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What Would Martin Do?

Summer time proposals for the zealous at heart!

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Dear Editors,

Since I know you are eager for comments and trust the readers, as the May letter declared, to let you know what we think of the paper, I decided that it was unfair to hold my comments to myself.

So, in the spirit of openness and honesty, I say that I find the layout painfully and wastefully careless. There's so much wasted space! It feels bulky, like a big pamphlet or brochure you'd get at a conference. Too much doodle space, do you know what I mean? It could be so cool tightened up and proofread more carefully.

But the spirit of the journal is open, generous and adventuresome. Thank you for listening!

Clare T Ruen
From the Editors’ Desk

Phatic messages—those little snippets of communication that bookend normative examples of daily conversation. They’re what we hear and receive numerous times each day, yet rarely do we stop to ponder the significance of these “throw-away” phrases. “Hi, how are you?” “Good. How are you?” “Good.” Phatic messages establish predictability in conversation, acknowledge another person’s existence, signal the beginning and end of conversation, and generally assist in framing personal interactions. We so frequently use these clichéd phrases in fact, that something out of the ordinary must occur in order for us to stop and take notice. Just such a conversational abnormality crossed my path earlier this week.

Walking hurriedly across campus, toward a class session already in progress, I passed a fellow seminarian with whom I have had several classes. Though we are not great friends, I proceeded to acknowledge his presence. (For the purpose of illustration we shall call this student Bob.) “Hey Bob,” I proceeded to say. “Fine, thanks” came his response. Obviously our communication had gone awry, and as Bob continued on his way, I began to contemplate this phatic faux pas. Countless scenarios would validate such a minor linguistic slip—preoccupations, distress, concern, anxiety, despair. In any case, I thought it most likely that Bob simply insonuated the conclusion of my greeting. He presumed I would utter that ominous three word inquisition, “How are you?” Thus, his assumption led him to a completely natural, though flippant response. How often do our assumptions lead us to similarly superficial retorts within this seminary community?

Throughout the last few months, the editors of The Concord have attempted a sensitive balancing act. We have tried—through self-education, experience, and response—to produce a monthly publication of integrity, purpose, humor, functionality and honest communication. In retrospect, we have both accomplished this mission and fallen short. Like the good Lutherans that most of us are, we have attempted to embrace a dialectic tension between success and failure. And as this school year comes to a close, we wish to express our gratitude to you, our readers.

By Co-Editor Daniel Lee

Without your interaction, this publication would cease to exist. We thus sincerely thank you.

Yet what would a healthy sign of appreciation be without expressing an equally sincere hope regarding our future communication? It is with this expectation of future dialogue in mind that I repeat my concern: How often do our assumptions regarding communication lead us away from genuine conversation and towards superficial retorts? Regrettably, I believe this seminary community does consciously what Bob did unconsciously far too often.

A prime example of this behavior is exhibited in the “straw man” arguments so regularly used on campus. Students and faculty alike develop caricatures of those with whom we disagree—other Christians, people of other faiths, public figures, and (most distressingly) fellow peers. We develop arguments framed around these assumed caricatures and then take turns kicking the “straw man” around the circle. This Cross-Fire method of discussion that involves anything but listening to the one with whom you speak, is the antithesis of the fellowship to which we claim to be called. As a seedbed for “future leaders” in the Christian church, I find it troubling and deeply disconcerting that this community appears to thrive on such characterizations and lack of genuine communication. I’ve lost count of the number of students who are simply “biding their time” until ordination, whereupon they will let their true feelings and theology be known.

In short, these parochial critiques only serve to discredit our own religious confession. Insular attacks rooted in anxiety (while popular at the cafeteria table) simply reinforce our own lack of religious comfort. I would contend that mature faith should allow and encourage us to listen, dialogue, and disagree in unthreatened and positive ways. Summer is upon us friends. Take advantage of this time. Read, relax and reflect upon what this mystical body of Christ truly is. Will we grudgingly attempt to retain self-righteous autonomy or might we dare to communicate honestly with those who cross our path?

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2005 Faculty/Staff vs. Student Softball Game

What is God up to in this game?

Take me out to the ballgame...

You must get around all of the bases before you are saved

This ball is about to be the exposition of Holy Scripture... a.k.a. HISTORY!

Sundberg, You're up!

Habemus Presidentem!
Summer Reading Suggestions

Nancy Koester
Adjunct Professor of Church History


Pillars in the Earth, by Ken Follett. Captivating read in a medieval setting—adventure, romance and revenge told against the backdrop of the construction of a great cathedral.

The Merchant's Partner, by Michael Jecks. Lightweight but fun medieval mystery, great for reading at the airport or the beach.

Alice Loddis
Coordinator of Faculty Support Services

Last Chance to See, by Douglas Adams and Mark Cardwardine

The Secret Life of Bees, by Sue Monk Kidd

The Satanic Verses, by Salman Rushdie

The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat: And Other Clinical Tales, by Oliver Sacks

Mary Jane Haemig
Associate Professor of Church History

The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency, by Alexander McCall Smith (and other books in the series of this name)

East of the Mountains, by David Guterson
Summer Reading Suggestions

Victoria Smith
Faculty Secretary

The Life and Legends of Saint Francis of Assisi, by Father Candide Chalippe
Pretty flowery writing, but has some good stuff in there.

Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, by Douglas Adams
A Paul Snider (Manager of Media Services) recommendation.

The Source, by James A. Michner

David Lose
Assistant Professor of Homiletics

Book I'm most looking forward to (along with about 10 million other readers): Harry Potter and the Half-blood Prince, by J.K. Rowling

Book I'm most intrigued by: The Mermaid Chair, by Sue Monk Kidd; The Secret Life of Bees was excellent and I'm interested in this next novel by a fabulous writer.

Book I'll probably learn the most from: The World is Flat, by Thomas Friedman. Nobody gets to the heart of contemporary geo-political issues like Friedman, a columnist for the NY Times.

Book I'm most likely to re-read: Peace Like a River, by Minnesotan Leif Enger -- perhaps the best book I've read in a decade, chock full of beautiful prose and even some good theology.
Summer Reading Suggestions

Megan Thorvilson
Concord Co-Editor

Corelli's Mandolin, by Louis de Bernieres

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time, by Mark Haddon

Bar Season, by Myla Goldberg

The Time Traveler's Wife, by Audrey Niffenegger

The True and Outstanding Adventures of the Hunt Sisters, by Elisabeth Robinson

Andrew Plocher
Concord Co-Editor

In the spirit of the season I am looking forward to reading some of my childhood favorites. Many of you are probably too old to remember, but about twenty years ago (maybe less) Pizza Hut made a deal with public libraries. They started offering a free 'personal pan pizza' with every ten books. Let's just say it motivated my reading.

The Dark Is Rising, (and its sequels) by Susan Cooper
On his 11th birthday Will Stanton is sent into a world of history, mystery and intrigue. These books have a great message, like C.S. Lewis or J.R.R Tolkien, and are a blast to read! And yes, they are excellent for adults.

A Wrinkle in Time, by Madeline L'Engle
Meg Murray, Charles Wallace and Calvin O'Keefe. Could you ask for a better cast of characters? I grow every time I reread this timeless masterpiece.

Lamb: The Gospel According to Biff, Christ's Childhood Pal, by Christopher Moore
This should be required reading at the seminary level. Enjoy this gospel and cherish the characters, the questions, the 'deep' theology and the portrayal of the Roman statues. You'll laugh hard, I guarantee it.

The Life of Pi, by Yann Martel
What happens when a ship sinks into the Pacific, leaving Pi stranded on a life raft with a hyena, an orangutan, an injured zebra and a 450-pound Bengal tiger named Richard Parker? Among other things, a spectacular journey of faith! This story will keep you captivated and the writing is breathtaking.

The Book of Order, by the Presbyterian Church USA
If you don't know what you believe check out what the Presbyterian's do. It's fascinating reading, and I essentially have to memorize it for an exam in August.
Summer Reading Suggestions

Daniel Lee
Concord Co-Editor

*A Walk in the Woods*, by Bill Bryson
The author charts his quest to through-hike the Appalachian Trail, and humorously recounts the many individuals met along the way.

*A Brief History of Nearly Everything*, by Bill Bryson
After several years of research, interview and journey, the author produces a compelling and fascinating synthesis of scientific history and the people who discovered it.

*America: A Citizen’s Guide to Democracy Inaction*
The Daily Show with Jon Stewart presents an irreverent view of our confusing nation.

*Picnic, Lightning*, by Billy Collins
A collection of captivating poems written by the U.S. Poet Laureate Billy Collins.

*The Chronicles of Narnia*, by C.S. Lewis
Well worth the reread—like being reunited with an old friend.

Andrew Nelson
Concord Co-Editor

*A Confederacy of Dunces*, by John Kennedy Toole
A zany novel, published posthumously, about the tragicomic adventures of one Ignatius J. Reilly.

*Lake Wobegon Summer 1956*, by Garrison Keillor
Spend a summer in the shoes of a 14 year old Wobegonian whose brand new typewriter, suave older cousin, and painful crush on anything with two legs all threaten to dismantle his deeply pious upbringing and send him toward worldly damnation.

*Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*, by Jared Diamond
An entertaining, imaginative, and compelling look into the question: “How did some end up with so much and others with so little?”

*The Complete Stories*, by Flannery O'Connor
This Southern writer shows humans at their most bizarre, tragic, humorous, and naked. Ms. O'Connor's stories are truly strange, but infused with powerful Christian mystery. Some places to start within this collection of short stories are “Revelation,” “A Good Man is Hard to Find,” “The Life you Save May Be Your Own,” and “The River.”

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Family Summertime Emergency Fun List

When your kids run out of fun ideas this summer and you draw a blank, may this list breathe some new life into your family’s tactile, applied Lutheran theological development.

1. Afternoon on the enormous playgrounds, bike trails and pool at Lake Elmo (1515 Keats Avenue North, Lake Elmo, MN 55042 651-430-8370). Review 9th commandment.

2. Five-star, five-stop crazy day playground tour: (Great zany afternoon on bicycles)
   - Langford Park (behind Saint Anthony Park Elementary)
   - College Park (corner of Carter and Raymond)
   - Falcon Heights Community Park (corner of Roselawn and Cleveland)
   - Lauderdale Community Park (corner of Roselawn and Carl)
   - Sandgren Playground


4. Afternoon of playground and swimming at Lake Johanna Park (3500 Lake Johanna Blvd.). Ponder Small Catechism 4-6.

5. Rainy day bus ride (#3 on Como Ave) to Children’s Museum downtown St. Paul. (Most seminary families qualify for a free pass. Visit http://www.ucm.org/membership2.shtml#accessPassport for more information.) Grab a burger at McDonalds upstairs on your way to the bus homeward. Recite Ps. 34:8.

6. Mosquito whacking contest (extra points for older boys who can pop the buggers). Bible fun: when did God make Mosquitoes? Squash one in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:9)

7. Bicycle Ride:
   - Along the Mississippi River Trail

By Local “Fun Guy” Chris Kramer

- Around Lake Calhoun (South Minneapolis)
- To the Como Zoo (Free)
- Check http://harpoval.com/Tcbe/bike.link.htm#trails for more ideas.


10. Walk to see and smell the cows and pigs at University of Minnesota St. Paul campus. Grab a sandwich at the coffee shop on the corner of Buford and Cleveland. Extra fun: read Smalabald 2:11 downwind of pig barn.

Inside Fun:

1. Smorgasbord of Gooey Weird Stuff: 3 parts cornstarch, 2 parts water. It just feels wrong.

2. Build an obstacle course in Sandgren hallway with candidacy balance beam (scrap 2x4 from Home Depot), dizzy bat, hurdle, catechism recitation, tricycle race. (Make sure Duane is outside.)

3. Coffee filter art: color coffee filters with washable markers, dip in water and see what happens!

4. Fabric scrap fun: Buy fabric of various shapes and colors. Let kids dress up, wrap their babies in them, build a fort. Use clothes pins, rope and dining room furniture to make capes or structure for a fort in the air-conditioned living room. Advanced play: raid the vestry for more costumes and play church!
Community Concerns

5. Paper Dolls: Have kids draw people, animals, fish barrels, etc. Cut them out, tape to popsicle sticks and have a puppet show. Nativity is a favorite among kids, though I’m partial to Luther’s rescue of Katharina from the convent.

6. Indoor fishing derby: tie string to a stick with magnet on the other end. Have kids draw and cut out paper fish. Attach paperclip to mouth, place cloth on the floor as a pond and go fishing. Works well as an ‘outing’ for an inside camping trip. Also consider a pretend campfire on which to fry the fish. Luke 5:1-1.

Local Angler Allison Schmitt Shares
Here Secret Lures

Even the most novice of anglers knows you have to use bait that’s appropriate for the fish you’re after. You don’t bait a fish hook with lug nuts if you’re going for sunnies (though I must say I once saw a youngster catch a five-pound bass on a piece of Snickers candy bar).

The same is true in dating. I’ll confess that, in my undergraduate days, I knew that a blouse open down to here or a skirt slit up to there often succeeded in getting men to notice me. I knew that extra swish in my hips or suggestive glance might persuade a man to ask me out.

It took me the longest time to understand why these men were only interested in “one thing” I’m not sure if I was a little slow or simply so desperate for attention that I’d rather put up with saying “no” to a man than having no one to say no to.

Fifteen years and one divorce later I’ve finally caught on. I realized I was using a six-inch treble hook spoon lure hoping for crappies but ending up with snapping turtles. I was fishing for trout using earthworms on Size 1 jg hooks but catching only carp.

First of all, I realized that, not only is provocative clothing ungodly, it’s also likely to attract the kind of man I’m not interested in dating. If you want to catch panfish, you bait a small hook with something like a waxworm, not a redtail chub minnow. Issues of force aside, we women have to take our share of responsibility for keeping our relationships God-pleasing. It’s not right to dress like Madonna and expect men to think only those thoughts they would think about the Madonna. That doesn’t mean we have to adopt Victorian-age practices, when even piano legs were clothed for fear of arousing men. It does mean we should be mindful of our motives as we choose outfits and apply make-up.

Second, I realized that if I want to find a Christian spouse, I might want to spend a little time at places where Christians gather. After all, you’ll never catch that record muskie in a rain barrel. Nothing wrong, in my opinion, of going to a bar or joining the nearest health club. But the odds of meeting a Christian there are lower, I daresay, than in the church choir or at a congregational service project.

I also learned that it’s important to represent myself truthfully. Imagine how disappointing it is for a fish to bite into a big, fat, juicy nightcrawler only to discover it’s one of those pheromone-infused rubber worms. That would be like me agreeing to participate in a 10K run in order to impress a man when my idea of fun is sitting nearly motionless digging dandelions out of my lawn.

I’ve also come to recognize it means making it a point to go to places and events where I might meet other single people, even when I might prefer puttering in my garage or weeding my garden on a balmy Saturday evening. After all, fishing poles don’t just take themselves out of the basement and head to the nearest lake.

When I was younger, I could go anywhere and expect to make many acquaintances. But the older I get, the more difficult it becomes to go places where I know few if any people. So I plan ahead and find a friend with whom I can attend. That also helps me carry through with my intention so that basket of dirty laundry I’ve ignored for two weeks doesn’t suddenly require my urgent attention.

With its terminology of lunkers and stringers, rods and reels, spawning and spinners, you can take the fishing/dating analogy only so far. Suffice it to say I’ve cleaned out the tackle box and disposed of all the inappropriate gear. So if you see a plain-looking woman in modest clothing around campus, that might be me.
Jesus loves You!

Have a Groovy Summer!