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Letter from the Editor

By Natalie Gessert
Concord managing editor

Why did the commercials about Al Franken's history of cursing in public cause such uproar? Politics aside, profanity has power.

This issue is all about profanity, and not just the "naughty word" variety. While, of course, we remain fascinated at the shocking words and phrases which spice up daily vocabulary, deemed verboten by parents and others in authority, profanity is finally a matter of drawing lines in the sand. Using an exciting word here and there is meant to declare power over the willingness of others to sit up and pay attention. Nevertheless, using a string of words, however banal they might be, may also be used in ways more frightening than simple attention-getting behavior. Words may be used to speak another out of a community — our community — and in this way, essentially out of existence. Politicians use this very tactic, as we have seen in the barrage of commercials over the past weeks. Ironically, these ads have a pattern of one defaming the character of another, simply to declare the other unfit for leadership — and round and round we go. But this troubling pattern of behavior is also found right here at Luther Seminary. Proclaiming your classmate, colleague and neighbor to be profane announces how unfit the other is to be in communion with the community at large. Perhaps this is more dangerous than the F-word. Perhaps this is more shocking than your basic vulgarity used to declare alarm at a stubbed toe. Declaring another to be profane shocks us into the realization that we may name others as the very definition of offense. Profanity is not simply a naughty word.

Profanity is a matter of declaring power over another; who is fit and unfit, righteous and unrighteous, welcome and unwelcome, in and out.

We recognize this with stark clarity in the second commandment. We are not to use God's name in vain because the Name holds real power: The One who claims the Name above all names created the world and all life therein by using words; speaking what is into being. God shows us that words, in their best capacity, are meant to create. We are told not to call on God in vanity because to speak God's name carelessly ignores the power — all of heaven and earth — contained in this Name. Our daily work at Luther Seminary means to teach us to do all sorts of things in God's name... in Jesus' name... by the power of the Holy Spirit: forgive, pray, preach, teach and provide care. Is it in this name we also truly wish to damn our neighbors in an effort to separate others from our community?

From the Mann Himself

"Don't Call God When You Don't Want God"

By John Mann
Seminary Pastor

The title of this piece is a summary of the second commandment as I preach and pray. At Luther preschool and primary Sunday school class many years ago. It tries to get at the seriousness with which we should approach the name of the Holy One.

You will remember that in the 19th century the name of God was not to be uttered. Thus, we have a whole host of circumlocutions trying to avoid the presumptuousness of a human being naming (and thus exercising power over) God. The name was not only too holy to be spoken, but also to be used only to glorify and worship the Almighty. To magnify God's name meant only to use that name to increase God's grandeur.

I was once invited sailing with an executive presbyter of an acquaintance of mine. He was a true sailor — not only did he have a boat, but the sailor's mouth to match it.

He was a true sailor - not only did he have a boat, but the sailor's mouth to match it.

Once when he was waxing colorful, I looked at him with a smile and raised eyebrows, He laughed and said, "You Lutherans" I arched my brows even higher and he told me this story:

Once in a race, I had a mixed crew of clergy-Lutheran and Presbyterian — when suddenly another boat cut me off. I bellowed over at him, "Try that again, you G**d-**n S.O.B. and I'll tell you another story!" The Presbyterians were all outraged that I would use language of a sexual nature to describe him and threaten his boat. The Lutheran said simply, "I don't care what you do to that S.O.B.'s boat, but leave God out of it." I think that is the essence of the commandment: Don't call God if you don't want God.
I'm incredibly excited that Peter Rollins will be coming to Luther from November 2nd-4th. Dr. Rollins will be providing a lecture on Monday, Nov 3rd at 7pm in the Chapel of the Incarnation titled: “Transformation Art: Faith, Fetishism and Worldly Christianity,” then sticking around for chapel on Tuesday, Nov 4th, election day.

I'm often incredibly excited, so I decided to ask Worship Prof. Chris Scharen to give us a little teaser of who Rollins is and why he's so stinkin' cool. Here's what I found out about Rollins:

CG: First of all, how did you first encounter Peter Rollins?

CS: I found the IKON website first, before I ever met Pete, and I was totally engaged by what they call their coordinates—which they call a (non)definition of IKON—including the following terms: “iconic, apocalyptic, heretical, emerging, and failing.” You can see how they spell these out at http://wiki.ikon.org.uk/wiki/index.php/Ikon:

About. I was exploring this when I was leading a big old downtown congregation in Connecticut and identity was a core question for us. IKON became a way for us to break open the question—How do we describe ourselves in a fresh and faithful way? We didn’t visit IKON, but their efforts at a (non)definition really helped me think in fresh ways and lead creatively. Soon after my move to Yale, Pete’s publisher, Paraclete, contacted me to see if I was interested in hosting Pete on his tour for the release of How (Not) To Speak of God. I said sure, and asked my friend Tony Jones to come out and respond to Pete. It was fantastic. Pete is very kind, incredibly creative. We had a good conversation at Yale, and a better one at the pub later. We had Pete back to Yale last year for a conference on Ecclesiology.

CG: What has excited you about his work?

CS: A key thing in their DNA as a (non)church gathering is that they try to create ruptures, spaces in which conventions are broken open so that potentially transformative encounters with God can happen. And this is grounded in, on the one hand, deep and creative encounters with Scripture—esp. Jesus’ words and the other hand, postmodern philosophy. What is an example of their strategy to create spaces that break conventions? That they started meeting in an open bar, doing their gatherings publicly, is an example. So is the way they try to break the conventional view of Christianity (esp. of a certain sort) that we first Believe, then Behave according to the Belief, and therefore Belong, that is, join a community of faith. Pete reverses that with Belonging first, and beginning to try out the Behaving as part of Belonging, which gives rise (perhaps) to Believing. So what most excites me is the way their creative encounter with Post-Christian culture in Belfast sparks creative imagination in me as I think about ministry and Christian life.

I am excited about seeing this fresh perspective on church here at Luther. It’s easy to tell you what The Fidelity of Betrayal is not. It is not a systematic theology book. It is not a how-to book to build an emergent community or program ministry. It will not easily fit into your seminary categories, nor will it give the same old approach to the Bible and Church.

Peter Rollins brings fresh questions to familiar people from the Bible by emphasizing “the Rupture of Revelation.” He calls us to wrestle with God, and our questions and conflicts around who God is, together with the communities that provided these texts to us. He provides fiercely dynamic tools for reading the Bible by guiding us to recognizing the presence of God in an often wounded text. Rollins challenges the institutionalized church’s emphasis on a prescribed set of beliefs. He puts forth in its place a model of church that emphasizes belonging and the expectation that the Spirit will lead the community as a certain sort of one that we first Behave, then Believe according to expectations that stifle faithful following of the experience of God’s revelation in Word, Event, Miracle and Truth. Reading The Fidelity of Betrayal has excited my mind towards my own questions for the text and given plenty to consider as I look towards worship and leadership. I can’t wait to see Peter Rollins at Luther.
In the Name of God
Finding Sacred Moments

By Sarah Brouwer
M.Div. Senior

A few years ago at the mature age of twenty-one I was traveling around Europe during my “typical-small-liberal-arts-college” semester abroad. At one point in the trip a friend and I were being touristic, visiting a cathedral in Seville, Spain. While I, the seminarian-to-be, was soaking up the intricate artwork and reveling in the history of this holy place, my klutz of a friend dropped her expensive camera lens and loudly said the S-word. Needless to say I was embarrassed but soon horrified when she said the S-word again reacting against having said it the first time. Ugh.

Now I don’t want to come right out and say it, but “times they are a changin’” and a level of reverence for holy, sacred places and even the name of God just is not what it used to be— or should be, in my humble opinion.

Many of you have probably heard of Anne Lamott. She is one of my favorite authors, and I don’t love her just because she is a fellow Presbyterian. She has a relatable wisdom, and in her book titled: Grace (Eventually): Thoughts on Faith, she writes:

“If you are mesmerized by televised stupidity, and don’t get to read or hear stories about your world, you can be fooled into thinking that the world isn’t miraculous—and it is.”

I am not out to place blame. I am not going to say it is the evils of cable television or violence in video games. But it saddens me to know that other people do not regularly experience the power of God’s mystery within those times and places, those words from Scripture, those life-giving sacraments, those “cup runneth over” moments, that are truly sacred.

I wouldn’t exactly suggest that miracles and the sacred are the same thing, but I think Lamott is getting at what I believe about the profane and the sacred.

The second commandment is about so much more than what we have come to believe about taking the Lord’s name in vain; it’s about remembering that not only is God’s name holy, but God and everything that God is about is holy. In my estimation it must be a reminder that, even within the name of God, there is something so precious about the life of God. When we deprecate that sacredness we are not only hurting God but distancing ourselves from the sheer grace of the relationship. If we allow ourselves to be wooed by the profaneness of the world, it gets harder to experience the real name of God and all the glory that comes with it.

So I say stick to the sacred when you can, because it’s the life-sustaining, awe-inspiring, joy-filling gift in the name of God.

Tear It Down!
Of Lamentations and Profanity

By Festus A. Alomaja
M.A. Senior

In biblical terms, personal names have a meaning, for they usually describe some aspect of personal character; so it goes with God’s name. God will not forget his commandment because he is a jealous God and he does not want his name profaned in any way. He is very concerned about those who use his name in vain. The ancient people in the Bible did curse, so we say. So why can’t we do the same thing? Some things are just plain wrong here. To understand this commandment better, we need to explain the distinction between profanity and lamentation. The ancient Jews had a commandment to recover the lost. This includes corporate lamentation. To them, it is communal, not personal, lamentation that is best for grieving a loss. This explains many of the seemingly crude and violent elements we stumble over in, for instance in Psalm 137:7-9:

1 Remember, O Lord, against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem’s fall, how they said, ‘Tear it down! Tear it down! Down to its foundations!’
2 O daughter Babylon, you devastator! Happy shall they be who pay you back what you have done to us!
3 Happy shall they be who take your little ones and dash them against the rock!

However, the vocabulary used to curse with the name of God today is crude profanity and not in any way similar to the Israelites lamentation.

In the Yoruba societies found in Nigerian and Benin, when people say “O’d d’im!” it is an ugly expression that does not simply go through one ear and out of the other; but it sticks in the brain to be played over and over again in the mind. What does this mean for these people? They are highly superstitious because using the name of God means people would listen and fear. They could pronounce the name of God to say, “In the name of God, there will be rain today” or, “In the name of God, I say that you will win a game.” This notion that the name of God gives power to create or to make something happen often gave Pentecostal Preachers in this region much power and authority. For example, a preacher might say, “I rebuke it in Jesus’ name…” and it does this very work.

In reality, if you use God’s name seriously; in prayer, for instance, this is fine. However, if you use God’s name casually, many would believe that you have crossed a line. You may suffer consequences, such as simply be ignored in any other conversation. Precisely, using God’s name in vain and with superstition, these people believe hardships and sufferings will be caused for many. For this reason, people in this region are always filled with disgust when a person uses God’s name with no reasonable purpose. Still, many Christians are breaking this commandment everyday, damming God’s reputation. It is difficult to recover the ancient traditions of using God’s name with respect, even lamentation, which has been lost. But perhaps this is where the church can help us to do whatever it takes to tell people how this is wrong and that we should put an end to it, learning how to use God’s name properly for prayer, praise and thanksgiving.
What We Need

By Maggie Saylor
M.A. Junior

In this election time, the term “outsider” has been the topic of much debate and one that describes the election atmosphere. When I read Internet blogs, Op Ed columns and political commentaries, I get the idea that everyone is fighting the feeling of being labeled an outsider.

Most of us are Washington outsiders, and this leads to a terrifying sense of powerlessness—we can vote, campaign and protest, but do we really make a difference? Or do we desperately try to convince ourselves that we actually have a say in our future government?

It goes beyond government, too. Outside Washington we might feel like outsiders if the people around us support “the other side.” We do not know with whom we can speak openly about our opinions or share our real selves. We might be outsiders, and we might be rejected for it.

At Luther, this feeling is very real. When Bishop Hanson came to give a lecture, some who heard it said they felt alienated by his political leanings. Those who agreed with him felt alienated by those who spoke out so loudly against his lecture. We became polarized over politics, and in the end most of us missed his message.

Bishop Hanson, I think, knows what we need right now, and that is community. We need Christian community, where all are welcome in the church, where we should feel free to disagree with one another in patience and understanding, and where we should talk about the confusing, complicated, alienating world around us. We retreat to our corners of safety, and in the end we only remain outsiders. Community invites everyone in. What are we waiting for?

Finding “My People”

By Megan Koepnick
M.Div. Middler

When first asked to write this piece, I wasn’t sure if I should be offended or not. Did the Concord staff think I was an outsider? I thought I had grown out of caring about whether or not I fit in when suddenly I was plunged back into uncertainty about my social status. Throughout Junior and Senior High I longed for a place where I wouldn’t be the weird kid who liked to go to church. I always hovered on the edges of being cool and yet could never quite make it. My mother would say, “Don’t worry, someday you’ll find your people.” As difficult as it is to admit, she was right. I have a vivid memory of calling my mom after the first week of college and excitedly telling her that I had found “my people.” But even within the close-knit social circles of Augustana College in Rock Island, I was an outsider. I was the only religion major in my sorority and the only member of my class who went to seminary. My biggest fear was that I wouldn’t make any friends here at Luther and once again hover on the edges of community. I think ultimately that is what being an outsider is about, the search for community. Fortunately, I was taken in by a kindly group of Middlers and the rest is history—that is, until they left on internship. Suddenly I was faced with the prospect of having to build a new community all over again. It was daunting until I realized that we are all outsiders looking to feel connected and appreciated for our weird little quirks. Here at Luther we are a big group of weird kids, and it’s not about being “in” or “out” but about feeling comfortable in our own skin and making no apologies. Granted, Luther gives us a place to come together to answer our call to ministry and to find joy in our weird little community of outsiders.

A View Through Torn Curtains

By Andrew Ronnevik
M.Div. Senior

“There never was a more holy time than ours, and never a less.”—Anne Dillard

I’m charged with writing about the line between insider and outsider, sacred and profane. The quotation above is the skeleton of my thesis. Here are a couple of swipes at fleshing it out:

I lived in India for a year before seminary, primarily to be a guest member in a multi-faith community centered around a core group of South Indian men and women with developmental disabilities. Every third week, my morning chore detail involved sweeping the floor in the Yogiayam, our thatched-roof prayer building. Funny. The beams of sunlight streaming in through spaces in the brick work and the swish of the coconut leaf broom made for a time more meditative and God-infused than our scheduled times of prayer; that modest place, right then, was more heavenly than the renowned temples and churches I visited elsewhere.

Another weekly rotation involved accompanying an elderly Indian man with a mental handicap bathing his soft body, preparing food appropriate for his toothless mouth, sitting in still silence, listening to him raise his thin voice in prayer and sometimes in a song like “Jesus Loves Me.” Funny. His presence, person, and prayer marked me more than an audience with a swami-guru.

An infidel commander in an imperialist army had a vision in which he was told that his prayers were heard by God and that he was to summon a man by the seaside. The next day, the man by the seaside, a fast-talking peasant in the occupied land, had his own vision: this one commanding him to consume unclean foods—an unthinkable act—and to expect a summons. The commander’s aides soon arrived and escorted the peasant to the commander’s residence. The military man explained the unusual circumstances and gave his guest the floor. So the guest, a preacher; began: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality.” And as he spoke, the powerful and palpable spirit of God moved and came upon them, outsiders all.

A first-century account of an itinerant Jew on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean documents the figure’s death. The writer notes that when the poor fellow finally came to his ignominious end, the curtain of the magnificent temple—the shield of the sanctum sanctorum—was rent in two, leaving that holiest of places naked and open.

“For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.” Paul, formerly Saul, of Tarsus
Hein-Fry Lecture

The Art of Moral Deliberation

By Marie Olson
M.Div. Middler

Depending on who you talked to after Bishop Hanson's speech about the Church in Public Life, you may have heard comments about his inspiring message of inclusivity or how exclusionary he seemed despite an "inclusive" message. Many feelings of exclusivity expressed are justified because several of Bishop Hanson's comments and stories clearly labeled him with Democrat-leaning partisanship. Most contentious was his anecdote where at a news conference he offered a non-partisan response, but his wife stood up in the audience and declared that despite his comments "she and his six children would be voting for Obama." Stories such as these deepen beliefs that Bishop Hanson is too political for his role as Presiding Bishop. Hanson himself addressed these critiques, saying at one point in his speech, "enough people think I'm a chaplain to the Democratic Party." Despite the controversy over how well Bishop Hanson exemplified the art of moral deliberation, the underlying message of his speech was that this type of open conversation needs to take place in the public church.

Hanson's speech began by pondering what is meant when talking about the church in public life. Hanson suggested the public life of a church begins with public worship. Referring to Martin Luther, Hanson highlighted that what occurs in the church reflects what we do "out there" in public view. In fact, it is by virtue of our baptism that we confidently say we have a right to speak in the public forum. In our baptism we are called into communal life and our baptismal vocation calls us to live among God's faithful people. Hanson suggests that the difficulty comes in how we define "faithful" people, especially in a culture which often tries to limit who these people are. Referring back to his chapel homily based on the healing of the paralytic man, Hanson exclaimed that as baptized members of the body of Christ, "we are beckoned to welcome the one paralyzed." As Bishop Hanson proclaimed, "We are a church of 4.7 million Evangelicals but we don't believe it!" This statement was clarified in the Q&A session when Bishop Hanson explained how often he has heard people who want to differentiate themselves from the evangelicals. "I can't stand the word 'evangelical' being used to differentiate... 'evangelical' should be used to bring people together!"

The greatest moment of applause during the speech came when Bishop Hanson challenged candidacy committees, other Bishops and really all of us, not to reduce the Vision and Expectations Document (V&E) down to one controversial paragraph. He challenged this by first quoting directly some of the expectations out of V&E: "Ordained ministers are expected to proclaim the gospel through word and deed... to acknowledge past and present failures and lead the church to repentance... to resist the temptation to seek power over people... to lead God's people as servants..." After listing several of these expectations Hanson went on to say, "I'm waiting for a day when a candidacy committee or Bishop rejects someone for failing to uphold those standards." When we are called to be the public church this also means being engaged in public life and the issues of the day especially when it concerns striving for peace and justice. Hanson pointed out that the economic situation of our country also reflects the shared values of our society. The church should be involved in these debates surrounding values and morality. The challenge is that we struggle to deal with issues of morality even within the church, let alone in the public realm. Hanson exemplified this struggle by stating that only about one percent of congregations in the ELCA have convened to talk about what a potential just solution to the Iraq war might be. Hanson described this lack of conversation as stemming from the problem "we don't know the art of a moral deliberation." He also emphasized that the church does not attempt to teach moral deliberation in order to "bird" individual conscience, but rather to "inform" the conscience. As Christians who strive to lead godly lives it is fitting that we engage in moral deliberation with other Christians to inform our beliefs and subsequent actions. In doing so, perhaps we will realize the radical act is to find places where we converge and agree instead of working with such vigor to differentiate ourselves.

Moral deliberation is a difficult task in the face of widely differing opinions. Perhaps the diverse reactions to Bishop Hanson's speech are witness to what a tricky and touchy task this is and how we are all continually learning how to improve our deliberation skills. Bishop Hanson suggested that moral deliberation and action in the public church requires three things: humility because we may be wrong, hope that justice can be born out of conflict and, most importantly courage to become engaged and speak publicly out of one's Christian beliefs and understandings.
Politics Before Gospel?

By Michael Vinson
M.Div. Middler

I sat in the Chapel of the Incarnation with anticipation to hear a lecture by our Presiding Bishop, Mark Hanson. Bishop Hanson was to speak on the topic of Christians and Citizenship in Election Time. Before I go any further, with my endorsement less then two weeks away I fear that this article could have a negative affect, but I write for the sake of the Gospel and not a partisan viewpoint and in that I will take my strength.

Bishop Hanson, in his clerical collar and pectoral cross, stood up in front of a standing room only audience and gave a very partisan lecture. From his opening joke about his family voting for Obama, to a cutting comment at Sarah Palin, all the time dancing around not fully coming out himself for Barack Obama. I personally do not care who Bishop Hanson is going to vote for and as the voice of our church he should be telling us how both of the candidates fall short in the eyes of God. I so badly wanted to hear and learn how to discern the Spirit at work in our political process and I just got lost in all the partisan rhetoric. When Bishop Hanson speaks in public he is the voice of 4.7 million people in the ELCA and now I see one of the reasons it gets smaller everyday.

Philippians 1:27 says “Only live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel.” Bishop Hanson has done a disservice to this goal. By giving us his partisan views, he has put his politics before the church. It is impossible for us to strive side-by-side with a leader that divides us on matters of politics. As a pastor and leader of our Church, Bishop Hanson is called to speak the Gospel of Jesus Christ into the world not the partisan views of Senator Obama or Senator McCain.

An Overshadowed Message

By Dave Arends
M.Div. Senior

For the sake of full disclosure let me begin by saying this: I like Bishop Mark Hanson. I have seen him speak several times and each time I have heard the gospel and a call to live in the gospel, proclaiming forgiveness and life through Jesus Christ. Bishop Hanson recently visited Luther Seminary and spoke about the public life of the church. In both his sermon and lecture he heard the call to live out the gospel in everything we do.

I must say that I was a bit distracted during his lecture. It is very clear that Bishop Hanson’s politics lean to the left. This is also historically true of Minnesota, Lutheran pastors and seminary students, myself included. We’re on the liberal side of things. But, then I saw the response of a conservative friend who happened to be sitting several rows ahead of me. While at first I enjoyed watching him fidget, later I found myself joining him in his agitation.

Bishop Hanson promoted addressing the issues facing this world as a church while avoiding the national and international politics. He even spoke about how one church he served went through a yearlong process learning how to have open discussion between people with very different views. Unfortunately, this stance did not come through in his speaking. He joked as a Democrat speaking to a room of Democrats. People cheered when he mentioned certain points of view that are held and uplifted by the Democratic Party. I could have overlooked this if it weren’t for two off-hand comments he made. Although not by name, two comments were made about Gov. Sarah Palin—both were rude and insulting. You might even refer to them as petshios. They left me rather disappointed with a speech that left me otherwise very impressed. As a bishop wearing his collar and speaking within a place of worship, behind a pulpit, he speaks as a representative of the Church, the Body of God. One might even go so far to say his public addresses are said in the name of God. As he supported the strong use of language in his speech, let me say this to him: “you betray yourself and your message when you speak so rudely of a fellow Christian in the name of God.” How can we students learn to have open and constructive discussions with those with whom we disagree when such behavior is modeled by the head of our denomination? So Bishop Hanson, please be more careful not to overshadow our gospel with such off-hand carelessness. In a speech about public ministry this is most unacceptable.
Attention to Biblical Witness
Important Insights from Davis’ Lecture

By Kathryn Schifferdecker
Assistant Professor of Old Testament

The Concord staff asked me to provide a brief faculty response to the Word and World lecture, given this year by Prof. Ellen Davis, entitled, “Learning Our Place: The Agrarian Perspective of the Bible.” I am happy to do so, as Ellen has been my mentor and friend for many years now.

Ellen Davis is one of the leading voices among scholars today in the area of biblical interpretation and ecological responsibility. Her work in this area has led to the publication of her new book, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible.* Wendell Berry, the agrarian writer and poet, says of her work that it is “exuberantly intelligent.”

Exuberantly intelligent. It is an apt phrase, and one that describes the lecture Ellen gave here as well. As the title of the lecture makes clear, her focus was on an “agrarian” reading of the Bible: that is, a reading that focuses on the importance of land in the Bible, and humanity’s relationship to the land. We are to “learn our place” with respect to the rest of creation, as “uniquely powerful” creatures inextricably linked with the other creatures of creation.

Ellen’s lecture was densely packed with important insights, more than I can touch on in this short space (I urge you to read the spring issue of Word and World, in which the full lecture will be published). I would note just one point she made that I found particularly thought-provoking. Speaking of our modern society’s pattern of consumption, Ellen noted that, by contrast, the “moral economy” of God is one of “sufficiency and restraint.” God provides enough for us, and we are to practice restraint in our use of the earth’s resources. It is instructive that God’s first prohibition to humankind has to do with practicing restraint. They may eat from any tree in the garden except one (Gen. 2:16-17). The first sin, then, has to do with consumption. God sets a limit on consumption, and the humans ignore it. The earth itself suffers for their sin, being cursed (Gen. 3:18). The earth continues to suffer for our sin (as the prophets also proclaim). And we continue to largely ignore any limits on our consumption. In these times of ecological and economic crisis, which—I would argue—both have their roots in our culture’s practice of over-consumption, the biblical witness calls us to lives of justice, lives of self-restraint, lives lived in right relationship with the God who created and sustains this beautiful world. I give thanks for scholars like Ellen Davis who call our attention to that biblical witness.

Fuly and Exuberantly Human

By Anna Marsh
M.A. Senior

A fair test of any lecture is the amount of conversation it provokes. By this measure, Ellen Davis gave an extraordinary address last Wednesday. Her talk, *Learning Our Place: Biblical Interpretation and Ecological Responsibility* challenged us to revisit our understanding of what it means to be “fully human” in this created order. This lecture sparked a number of meaningful conversations with fellow students, each one citing a different point they found especially significant.

Davis spoke Hebrew quickly and fluidly during her lecture and covered so much ground that it is impossible to give but a thumbnail sketch of it here. Her three key points were:

° Though the Bible presents a genuinely agrarian perspective on life, the oft-debated Hebrew terms that define our relationship to the earth in Genesis 2:15 are *not* agricultural terms. Though the NRSV renders *avod* as “till” and *shamar* as “keep,” they are better understood as relational terms. Davis suggests “serve” and “observe/preserve” as possible alternatives.
° Biblical authors see the created world as an *index of faithfulness* to the covenant, and use this idea in both a material sense (the created order suffers according to the Prophets) and in a metaphorical sense (gardens and vineyards, both thriving and not thriving, are commonly used images). She calls us to understand our current ecological crisis as an overlap between material and spiritual disarray.
° The notion of *restraint underlies the practice of justice.* While conventional wisdom balks at the idea of God dangling the forbidden fruit before our eyes, Davis argues that this is the most natural thing in the world according to the Hebrew Bible. It is not the Creator baiting humankind; rather, the Torah sees the practice of *restraint* as essential to our formation as a people of God, and therefore the foundation on which all commandments rest. The first human sin is an *eating violation*; manna is provided, but we can’t hoard it; the command to honor the Sabbath is the most reiterated commandment in the Hebrew Bible. We are *never* allowed to practice wanton destruction, even in the midst of war (see Deuteronomy 20:19-20). She said, simply, “The Bible refuses to endorse our right to what we want.”

Davis calls our attention to the significance of the agrarian perspective in reading the Bible. In such a setting, knowing the particulars about the land means life or death; treatment of the land is seen as a *family value* by the biblical authors. She suggests that the harsh realities of agrarian life may be the reason so much of the Bible deals in seemingly minor infractions and argues that if we find them boring, perhaps it is because we do not yet know how to read it. Ellen Davis proved true to her reputation as a careful scholar, deeply concerned with the profundity of what the Bible still has to teach us about ourselves and about life with God.
Feminism. Instantly images of crowds of fuming women burst into your brain, bra-burning hoards with picket signs scrawled with angry paint, women with short haircuts and "camo" pants, man-haters and man-bashers. These are often the images that come to mind when the word "feminism" is brought up in a conversation. Sadly this too often means that even if we agree with what feminism says, we are hesitant to use such a "profane" word in conversation. Much like sex, politics, and religion, feminism is not to be mentioned in polite conversation.

What is feminism really? Is it embodied in the negative images that so easily come to our heads? Much like Islam has gotten a "bad rap" in the eyes of the American public for the radical fundamentalists sects that cause havoc on the nightly news, feminism has become a dirty word in our language. "Feminism is the radical notion that women are people," Cheris Kramarae and Paula Treichler once said. At the heart of feminism is the belief that women are people and deserve to be treated as such. Men are not "to blame," both men and women are responsible for and trapped by a society that still upholds biases against women in many careers, whether these women are Caucasian, African American, Native American, or Latina.

Does talking about feminism have a place at a Lutheran seminary? Absolutely. Indeed, around half of those who attend this seminary are women, and more and more women are becoming leaders in the Church. Some have even been elected bishops. This is wonderful, but it does not stop there. As Christians, we believe that all people have been created in the image of God, whether they are male or female, and all people deserve a chance to live out the path God has called them to. Women from this seminary need the support of both men and women in order to best be the leaders God has truly called them to be in God's Church.

Here at Luther there is a place of support for women, a place to discuss issues surrounding women and ministry. It is called Women Leading. This group seeks to provide a safe place for both men and women to enter into dialogue about these issues. Perhaps together we will be able to take back the F-word.
Your mother was right, you shouldn't be cursing. You should guard your tongue that it not curse, swear, lie or deceive. God bless her; when she took you to the sink and washed your mouth clean with soap—speak not these words. Take down your guilt to clean off the true offender which lay deep in the heart. Anyway, in the end a little soap won't do. The tongue is a tiny organ, "but gets you in big trouble," says James. "It is a scourge," says Job; "a viper," says Proverbs. Yet tongues have a great future, since in the end they will sing Christ's praise at the throne of the Lamb. Meanwhile, they should be kept clean like mama said. Certain words can reduce your class standing by associating you with the coarse and rural. Certain words can remove you from public discourse since people won't stand the insult. Certain words can get you a bloody nose, or even the end. Certain words are not ordinary descriptions or salutations, they don't simply describe something, they do something. Roughly, these words fall into two types. One type refers to the core of this old kingdom by addressing sex and defecation. The other type refers to the holy temple and spiritual kingdom in the form of the last judgment. The first type refers to our inescapable and dying bodies, the other to the fact that everyone will stand under judgment for what they have done on the final day. Sex, poop and death; Reproduction, Sex and Eschatology—no one wants to be reminded of these. But without the Gospel these all get strangely mixed. In the right situation you can shock people with these words, and what fun is being a child without this discovery? When you say "the devil, mother's soap—salutations" you are drawing down the final judgment on another; and when you do so in relationship to reproduction or evacuation of the bowels, it creates the basic situation that we have come to call by the Latin word: profanity.

This is what is said or done outside the temple, literally before you get to the holy place to say your prayers. Better get your unholiness out before entering the temple! We call it catharsis, and expurgation—mother's soap—so righteousness is cleansing of sex and shit so you will stand holy for the final judgment. Certain words are made before the final judge and without Christ, you end up filling your pants. "Holy" is then the opposite of "profane" and is considered a particular location where you take leave of the world, along with your body and death. Thus you separate the whole world into the holy and unholy, the temple and the hell, when you do the holy. Consequently, life becomes a cleansing pilgrimage to the temple. What you do on the way to the temple determines your final judgment, like the two men who passed by the beaten man beside the road since they had a higher calling to the temple according to the law. Only the Samaritan acted profanely at Holy places, holy things, holy people. The Profane is a basic confusion of the two kingdoms. Because of this confusion sex and crap are turned into final judgment and the final judgment becomes sex and crap. The profane then considers the body as either enemy or Messiah: take your pick. The last judgment becomes a graduation ceremony for those who have shed the body or enthroned it by the time they come to the temple.

When profanity is the trip to the temple for your reward, then the tongue becomes a moral organ according to the theory that there are categories of good words and bad words. Thus, what is outside you profanes your good and holy insides. But, as Jesus warned, it is not what is outside you that defiles you but what is inside. The problem is not the words, it is the heart and its trust. Not the words, but you. The reason you are the problem is not your body or what you did on the way to the temple, but is your lord, who is the devil himself, who whispers in your ear that "you will not die," and that it is better to trust yourself than an external word from God. Enlightened, urban morality did away with the devil for a reason, specifically so it could do away with the final judgment, and thus eschatology left in one simple "poof" so that now all things could be settled by reason using the law on the way to the temple. The devil has always loved this ruse. In fact, he invented it. The words you fashion will make you what you are. You will either be elevated by them or reduced to the crass and uncultured class. Eloquence lifts up, cursing shoves down. Profanity must then be removed from your vocabulary on the way up. The devil loves this because then no one curses him. But cursing the devil is the great vocation and joy of the Christian. When you finally figure out to whom cursing belongs—not your neighbor; but the demonic one—then you can finally stop the trip to the temple and toss the cursing flying and still have time to tend your neighbor's wounds.

Enlightened and post-enlightened people do not know what to do with scoff other than try to hide it. Scat must be eschatological and so removed from the realm of law alone. The shocking of a neighbor with whom you are jostling for position on the way to the temple. How will you know your true enemy unless you understand the final judgment? How will you know when to swear and when not to swear if you do not eschew the scoff? But how to do it?

Listen! Christ was crucified outside the temple (Hebrews), and so was made profane by the world's holy standard. He took your crap and made it terminology your tool. The devil once thought scoff was on his side. He liked poop, or I should say, the idea of it, because it seemed like death to him. But he himself wouldn't touch it. The devil is the cleanest person you will ever meet. Christ is not. Christ became profane for you so that you could heap profanity on the beast. Profanity belongs on the devil, and is well used there. In fact, it is of the highest morality and righteousness when you learn to toss scoff at the Devil. Eschat, and as he runs, remind him that Christ was not afraid and indeed has come so far into the flesh and sect that his skin smokes. When the profane is not used to degrade the neighbor or the body but to attack sin, death and devil then a good damnatus, a fart and a joke at the Devil's expense, can lift you up with your neighbor to hear that Christ is not far away, his kingdom has indeed come and so the Devil's time is over. Christ came profane outside the temple while your mother was trying to wash your mouth out with soap. Take that, you Teuffels Dreck, your devit is over. The tongue that says that is already music to Christ's ears.
Reflections on a Profanically Impoverished Childhood

By Mark Nygard
4th Year Ph.D. Student

Some might consider my credentials for writing an article on profanity as a bit lean. I grew up in a family where the strongest oath we ever heard was Dad’s “Jumpin’ Jillivars!” and Mom had an unspoken mild swear words of my day - gee, gee whiz, jeez, golly, gosh, oh m’gosh, etc.

And the later stronger ones - Jesus Christ, God Almighty and G*d D**n It - then we would have taken a bath on Main Street. You might say, I had a profanically impoverished childhood.

Others might consider that my credentials are as good as anyone’s. We did have exclamations in our family that, at the time, we considered innocent: Sheesh, Man Alive, For Goodness Sakes and Drat It All. I was in my twenties before I began to imagine what some of these words represented: “Sheesh” for Jesus, “Man Alive” for the Risen One, “For Goodness Sakes,” for the sake of the only One who is good and “Drat it all” for “God rot it all” (look it up) or even “G*d d**n it.” So, in fact, we did use profanity after all - we just did not know it. I discovered that, once recognized, it was a long, slow process for the words to go away. There are few exclamations still innocent in my mind even today: Wow, Uff-da and Erks. Maybe “Shazaam.” Maybe a few others, but we cope as best we can. I like to think that being expressive with a profanity-poor vocabulary simply calls for ever fresh cornpiliars* but only when the cattle were out. I remember trying out the word, “gee,” as a kid, then having Mom gently explain to me that as an abbreviation for the name of Jesus we probably shouldn’t use it for more exclamation. That made sense to us kids and we would no more have used such a word than spit on the face of our Lord. So, we simply used to enjoy it without anxiety. To argue about whether or not this is still profanity since it is no longer recognized as such to raise the point. The mere tendency among us to tolerate the use of God’s name in the same category as human body functions to validate our pettifications should give all those conscious of being God’s people pause.

Thirdly, if it is about using God’s name lightly for the sake of nothing in particular, I wonder about the profanity of some of my other practices. I estimate my mind wanders during 80% of the singing of hymns in worship, so that I mindlessly mouth God’s name every single Sunday morning. It is not an uncommon experience for my wife and I to have prayed our table prayer and then wonder whether or not we had prayed because we weren’t paying attention so that we have to pray again. Who hasn’t “recited” the Lord’s Prayer by rote so that one cannot remember a single word one said? Why is it so difficult to get myself to chapel where the God’s name is praised or to my morning prayer time where my petitions are uttered in God’s presence? If we want to worry about profanity, here is the real challenge: neglecting God’s name entirely going through life as if God wasn’t there.

Maybe this whole discussion of profanity comes down to cherishing the Name. In one of his sermons, Lüther systematics professor Gerhard Forde (1927-2006) declared, “One of the greatest gifts of God’s grace to us is the fact that he has given us a name. I would like to have you consider what a great grace it is to be given a name.” What name is that? It is God’s name, the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, put upon us at baptism. It is Jesus’ name by which we are assured of our salvation. “In that name,” Forde continued, “God has given our lives a meaning, a purpose, a form, and a direction, and this is the most important thing about us. It is our defense against the darkness and it is the only real defense there is.” When it comes to profanity in all its odd manifestations, living a life and speaking a faith nestled in that defense is no doubt the last word.
When Mudslinging Goes Too Far

By Martin Patrick
M.A. Senior

James Calleander, working for the Jefferson campaign around 1800, once called John Adams "a hideous hermaphroditical character which has neither the firmness of a man, nor the gentleness and sensibility of a woman." That was after he called Adams a "repressive pedant." Double whammy. In 1838, Andrew Jackson was called "a gambler, rogue, fighter, slave trader and the husband of a really fat wife." Rutherford B. Hayes was accused by opponents in the 1876 campaign of having shot his own mother. And according to Harry Truman circa 1960: If you vote for Nixon or Kennedy, "you ought to go to hell." When our politicians sling mud and when they engage in political profanity, they follow a very, very fine tradition dating back to at least the founding of the Republic.

Clearly, no subject has been off limits: the questions of manliness, morals and ethics, the eternal state of the soul, the quality (or even the quantity) of one's spouse, and of course the nature and number of one's reproductive organs. Our friend Calleander felt that Adams, despite the apparent potential to be a man and a woman, did not make a very good one of either. Do these provocations actually work? Perhaps they do, as we now have a brand new verb for it: to swift-boating. No longer is mud-slinging or smearing enough, we now get to swift-boat people. We often decry how much mudslinging there is during campaign season, but this political profanity has been with us through the whole of the development of our nation. We're used to it, and it'll always be with us.

Mainstream political profanity has never made use of expletives, the common understanding of profanity. Rather, it seeks to undermine the character of the opponent, sometimes by associating the opponent with taboos. John Adams is called a hermaphroditic. Andrew Jackson was involved with gambling, cock-fighting and slave trading. Our mudslinging heritage involves not just covering up an individual's true character or self but actually attempting to negatively redefine that person's character. None of us are likely to forget that John Kerry is a flip-flopper or that Barry Goldwater would kill poor little Daisy with a nuclear bomb.

In our age of YouTube and our victory in Time Magazine's Person of the Year in 2006, coverage of mudslinging and political profanity has shifted from the professionals to the crowd. A woman recently told John McCain, "I don't trust Obama. I have read about him and he's an Arab." Of course McCain cut her off to defend Obama; most people can sense just how politically profane that comment is. This is not because the comment was politically-incorrect, but because the art of mudslinging and swift-booting is not about ethnic stereotypes but about the individual person. Mud-slinging in campaigns attacks the person or the political party, not race or ethnicity. Can you imagine someone standing up and saying, "I don't trust McCain. I've read about him and he's an Anglo-Saxon"? For the woman in question, Obama is untrustworthy because he's an Arab. Arab becomes an expletive. Conversely McCain is to be trusted because he is white.

As we saw in my very brief highlight reel of political profanity, the taboos and doubts brought up are not tied to any one ethnic group. Jackson as a slave trader comes the closest, but in antebellum society you did not have to be white to be a slave trader. This election is unique, it features the first non-white presidential contender on a major party ticket. We've never faced this situation before. Obama does have an "odd" name, and his skin color certainty is not white, but are those part of his character and integrity? Can we see him as somebody else's ethnicity or name? Or can we claim someone has character and integrity because of their skin color?

It's ok to suggest in the context of politics, for example, that a candidate does not have the credentials to be president. Or that he is too liberal or too conservative. Or out of touch with "real" Americans. Or that he'll raise taxes. Or that real Christians can't vote for him. Or that anyone who votes for him should wind up in hell. Or perhaps even that his wife is of unhealthy size. Killing your mother, as Hayes was accused, certainly indicates a lack of integrity. The tradition of political profanity involves creating doubt about a candidate's integrity and abilities based on their own personal history. We're watching choices and actions, not on her or his ethnicity. Deep down we all understand that ethnicity does not determine such things, the individual's choices do.

Does it matter if John Adams had male and female sex organs? Does it matter if Andrew Jackson's wife were overweight? Does it matter if Barack Obama is actually a Muslim or an Arab? McCain was correct to argue that Obama is a "decent man." He didn't try to respond to whether or not Obama is an Arab, just that he is a "decent man," which reinforces the understanding that ethnicity is not important to character or integrity. Obama is a man, so let's at least hold him up to our mythological view of what a man is. It does not matter whether Obama is a "decent man" or not, it matters that political profanity has gone too far this year. Anytime a campaigning politician who is behind in most of the polls has to defend his opponent by calling him "a decent family man" less than a month before the election, you know it's gone too far.

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Does anyone really give a s**t any longer? Profanity is certainly a common part of the language of today's culture; one really has to wonder if anyone really does give a flying f... well...

After having spent over four years in the United States Army where profanity is very much a part of daily language, I quickly found how it became a regular part of my own vocabulary as well. As a matter of fact, profanity was so much a part of my life that I am progressively more numb to its use across the board now. I am fairly certain there is not going to be any occasion might say that will cause me to blink (not that I was all that ignorant of profanity before I went into that Army). Profanity was already becoming a regular part of my life long before I proudly put on the uniform.

I am not sure when it happened, but I eventually realized profanity did not have the same value it did many years before. More often than not, people would not cringe or react when they heard some shocking word or phrase. When all of those words became common to daily language, I found myself no longer interested in using them. The words and phrases lost their power; and without power, they were no longer "useful." Without profanity I did not have the power to offend or shock people and 'found myself wondering what to do with the void.

As it turned out, in this case, surprisingly simple words pack some power as well. Without the use of common profanity in my arsenal, I filled in with simple words such as "cats" and "buckets." "Holy cats" or "holy buckets" instead of "holy s**t" brought a look of pure surprise on the faces of others. I also started replacing the big, bad "fword" with "jeepers." This brought about some pretty amazing responses from people. As a matter of fact, "jeepers" gains more attention from people then the "f-bomb".

There may be some long history our common profane words and phrases. If you happen to know where the offense has arisen, I would appreciate the history lesson. But, the reality is that words and phrases are often only deemed offensive and shocking when labeled as such by a particular culture. Another reality is that as culture changes with time, there is will be a new set of words to arise, only to be seen as equally coarse and offensive as our present-day cache of slurs and epithets. This will, of course, be based on the values of any particular society. For instance, I have not even discussed how our international students understand profanity in their cultures and how the words of offense in those cultures change as well.

However, because of my experience with profanity, I recognize the strengths and limitations of words. I recognize that words pack a particular kind of power, and it is for the reason I tell you that I do know one that truly does "give a s**t." This one cares for us deeply and wants nothing but the best for us, even so far as caring about how we use words amongst one another. Yes, you guessed it: a seminary student is talking about God. There is so much love for us by God that our simple human minds cannot begin to understand (let me warn you now my pietistic side may appear soon). Even here on campus we continue to run around and use the very name of God in vain-God's name used as profanity itself. This is not some arbitrary offense, as it is clearly stated in our understanding of the second commandment that this is offensive to God. God creates using words, and it is with this example humanity recognizes the clear importance of the power of speech. When speech, especially about God the Creator, is used with dishonesty and flippancy, God's creatures-you and I-ought to conclude that as offensive as this language is to God, it should be offensive to us as well.

Using God's name to curse, swear, lie or deceive dishonors God's name. While it may be shocking to hear the occasional "s**t" and "f**k," these words continue to have a lesser sense of power because they are not connected to a person, specifically these words are not connected to any one person by name. For example, we are not saying "Oh My Natalie" or "Oh My Colin," or "Oh My (your name)." The moronic banal and common use of English vocabulary are unconnected to the very personal realm of using a name to curse.

I understand God's word is big enough to take the verbal abuse humanity commits using His name. After all, we are loved by God in spite of cursing both His name and His body on the cross in death.

But, as Christians, coming to witness God's great love in faith, should we continue to shout God's name-with all its power and care for all creatures-to tear down creation, specifically our neighbors? I should say not.

As a result, I would rather have you throw around the arbitrary profane words of this world or even put your own name at the end of "Oh My..." rather than continue to use the name of your God to make a point. Use God's powerful name to perform the works of power God has sent you for: prayer, praise, thanksgiving, preaching, teaching, loving and forgiving.
Meet Your 2008-09 Student C
You will be glad you did!

Michelle de Beauchamp is an M.Div junior who hails from an island near Seattle. She graduated from Pacific Lutheran University with a B.A. in Anthropology and History. She studied abroad in Barcelona, Spain where she realized she is truly a Lutheran.

Erin M Diericx is the Commuter Representative and the crazy girl in the electric wheelchair working on her 50-80 page thesis this year. She advocates for individuals with disabilities who need accommodations on campus.

Tony Fair likes baseball, short meetings and spending time with his kids. He is one smart cookie.

Michael Feltes looks forward to being a servant of his fellow students, helping all to work together to make the most of this community. He hopes to serve not only the Minneapolis/St. Paul area but also the Gulf Coast and Iowa flood relief, for example.

Rachel Fuller is a French-speaking, music-loving, sci-fi-book-reading Middler who hails from Anchorage, Alaska. She is excited to see what kind of community events will unfold from Student Council this year!

Dennis Gelinek is from Germany. He is an excellent soccer and frisbee player who enjoys being outside.

Colin Grangard is excited about pretty much everything. He likes to pretend books are people and loves both books and people dearly. He is easily distracted by shiny things.

Betsy Hoium is an M.Div Junior and second career student from Minneapolis. Prior to seminary she was an attorney and manager for the Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport. She says, “Through student council, I hope that we can use what we are learning at seminary to real people in the world.”

Tim Jackson is very humbled and excited about being part of the Student Council this year. He brings passion for the safety and well-being of all within Luther Seminary and the surrounding community and he hopes to take a proactive approach to increasing the level of security at Luther.

Ronda Renee Koch has been an Associate in Ministry for 17 years and is already endorsed, so she is not afraid to advocate for students. She is an M.A. Senior studying for specialized ministry as a chaplain. She has brought forth learning concerns and asks why?

Paul Lutter has had the opportunity to work with students at the college level on matters of vocation over the course of his Ph.D. work. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that working on matters of vocation at the seminary level is also of interest to him.

Clint Mack grew up on a farm in Sleepy Eye, MN and graduated with a B.A. in Political Science from the University of Minnesota, Morris. He hopes to focus this year on listening to the student body. He believes there are great things that can be accomplished for with creativity and hard work.
Student Council

What is Happening?
Student Council's New Look

There are a lot of new things about the Student Council this year: new faces, new leadership, new plans to bring campus activities and opportunities to serve the seminary community.

This year we've totally changed the Student Council's approach to campus life. This breath of fresh air comes as we live into the questions of how our community plays together; serves each other, advocates for one another, and acts as a community for Christian leadership for the city and communities around us. We have organized this project into three teams: Student Life, Student Advocacy, and Service and Vocation.

Our Student Life team, led by Clint Mack, is excited to support Ben Ciesliski, the Student Activities Coordinator; the GMI and Sarah Ruch down in married student housing, as they find exciting events to bring together our community life. The Student Life team has already been listening and responding to voices around Luther. One thing they have heard loud and clear is that people on campus are interested in seeing newspapers in the cafeteria. At this very moment, even as you read, Clint and the Student Life team are seeking out creative solutions to the biggest barrier that this year's plan to provide newspapers face: Funding. If you are interested in helping to solve this problem, contact Clint Mack.

Our Student Advocacy team, led by Michelle de Beauchamp, is excited to bring visibility to student needs through good listening, new communication outlets and willingness to petition. They are especially dedicated to advocacy for student mental well-being and students with disabilities.

Our Service and Vocation team, led by Colin Grangaard, will be organizing regular opportunities to engage our community and city through service opportunities. They are interested in helping to establish and equip leaders for Bible studies or other issue groups for discipleship on campus. If you have a passion or idea for a group that you would like to form on campus, contact Colin to get plugged in.

All three team leaders are interested in YOUR help at whatever level of involvement you are interested in.

This year we're excited about getting everyone involved. If you have any questions or need anything, call or email our executive council: Rachel Fuller, President; Matt Metevelis, Vice President; Michael Foltzes, Secretary; and Erin Dierickx, Treasurer.

Layout Editor Needed

The Concord is looking for a production manager to start in December 2006. Experience with Adobe product preferred, but not necessary. If you are interested, please contact Natalie Gessert at ngessert001@luthersem.edu

Erica Kennedy is most often to be found in the Financial Aid office focusing on Financial Wellness for church leaders and congregations alike. Erica is a proud graduate of Luther Seminary and enjoys an opportunity to preach and teach especially on topics related to Money and Faith.
Internship

Sunny Side Up
Reflections on Internship

By Hannah Johnson
M.Div, Intern

It was a year ago that I began dreaming of internship: of being out of the classroom full-time, of being in an unfamiliar place and spending time with new people, and of truly beginning to own my pastoral call as Vicar or Intern Hannah... whatever those titles meant.

I write to you now from sunny Arizona—temperatures in the mid-100s when I first arrived and now “cooling off” in the 90s—with six weeks of internship under my belt. Officially, I am the “Pastoral Intern” at Our Savior’s Lutheran Church in Mesa—one of the four churches part of the missional cohort in the Phoenix area. Our Savior’s is a unique church in that it is one congregation with three campuses, focused on mission re-development in the East Valley:

I have to admit I could not be more excited about this year. Each day brings about new adventures, whether it’s in planning worship services and coming up with new sermon ideas (www.workingpreacher.org is a lifesaver), visiting with the sick, spending time on Thursdays with the quilters as they tie blankets and discuss politics, leading the Men’s Bible Study (not many women get to do that!), or getting lost in the identical 55+ communities en route for communion visits, even with a GPS.

Of course, this internship also has its challenges. The transition to my new home 1,600+ miles from St. Paul and those I love the most was not the easiest thing. I miss seeing the changing of leaves and “Minnesota nice.” Often times, I am the youngest person by more than a few decades, and I fail miserably at remembering people’s names. Finally, the ever persistent pastoral work can be daunting day after day.

Still, I am reminded every day what a blessing it is to be here. I recently asked one of the members, “How are you?” His response was, “Things are sunny side up.” This rings true for me in both the literal and figurative sense. The sun shines brighter here than anywhere else I have ever been, and I feel such warmth and care from these people that I experience the living God on a daily basis. These people embody the notion that “faith” is not only a noun, but a verb. It is my prayer that I may return that blessing to them, knowing that the light of Christ is shining forever.


New Perspectives on Luther’s
Theology of the Cross
featuring Dr. Deanna Thompson
author of Crossing the Divide: Luther, Feminism, and the Cross

LECTURES
Monday, November 10 at 7:00 PM
“Women, World, and Luther’s Theology of the Cross”
Tuesday, November 11 at 10:00 AM
“More than Miracles: Hope in the Face of the Cross”

The Augsburg College Founders Day Reformation Lectures are offered free of admission and are open to the public. The lectures take place in Hoversten Chapel. Attendees of the Tuesday morning lecture are invited to stay for a twenty-minute chapel service beginning at 11:20 AM. The Augsburg College Founders Day Reformation Lectures are sponsored by the Augsburg College Office of the President in cooperation with the Augsburg College Religion Department.

For more information, contact Hans Wiersma at 612.330.1205

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Faith and Money
Ask Questions, Explore Options

By Erica Kennedy
Assistant Director of Financial Aid

What does faith have to do with money decisions? Everything!

Last Sunday after worship, my husband Steve and I were talking to our friend Paul. Paul is the father of a bright and insightful 8-year old named Brian. We were talking about the crazy week we had watching the downturn in the stock market when Paul commented on how much kids pick up and understand from stories in the news.

For the last few weeks, Paul and his family had been watching old episodes of The Waltons. For those who have not seen these reruns, The Waltons is set in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia—during the Great Depression—where the Walton family makes a small income from its sawmill on Walton's Mountain. The saga follows the family through depression and war. After watching one of these old episodes, Brian said, "Dad, do we have to start living like the Waltons?" Obviously Brian had been hearing words in the news like depression, war, and struggle, and had even experienced some fear as he overheard the news and conversations about the downturn in the stock market.

Brian was the only person asking a question like that. Some of us might have been wondering similar things, even if we hadn’t been watching reruns of the Waltons. What will happen for me? For some, money is a security blanket. When we feel like we have enough we feel secure. When we don’t know where the next dollar will come from we panic and react in ways that make no sense. What does it mean to be a faithful Christian public leader in the midst of chaos and a downward-turning economy? Where does faith intersect with our Christian witness and participation in the world economy? How do our choices now affect what is happening worldwide? What does it mean to be a faithful steward of what God entrusts to us, even while in seminary?

No, I don’t believe we will start working at the family sawmill to make a living, but how will our lives be changed as we think about the role that faith and money play in our society today?

Welcome to an ongoing conversation about Faith and Money. In this musing, we will explore faith and personal finance, stewardship, confessional leadership and mission by raising questions, wresting with ideas, and providing resources to deal with some of these issues in our day-to-day lives. Seminar is the time to tackle tough topics and get confident talking about and practicing faith and money “stuff” in your life as you prepare to lead those conversations in the congregations you will serve.

Jerry Hoffman, Director for the Center for Stewardship Leaders, Bill Silva-Breen, Director of Financial Aid, and Erica Kennedy, Assistant Director of Financial Aid will serve as regular contributors as we muse at the intersection of Faith and Money.

Things to check out this month:
www.youtube.com (Financial Coaches and Me)
www.luthersem.edu/stewardship (Stewardship Leaders)
www.luthersem.edu/financialaid (Financial Planning Tools)

Nurture Well-Being
National Domestic Violence Month

By Karen Treat
Seminary Parish Nurse

You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

Exodus 20:7

My house, both as a child and as a grown-up, has had very strict environments about using the Lord’s name in vain. Soaps was the discipline for me from my father (I cannot remember my mom using it on me), and for my children it is more of the threat of using soup.

When I am in public, or watching a movie, and I hear others swearing I am uncomfortable. It feels offensive. It feels as if something is being torn apart. It feels as though it would not take much of a step to move toward further abuse to my well-being. It probably is a pretty big jump, but it is what it is for me.

October is National Domestic Violence Awareness month. Domestic violence is willful intimidation, assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior against another, who is likely to be an intimate partner. Domestic violence is experienced in one in four women, and less than one fifth of the victims report their abuse. Those are pretty staggering numbers.

What can I do knowing that domestic violence so profoundly affects so many people? What words and actions reveal a sense of connectedness to the community? Are behaviors changing? Is an individual becoming angrier, controlling, more withdrawn and missing school or work more often? Be aware of those who are around me. One behavior does not necessarily lead to the conclusion of domestic abuse. In any case, being aware of the actions of others does nurture social and community well-being.

For more information go to:
www.ncadv.org
1-800-799-SAFE
Sweet Sound of Speculation
By Jeni Grangaard
M.Div. Senior

I’ve got a couple of fighting images in my mind as I think about profanity and music. One is a professor from Augsburg College who used a lignm with perhaps the greatest swear word: Alleluia. Of course the word itself isn’t profane, but his use of it in the Lenten season rendered it so. That and the use of a particular hand gesture with the line “Jesus said a big F**k you to sin, death and the grave.” Its counterpart image is the campus pastor who always taught that to swear or use profanity was a lack of imagination and creativity. Who is right? Could it be both?

What makes a song “Christian”? Is it the content or is it the artist? I’ve heard many Christian songs sung by Christian artists yet seem to lack Christian themes and are played on Christian radio stations. I’ve heard many Christian songs sung by Christians and others full of Christian content that aren’t played on Christian radio stations. Maybe my connections are misplaced or my theological insights flawed, but I hear the gospel more from the likes of Johnny Cash, Bob Dylan, Sufjan Stevens, et al than the majority of songs being played on Christian radio. Don’t get me wrong, we listen to Christian radio in our car and even find ourselves singing along once in a while, but my confession is that I hear faithful songs in places that most wouldn’t expect.

According to Luther professor Chris Scharen, CCM, the institutional authority in Christian music, will not consider a song Christian or include it in its magazine if it has a swear word; it’s considered a lignm with perhaps the greatest swear word: Alleluia. Of course the word itself isn’t profane, but his use of it in the Lenten season rendered it so. That and the use of a particular hand gesture with the line “Jesus said a big F**k you to sin, death and the grave.” Its counterpart image is the campus pastor who always taught that to swear or use profanity was a lack of imagination and creativity. Who is right? Could it be both?

Jesus/Jesus help me? I’m alone in this world/and a F****d up world it is, too/ Tell me, tell me the story, the one about eternity/ and how it’s all gonna be? Wake up? Wake up, dead man

In his book One Step Closer, Chris Scharen notes that U2 picks up on the theme of Psalm 44:23-26 which says:

23Rouse yourself! Why do you sleep, O Lord?
Awake, do not cast us off forever!
24Why do you hide your face?
Why do you forget our affliction and oppression?
25For we sink down to the dust;
our bodies cling to the ground.
26Rise up, come to our help.
Redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love.

Does the presence of the Fbomb in the U2 song take away from the validity of the song? Could the song be truthful without it? Does it cease to witness to the Christian story? Does it bear weight without it? I think not.

Take the song “Jesus Walks” by Kanye West, which is powerful not only because of its brisk and polished delivery, but also because of the depths to which it speaks:

To the hustlers, killers, murderers, drug dealers even the strippers (Jesus walks with them)/ To the victims of Welfare for we living in Hell here hell yeah (Jesus walks with them)

Life in Christ, life with Jesus is not relegated to the clean and tidy, but rather within the tension of saint and sinner, recognizing that though they be strange bedfellows, they are, nevertheless inextricably bound together. In Jesus the sacred became profane. Jesus himself makes the profane sacred, not by keeping them separated, but by holding them, keeping them, and yes, walking with them.
Concord Events Calendar

By Anna Marsh
M.A. Senior

November Events Calendar

There is really only one event this month. If you are not registered, don’t worry! Minnesota allows you to register at the polls on Election Day with ID and proof of residence. Find your polling place and get more information at: www.sos.state.mn.us.

Nov 2

Each year in celebration of All Saints Day The Church of St. Agnes presents a stunning version of Gabriel Faure’s Requiem in D Minor featuring a choir and chamber orchestra. Chorale and orchestra, 10:00 am. Free. More information at: www.sages.net/music-schedule.html.

Nov 4

To quote Bob Schieffer’s mother: “Go vote now. You’ll feel big and strong.”

Nov 15

The North Star Roller Girls’ new season has started—their second “bout” of the year is tonight at the Minneapolis Convention Center: $10, 7:30 pm. She’s off this month, but stay tuned for the appearance of Luther’s own “Checkmate” Cate in their December 27th bout. www.northstarrollergirls.com

Nov 22-24

The days before and after Thanksgiving offer a multitude of ways to serve our neighbor. Start with a search on www.volunteermatch.org to learn where you can go.

Thru Nov 23

I’m casting my vote for “Consistently Best Thing To Do in the Twin Cities” for the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. They’re showing a new exhibit of Picasso prints. Still running is the exhibit following depiction of Christ’s passion through the 15th and 16th centuries, Insult to Injury. As always, admission is free. www.artsmia.org

Nov 28

Singer-songwriter & totally hip mama Kimya Dawson (the force behind about 60% of the soundtrack for the movie Juno) is touring around her new album of songs for children, “Alphabet.” Your kids will laugh at her potty jokes, you’ll delight in her wordplay. The Cedar Cultural Center, 2:30 pm. $12 (3 and under: Free). Call the Cedar Ticketline at 612/831.2674 ext. 2.

All month

Hindsight is Always 20/20

You know those charts they use when you get an eye exam? They’re called “Snellen charts.” Won’t you be a fetching addition to the next party you attend?) A new exhibit at the Weisman museum on the U of M campus looks back at presidential State of the Union addresses, putting the most frequently used words at the top—less frequently used words at the bottom. Take a second “look” at our nation’s history. Daily. Free. More at www.weisman.umn.edu

Vatican Splendors: From St. Peter’s Basilica, etc.

If you haven’t been to the Vatican, put it on your bucket list. For now there is a touring exhibit making one of three US stops in Saint Paul which features pieces from St. Peter’s Basilica, the Vatican museums and the Swiss Guard. The list of included pieces is pretty impressive (see www.vaticansplendors.com for more info). I won’t say anything about how expensive it is—let’s just hope that every time a coin in the coffer clings, a History Center employee gets a raise.

Oddities & Curiosities of Nature

The Bell Museum of Natural History gathers all of its most unusual specimens into one exhibit. They include: a mummified pigeon, a “mermaid” skull and killer pinecones. www.bellmuseum.org

The CSI Experience

In case you can’t get enough of these shows (or watch them because they’re pretty much all that’s on anymore), The Science Museum of Minnesota is running an interactive experience with crime scene investigation. $8-10. www.umn.org

Who is Using STRONG Language?
Table Talk

The Concord asks ...

How do you swear on campus?

"Regularly and with abandon."
- Rollie Martinson
Academic Dean

"Quietly and between my teeth."
- Richard Rehfeldt
Preaching Instructor

"I sin boldly, I swear boldly."
- Doug Holtz
M.Div. Senior

"I don't breathe."
- Matthew Magera
M.Div. Junior

"If at all, probably under my breath!"
- Debbie Brandt
M.A. Senior

"Aiiiiiy! How could you ask such a question?"
- Margaret Obaga
2nd Year Ph.D. Student

Down the Hill

Wow!

Prayer, Praise and Thanksgiving

Sohyoung Jeong
Daughter of Seokhwan Jeong and Hyunah Choi, age 5

My name is Sohyoung. I'm from Korea. I go to Kindergarten because I'm five. We went to Duluth last week. My Dad, Mom, me and my sister Sorah, we all said "Wow! Wow!" again and again. All trees' color was so fantastic. My Mom asked me to, "Do you know why the colors of trees are changed like that?" and I replied, "Of course I know that. Mom, God painted the trees, so it is very pretty!" Whenever God paints on the trees, it made the leaves easy to fall down. And I'll be excited for the winter. When I see a flower I think God’s painting is wonderful, isn't it?

Mom and I always pray before I go to school. Sometimes Mom forgets to pray and then I ask her to do that. Yesterday, Mom asked me why I want to be with God in the school too. I answered, "God will make me a good girl and special girl. Because He made me very special, so I am very, very special girl."

One day Daddy asked me, "Will God gets angry somehow?" and I said, "No, God never gets angry". And Dad asked to me again, "If people fight each other; and then?" Um... maybe then God will get angry. I don’t want people fight each other. Dad prays for me every night before I go to bed. I will love all the people, hundred million thousand people. I am so happy because God loves me, Dad and Mom love me and I love God, my Dad, Mom, and my sister too.

In the next CONCORD:

Put on your Sunday best. Our next issue is all about:

Sabbath

...and you thought profanity was exciting! We're moving on through our adventures in commandments... on to the third! For six days you shall labor and do all your work. At Seminary? I think not. For seven days you shall labor and do all your work. And for seven more days. And then seven more after that. What does it mean for a seminary student to rest? How do we care for our health by the care and organization of our time? Put your donkeys in the stable and a casserole in the oven. Take the day off and write your article for the next issue of the Concord!

Articles are due Friday, November 7.

If interested in being solicited for articles in the future, please send an e-mail to concord@luthersem.edu.

Pay rate is $15 per article with up to 300 words and $25 per article with more than 300 words.