

Remembering Walter, seeds of investment, and more reader feedback

Letters & Comments

August 14, 2025

## **Remembering Walter**

Jason Edwards's eulogy of Walter Brueggemann was eloquent and profound—almost good enough for Walter ("[Walter Brueggemann's gift of disruption](#)," August).

—Terree Newberry

*Gray, GA*

## **Seeds of investment**

Reading Martin Copenhaver's report on Invested Faith ("[Churches are closing. What should they do with their assets?](#)" July) was a fortuitous accident! I'm a retired professor of theology, ethics, and community ministry at Moravian Seminary, and I'm currently working (such is retirement) with several colleagues who are looking for ways to help dwindling churches decide how to faithfully use their considerable material resources, even if they will no longer be continuing as congregations. We've been aware of Invested Faith for a while, and we found the article to be a really useful summary of what they're about. Thank you for making it available. You're planting some good seeds.

—Steve Simmons

*Bethlehem, PA*

## **Can war be just?**

The online article by C. Andrew Doyle and Stanley Hauerwas ("[The church cannot bless war](#)") seems to be in tension with earlier articles from the century that showed more support for Aquinas's "just war" theory. Two come to mind: one by David Heim, then the magazine's managing editor ("Theologizing on the Gulf: The bishops'

advantage,” Dec. 12, 1990), and one by Daniel Bell (“In war and in peace: Implications of just war theory,” Sept. 6, 2005). Doyle and Hauerwas state, “We realize that some think ‘Just War’ is a defensible position for Christians”—implying that they are not among those *some*. They go on to argue accordingly: “A Christianity that affirms the state’s wars is not Christianity. It is idolatry. . . . The church is supposed to be an alternative. Let us live like it.” Readers may want to read all these articles as they ponder whether Doyle and Hauerwas or Heim and Bell are correct.

—Victoria Rebeck

*Aurora, IL*

### **Inerrant translations**

Jost Zetsche’s fascinating article ([“What do we mean when we say something is ‘in the Bible’?”](#) July) about the use of the Translation Insights and Perspectives database of the United Biblical Societies raises for me an old question. Which Bible is considered inerrant by Christian fundamentalists in the English-speaking world, and is that version *the same* as the ones used by Christian fundamentalists in other cultures? Personally I feel that one of God’s greatest miracles is the vast array of paths God has provided us humans to approach the strange numinous beauty of the Holy. As Zetsche demonstrates, thankfully this need not be limited by language or translation.

—Jim Eastman

*Madison, WI*

### **Unorthodox church clothes**

While reading Pamela Lewis’s article ([“Does God care what I wear to church?”](#) July) I thought of a former parishioner, a young Latino man who was a member of an urban church I served. In our gatherings for people interested in joining the church, he would tell the story of his first time there: “I came to church that day ready to be rejected!” He described how he dressed that morning—putting in all his (many!) piercings, wearing chains everywhere he could wear a chain—convinced he could

prove that no church would welcome him. When he came into the sanctuary, one of our oldest members spotted him and brought him over to sit beside her in the front pew, handing him a hymnal and explaining the order of worship to him. At coffee hour, she walked with him to the refreshment table, introducing him to everyone they met. We talked a lot in that church about embodying the “radical welcome of Jesus,” which he experienced that morning in spite of his determination to dress in such a way that would prove he was not welcome by church or by God. He became one of our most active and faithful church leaders, regularly bringing with him people who likewise believed they would never be welcomed so they too could experience a church that welcomes them as they are.

—Nancy Elder-Wilfrid  
*Jaffrey, NH*

## **Youth group trauma**

I applaud you for publishing McKenzie Watson-Fore’s essay “[Dear Jesus, Am I broken enough yet?](#)” (July). I am a 47-year-old woman who grew up in evangelical youth groups and was taught early and often to hate myself. Undoing that miseducation has been the work of my adult life, and the hardest work I’ve ever undertaken. Watson-Fore’s words resonated with me:

Throughout high school, I watched as friends’ brains developed addictions to the pattern of gratuitous confession, emotional upheaval, and catharsis. Meanwhile, I couldn’t complete the cycle. My faith was weaponized against me. I began to doubt my own experience, to question my convictions and defer to others. When my inner voice contradicted my leaders’ teachings, I stopped listening to myself altogether.

I certainly became addicted to those same patterns and became very adept at ignoring my own intuition. I am grateful for Watson-Fore’s voice. It is good to know I’m not alone in feeling the need to parent my younger self, as she did.

—Jaime Lewis  
*San Luis Obispo, CA*

## **Eight months in**

Valerie Weaver-Zercher's article about Ecclesiastes ("[A time to endure](#)," January) is itself like Ecclesiastes. It pulls me forward and backward.

I am a slow reader. The magazines stack up until something inspires me to read one. I am so grateful that I read this one. Even now, after months of the Trump administration, this article from January tells my story. It helps that my parents are 98 years old and in memory care, like the author's 99-year-old mother-in-law. I can relate.

"Given layers of privilege," writes Weaver-Zercher, "we White Christians will need to shut up and listen to everyone else so we stop being so astonished that shitty history happens—and that we're still the drivers of it." Oh, dang. So true. So me. Little did I know that Ecclesiastes was so applicable to our day.

—Jane Otte  
*Marion, IL*

## **Anorexic at church**

Thank you, two years later, to Ryan Althaus for sharing with vulnerable elegance the experience of living with anorexia while seeking a life-giving faith through participation in the Eucharist ("[Anorexia in the communion line](#)," September 2023).

For many years, as a survivor of anorexia that developed in my late teens, I've wondered how to safely share what it is like to navigate the customary food-centric spaces and assumptions of our faith communities. This has been an issue for me both as a member and as a leader. The intense inner wrestling at such moments—and the anticipatory rumination, planning, and strategizing—is often hidden in plain sight. The anguish of hypervigilance can create a chronic mental and spiritual exhaustion. There are both subtle and overt ways in which my still active but contained anorexia shapes my choices. I seek both to venture out of my comfort zone and to recognize the internal struggles that accompany what is in my case a lifelong illness.

Althaus's story reminds us of our call to gently encourage and support those whose mental illness recovery is accompanied by ambivalence toward what seem to be

typical or traditional church activities. Involvement around food-centric events might seem sporadic, comings and goings mystifying, simple arrangements perplexing and burdensome. Let's continue offering generous hospitality, where all feel welcomed as we are and to whatever extent we can participate, growing together as communities of healing, hope, and transformative grace.

—Kim Langford

*Lake Macquarie, NSW, Australia*