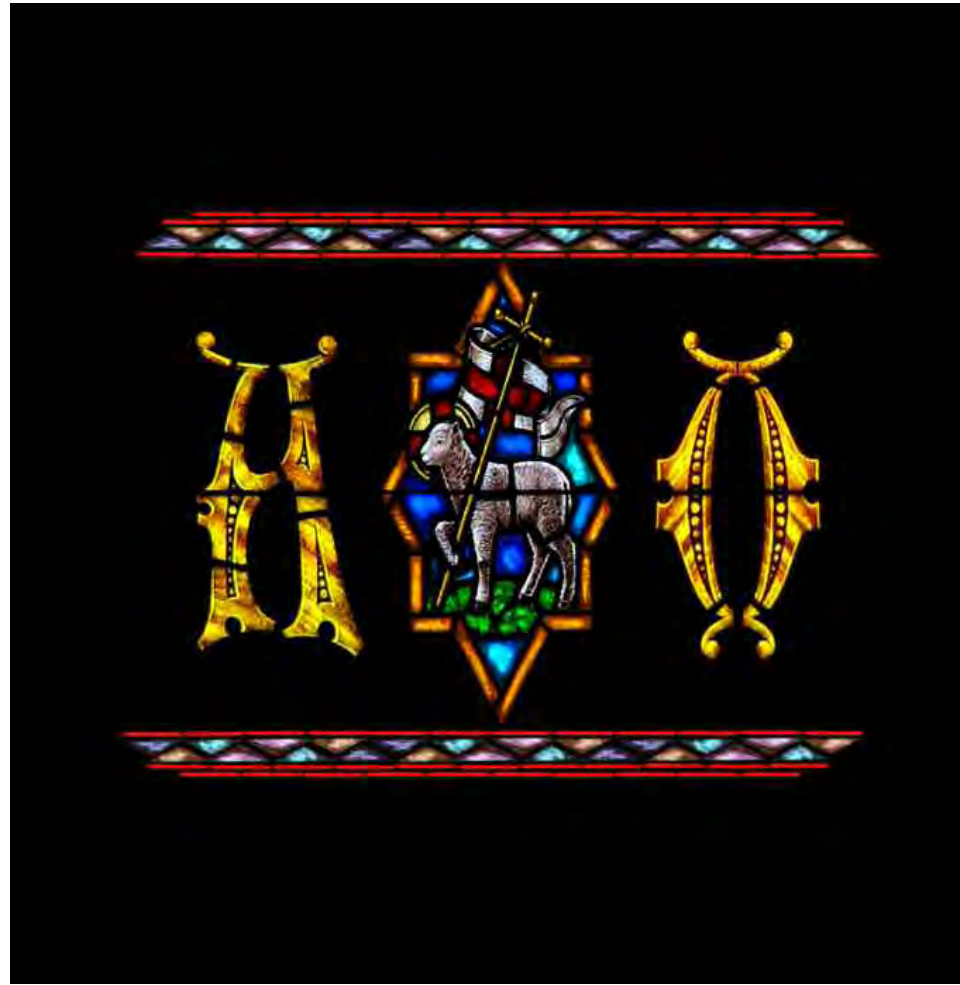


VOLUME 4 NUMBER 1 SPRING 2007

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



CARING CONNECTIONS

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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.

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Editorial

This Spring 2007 issue of *Caring Connections* is dedicated to sharing the content and experience of the recent Zion XIII February 8th through 11th 2007. As a first-time Zion attendee I was so impressed by the work of the planning committee who consisted of Erwin Brese, Angelina Daniel, Bert Klein, John Stelling, and Mel Swoyer.

Zion is a wonderful occasion to unwind in a non-urgent setting and get away from the anxieties of work. Zion is a great opportunity to meet people from across the country, all unified by a common commitment to ministry in specialized settings. It's not too early to start putting in plugs for you to mark it on your calendars when it comes around again.

Recognizing that not everyone can attend Zion, the editorial board of *Caring Connections* wishes to share with all readers the superb presentations by the plenary speakers. If you weren't able to attend, you can read these lectures published here in the journal. If you did attend, you'll appreciate being able to have these handy to study again and relive through these pages.

The Theme and Title of Zion this year was "Power and Passion for Pastoral Ministry." The plenary speakers definitely displayed both. Dr. Arthur Just shared how New Testament metaphors enrich our practice of pastoral counseling and care. He especially highlighted for us the earth shattering power of the Holy Eucharist in our healing. Dr. Just proclaimed, "Heaven and earth are united when we enter Christ's holy presence to receive his very body and blood."

Dr. Diane Jacobson gave us glimpses into the wisdom and power of Old Testament images. Widening our vocabulary of metaphors for God helps us speak to ourselves in myriad ways. Dr. Jacobson remarked, "Old Testament metaphors and images might help you in your capacity as pastoral care givers. My conviction is that the Bible provides us with our primary language of faith."

This issue of *Caring Connections* will be understood to also include resources which will be downloadable separately. The devotions provided by Peter Steinke and Lucinda Zesch will be added to the Resources section of the *Caring Connections* website soon.

Caring Connections can be read in two places, both in its own dedicated website, www.caringconnectionsonline.org, and also on the Lutheran Services in America website. We plan to knit these sites together in exciting ways to create a rich resource and network for pastoral care providers. We are creating a resources center on the site. If you have any resources such as case studies, care plans, creative liturgies or any resource of interest to the pastoral care provider community, please share these with us for inclusion on the site.

If you have not already done so, we encourage you to subscribe online to *Caring Connections*. Subscription is free! By subscribing, you assure that you will receive prompt notification when each issue of the journal appears on the *Caring Connections* website—no need to keep checking to see if a new issue is there. You will also help the editor and editorial board keep a clear idea of the level of interest our journal is generating. You can subscribe by clicking on the subscription link on www.caringconnectionsonline.org or by following the information appearing on the masthead (page 3) and also (in larger print) on page 29.

Caring Connections is the product of many partners. I would like to especially thank Chrissy Woelzlein for assistance with layout and publication. I would like to thank everyone at Lutheran Services in America, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod St. Louis offices, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Chicago offices for their ongoing support and assistance with the journal.

Call for Articles

Caring Connections seeks to provide Lutheran Pastoral Care Providers the opportunity to share expertise and insight with the wider community. We would like to invite anyone interested in writing an article to please contact the editor, Rev. Kevin Massey. We would like to specifically request articles for upcoming issues on the following themes.

Summer 2007 "Topics on Pastoral Counseling"

Lutherans have a rich tradition of leadership and excellence in the field of Pastoral Counseling. This issue will highlight topics and trends in this distinct healing modality among the Spiritual Care disciplines.

Fall 2007 "Ministry with Returning Veterans"

Many pastoral care providers will provide care for veterans returning home from Iraq, Afghanistan, and other areas of hardship service. This issue will focus on special considerations and approaches in providing supportive care for veterans.

Winter 2007 "Spiritual Care and Pandemic Flu"

The threat of Pandemic Flu raises many topics of interest to pastoral care providers. Preparations on special pastoral care considerations and surge capacity planning will be presented.

New Testament Metaphors for Pastoral Ministry

What does it mean to be a Christological community in today's culture?

Coming out of the seminary in 1980, my first call was to a small parish on the Connecticut River founded by German immigrants in the late nineteenth century. It was a small parish, about three hundred souls, and it was deeply troubled. It had suffered through doctrinal disputes, a couple of rough pastorates, and some family squabbles. What had once been a lively parish of over 600 active Lutherans, was now settling for a very young seminarian.

You get the picture. Conflicted parish, young seminarian. Not a good combination. Even at twenty-seven, I knew immediately that what I needed to do – what I had to do – was build community. What was once a healthy, growing parish was now a parish in decline, still angry about the events of the previous decade, not sure where it was going. I had one advantage. I was a New Englander, so I was supposed to understand the strange ways of Lutherans in New England.

Ordained in June, I threw myself into VBS that first summer and visited every member of the parish that I could. My goal was to see everyone by the end of the year. I knew that to build community, I had to create relationships. It's all about relationships, I thought, and I was right. Slowly, I was making headway. I was getting to know them, and they were getting to know me. This is how you build community, I thought. I was also preaching my heart out, and teaching like crazy. That's what I had been taught to do. What amazed me was in talking to people, in getting to know them, they told me stuff I couldn't believe. Depressing stuff. Stuff that doesn't build community. But I was young and naïve, an optimist at heart, and not one to be discouraged. So I kept it up all summer, and found myself really enjoying getting to know everyone.

I'll never know what would have happened at Grace Lutheran in Middletown Connecticut if my wife's sister had not been raped and murdered on September 11th, two and a half months after my installation. September 11th has long been a very difficult day in the life of my family. I don't know if my efforts to build community would have been successful or not. But the indescribable death of Barbara forever changed us, and that included my little parish on the Connecticut River. This enormous tragedy for our family created community in this conflicted parish. They embraced these two young kids fresh out of seminary as their own, and they bore our burdens. They suffered with us, and they taught me how to suffer with them.

All those issues that had broken their community didn't seem to matter anymore. It was about first



things. It was about life and death. About helping us cope with the horrific loss of a beautiful twenty-one year old woman with her whole life ahead of her. In retrospect, our loss of Barbara, in a strange and mysterious way, was Grace, Middletown's gain. And my gain as well. This could have broken our marriage, crippled my three month pastorate, but it didn't. They embraced us with compassion and love, and we reciprocated. When our first child, Abigail, was born 11 months after Barbara's death, it was like Easter after Good Friday. Here was the first baptism in the congregation in two years. We had to share Abby with everyone in that congregation, because she was a sign that the resurrection is true. God uses tragedy and death to bring restoration and new life.

God uses tragedy and death to bring restoration and new life.

I don't tell that story very often, at least not at conferences. But to understand how I read the New Testament, I felt you needed to know how this incident in my family's life has affected me.

The following year, our community at Grace experienced another death. A young thirteen year old in my confirmation class died after a long bout with cancer. It was one of those evil cancers that wouldn't let this young boy go. His young parents, whose first funeral was their son's, were not comforted by my sermon that proclaimed with great

confidence that their son was in heaven. As his father said to me, “Pastor, I know you’re trying to help, but I really don’t care that Chris is in heaven. Chris belongs here with us, playing baseball and doing what thirteen year old boys do. I want Chris with me now.”

He was right. This was unfair. Chris, like Barbara, was too young to go to heaven. I left their home the day of the funeral utterly depressed. What could I say to these young parents, what could I say to my wife about Barbara, or to her parents, or to my parishioners that would comfort them when someone is ripped from their families, from community, to a community we cannot see. It was in my anguish about how to comfort these two parents about their son. And then I discovered the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven. I returned to those parents and told them that this Sunday, when we celebrated the Lord’s Supper, Christ would be present, and with him the angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven, Chris would be there in Christ. As Chris was singing the Sanctus with the angels in the heavenly community, we would be singing the Sanctus with the saints here below. Heaven and earth are united when we enter Christ’s holy presence to receive his very body and blood. “Come to the Supper,” I told them, “and you will be joined to Christ in Christ.” And they came. They trembled as they came to the table, and I shook as I gave them this life-giving food. Our community at Grace was forever changed after that Eucharist. We wept bittersweet tears that day. But I was not only thinking of Chris, but of Barbara, and there is not a Eucharist that I attend now where I don’t think of her.

Those parents left that day telling me that they were comforted that Chris was in heaven because he was in Christ. It was this young boy’s death, along with Barbara, that helped me see that true community is at the altar where in Christ, we are bound together as community. Community is built through the holy presence of Christ when we gather together to receive the great gift of Christ himself.

The Social World of Jesus

One of the most influential books in my work in the last fifteen years is Jerome Neyrey’s *The Social World of Luke-Acts*. (Another book for our consideration is Richard Hays’s, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation* that addresses specifically the issues of community in Paul’s letters)¹. Along with his close colleague, Bruce Malina, they suggest a paradigm for reading the New Testament sociologically, that is, entering the world of the first century to see how they mapped the world in which they lived. Applying social science principles to the New Testament through a deep theological background leads to some interesting insights in the way in which first century Jews and Christians thought about their world. Some of the chapter titles are intriguing in

and of themselves: “The Pre-Industrial City in Luke-Acts: Urban Social Relations,” “Sickness and Healing in Luke-Acts,” and “Temple versus Household in Luke-Acts: A Contrast in Social Institutions” to name just a few.

For many years now I have gleaned from Neyrey some theological principles about the first century world of Jesus and the apostles that cannot help but enlighten our understanding of community. The

*Heaven and earth are united when we enter
Christ’s holy presence to receive his very body
and blood.*

essays in *The Social World of Luke-Acts* are helpful to us because they contrast our world and the Biblical world. As we shall see, there are many differences, and in the comparison, it becomes clear that there is a Biblical world view that appears to transcend time. In other words, what Neyrey and Malina are doing is recommending to us a way of being, or to use their words, a way of mapping our universe that is distinctly Biblical. And they offer, at the same time, an opportunity for us to critically assess whether the way we view reality does in fact correspond to the Biblical evidence.

As a way of tasting their analysis, I will share three aspects of their work that I find to be the most compelling, and what I consider to be powerful New Testament metaphors for pastoral ministry. Let me be candid here. These three different paradigms will be interpreted through my own theological perspective, so that they represent my reading of Neyrey and others in light of the Biblical evidence. To begin, the perspective that casts a shadow over the whole is the development of Luke’s symbolic universe, especially as it relates to the core value of holiness. Then to the first century’s notion of “honor and shame” as a way of seeing how we must expand our understanding of sin. And finally, the first century notion of personality that distinguishes between a *dyadic*, that is, group way of looking at a person versus the individualism of our world today.

One caveat. I have used this book in a Ph.D. class that contained an equal number of students from our Western world, and students from different parts of the globe such as Africa and Asia. The students that struggled and resisted Neyrey’s analysis were the students from the United States and Europe, whereas those who felt right at home with Neyrey were those students who still lived in a Biblical culture.

God’s Holiness as a Core Value of the Symbolic Universe of the First Century

The church catholic confesses that the bodily presence of Jesus Christ unites us with Jesus and the first century church. In Gospel studies today, much investigation has taken place about the first century

world in which Jesus lived, taught, performed miracles, and accomplished the world's salvation. Gospel scholars speak of the "symbolic universe" of a culture that describes the way that culture maps its world, that is, how that world is structured and ordered by people inhabiting that world. When people engage in the process of ordering their world, they are making a statement about who they are. They are defining their identity. Each culture has within its symbolic universe some core values. Jerome Neyrey describes the core value of our culture's symbolic universe:

What is a symbolic system? Cultures embody and express core values. These values are structured in the cultural life of group. A core value in the U.S. is democracy, which is structured in terms of elections, opinion polls, etc. The core value influences how things are classified and where they are located. It is the overarching rationale for behavior, the principal justification for the shape of the system. The core value, moreover, is replicated throughout the system, giving it direction, clarity, and consistency.²

Neyrey in his chapter on "The Symbolic Universe of Luke-Acts" describes one of the core values of first-century Judaism. It is God's holiness. The presence of God's holiness in creation and the temple was central to how Israel mapped the world. Maps define boundaries as a means of ordering the universe in which one lives. As Neyrey puts it, "boundary lines basically indicate who's 'in' and who's 'out,' or what belongs and what does not."³ This is at base a matter of identity, and identity is at the core of community. Jesus and his disciples shared the same symbolic universe as the people of their day, particularly the religious establishment. One of the reasons Jesus is crucified is because he crossed some of the boundaries that these religious leaders used to define themselves. As we all know, many of these boundaries Jesus crossed directly affected the core value of purity and holiness – touching lepers, healing on the Sabbath, eating with tax collectors and sinners. But as Luke points out from the very beginning of his Gospel, Jesus crosses these boundaries because he is, as the Son of God, the embodiment of holiness and purity, and he is re-drawing the boundaries of holiness not only for Israel, but for the entire cosmos. As the "Holy One of God," whatever Jesus touches and proclaims clean and holy – no matter how unclean and unholy it might be in the eyes of his first-century culture – it is now holy because it has been transformed by the Creator who has broken into his creation to make all things new.

One of the great themes of Luke's infancy narrative is to announce in no uncertain terms that the place of God's holiness is not only in Holy Scripture and the temple of Jerusalem, but is now also in the flesh of Jesus Christ. It may have been quite shocking to first-century Jews to find out that Mary is described as the New Israel, the new temple, and even perhaps the ark of the covenant, not because of

who she is, but because God chose her womb as the locale of God's holiness, as a temporary and portable vessel housing the immanent presence of the true God, thereby fulfilling the purpose originally given to Israel, the temple, and the ark. Neyrey argues quite persuasively that Jesus is a reformer, not a revolutionary: "Jesus as the cornerstone of the true temple becomes the new center of the map and all holiness is measured by proximity to him."⁴

What forms community among early Christians, and what forms community among us, is the bodily presence of Jesus Christ and our communion with that presence through our liturgical life.

What forms community among early Christians, and what forms community among us, is the bodily presence of Jesus Christ and our communion with that presence through our liturgical life. Teaching/preaching and administering the sacraments are the new miracles of the post-Pentecost church because they testify to Jesus' presence in his creation bringing about the new creation.⁵ These miracles of the church are what bind people together as community. We don't build community, Christ does, and he does it as he did with the Emmaus disciples – through teaching and the breaking of the bread – or what we have always confessed as the way the Christian community is formed – through the Gospel and the Sacraments.

Honor and Shame

The categories of honor and shame are no longer privileged in our culture, but this was the dominant way of thinking at the time of Jesus. Neyrey and Malina define honor as "the positive value of a person in his or her own eyes plus the positive appreciation of that person in the eyes of his or her own social group."⁶ As we shall see in the section on personality, even though a healthy sense of the individual exists in the first century, reality was mapped through the eyes of the social group.

A couple of quick examples of this honor and shame perspective will illustrate its significance. Jesus and his disciples were considered their own social group, fairly typical in that culture, but of course, Jesus was never typical. The group that Jesus most associated with, and with whom he had the most in common, was the Pharisees. Both were conservative in that they accepted the entire Old Testament as Scripture, used the same methods in interpreting the Scripture, both believed in the resurrection, accepted the messianic prophecies, etc. Of course, they had one difference that made all the difference in the world – Jesus interpreted the Scriptures Christologically, accenting salvation by grace, and the Pharisees read the Scriptures through

the Law, and therefore taught that salvation required that one become a Jew and keep the Law. Now when these two groups came together, two groups that had a great deal in common, the Pharisees would attempt to shame Jesus because they saw in him a great threat to their teachings and their way of life. In response to them, Jesus would “turn the tables,” so to speak, and the Pharisees ended up being shamed instead. Read the Gospels through these controversies between Jesus the Pharisees, controversies that involved purity laws, sabbath laws, table fellowship laws, and even kinship laws. In each case, through a Christological reading of the Torah, the written code of the Law, Jesus unmasks the legalistic interpretation of the Pharisees’ oral code of the Law and shames them.

These controversies led to Jesus’ crucifixion where, in Luke’s Gospel, the Pharisees were really behind his death. Since crucifixion was the ultimate shame, the religious establishment of Israel pushed the Romans to crucify Jesus in this most horrible of deaths. The irony, of course, is that Jesus provides the greatest honor to our humanity, to everyone, by becoming shame for us. He creates honor through shame, so that no matter who you are, no matter how degrading your life may be, no matter what shameful act you have done, through his shameful death on the cross Jesus now gives you honor.

What is most remarkable about Luke’s Gospel is how it shows the innocence of Jesus in the passion narrative. Four times in the three trials before Pilate and Herod, these two ruthless men declare him innocent. Twice at the cross, once by a thief and once by a centurion, Jesus is called righteous. The reality of Jesus’ shame is that he is sinned *against*. This is shame that comes, not from Jesus’ own actions, but by the actions of others.

Let me now give some contemporary examples of this. Almost fifteen years ago, I began a conversation with a colleague of mine from Australia, an Old Testament professor, about the ancient scrutinies in the Lenten liturgy as catechumens prepared for baptism. He had been reading much of the same literature as I had about the social and cultural context of the New Testament. He told me about a vexing problem they were having both in Australia and in the mission field in Papua New Guinea. In both places, newly baptized adults who had been thoroughly catechized were all of sudden abandoning the church, abandoning community, about a year after their baptisms. After some investigation, they discovered, in both places, that most of these newly baptized converts had some deep hidden shame from being sinned against that they had not revealed to the pastor. Being baptized, and continually dwelling in Christ’s holy presence in the body of Christ, was too much to bear in their hidden shame. They had to flee from this community because they felt unworthy to be included, they felt unworthy of the presence of holiness.

Now these people experienced shame, not from

what they had done, but what had been done to them. After further investigation, it was learned that this shame stemmed from sexual abuse, that such abuse was within the family, often going on for generations, and that it was related to the occult. Sadly, Christ’s holiness was causing them to flee community not be formed by it. The ancient scrutinies were meant to rout out these sorts of things, which is why my colleague from Australia was pursuing their significance for the church today. He was finding that

Jesus provides the greatest honor to our humanity, to everyone, by becoming shame for us.

if these shameful experiences of being sinned against were revealed and confessed, restoration to the church was possible. But what was absolutely critical, and restoration to the community could not take place without this, was for them to embrace that Jesus’ blood cleansed them of their shame. Jesus came to purify and make whole. For Christ’s death was the ultimate shame, where he was sinned against, and the shame of the cross absorbed the shame of all who would ever be sinned against. Once this became clear, the recovery back to the church was often remarkably quick, although not always. The power of this shame was formidable.

Dyadic versus Individual – The New Testament Understanding of Personality

Perhaps the most telling difference between us and the first century is how we define who a person is in contrast to the way the first century defined personality. Since the Enlightenment, in the period we called Modernism, a person is defined from within, from an individualistic perspective. This was not the case in the first century. A person was defined in the New Testament from the outside, from the perspective of the community. Neyrey is very clear about these differences:

Individualism was an still is a way of being a person totally alien to the scenarios of the first-century Mediterranean world. . . . The personal, individualistic, self-centered focus typical of contemporary American experience was simply not of concern to first-century Mediterraneans. Given their cultural experience, such self-concerned individualism would appear quite boring and inconsequential. For group survival is would be dysfunctional. . . . To understand the persons who populate the pages of the New Testament, then, it is important *not* to consider them as individualistic. They did not seek a personal, individualistic savior or anything else of personal, individualistic sort. If those people were not individualistic, what or how were they?

We submit that what characterized first-century Mediterranean people was not individualistic, but

“dyadic” or group-oriented personality. For people of that time and place, the basic more elementary unit of social analysis is not the individual person but the dyad, a person in relation with and connected to at least one other social unit, in particular, the family.⁷

To briefly illustrate this, when I am introduced at a conference like this its all about me – my degrees, my books, my positions, etc. It is about what I as an individual have accomplished. If I were to be introduced in the first century, however, it would be about what others think about me – what do my colleagues think of me, my students, my children, and heaven forbid, my wife. My honor, so to speak, would be given me by the group and not by my own individual accomplishments. What it is all about is the community’s perception of me.

When Jesus entered into conversation with the religious establishment of Israel, one of his most telling critiques of them concerned the “kinship laws” that defined who was and who was not a member of the family of Israel. The most important evidence for one’s place within the community of Israel was through genealogy, that is, through blood. Family was everything, and if you could demonstrate through the genealogical tables kept by the Sadducees in Jerusalem, you could make claims for your place within Israel. This should not surprise us, for the structure of the entire book of Genesis revolves around the endless litany “these are the generations” that put forth genealogies that showed the wandering people of God that Messiah was firmly imbedded in their loins. When in the 49th chapter of Genesis, Jacob blesses his twelve sons, it is clear that Judah is given the blessing of bearing the seed of the Messiah, not because of any worthiness in him. He was, after all, the one who sold his brother Joseph into slavery and who seduced his daughter-in-law. One might expect Joseph or even Benjamin to receive the blessing of carrying on the seed of the Messiah. But God makes clear it is by grace, it is by God’s choosing and not by our worthiness. Matthew begins his Gospel with a genealogy to show that this is a continuation of Genesis, showing that Jesus has the right pedigree, for he is a son of Abraham, a son of David.

In Luke’s genealogy, it becomes clear that bloodlines no longer matter. Luke has eleven epochs of seven generations. Counting backwards from Adam, the final name is Jesus “who appears as the end of the eleventh week of the world, which precedes the messianic week.”⁸ Jesus comes at the end of salvation history, and when he gives birth to the church through his Spirit at Pentecost, this twelfth messianic week begins. And in this twelfth epoch, there is only one generation, one family, one community — the generation, family and community of Jesus — for he will give birth to children through Baptism and faith. One is no longer attached to the covenant community of Israel by genealogy. Membership in the community of the new Israel comes through birth by water, Word, and Spirit – by

Baptism into Jesus, the end of Israel’s genealogy. Jesus now embraces in himself every generation from Adam, the beginning of humanity. This explains why, when Jesus is told that “your mother and your brothers are standing outside wishing to see you,” he responds that “my mother and my brothers are those who hear the Word of God and do it.” Jesus’ family, and ours, are not our blood relatives, but those who are of the household of faith.

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that is, his words create what they say.
Homileticians call this performative speech.
When Jesus speaks, things happen.*

Jesus and the New Creation – Freedom, Liberation, and Release

Jesus describes this new community as the new creation. Jesus is the creator come to his creation to release it from bondage. In his first public appearance since his baptism, at the synagogue in Nazareth where he was brought up, Jesus announces the program of his ministry as one of freedom, liberation, and release. Standing before his hometown relatives and friends, he cites Isaiah 61 and 58 that prophesied that the Messiah was sent to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to send away in release the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of jubilee when debts were forgiven and prisoners were set free.

What Jesus is actually doing is telling the hometown folks that he is the Creator come to his creation to set it free by his teaching and his miracles. Jesus’ teaching and preaching create reality, that is, his words create what they say. Homileticians call this performative speech. When Jesus speaks, things happen, just as they did at the first creation when God spoke (the Word was Jesus) and he created a world out of nothing. And so Jesus will rebuke the demons and fevers that possess people and these people are set free. He will say to the widow’s son at Nain who was dead to rise up and he does. He will say to the paralytic your sins are forgiven, and they are. Jesus performs miracles to testify the he, the Creator, has come to the creation, to set it free from demons, sickness, sin, and death, and that by his incarnational presence in the creation the new creation is already happening now.

An excellent illustration of this is when he was summoned to the bedside of a dying twelve year old girl, the daughter of Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue. The tragedy here is that the twelfth year is the year when boy or girl reaches the goal that God intended for them. This is when this young girl was to become a woman, and her life was ebbing away. On his way to minister to her, Jesus is surrounded by a

huge crowd of people who are touching him. In Israel, over half the population was considered unclean because of some illness. Therefore they were excluded from the temple, the synagogue, and the basic social network of Israel. These people were considered outcasts and would remain so until they were restored back through healing and absolution. That is why the crowds are so huge around Jesus. He not only brings healing, he restores people back to a full life with family and friends. What he does is he restores them to community.

A woman with a flow of blood for twelve years – for the entire length of this young girl’s life – came up behind him and touched the tassel of his garment, and she was immediately healed. Luke tells us she had spent all she had on physicians to stop being a woman everyday for twelve years. And then in an instant she is healed. Now when this happened, even though she touches Jesus from behind, he knows that she touched him. He says “Who is the one who touched me?” and Peter, laughing, says, “Master, the crowds seize you and press around you.” And then Jesus makes this remarkable claim, “Someone touched me, for I knew that power had gone out from me.” Here is the great exchange — the power had gone out from Jesus to this woman to heal her, and the flow of blood goes into him as he bears her infirmities. That is what happens with all the miracles. Jesus sends out his release and he takes on our bondage. That is why, as he makes his way to the cross, he becomes more and more burdened with our sins and diseases.

All of this leads to the cross where all demon possession, all sickness, all sin, and even death is laid on him. And just as his presence in the creation caused it be changed, so now creation will become unglued at the moment of Jesus’ death. This is the most violent moment in the history of the world. Here is where God is making right what had gone wrong. You know what happens to the creation — the world becomes dark for three hours in the middle of the day, there is an earthquake, the temple curtain tears in two, and the dead rise up and walk around the city. Creation rocks and rolls as Jesus brings in the new creation. In order to be set free, the creation must first groan as Jesus is making all things new with his death. When Jesus says, “It is finished,” the work of the new creation is now over.

A great illustration of this is from the movie *Ben Hur*, one of the first movies I ever saw as a child. In the movie you never see Jesus from the front but always from the rear. In the scene of the crucifixion, the director shows two scenes simultaneously, one of Golgotha with the three crosses on the rock-pile, and the other scene in a cave where Ben Hur’s mother and sister, who are lepers, are huddled with his fiancé. The movie shows the darkness and the earthquake, but then takes a little literary license in showing a great storm with thunder and rain. The rain washes down the bloody body of Jesus, down the rock-pile into a stream where it mingles with the

water. This same bloody stream flows by the cave with the three women and guess what happens. The fiancé looks at the mother and sister and their leprosy is gone. The blood of Jesus washes away their sickness. They are cleansed. They are restored to community. This is the new creation.

When Jesus rises on the third day, he brings all of creation with him, showing us in his resurrected

Creation rocks and rolls as Jesus brings in the new creation.

body with its wounds what our body will one day be. He gives us a glimpse of our heavenly destiny. He shows us why it is that we were baptized into this body of Christ, the church, the community he purchased with his own blood. He shows us that he built community by freeing us from our diseases and our sins. His teaching and miracles continue to free us even now in our liturgy where he comes and teaches us through his Word and then feeds us the miracle of his body and blood. If miracles testify to the presence of God in his creation working the new creation, baptism is the great miracle of rescuing out of the kingdom of Satan and bringing us into the kingdom of God, of snatching us out of darkness into light. And what greater miracle is there than to feed on the body and blood of him who died on Golgotha as he made all things new? At the Lord’s Supper, Jesus is continually bringing in his new creation as he recreates the world in us over and over again.

Theology of the Cross — Building Community through Suffering

This brings us to what many of you are about, that is, how community is formed outside of the liturgical community— by demonstrating in our lives the character of Christ through acts of mercy and charity. To put it in the form of a question, “What does it mean to care for one’s neighbor in today’s culture?” In a very real way, the question that we are really asking is this: “What does it mean to be a Christological community in today’s culture?” For to be a caring Christian is to bear witness that Jesus Christ is present in our world through our love, mercy, and compassion.

Raymond Corriveau, in his book *The Liturgy of Life: A Study of the Ethical Thought of St. Paul in his Letters to the Early Christian Communities*, first gave me a way of speaking about how Christ is present in the world through us after we have communed with him in his Word and his Meal.⁹ Some people call it “eucharistic living.” After receiving the gifts of his flesh in the Divine Service, and giving thanks for those gifts by receiving them in faith, we respond to these gifts through acts of confession, prayer, and praise. The rest of Christian life then is nothing more than a life of thanksgiving for the creation and re-creation that comes from the gracious

hand of Jesus Christ who gives us the gift of himself. This “liturgy of life” is nothing more and nothing less than the life of Christ lived out in the lives of Christians who have received the gifts of his fleshly presence in the Divine Service.

The Sermon on the Plain

The Sermon on the Plain is perfect for illustrating the “liturgy of life” in Jesus’ teaching. It is the beginning of Jesus’ teaching to his disciples about what it means to walk in this “liturgy of life.” The beatitudes describe the characteristics of those catechumens who are incorporated into Christ in baptism. They describe “*being*.” What follows the beatitudes describes the shape our life in Christ — they describe “*doing*.” The first-century world valued first and foremost who a person *was* and only secondarily what a person *did*. As we have seen, knowledge of one’s position within the social environment came from the group and not from one’s own evaluation of his social status. People thought *ontologically* rather than functionally, and meaning was determined by *groups* rather than by individuals. Jesus affirmed this in his own life and ministry by his incarnation and his presence among us as the world’s re-creator and redeemer, and in such teachings as this one in his Sermon on the Plain.

Who might Luke’s first hearers have in mind when they hear the beatitudes? Who are blessed because of their poverty, their hunger, their crying? Who are blessed for the hate, insults, and exclusion they receive on account of the Son of man? Would these hearers not recall the martyrs who went before them, the saints who preceded them and now stand with them in the church? Would they not see themselves? For when one enters the Christian community by baptism, these beatitudes describe the character of those who belong to this community.

Luke’s hearers then and now would see beyond themselves to the One who was poor for them, who hungered in the wilderness for them, who wept for them as he entered into Jerusalem, who received hate, insults, and exclusion, insults for them, and was cast out and crucified outside Jerusalem as evil — the Son of man. In the beatitudes, the Great Reversal first announced in the Magnificat is sounded again, but now in the context of a ministry of reversal in which Christ shows that all blessedness comes from his humility in the face of mounting persecution. The Christological character of the beatitudes would not be lost on Luke’s hearers, who see themselves only in terms of how they see Jesus, and understand their baptismal incorporation into his body and into all that he brings. *The Christian, who enters the christological life through baptism, is taught about this life by being told in the Gospel how Jesus lived his life in a hostile world that put him to death.* Those who join his community will live this same life in this same world. *This is the “liturgy of life!”*

Now this christological reading affects not only

the beatitudes, but the rest of the sermon. The second section of the Sermon on the Plain contains three important summary imperatives which form the foundational stones for the “liturgy of life:”

6:31 “Just as you wish that men do to you, likewise do to them.” (The Golden Rule)

6:36 “Become merciful just as your Father is merciful.”

6:38 “Give and it will be given to you.”

These climactic imperatives begin with the general principle, “the Golden Rule” (6:31), continue with the general application of that principle to be merciful like the Father (6:36), and conclude with the specific application of the golden rule to give on the basis of that mercy (6:38).

Love expresses itself in concrete actions of doing good, even to those who hate you.

The imperational section begins with the most difficult one of all: “Love your enemies” (6:27). The “liturgy of life” begins by loving one’s enemies. This radical command is a call to action, not just emotion, for to love one’s enemies is an unnatural act of the will. This over-arching command to love will express itself in action. Love expresses itself in concrete actions of doing good, even to those who hate you. This is what the baptized do to show how one might be asked to demonstrate this love for one’s enemy. For example, Jesus implies that the violence of being struck on the cheek is not punishment for a criminal act but comes from persecution. Retaliation is not only prohibited, but the Christian does the opposite of his natural reaction: he is called to offer the other cheek to receive the same violence. Then, in the same violent context, the Christian is not even to struggle to hold on to the inner garment, but will willingly allow persecutors to strip him naked. The believer may be stripped of his property as well, and he should not demand back from those who take his things. Christians must be prepared to be treated violently and stripped of their clothes and their material goods. If they have the mind of Christ in the beatitudes, then they will accept such persecution as to be expected.

The hearer cannot help but think of Jesus’ passion, when he himself willingly was beaten and stripped in fulfillment of such prophecies as Is 50:4-11. Jesus himself had no possessions or property except the robe he wore, and even that he gave up without demanding it back. Again, the Sermon on the Plain is Christological, and everything Jesus asks of his disciples, he himself has first done on their behalf.

Jesus’ “Golden Rule” shows the principle of reciprocity, by which even “sinners” may live. Reciprocity, in general, might mean giving to those who love and do good to you in return (6:32, 33, 34). But the Christian goes way *beyond* that. Jesus wants

them to go beyond mere reciprocity into gift-giving, for as the beatitudes state, those in Christ are enabled by his grace to do what Christ does, and this is most clearly expressed in the ability to give above and beyond the “Golden Rule.” The Spirit poured out in Baptism — the same Spirit that descended on Christ at his Baptism — will give the baptized the *grace* to do what Christ himself has done *for them*: to love even those who are enemies.

Only Luke’s Sermon on Plain repeats the imperative “love your enemies.” This shows how fundamental this imperative is for the “liturgy of life.” But how does one perfectly love one’s enemies, do good, and lend without expecting anything in return? *By becoming merciful.* As children of the Father, they are to imitate the Father’s kindness to them, and the purest manifestation of his kindness is mercy. “Become merciful just as your Father is merciful” echoes the Old Testament creedal description of God as “gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.” The imperative “become” describes a state of being the believers now possess in Christ. They have become like Christ, who is like the Father. The mercy the Father shows toward his perfect Son he also shows toward his forgiven sons and daughters. They in turn reflect his mercy because they are “Christians.” Mercy is expressed through forgiveness. The hearer has already seen Jesus’ mercy and forgiveness for outcasts and sinners.

The contrast between God’s mercy and petty human judgments highlights how mercy and compassion that are the essence of the Christian life are completely different from natural human behavior. God’s mercy will express itself in two ways: forgiveness and generosity. To be merciful is to release others of those strictures for which one might be tempted to judge and condemn them. Forgiveness spills over into generosity that overflows in abundance because it comes from God.

There is a correspondence between God’s forgiveness and generosity and the way Christians forgive and give to others. This is summed up by the final statement in this section: “For with what means you measure it will be measured in return to you.” This is “a truly radical notion, that God adopts for the judgment of humans the standard they use in their relations with each other.” But who really forgives first: God or the disciple? Jesus’ sermon has already taught that the way of life that makes possible forgiveness and generosity is the life of Christ himself. The forgiveness and generosity of God come to those who bear Christ within them by faith and baptism. Forgiveness and generosity are christological actions and God responds to the Christian positively because the Christian’s forgiveness and generosity are from Christ. God approves of the qualities he himself has already given in Christ, which are Christ’s own characteristics of forgiveness, generosity, and righteousness.

Many people today want to know *how* to be a Christian. The response: “Be like Christ!” But they will ask: “What does this mean?” Simple, but oh so hard: love your enemies, be merciful and compassionate, forgive, and do works of charity. This is the “liturgy of life.”

Forgiveness spills over into generosity that overflows in abundance because it comes from God.

Paul in Galatians – A Map of the World in Which we really live

To see this liturgy of life played out in a congregation, one needs to go to the apostle Paul, particularly to the Paul’s letter to the Galatians, where his passion for a community as their pastor is readily evident. Paul tells the Galatians that their life in Christ is founded on this remarkable reality – that Christ invaded this present evil age to give himself up for our sins. Our sins are evidence that this world had been infected with a virus from which we cannot escape. Things are very wrong. Everyone can see it, especially in those people who suffer physical, emotional, and physical pain from the consequences of sin – those broken by violence and tragedy, by sickness and death. Only God is able to make right what has gone wrong in this world. He does it by sending his Son from heaven into our world to show us his mercy. He loved us so much that he was willing to bear all our burdens, even to the point of death, a death in which he becomes a curse for us by hanging on a tree to make right what had gone wrong.

What Paul wants to give the Galatians as their pastor is a map of the real world where God is making right what has gone wrong. This is the new creation. Paul’s map of this new world shows that the evidence that all things have been made new may be seen in the presence of Christ’s love and mercy in us. What matters for Paul is for all the world to know that the law has been brought to perfect fulfillment by God in Christ, and Paul summarizes this fulfillment in one word – “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

To love one’s neighbor is to “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” Paul is calling all of us who are baptized to bear witness to the Christ who is in us by showing mercy and compassion to those in need. Jesus taught his disciples that a lively confession of the faith must always be accompanied by a life of charity and forgiveness. Jesus calls all of us to a life of charity when he tells us to “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.”

A Foretaste of the Heavenly Community

At the end of the day, Paul never addresses what it means to build community outside of the church, the body of Christ. And perhaps the same could be said

of Jesus. But everything he says, and everything Jesus says, is about what it means to be the community of God's people in a fallen and broken world. How do you survive a tragedy like Barbara or Chris, or the many great tragedies that touch our lives. We do it through the community where Christ dwells with his mercy, his forgiveness, and his love.

For even now, in this broken life of ours, we have a foretaste of that end time community. We are all on pilgrimage to our heavenly home, and every once in a while, heaven breaks in and we see and experience the presence of the future. We taste the heavenly food, bask in his glorious presence, and experience his compassion and healing. Christ's eternal community cannot help but break into our lives. It always happens at the Eucharist, but sometimes we are surprised when it happens in our marriages, with our colleagues at work, with our families and friends. And when it does, Christ is always at the center, dispensing gifts, like the loving Father seeing his prodigals afar off, welcoming us home to be with him forever.

8 J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem at the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969) 292.

9 This title comes from R. Corriveau, *The Liturgy of Life: A Study of the Ethical Thought of St. Paul in his Letters to the Early Christian Communities* (Bruxelles, Paris: Desclé de Brouwer, 1970).

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1 Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1996).

2 J. Neyrey, *The Social Word of Luke-Acts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991) 275.

3 J. Neyrey, *The Social World*, 281.

4 J. Neyrey, *The Social World*, 293.

5 This last section is a paraphrase of J. Neyrey's argument, *The Social World*, 292-302.

6 J. Neyrey, *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, 25-26.

7 B. Malina and J. Neyrey, "First Century Personality: Dyadic, Not Individual," *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, 72-73.

The Wisdom and Power of Old Testament Images

We are called upon to expand our language and to explore the whole of the biblical witness for metaphors.

Thank you for inviting me to be part of your event. Let's begin with a word of prayer:

- Gracious Lord, we give you thanks for gathering us together in this lovely place for a time of refreshment and learning. Grant us joy in our engagement with your Word and with each other. This we ask in Christ's name. Amen.

Several things excite me about being here. First, I very much admire your callings as chaplains and pastoral care givers in specialized settings. You are front line workers for the church, dealing with people in need and on the margins. Yours is daunting and important work, and my family and I have seen the positive results first hand. I have much to learn from you, so I hope we can have some fine conversations both this morning and throughout the gathering.

Second, I am delighted to be part of a joint ELCA and LC-MS conference. I am always pleased to be part of ongoing work between these two expressions of the Lutheran witness. I grew up in Saint Louis, though in truth at that point I was Jewish and I didn't know what a Lutheran was. My family still lives there, so I often breathe the rarified air of Concordia Seminary and have, over the years had some opportunities for conversation. More significantly, my husband Paul taught music at Concordia Bronxville for 6 Years back in the 1970s. We taught together for a number of years at Camp Pioneer on Lake Erie. I still feel very close to some of our colleagues from that period of our lives.

That said, my hope this morning is to contribute positively to your work by examining how Old Testament Metaphors and images might help you in your capacity as pastoral care givers. My conviction is that the Bible provides us with our primary language of faith. We use the language of the Bible to make sense of things, to interpret reality. It is the language by which we hear and then pass on both challenge and comfort, both demand and promise, or, as we Lutherans would put it, both law and gospel. Our responsibility is twofold: first, to become fluent in this primary language and second, to help others in our care take this language into their own imaginations and lives in order that it might become their primary language as well. One might say that part of our joy is naming the tradition into lives of people or better, helping them to do this on their own. My joy this morning is to bring the Old Testament witness to this reality through discussing Old Testament images and metaphors.



A Myriad of Metaphors for God and humanity

This task is a bit overwhelming. In the Bible one finds a myriad of metaphors for God and humanity. Each metaphor for God implies a human metaphor as its counterpart. Each human metaphor equally implies a metaphor for God. The preeminent biblical metaphor for God is certainly Father, though in truth this is primarily a New Testament metaphor. In the Old Testament, the metaphor is found mainly in wisdom literature, in Proverbs where God is father to wisdom and a few significant times in the psalms.

My conviction is that the Bible provides us with our primary language of faith.

Psalm 103:13 As a father has compassion for his children, so the LORD has compassion for those who fear him.

Psalm 89:26 He shall cry to me, 'You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation!'

The strengths of the divine father metaphor are numerous and not to be dismissed. Naming God as

father ties us to the Trinity, to the relationship within God's very self. Naming God as father ties us to instructions from Jesus himself about how to address God. When we address God as father, God is personal and our relationship is presumably permanent. We are defined implicitly as God's children, to be disciplined and cherished. Ideally one's relationship with parents cannot be severed. When we address God as father, the emphasis is on parental compassion, care, and love which know no bounds.

Yet, as you in the profession of pastoral care well know, even this central metaphor has its weaknesses, its underside if you will. You know well the experience of children for whom the relationship with their father has been anything but permanent or loving. You know the scars carried by children abandoned by absentee fathers, by children abused or discarded. You know that often such children, or the adults they become, cannot address God as father without their own experiences coloring the address. Now one could say in response that the comfort of the heavenly Father precisely counters such earthly manifestations, and one hopes this proves to be so. But three dangers lurk. The first is the danger of denying the truth of a person's suffering. How then can one provide any meaningful care? The second is the danger of limiting our biblical imaginations. Employing only a single biblical metaphor limits the scope and breadth of both scripture and God. The third danger is perhaps the more insidious. This is the danger of idolatry. If God is always and only father, one slips all too easily into believing that fathers are gods. Our anthropology becomes infected by our theology. I once heard a radio interview with a father who had abused his daughters. He noted that as a father, he owned his children; they were called by his name and owed their life to him. He was God over them and exercised both love and authority. Metaphors often work like this; their power bursts the bounds of anticipated meaning, for good and for evil alike. Much as one wishes to claim that metaphors work in one direction only, language is never so tame. We cannot control meaning by authorial or even pastoral intent. Words have power.

So for just such reasons we are called upon to expand our language and to explore the whole of the biblical witness for metaphors that help us not only to tap the power of the biblical images but also to protect us — in, with, and under the multiplicity — from using that power in idolatrous, self-serving, and abusive ways.

So what other biblical metaphors of God come to mind? Just for fun, let's take one minute for you to write three or four metaphors of God from the Old Testament that are near and dear to you. Now share your metaphor(s) of God and tell me the implied metaphorical counterpart for who we are as humans.

Responses...

Let me share a few and see where they take us. The psalmists declare that:

Psalm 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Psalm 18:2 The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

Psalm 62:2, 6 He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall never be shaken.

Psalm 91:2 I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust."

Naming God as father ties us to the Trinity, to the relationship within God's very self. Naming God as father ties us to instructions from Jesus himself about how to address God.

These metaphors evoke a picture of God as strong, impenetrable, protective, and saving. They convey both the might and permanence of God and the notion that God is for us. Who then are we? We are those who need protection and strength from the onslaught of outside forces. We are the besieged. The metaphor is both military and impersonal, which is both its strength and its weakness. These psalmic images have power for the besieged and the weary. They offer comfort and a place to go. God is our safe haven, our place. But the metaphor also implies that God is unchanging and unchangeable. It implies further that battle is the operative way to overcome our problems. God as fortress pictures the forces against us are the enemy. My guess is that sometimes naming those forces in just such a way is very helpful in the care of souls. But under this metaphor we think of ourselves, for the most part, as alone in an oppressive world.

I have spoken of God as Father and God as fortress. What happens when you combine the two images of parent and protection. You end with a most surprising metaphor that comes from perhaps one of the oldest, certainly one of the most vivid songs in the Bible, Deuteronomy 32. Listen to a few scattered verses and hear the images:

Deuteronomy 32 ¹Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; let the earth hear the words of my mouth. ² May my teaching drop like the rain, my speech condense like the dew; like gentle rain on grass, like showers on new growth. ³ For I will proclaim the name of the LORD; ascribe greatness to our God! ⁴ The Rock, his work is perfect, and all his ways are just. ...⁷ Remember the days of old, consider the years long past;... ¹⁰ He sustained him in a desert land, in a howling wilderness waste; he shielded him, cared for him, guarded him as the apple of his eye. ¹¹ As an eagle stirs up its nest,

and hovers over its young; as it spreads its wings, takes them up, and bears them aloft on its pinion...¹³ He set him atop the heights of the land, and fed him with produce of the field; he nursed him with honey from the crags, with oil from flinty rock;

Do you hear all those images: the Rock is perfect, just sustaining, shielding. It morphs into an eagle who protects and bears its young on its wings (which I now know from speaking with folks at the raptor center of Minnesota doesn't actually happen). And then it continues:

¹⁵ Jacob ate his fill;... You grew fat, bloated, and gorged! He abandoned God who made him, and scoffed at the Rock of his salvation. ...¹⁸ You were unmindful of the Rock that bore you; you forgot the God who gave you birth.

And then the last line is so very surprising; it catches you off guard if you let it. Consider "the Rock who bore you... the God who gave you birth." Here we have God both as Rock and parent. In what way does a rock give birth? If we were grading high school papers we would mark this as an unlikely mixed metaphor that doesn't work. But we would be wrong. How does one speak of God in ways that capture the divine reality? Do we not experience God as both a steadfast rock who protects and shields and at the very same time gives birth to something new through the very pangs of childbirth. How else can we convey God in ways that break through conventional language with such power that we dare not forget? The image serves as warning and invitation. You dare not forget the rock that bore you. But know this: the Lord is the very rock who gave you birth. Have you ever told someone that God was the Rock that gave them birth? Perhaps it is simply too fanciful, but I wonder.

Throughout the Old Testament we find other deeply surprising metaphors both for God and for humanity. If we look at Hosea alone, we are barraged by images. Let me share just a few of them:

Hosea 4:16 Like a stubborn heifer, Israel is stubborn; can the LORD now feed them like a lamb in a broad pasture?

We, that is Israel, are stubborn cattle. God keeps us in line. Look where it goes though. To a lamb, a young sheep in a pasture who needs feeding. If our biblical imagination is engaged we move from being a stubborn heifer to being the sheep God cares for in Psalm 23 and to being sheep tended by Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Through the image, we move from stubbornness to being embraced and fed.

5:12 Therefore I am like maggots (*or* a moth) to Ephraim, and like rotteness to the house of Judah.

What does a maggot do? It eats dead flesh, and in the process heals. This past Sunday after church I told our pastor that he should perhaps check the host

because it tasted a bit rancid. He responded that this was hardly the image of Christ we wanted to convey. I thought of this passage and then thought about moldy bread on one hand and penicillin on the other. Sometimes God seems to be consuming the flesh of those for whom we care, but perhaps some cancers are thereby consumed as well.

5:14 For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, and like a young lion to the house of Judah. I myself will tear and go away; I will carry off, and no one shall rescue.

Throughout the Old Testament we find deeply surprising metaphors both for God and for humanity.

The irony of this image is crucial for our understanding it. It falls under the category of being careful what you wish for. Judah we know from Genesis 49:9 is presumably the lion, the lion of Israel, chosen by God. Now God becomes lion and Judah becomes the prey. All of this is a result of injustice and going after false gods. It is like the next one:

7:11-12 ¹¹ Ephraim has become like a dove, silly and without sense; they call upon Egypt, they go to Assyria. ¹² As they go, I will cast my net over them; I will bring them down like birds of the air; I will discipline them according to the report made to their assembly.

Now God is the fowler, and we again are the prey. This time a dove, a "jonah" in Hebrew, also often a self-identification of Israel. Watch the complexity of the next text:

9:10 Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel. Like the first fruit on the fig tree, in its first season,
10:1 Israel is a luxuriant vine that yields its fruit. The more his fruit increased the more altars he built....

Match this with:

Hosea 14:5-7 ⁵ I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily, he shall strike root like the forests of Lebanon. ⁶ His shoots shall spread out; his beauty shall be like the olive tree, and his fragrance like that of Lebanon. ⁷ They shall again live beneath my shadow, they shall flourish as a garden; they shall blossom like the vine, their fragrance shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

Watch how the metaphor functions. The affection, the relationship, the power of each image... the grapes, the figs, the vine, the lily, the olive tree, the garden. Each image itself functions as both law and gospel. A reality we will return to a bit later. First let's look at two more images from Hosea and speak a bit about what this barrage calls us to.

11:1-4 ¹ When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. ² The more I called them, the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Baals, and offering incense to idols. ³ Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them. ⁴ I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them.

We return once more to the image of parent. God as father and/or mother. Here the parental image expands to teacher, healer, and nourisher. I often return myself to this passage as it played such an important role in my becoming a Christian. I spoke about it two weeks ago in an address I gave to a group of folks gathered in the ELCA to begin a new initiative under the banner of *Book of Faith: Lutherans Read the Bible*. We are working towards a goal of inviting more active reading of and engagement with the Bible throughout the ELCA. I spoke then about how this passage got under my skin early on and helped to form my faith. Later in the chapter, the passage continues:

⁷ My people are bent on turning away from me...

⁸ How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. ⁹ I will not execute my fierce anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and no mortal, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.

I shared with that group that as I heard this passage and studied this passage, eventually through this word, mixed together with all manner of other experiences, I was called to become a Christian. I heard the wrath and the promise. I experienced the compassion and that remarkable verse: *I am God and no mortal, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath*. I heard in this powerful image that what distinguishes God from humanity is God's compassion-driven unwillingness to execute anger, to destroy, and to come in wrath.

What distinguishes God from humanity and what constitutes God's holiness *is* the anguish-filled tilt toward and grasp of grace and forgiveness. And ironically the verse in which God claims not to be human was the very verse that persuaded me that God did become human. Incarnation was the only possible way to actualize those bonds of compassion, the only way for God to be most fully the Holy One in our midst.

But the irony does not stop there. As it turns out Hosea is also the very biblical book that most often gives rise to my own hermeneutics of suspicion. As many of you may have noticed, I have yet to mention the prime metaphor for God and humanity in Hosea. In the first three chapters and scattered throughout, Hosea pictures God as the good hus-

band and Israel as the promiscuous wife. I won't read it aloud, but I trust you know the image.

Hosea 2:2-13 ² Plead with your mother, plead—for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband—that she put away her whoring from her face, and her adultery from between her breasts, ³ or I will strip her naked and expose her as in the day she was born, and make her like a wilderness, and turn her into a parched land, and kill her with thirst. ⁴ Upon her children also I will have no pity, because they are children of whoredom. ⁵ For their mother has played the whore; she who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, “I will go after my lovers; they give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.”

What distinguishes God from humanity is God's compassion-driven unwillingness to execute anger, to destroy, and to come in wrath.

⁶ Therefore I will hedge up her way with thorns; and I will build a wall against her, so that she cannot find her paths. ...

⁹ Therefore I will take back my grain in its time, and my wine in its season; and I will take away my wool and my flax, which were to cover her nakedness.

¹⁰ Now I will uncover her shame in the sight of her lovers, and no one shall rescue her out of my hand. ¹¹ I will put an end to all her mirth, her festivals, her new moons, her sabbaths, and all her appointed festivals. ¹² I will lay waste her vines and her fig trees, of which she said, “These are my pay, which my lovers have given me.” I will make them a forest, and the wild animals shall devour them. ¹³ I will punish her for the festival days of the Baals, when she offered incense to them and decked herself with her ring and jewelry, and went after her lovers, and forgot me, says the LORD.

Men are good; women are bad. The metaphor permeates the book and has a profound effect on how the whole prophetic witness describes women and men. I have experienced along side many other women who read this book the many ways in which this powerful image effectively blocks the good news that Hosea so insistently wishes to proclaim.

When some of us look at Hosea 2 what we see is that:

- The woman is portrayed as a slut/harlot.
- Female sexuality is objectified or negative where male sexuality is either neutral or positive.
- The woman is degraded or publicly humiliated.
- The woman is analogous to nature, particularly land.
- Children, when they are bad, are hers.

All but the last of these belong to the classic description of pornography. And so I find myself struggling with scripture as one struggles with a friend, or

a parent, or a husband. I am reminded of Abraham arguing with God about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. In arguing with and through Scripture, I find myself arguing with God. And I am thrown back to the main point of the divine pronouncement in Hosea 2:16

¹⁶ On that day, says the LORD, you will call me, “My *‘ish*, my husband,” and no longer will you call me, “My lord, my Baal.”

God promised a relationship, and that is what I have received. My experience, in retrospect, reminds me of Luther’s engagement with Roman 1:17. Luther came to his own radical insight about justification through faith because of his own need and his experience of the medieval church. He struggles with his own situation and with the text. He didn’t bring to this encounter a fully formed theory of scripture. What Luther brought was a love of scripture, an immersion in scripture, an encounter with scripture, and a trust in the power of the Holy Spirit through this encounter to make the Gospel known.

Can we use these powerful, provocative, sometimes terrible and terrifying images in the same way? To enter the fray and the struggle. To engage and argue with the forces that overwhelm us and somehow let the Spirit work in the midst of this engagement. This activity is not tame or predictable, but it deepens our faith through our questions as well as through our answers.

Questions? Thoughts? Reflections? Time for a hymn break.

How Firm a Foundation

How firm a foundation, O saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in his excellent Word!
What more can he say than to you he has said
Who unto the Savior for refuge have fled?

Fear not, I am with you, oh be not dismayed,
For I am your God and will still give you aid,
I’ll strengthen you, help you, and cause you to stand,
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.

Multiple Metaphors for The Creator and the Created

So far I have approach our topic with a rather shotgun approach, to use an unfortunate metaphor. I want to spend most of our remaining time exploring one extended example of how metaphor and image works and how it might help in your roles as givers of pastoral care.

Genesis 1 and Psalm 8

I decided to explore with you the power of multiple metaphors used in biblical description of creation. We are used to confessing that God is our creator. What is the power of this claim? What is the implication and the usefulness for the care of souls? I suggest that we cannot really capture the depth of

the claim without exploring the variety of metaphors and contexts.

Let’s begin with the image of creation and of God as creator in Genesis 1.

Here we find a picture of creation as ordered and good. One detects the order in all of the repeated phrases of Genesis One, yes? And God said, “Let there be... and there was” Bringing forth things “of every kind.” Repeated blessing. Day One, Day Two, Day three, etc. God in Genesis One is the founder of the order and the structure. God is the Creator of order out of chaos by mere speech and will.

To enter the fray and the struggle... This activity is not tame or predictable, but it deepens our faith through our questions as well as through our answers.

One of the most important of the repeated and ordering phrases is that God says creation is good, indeed very good. Folks hear this term in quite different ways. Some hear that creation is morally good; some hear aesthetically good. I think there is some truth to both, but principally I hear this as God seeing the world as functioning well; working well — healthfully, harmoniously; even beautifully. The world, as created, was ordered in a manner pleasing to the divine eye. Thumbs up good. This sort of goodness of creation permeates creation and defines its character on the basis of divine discernment.

Two aspects of this good order impact our image of who we are. One, of course, is the creation of humanity, male and female, in God’s image. Now here is a particularly important place to pause in any talk entitled *The Wisdom and Power of Old Testament Images*. We, we humans, are God’s images. This is more basic than any image on the page, any written or drawn image. We see the image of God primarily in seeing one another. The image of God is alive and relational. And there is more.

Normally in the ancient near east, the king was thought to be the royal image of God. So, in Genesis One, kingship is democratized, and we are all said to be royal. That we are so described has huge implications for our notions of self worth. Our amazement of being thus named is best described in Psalm 8:

³ When I look at your heavens, the works of your fingers, The moon and stars that you have established,

⁴ What are human beings that you should remember them, Or mortals that you should care for them?

⁵ Yet You have made them a little lower than God (or *the gods*) and have crowned them with glory and splendor.

Gen.1 and the psalmist here invite us to consider our place in creation from a divine vantage point.

This LORD who has, the psalmist proclaims, created the world with his finger, has fashioned creation in such a way that humanity is either a little less than God, or a little less than the gods, the angelic hosts (the “us” or Genesis 1). Everything is reversed from the obvious, the expected. Genesis One and Psalm 8 demand that we consider ourselves as significant because God considers us to be significant. More than this though, our role as images of God demands that we take responsibility beyond ourselves. We all become royal caretakers of God’s earth and God’s creatures. We are called upon to use our status for the sake of the world.

The second aspect of God’s good order that impacts our image of who we are is the proper ordering of time. Among the various structures of Genesis One is an emphasis on the seventh day. (I often ask how many days did God create, and I get two different answers, both present in the text.) What is created on the seventh day is the Sabbath. What is not always clear is that the creation of Sabbath is significant because of the Sabbath’s implication for social justice for all creation. The goal of the Sabbath is the cessation of work for all creatures every seven days. In the Enuma Elish, Genesis’ competing Babylonian creation epic, the gods create human beings to be their slaves so that the gods can rest. Here in the portrait of Genesis One, God creates Sabbath rest so that humans and all creation can join in the divine rest within the divine pattern that God creates. Every seven days, the workers of the world both human and non, rest from their labor precisely so that the order might be properly maintained and rejuvenated. Part of our job as human care givers is both to rest ourselves and to see to it that the social structures we create insure the opportunity for all people and all creation to partake of a proper pattern of work and rest.

Thus this Genesis portrait of creation as God’s good and ordered place has profound implications for our human behavior. First, we humans should recognize the world as well ordered by God. God’s world is primarily good; it is designed by God to function well and beautifully. Believing this is a matter of trust. Quite often this order is not apparent or we try to impose our own order and call it God’s. Second, we humans should recognize our own elevated status as God’s images. We thus both see God primarily in the face of the other and also we take our place as royal caretakers of creation. And third, one way we can participate in this good creation is by maintaining a proper pattern of work and rest both for ourselves and for all creation. This last insight holds more significance than we sometimes think. Allow me to share a story from my own family, a story, just so you know, I have permission to tell the story.

A few years ago, some members of my family were struggling, as so many do, with issues of mental health. At one point in the midst of this struggle, the wife of the couple was talking to me about being

weak with fatigue, wanting to sleep all the time. She said, “That’s my temptation – to seek nothingness, constant rest.” She said that her husband’s temptation was quite the opposite. He slept fitfully and sought constant chaos. Disruption was his principle mode of interaction. I was reminded of, and spoke to her about, the deep structure of Genesis 1 where creation happens in tension with two opposites. On

Part of our job as human care givers is both to rest ourselves and to see to it that the social structures we create insure the opportunity for all people and all creation to partake of a proper pattern of work and rest.

the one side is chaos, *thohu va vohu*, the swirling waters which God must separate in order that creation can happen. On the other hand is nothingness, stillness, no work, only rest. Mythically, creation happens two ways: one when chaos is defeated and the other when nothingness shaken into activity. Actually God’s spirit “hovering” over the waters can be read either way. Sabbath in Genesis is the creation pattern that insists both on productive, ordered activity – that is, work, as well as restful un-chaotic space, that is Sabbath rest. It struck me in that conversation and again when my husband and I saw the movie, *A Beautiful Mind*, that this pattern is not only mythic, it is also psychological. The balance between ordered work and restful ceasing is a deep necessity for mental health and the capacity of all of us to live full, productive, and meaningful lives.

Before we move on to other images of creation, let’s rise and sing the hymn printed on your handouts.

Prophets

While the portrait of creation one finds in Genesis One brings order, the portraits found in the prophets bring both challenge and promise. Consider if you will the three times repeated doxological hymn fragments found scattered throughout Amos. Three times in Amos, the threat of consequences for being unjust are sealed with similar words:

Amos 4:13 ¹³ For lo, the one who forms the mountains, creates the wind, reveals his thoughts to mortals, makes the morning darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth—the LORD, the God of hosts, is his name!

Amos 5:8-11 ⁸ The one who made the Pleiades and Orion, and turns deep darkness into the morning, and darkens the day into night, who calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out on the surface of the earth, the LORD is his name, ⁹ who makes destruction flash out against the strong, so that destruction comes upon the fortress. ¹⁰ They hate the one who reproves in the gate, and they abhor the one who speaks the truth. ¹¹ Therefore

because you trample on the poor and take from them levies of grain, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not live in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine.

Amos 9:5-7 ⁵ The Lord, GOD of hosts, he who touches the earth and it melts, and all who live in it mourn, and all of it rises like the Nile, and sinks again, like the Nile of Egypt; ⁶ who builds his upper chambers in the heavens, and founds his vault upon the earth; who calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out upon the surface of the earth—the LORD is his name. ⁷ Are you not like the Ethiopians to me, O people of Israel? says the LORD. Did I not bring Israel up from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?

Here is a very different image of God as Creator than the one we encountered in Genesis One. Creation is evidence of God's unbridled power. With that power comes not order, but destruction. Perhaps such images are too problematic, too dangerous for the world of pastoral care. I wonder deeply with you about what role such images, such passages play when we are addressing the issues of the care of souls. I would suggest that Christian caregivers, Lutheran caregivers are not merely supportive or, I should say, we are not supportive in a simplistic way. We understand the Bible to be heard as both law and gospel. Such texts as these from Amos are heard as law for most of us who live privileged lives akin to those to whom Amos spoke. But for the poor in our midst, these words of judgment can be heard as gospel, as Good News. It is worth noting that in Hebrew the word for "judgment" and the word for "justice" are the same word, *mishpat*. One cannot have justice without judgment. For those who are on the edges of society, the notion that God's creation insures justice is good news indeed. More than this, these three hymn fragments found in Amos tells us something of the community's reception of Amos' words. These are doxologies of judgment; that is, the community is able to sing praises to God for God's divine judgment even of themselves. That God cares about justice and bothers to call us to account for our sins is finally received as Good News even by the sinner. The doxologies of Amos highlight the reality that God's creation can embrace destruction as part of its good order.

But in the prophets as throughout the Bible, we are never left finally with images of judgment. We are, in the words of Zechariah, "prisoners of hope." Prisoners of hope rather than prisoners of despair. The prophets employ images of God as creator for promise and hope as well as for judgment. Examples from two prophets will suffice.

The first is from Jeremiah 31. In a passage that follows directly the well known description of God's giving to Israel a new covenant that will be written on the heart, we hear these words:

Jeremiah 31:35-36 ³⁵ Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—the LORD of hosts is his name: ³⁶ If this fixed order were ever to cease from my presence, says the LORD, then also the offspring of Israel would cease to be a nation before me forever.

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Do you hear the promise here? The rising and setting of the sun, the seasons, the very following of day upon night, are a fixed sign of God's promise to be with the people. Every time day is followed by night and night is followed by day, every time one sees or hears the roar of the ocean tide, one is reminded of God's promise. Can creation function that way for us? Can creation function that way for the people in our care? Add to this the words from Isaiah.

Isaiah 40:27-31 ²⁷ Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God"? ²⁸ Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. ²⁹ He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. ³⁰ Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; ³¹ but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Isaiah adds yet more to the promise implicit in creation. God, the creator, does not grow weary. And God the creator shares this power and energy of creation with the powerless and the exhausted so that they "mount up with wings like eagles." This image of hope blows me away. We so often come exhausted. Our people are so often exhausted. God, the creator of the ends of the earth, turns our exhaustion into walking, running, and flying.

And this God of creation is not yet done with creation. Creation always carries in it the promise of new relationships and new realities.

Isaiah 42:5-9 ⁵ Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it: ⁶ I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, ⁷ to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the pris-

oners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. ⁸ I am the LORD, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to idols. ⁹ See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them.

This same move of creation bringing comfort and promise are found with great frequency in the psalms. I put before you just one example, the familiar opening verses of Psalm 121. This psalm, more than any other, captures the visceral, physical reality of creation bringing comfort. The first line can be translated either as a statement or as a question: In the King James we read,

^{KJV} Psalm 121:1 I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

In the NRSV and other modern translations, we hear the question,

^{NRS} Psalm 121:1 I lift up my eyes to the hills— from where will my help come?

The response in either case is:

² My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

I have yet to talk to any person who has not looked up to a mountain either searching for a response or in awesome wonder at the power of creation. The creation then points them and us to the promise of care and protection by the very Lord who made the mountain that stretches out before our eyes. Small wonder then that nature can sooth the troubled soul and bring the promise of peace. Small wonder that one significant response to depression is taking a walk in the woods or a canoe trip in the Boundary Waters. The psalms capture this reality and give it voice.

But even with the insight from psalms, we are not finished with the importance and effect of biblical images of creation.

If the images of creation in Genesis One bring a sense of good order, and images of creation in the prophets and psalms bring both demand and promise, then the images of Creation in the wisdom literature bring perspective. And in the way of biblical wisdom, this perspective is not singular but multiple. I share with you three perspectives that come from the pages of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job.

Creation: Proverbs 22:2; Proverbs 14:31; Proverbs 17:5; Proverbs 29:13

At least two insights come from the images of the Creator found in Proverbs. First, take a look at the five Proverbs that refer to God as creator and notice the logic:

Proverbs 20:12 The hearing ear and the seeing eye— the LORD has made them both.

Proverbs 22:2 The rich and the poor have this in common: the LORD is the maker of them all.

Proverbs 14:31 Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker, but those who are kind to the needy honor him.

Proverbs 17:5 Those who mock the poor insult their Maker; those who are glad at calamity will not go unpunished.

Proverbs 29:13 The poor and the oppressor have this in common: the LORD gives light to the eyes of both.

If the images of creation in Genesis One bring a sense of good order, and images of creation in the prophets and psalms bring both demand and promise, then the images of Creation in the wisdom literature bring perspective.

The issue of these Proverbs is not universal creation, but rather human creation. Notice what creation insures: equality and justice. Because we are all created by God, we are not superior to our neighbor. And because we are all created by God, we insult God when we mock the poor. Interesting don't you think? Is this our logic of creation? How would you finish the sentence: The Lord is our maker, therefore.... What?

The second prominent image of creation in Proverbs is the picture of Woman Wisdom there beside God in the beginning, helping God to order the world.

Proverbs 8

²² The LORD created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago.

²³ Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth...

²⁷ When he established the heavens, I was there, when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,...

²⁹ when he assigned to the sea its limit...

when he marked out the foundations of the earth, ³⁰ then I was beside him...

Wisdom then calls to humanity and instructs us to order our lives with the same wisdom with which God created the universe.

³² And now, my children, listen to me: happy are those who keep my ways. ³³ Hear instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it. ³⁴ Happy is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors. ³⁵ For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the LORD;

Proverbs here suggests that Wisdom makes available to us the very order and instructions implicit in creation. Therefore by heeding Wisdom's call we can reap the benefits which are life and the favor of the Lord.

But if images of creation in Proverbs insure equality, justice, order, favor, and life, the perspective brought by Ecclesiastes is quite different. The only equality insured by creation is that we will all die. Moreover the very wisdom and order we are urged to live our lives in accord with in Proverbs is said by Ecclesiastes to be entirely inaccessible.

As explained in Ecclesiastes 3:9-11

⁹ What gain have the workers from their toil? ¹⁰ I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with. ¹¹ He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

For many readers of Ecclesiastes, this frustration of useless toil and the inability to know or anticipate or in any way control the ways of creation leads to despair. Qoheleth tries everything – work, riches, family, pleasure – and it is all *hebel*, nothingness, vanity, puffs of empty air. My guess is that many of you have encountered folks whose depression or guilt or empty lives lead them to just such a conclusion. Everything is simply worthless. Such folks are often drawn to Ecclesiastes like a moth to a flame. This book, unlike so many other books in the Bible, gets it right.

Many then conclude that Ecclesiastes is negative about the world, is disdainful of God's creation. In fact, just such a reading during the Middle Ages supported the creation of monasteries into which monks withdrew from the sad and useless world. But most interestingly and significantly, Martin Luther reaches an entirely different conclusion.

Luther finds the center of the book in the often repeated refrain that is found first directly after this passage in chapter 3.

Qoheleth continues:

Ecclesiastes 3:12-13 ¹² I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; ¹³ moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil.

For Luther, the fact that we cannot get ourselves anywhere by our own working and striving is one of the basic insights of the faith. But rather than leading us to despair, we learn in this way to trust in God's creative intention. We are free to accept the gifts of joy when they are given. He likens this perspective to the words of Paul in

Philippians 4:6-7 ⁶ Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

If we accept the free gifts of God's creation, then we need not worry about our lack of accomplishment on our own. We need only give thanks, and only in this way do we find the peace of God.

Thus the image of God as distant and inaccessible Creator which one finds in Ecclesiastes leads, if we attend to the logic of the book, to very surprising insights into the implied role of humanity. We are to take eat, drink, and be merry. We are to take joy in the work that God has given us to do and be grateful

that the running of the world is not on our shoulders. A fascinating conclusion.

I have one more perspective to present from wisdom, this from the pages of Job. I plan to take considerably more time with this one because, like so many folks, I believe Job has a great deal to offer to considerations of pastoral care. We in fact find a variety of images of God as Creator throughout the Book of Job.

When Job's friends look at creation, (see Zophar in chap.11, Bildad in chap.18, and Eliphaz in chapters 4 and 5) they see there an assurance that the world is ordered in such a way that the good are rewarded and the bad are punished. That is, as they understand the tradition we have now looked at together, God has ordered the world justly. They conclude that because Job is suffering, he must have sinned and thus deserves the righteous punishment of God.

For Luther, the fact that we cannot get ourselves anywhere by our own working and striving is one of the basic insights of the faith.

Job, for his part, shares with his so-called comforters the conviction that God ought to run the world justly so that the good are rewarded and the bad punished. *But Job's experience convinces him that God causes destruction and disorder rather than justice and peace.* When Job sings creation hymns in chapters 9 and 12, they serve to blame rather than to praise God. In 12:7, Job says "Ask the beasts (behemoth), and they will teach you; the birds of the air and they will tell you. Ask the plants of the earth; they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you." And these beasts, birds, plants, and fish all teach, Job continues, that God is capriciously violent, that God withholds water, thus creating drought, and unleashes water, thereby creating floods. In chapters 3 and 7, Job compares himself to the sea to the chaos monster and assumes that these creatures, like him, are God's enemies, outside of the created order. He assumes that God in creation has set boundaries that exclude the unclean and the chaotic. And he finds himself strangely allied with both. In 30:29, Job says, "I am a brother of jackals, and a companion of ostriches." He says this as a complaint, but he is soon to discover that this is true in ways he has failed to grasp. *The issue of the place of humans within nature*, among the beasts, in the whole scope of creation is thus explicitly and ironically set forth.

The most dramatic vision of God as creator comes, of course, from God's own lips as God addresses Job from the midst of the whirlwind. We, like Job, have great expectations for this address. We want answers to our questions: why we suffer, we want to be justified and perhaps even comforted. We want to understand God's justice, and we want

to know where humanity stands. We want order in our chaos, light in our darkness.

What we get is a most bizarre vision of creation. And while many speak of creation in the abstract containing a response to Job's lament and questions, I would hold that we are instructed precisely by the details of the text, by the specifics of the images.

God addresses Job and us with an onslaught of questions that let us know that we were not there when the world was created and do not know its deep order. We are given visions of the sea, that chaotic reality that needed in Genesis to be contained. In 38:8-11 the sea is contained by being swaddled like a beloved child, wrapped in clouds and darkness. The sea is hedged in not as punishment but for protection. We see chaos birthed, constrained, and swaddled and thus to able contribute to life as the snow and rain and dew that follows. This rain in verse 27 satisfies "the waste and desolate land" where no human dwells. God cares even for the desolate wasteland. The world is much bigger than Job or we had imagined. Even liminal, dangerous space is precious and needy. In what follows the earth, the sea, and the sky all have a place of their own which needs God's birthing, protecting, and nurturing. The imagery is explicit.

God then moves to what we might call the animal kingdom. But the animals mentioned would never make it into a child's version of Old MacDonald had a farm. The collection is remarkable most particularly for its adverse relationship to humanity. We are told of the lion, mountain goat, wild ass and ox, ostrich, horse, hawk and vulture, and finally we are introduced to behemoth and leviathan. Notably, most of the creatures (all but the mountain goat, deer, and wild ox) are "unclean." That is, according to the priestly and levitical vision of creation, these animals are disordered boundary crossers; they are "detestable, to be shunned." Yet in God's vision of creation, each of these wild, liminal, unclean beasts has a place within, not outside of God's order. With each successive creature we are told that that their continued reproduction and their very wildness and freedom are valuable and are needful of protection and nurturing within the divine economy. God cares for them and for their children, even to the point of feeding young vultures with the blood of the slain (39:40).

In God's second speech from the whirlwind, God questions Job and us about the place and value of the chaos monsters of earth and sea. We hear from God only admiration and care for these beasts. Behemoth, not humanity, is said to be "the first of the great acts of God" (40:19) and Leviathan is crowned with royal status and declared to have no equal on earth (41:33-34)

So what is the implied picture of humanity that we hear in these speeches? On the surface, humans are simply absent from the equation. Humans are not present except as one challenged and then dismissed. We're brutally informed that the world is

not anthropocentric in the least. This discovery accounts in part for the supreme frustration we have with God's response. We desperately want to be at the center of God's concern. Genesis 1 and Psalm 8 taught us that we, not Leviathan, are the royal images of the divine creator. Our very lives are at stake. Perhaps that's all that needs to be said. What we need to learn is our place, or lack thereof, in God's cosmic scheme. But to end here would be to miss the message which lies beneath the initial scolding, the message which lies, as one would expect, in the details of the images.

The world is much bigger than Job or we had imagined.

Throughout the speeches we hear of God's concern and care for the wild, the chaotic, and the unclean. Far from being outside of God's creation, they stand at the center of God's concern. So it is with the leprous and thus unclean, lamenting, and chaotic Job who aligned himself with the jackals and ostriches and sea-monsters. Job discovers in this speech that he is loved and admired not because he is upright and just but because he is one with the outcast and forsaken. Job actually is not simply scolded as it seems at first glance; he is transformed. I suggest that this transformation takes place on three different levels, each level has a tremendous lesson for us about pastoral care in the light of Job's encounter with the images of a creation that embraces rather than rejecting chaos. First Job learns to think differently. Second, Job is affirmed and transformed in his relationship with God. And third, Job's life and actions are transformed. Let me take these one at a time.

First, Job learns to think differently, specifically about creation. Carole Fontaine suggests that Job "has been on a shaman's quest and is now wiser." He is healed. Fontaine quotes Jeanne Achterberg, a shamanic scholar, to illustrate her point, "Health is an intuitive perception of the universe and all its inhabitants as being of one fabric...health is not...the absence of pain...Health is expanding beyond one's singular state of consciousness to experience the ripples and waves of the universe" (*Ibid.* 82). We see that Job has changed by looking at his final response to God, notoriously difficult to translate but my best guess would be

Job 42:6 Therefore, I recant and relent, being but dust and ashes. (Jewish Publication Society, supported by Fretheim... decided not "I despise myself.")

Job learns, and we learn from Job, that chaos is part of God's order. We learn that the unclean and undesirable are important creatures of God, and even that they are admirable, that they have about them a sort of beauty. So chaos, and by extension suffering, are not the opposite of order, goodness, or

even righteousness. Job learns that the care and concern of God are cosmic in scope, yet still personal. The relationship is not legalistic, automatically rewarding good and punishing evil, but more relational. I would imagine that if we could communicate such ideas to the suffering folks with which we live and work, the results would be truly astonishing. But thinking differently is never sufficient for any of us nor was it for Job. Transformation only starts there.

Job is also affirmed and transformed in his relationship with God. One of the over-riding questions of the book of Job concerns the nature of true piety. What does pious speech look and sound like? Job's friends think that pious speech always means praise and always means defending God against the assaults of the impious. They believe they have a lock on God. Job, wails, laments, and accuses God. He speaks to God directly and personally about his own suffering and the injustice of it all. Now look at God's actual final speech in the Book of Job.

⁷After the LORD had spoken these words to Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite: "My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends; for you have not spoken of (to) me what is right, as my servant Job has. . .⁸ and my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly; for you have not spoken of (to) me what is right, as my servant Job has done."⁹ So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did what the LORD had told them; and the LORD accepted Job's prayer.

Always pay attention when God says something twice. God's wrath is provoked by the speech of the friends with their protective theological defenses of God. But Job's speech is declared to be right, directed aright, steadfast. God embraces the laments of Job and pronounces them to be true speech. I suggest that this divine pronouncement has several aspects. First, Job spoke to God rather than about God. The relationship is key. Second, Job lamented his suffering truly, and true laments exhibit the most profound sort of faith in God. The lamenter so believes in the promises of God that when experiences of suffering seem to indicate that those promises are not being fulfilled, then the lamenter is beholden to ask question —Why, O Lord? Until when? Will you desert us forever? And the God of Scripture, far from merely graciously allowing us such speech so that we might feel better, *insists* that we speak so, because such speech is true.

Such laments are, to my ears, best considered under the category of the theology of the cross. A theology of the cross insists that we speak the truth about life. No lies, no coverups. The theology of the cross is about telling the truth and living the truth. It is about calling things what they are, which means we are to name and lament for the suffering around us. We get to the truth through the cross,

never by going around it. There is no short cut to God that bypasses the cross. Job speaks what is right of and to the Lord. The truth is revealed in his suffering, but not as we thinkers would expect. Job does not think more clearly than his friends. He, like his friends, is stuck in believing in the theory of just retribution and in the moral rectitude of a centralized, hierarchical moral system. But the truth of his suffering forces him to throw himself, albeit reluctantly, on the mercy of God. One might even say that Job's faith, itself hidden in doubt and anger, is what "saves" him. What he screams and laments for is relationship with God. He thinks perhaps that what he wants is some abstract revelation of truth and some answers as to why he is suffering. What Job gets is a relationship with God hidden within a remarkably odd encounter with God.

We get to the truth through the cross, never by going around it. There is no short cut to God that bypasses the cross.

Job's speaking truly cannot be separated from Job's experience of suffering. That experience both breaks down his certainty about God, and points him to a God for him, though how all this works remains hidden. As I said, the final logic of Job is not the logic of justice but rather the logic of relationship. Knowing God for Job is deeply a matter of faith through suffering within the void. Chaos is taken up into the promise of God and the only doorway is cloaked in darkness. I wonder if, we might speak of Job, indeed of all honest lamenters, as crushed theologians (a marvelous phrase of Fred Reisz) who cannot think their way to God but who are finally grasped by the cross, engrafted by the Spirit into Christ? How does this notion of a lived theology of the cross, of accepting lament as true and pious speech, and a deepened relationship with God as the heart of transformation play out in the care of souls?

We need to address one final aspect of Job's transformation. Job's life and actions are transformed. This aspect of Job's transformation is perhaps the most subtle of all. Job not only thinks differently and has an altered relationship with God, this change also has an impact on how he lives. A student of mine, Abby Pelham, once noted that the two words used to describe Job at the beginning of the book, "upright" and "blameless," are not picked up again at the end. Job has been so transformed, that even his righteousness is different.

Job's actions are tied up with his changed moral outlook. Job has learned from God to adopt the chaotic and the unclean. More than adopt, to accept as worthy of attention and consideration. Job first sees that he himself has become part of this category. He is, after all, a leper. He has become "a brother of jackals, and a companion of ostriches." And as such, he is affirmed in rather than denied the status

of “child of God.” Job’s identification with the other, the outsider, is complete. As Carol Newsome has beautifully explained, prior to his experience of suffering and his encounter with God Job had assumed the world to be properly ordered when he the righteous patriarch, and others like him, sat at the gate and kept order. They ruled justly. They were kind to the poor and those below them and under their care. And they meted out judgment on wicked sinners and on the enemy. Job stood at the center of this world. In his suffering he is shamed through his loss of place, at having become one of the marginalized. So then part of his transformation is treating the marginalized and the outsider very differently than before. Thus it is that we see a changed Job in the final verses of the book.

¹⁰ And the LORD restored the fortunes of Job *when he had prayed for his friends*; and the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. ¹¹ Then there came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and they ate bread with him in his house; they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him; and each of them gave him a piece of money and a gold ring. ¹² The LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; and *he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand donkeys.* ¹³ He also had seven sons and three daughters. ¹⁴ *He named the first Jemimah, the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch.* ¹⁵ In all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job’s daughters; and their father *gave them an inheritance* along with their brothers. ¹⁶ After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children, and his children’s children, four generations. ¹⁷ And Job died, old and full of days.

The first action of his transformed reality is that he prays for, rather than judges, his enemies. Job becomes the intercessor he has prayed, and his prayer is accepted!

And then one notices that missing in the list of Job’s now doubled possessions are the servants.¹ The servants are so invisible to us that we hardly notice this new ordering of a world without servants. And finally the three daughters mentioned, then ignored in 1:2, are now matched by three daughters who are named and given inheritance.² Power is shared and the old hierarchy holds no sway. And finally (as one participant at the conference observed) no where are we told that Job is cured. He is still, presumably, a leper. Such changes are far more significant than we first imagine. A Job that looks for all the world the same, is radically transformed.

Think then about the profound effect for transformation of the specific Jobian vision of God as Creator. We are invited to see chaos and wildness and even uncleanness as part of the creation that God admires and loves. We are invited to see relationship with God as the only “answer” to suffering.

Not a relationship that denies suffering but a relationship which sees and speaks truly because of the truth of the suffering. And we are invited to see a transformed life evolving out of the encounter.

When you begin thinking about the impact of biblical metaphors and images, the multiplicity and the tension among and between them are the very things that deepen their meaning.

I have spent so much time on Job because I find that when you begin thinking about the impact of biblical metaphors and images, the multiplicity and the tension among and between them are the very things that deepen their meaning. To be fluent in this biblical language we must read broadly and dig deeply.

Perhaps we don’t have time, but I would love to sing the hymn that is printed.

ELW 703 O God, Why Are You Silent? (O Sacred Head Now Wounded)

Text: Marty Haugen Music: Hans Hassler; J.S. Bach
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O God, why are you silent? I cannot hear your voice;
The proud and strong and violent all claims you and rejoice;
You promised you would hold me with tenderness and care.
Draw near, O Love, enfold me, and ease the pain I bear.

My hope lies bruised and battered, my wounded heart is torn;
My spirit spent and shattered by life’s relentless storm;
Will you not bend to hear me, my cries from deep within?
Have you no word to cheer me when night is closing in?

May pain draw forth compassion, let wisdom rise from loss;
Oh, take my heart and fashion the image of your cross;
Then may I know your healing through healing that I share,
Your grace and love revealing, your tenderness and care.

Conclusion: Final Images and Metaphors

As I look over the myriad of Old Testament metaphors and images we have considered this morning, I must confess that I am more struck by all the images we have not considered than by what we have looked at. So many important images arise out of the Old Testament narrative texts. I would have loved to

talk with you about the images of abused women, particularly the texts about David's daughter Tamar, and the Levite's concubine in Judges. These texts encourage us to remember the stories of these women and to take note of the public havoc that follows upon their private tragedies. Their stories can provide tremendous resources for pastoral care. And I am nervous about giving the impression, through my choices, that images of God as savior and redeemer are lacking in the Old Testament. Nothing, of course, could be further from the truth. Perhaps the central narration that forms our biblical imagination in, under and around the other images is that of God parting the Red Sea and bringing us via Sinai into the promised land. And one final image seems most fitting as the closing picture for such a presentation as this. In two psalms, God is declared to be our healer.

Psalm 147:1-3 Praise the LORD! How good it is to sing praises to our God; for he is gracious, and a song of praise is fitting. 2 The LORD builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the outcasts of Israel. 3 He heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds.

Psalm 30:2 2 O LORD my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me.

And in the final psalm this image of healer is expanded and leads us to God's mercy and grace. I would like to conclude with our reading part of this psalm together.

Psalm 103:1-8

¹ Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

² Bless the LORD, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits—

³ who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,

⁴ who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,

⁵ who satisfies you with good as long as you live so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

⁶ The LORD works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed.

⁷ He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.

⁸ The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

Diane Jacobson came to the Luther Seminary faculty as an assistant professor in 1982, and was promoted to associate professor in 1990. In 1999, she became professor of Old Testament. She was chair of the biblical division from 1993 to 1996. She currently serves as associate dean of MA/MSM programs.

Jacobson is a Phi Beta Kappa magna cum laude graduate of Connecticut College, New London (1970). She earned the M.A. degree from Columbia University/Union Theological Seminary in 1975. She also holds the M.Phil. and Ph.D. degrees from Union (1982 and 1990).

She is a member of the Society of Biblical Literature and has been an Associate in Ministry (previously, a certified lay professional) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) since 1985.

Jacobson is a frequent speaker throughout the Church. Her writings include, A Beginner's Guide to the Bible, co-authored with Robert Kyser (1991) and numerous articles on such topics as wisdom, creation and psalms. In addition, she has written "You are Sanctified in Christ, Called to Be Saints" as a part of In Christ - Called to Witness Bible Studies for the Lutheran World Federation Ninth Assembly in Hong Kong (1997). Dr. Jacobson has also written the 1997 Lutheran Woman Today Bible Study, From Slavery to Service: A Study of Exodus.

¹ Compare the list in 42:12 to 1:3.

² The importance of the daughters is noted by both by Newsom, *Moral Sense*, 27, and Brown, *Ethos*, 379.

For more complete references, see my articles listed below and bibliographies on my web page: <http://www.luthersem.edu/djacobso>

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New and noteworthy

“Give Something Back” Scholarships

This year will mark the inaugural distribution of “Give Something Back” Scholarship funds. The “Give Something Back” endowment fund began as a three-year campaign in 1992. Funds raised for the endowment were to provide financial assistance to recipients seeking clinical educational preparation for service in ministries of Chaplaincy, Pastoral Counseling, and Clinical Supervision. In addition, the endowment created an opportunity for those who had received financial assistance for their own education to “give something back” by helping others with similar needs.

The Inter-Lutheran Coordinating Committee for Ministries in Chaplaincy, Pastoral Counseling, and Clinical Education (ILCC-MCPCCE) has appointed a scholarship committee and has designed an application process that will enable it to begin awarding \$6,000 in scholarships per year.

The “Give Something Back” endowment will make a very 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/LCMS.
- ✓ Not already be receiving funds from the ELCA/LCMS national MCPCCE offices.
- ✓ Submit an application with a financial data form for committee review.

Applicants must complete the Scholarship Application and Financial Data forms that are available from ELCA and LCMS Offices for Ministries in Chaplaincy, Pastoral Counseling, and Clinical Education. Contact information, including web links that provide further information about ELCA and LCMS ministries of chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical education, is provided below.

ELCA

Theresa Duty
Administrative Assistant
Theresa.duty@elca.org
www.elca.org/chaplains
800-638-3522, ext. 2417

LCMS

Judy Ladage
Specialized Pastoral Ministry Coordinator
Judy.Ladage@lcms.org
www.lcms.org/spm
800-248-1930, ext. 1388

Application deadline in 2007 will be August 15, with awards made in November.

Association of Professional Chaplains Continuing Chaplaincy Education Credits

We have received word that *Caring Connections* will be an approved journal offering Association of Professional Chaplains Continuing Chaplaincy Education Credits. The APC will make announcements at the upcoming annual conference about the opportunity to receive free CCE’s by reading various journals, including *Caring Connections*. These CCE’s will be offered for all the issues of 2007, including this present issue. The format of the codes for submission of the continuing education form is being devised and will be provided in the next issue of *Caring Connections*. Spread the word amongst your APC colleagues to subscribe to *Caring Connections* to take advantage of this opportunity!

Lutheran Chaplain and Clinical Pastoral Education Supervisors Honored

Four pastors earned the Christus In Mundo award, the highest honor granted for distinguished service by the Inter-Lutheran Coordinating Committee for Ministries in Chaplaincy, Pastoral Counseling and Clinical Education (ILCC-MCPCCE), at a Feb. 8-11 conference in San Antonio, Texas.

The ILCC is a joint committee of the Board for Human Care Ministries of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) and the Vocation and Education program unit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

Honored at the Zion XIII conference were: Rev. Harvey M. Berg of Waukesha, Wis., and Rev. Serge A. Castigliano of Putnam, N.Y., (ELCA); and Rev. Kenneth J. Siess of St. Paul, Minn., and Rev. Richard “Dick” Tetzloff of Hackensack, Minn. (LCMS).

About 170 participants attended the 13th triennial conference, which marked the event’s 40-year

anniversary. Rev. John Fale, associate executive director of LCMS World Relief and Human Care, served as program emcee.

The Christus In Mundo awardees were:

- Berg, former director of Pastoral Care for St. Luke's Medical Center, Milwaukee, Wis., and a supervisor with the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE). Berg retired as a chaplain colonel after serving in the U.S. Army Reserve.

- Castigliano, who served as the ELCA's director of Specialized Pastoral Care and Clinical Education and is now an ACPE supervisor at the Eger Health Care Center, Staten Island, N.Y.

- Siess, an ACPE supervisor, who previously served on the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo.; as director of Chaplaincy and Clinical Pastoral Education at the University of Minnesota Hospitals and Clinic; and as director of Chaplaincy with Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota.

- Tetzloff, former director of Specialized Pastoral Care and Clinical Education for the LCMS and former executive director of Lutheran Ministries Association, St. Louis.

The Zion conference tradition began in 1967 in Zion, Ill., to offer an opportunity for personal reflection and renewal for professionals who serve others and to highlight the importance of ministries in specialized settings. The conference was made possible by grants from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans and the ILCC.



Sporting the medallions they received as part of the Christus In Mundo (Christ in the world) awards at the Zion XIII conference, Feb. 8-11, in San Antonio, Texas, are: (from left) Rev. Harvey M. Berg, Waukesha, Wis.; Rev. Richard "Dick" Tetzloff, Hackensack, Minn.; Rev. Kenneth J. Siess, St. Paul, Minn.; and Rev. Serge A. Castigliano, Putnam, N.Y.

Recent and upcoming events

Inter-Lutheran

- March 28-31 CPSP to be held at the Holiday Inn in Raleigh, North Carolina.
- April 26-28 AAPC Conference to be held at the Portland Oregon Marriott Downtown Waterfront.
- April 28-May 2 APC Conference to be held at the Hyatt Regency San Francisco Airport.
- April 30-May 2 LCMS Conference on Mercy to be held at the St. Louis Airport Marriott.
- October 24-27 ACPE Conference to be held at the Adolphus Hotel in Dallas, Texas.

How to Subscribe

Subscribers to future issues of *Caring Connections: An Inter-Lutheran Journal for Practitioners and Teachers of Pastoral Care and Counseling* will be notified by e-mail when each issue is published. We hope you will subscribe. The process is simple: go to www.lutheranservices.org, select *Networks*, then select *Affinity Networks*, then select *Chaplains' Network*, then select *Resources*, then select *Caring Connections* and register on that page. You will need to provide your name, your organization's name, your e-mail address, and your ZIP code. Subscribers and nonsubscribers alike will also be able to access this issue of *Caring Connections* electronically by visiting the LSA website.

Caring Connections: An Inter-Lutheran Journal for Practitioners and Teachers of Pastoral Care and Counseling welcomes your submissions of news germane to specialized ministries as well as announcements of forthcoming events. You may e-mail news items and announcements to one of the Caring Connections news editors: John Fale at John.Fale@lcms.org or Bryn Carlson at bcarls@covcable.com