling at CSL. He began his clinical training at Care and Counseling in St. Louis. He describes himself as a Lutheran pastor trained by Jesuits, as he completed his Ph.D. in Pastoral Counseling at St. Louis University. His training was enriched by long-term mentoring relationships with family psychiatrist Dr. Carl Whitaker and the Rev. Dr. Oswald Hoffmann, speaker of “The Lutheran Hour” radio program.

Wurster’s clinical experience continually enriched his work as a preacher and pastor, and his work as a pastoral counselor and supervisor (Diplomate AAPC) enabled him to demonstrate a unique integration of the clinical and the theological. During the course of his career, he supervised students from CSL; Seminex; Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis; Christ the King Seminary, a Roman Catholic institution in East Aurora, N.Y.; Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada; and several colleges. Over the course of five years, he served on both regional and national certification committees of the AAPC.

The church at-large recognized Wurster’s gifts and used them in a variety of settings. He taught homiletics for three semesters at Concordia, St. Catharines. He also taught courses and did consulting work in both Nagercoil, India, and Sri Lanka. He then continued as a consultant for the LCMS mission field in Asia. His gift of writing also was recognized, and he wrote for Hoffmann for seven years.

Currently, Wurster is a consultant to the Samaritan Counseling Center of Buffalo, where he also serves on the board of directors.

In Memoriam



Terry Germann

Terry Glynn Germann was born on August 8, 1941, at his family’s farm near Holgate, Ohio. He attended elementary school in Holgate and graduated from Wauseon High School in 1959. He attended Concordia College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Concordia Senior College in Fort Wayne, Indiana from which he graduated in 1963. He then attended Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, graduating in 1967. He married Susan (Kroemer) on July 1, 1967. He was ordained into ministry on July 23,

1967, in Wauseon, Ohio. Terry received a doctorate from Eden Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1979.



Gerald B. Wunrow

Gerald (Gary) died at age eighty-eight on February 8, 2020 at home in St. Paul, Minnesota surrounded by loving family. Gary was a chaplain and director of Pastoral Services for St. John's Northeast Hospital 1978–1994. He specialized in grief counseling and was instrumental in creating the Hospice program at St. John's. Gary had a long career in ministering in hospitals, nursing homes, and for the disabled. Prior to that, he served as the pastor for churches in St. Louis, Mo., Rockford, Ill., and Danville, Ill. Gary loved camping with his family, photography, carving, singing, and leading travel tours around the world.