

## # 80, Playing Protestant Pope

By Alvin Petty, retired area minister

Isaac Luria's rewriting the biblical creation story helped many Jews to develop a spirit of joy and kindness at a time when they could have been overcome by rage and despair. Meanwhile in the world of Protestant Reformers, sola scriptura or scripture alone, was their benchmark guideline. However, their emphasis on scripture alone did not always produce joy and kindness with which to face life. Such has often been the case in history when scripture alone proudly rules the church. It is not scripture's fault but the interpreters' attitudes.

It seems to me that all the Protestant reformers who changed their doctrine from that of Roman Catholicism soon went on to become Protestant Popes, ruling their followers and opposing those who disagreed with them with an iron fist.

The new discipline of scripture alone was just not able to bring a spirit of joy and kindness for the Christians of Europe. Luthor, though freed from an oppressive Catholic philoso-

phy, remained terrified of death. He seemed almost constantly in a state of rage against the Anabaptists, with rebellious peasants, whom he condoned the slaughtering of by the German nobility. He raged viciously against the Pope, the Turks, the Jews (Nazis used some of his writings to promote their anti-Jewish policies in WW II), women, scholastic philosophers and every single one of the theologians who disagreed with him on some point. Luthor was great and did great good, but you can see he was not as wholesome as Protestants have often painted him. He hated the papacy and all its trappings, but he became a German Pope over his domain.

He and the Swiss Reformer Zwingli engaged in an angry argument over the meaning of Christ's words in the Last Supper saying, "This is my body." Zwingli said the bread and wine were symbols of Christ's body and blood while Luthor said Christ was really present with the bread and wine.

Zwingli was killed in the 100 years of religious wars that ensued soon after this. This ongoing religious warfare in Europe and England was the main reason our American founding fathers wisely separated Church and state, giving us a secular state with freedom of religion. A secular state with freedom is always better, if Christians will just do their job.

God save us from the Chris-

## Weather

Neoma Williams  
U.S. Weather Observer

	Hi	Lo	Pr
Thursday	81	60	1.49
Friday	72	61	
Saturday	79	61	
Sunday	85	63	
Monday	92	68	
Tuesday	92	69	
Wednesday	91	66	

June moisture.....	3.96
July moisture.....	4.86
2014moisture.....	13.76
2013 moisture.....	12.62

# Why Incumbents Keep Getting Re-elected

By Lee Hamilton

It's no news that Congress is unpopular. In fact, at times it seems like the only real novelty on Capitol Hill would be a jump in its approval rating. In June, a Gallup poll found members' standing with the American people at a historic low for a midterm-election year. Which might have been notable except, as The Washington Post pointed out, that "Congress's approval rating has reached historic lows at least 12...times since 2010."

Here's the interesting thing: nearly three-quarters of Americans want to throw out most members of Congress, including their own representative, yet the vast majority of incumbents will be returning to Capitol Hill

tian state that many scripture-alone fundamentalists seem to want. It would wind up a power hungry, oppressive state like all religious-controlled states have been in history.

John Calvin, the other great reformer of this time, was appalled by the anger that had clouded the minds of Zwingli and Luthor and caused an unholy rift that could and should have been avoided. He felt that they could have, with effort, made conciliation with each other.

It was unrealistic to think interpreters would agree on every single passage of the Bible; so disputes should be conducted humbly and with an open mind. Yet Calvin did not always practice what he preached. He was more than ready to execute dissenters within his own church and sometimes did. I am so glad I did not live back then for I would have been executed with all Baptists, Methodists, Church of Christ and a few others, because these were all state-sponsored churches and that is what you get when the religion and the state are not separated as in America.

in January. In other words, Americans scorn Congress but keep re-electing its members. How could this be?

The first thing to remember is that members of Congress didn't get there by being lousy politicians. They know as well as you and I that Congress is unpopular, and they're masters at separating themselves from it and running against it — appearing to be outsiders trying to get in, rather than insiders who produce the Congress they pretend to disdain. They're also adept at talking up their own bipartisanship — which is what most general-election voters want — when, in fact, they almost always vote with their own party's leadership, especially on the obscure procedural votes that can decide an issue before the actual up-or-down vote is taken.

Just as important, incumbents enjoy an overwhelming advantage in elections: a large staff, both in Washington and at home, whose jobs focus on helping constituents. They find lost Social Security checks, help get funding for economic development projects, cut through red tape to secure veterans' benefits. At election time, voters remember this.

That's not the only help members can expect. They're buttressed in ways challengers can only dream about. They're paid a good salary, so they don't have to worry about supporting their families while they campaign. They get to spend their terms effectively campaigning year-round, not just at election time, and they are able to saturate their state or district with mass mailings. The nature of their work allows them to build ties to various interest groups back home — which quite naturally seek out the incumbents and ignore challengers.

Incumbents receive invitations to more events than they can possibly attend; challengers

have trouble finding a meeting interested in having them. Incumbents get the honored place in the parade, the prime speaking position, the upper hand when it comes to raising money; challengers have to fight for visibility and money. And the news media seek out incumbents, often ignoring the challengers.

In fact, challengers are at a disadvantage at almost every point in a campaign. From building name recognition to arranging meetings to building credibility with editorial boards, donors, and opinion leaders, they're trudging uphill. They do get one leg up — they're in the district all the time, while the incumbent has to be in Washington regularly — but that's a small advantage compared to the obstacles arrayed against them. Especially when districts are gerrymandered, as they often are, to protect incumbents. This means that in primaries, incumbents generally need to focus just on the most active voters, while in general elections the vast majority can consider themselves on safe ground.

But there's another reason incumbents keep getting re-elected that's also worth considering: voters — that's you and me. Most Americans don't vote, which means that a U.S. senator or representative might be elected by only 20 percent of the eligible voters. And those who do vote often cast their ballots for narrow or unusual reasons. They like the way they got treated by the incumbent's staff, or they shook his or her hand at a county fair, or they like his or her stand on a particular social or economic issue, or perhaps they just recognize the name. Whatever the case, they don't look at an incumbent's entire record: votes on a cross-section of vital issues; willingness to work with members of different ideologies and backgrounds; continued to Page 3

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