

**Don't feed the hate**

I am personally sick and tired of people using religion to target our public schools and teachers. Public schools are not targeting Christians, churches or Christian schools, they are exactly what their title says, public schools, inclusive and for all children if they choose to go. Public schools are not day care centers even though services are provided for many children with parents struggling to work and be there for their children. It is obscene what these radical groups are doing, putting public schools at risk for violence! Those claiming Christian beliefs to target schools, please note I said claiming Christian beliefs! Reality is you have your churches throughout the world, you have schools, you have Sunday schools, no one is stopping you from being a part of them, even when priests were molesting our children in the church. Instead radical groups want to destroy our public schools and target even students that live a different life, or follow a different path. Their goal is to destroy, it certainly is not a goal of equality and freedom of choice to be alive and well in our country. The only grommers in this are those that feed hate and hide behind religion. Thank the creator we still have many Christians with the heart of Jimmy Carter!

Deb Halsted  
Baxter

**Don't be selfish**

So, the murder of thousands of innocent people, including children, by firearms in our country is a people problem, not a gun problem? In a way, they are correct. It's the fact that those people wrongfully interpret the meaning of the Second Amendment. As far as a well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, we already have that in the Army, Navy, Air Force, etc. Instead they think if they can't roam the streets with a powerful military weapon, their rights are being infringed. No private citizen needs a military weapon to protect your house or kill an animal, if that is your pleasure. What about the rights of people to go about their lives without being killed being infringed? Is the mass murder of innocent children and adults just collateral damage because you are afraid of having your shotgun or pistol being taken away? Show some compassion for others beside your own selfishness.

Julie Pawlak  
Hackensack

**Human compassion**

I would like to express my support to the brave pastor who put human compassion over theistic norms when he expressed his support for the Minnesota End of Life Options Act. Maybe it is time to put certain other old biblical beliefs out to pasture and tweak them for today's civilization.

Don Hansen  
Pine River

**Reject dangerous ideas**

I read the March 29 Clergy View, "A Sanctuary State for Evil," on the Religion page of the Dispatch. My first reaction was how could anyone professing to be a Christian promote such prejudicial and hate-filled ideas? No wonder Christianity has gotten a bad name!

The Christianity that I believe in professes that the love of God and Jesus is for everyone, no excep-

tions. To target abortion, gays and transgender folks as being evil fits into the parameters of evil in my view. I believe God put us here on earth to be in a loving relationship with all people and all of creation. That is our simple, but not easy, task as Christians. I hope others will join me in rejecting the author's narrow minded and dangerous ideas regarding Christian theology.

Lowell Johnson  
Fort Ripley

**God is love**

The clarity with which a local pastor recently conveyed the nature of his ministry inspired many of us to renew our commitment to follow a path different from the one suggested: the path of a man called Jesus, a man who taught us, first and foremost, that God is love, and that love of one another, rather than fear or hate, is the path we must follow if we want a better world. Fortunately, there are churches that still follow Jesus, such as ours, at which each Sunday service begins with the pastor saying, "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here." To me, this sounds more like something Jesus might have said, and I get to hear it every Sunday at First Congregational UCC in Brainerd.

Cynthia Janes  
Brainerd

**Be who you are**

The March 29 Clergy View by Bill Werth is an example of black-and-white thinking, an early stage of cognitive development expected in children but not in healthy adults.

Werth himself reveals the real origin of his anti-gay and anti-trans views when he writes: "you do not even need a Bible to tell you these things are wrong. They are not normal. They are not natural." Adults capable of nuanced thinking realize that there are many ways of being that they themselves have not experienced but that are nevertheless normal and valid. For Werth, it's black and white — you are a male or a female, period.

I have always known that I am a female. How dare I question people who know their gender identity as strongly as I do, although it differs from the label originally assigned by doctors?

The Washington Post, which reported on March 23 on one of the largest surveys of trans people ever, quoted a transperson as saying: "The worst day I've ever had as a trans person is still better than the best days I had pre-transition; at the end of the day, not living authentically was terrible, and I would rather live authentically than hide a version of myself to appease people I don't even know."

Families with gay or trans children should start loving them and encourage them to become their authentic selves. It would spare a lot of heartache all around.

And if people, especially religious leaders and parents, stopped judging gay and trans people and stopped calling them "sinful" and "evil," there would be a lot less suicide in those populations.

Charlotte Goedsche  
Brainerd

**Love thy neighbor as thyself**

I subscribe to Brainerd Dispatch. I read everything so that I can know my community and understand it better and I can be an

informed and involved citizen. I am a Christian and a member of the First Congregational United Church of Christ in Brainerd. I always read the Wednesday Religion page. There is much that I can agree with.

The Clergy View of March 29 disturbed me, "The sanctuary state for evil." Yes, there is evil and sin in our world, but the minister focusing on only two topics was what disturbed me. It was a harsh judgment as we approach Easter. My church is an open and affirming denomination. God's grace is available to everyone.

When I die I do not believe that God is going to ask me about the two men down the street who got married, or the girl next door who had an abortion, or the atheist who lives on the corner. God will ask me if I loved those people as God has called me to do. (Matthew 22:37.)

The Clergy View writer seems to have forgotten about many important issues of social justice.

In this time before Easter, I urge local churches to continue to reach out and offer support to people in our community who are in crisis. The Sharing Bread Soup Kitchen, the Salvation Army Food Shelf, The Bridge on 7th. We have affordable housing and child care shortages. Let us all continue to do God's work in our world and this community.

Marcia Ferris  
Brainerd

**Religious homophobia**

In response to the Clergy View last week regarding homosexuality (aka the LGBTQ community), abortion, etc., Reverend Werth is entitled to his own personal view. So too are the members of his congregation, and everyone else in the community. Individually, I doubt even your entire congregation agrees with you on these topics, as volatile as they are.

Jesus taught love, and I have searched the New Testament and questioned many pastors as to what Jesus said about homosexuality. It seems the fact is Jesus never said a single word about homosexuality. He said a lot about love. Some people believe the apostle Paul addressed the matter, but one must remember Paul was also a former Pharisee who was well indoctrinated in the laws of the Old Testament where homosexuality was addressed. Two points I'd like to make are, one: Jesus came to relieve us of the burden of Old Testament laws, and two: even the word "homosexuality" was not included in the Bible until 1946.

Jesus taught love. If two people love each other, who are we to come between them with our opinions? Besides, it has no effect on us or on our personal lives. If we cannot love them as Jesus taught, it seems the least we can do is live and let live. Our world keeps changing. Our beliefs must change with new information. One who cannot change their beliefs is, as the saying goes, "dead in their faith."

It has been said — and I must believe — that it is not possible to know or understand the mind of God, despite what some individuals may claim. I think one who presumes to know the mind of God is not only dangerous, but likely committing an egregious sin themselves.

Jack Kraywinkle  
Brainerd