

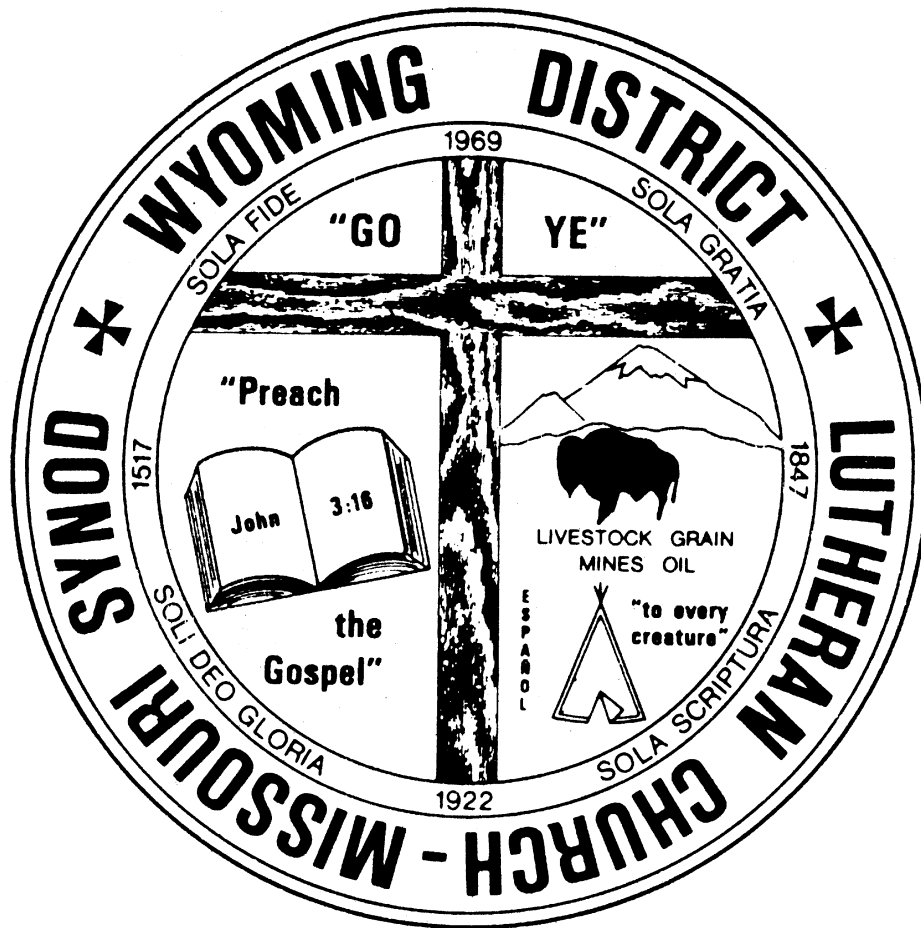
20th Convention
WYOMING DISTRICT

of the

LUTHERAN CHURCH – MISSOURI SYNOD

PROCEEDINGS

“Here I Stand before Kings and Princes”



May 6-8, 2021

Casper, Wyoming

The 2021 Wyoming District Convention Proceedings

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PART 1

CONVENTION INFORMATION

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DIRECTORY

OFFICERS OF THE SYNOD

PRESIDENT:	REV. DR. MATTHEW C. HARRISON
FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT:	REV. PETER K. LANGE
SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT:	REV. JOHN C. WOHLRABE JR.
THIRD VICE-PRESIDENT:	REV. SCOTT R. MURRAY
FOURTH VICE-PRESIDENT:	REV. NABIL S. NOUR
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SIXTH VICE-PRESIDENT:	REV. BENJAMIN T. BALL
SECRETARY:	DR. JOHN W. SIAS

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LAYMAN:	MR. MATT HUCKFELDT

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POWDER RIVER (#3):	REV. JON C. OLSON
YELLOWSTONE (#4):	REV. JAIS TINGLUND
HEADWATERS (#5):	REV. DANIEL MULHOLLAND
HIGH PLAINS (#6):	REV. LINCOLN WINTER

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MISSIONS DEVELOPMENT:	REV. ALLAN WIERSCHKE
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MISSIONS SUPPORT:	REV. NOAH FREMER
ADVISOR:	REV. MARK MAAS
LLL DISTRICT PRESIDENT:	MR. MARK WILLIAMS

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STEWARDSHIP:	REV. JOSHUA SCHEER
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YOUTH/OUTDOOR MINISTRY:	REV. RENE' CASTILLERO
ADVISOR:	REV. TED BOURRET

HONORARY DISTRICT PRESIDENTS

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REV. DR. RON GARWOOD

WYOMING DISTRICT RECONCILERS

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REV. DARREN PFLUGHOEFT
REV. KENNETH MARS
MR. RONALD MISCHNICK

WYOMING DISTRICT MEMORIAL LIBRARY STANDING COMMITTEE

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MRS. TERA RICE

REV. JOHN HILL

ARCHIVIST

MRS. TERA RICE

DISTRICT LEGAL COUNSEL

MR. LARRY HARRINGTON

CONSTITUTIONS CHAIRMAN

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MINISTERIAL GROWN AND SUPPORT (CONTINUING EDUCATION)

REV. MARK MUMME

LUTHERAN MINISTRIES CENTER OFFICE STAFF

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MRS. TIFFANY HOFF, OFFICE MANAGER/ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT TO THE DISTRICT PRESIDENT

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REV. JONATHAN LANGE

CONVENTION MANAGER

MR. JEFFREY SNYDER

PAGES

PAUL OLSON

SILAS WITKOP

NOAH WATERBURY

HOST CONGREGATION

MOUNT HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH

2300 HICKORY STREET

CASPER, WY 82604

REV. DR. CHRISTIAN PREUS

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

REV. RICHARD BOCHE (CHAIRMAN)

REV. NEIL CARLSON

REV. RANDOLPH SCHNACK

MR. TERRY BOURLIER

MR. SCOTT LEFFERS

RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE

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REV. ALLEN STRAWN (SECRETARY)

REV. PETER BERTRAM

REV. MARK PREUS

DR. TIM NARJES

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MR. JESSE NEUGEBAUER
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COMMISSION ON MISSION SERVICES/COMMISSION ON CONGREGATIONAL SERVICES MINUTES

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REV. DARRELL DEBOWEY
MR. STEPHEN GEU
MR. JOHN KISSEL

ELECTIONS COMMITTEE
REV. RICHARD NEUGEBAUER (CHAIRMAN)
REV. JARED KORB
MR. KEVIN FREY
MR. MARK DOUTHIT

REGISTRATION AND CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE
REV. PAUL CAIN
MRS. TIFFANY HOFF
MRS. MARY GRANT

PARLIAMENTARIAN
MR. LARRY HARRINGTON, ATTORNEY AT LAW, CASPER, WY

SYNODICAL REPRESENTATIVES
REV. PETER LANGE, LCMS FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT
REV. NABIL NOUR, LCMS FOURTH VICE-PRESIDENT (IN ABSENTIA)

State of the District Report
Wyoming District Convention
May 6, 2021

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (Galatians 1:3–4)

It was at the famous, or infamous, 1969 convention of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod that the Synod voted to reconfigure the Northern and Southern Nebraska Districts into the Nebraska and Wyoming Districts. You remember that the 1969 Convention was when the Synod entered into the ill-fated fellowship with the American Lutheran Church, permitted women's suffrage in congregational voters assemblies, and elected Dr. J. A. O. Preus as President of Synod. A doctrinal war was being waged at the St. Louis seminary that culminated in the Walkout and expulsion of the erring Faculty Majority in January 1974. The whole Synod was in turmoil over Holy Scriptures, purity of doctrine and practice, and church fellowship. The Wyoming District held its first convention and was incorporated the following year, 1970.

That is to say that our beloved Wyoming District was born in the midst of contention for the Word of God. How appropriate it is that we celebrate our 50th Anniversary as a District by remembering the confession of our beloved father in the faith, Dr. Martin Luther, before “kings and princes” 500 years ago. “I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings and shall not be put to shame” (Psalm 119:46). Luther was also contending for the Word of God, as we shall hear. It is by remembering our fathers in the faith that we are not only encouraged and strengthened in our labors, but we are especially reminded that it is always our task to contend anew for God's Word and the confession of His pure doctrine. The prayer of our fathers is our prayer too:

Oh, keep us in Thy Word, we pray;
The guile and rage of Satan stay!
Oh, may Thy mercy never cease!
Give concord, patience, courage, peace. (TLH 292.4)

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It is my great joy to report and reaffirm for you the faithfulness of our pastors and congregations in the doctrine and practice which God has taught us in His holy Word. The doctrine I hear preached and taught in Bible Classes conforms to our confessional standards of Scriptures and the Confessions of the Lutheran Church. Our congregations hear God's Word gladly, receive the Lord's Supper with piety and joy, baptize their infants and new Christians,

teach and confirm youth and adults in accord with our doctrine, practice closed communion according to God's Word, use the liturgy and hymns of our church, care for one another, encourage each other to all godly virtues and good works, honor marriage and the marriage bed, and visit the sick and dying. God gives life to His Church, preserves Her, and causes Her to grow in grace, in knowledge, and in all good works.

Our pastors have been faithful in attending District Pastoral Conferences and the Circuit Winkels. This is what our Confessions call "the mutual conversation and consolation of brothers" (SA III.4), and it is vital to the spiritual health and wellbeing of both pastors and congregations, and is essential for the maintenance of the "unity of the Holy Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). Laymen, thank you for supporting and encouraging your pastor in this important work.

Our congregations are sound both spiritually and physically. I say that while acknowledging the many challenges that you have all faced over the past triennium. All our congregations must combat the lies of the devil, rebuke and forgive sin, repent and be reconciled with each other, and address the fear and the coldness brought on by the assaults of the world. All our congregations address issues of encouraging the leadership of the men in their midst, strengthening marriages and families, balancing finances, maintaining buildings, and the like. We are all watching the demographic challenges of shrinking and aging populations in most of our communities and congregations. Yet in the midst of these challenges, God's people have responded with joy and have borne much fruit for God's Church. And I can add this: At this time we have no calling congregations and only one vacancy. As I have told many of your congregations, a faithful pastor and a faithful congregation are two of the rarest and greatest treasures on earth, and you have them both! God has blessed us mightily.

Let me especially acknowledge the labors of our congregations toward the young. Children are being taught God's Word. Parents are receiving support from the Church as they bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord Jesus. Throughout the District there has been a renewal of efforts to bring our youth together and build a Lutheran culture among them. We pray that this bears fruit with Lutheran weddings and many Lutheran children for our congregations. Our schools are committed to Classical Lutheran education and are faithfully bringing their students into daily chapel and teaching them God's Word. God will certainly bless this joyful obedience to His commands, as He promises in the 4th Commandment and elsewhere.

In the second half of this past triennium God sent us the Covid crisis to test our faith, to expose our weaknesses of knowledge and courage, and to show us where we need to grow and mature in His Word. We have learned that we need to be ready for governmental, cultural, and economic interference in the life of the church. We recognize that our pastors and congregations need to grow in their knowledge and understanding of what God teaches us about our relationship to government and civil community. We need to prepare our hearts for the persecution that Christ and His Apostles promised so often in Scriptures.

Nevertheless, for the most part, our congregations throughout the District soon returned to worship, gathered as Christ commands us, and have mostly returned to normal congregational life. This faithful response to the Covid hysteria has been a wonderful blessing! The most painful sore spot was the inability of pastors and members to visit their elderly and infirm members and loved ones in the nursing homes, comfort them with God's Word, give them Holy Communion, pray with them, and love them as God commands. God give us wisdom and love to see to it that such spiritual cruelty never be inflicted on our loved ones again. God help us!

As I noted in my Convention Workbook report, various regions of the district have met to begin addressing the challenges of our changing demographics. At the heart of our meetings is the Word of God which gathers us into congregations and provides us pastors to serve us with His Gospel. These are two important points I have emphasized here: First, God has placed our congregations in their communities to be the place, the location, where God's Word is purely preached, the sacraments administered, intercession is made for the church and household and community, and from which love and outreach may take place. Second, we are to call a pastor to each congregation and parish, and we are to provide for the physical needs of the pastor and his family.

As these regional gatherings of congregational leaders discussed, the future wellbeing of our congregations will require that they work together and perhaps make changes that look to the good of other congregations, not just their own. But this is the very nature of the Church and Her fellowship, that the unity we have through agreement and common use of the purely preached Gospel and the Sacraments should find expression in our love and care for one another. This is true individually. It is true within a single congregation or parish. It is also true between our parishes. Pure faith constantly bears the fruit of fervent love.

One evidence of this unity in working together is found in the new parish agreements that form when needed. Another example that all of you have experienced is the sharing and receiving of a vacancy pastor during times of vacancy. I'm also aware of at least one congregation that provided financial assistance to the ongoing needs of a sister congregation, not to speak of the many of you who responded to calls for help after natural disasters or a medical crisis.

Parish realignments and new parish agreements are in the future for many of our congregations. These are not easy matters, and I beg patience and wisdom and love from you all when the time comes for your congregation. Change is hard and unsettling. Timing is often difficult, given that present pastors have a divine call to serve their congregations. That means the timing is left to God's discretion, usually when vacancies occur. The unchanging constant, of course, is that your congregation must always have the Gospel in teaching and sacraments, which means sound and regular pastoral care for your congregations. It is my duty—and the duty

of the District—to help see to it that you receive this pastoral care. We are deeply committed to the wellbeing of your congregation.

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Now let me turn to our district work together. Our two major mission projects in the Wyoming District are the Wind River Lutheran Mission at Fort Washakie and Crowheart and St. Andrew's Lutheran Church and Campus Center in Laramie. In the past triennium we were able to resolve two major concerns at the Wind River Mission: housing and the isolation of our missionary. First, after exploring options for correcting some growing problems at the parsonage, the Board of Directors finally conceded that the trailer home needed to be removed and sold, and we now provide a monthly Home Ownership Allowance to the Sonnenscheins to purchase and maintain their own home. They found a wonderful home on the reservation, not far from Lander.

Second, at the retirement of Pr. Sterle at Mount Calvary in Dubois, the congregation there explored options for calling another retired pastor, sharing an assistant pastor with Trinity, Riverton, or entering into a new parish agreement. The congregation decided to enter into a parish agreement with the District and called Pastor Sonnenschein as their pastor. This is a blessing to Mount Calvary, the District, and the Sonnenscheins. One of my great concerns for our missionary pastor on the Reservation is his isolation there, and especially the fact that he has none of the usual congregational support that the rest of us enjoy. Mount Calvary will help us take good care of our pastor.

There are more challenges on the horizon for the Mission. The Reservation has been locked down tight with Covid, which has prevented the Sunday School, prison ministry, nursing home services, and clothing giveaway from taking place. We hope that these will be restored in due time. Also, the Board of Directors is concerned about the long-term viability of our church building on the Reservation. I thank you for the generous support and encouragement you give for our mission to the nations in our midst.

St. Andrew's Lutheran Church and Campus Center in Laramie has become one of the most unusual campus ministries in Synod. Not only is a thriving outreach and care of our college students taking place, but a community of young families has grown up out of this campus work. I urge you to visit the congregation some Sunday morning and enjoy the young people and little children gathered in worship. I rejoice to anticipate the long-term blessings to the District and Synod at large as both college students and little children grow up, leave Laramie, and bring great blessings to the congregations they join.

St. Andrew's has responded to this growth with increased offerings to the district. This year they were able to fund a vicar with special gifts to help Pastor Preus with his multiplying workload. In the last couple of years they have begun to address the urgent need for a Lutheran

school to serve the families of St. Andrew's and Zion. About a dozen of the college students and other members have been teaching the older children of St. Andrew's this year. In the long term, the young families are looking at establishing a school or a kind of homeschool coop to teach their children. There are a couple dozen children under the age of seven at St. Andrew's.

The Board of Directors has been searching for a number of years now to provide better housing for the Preus family. Options included purchasing a larger house, building a home, adding on to the present parsonage, or providing a home-ownership allowance to the Preuses. Housing is very expensive in Laramie, so any solution would require careful stewardship. Now a wonderful opportunity has arisen. The Board of Directors has committed to purchasing the house of Connie and Lydia Kerscher, long time members at Zion and very active in District and Synod, who both passed away in 2020. The purchase project is developing into a 3-way partnership between the Kerscher family, St. Andrew's, and the District. This house will not only fulfill our responsibility to provide for our campus pastor, but it will also be a wonderful asset for the District. I want you to share in our gratitude to God for answering our prayers so generously.

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I trust that you have all had opportunity to read the various reports in the Convention Workbook. Please give your attention to the work that is reported there and during the convention. I am deeply grateful for the work of so many people, who have volunteered their labor and time, given of their resources, served in various offices, organized and run conferences, classes, youth events, gatherings of various kinds, women's services, and the like.

I want to comment briefly on three items. First, you are aware of the legal and cultural war being waged on marriage, life, families, Christian culture, our legal protections, and churches. Pastor Jonathan Lange, our facilitator for Marriage, Life, and Family, has provided leadership on these issues in the civil and religious communities in Wyoming, and especially to the Wyoming District. Some of you are aware that the Board of Directors is providing oversight to a new project, "Two Kingdoms, One Lord," which funds some of the work Pastor Lange is doing and thereby supports his two small congregations in Evanston and Kemmerer. The project is funded only by donations and speaking engagements. It is not funded by the District. Our goal is to make his expertise and experience available in other districts of Synod. Pastor Lange has brochures for the project. I encourage you to contact him for more information or to inquire about him coming to speak to your congregation.

Second, most of you have probably heard about Luther Classical College. The college will be located on the campus of Mount Hope here in Casper and is preparing to open in August 2024. Its Board of Regents are Missouri Synod pastors and laymen; its faculty will be Missouri Synod members, and its students also will be only faithful Lutherans. I am speaking about it here so that you have an understanding of the relationship of the college to the District and Synod. Luther Classical College is not a project of the Wyoming District or the Synod and will not be

funded by either of them. It is a project of Missouri Synod members and congregations. The Wyoming District President, however, will be asked to provide visitation—ecclesiastical oversight—to the college and its workers. There is still work to be done to establish many of the details of the relationship of the college to Synod, hopefully as a Recognized Service Organization.

The college will be a great blessing to our District. Luther Classical College will fulfill a need that has been growing for years now. Many of you are aware that the Classical Education movement in Synod is about 25 years old now, and that the Wyoming District has been a strong leader in the return to this great heritage of our education. For at least 20 years there have been discussions and meetings about starting a classical Lutheran college. The time has come.

I have fielded some questions and concerns about starting a Lutheran college when three of our own Synod institutions have recently closed. My basic response is that Luther Classical College will fill a void and answer a need that is not and cannot be supplied by our Concordia University System schools. That is, it will not compete with the offerings of Synod's universities. It will stay small and not burden itself with a large overhead. It will be tightly focused on providing Lutheran doctrine, classical content, Lutheran worship, and encouragement to the marriage and families of our young students. It is exactly what our District's classical Lutheran schools envision, and it is exactly the option needed by the Lutheran parents of our Lutheran children. Please make sure you get a brochure about the college and see to it that you are signed up to receive the college's magazine, *Christian Culture*. You will find us at lutherclassical.org.

And third, there is a great deal of work going on at the Lutheran Ministries Center, what we affectionately call the District Office. Teams of men have been volunteering their labor to finish the basement and enable an expanded use of that space, and especially the library. More teams have been working on replacing all the old and dying florescent light fixtures upstairs with new LED lights. Please come and take a tour this evening before or after the Divine Service at Mount Hope. Thank you to Matt Huckfeldt and all the people who have given their time and labor generously for this project. Thank you to the Temme family for their financial support that is funding this project of the District Library.

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In your travels through the District you may have seen the billboard with the picture of John Wayne with the subtitle, Grit. That's such a great word. It comes from the Old English word for "sand, dust, earth, gravel." You hear about grit these days because parents and school teachers have become alarmed at the inability of children, youth, and young adults to endure and thrive under hard work and affliction. They need more grit. And how do we give them grit?

Now, grit isn't just a character trait of the American West—the rancher, the miner, the farmer, the outdoorsman. It is known from ancient times as the cardinal virtue Fortitude. It is what we also call “character,” or “manliness” (from the Greek word *andreia* or *andrizomai*), courage, grit. This key virtue is informed by the virtues of Prudence—having the discernment to act wisely, Justice—judging and living divine law rightly, and Temperance—possessing self-control and a sound mind. Above and within all these are the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love, the greatest of all virtues.

I am certainly advocating these virtues and more, as we see them taught and portrayed in the Scriptures and in the great history and literature of Western Civilization. But I believe it is time to give some attention to grit, to fortitude and courage. We have entered a time of persecution and confession. Closing churches, denying the Gospel to nursing home residents, suing those who confess the truth of marriage and sex—this is persecution. And most wonderfully, as a result, this is our time, the time to confess the truth.

And confession requires courage, grit, the virtue of Fortitude. Picture Luther standing before Emperor and Empire in that hot and crowded hall at the Diet of Worms. Grit. This is how the Holy Spirit teaches us, “We boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces grit—character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Romans 5:3–5). This is our time, dear Christians. It is as the Commander of the Lord’s Armies said to Joshua, His lieutenant, “Be strong and courageous. . . Be strong and courageous. . . Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous” (Joshua 1:6, 7, 9). St. Paul repeats it, “Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love” (1 Corinthians 16:13–14). God grant it for Jesus’ sake. “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you” (1 Corinthians 16:23). Amen.

NEW MEMBERS / CONGREGATIONS OF SYNOD

ORDAINED MINISTERS

Rev. Patrick M. Baldwin

COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

Anna Hahn



OFFICIAL ACTS OF THE PRESIDENT

March 2, 2018 to March 1, 2021

MEMBERSHIP OF CONGREGATIONS

CHANGES WITHIN THE DISTRICT

Formation of a Multi-Congregation Parish between St. James Lutheran Church, Scottsbluff, NE and Mount Calvary Lutheran Church, Bayard, NE, May 22, 2018

Formation of a Multi-Congregation Parish between Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Green River, WY and Trinity Lutheran Church, Rock Springs, WY, July 6, 2018

Formation of a Multi-Congregation Parish between Trinity Lutheran Church, Wheatland, WY, Zion Lutheran Church, Grover, CO, and Grace English Lutheran Church, Pine Bluffs, WY, November 19, 2019

Formation of a Multi-Congregation Parish between Wind River Lutheran Mission, Fort Washakie, WY and Mount Calvary Lutheran Church, Dubois, WY, December 6, 2020

ORDAINED MINISTERS

ENTERED THE DISTRICT

Rev. Andrew W. Dimit (Emeritus) from Rocky Mountain District, January 31, 2019

ENTERED THE DISTRICT (continued)

Rev. Andrew P. Richard (St. Silas Lutheran Church, North Liberty, IA) to Assistant Pastor, Mount Hope Lutheran Church, Casper, WY, May 30, 2019
(Installed by Rev. Jon C. Olson).

Rev. John C. Preus (Trinity Lutheran Church, Clinton, IA) to Sole Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church, Cheyenne WY, June 1, 2019 (Installed by Rev. Mark Maas)

Rev. Harold R. Hintzman, Jr (Emeritus) from Minnesota South District, July 15, 2019

Rev. Paul J. Beyer (Emeritus) from Nebraska District, August 31, 2019

Rev. Patrick M. Baldwin, graduate of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN to Christ Lutheran Church (Rawlins, WY), July 19, 2020
(Ordained and Installed by Rev. John E. Hill)

Rev. Jonathan Durkopp from Trinity Lutheran Church (Lamoure, ND) and Trinity Lutheran Church (Adrian, ND) to Our Redeemer Lutheran Church (Glenrock, WY) and Zion Lutheran Church (Douglas, WY), October 25, 2020
(Installed by Rev. John E. Hill)

Rev. Shaun Daugherty (Candidate Status, Atlantic District) to Assistant Pastor, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Alliance, NE, February 28, 2021 (Installed by Rev. John E. Hill)

CHANGES WITHIN THE DISTRICT

Rev. Daniel C. Praeuner (Grace Lutheran Church, Pine Bluffs, WY, and Zion Lutheran Church, Grover, CO) to Emeritus, January 1, 2018

Rev. Paul F. Nus (Trinity Lutheran Church, Cheyenne, WY) to Candidate Status, July 1, 2018

Rev. George Naylor (Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church, Bayard, NE) to Multi-point parish Pastor with St. James Lutheran Church, Scottsbluff, NE, July 8, 2018
(Installed by Rev. John E. Hill)

Rev. Bradley D. Heinecke (St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Sidney, NE) to Emeritus, October 10, 2018

Rev. James Martin (Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Green River) to Multi-point parish Pastor with Trinity Lutheran Church, Rock Springs, WY), January 13, 2019
(Installed by Rev. John E. Hill)

Rev. Lincoln Winter (Trinity Lutheran Church, Wheatland) to Multi-Point parish Pastor with Grace English Lutheran Church, Pine Bluffs, WY) and Zion Lutheran Church (Grover, CO), December 29, 2019 (Installed by Rev. John E. Hill)

CHANGES WITHIN THE DISTRICT (continued)

Rev. Christopher Brandt (St. John's Lutheran Church, Lovell, WY) to
Emeritus, April 30, 2020

Rev. Terry Wiley (Christ Lutheran Church, Rawlins, WY) to
Emeritus, June 30, 2020

Rev. Martin T. Schnare (Immanuel Ev. Lutheran Church, Alliance, NE) to
Emeritus, June 30, 2020

Rev. Andrew Dimit (Emeritus) to Assistant Pastor, King of Glory Lutheran Church (Cheyenne,
WY), September 20, 2020 (Installed by Rev. Mark Maas)

Rev. Gregory Sonnenschein (Wind River Lutheran Mission) to Multi-point parish Pastor with
Mount Calvary Lutheran Church, Dubois, WY), December 6, 2020
(Installed by Rev. John E. Hill)

CALLED TO GLORY

Rev. Claude H. Constable, December 24, 2018

Rev. Joseph S. Hu, February 20, 2019

Rev. Robert C. Oberheu, April 22, 2019

TRANSFERRED TO OTHER DISTRICTS

Rev. Daniel A. Hinton (Associate Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church, Cheyenne, WY) to
Christ Lutheran Church, Lubbock, TX, August 13, 2018

Rev. John H. Melms (Emeritus) to St. James Lutheran Church, Southern Pines, NC and
St. Paul Lutheran Church, Whispering Pines, NC, November 17, 2018

Rev. Jakob D. Berger (Sole Pastor, Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Glenrock/Zion Lutheran
Church, Douglas) to Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church, Thompson Falls, MT,
November 18, 2019

Rev. Bradley D. Heinecke (Emeritus) to Florida-Georgia District, January 4, 2019

Rev. Roger D. Sterle (Emeritus) to Mid-South District, May 14, 2020

Rev. Martin T. Schnare (Emeritus) to Southern Illinois District, June 1, 2020

Rev. Christopher Brandt (Emeritus) to Montana District, June 10, 2020



COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

ENTERED THE DISTRICT

Anna Hahn (Concordia, Mequon), Commissioned/Installed at Mount Hope Lutheran School, Casper, WY, August 30, 2018 (Commissioned by Rev. Dr. Christian A. Preus)

Breanna Erdman, Teacher (Trinity, Riverton, WY)
from South Wisconsin District, August 25, 2019 (Installed by Rev. Mark Mumme)

CHANGES WITHIN THE DISTRICT

Shirley Bundschuh, Trinity Lutheran School, Riverton, WY to Emeritus, July 1, 2018

Susan Tucker (Candidate) to Emeritus, December 9, 2020

REMOVED

Karen Gabriel (DCE), Voluntary Resignation, December 10, 2020

TRANSFERRED TO OTHER DISTRICTS

Laurie Anderson, Our Savior Lutheran Church (Cheyenne, WY) to St. John, Chester, IL,
September 15, 2018

Diane Schnare, Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church (Alliance, NE) to St. Paul, Hamel, IL,
July 14, 2020



ANNIVERSARIES

Ordained Ministers

In the Year of Our Lord 2019

Rev. David Caspersen	50 years
Rev. Lynn Christensen	25 years
Rev. Allan Wierschke	25 years
Rev. James Martin	20 years
Rev. Darren Pflughoeft	20 years
Rev. Dan Holthus	20 years
Rev. Kenneth Humphrey	10 years
Rev. Samuel Needham	10 years
Rev. Gregory Sonnenschein	10 years

In the Year of Our Lord 2020

Rev. Harold Hintzman Jr	45 years
Rev. Phillip Grovenstein	35 years
Rev. David Anderson	30 years
Rev. Richard Keuck	30 years
Rev. Shawn Kumm	30 years
Rev. Jonathan Lange	30 years
Rev. John Hill	30 years
Rev. Richard Mueller	30 years
Rev. Jais Tinglund	25 years
Rev. Jeffery Grams	25 years
Rev. Mark Mumme	20 years
Rev. Paul Cain	20 years
Rev. Jared Tucher	15 years
Rev. Ryan Mills	15 years
Rev. Kenneth Mars	15 years
Rev. Mark Preus	10 years
Rev. Gerald Heinecke	10 years
Rev. Paul Nus	10 years
Rev. Marcus Baikie	10 years

In the Year of Our Lord 2021

Rev. Thomas Jacobsen	60 years
Rev. Francis Koessel	60 years
Rev. Duane Simonsen	45 years
Rev. Sam Christensen	45 years
Rev. Randolph Schnack	40 years
Rev. Peter Bertram	40 years
Rev. Andrew Dimit	35 years
Rev. Lee Rupert	30 years
Rev. Scott Firminhac	25 years
Rev. Phillip Found	25 years
Rev. Scott Shields	20 years
Rev. Michael Wittrock	20 years
Rev. Ted Bourrett	20 years
Rev. Jon Olson	15 years
Rev. Neil Carlson	10 years
Rev. John Preus	10 years
Rev. Dr. Christian Preus	5 years
Rev. James Rockhill	5 years
Rev. Jonathan Durkopp	5 years

Commissioned Ministers

In the Year of Our Lord 2019

Shirley Bundschuh	40 years
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In the Year of Our Lord 2020

Cecelia Postma	35 years
Leah Wierschke	25 years
Stanna Funk	20 years
Tarayca Walters	20 years
Dixie Ailts	15 years
Tiffany Baikie	15 years

In the Year of Our Lord 2021

Bonnie Bourret	40 years
Darcia Boche	20 years

In the Year of Our Lord 2021 (continued)

Jennifer Kaelberer	15 years
Susan Tucker	15 years

ANNIVERSARIES

Congregations

2019-2021

In the Year of Our Lord 2019

St. Paul- Rushville	130
Zion- Emblem	120
St. John's- Kimball	105
Our Savior- Chadron	95
Trinity- Gillette	90
Zion- Hay Springs	90
Redeemer- Harrison	90
Mount Calvary- Bayard	65
Bethlehem- Moorcroft	45
King of Glory- Cheyenne	30

In the Year of Our Lord 2020

Salem- Gurley	110
St. Paul's- Sidney	105
Our Savior- Torrington	85
St. Luke's- Worland	70
Trinity- Rock Springs	70
Mount Calvary- Dubois	65
Our Savior- Pinedale	60
Emmanuel- Green River	55
Peace- Marbleton	55

In the Year of Our Lord 2021

Trinity- Sidney	135
Immanuel- Alliance	110
St. John's- Scottsbluff	105
St. John's- Lovell	105
Zion- Grover	105

In the Year of Our Lord 2021 (continued)

Grace- Gordon	100
Zion- Laramie	95
Immanuel- Powell	85
Trinity- Morrill	75
Mount Calvary- Sundance	70
Grace- Pine Bluffs	70
Platte Valley- Saratoga	65
Christ the King- Cody	60

CONVENTION ROSTER OF VOTING DELEGATES

<u>CONGREGATION</u>	<u>LAY DELEGATE</u>	<u>ALTERNATE LAY DELEGATE</u>
Chimney Rock Circuit #1		
Mt. Calvary, Bayard**	Greg Schmall	John Schmall
St. Paul, Bridgeport	Mark Douthit	-
Zion, Chappell**	See Trinity, Sidney	
Faith, Gering	Jesse Neugebauer	Keegan Harkins
Salem, Gurley**	See St. Paul, Potter	
St. Paul, Potter**	Richard Stahl	Aaron Brauer
St. James, Scottsbluff**	See Mt. Calvary, Bayard	
St. John, Scottsbluff	Ronald Merritt	-
St. Paul, Sidney	Stephen Geu	Ken Steffens
Trinity, Sidney**	Steve Hume	-
 Pine Ridge Circuit #2		
Immanuel, Alliance	Timothy Narjes	Ronald Brown
Our Savior, Chadron	Dennis Brown	Rex Cogdill
Bethlehem, Crawford**	Gary Witt	Joe Stecher
Grace, Gordon	Barb Schaer	-
Redeemer, Harrison**	See Bethlehem, Crawford	
Zion, Hay Springs**	Matthew Albrecht	Elizabeth Albrecht
St. Paul, Lusk	-	-
Trinity, Morrill	Donita Allen	Virgil Ritz
Our Savior, Torrington	Bill Law	Tom Denniston
St. Paul, Rushville**	See Zion, Hay Springs	
 Powder River Circuit #3		
Prince of Peace, Buffalo	Dalton Frederickson	Steve Rzasa
Mt. Hope, Casper	Benjamin Craig	Larry Harrington
Trinity, Casper	Marty Finch	-
Zion, Douglas**	See Redeemer, Glenrock	
Trinity, Gillette	Mark Reimnitz	Seth Ahlers
Our Redeemer, Glenrock**	Larry Rice	Darold Moss
Bethlehem, Moorcroft**	-	-
Immanuel, Sheridan	Owen Mullinax	Justin Carlson
Mt. Calvary, Sundance**	See Bethlehem, Moorcroft	

Multi-congregational parishes have only **one lay vote and **one** pastoral vote.

† Indicates that the Alternate delegate served as the lay voting delegate for said congregation

A solid line through a name indicates that the lay delegate did not attend Convention

CONVENTION ROSTER OF VOTING DELEGATES

<u>CONGREGATION</u>	<u>LAY DELEGATE</u>	<u>ALTERNATE LAY DELEGATE</u>
Yellowstone Circuit #4		
Christ the King, Cody	Andrew Allgeier	Ernie Hiltz†
Zion, Emblem**	See Grace, Greybull	
Grace, Greybull**	John Olin	Victor Werbelow
St. John, Lovell	Ralph Fink	Richard Fink
Immanuel, Powell	James Thompson	Jake Dillinger
St. Paul, Thermopolis	John Kissel	-
St. Luke's, Worland	Landis Benson	Richard Buckman
Headwaters Circuit #5		
Mt. Calvary, Dubois	Alan Gehrt	
Christ Our Savior, Star Valley**	See Redeemer, Jackson	
Our Saviour, Evanston**	Paul Albert	Immanuel Lange
Shepherd of the Valley, Ft. Bridger	Charles Robbins	
Emmanuel, Green River**	See Trinity, Rock Springs	
Redeemer, Jackson**	Ron Campbell	Steve Trogdon
St. Paul, Kemmerer**	See Our Saviour, Evanston	
Bethel, Lander	Bryk Cook	Dennis Oberlie
Peace, Marbleton**	See Our Savior, Pinedale	See Our Savior, Pinedale
Our Savior, Pinedale**	Gary Neely	William Lanning
Christ, Rawlins	-	-
Trinity, Riverton	Ed Steele	David Lininger
Trinity, Rock Springs	Michael Larsen	Maynard Suhr
Platte Valley, Saratoga	Bill Brudigam	-
High Plains Circuit #6		
Immanuel, Burns	See St. John's, Kimball	
King of Glory, Cheyenne	Matt Huckfeldt	John Hippe Jr.
Our Savior, Cheyenne	Don Payton	Merle Ziegelman
Trinity, Cheyenne	Kenneth Eppich	-
St. John's, Kimball	Everett Durham	Terry Bourlier
St. Andrew's, Laramie	Kevin Frey	-
Zion, Laramie	David Maynard	Ronald Christensen†
Grace, Pine Bluffs**	See Zion, Grover	
Trinity, Wheatland**	See Zion, Grover	
Zion, Grover, CO**	Mark Weisbrook	Marvin Roberts

Multi-congregational parishes have only **one lay vote and **one** pastoral vote.

† Indicates that the Alternate delegate served as the lay voting delegate for said congregation
A solid line through a name indicates that the lay delegate did not attend Convention.

CONVENTION ROSTER OF VOTING PASTORAL DELEGATES

<u>CONGREGATION</u>	<u>PASTORAL DELEGATE</u>	<u>ALTERNATE</u>
Chimney Rock Circuit #1		
Mt. Calvary, Bayard**	Rev. George Naylor	
St. Paul, Bridgeport	Rev. Allen Strawn	
Zion, Chappell**	See Trinity, Sidney	
Faith, Gering	Rev. Richard Neugebauer	
Salem, Gurley**	See St. Paul, Potter	
St. Paul, Potter**	Rev. Ted Bourret	
St. James, Scottsbluff**	See Mt. Calvary, Bayard	
St. John, Scottsbluff	Rev. Jeffery Grams	
St. Paul, Sidney	Vacant	
Trinity, Sidney**	Rev. Neil Carlson	
 Pine Ridge Circuit #2		
Immanuel, Alliance	Rev. Richard Mueller	
Our Savior, Chadron	Rev. Peter Bertram	
Bethlehem, Crawford**	Rev. James Rockhill	
Grace, Gordon	Rev. Travis Sherman	
Redeemer, Harrison**	See Bethlehem, Crawford	
Zion, Hay Springs**	See St. Paul, Rushville	
St. Paul, Lusk	Rev. Darren Pflughoeft	
Trinity, Morrill	Rev. Kenneth Humphrey	
Our Savior, Torrington	Rev. Scott Firminhac	
St. Paul, Rushville**	Rev. Allan Wierschke	
 Powder River Circuit #3		
Prince of Peace, Buffalo	Rev. Gerald Heinecke	
Mt. Hope, Casper	Rev. Christian Preus	Rev. Andrew Richard
Trinity, Casper	Rev. Jon Olson	
Zion, Douglas**	Rev. Jonathan Durkopp	
Trinity, Gillette	Rev. Jared Tucher	
Our Redeemer, Glenrock**	See Zion, Douglas	
Bethlehem, Moorcroft**	-	
Immanuel, Sheridan	Rev. Rene Castillero	Rev. Paul Cain
Mt. Calvary, Sundance**	See Bethlehem, Moorcroft	

Multi-congregational parishes have only **one lay vote and **one** pastoral vote.

CONVENTION ROSTER OF VOTING DELEGATES

<u>CONGREGATION</u>	<u>PASTORAL DELEGATE</u>	<u>ALTERNATE</u>
Yellowstone Circuit #4		
Christ the King, Cody	Rev. Shawn Kumm	
Zion, Emblem**	Rev. Jais Tinglund	
Grace, Greybull**	See Zion, Emblem	
St. John, Lovell	Rev. Jacob Benson	
Immanuel, Powell	Rev. Lee Wisroth	
St. Paul, Thermopolis	Rev. Samuel Needham	
St. Luke's, Worland	Rev. Jared Korb	
 Headwaters Circuit #5		
Mt. Calvary, Dubois	Rev. Gregory Sonnenschein	
Christ Our Savior, Star Valley**	See Redeemer, Jackson	
Our Saviour, Evanston**	Rev. Jonathan Lange	
Shepherd of the Valley, Ft. Bridger	Rev. Daniel Mulholland	
Emmanuel, Green River**	See Trinity, Rock Springs	
Redeemer, Jackson**	Rev. David Bott	
St. Paul, Kemmerer**	See Our Saviour, Evanston	
Bethel, Lander	Rev. Noah Fremer	
Peace, Marbleton**	See Our Savior, Pinedale	
Our Savior, Pinedale**	Rev. Kevin Rose	
Christ, Rawlins	Rev. Patrick Baldwin	
Trinity, Riverton	Rev. Mark Mumme	
Trinity, Rock Springs**	Rev. James Martin	
Platte Valley, Saratoga	Rev. Randolph Schnack	
 High Plains Circuit #6		
Immanuel, Burns**	See St. John's, Kimball	
King of Glory, Cheyenne	Rev. Mark Maas	
Our Savior, Cheyenne	Rev. Joshua Scheer	Rev. Marcus Baikie
Trinity, Cheyenne	Rev. John Preus	
St. John's, Kimball**	Rev. Kenneth Mars	
St. Andrew's, Laramie	Rev. Mark Preus	
Zion, Laramie	Rev. Darrell Debowey	
Grace, Pine Bluffs**	See Trinity, Wheatland	
Trinity, Wheatland**	-	
Zion, Grover, CO**	See Trinity, Wheatland	

Multi-congregational parishes have only **one lay vote and **one** pastoral vote.

CONVENTION ROSTER OF ADVISORY DELEGATES

Advisory- Ordained

Rev. David Anderson (Cheyenne, WY)	Rev. Lowell Kayser (Colorado Springs, CO)
Rev. Marcus Baikie (Cheyenne, WY)	Rev. Richard Keuck (Casper, WY)
Rev. Paul Beyer (Casper, WY)	Rev. Francis Koessel (Aurora, CO)
Rev. Richard Boche (Cheyenne, WY)	Rev. Ryan Mills (Niceville, FL)
Rev. Vernon Boehlke (Riverton, WY)	Rev. Ralph Morris (Gering, NE)
Rev. David Boehnke (Casper, WY)	Rev. Paul Cain (Sheridan, WY)
Rev. David Caspersen (Cheyenne, WY)	Rev. Lynn Christensen (New Orleans, LA)
Rev. Sam Christensen (Dubois, WY)	Rev. Andrew Dimit (Cheyenne, WY)
Rev. Philip Found (Bayard, NE)	Rev. Dr. Ron Garwood (Cody, WY)
Rev. Philip Grovenstein (Powell, WY)	Rev. Harold Hintzman, Jr. (Cheyenne, WY)
Rev. Dan Holthus (Casper, WY)	Rev. Thomas Jacobsen (Ashton, ID)
Rev. Ralph Jaeger (Laramie, WY)	Rev. Shaun Daugherty (Alliance, NE)
Rev. Paul Nus (Beavercreek, OH)	Rev. Daniel Praeuner (Hot Springs, SD)
Rev. John Rasmussen (Cheyenne, WY)	Rev. Andrew Richard (Casper, WY)
Rev. Don Rieman (E. Aurora, NY)	Rev. Lee Rupert (Maplewood, MN)
Rev. Fred Schroeder (Lander, WY)	Rev. Scott Shields (Douglas, AK)
Rev. Duane Simonson (Buffalo, WY)	Rev. Marvin Temme (Torrington, WY)
Rev. Terry Wiley (Thermopolis, WY)	Rev. Michael Wittrock (Chadron, NE)

Advisory- Commissioned

Dixie Ailts (Gillette, WY)

Karen Bergquist (Riverton, WY)

Anna Hahn (Casper, WY)

Bonnie Bourret (Potter, NE)

Elizabeth Carlson (Sheridan, WY)

Christa Doyle (Rock Springs, WY)

Breanna Erdman (Riverton, WY)

Jennifer Kaelberer (Cody, WY)

Audrey Partipilo (Riverton, WY)

Cecelia Postma (Riverton, WY)

Susan Tucker (Riverton, WY)

Tiffany Baikie (Cheyenne, WY)

Stanna Funk (Gering, NE)

Darcia Boche (Torrington, WY)

Shirley Bundschuh (Riverton, WY)

Steven Coniglio (Riverton, WY)

Garnet Dwyer (Cody, WY)

Roxane Humphrey (Morrill, NE)

Jill Mueller (Alliance, NE)

CheriRae Pollom (Cheyenne, WY)

Leah Wierschke (Rushville, NE)

Tarayca Walters (Casper, WY)

REGISTERED SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVES

REV. ROBERT RAHN- LUTHERAN HERITAGE FOUNDATION
REV. DR. DAVID PREUS- SEMINARY IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
REV. DAN MULHOLLAND AND REV. KENNETH MARS- SIERRA LEONE MISSION SOCIETY
MRS. BECKY THORNE- CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE
REV. JON SCICLUNA- CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
CHAPLAIN CRAIG MUELLER AND CHAPLAIN STEVE HOKANA- MINISTRY TO THE ARMED FORCES
REV. JOHN RASMUSSEN- CHEYENNE NATIONAL CEMETERY
REV. JEFF DUNCAN- LUTHERANS FOR LIFE
MRS. BARB SCHAEER- LUTHERAN WOMEN'S MISSIONARY LEAGUE, WYOMING DISTRICT
MR. JEFFREY SNYDER, JACKIE PARKER, AND RACHEL GRANT- LUTHERAN CHURCH EXTENSION FUND
MR. RALPH SIMON- LCMS FOUNDATION
MR. KIRK MEYER- KLORIA
REV. GREGORY SONNENSCHNEIN- WIND RIVER LUTHERAN MISSION

OTHER OFFICIAL REPRESENTATIVES

DISTRICT EDUCATION CHAIRMAN

REV. PAUL CAIN

SPECIAL GUEST MUSICIAN

KANTOR STEVE HOFFMAN

FINAL CREDENTIALS REPORT
MAY 8, 2021

VOTING DELEGATES	79
ADVISORY DELEGATES	13
GUESTS	22
SYNOD OFFICIALS AND STAFF	7
EXCUSED ABSENCES	10

PART 2

CONVENTION MINUTES AND ELECTION TABULATIONS

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**Minutes of The Twentieth Convention of the Wyoming District
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
May 6–May 8, 2021**

**“Here I Stand Before Kings and Princes”
Ramkota Hotel
Casper, Wyoming**

THURSDAY, MAY 6

12:30 P.M. Opening Worship

Rev. Mark Maas, District First Vice-President, officiated the opening service of the Convention with the order of Vespers from *Lutheran Service Book* 229 (hereafter LSB). Worship began with the delegates singing the hymn “Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord” (LSB 497). The delegates chanted Psalm 119:41-48 and sang the hymn, “O Lord, Look Down From Heaven, Behold” from *The Lutheran Hymnal* 260 (hereafter TLH). The appointed Scripture reading was Esther 4:1-17.

The following is a summary of Rev. Maas’ sermon. We are called to be faithful in our time, as Esther was in her time and Dr. Martin Luther, author of the Office Hymn, was faithful in his time. The Lord exchanges times of doubt and uncertainty with the truth of His Word and certain forgiveness of sins in Christ Jesus. We carry this message before the world as believers in the Lord Jesus.

TLH 260: “Defend Thy truth, O God, and stay This evil generation; And from the error of its way Keep Thine own congregation. The wicked everywhere abound And would Thy little flock confound; But Thou art our Salvation.” Truly, O God, Thou art our salvation!

The service concluded with prayer.

1:03 P.M. Formal Opening; Credentials Report

At 1:03 P.M., Rev. President John Hill called the Convention to order. Rev. Paul Cain, District Secretary, gave the credentials report:

Voting Delegates:	77
Advisory Delegates:	10
Guests:	22
Excused absences:	10
Synod Officials and Staff:	5

Pres. Hill directed delegates to the Convention Workbook (hereafter, Workbook), Tab 1, p. 16, “Rules or Practices That Have Been Observed Over the Years by Our District.” Pres. Hill requested the Convention to adopt these rules for use throughout the Convention. It was moved and seconded to adopt these rules. The motion was **adopted** unanimously.

Pres. Hill directed delegates to Workbook Tab 1, p. 4-5, “2021 Wyoming District Convention.” Pres. Hill requested the Convention to approve the agenda as presented. It was moved and second to adopt the agenda. The motion was **adopted** unanimously.

A quorum being present, Pres. Hill declared the 20th Convention of the Wyoming District to be in session in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

1:10 P.M. Announcements

Pres. Hill introduced the following individuals:

Rev. Peter Lange, LCMS First Vice-President

Rev. Richard Boche, Wyoming District President (2006-2015) Emeritus

Chaplain Craig Mueller, LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces

Rev. Dr. David Preus, missionary and seminary professor in the Dominican Republic

Rev. Paul Cain, Wyoming District Secretary

Mr. Larry Harrington, Convention Parliamentarian, District Attorney

Mr. Jeffrey Snyder, Wyoming District Business Manager, Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) Vice-President, and Convention Manager

Mrs. Tiffany Hoff, Wyoming District Office Manager and Administrative Assistant

Kantor Dr. Steven Hoffman, Convention Organist

Paul Olson, Silas Witkop, and Noah Waterbury, Convention Pages

Pres. Hill asked the members of the Wyoming District Board of Directors to stand:

Rev. Mark Maas, First Vice-President

Rev. Ted Bourret, Second Vice-President

Rev. Jonathan Lange, Third Vice-President

Rev. Paul Cain, Secretary

Rev. Peter Bertram, Pastor-at-Large

Mr. Andrew Beyeler, District Treasurer (joining us on Friday)

Mr. Steven Coniglio, Commissioned Member (in absentia)

Mr. John Schmall, Lay Member

Mr. Matt Huckfeldt, Lay Member

Pres. Hill asked the Wyoming District Circuit Visitors to stand:

Rev. Allen Strawn, Chimney Rock Circuit

Rev. Scott Firminhac, Pine Ridge Circuit

Rev. Jon Olson, Powder River Circuit

Rev. Jais Tinglund, Yellowstone Circuit

Rev. Dan Mulholland, Headwaters Circuit

(Rev. Lincoln Winter), High Plains Circuit

Pres. Hill noted that various vendors and organizations have set up information tables in the north ballroom.

1:13 Conference Business

At 1:15 P.M., Pres. Hill invited Rev. Dr. Christian Preus, pastor of Mount Hope Lutheran Church in Casper, Wyoming, and host of the Thursday evening Divine Service, to give instruction and guidance regarding the evening Divine Service at Mount Hope Lutheran Church. The Communion registration sheet is at the registration table.

Pres. Hill invited the delegates to visit the Lutheran Ministries Center for an Open House this evening from 6:00–6:45 and 8:45–9:30.

Pres. Hill noted the areas in the Convention Hall where the voting delegates were seated and where advisory delegates and guests were seated. When delegates seek to speak to the Convention, they were asked to use the microphones and introduce themselves by name and location. Pres. Hill also highlighted that delegates will be limited to two minutes at the microphone. Pro/Con will be used as needed.

Electronic devices are permissible but Pres. Hill asked that they be placed in silent mode so as not to distract other delegates. In addition, it is understood that delegates should not text or message other delegates while the Convention is in session. The staging area for individuals who will give presentations to the Convention was located stage right of the Convention podium.

Pres. Hill requested that written notes be sent to the Chair of the Convention. Lutheran Service Book hymnals, owned by the Wyoming District, will be used throughout the Convention. Copies of The Lutheran Hymnal will also be available as needed. Hymns will be sung two or three minutes before the beginning of sessions as a way to call delegates back to the Convention Hall.

1:17 Elections Committee

At 1:17 P.M., Pres. Hill invited Rev. Richard Neugebauer, Chairman of the Elections Committee, to the podium.

Rev. Neugebauer gave greetings to the Convention delegates and guests. There being no floor nominations, the committee **moved** adoption of the slate for District President as presented:

Rev. John Hill

On behalf of the Elections Committee, Rev. Neugebauer moved to elect Rev. John Hill by acclamation. Motion carried. Rev. Neugebauer led the Convention in prayer. Rev. Neugebauer announced that Rev. Hill was elected District President.

Rev. Hill asked for a motion to ratify the slate for District 1st Vice-president consisting of

Rev. Paul Cain

Rev. Jonathan Lange

Rev. Dan Mulholland

Rev. Neugebauer directed the delegates to Workbook Tab 6, pp. 3–6, for biographical information on the nominees for District 1st Vice-President. A motion was made and seconded to ratify the slate for District 1st Vice-President. The motion to ratify the slate was **adopted** unanimously. Rev. Neugebauer led the Convention in prayer. After ballots were collected, Rev. Neugebauer declared the election for District 1st Vice-President closed.

1:24 P.M. State of the District: President John E. Hill

At 1:24 P.M., Pres. Hill presented his report to the Convention; it will be published in the Convention Proceedings.

1:49 P.M. Elections Committee

At 1:49 P.M., Rev. Neugebauer returned to the podium to announce the result of the election for District 1st Vice-President:

Rev. Paul Cain	36
Rev. Jonathan Lange	30
Rev. Dan Mulholland	13

Rev. Neugebauer noted that additional delegates arrived after the first credentials report. He announced that a majority was not achieved; Rev. Dan Mulholland's name was removed from the ballot. A second ballot for District 1st Vice-President was distributed consisting of the following candidates:

Rev. Paul Cain
Rev. Jonathan Lange

Rev. Neugebauer led the Convention in prayer. After the ballots were collected, Rev. Neugebauer declared the election for 1st Vice-President closed.

1:54 P.M. Nominations Committee

At 1:54 P.M., Pres. Hill invited Rev. Richard Boche, Chairman of the Nominations Committee, to the podium. Rev. Boche thanked those who allowed their names to stand for election and service in the District.

Rev. Boche introduced the members of the nominations committee:
Rev. Norman Wacker (in absentia)
Rev. Neil Carlson
Mr. John Schmall
Mr. Scott Leffers

After completing the introductions, Rev. Boche directed the delegates to an updated "District Nominations Committee Report" available at the registration table, an update to Workbook Tab 6, p. 8, "Nominations Committee Report." Rev. Boche reviewed each slate.

Pres. Hill provided a brief summary of the order of elections that will take place during the Convention.

Order of Elections:

1st Vice-President

2nd and 3rd VP: Caucus, then elect, then rank

Circuit Visitors

Board of Directors: Secretary, Commissioned member, Layman

CMS and CCS Chairmen-Elect

2025 Nominations Committee

2023 LCMS Committee for Convention Nominations layman

Mr. Tim Hu asked that his name be withdrawn from the slate for the 2023 LCMS Committee for Convention Nominations.

Pres. Hill introduced convention vendors from the following organizations:

Lutheran Heritage Foundation – Rev. Robert Rahn

Seminary in the Dominican Republic—Rev. Dr. David Preus

Sierra Leone Mission Society—Revs. Dan Mulholland & Kenneth Mars

Concordia Publishing House – Mrs. Becky Thorne

Concordia Theological Seminary – Rev. Jon Scicluna

Ministry to the Armed Forces—Chaplain Craig Mueller, Chaplain Steve Hokana

Cheyenne National Cemetery—Rev. John Rasmussen

Lutherans for Life—Rev. Jeff Duncan

Wyoming LWML – Mrs. Barb Schaer

Lutheran Church Extension Fund – Mr. Jeff Snyder, Jackie Parker, Rachel Grant

LCMS Foundation—Mr. Ralph Simon

Kloria—Mr. Kirk Meyer

Wind River Lutheran Mission—Rev. Gregory Sonnenschein

2:05 P.M. Rev. Elections Committee

At 2:05 P.M., Rev. Neugebauer returned to the podium to announce the result of the election for District 1st Vice-President:

Rev. Paul Cain	41
Rev. Jonathan Lange	38
Abstaining	2

Rev. Neugebauer announced that Rev. Paul Cain was elected District 1st Vice-president.

There are now 81 Voting Delegates in attendance.

2:06 P.M. Anniversary & Service Awards: Rev. Ted Bourret, 2nd Vice-President

At 2:06 P.M., Rev. Ted Bourret, District Second Vice-President, directed the delegates to Workbook Tab 2, p. 12-14, “Congregations: 2019–2021.” After reading a passage of Scripture, Rev. Bourret directed the delegates to “Anniversaries: Ordained Ministers.” Rev. Bourret read aloud the various anniversaries celebrated by various District pastors.

Rev. Bourret directed the delegates to “Anniversaries: Commissioned Ministers.” Rev. Bourret read aloud the various anniversaries celebrated by various District Commissioned Ministers.

Rev. Bourret read aloud the various anniversaries celebrated by various District Congregations. Rev. Bourret offered prayers of thanksgiving.

The Convention concluded by singing the hymn, “The Lord, My God, Be Praised” (LSB 794).

2:17 P.M. Resolutions Committee

At 2:17 P.M., Rev. Hill announced that the Convention is ahead of schedule and asked Rev. Shawn Kumm, Chairman of the Resolutions Committee, to prepare resolutions for consideration.

Pres. Hill invited Rev. Kumm to the podium.

Pres. Hill asked the Convention delegates for permission to omit the reading of the whereas statements in the resolutions. The Convention, agreed **by consensus**, that only the resolves of resolutions will be read.

(A secretarial note. Amendments to resolutions will be indicated in the following manner: words or phrases removed will be struck-through, words or phrases that are added will be underlined.)

Rev. Kumm presented **Resolution 2-02-2021**.

The committee **moved** adoption.

Amendment to Wyoming District Bylaws

RESOLUTION 2-02-2021 (OVERTURE 2-02-2021)

WHEREAS, LCMS Secretary Sias submitted a letter to the Wyoming District dated 2019-12-04 with recommended wording to facilitate changes in governing documents following an action of Synod in Convention; therefore be it

Resolved, that the routine and obligatory alignment of language to the Wyoming District Bylaws necessitated by synod convention action be reviewed by the district Constitutions Chairman before it is brought to the Wyoming District Board of Directors; and be it finally

Resolved, That the following language recommended by Synod Secretary Sias be added to Section V of the Wyoming District Bylaws in an appropriate location:

When necessitated by amendments to the Synod Constitution or Bylaws, or otherwise directed by a resolution of the Synod in convention, amendment may be made by a two-thirds majority of the district board of directors. Such amendments shall be drafted by the district secretary and shall be reviewed in advance by the LCMS Commission on Constitution Matters.

The resolution was **adopted** unanimously.

Rev. Kumm presented **Resolution 2-01-2021**.

Name Change and Maintenance Responsibility to the Wyoming District Handbook

RESOLUTION 2-01-2021 *(OVERTURE 2-01-2021)*

Rationale

Various communications and concerns with the current state of the “Wyoming District Handbook: Guidelines, Policies, and Strategies 2018” prompted the suggestion that the book be reorganized and portions of it placed into the care of those who are responsible for its various sections.

In effect, this would remove all but the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws from the direct supervision of the District in Convention. Convention time, as well as Workbook and Proceedings space, would be economized. Most of the items would be placed in the care of the Wyoming District Board of Directors (BOD), who have the task of carrying out those items. Amendment of non-convention items could take place on an as-needed basis, rather than every three years during valuable convention time. The BOD will consult or receive proposed amendments or additions from the commissions or entities and act upon them.

All these items are public and both the Handbook and the BOD Operating Manual shall be made available upon request to any member of the District (i.e. congregations and rostered workers).

Therefore be it

Resolved, That the Wyoming District Supplement, previously known as the Wyoming District Handbook include a notification that the Handbook of Synod is also the Handbook of the Wyoming District; and be it further

Resolved, That the Wyoming District Supplement be divided as noted below (according to 2018 page numbers), with ongoing maintenance by the responsible entities identified below;

Convention

4–6	Articles of Incorporation
7–19	Bylaws

Pastors Conference

20–23	Wyoming District Ordained Ministers (Pastors) Conference Guidelines
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Circuit Visitors (including Praesidium)

24–25	Guidelines and Procedures for Ordained Ministers (Pastors)
26–28	Guidelines/Procedures for Vacant Congregations. . .

37–53	Ministry Support: Compensation Guidelines for Church Workers
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Board of Directors

29	Wyoming District Moving Procedure Guidelines
31 –36	Wyoming District (LC-MS) Pastor Compensation
54	Housing Guidelines for Professional Church Workers
55–56	Stewardship of the Parsonage
57–60	Guidelines for Articles of Agreement for <i>Multi-Congregation</i> Parishes
61	Conflict of Interest Policy
62	Consulting with District President on Appointments
63	Guidelines for Recognition of District Service
64	Guidelines for Expenses Incurred by District Officers
65–66	Wyoming District Travel Procedures and Guidelines
67	Wyoming District Office Mail Policy
68	Worker Salary Increases, Effective Date
69	Wyoming District Data Policy
70–71	District Office Personnel Electronic Communications Systems Policy
72	Guidelines for District Website
73	Endowment Guidelines
74	Wyoming District-LCMS “In Kind” Gift Policy
75	“In Kind” Gift Receipt
76	Wyoming District Capital Reserve Policy
77–78	REVISED: Investment Policy
79	Church Worker Assistance Guidelines
80	Gifts for District Missionaries and Office Staff
81	Compensation Policy for District President Transition
82–86	Wyoming District Sexual Misconduct Guidelines
87–91	TO BE REMOVED: Guidelines for Investigating Alleged Sexual Misconduct
92–93	Indemnification of Directors in Lawsuits
94	Wyoming District LCMS Image, Likeness, Picture Release Form
95	Honoraria Guidelines
96–97	School Grants Fund
98	Wyoming District Library Guidelines
99	Guidelines and Directives for Mission Work in the Wyoming District
100–102	REVISED: Procedure/Communication Guidelines . . . Assisted Cong. . .
103–104	Relationship and Communication Guidelines, St. Andrew’s
105–106	Wind River Reservation Mission Strategy

107	Remunerated and Un-Remunerated Extra-Curricular Activities. . .
108–113	Guidelines for Awarding of Student Financial Aid
114–116	Lander Camp (various)

and be it further

Resolved, That the Wyoming District Board of Directors be granted discretion to include some of its items in its BOD Manual and others in the Supplement; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Wyoming District Supplement be published electronically at least once every three years before the Convention to all delegates and members of the District, with paper copies printed upon request.

There being no discussion or questions, the convention proceeded to vote.

The resolution was **adopted** unanimously.

Rev. Kumm presented **Resolution 2-03-2021**.

School Grant Guidelines

RESOLUTION 2-03-2021

(*OVERTURE 2-03-2021*)

WHEREAS, the 2018 Wyoming District Convention adopted Resolution 2-12-2018 To Strengthen, Publicize, and Fund the School Grants Fund; therefore be it

Resolved, That the current School Grants Fund guidelines (2018: 96-97) be replaced with simpler language based on the Church Worker Assistance Guidelines (2018: 79) as found below:

School Grant Guidelines

The purpose of this fund shall be for assisting schools that are in financial need where immediate relief will make a genuine difference. This assistance, while primarily financial, may also include financial guidance on budgeting, tuition rates, and development.

Situations that come to the attention of the district president or education executive shall be considered in light of circumstances surrounding the request for aid. Investigation of need, background history, etc., shall be conducted as a basis for assistance. The Board of Directors (BOD) shall determine appropriate boundaries for granting assistance.

Funding shall be determined by the BOD as to source of funds, the amount provided for these purposes, and the method of dispersing these funds. Grants may be provided as appropriate to the circumstances of the school needing assistance. The BOD shall determine appropriate amounts for dispersal at the discretion of the district president, and the level of amounts requiring consultation before dispersal.

Accountability shall be set up for the sake of the school through the district president or education executive. Reports of a general nature shall be made to the BOD as appropriate on a regular basis.

and be it finally

Resolved, That members of the congregations of the Wyoming District and congregations themselves be encouraged to contribute to the School Grants Fund and include communication to the education executive of the Wyoming District.

Following questions about the history of the fund and the source of the financial guidance, the convention proceeded to vote.

The resolution was **adopted** unanimously.

Pres. Hill announced that the western and eastern regions will need to caucus during the break in order to secure nominations for their regional vice-president. He provided the following instructions for the election of the Vice-Presidents: each caucus may present up to three nominees for their regional vice-president. The Convention will elect the vice-president for each region.

Two Regions will caucus: Region 1 (East/Nebraska): Chimney Rock & Pine Ridge circuits and Region 3 (West): Yellowstone and Headwaters circuits; Chair of caucus (current VP—R1: Bourret; R3: Lange)

Advisory Ordained will also caucus to elect a delegate and alternate for the 2023 LCMS convention: date and place unidentified; Chair of caucus: Rev. Cain. The Advisory Ordained chose Rev. Daniel Holthus as Delegate and Rev. Harold Hintzman as Alternate.

2:40 P.M. Caucus – District Regions; Advisory – Ordained

At 2:40 P.M., Pres. Hill dismissed the Convention to form their respective caucuses; he declared the Convention to be in recess.

2:50 P.M. Break

3:10 P.M. Elections Committee

At 3:08 P.M., Pres. Hill called the Convention back to order with LSB 656. At 3:10 P.M. he introduced LCEF representatives for a giveaway and shared an opportunity to fill out a form indicating “What the Wyoming District Means to Me.”

Pres. Hill then invited Rev. Neugebauer back to the podium to announce the slates for regional vice-presidents for the Western and Eastern regions. Rev. Neugebauer led the Convention in prayer. The ballot for the Western Region Vice-President consisted of the following nominees:

Western Region (Headwaters and Yellowstone Circuits)

Rev. David Bott

Rev. Jonathan Lange

Rev. Dan Mulholland

The ballot for the Eastern Region Vice-President consisted of the following nominee:

Eastern Region (Pine Ridge and Chimney Rock Circuits)

Rev. Allen Strawn

After the ballots were collected, Rev. Neugebauer declared the elections for the Western Region and the Eastern Region Vice-President closed.

3:20 P.M. Essay I with Q and A: “Here I Stand,” Rev. John Hill

At 3:20 P.M., 1st Vice-President Maas introduced Pres. Hill and invited him to the podium for his presentation.

4:23 P.M. Elections Committee

At 4:23 P.M., Pres. Hill invited Rev. Neugebauer to the podium to announce the results of the elections for the Regional Vice-Presidents.

Rev. Neugebauer announced the results of the election for the Eastern Region Vice-President:

Eastern Region (Pine Ridge and Chimney Rock Circuits)

Rev. Allen Strawn	77
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Rev. Neugebauer announced that Rev. Allen Strawn was elected the Eastern Region Vice-President.

Western Region (Headwaters and Yellowstone Circuits)

Rev. David Bott	15
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Rev. Jonathan Lange	41
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Rev. Dan Mulholland	20
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Abstaining	2
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Rev. Neugebauer announced that Rev. Jonathan Lange was elected the Western Region Vice-President.

Rev. Neugebauer informed the delegates that the Convention must determine who will serve as District Second and Third Vice-Presidents. The slate for Second and Third Vice-Presidents was:

Rev. Jonathan Lange

Rev. Allen Strawn

Rev. Neugebauer announced that the candidate who receives the most votes will be designated Second Vice-President and Constitutions Chairman, and that the remaining candidate will be designated Third Vice-President. Rev. Neugebauer led the delegates in prayer. After the ballots were collected, Rev. Neugebauer declared the election for Second and Third Vice-President closed.

4:27 P.M. Elections Committee

Pres. Hill opened the floor in order to give the Convention the opportunity to amend the various slates presented in the updated “Nominations Committee Report.”

No additional nominations were made from the floor.

Pres. Hill declared that nominations were closed.

4:33 P.M. Litany: Rev. Kenneth Humphrey, Chairman, CMS

At 4:33 P.M., Pres. Hill invited Rev. Humphrey to the podium to lead the Convention in the Litany, LSB 288-289. The appointed Scripture reading was John 18:33-38a. The Convention sang the hymn “Oh, How Great Is Your Compassion” (LSB 559).

At 4:42 P.M., Pres. Hill declared the Convention to be in recess.

FRIDAY, MAY 7

8:00 A.M. Call to Order, Announcements

At 8:00 A.M., Pres. Hill called the Convention to order. Pres. Hill announced that the Convention will need to make suggestions as to where the offering from last night’s Divine Service (\$906.00) should be designated.

Pres. Hill invited Rev. Paul Cain, District Secretary, to give an updated credentials report:

Voting Delegates:	81
Advisory Delegates:	14
Guests:	23
Excused absences:	11
Synod Officials and Staff:	7

Rev. Hill noted that we only have four resolutions left remaining, other than housekeeping resolutions of thanks later in the convention.

8:03 A.M. Matins: Rev. Ted Bourret, District 2nd Vice-President

At 8:03 A.M., Rev. Bourret, District Second Vice-President, led the Convention in the Order of Matins (LSB 219). Worship began with the delegates singing the hymn “O Little Flock, Fear Not the Foe” (LSB 666). The delegates also sang the hymn “Jesus Christ, My Sure Defense” (LSB 741). The appointed Scripture reading was Daniel 3:1-30.

The following is a summary of Rev. Bourret’s sermon. If you want to conquer a nation and change its culture, get to the youth. And that’s what Nebuchadnezzar did. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not depart from the fear and trust in the one true God that they had learned in their youth. All the government was marshalled against these three who would not bow the knee.

The Lord delivered them from the flames, the same Lord who sent His Son, Jesus Christ, pierced for our iniquities. This is the God who will not abandon His children, nor forsake His promise.

The service concluded with prayer.

8:47 A.M. Announcements, Elections Committee

At 8:47 A.M., Pres. Hill brought greetings from our LCMS Regional Vice-President, Rev. Nabil Nour, unable to attend our convention. The convention rejoiced with him in the birth of a grandchild by singing LSB 895.

Pres. Hill invited Rev. Neugebauer to the podium to report the results of the election of District Second Vice-President.

Rev. Jonathan Lange	42
Rev. Allen Strawn	37

Rev. Neugebauer declared Rev. Jonathan Lange to be elected Second Vice-President and Constitutions Chairman and Rev. Allen Strawn to be elected Third Vice-President.

Pres. Hill announced the slate of Circuit Visitors (note **change** from the slate at Tab 6, page 7):

Chimney Rock (#1):	Rev. Richard Neugebauer
Pine Ridge (#2):	Rev. Scott Firminhac
Powder River (#3):	Rev. Jon Olson
Yellowstone (#4):	Rev. Jais Tinglund
Headwaters (#5):	Rev. Dan Mulholland
High Plains (#6):	Rev. Andrew Dimit

Pres. Hill noted that the convention may alter the slate by amendment.
A motion was made and seconded to ratify the slate, constituting election.

A motion was made and seconded to ratify the following slates for the Board of Directors:
District Board of Directors, Secretary (removing Rev. Paul Cain, elected 1st Vice-President)
District Board of Directors, Commissioned Member
District Board of Directors, Layman

Rev. Neugebauer distributed the ballots containing the slates for all three positions:

District Secretary
Rev. Darrell Debowey

District BOD Commissioned
Mr. Steve Coniglio
Ms. Brianna Erdman

Board of Directors Layman
Mr. Justin Carlson
Mr. Philip Scheel
Mr. Martin Finch

After the ballots were collected, Rev. Neugebauer declared the election for all three positions closed.

9:00 A.M. Resolutions Committee

At 9:00 A.M., Pres. Hill invited Rev. Kumm to the podium.

Rev. Kumm directed the delegates to Workbook Tab 8. He presented **Resolution 1-02-2021**. The committee **moved** adoption.

A motion to amend, adding the topics of Communism, Marxism, Critical Theory was seconded. The mover and seconder agreed to an amendment to delete “Postmodern” from the resolution title. The amendment was adopted.

By common consent the number “two” was removed from the Resolution.

To Form Theological Committees to Address ~~Postmodern~~ Contemporary Heresies

RESOLUTION 1-02-2021

(PRESIDENT’S REPORT - TAB 2, P. 6)

Rationale

WHEREAS, Wyoming District President John Hill rightly includes “feminism” and “transgender theories” among the heresies we should watch out for and oppose as Christians and pastors in Christ’s Church,

Therefore be it

Resolved, That the Wyoming District in its 2021 May Convention commission ~~two~~ committees to write theological resolutions condemning “feminism,” “Communism,” “Marxism,” “Critical Theory” and “transgenderism” as heresies, to be presented to and discussed at the Fall Pastors Conference of 2021, for the possibility of a Spring 2022 conference presenting them as overtures to the 2023 LC-MS synodical convention.

The motion as amended was adopted.

9:07 A.M. Synod Report I: Rev. Peter Lange, LCMS 1st Vice-President

At 9:07 A.M., Pres. Hill introduced the Rev. Peter Lange, 1st Vice-President of the LCMS, and invited him to the podium.

Rev. Peter Lange showed a video from October 2020 by LCMS President, Rev. Matthew Harrison, on uncertainty and our certainty in Christ.

The video may be viewed at:

<https://reporter.lcms.org/2020/life-together-with-president-harrison-october-2020/amp/>

Contract negotiations for the next LCMS Convention in 2023 (location and dates) are ongoing. Wyoming is the first District to have its convention. Only five will have conventions in 2021. The remaining thirty will retain their typical schedule in 2022, yet twenty-one of them will be in June alone! This is his first District Convention attending as LCMS 1st Vice-President.

About half of the work of the LCMS 1st Vice-President is pastoral colloquy. He also reviews every application for teacher colloquy. There is currently a full review of commissioned ministry underway. The 1st Vice-President also serves on the Council of Presidents, the LCMS Board of Directors (non-voting), and the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (non-voting). The President of Synod gets an appointment to each Seminary Board of Regents. Rev. Lange serves at the pleasure of the LCMS President on the Concordia Seminary Board of Regents.

Rev. Lange will also represent the LCMS President at one-third of the District conventions and will assist in official visitations to the Districts. There are also notable correspondence and communications duties delegated to the 1st Vice-President.

The latest congregational survey results about the impact of COVID-19 will be available in a fifty-page downloadable document. There will also be a REPORTER article on it.

LCMS International Mission: We have about 110 career missionaries in the field (35 countries) supported by nine people in the International Center and 1 ½ full-time-equivalent people elsewhere. We are working with partners in sixty-three countries. The LCMS has 77 Military Chaplains, 45 Reserve Chaplains, and 17 Guard Chaplains.

Rev. Lange closed by giving updates on Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Liberia.

His report was received with applause.

10:01 A.M. Break

At 10:01 A.M., Pres. Hill declared the Convention to be on break.

10:21 A.M. Announcements, Synod Report II (with Q and A): Rev. Peter Lange, LCMS 1st Vice-President

At 10:21 A.M., Pres. Hill reminded delegates to fill out mileage or reimbursement forms and LCEF had another giveaway. Pres. Hill invited Rev. Peter Lange back to the podium.

Rev. Peter Lange resumed his report. The LCMS has 39 partner churches, with whom we have full altar and pulpit fellowship. The LCMS has 43 Allied churches, bodies with whom we collaborate in various ways. Emerging relationships: 14. A half-time position will soon resume this work for President Harrison.

The Office of National Mission has eighteen ministries under it. A church planting study will be available soon. Districts with fewer church plants have a higher success rate. The LCMS placed 79 M.Div. candidates and 9 additional residential students, 88 total. Twenty-six requests for a pastor from the seminary went unfilled.

Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) is working on an annotated Large Catechism to be published by Concordia Publishing House by the end of this quadrennium. New and revised documents include clergy as agents of the state, human sexuality, and worship.

Rev. Peter Lange answered questions presented by Convention delegates. He answered questions related to the following topics:

Our District engagement with Concordia Seminary, St. Louis on the creation issue of Concordia Journal, concerns about worship, and other concerns.

The reasons why people are (not) coming back according to the two COVID-19 surveys of LCMS congregations.

The Lord's command to gather together.

Permanent congregational closings due to COVID-19.

Concerns about "Online Communion."

Religious persecution in Finland.

Strengthening the Specific Ministry Pastor program.

The Convention received his presentation with applause.

11:00 A.M. Essay II with Q and A: "Confession in the Holy Scriptures"

Rev. Kenneth Mars

At 11:00 A.M., Pres. Hill invited Rev. Mars to the podium to give his presentation.

11:58 A.M. Announcements

At 11:58 A.M., Pres. Hill prayed for a retired pastor who had been life-flighted to a regional hospital. He then declared the Convention to be in recess for lunch until 1:30 p.m.

12:00 P.M. Lunch

1:30 P.M. Responsive Prayer 1: Rev. Jim Martin

At 1:30 P.M., Pres. Hill invited Rev. Jim Martin, Chairman of the CMS, to the podium to lead the Convention in Responsive Prayer. The worship began with "O God, My Faithful God" (LSB 696). The appointed reading for the service was Daniel 6:1-28. Upon the conclusion of the Scripture reading, the delegates prayed the remaining portion of Responsive Prayer 1 (LSB 282-284).

1:47 P.M. Essay III with Q and A: "Lessons from Magdeburg for Today,"

Rev. Dr. Christian Preus

At 1:47 P.M., Pres. Hill invited Rev. Dr. Christian Preus to the podium to give his presentation.

2:42 P.M. Elections Committee

At 2:42 P.M., Pres. Hill invited Rev. Neugebauer to the podium to report the results of elections for various positions on the Board of Directors:

District Secretary	
Rev. Darrell Debowey	81

District BOD Commissioned	
Mr. Steve Coniglio	63
Ms. Brianna Erdman	16

Board of Directors Layman	
Mr. Justin Carlson	13
Mr. Phillip Scheel	35
Mr. Martin Finch	28

Rev. Neugebauer declared that Rev. Darrell Debowey was elected District Secretary and Mr. Steve Coniglio was elected District BOD Commissioned Member. A majority was not achieved for layman on the Board of Directors. Mr. Justin Carlson was removed from the second ballot, which consisted of the following candidates:

Board of Directors Layman
Mr. Phillip Scheel
Mr. Martin Finch

Rev. Neugebauer instructed that the next elections will be for the following:
Layman on the Board of Directors
The Chairman-elect for Commission on Congregational Services (CCS)
The Chairman-elect for Commission on Mission Services (CMS)

Members of the Elections Committee distributed the ballot for the layman on the Board of Directors and for Chairmen-elect for the Commission on Congregational Services and Commission on Mission Services with the following candidates:

CMS Chairman-elect
Rev. Travis Sherman
Rev. Kenneth Humphrey

CCS Chairman-elect
Rev. Jared Tucher
Rev. David Bott

Rev. Neugebauer explained that this ballot also includes two slates for the 2025 District Convention Nominating Committee to be distributed. He instructed the delegates that they were to vote for one slate, not individuals. The two slates were as follows:

Slate #1

Rev. Dan Holthus
Rev. Darren Pflughoeft
Mr. Landis Benson
Rev. Travis Sherman
Mr. Ken Steffens

Slate #2

Rev. Marvin Temme
Rev. Samuel Needham
Rev. Ted Bourret
Mr. Benjamin Craig
Mr. Tim Narjes

After the ballots were collected, Rev. Neugebauer declared the elections closed.

2:51 P.M. Greetings

At 2:51 P.M., Pres. Hill introduced Wyoming District LWML President, Mrs. Barb Schaer, who brought greetings to the convention. The National LWML Convention is scheduled for June 2021 in Lexington, Kentucky. The mite mission funding goal from the previous national convention was reached in February. President Schaer presented a grant to the Wyoming District to send pastors to DOXOLOGY. The convention responded with applause in thanksgiving to the Lord.

Pres. Hill also introduced Chaplain Craig Muehler, who brought greetings on behalf of Wyoming District military chaplains, “missionaries in uniform.”

Finally, Pres. Hill introduced Rev. John Rasmussen, who gave updates on Cheyenne National Cemetery.

3:00 P.M. Break

At 3:00 P.M., Pres. Hill declared the Convention to be on break.

3:22 P.M. Essay IV with Q and A: “Confession in Our Culture and World Today”

Rev. Jonathan Lange

At 3:22 P.M., Pres. Hill invited Rev. Jonathan Lange to the podium to give his presentation.

4:21 P.M. Elections Committee

At 4:21 P.M. Pres. Hill invited Rev. Neugebauer to the podium to give the results for the elections for Layman on Board of Directors, the Chairmen-elect for both District Commissions, the 2025 District Convention Nominating Committee.

CCS Chairman-elect

Rev. Jared Tucher 30

Rev. David Bott 43

CMS Chairman-elect

Rev. Travis Sherman 49

Rev. Kenneth Humphrey 30

Layman, Board of Directors

Mr. Philip Scheel 39

Mr. Martin Finch 34

2025 Nominating Committee

Slate #1 41

Rev. Dan Holthus

Rev. Darren Pflughoeft

Mr. Landis Benson

Rev. Travis Sherman

Mr. Ken Steffens

Slate #2 30

Rev. Marvin Temme

Rev. Samuel Needham

Rev. Ted Bourret

Mr. Benjamin Craig

Mr. Tim Narjes

Rev. Neugebauer declared that Mr. Scheel was elected as layman to the Board of Directors, the Rev. David Bott was elected as the Chairman-elect for the Commission on Congregational Services, the Rev. Travis Sherman was elected as the Chairman-elect for the Commission on Mission Services, and the individuals listed on Slate #1 to be elected as the 2025 Nominating Committee.

4:13 P.M. Minutes Review Committee Reports

At 4:13 P.M., Pres. Hill invited Rev. Samuel Needham to the podium to give a summary of findings from Review Committee #1. Rev. Needham greeted the Convention and stated that his committee was responsible for reviewing the minutes taken during Wyoming District BOD meetings and minutes taken during District Pastors/Teachers Conferences. Rev. Needham also introduced the members of his committee: Rev. Travis Sherman, Mr. Jesse Neugebauer, Mr. Marty Finch. Rev. Needham reported that they took care of their business. Their report has been submitted to Pres. Hill.

Pres. Hill invited Rev. Neil Carlson to the podium to give a summary of findings from Review Committee #2. Rev. Carlson stated that his committee was responsible for reviewing the minutes taken during CCS and CMS meetings. Rev. Carlson also introduced the members of his committee: Rev. Darrell Debowey, Mr. Stephen Geu, Mr. John Kissel. Rev. Carlson reported that all the minutes were in good order. They identified a point of clarification, a correction, and a recommendation. Written and electronic records are helpful, as well as defining or avoiding abbreviations.

4:30 P.M. Treasurer's Report: Mr. Andrew Beyeler

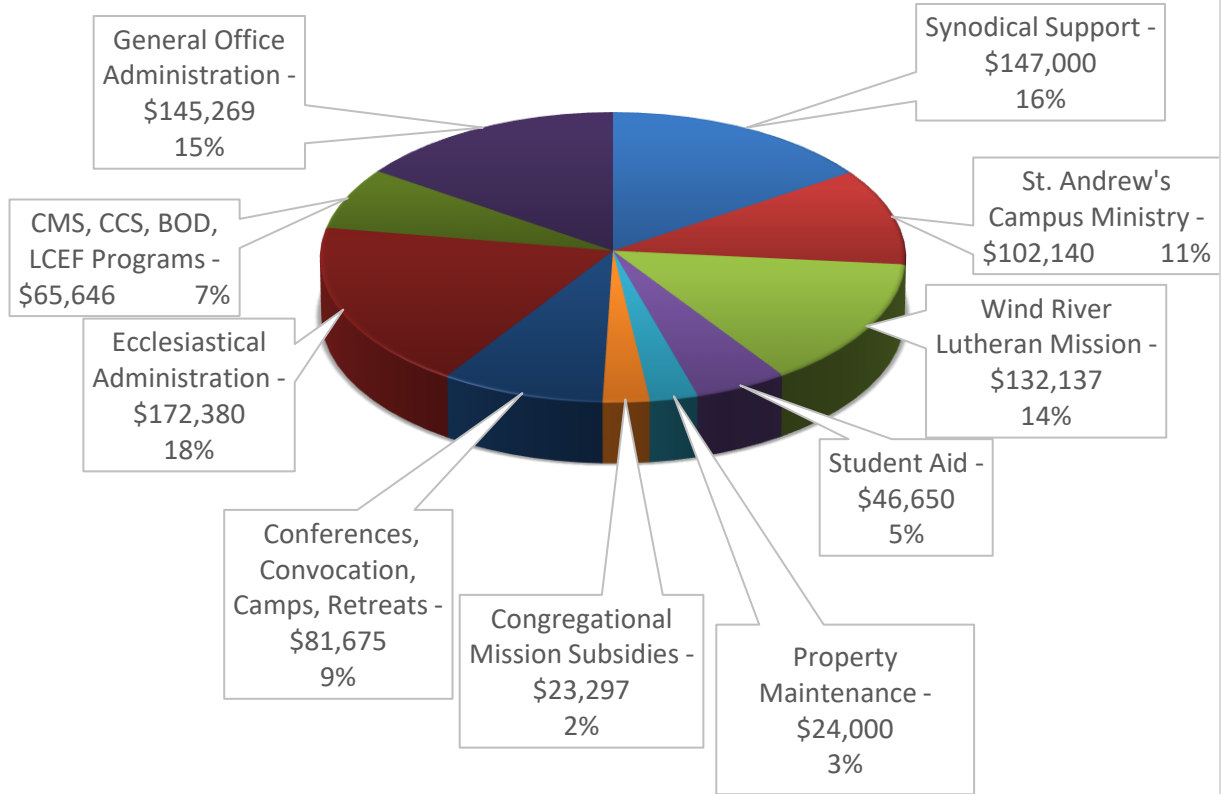
At 4:30 P.M., Pres. Hill invited Mr. Jeff Snyder to the podium to present the Treasurer's Report in the stead of Mr. Beyeler.

Mr. Snyder directed the Convention to Workbook Tab 3, p. 22, reproduced below:

**Three Year
Summarized Budget Comparison**

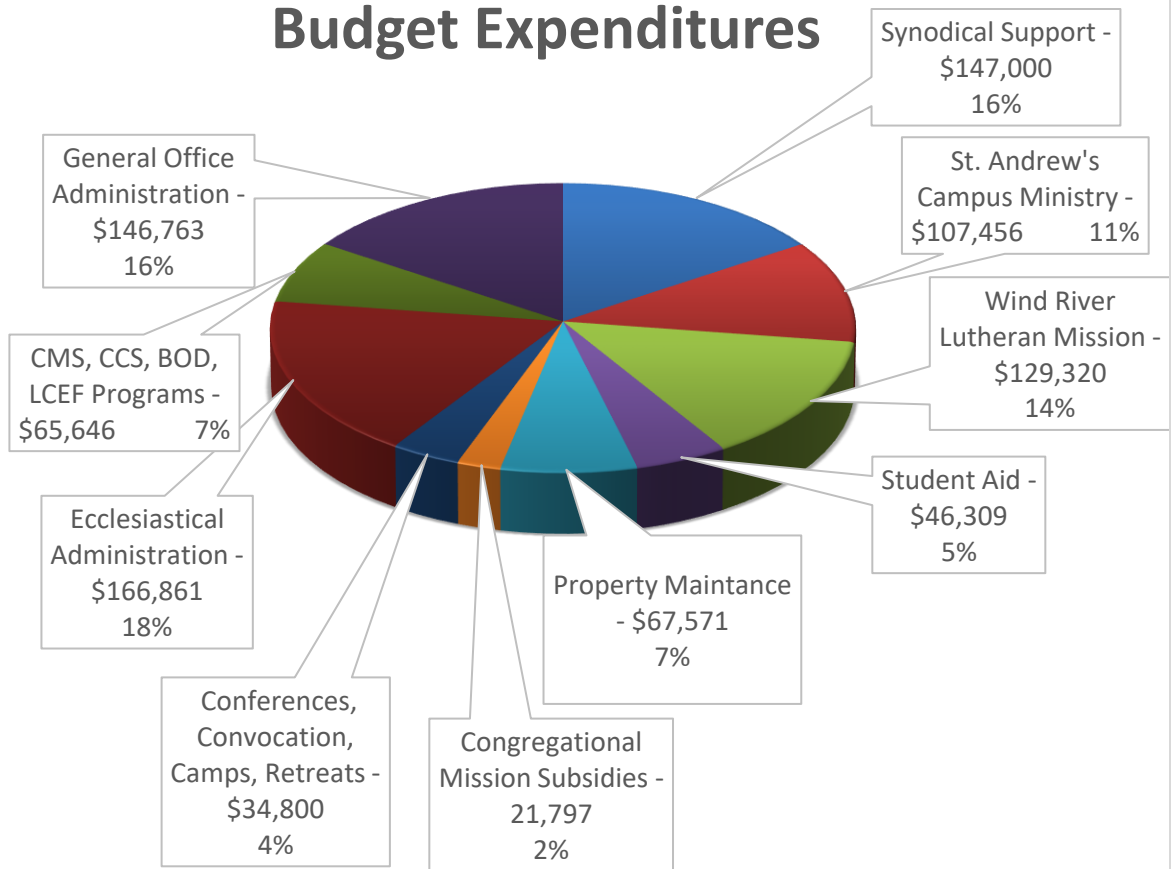
	Actual Expenses			Projected Expenses
	<u>2018*</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
<u>Synodical Budget Pledge</u> Higher Education, World Missions, Congregational Services & Administration, etc.	<i>*Shorter Fiscal Year</i> \$147,000.00	\$147,000.00	\$147,000.00	\$150,000.00
<u>District Mission Projects</u> Program Administration, District Mission Work, Campus Ministry, Subsidized Congregations, & Institutional Ministries	\$227,525.00	\$261,342.00	\$259,522.00	\$260,084.00
<u>Student Assistance</u> Student Aid & Recruitment, Schwieger & Fern Preis Scholarship, LWML Scholarship, Jensen & Splittgerber Scholarships	\$44,132.00	\$52,547.50	\$46,309.00	\$58,100.00
<u>Congregational Services</u> Program Administration, Adult Education, Outdoor & Youth Ministry, Evangelism, Stewardship, Human Care & Family Ministries	\$24,512.00	\$33,199.00	\$27,064.00	\$40,650.00
<u>Ecclesiastical Administration</u> President's Office, Vice Presidents and Circuit Counselors, Reconcilers, District Board of Education, DP Discretionary Fund	\$155,190.00	\$168,636.00	\$166,871.00	\$181,790.00
<u>District Administration</u> Financial & General Office, Board of Directors, Properties, Synod/District Conventions, Workshops, Pastors Conferences, Continuing Education, LCEF, Memorial Library, etc.	\$242,723.00	\$254,657.00	\$255,921.00	\$275,338.00
Total Expenditures (minus depreciation)	<u>\$841,082.00</u>	<u>\$917,381.50</u>	<u>\$902,687.00</u>	<u>\$965,962.00</u>
Total Income - (Actual & Projected)	<u>\$803,547.00</u>	<u>\$872,483.00</u>	<u>\$931,198.00</u>	<u>\$875,831.00</u>
Operating Surplus / (Deficit)	<u>(\$37,535.00)</u>	<u>(\$44,898.50)</u>	<u>\$28,511.00</u>	<u>(\$90,131.00)</u>
Assets/Investments for Expenditure Offset	<u>\$27,373.00</u>	<u>\$44,993.00</u>	<u>\$18,952.00</u>	<u>\$90,852.00</u>
District Capital Surplus (cumulative)	<u>-\$10,162.00</u>	<u>\$94.50</u>	<u>\$47,463.00</u>	<u>\$721.00</u>

2019 Wyoming District - LCMS Budget Expenditures



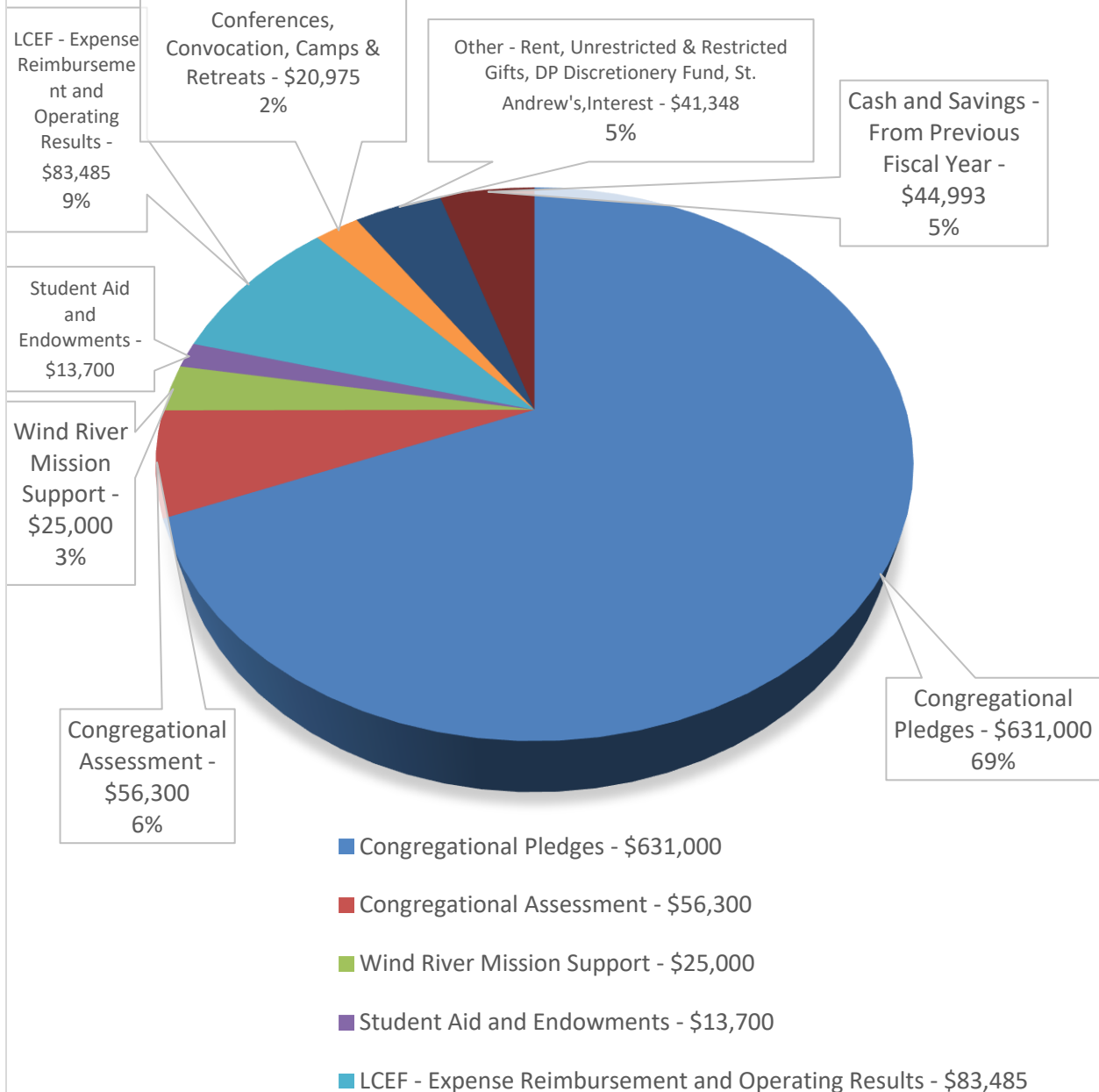
- Synodical Support - \$147,000
- St. Andrew's Campus Ministry - \$102,140
- Wind River Lutheran Mission - \$132,137
- Student Aid - \$46,650
- Property Maintenance - \$24,000
- Congregational Mission Subsidies - \$23,297
- Conferences, Convocation, Camps, Retreats - \$81,675
- Ecclesiastical Administration - \$172,380
- CMS, CCS, BOD, LCEF Programs - \$65,646
- General Office Administration - \$145,269

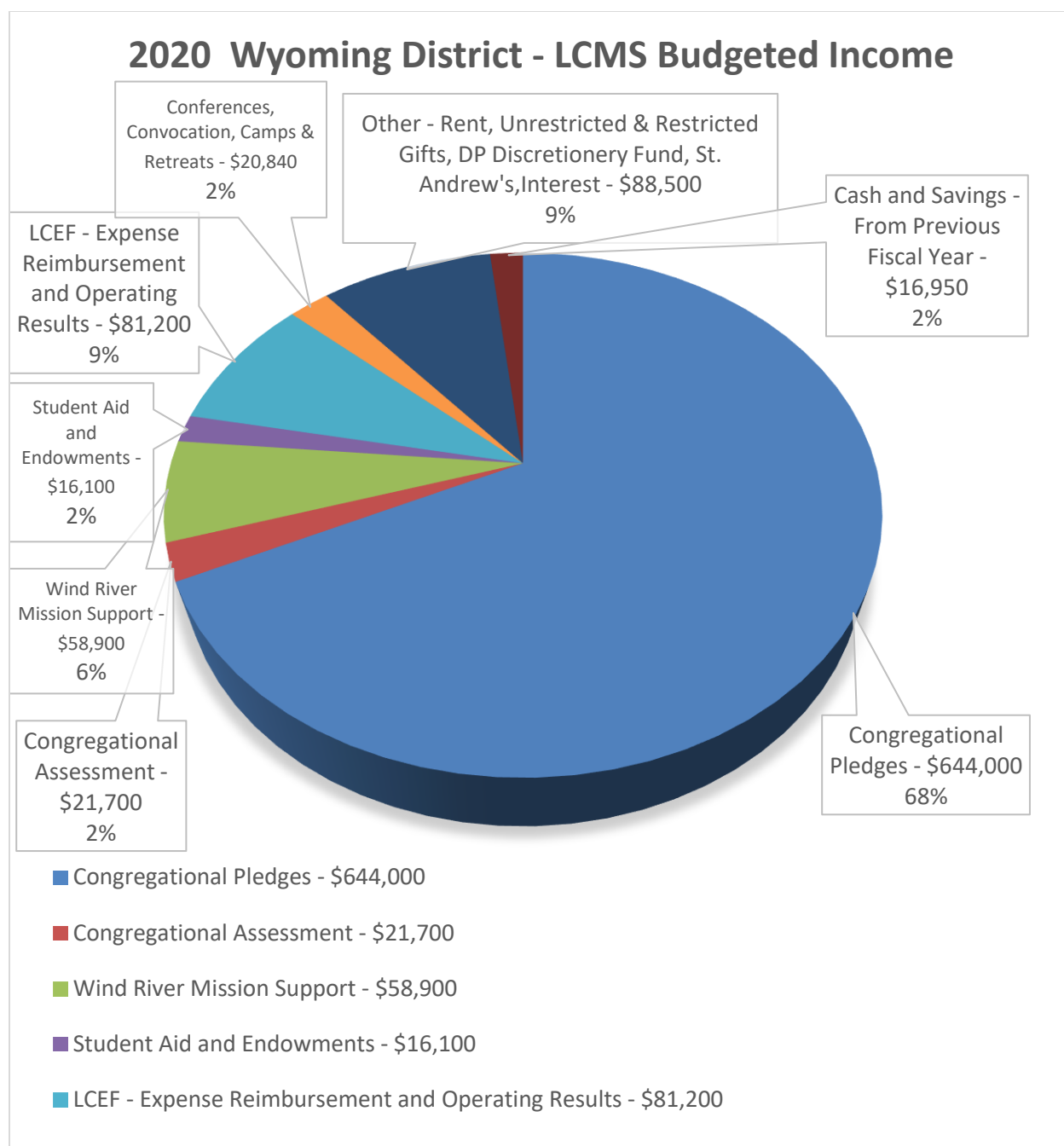
2020 Wyoming District - LCMS Budget Expenditures



- Synodical Support - \$147,000
- St. Andrew's Campus Ministry - \$107,456
- Wind River Lutheran Mission - \$129,320
- Student Aid - \$46,309
- Property Maintenance - \$67,571
- Congregational Mission Subsidies - 21,797
- Conferences, Convocation, Camps, Retreats - \$34,800
- Ecclesiastical Administration - \$166,861
- CMS, CCS, BOD, LCEF Programs - \$65,646
- General Office Administration - \$146,763

2019 Wyoming District - LCMS Budgeted Income





Mr. Snyder reported Mr. Beyeler's assessment of the Wyoming District's financial position: "The financial condition of the Wyoming District remains strong despite the challenges of COVID-19. Congregational pledges increased during 2020. Expenses have remained consistent and reasonable."

Mr. Snyder noted that 2018 was a shorter fiscal year by about two weeks. He also reported that the District received a Payroll Protection Program loan for \$71,700 on April 8, 2020. Forgiveness by the Small Business Administration was granted on December 15, 2020.

4:40 P.M. LCEF Vice-President's Report: Mr. Jeffrey Snyder

At 4:40 P.M., Pres. Hill invited Mr. Jeffrey Snyder, LCEF Vice-President, to give his report.

Mr. Snyder directed the Convention to the Workbook Tab 5, pp. 7 for his report.

The LCEF "Church Improvement Loan" or "ChIL" loan is the most common way of granting loans to congregations.

Many LCEF investors in the Wyoming District are children!

Mr. Snyder introduced Jackie Parker and Rachel Grant, who gave reflections on getting to know Wyoming and delegates at the Wyoming District Convention.

4:51 P.M. Resolutions Committee

At 4:51 P.M., Pres. Hill invited Rev. Kumm to the podium. Rev. Kumm directed the delegates to Workbook Tab 8, p. 4, and presented **Resolution 1-03-2021**.

The committee **moved** adoption.

To Produce Biblically Faithful Textbooks/Curricula For our Day Schools, High Schools, and Home Schools

RESOLUTION 1-03-2021

(PRESIDENT'S REPORT, TAB 2 P. 5)

WHEREAS, education in all subject areas is first and foremost about what is taught, namely that which is good, true, and beautiful; and

WHEREAS, secular education in all subject areas is increasingly subject to forces from anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-family, pro-death, amoral, anti-truth, and even anti-beauty perspectives; and

WHEREAS, the Holy Scriptures provide the norm and framework for knowledge in all subject areas, all being interwoven in significant ways with right theology, ethics, history, and human nature as revealed by God therein; and

WHEREAS, the LC-MS has the second largest system of parochial schools in America, but too often they are using secular textbooks/curricula, or publications from non-Lutheran traditions; and

WHEREAS, many Lutheran parents who homeschool their children find good, biblically faithful textbook/curricula options to be sorely lacking; and

WHEREAS, Christian schools and home schools in general would benefit greatly from having more biblically faithful Christian textbook/curricula options; and

WHEREAS, the natural sciences, especially biology and earth sciences, are prone to the grievous errors of Darwinism and Deep Time which directly undermine the integrity of the Scriptures, and the Gospel itself by putting Death before the Fall; and

WHEREAS, the Discovery Works science textbooks available from Concordia Publishing House, the only day school curricula available from CPH besides Religion Curriculum and some Lesson Plans, are outdated (© 1999) and rather limited (Grades 1-6); and

WHEREAS, it was resolved in Synodical Convention in 2019 ‘that pastors and other church workers be encouraged to confess, witness to, and uphold in their teaching the Synod’s publicly stated positions as set forth in A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod, Article 5 (adopted 1932):

We teach that God has created heaven and earth, and that in the manner and in the space of time recorded in the Holy Scriptures, especially Gen. 1 and 2, namely, by His almighty creative word, and in six days. We reject every doctrine which denies or limits the work of creation as taught in Scripture. In our days it is denied or limited by those who assert, ostensibly in deference to science, that the world came into existence through a process of evolution; that is, that it has, in immense periods of time, developed more or less of itself. Since no man was present when it pleased God to create the world, we must look for a reliable account of creation to God’s own record, found in God’s own book, the Bible. We accept God’s own record with full confidence and confess with Luther’s Catechism: “I believe that God has made me and all creatures.”

which certainly should include writings as presented to students by their teachers via textbooks/curricula; and

WHEREAS, the need is urgent, as common experience among shows many young adults rejecting their baptismal vows, their doubts arising in middle school and high school when Darwinism and its many related false “-isms” are preached by the secular textbooks, while either no counter arguments for biblical truth are available or those presented are inadequate; and

WHEREAS, the LC-MS has a university system and two seminaries housing expertise across all subject areas, including early childhood education, for producing excellent textbooks/curricula for grades K-12 as well as providing theologically sound editorial oversight to ensure content is biblically faithful in its Christian apologetic (defending Gen. 1-11 as it defines marriage between one man and one woman, and human nature as fallen, infected with original sin from Adam, but tells of the seed of the woman, the second Adam, Who would crush Satan’s head, and as it describes Earth’s early history with creation ex nihilo in six natural days ~~less than 10,000 years ago~~ and the global flood in Noah’s day); and

WHEREAS, the LC-MS has its own publishing house; therefore, be it

Resolved, that the Wyoming District of the LC-MS memorialize the Synod in convention to direct and coordinate the systematic preparation and production of biblically faithful textbooks/curricula across all subject areas, prioritizing biological and earth sciences, for grades K-12; and be it finally

Resolved, that this curriculum be ready for market by ~~2024~~ 2026.

A motion to strike “less than 10,000 years ago” in the next-to-last Whereas was seconded. The amendment was adopted.

A motion to amend line 7 of page 2 from 2024 to 2026 was accepted by common consent.

An additional amendment was withdrawn.

The motion as amended was adopted.

5:08 P.M. Announcements

Pres. Hill made various announcements regarding mileage reimbursement vouchers and the banquet being hosted at the Ramkota later this evening.

5:15 P.M. Vespers: Rev. Paul Cain, District Secretary

At 5:15 P.M., Rev. Paul, District Secretary, led the Convention in the Order of Vespers (LSB 229). Worship began with the delegates singing the hymn “Rise! To Arms! With Prayer Employ

You” (LSB 668). The delegates chanted Psalm 119:153-160 and sang the hymn “O Holy Spirit, Enter In” (TLH 235). The appointed Scripture reading was Acts 5:17-42.

The following is a summary of Rev. Cain’s sermon. Doing the right thing can get you into trouble. Yet, we echo and practice Acts 5:29: “We must obey God rather than men.” When the State commands that which God forbids or forbids what God commands, we have the duty to obey God rather than man. The Lutherans of Magdeburg made the good confession in 1550 against the Emperor. When the State commands that which God forbids or forbids what God commands, the lower authority (or lesser magistrate) has a duty to disobey the unjust command of the higher authority, and if necessary, to actively resist. In addition, those who hold lawful authority must wield it in whatever capacity they have to oppose tyrannical decrees.

By faith, you confess that the Christ is Jesus and His Resurrection. The Holy Spirit within your hearts has called, gathered, and enlightened you, and as you continue to be in the Word and receive His gifts, He keeps you in the holy Christian faith. You may not face persecution and arrest, yet your faith and values are under attack. You have many opportunities to witness to Christ, He who was killed by hanging on a tree, was raised from the dead, and has been exalted to God’s right hand so that He might give you repentance and forgiveness of sins!

Following the sermon and the singing of the Magnificat (LSB 231–232), the service concluded with prayer.

Following the conclusion of Vespers, Pres. Hill declared the Convention to be in recess.

SATURDAY, MAY 8

8:00 A.M. Call to Order and Announcements

At 8:00 A.M., Pres. Hill called the delegates to order for morning worship and declared the Convention to be in session.

Pres. Hill invited Rev. Paul Cain, District Secretary, to give an updated credentials report:

Voting Delegates:	79
Advisory Delegates:	13
Guests:	22
Synod Officials and Staff	7
Excused absences:	10

Pres. Hill asked the delegates to return their name tags and lanyards at the end of the day. Mileage reimbursement checks should be available before the conclusion of the Convention.

8:02 A.M. Memorial Service: Rev. Richard Boche, President Emeritus

At 8:02 A.M., the Rev. Richard Boche, Wyoming District President Emeritus, began the Memorial Service by announcing that four pastors, the Rev. Claude Constable, Rev. Joseph Hu,

Rev. Robert Oberheu, Rev. Vernon Boehlke, one teacher, Carol Casperson, and one Wyoming District Staff Member, Ruth Kucera, had been called to their eternal rest. After the hymn “Awake, My Heart, with Gladness” (LSB 467), Rev. Boche led the delegates through the Remembrance of Baptism from the Funeral Service Liturgy (LSB 278). The delegates chanted Psalm 116. The appointed readings for the service were Ruth 1:15-18, Hebrews 11:32-12:2, and Matthew 11:25-30. Following the Scripture readings, the delegates sang “I Know My Faith Is Founded” (LSB 587).

The following is a summary of Rev. Boche’s sermon. Real people. Real servants of God. Real sinners. Real death. Psalm 116: Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints! The Lord is not distant with regard to those who are His own. They are asleep in Christ and will awake when Christ comes again. He says: “You will find rest for your soul.” That is God’s gift to the Christian. Your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

The service concluded with prayer and the hymn “For All the Saints” (LSB 677).

8:45 A.M. Elections Committee

At 10:11 A.M. Pres. Hill invited Rev. Neugebauer to the podium. Rev. Neugebauer requested that the ballots for the LCMS 2023 Nominations Committee (lay) to be distributed with the following candidates:

Mr. John Schmall
Mr. Landis Benson

After the ballots were collected, Rev. Neugebauer declared the elections closed.

8:50 A.M. Resolutions Committee

At 8:50 A.M., Pres. Hill reminded the delegates that resolutions not addressed during the Convention die due to lack of action. Congregations can submit overtures directly to the Synod Convention.

Pres. Hill invited Rev. Kumm to the podium. Rev. Kumm presented **Resolution 2-04-2021**.

The committee **moved** adoption.

To Give Thanks to God for the Work of Circuit Visitors

RESOLUTION 2-04-2021 *(OVERTURE 2-04-2021)*

WHEREAS, our Lord instructs us in Holy Scripture, “do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain” (Deuteronomy 25:4, 1 Corinthians 9:9), and writing by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Saint Paul warns the church, “Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.” (Galatians 6:6-7); and

WHEREAS, in recognition of this, the Wyoming District has established guidelines for congregations to support their pastor in his work as an encouragement to follow these scriptural obligations; and

WHEREAS, the bylaws of synod require that the Wyoming District elect Visitors from among the pastors of each circuit to assist the District President in his duties; and

WHEREAS, the Synod Handbook bylaw 5.2(d) states “All nominated pastors serving congregations and emeriti pastors whose names are nominated prior to the day of the circuit forum shall be eligible for election in accordance with section 4.3 of these Bylaws” which trusts the wisdom of the circuit and district in nominating and electing the best pastor for the job, and noting that a nominated pastor may reject the nomination; and

WHEREAS, the office of Circuit Visitor is critically important to the health and wellbeing of our district congregations, assisting the District President in his duties of visitation and ecclesiastical supervision of congregations and pastors in the circuit; and

WHEREAS, this assistance takes a great deal of time (100 hours or more a year) away from the congregations and especially the family of the Circuit Visitor; and

WHEREAS, the District reimburses expenses of the Circuit Visitor, such as mileage, meals, etc., while the congregation continues to account for his time and effort, as Scripture requires of us; and

WHEREAS, the Wyoming District Praesidium, and the Board of Directors are to look after the care and well being of the Circuit Visitor and his congregations(s) and can provide means to aid in cases of need; therefore be it

Resolved, that the congregation(s) of the Circuit Visitor continue to support their pastor in his role as both pastor of the parish and in his role as Circuit Visitor and see their importance to the health of the congregations of the Wyoming District; and be it further

Resolved, that congregations view the time and finances (like pulpit supply) incurred by their pastor serving as Circuit Visitor as gift and service to the congregations of the Wyoming District; and be it finally

Resolved, that the Wyoming District give thanks to God for the work of Circuit Visitors in assisting the District President to provide Ecclesiastical Supervision, encouragement in the work of ministry among our pastors and congregations, and brotherly advice to pastors as they carry out their ministries.

The resolution was **adopted**.

Rev. Kumm presented **Resolution 1-01-2021**.

The committee **moved** adoption.

To Confess the Immortality of the Soul And to Clarify the Synod's Public Doctrine

RESOLUTION 1-01-2021 (OVERTURE 1-01-2021)

WHEREAS, *Luther's Small Catechism* teaches us to say, "I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my *body and soul*, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them" (First Article); and

WHEREAS, the Synod's first Explanation of the Small Catechism by Johann Konrad Dietrich (1517-1639), explicitly affirms that the soul is immortal: "But why do you believe in the resurrection of the body only? Because, properly speaking, only that shall rise which has perished; but the body only has perished; therefore only the body shall rise again. The soul can literally neither die nor rise again, because it is immortal. Matt. 10:28, Eccl. 12:7, Acts 7:59, 1 Pet. 3:19, Rev. 6:9, Wis 3:1" (p. 130, q. 312, 1902 English tr.); and

WHEREAS, the 1896 Schwan Explanation teaches concerning eternal life, "That all believers when they die are, according to the soul, at once present with Christ, and, after the last day, shall be with Christ, *body and soul*, and live with Him in eternal joy and glory. Luke 23:43, Rev. 14:13, John 10:27-28, 1 John 3:2, Ps. 16:11, John 17:24, Rom. 8:18" (p. 108, q. 205, 1905 English tr.); and

WHEREAS, the 1943 Explanation likewise teaches, "(A.) That at the time of death the *soul* of the believer is at once received into the presence of Christ. Phil. 1:23, Luke 23:43, Rev. 14:13. (B.) That at the Last Day the believer will live with Christ, according to *body and soul*, in eternal joy and glory. 1 John 3:2, Ps. 16:11, John 17:24, Rom. 8:18" (p. 143, q. 197); and

WHEREAS, the 1991 Explanation also teaches, "(A.) Eternal life is a present possession. John 17:3, John 3:16, Rom. 10:9, John 3:36. (B.) At the time of death, the *soul* of a believer is immediately with Christ in heaven. Eccl. 12:7, Luke 23:43, John 17:24, Phil. 1:23-24, Rev. 14:13. (C.) At the Last Day the believers, in both *body and soul*, will begin the full enjoyment of being with Christ forever. 1 Cor. 15:51-52, Matt. 25:34, Ps. 16:11, Rom. 8:18, 1 John 3:2" (p. 166-7, q. 190); and

WHEREAS, the 2017 Explanation, while it teaches that "I will enjoy being with Christ in His new creation, in body and soul, forever." (p. 225, q. 224), yet avoids speaking of the immortality of the soul and the Christian's soul dwelling with Christ upon death, and so breaks with the pattern of words (2 Tim 1:13) used by all previous synodical Explanations, when it teaches, "What happens to me as a Christian when I die? When I die, the God-given unity of my *body and spirit* will be broken. I will immediately be in the presence of Christ, in heaven, but my *body* will remain in the grave until the resurrection. Philippians 1:23-24, Philippians 3:20, 2 Corinthians 5:8, 2 Timothy 4:18, Luke 23:43, John 17:24" (p. 224, q. 223); thus, the newest synodical catechism conspicuously avoids confessing what happens to the *soul* in death; and

WHEREAS, the Synod's newest systematic theology teaches, "What does the scriptural understanding of *body and soul* mean for the 'immortality of the *soul*'? It denies this view, if by *soul* one means, as is usually intended, a separate principle that a human being has or receives" [Samuel H. Nafzger, ed., *Confessing the Gospel: A Lutheran Approach to Systematic Theology* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 1:285, and see footnote 68]; and

WHEREAS, the 1969 Commission on Theology and Church Relations position paper, *A Statement on Death, Resurrection, and Immortality*, rejects the immortality of the soul, claiming that, "The Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions compel us: ...To reject the teaching that the *soul* is by nature and by virtue of an inherent quality immortal" (III, 6, e). The paper does not, however, affirm that, like the angels, the soul is immortal by the ongoing and active will of God; and

WHEREAS, any denial of the immortality of the soul clearly contradicts the synod's first catechism by implying that the *soul* can literally "die" and "rise again." This, in turn, contradicts the bipartite anthropology of the Athanasian Creed wherein "the rational *soul and flesh* is one man." It also contradicts Luther's Small Catechism confessing that God "has given me my *body and soul*;" and

WHEREAS, the Scriptures in various places speak of the soul or spirit as distinct from the "personal identity of a person," e.g. "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior" (Lk 1:46-47); "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and let all that is within me bless His holy name." (ps. 103:1), etc.; and

WHEREAS, our hymnody and accepted prayers of the Church follow this sound pattern of words, e.g. in *This Body in the Grave we Lay* (LSB 759/TLS 596, stanza 3), “The soul forever lives with God, etc.”; and in *Awake, My Heart, with Gladness* (LSB 467, stanza 1), “My Savior there was laid/Where our bed must be made/When to the realms of light/Our spirit wings its flight!”; and in the common bedtime prayer, “And if I die before I wake,/I pray the Lord my soul to take.” And

WHEREAS, the Holy Spirit never teaches us to say, “My ‘personal identity’ magnifies the Lord” or “Into Your hands I commit my ‘personal identity’ or “The ‘personal identity’ is willing, but the flesh is weak” and the Church does not sing, “our personal identity wings its flight,” and

WHEREAS we do reject a pagan or Platonic or philosophical concept of the soul, which imagines the soul as eternal by itself, as having no beginning, or as being a spark of the divine essence; but the Scriptures teach that the soul is created by God to live forever; and

WHEREAS, we confess both the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Wyoming District in convention affirm the immortality of the soul; and be it further

Resolved, That the Wyoming District in convention commend to its pastors the study of Howard Tepker’s two-part article titled, “Problems in Eschatology” published in the *Springfielder*, vol. XXIX, no 2 (1965) & vol. XXX, no. 2 (1966); and be it further

Resolved, That the Wyoming District both commend and make available the paper of J.A.O. Preus titled, “Immortality of the Soul and Resurrection of the Body” that was presented to the CTCR in discussion immediately prior to its 1969 issuance of *A Statement on Death, Resurrection, and Immortality*; and be it further

Resolved, That the Wyoming District request that President Hill choose a theologian from our District to write a paper on the immortality of the soul to be presented at the Fall pastors conference, and invite the contributing author of Nafzger’s *Systematic Theology* to give a defense of calling the soul “personal identity” instead of soul; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Wyoming District in convention ask the CTCR to clarify: Does the Synod, in its teaching, affirm that man has in any way an immortal soul, deny this, or leave it as an open question?

The committee added a new next-to-last Whereas.

The amended resolution was **adopted unanimously**.

Rev. Kumm presented **Resolution 1-04-2021**.

The committee **moved** adoption.

To Develop Lutheran Curriculum for our LCMS schools and home school families

RESOLUTION 1-04-2021

WHEREAS, the schools and homeschooling parents of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have a need for faithful Lutheran curriculum; and

WHEREAS, there are many capable individuals within the LCMS who can write and prepare curriculum; therefore be it

Resolved, that the LCMS District President and Education Executive of the Wyoming District appoint a taskforce to research, fund, develop, and publish sound Lutheran Curriculum in all liberal arts subjects.

A motion to amend adding “within the LCMS” to the second Whereas was seconded. The amendment was **adopted unanimously**.

A motion to amend the Resolved to add “research fund,” was seconded. The amendment was adopted unanimously.

After discussion, the amended resolution was **adopted unanimously**.

Rev. Kumm presented **Resolution 1-05-2021**.

The committee **moved** adoption.

To Commend the Paper “Lessons from Magdeburg Today” to the Synod and its Officers

RESOLUTION 1-05-2021 (ESSAY III, 2021)

WHEREAS, at the Wyoming District Convention, May 7, A+D 2021, the Rev. Dr. Christian Preus of Mt. Hope Lutheran in Casper, gave a clear and Biblical presentation on how Christ’s Church should react to the kind of government mandates made in America during the Covid-19 crisis (*Lessons from Magdeburg Today*); and

WHEREAS, our synod is divided on how to react to government mandates to cease gathering together, to withhold the sacrament from Christians, to refrain from using the common cup, to silence the congregation’s singing, to muffle with facemasks the voices of pastors and congregations during the preaching, praying, and singing of God’s Word; and

WHEREAS, there is disagreement in congregations of synod on whether such government mandates ought to or can be obeyed, and such disagreement is deadly to walking together in the unity of Spirit (Phil. 1:27; Eph. 4:3; Gal. 5:15); and

WHEREAS, the Rev. Dr. Preus’s paper promises to answer such disagreement with the pure doctrine of Holy Scripture; therefore be it

Resolved, that the Wyoming District in convention, request that their district president, Rev. John Hill, distribute a reviewed version of Pr. Preus’s paper to the praesidium of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LC-MS), and be it ~~further~~ finally

Resolved, that President Hill encourage President Harrison to facilitate reading and discussion of this paper among the synod’s praesidium, and among the synod’s theologians; ~~and be it further.~~

~~*Resolved*, that the Wyoming District in convention encourage, urge, and request the district presidents of synod to use Pr. Preus’s paper to encourage faithfulness in practice among the congregations under their supervision; and be it finally~~

~~*Resolved*, that the Wyoming District urge the LC-MS in convention in 2023 to commend Pr. Preus’s paper for reading and sober consideration by all pious Lutherans.~~

A motion to amend, striking lines 21-25 was seconded. The amendment was adopted.

A delegate called the question. The non-debatable motion was seconded. The convention voted to cease debate.

The resolution was **adopted**.

9:54 A.M. Elections Committee

At 9:54 A.M. Pres. Hill invited Rev. Neugebauer to the podium.

Rev. Neugebauer invited the members of the Election Committee forward and presented them to the Convention. The delegates thanked them, and District Office Staff for their service.

Rev. Jared Korb

Mr. Kevin Frey

Mr. Mark Douthit

Rev. Neugebauer announced the results for the election for a layman for the LCMS 2023 Nominations Committee.

LCMS 2023 Nominations Committee (lay)

Mr. John Schmall	48
Mr. Landis Benson	23

Mr. John Schmall was elected as the LCMS 2023 Nominations Committee layman from Wyoming District.

Rev. Neugebauer thanked all who allowed their names to stand for election. He led the convention in prayer. Rev. Neugebauer announced that the work of the Elections Committee was completed.

9:56A.M. District Administrative Team (DAT) Report and Ingathering

At 9:56 A.M., Rev. Hill invited Rev. Maas to the podium to give instruction on the DAT form that was distributed to the delegates.

The convention stood to sing “We Praise You and Acknowledge You” (LSB 941).

Rev. Maas reviewed the questions on the 2021 survey form and requested that it be filled out and returned before the break.

10:03 A.M. Break

At 10:03 A.M., Pres. Hill declared the Convention to be on break.

10:25 A.M. Commission on Congregational Services (CCS) Report

At 10:25 A.M., Pres. Hill invited Rev. Humphrey, Chairman of the CCS, to the podium to give the CCS report.

Rev. Humphrey directed the Convention to Workbook Tab 5 for the CCS facilitator reports.

Rev. James Rockhill will become CCS Chairman. The 2nd Vice-President serves as CCS Advisor.

Rev. Jon Olson, Evangelism Chairman, announced that the Tell the Good News About Jesus Convocation will be February 11-12, 2022. Theme: Identity and Creation: 21st Century Problems, 1st Century Solutions. Prof. Adam Koontz will be the main speaker.

Lander Camp will be in August, one week later than usual.

The Men's Retreat next month will be at Fort Robinson in Nebraska.

Rev. Humphrey relayed his thanks for the work of all of the CCS Facilitators and shared personal thanks for Rev. Rockhill filling in as acting Chair when needed.

10:45 A.M. Resolutions Committee

At 10:45 A.M., Pres. Hill invited Rev. Kumm to the podium.

Rev. Kumm presented **Resolution 3-01-2021**.

The committee **moved** adoption.

TO GIVE THANKS FOR CONVENTION WORSHIP AND MUSIC

3-01-2021

WHEREAS, Dr. Steven Hoffman has done excellent work preparing the music for the District Convention which provides opportunity to joyously receive the gifts of the Lord through His Word; and

WHEREAS, there have been numerous pastors who have led us in prayer and the preaching of God's Word faithfully, rightly dividing Law and Gospel and encouragement for us in our life; and

WHEREAS, Mt. Hope Lutheran Church in Casper has hosted the Divine Service for the Wyoming District Convention and have blessed us with the gifts of the Lord entrusted to the congregation's care; and

WHEREAS, an offering was taken at the Divine Service and the District in Convention entrusts the faithful use of those funds to the congregation; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the delegates of the 20th Convention of the Wyoming District stand and that we sing the Doxology in thanks to the Lord for their service to our district.

The resolution was **adopted unanimously by singing the Doxology**.

Rev. Kumm presented **Resolution 3-02-2021**.

The committee **moved** adoption.

TO THANK THE CONVENTION ESSAYISTS

3-02-2021

WHEREAS, The Reverend Doctor Christian Preus, the Reverend President John Hill, the Reverend Jonathan Lange, and the Reverend Kenneth Mars have delivered essays to the Wyoming District Convention on the theme, “Here I Stand Before Kings and Princes”; and

WHEREAS, their presentations have been of benefit to those in attendance at the Convention, both in strengthening our unity as a district and edifying the faith of those claiming Jesus as Lord; be it therefore

RESOLVED, that the Wyoming District Convention rise to express our appreciation and thanks by speaking in unison “THANKS BE TO GOD!” for the presenters for their essays.

The resolution was **adopted with the words “THANKS BE TO GOD!”**.

Rev. Kumm presented **Resolution 3-03-2021**.

The committee **moved** adoption.

TO PRAISE GOD FOR JEFF SNYDER AND TIFFANY HOFF

3-03-2021

WHEREAS, Mr. Jeff Snyder and Mrs. Tiffany Hoff are employed by the Wyoming District; and

WHEREAS, Jeff and Tiffany have demonstrated faithful service to the district in preparing for this convention; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the delegates and guests of the Wyoming District Convention stand in order to express thanks with applause for these devoted workers.

The amended resolution was **adopted unanimously with thankful applause**.

Rev. Kumm thanked and introduced the members of the Resolutions Committee:

Rev. Allen Strawn (secretary)

Rev. Peter Bertram

Rev. Mark Preus

Dr. Tim Narjes

Mr. Greg Schmall

Mr. Benjamin Craig

Mr. Landis Benson

Mr. Steve Coniglio

Pres. Hill thanked Rev. Kumm and the Committee for their work.

10:42 A.M. Commission on Mission Services (CMS) Report

At 10:42 A.M., Pres. Hill announced that the CMS report is included in Workbook Tab 4 and encouraged the delegates to read the report. He thanked Rev. James Martin and the CMS facilitators for their work.

Rev. Gerald Heinecke will become CMS Chairman. The 1st Vice-President serves as CMS Advisor.

10:43 A.M. Commission on Ecclesiastical Services

At 10:43 A.M.,

Pres. Hill expressed his thanksgiving for the various participants on the Commission of Ecclesiastical Services (CES). The members of the CES are listed as follows:

Rev. Ted Bourret – Constitutions

Mr. Larry Harrington – Attorney

Rev. Mark Mumme – Ministerial Growth and Support

Rev. Paul Cain – Education

Rev. Jeffery Grams – Worship

Mr. Ken Temme – Memorial Library

Rev. Kenneth Humphrey – Communications

Pres. Hill thanked the following individuals who are completing their service to the District:

Rev. Mark Maas – District First Vice-President and Chairman of the BOD

Rev. Ted Bourret – District Second Vice-President and Constitutions Chairman

Rev. James Martin – Chairman of the CMS

Rev. Kenneth Humphrey – Chairman of the CCS

Mr. Mike Wendorf – District Layman BOD

Mr. Matt Huckfeldt – District Layman BOD

Mr. Andrew Beyeler – District Treasurer

Pres. Hill also thanked the convention pages, vendors, Resolution, Nomination, and Election Committees, Mary Grant, Tara Rice, and Dr. Hoffman.

10:47 A.M. Adjournment

At 10:47 A.M., Having no further business to consider, it was moved and second to adjourn the Convention. The motion was **adopted unanimously**.

Pres. Hill declared the 20th Convention of the Wyoming District to be closed in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

10:49 A.M. Matins (Rev. Jonathan Lange) and Installation of Officers (Rev. Peter Lange/Rev. John Hill)

At 10:49 A.M., Rev. Jonathan Lange officiated the closing service of the Convention with the order of Matins (LSB 219). Worship began with the delegates singing the hymn “To God the Holy Spirit Let Us Pray” (LSB 768). The delegates also sang the hymn “Lord Jesus Christ, with Us Abide” (TLH 292). The appointed Scripture reading was from Acts 4:23-31.

Rev. Jonathan Lange preached the sermon; a summary follows. There was a day when persecution of Christians happened for the very first time. Today’s reading is the day after. “They will put you out of synagogues,” Jesus said. His promise came true here. In jail, they talked about their circumstances. It is the job of the church to put contemporary challenges into a cruciform, Christological perspective. The true family is the family of God in Christ Jesus, created by the Father offering His Only-Begotten Son. The gathered Church prayed. Prayers for boldness are answered with occasions for boldness. The Lord gives boldness of speech. It will always remain a gift of God, given in answer to prayer. We resolved to continue confessing. We return to a posture of prayer. We have been saved by the blood of Jesus alone, are guided by the Scripture alone, and are saved by grace alone. To God the Holy Spirit let us pray. And He will answer. “I will deliver you and you will glorify Me.”

After the delegates sang the Te Deum (LSB 223–225), the service continued with the installation of officers listed as follows:

Installed by LCMS 1st Vice-President Peter Lange:
District President: Rev. John Hill

Installed by Wyoming District President John Hill:
District Vice-Presidents: Rev. Paul Cain, Rev. Jonathan Lange, Rev. Allen Strawn

Circuit Visitors: Rev. Richard Neugebauer, Rev. Scott Firminhac, Rev. Jon Olson,
Rev. Jais Tinglund, Rev. Dan Mulholland, Rev. Andrew Dimit

Board of Directors: Rev. Darrell Debowey, Mr. Steve Coniglio, Mr. Phillip Scheel

Chairmen-Elect for the CMS and CCS: Rev. Travis Sherman and Rev. David Bott, respectively.

The service concluded with prayer and the delegates singing the hymn, “Lord Jesus Christ, the Church’s Head” (LSB 647).

11:51 A.M. Adjourn, and Formal Convention Closing

At 11:51 A.M., the Wyoming District Convention stood adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rev. Paul J Cain, Wyoming District Secretary

PART 3

ESSAYS TO CONVENTION

CONFESSING THE FAITH: LUTHER AT WORMS

BY PRESIDENT JOHN E. HILL

THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF CONFESSION

BY REV. KENNETH MARS

LESSONS FROM MAGDEBURG FOR TODAY

BY REV. DR. CHRISTIAN A. PREUS

CONFESSION IN OUR CULTURE AND WORLD TODAY

BY REV. JONATHAN LANGE

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Confessing the Faith: Luther at Worms
Convention of the Wyoming District, LCMS
Rev. John E. Hill; May 6, 2021

The doctrinal essays at this convention will be given by four of our pastors. We are remembering and giving thanks to God for an event in our Church's history 500 years ago, on April 18, 1521. Luther stood before central Europe's Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation and confessed the truth of Christ. We are the children and heirs of his confession and his piety. Our essays will explore these four general topics: first, Luther's Confession at Worms and its implications for our church today (that's my task); second, "The Biblical Doctrine of Confession" (Pastor Kenneth Mars); third, "Lessons from Magdeburg for Today" on the Church's confession (Pastor Christian Preus); and fourth, "Confession in our Culture and World today" (Pastor Jonathan Lange).

From the outset, I would like to emphasize to you that Christian confession includes both the act and the content of the confession. It is an action, that is, you will have to take a stand both with your words and with your body and life. But it is also content, that is, true doctrine, without which any stand you take would be sheer vanity and a participation in the devil's lie. The Church's confession – the Christian's confession – is the confession of Jesus Christ and His Word. With that, let's turn to our first essay.

Introduction

It turns out that the history of the church at any place or time is a part of the history of the whole Church. You can enter into that history and see the acts and deeds of one man, or one congregation, or one event in the long and growing account of Christendom, and you will have entered into the history of the whole church. It is a history of God's deeds, beginning with many deeds that the world denies or overlooks, including the death and bodily resurrection of Christ, the daily Baptism and forgiveness of Christians, and the return of Christ in glory. The Church's history is a history of the contention for His Word, of Christians bearing scorn, of confession by words and confession by deeds and confession by martyrdom. There is deep sorrow because of sin, and error, and evil, on account of which we cry out to God daily. There is joy because of forgiveness, and truth, and goodness. There are craven, cowardly deeds. There is persecution that fills up the suffering of Christ. And there is always the confession of the truth of God's Word.

Luther knew and believed this great truth about the Church and her confession. Late in 1520, as Luther contemplated the potential summons to stand before the court of

the Holy Roman Empire, with Emperor Charles V and the imperial estates as his judge and jury, he wrote a letter to his good friend, George Spalatin. Would he come and stand before this court, even if it meant imprisonment, torture, or death? Here is Luther's answer:

Of course I would by all means come, if called, in so far as it would be up to me, even if I could not come by my own power and instead would have to be driven there as a sick man. For it would not be right to doubt that I am called by the Lord if the Emperor summons. Further, if they should employ force in this matter, which is most probable (for they do not want me called there because they want to learn something), then this matter can only be commended to the Lord. For He who saved the three men in the furnace of the Babylonian king still lives and rules. If He does not want to preserve me, then my head is of slight importance compared with Christ, who was put to death in greatest ignominy – a stumbling block to all and the ruin of many. No one's danger, no one's safety can be considered here. We must rather take care that we do not expose the gospel (which we have finally begun to promote) to the derision of the godless and thus give our enemies a reason for boasting over us because we do not dare confess what we have taught and are afraid to shed our blood for it. May the merciful Christ prevent such cowardice on our part and such boasting on their part. Amen.

Of course it has come about that the kings and rulers of the earth would gather and rage with the nations and peoples against God and His Christ. Yet the Spirit teaches in that same Psalm [Psalm 2] that those who trust in God will be blessed; and not only this, but also that the Lord will laugh and deride those who don't. Certainly it is not up to us to decide whether my life, or for that matter my death, will bring greater or less danger for the gospel and the public welfare. You know that God's truth is a rock of stumbling set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel [Is. 8:14; Lk 2:34]. . . Now you have my judgment and opinion on this matter. You may expect everything of me except flight and recanting. I do not want to escape, much less recant; may the Lord Jesus strengthen me in this. I could do neither without endangering piety and the salvation of many. (December 29, 1520, AE 48.188–190)

This essay will have two sections. First, I will describe the history of Luther's confession at Worms. Following this brief history, I will discuss the place of truth, in particular, the truth of God's Word, in every Christian confession. Luther's example will serve a salutary illustration of the situation that faces every Christian in his place in life.

Luther at Worms

It is a wonder that a 37-year-old ordained monk and professor of theology at the University of Wittenberg should stand before the most powerful civil ruler of Western Europe. Wittenberg was a backwater German town of some 2,500 inhabitants (smaller than Glenrock, WY). The University was only 10 years old when Luther first arrived in 1512. When he addressed the Emperor at Worms, Luther apologized if he used the wrong titles and modes of address. He simply had no exposure to such things in Wittenberg.

And yet, here he was before Emperor and Empire. You know that 3 ½ years before, Luther had nailed the 95 Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, an act that was intended to initiate debate about an abusive pastoral practice regarding indulgences. The Theses were copied, printed, and distributed across the empire. The unknown professor suddenly gained notoriety. It also earned him enemies.

God was at work in the growing controversy, for He drove Luther into a deeper and better understanding of the doctrine taught in Holy Scriptures. Luther studied, wrote, taught, debated, and defended over those 3 ½ years. In the summer of 1518 he participated in a widely publicized debate in the city of Leipzig. That debate put him on a direct collision course with the papacy in Rome. By August that year, Luther was summoned to Rome to be tried. Although he did not go to Rome, his official trial began that October with a hearing before the papal legate in Augsburg.

The death of Emperor Maximilian I in January 1519 delayed Luther's trial while the seven electors of the Empire chose his successor. The papacy tried to court the favor of Luther's prince, the Elector Duke Frederick, in the political wrangling that ensued. The election maneuvering gave Luther time to work in peace. Charles V was elected Emperor on June 28, 1519 and was crowned at Aachen, Germany on October 26 the following year.

1520 turned out to be a year of great productivity for Luther. He proposed a full agenda of reformation to the rulers of Germany and wrote major works against the Roman sacramental system and on the teaching of Christian freedom. Nevertheless, in January 1520 proceedings against Luther returned in earnest in Rome. Meetings at the papal court in late May and early June produced the papal bull, *Exsurge Domine*, which threatened Luther's excommunication. This official condemnation of Luther's teachings finally reached Wittenberg on October 10, 1520. On December 10, Luther and a crowd of students outside the Elster Gate of Wittenberg publicly burned the bull, along with books of canon law. The time of reckoning was coming.

The pope issued a bull of excommunication January 3, 1521, which required that Luther be handed over to the Roman church for punishment. But the civil rulers did not immediately obey the pope's demands. From the end of 1520 through the early months of 1521 Duke Frederick and Emperor Charles negotiated about how to give Luther a fair public hearing before they proclaimed him a notorious heretic and imposed civil penalties upon him. They finally agreed to give him that hearing at the parliamentary assembly – the Diet – of the Empire, to be held at the Imperial free city of Worms in southwest Germany. Importantly, a guarantee of safe-conduct was issued for Luther to attend. The summons arrived on March 29. He left Wittenberg on about April 2.

It is over 300 miles from Wittenberg to Worms. Luther traveled with companions in a covered wagon and preached at stops in Erfurt, Gotha, and Eisenach. In Eisenach he was not feeling well and had to be bled. In Weimar he learned that he had already practically been judged guilty in a ruling of the Emperor.

They reached Frankfurt on April 14 and Luther was feeling better again. In a letter to his friend George Spalatin, he wrote, "But Christ lives, and we shall enter Worms in spite of all the gates of hell and the powers in the air." He was determined to enter Worms, "even if as many devils were in that city as tiles on the roofs" (Brecht I.449f).

They entered Worms on April 16, welcomed by crowds of supporters. The next morning, Luther heard confession from an ailing knight and celebrated communion with him. The formal summons came later that morning to appear at the diet at four o'clock that afternoon. There was to be no debate; he was only to answer questions addressed to him. At his appearance, the imperial records give this description of him: "Forty years old, eyes and lively features which he frivolously changed. As clothing he wore the garb of the Augustinian order with its leather belt, the large tonsure freshly shaved, with his hair cut somewhat more than was customary" (Brecht I.453).

Luther was to answer two questions: Were the books – piled on a table in the hall – his books? And would he retract, or recant, anything in them? He replied first in German, then in Latin. After examining the books in question, Luther willingly acknowledged them as his own. In reply to the second question, however, he asked to be given a day to consider and prepare a faithful answer. He had come ready to answer for specific teachings, but not to give a total confession or total rejection of all his books. Luther knew that the salvation of his soul and the Word of God were at stake, that indeed he stood before the Final Judge of all men. He asked for time.

Time was granted him, though with some reluctance. Luther was warned “that he should keep in mind the unity of the holy, catholic, and apostolic church and the general peace and quiet of the Christian commonwealth, and that he should not contrive to rend apart what he ought to respect, venerate, and adore” (AE 32.124). He was dismissed, to appear the next day.

In a letter written later that evening, Luther summarized his appearance before the Emperor and the demand to renounce his books. Luther wrote, “With Christ’s help, however, I shall not in all eternity recant the least particle” (AE 48.200).

It was about six o’clock the next evening, April 18, before Luther was again brought before the Diet, this time in a larger hall to accommodate the crowds. The court official placed the question before Luther again and reprimanded him for not being prepared to answer the previous day. But Luther was now well prepared to give an answer: “I can bear no other witness about myself but that I have taught and written up to this time with simplicity of heart, as I had in view only the glory of God and the sound instruction of Christ’s faithful” (AE 32.109).

Luther continued by dividing his varied writings into three groups. The first group were books in which he taught Christian faith and piety so simply and evangelically that even the opponents recognized them as good and useful. He could not retract such sound teaching.

The second group were writings against the papacy and its teachings, which were destroying souls, tormenting consciences, and torturing the church with cruel tyranny. He could not retract these writings, lest he confirm and strengthen such evils.

The third group of writings were against individual persons who either defended the Roman church’s tyranny or attacked the doctrine Luther was teaching. Here he conceded that he had at times written more sharply than was appropriate for his call as a teacher of theology. Nevertheless, he could not retract these writings either, because the teachings were not his but Christ’s. But if someone would refute him from Holy Scriptures, he was prepared to recant any error immediately.

In concluding his answer, Luther responded to the reminder to “keep in mind the unity of the holy, catholic, and apostolic church and the general peace and quiet of the Christian commonwealth.” He declared,

To see excitement and dissension arise because of the Word of God is to me clearly the most joyful aspect of all in these matters. For this is the way, the

opportunity, and the result of the Word of God, just as He [Christ] said, 'I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, etc.' [Matt. 10:34–35]. Therefore, we ought to think how marvelous and terrible is our God in his counsels, lest by chance what is attempted for settling strife grows rather into an intolerable deluge of evils, if we begin by condemning the Word of God. (AE 32.111)

Although it was hot in the hall, so that Luther was now perspiring heavily, he insisted on repeating this lengthy speech in Latin. The official who was questioning Luther rebuked him for believing that he alone could interpret Scriptures, that he held his judgment above many famous men who went before him, that he should bring doubt into the true faith instituted by Christ and the apostles – confirmed by the blood of the martyrs, expounded by the teachers of the church, and fixed by the judgment of councils.

He then demanded of Luther directly that he give a simple, honest, and straightforward answer, without “horns,” that is, without clever reservations. Would he, or would he not, recant his books and the errors in them? Luther spoke for us all in this great confession:

Since then your serene majesty and lordships seek a simple answer, I will give it in this manner, neither horned nor toothed: Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by a clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise, here I stand, may God help me. Amen. (AE 32.112f)

The second part of our essay will give attention to the substance of Luther's great confession. But let me first summarize briefly how the rest of Luther's journey played out. Still that evening, before the assembly adjourned, the court official pressured Luther to reconsider, but he would not change his answer. The next day the Emperor declared himself in writing as Luther's opponent, “I am absolutely determined to stake on this cause my kingdoms and seigniories, my friends, my body and blood, my life and soul. . . I am determined to proceed against him as a notorious heretic” (AE 32.114).

Luther was not sent home immediately, and his case was still pending before the diet. There were intense negotiations on April 24 and 25, again pressuring Luther to

recant and throw himself upon the mercy of the Emperor. Finally, he was officially dismissed. He departed April 26, still protected by the safe-conduct he had been granted. On April 28 he wrote a letter to the Emperor, a letter which was apparently not delivered to him, in which he summarized the confession he had made in the Diet. Luther preached twice on his return trip, despite being forbidden to do so by the Emperor. On June 4, Luther's party was attacked. He was captured and taken into hiding at the Wartburg Castle, where Luther would spend the next ten months.

It was only after the official conclusion of the diet, after Duke Frederick and others had departed, that a judgment was rendered. The Edict of Worms, as it came to be known, declared Luther an "obstinate schismatic and manifest heretic" (Brecht I.474). The Emperor would enforce the bull of excommunication against Luther. He was not to be given food or hospitality. He was to be taken prisoner and delivered to the Emperor. The same treatment was to be used against Luther's supporters. Their property could be seized for one's own use. It was forbidden to read or distribute Luther's writings. The Edict of Worms continued to dominate Reformation politics for the decade to follow. Yet Duke Frederick asked to be excused from carrying out the Edict, and apparently was granted his request. Thus, despite the Empire's sentence against him, Luther was able to continue his work untroubled by the enmity of either Empire or Papacy.

Looking Past the Media Narrative: I have told the story of Luther's confession at Worms at some length because I believe it is important to understand that the confession of the Christian faith takes place in the actual events of a Christian's life, under many pressures, under temptations, under adverse circumstances. There were numerous pressures for Luther to compromise, be silent, even recant. Life was complicated for him as it is for us. But I don't want you to misunderstand the events I have just related to you, nor your own life of confession. Let me cut away the dead wood here.

It has been customary for centuries now to view Luther's stand at Worms primarily as a heroic event: Luther the Hero, standing up against the forces of the Empire, the Pope, the darkness of the Middle Ages, and so on. And it is true, you cannot miss the virtue of Luther's fortitude and courage. As we shall see, Luther's stand also revealed his faith in God's Word and the conviction that he must not yield to his opponents. We can in fact be greatly encouraged by his example to act with such virtue in our own life and confession. But if we look at the Diet of Worms simply as the scene of a heroic stand, we have missed the point.

Others prefer to see this event in light of the grand movements of culture and history taking place at that time. Humanism and the Renaissance were bringing in sweeping changes to man's understanding of himself and his place in the world. The community, state, and Empire were also changing. The Reformation would forever change the Church, breaking the tyranny of the pope, and its defeat would produce a thousand tyrant sects to replace him. Luther's stand could rightly be understood to play an important role in these developments. But again, if we only see Luther's confession in terms of culture, history, or even religious organization, we have failed to understand its actual significance.

And let me dispel one more illusion. Some people want to portray Luther's stand at Worms as a great political and cultural event in German history and German nationalism: Here is Luther the German patriot, throwing off the foreign chains of both Empire and Pope. Now, it is true that Luther is an important character in the history of the German nation. It is even true that Luther was aware that he could have stirred the German people to violence by his actions at Worms. He knew that the wellbeing of Germany was also affected by his role at the Diet. But we might compare this nationalist understanding of Luther's confession to the narrative in our own church body, in which we are somehow supposed to be a German Synod, stuck in the cultural webs of an ethnic and political world long past. Or that now we are somehow supposed to embrace a rival web of cultural and political forces, that we are supposed to be an American church and a 21st Century church, and for some people, it seems, a Republican church, or a Fundamentalist Evangelical church, or a Progressive church, or a Woke church, or the like. Let's be sure to recognize that whatever the political, national, and cultural forces at work in Luther's stand at Worms, there is still something far more important that took place there.

And what, finally, is so important about Luther's confession? In short, Luther's confession was the confession of a Christian. It was the confession of God's Word. It was an act of the Church of the living God, done in time and place, by one Christian, before one man's neighbors, before the world. The act of confessing is important only because of the content of his confession, because of the truth that he confessed. "My conscience is bound by the Word of God;" therefore, "I cannot and I will not retract anything." This is the Church's perpetual confession to the world in every age and in every place.

The Paramountcy of Truth

At the heart of every Christian confession is the truth. I do mean, of course, Jesus Himself, who is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6). But in confessing Christ,

we also confess all that He does, all that He teaches, and all that He gives—that is, “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). We saw in Luther’s confession at Worms that it is the truth of God’s Word, divine truth, that is always the stuff, the subject, of the Christian confession. In this section I will begin by contrasting truth and lies. I will comment on the polemical nature of truth and the unity of truth. This will lead to the heart of Luther’s confession, that God’s Word is truth.

The Truth and Lies: Let me describe our present situation as the collision of two worlds. In one world, the created world, truth corresponds to reality itself and can be expressed or described by way of words and signs. In plain language, this means that we expect our speech to be simple, clear, honest, and true. Our words describe the way things are, and we speak of things as they can be rationally known. We Christians expect this because we believe in a God who created the world, gave man the gift of language and reason, and then spoke to man in the reasonable language He had given him. We believe in a God who is truthful. He cannot lie (Titus 1:2). We believe in a God who speaks clearly. He reveals to us what He wants us to know. He wants us to “be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). He speaks to us so that we may know and believe in His Son, whom He sent into the world to save us and to give us new life (John 20:30–31). With these divine Words He also teaches us what it means to be Christian, to be human, to live lives according to His own mind and will. We have confidence in human speech because God Himself speaks to us in our language. We believe that our speech should imitate His in clarity and truth.

The realm of truth is all things—Creator and creature, visible and invisible. In the created world many things are subject to man’s reason, and their logical relations to each other can be debated and concluded. This realm of knowledge is as broad as the creation itself, even if our grasp of it is fragmentary and fallible. Knowledge of the creation is frustrated by man’s corruption under sin, by his own creaturely limitations, and by the inherent mystery of the created world. This realm of knowledge is often summarized by the term Natural Law. If we knew Natural Law perfectly, we would see that it corresponds perfectly to what is taught us in Holy Scriptures, since God is the author of both.

But then there are things that are not subject to man’s reason or experience, things known only by God. Some of these things remain hidden in God’s unrevealed will, and we are taught not to search for this hidden knowledge. But what God wants us to know for our salvation and for the good of our lives, He teaches us in the words of Holy Scriptures. This knowledge is often called Special Revelation, in contrast to Natural Law or the Natural Knowledge of God and the world. By Special Revelation we

mean the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, which are the very words of God Himself. The things revealed in the Scriptures also belong to the world that actually exists, the created world and the God who made it.

But there is another world, a pseudo-world, that is intended to subvert and destroy this created world. That other world is a nightmare, a world in which so-called “truth” is something that is created by man in the telling of lies. Language is coopted for evil use. This is the world, to give one of a thousand examples, in which a man can become a woman simply by saying it. This can be even if biological or medical science affirms without dispute that this man is a biological male. This lie becomes the “truth” not by way of reasonable inquiry, or by scientific or medical investigation, and certainly not by divine revelation, but simply by the expression of a man’s spoken will. “Truth,” as it is called in this alternate world, does not correspond to the way things are, but to the way a man wants them to be. In this world, man’s will creates his own reality.

Now, this world of lies is not actually new. It’s not even Postmodern or post-Christian. It is as ancient as the serpent in the Garden of Eden. And it is always anti-Christian. It is the nature and purpose of a lie to create an alternate reality and make that alternate reality replace the truth. The serpent in the Garden of Eden presented an alternate reality: “You shall not surely die. . . You shall be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:4, 5). As we know from the outcome of that first lie, lies cannot create anything. Satan’s lie certainly did not create the world he promised, where sin is not punished with death, and man overthrows God. To the contrary, lies break, corrupt, destroy, and kill things. It is, in fact, in the very nature of the lie to bring about the death of man.

In John 8:44–45 Jesus rebukes the Pharisees, “You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe in Me.” Jesus teaches us that lies are always set against the truth, just as the devil is always set against God. Lies belong to unbelief; the truth belongs to faith. Lies lead to death; the truth gives us life and sets us free.

The road to hell is paved with lies. Lies are the devil’s language. Lies destroy the soul of man. Lies dehumanize us, bestialize us. Lies destroy all that is good: good marriages, good households, good governments, good churches. Lies rob us of faith and hope and love. Lies turn loving marriages into cold and barren wastelands. Lies make cowards out of bold men and tyrants out of just men. Lies destroy the unity of the

church and abolish the integrity of her confession and fellowship. Lies are the death of man.

So the Holy Spirit warns us. He warns us against lying words, lying witnesses, lying preachers, lying “christs” (Matthew 24:24). The confession of lies is no Christian confession. It is the liars who say, “We have made a covenant with death . . . for we have made lies our refuge and in falsehood we have taken shelter” (Isaiah 28:15). The Spirit declares the justice and wrath of God against all lies and falsehood. “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth . . . they exchanged the truth of God for a lie” (Romans 1:18, 25).

Not only do we renounce lies when we renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways, but we commit ourselves – body and soul – in faith and confession, to the truth. Professor Marquart summarized our own confessional situation this way: “Our western world, thrashing about in a surfeit [an excess] of soulless information, is dying from lack of truth. This starvation, moreover, is self-imposed.” (Yes, that was written before the year 2020.) And he described the offense of the truth: “The idea of authoritative revelation, truth handed down from on high – and from antiquity – is particularly distasteful to this mentality. For it implies a standing rebuke to the ideology of normlessness and unbridled self-indulgence mistaken nowadays for freedom” (Kurt Marquart, “The Contemporary Significance of the Formula of Concord,” 32). As Hosea decried, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6), that is, the knowledge of God’s Word, the knowledge of the truth.

Christians confess the truth. God Himself is the “God of truth” (Psalm 31:5 KJV). “All His work is done in truth” (Psalm 33:4 KJV). He “delights in truth” in our souls, in our minds and hearts and consciences (Psalm 51:6). When the God of truth “became flesh and dwelt among us,” He was “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). He is the Truth incarnate (John 14:6). The Spirit of Jesus whom He sends to us from the Father, is the Spirit of truth (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13).

Truth, pure doctrine, belongs to the Godhead. It is not an added extra or a mere description. Truth corresponds to being in God. The Son is “the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature” (Hebrews 1:3). To know Jesus, who is the Truth, is to know the Father. He who has seen Jesus has seen the Father also (John 14:6–11).

Truth alone is the object of Christian faith – true and saving faith. Christian confession of the truth is a fruit of faith and a mark of the Christian life. This pure faith

and confession is worked by the Spirit of truth through His Word. It flows from the pure teaching of God's Word and right faith in that same Word. By that same pure teaching the Spirit of truth gathers the holy Church. By this same Biblical truth He unites His Church in a true confession. The truth is prior to all other considerations. As Professor Marquart reminds us, truth is paramount (Kurt Marquart, *The Church*, 57-59). We cannot finally come to true unity in the church or true love between members except by way of true doctrine.

Truth Is Polemical: Dr. Herman Sasse reminds us that "the symptoms of truth . . . are polemical." (Sasse, *Here We Stand*, 97). That is, truth is always at war with lies. Truth always anathematizes the lie, just as the lie abolishes the truth. C. P. Krauth reminds us that the lie has a permanent battle plan. First it demands accommodation with the truth. Then it demands equal standing and equal time. Then it takes over and overrules the truth. But truth never desires accommodation and never seeks equal time with lies. It must be the queen who rules, or it must perish. Truth and falsehood are utterly and finally incompatible. There can be no neutral ground between the two, not in the church, not in the home, not in government and society. The Christian confession takes a stand, like the battle line in a war, against lies.

The polemical nature of truth is revealed in the Church on two fronts. The first is that we explicitly reject and condemn whatever is opposed to true doctrine (FC Ep Rule and Norm. 6). As we affirm, "In order to preserve pure teaching and fundamental, lasting, God-pleasing unity in the church, it is necessary not only to present the pure, beneficial teaching correctly, but also to censure those who contradict it and teach other doctrines" (FC SD Rule and Norm.14). Our confession of the truth includes the condemnation of lies.

But second, the polemical nature of truth is revealed in its persecution by the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh. Luther was called to confess at Worms because a false church with false doctrine hated the truth and wanted it destroyed. It waged war against God and attacked the truth of God's Word by seeking to destroy the confessor of that truth. As Luther acknowledged before the Emperor, "This is the way, the opportunity, and the result of the Word of God, just as He [Christ] said, 'I have not come to bring peace, but a sword'" (AE 32.111).

The Unity of Truth: We confess our faith in a world of isolated and conflicting "truths." Religious "truth" has nothing to do with scientific "truth" which has nothing to do with political "truth." The world has allowed isolated "truths" to be "true" in their own

sphere, but nothing is universally true. For example, homosexuality – or rather, sodomy (to give it its proper name) – is a sin in Christianity, a barren and unnatural aberration in science, but nowadays a glorified virtue in politics and culture. Three different “truths” about sodomy, like three petty gods competing for supremacy in the hearts of men. The failure to confess objective and universal truth leads us into a new polytheism.

We could call this polytheism a pantheon – a community of gods – like that of the ancient world. The Romans had Jupiter, Juno, Mars, Venus, and various other gods and goddesses. Each represented divine power in some aspect of life and the world. Jupiter was king of the Roman pantheon at the time of the Empire, but it had not always been that way. Nor was Jupiter king in the non-Roman world. “For although there may be so-called gods in heaven and on earth – as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords” – yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist” (1 Corinthians 8:5–6).

So it is with truth in our polytheistic world. Random “truths” are like the so-called “gods.” The goddess Reason ruled as “truth” for many years after the humanistic Renaissance. She was the dominatrix of the pantheon. Then Science came along and unseated Reason. Now we have every reason to conclude that Science has lost her place as ruler of the gods and has been replaced by Political Will and Power. Many “gods” and many “lords.”

But here is the point. Just like the polytheistic cultures throughout the ancient world, most people today – unfortunately including many Christians – assume that there are many truths, a pantheon of truths. Religion-truth is perhaps acknowledged by those who recognize that man has a soul, but it is allowed only as a minor god in the ghetto of personal opinions and sentiments. Recently dethroned Science-truth still impresses most people, even after it has been demonstrated conclusively to be founded on a swamp of fallible presuppositions and observations, and not on a bedrock of truth (Marquart, “The Sacramentality of Truth,” 88). Politics-truth has reasserted itself as king, ruling with the three-pronged trident of media, money, and governmental coercion. It presently trumps all other “truths.” And it would take you only a few minutes to begin to fill in the rest of the pantheon of “truths,” things like Philosophy, Mathematics, Psychology, Sociology, the Human Heart, the Internet, and the like. Our culture is left with the belief that there are many irreconcilable and competing truths in the world, a cacophony of sounds and a shattered mirror for vision.

But for Luther at Worms, and for us Lutherans, God's Word is the first and final truth. God's Word demonstrates to us that the uncreated God and all His creation constitute one single universe, one seamless reality, one truth. What is true in the Bible is true in the world of Natural Law. What is true in Church is true in the Home, is true in the Workplace, is true in Society and Civil Government. Ultimately, the Bible alone reliably teaches us how we should look at and understand the world and our own lives. Ordinary sources of knowledge – history, custom and law, science, and reason – can teach us things that are true, but they will also quickly lead us astray if God's Word does not unite these ordinary truths with the divinely revealed truth of Christ, in whom "all things are united" (Ephesians 1:10, Colossians 1:17).

God's Word is Truth: The problem that Luther faced in 1521 was that the many lies that competed against the truth were united in the powerful office and doctrine of the pope, defended by the late Medieval academy, and enforced by the might of the European empires and nations. When Luther appealed to "the testimony of Scriptures" and professed that "my conscience is captive to the Word of God" (AE 32.112), he was not arguing for an unbound conscience or a free-floating conscience. He was asserting that God's Word, and God's Word alone, could bind the conscience. Only in this way could the conscience be bound to the truth and be free of corruption and lies. One must either "embrace the paramountcy of truth, or else surrender one's conscience and integrity unconditionally to an institution which is thereby granted absolute power to corrupt absolutely" (Marquart, *The Church*, p. 59). Luther's confession went directly to the source of these powers, to destroy the foundation of this house of lies.

There were other competing sources of truth that Luther rejected in his confession. Besides the papacy, Luther rejected the Enthusiasts, who asserted that they had the truth in their hearts apart from Holy Scriptures (SA III.viii.3–13). He rejected the humanists, who taught that man's reason and investigation of the world can find the truth. When we reject the pope, the false doctrines and claims of erring churches and false philosophies, and the overblown claims of science and the academy, we are doing as Luther did: "My conscience is captive to the Word of God."

Luther asserted that Holy Scripture alone is the true authority and source for the knowledge of God and man, Creator and creature. This is to say that only God's Word is the source of the Church's doctrine and life, and that every Christian life and confession must conform to God's Word. He stated this point repeatedly before, during, and after Worms. For example, in his evaluation of the papal bull that condemned his teachings, he wrote,

Holy Scripture must necessarily be clearer, simpler, and more reliable than any other writings. . . . necessity forces us to run to the Bible with the writings of all teachers, and to obtain there a verdict and judgment upon them. Scripture alone is the true lord and master of all writings and doctrine on earth. (AE 32.11f)

During the negotiations at Worms, quoting 1 Thessalonians 5:21 and Galatians 1:8: Luther “besought them all the more not to violate his conscience, bound as it was by the chains of Scripture and the holy Word, by forcing him to deny that clear Word of God” (AE 32.119). Again, “I would rather lose my life and head than desert the clear Word of God” (AE 32.122). In his April 28 letter to the Emperor he repeated the point many times, including here,

Concerning the Word of God and the eternal values, however, God does not allow this risk, that is, that man should surrender [the Word of God] to man. For he has ordered that all men and all things should be submitted only to him, as he alone has the glory of the truth and is truth himself. (AE 48.206f)

Every Christian confession is founded upon the great Reformation truth: *sola Scriptura*, Scripture alone. The Holy Scripture is the sole source and authority for doctrine. “Sanctify them by the truth; Your Word is truth” (John 17:17). “The sum of Your Word is truth” (Psalm 119:160). We have various dogmatic terms and phrases to emphasize this point: the *infallibility* of Scriptures, that the Bible is incapable of lies or deception, because it is God’s own Word; the *inerrancy* of Scriptures, that it is free from error; the *sufficiency* of Scriptures, that the Bible has all the knowledge needed to give us salvation and teach us the Christian life; the *clarity* of Scriptures, that the words of the Bible are clear and understandable, because God Himself is the speaker and teacher; the *efficacy* of Scripture, that God’s Word is the power by which He accomplishes and gives what His Word says. “God, who cannot lie” (Titus 1:2), speaks truthfully, clearly, and powerfully in His Word.

The doctrine of Holy Scriptures, confessed simply and powerfully by Luther at Worms, is drawn into our public confession in the Book of Concord. We confess its purpose: “on the basis of God’s Word . . . to expose and reject false teaching, and clearly to confess the divine truth,” and “that . . . an unalloyed explanation of the truth might also be transmitted to our descendants” (BOC Preface 9, 13). So also in the Solid Declaration: “First, we confess our adherence to the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments, as to the pure, clear fountain [*reinen, lautern Brunnen; limpidissimos purissimosque fontes*] of Israel, which alone is the one true guiding principle, according to which all teachers and teachings are to be judged and evaluated” (BOC Rule and Norm.3). That is, Scriptures is the source of all truth, all doctrine. It is our

Formal Principle, or to use the old term, the *Principium Cognoscendi*. “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

Conclusion: Before the Judgment Seat of Christ

The Christian confession, like all of life, is given in anticipation of “the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Timothy 6:14). Just as we were baptized into Christ’s death and resurrection (Romans 6:3–12); just as we “proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes” when we receive the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:26); just as the charge to “preach the Word” is given “in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom” (2 Timothy 4:1–2); so also the confession we make in this life is the confession we make before the throne of God on the day of judgment (1 Timothy 6:11–16). Listen to Luther, seven years after the Diet of Worms, in his Large Confession of 1528 (AE 37.360f):

I desire with this treatise to confess my faith before God and all the world, point by point. I am determined to abide by it until my death and (so help me God!) in this faith to depart from this world and to appear before the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence if any one shall say after my death, “If Luther were living now, he would teach and hold this or that article differently, for he did not consider it sufficiently,” etc., let me say once and for all that by the grace of God I have most diligently traced all these articles through the Scriptures, have examined them again and again in the light thereof, and have wanted to defend all of them as certainly as I have now defended the sacrament of the altar. I am not drunk or irresponsible. I know what I am saying, and I well realize what this will mean for me before the Last Judgment at the coming of the Lord Jesus.

This is our confession. We confess the truth, true doctrine, the teaching of God’s Word, before the Church, before our household and neighbors and communities, even before kings and princes. We make this confession before Jesus Christ, our final Judge:

By means of God’s grace we, too, intend to persist in this same confession unto our blessed end and to appear before the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ with a joyful, undaunted heart and conscience. (BOC Preface.16)

And, in the conclusion to the entire Book of Concord (FC SD XII.40):

Therefore, it is our intent to give witness before God and all Christendom, among those who are alive today and those who will come after us, that the explanation here set forth regarding all the controversial articles of faith which we have addressed and explained – and no other explanation – is our teaching, faith, and confession. In it we shall appear before the judgment throne of Jesus Christ, by God's grace, with fearless hearts and thus give account of our faith, and we will neither secretly nor publicly speak or write anything contrary to it. Instead, on the strength of God's grace we intend to abide by this confession. Thus, after careful consideration and in the fear and invocation of God, we have subscribed our signatures to this document with our own hands.

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The Biblical Doctrine of Confession

Introduction

The theme of this Convention is “Here I Stand before Kings and Princes” from Psalm 119:46. The reason, as you have already heard, is that 2021 is the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther’s great confession to hold true to the teachings of God’s Word before Emperor Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire. “Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God. Amen.” Those words, spoken on April 18, 1521, mark another voice added to the great cloud of witnesses who confessed true faith in Christ and His precious gospel. In one sense, Luther’s confession is most remarkable because any true confession of faith is a miracle of the Holy Spirit who creates faith where there had once only been unbelief, life where there had been death, obedience where there had been disobedience. Similarly, Luther makes this confession knowing that by so doing, his earthly life is forfeit in the eyes of man, especially his Emperor. But not in the eyes of God whose good opinion and commendation is the only judgment man need seek. In another sense, Luther’s confession was merely the warp and woof of the Christian life. Simply put, Christians confess before kings, princes, paupers, family, magistrates, friend or foe, in times of peace or persecution. This is the what the Bible teaches, exhorts, and commands. The goal of this paper is to define the doctrine of confession as it is taught in the Old Testament from which the New Testament draws and amplifies. The reasons why the Bible commands man to give a true confession will be considered in the doctrines of creation, man being created in God’s image, and the need for redemption through the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Confession in Holy Scripture

In the New Testament, the basic word for confession is ὁμολογεῖν (*homologeîn*), which means “to say the same thing.”¹ In the Church, the word “confess” refers to three separate yet related ideas, namely, confessing one’s sins in repentance, confessing the faith or doctrine one believes, and confessing praise and thanksgiving to God in worship.² This paper will consider what the Bible teaches generally regarding God’s people confessing what God has given them to say. All three aspects of confession will be discussed throughout.

There is good historic evidence for the word group *homologeîn* being used in the pagan Greek world in various settings from business to religious to philosophical contexts.³ It is reasonable to assume that the New Testament writers were aware of this secular usage. But the inspired authors’ most important source for knowing what the word group means was derived from the Old Testament Scriptures.

¹ Michel, “ὁμολογεῖν ktl.” TDNT 5:199-220, esp. p. 200.

² Sasse, Herman, “Concerning the Nature of Confession in the Church,” p. 22 in *Letters to Lutheran Pastors, Volume I, 1948-1951*.

³ Michel, “ὁμολογεῖν ktl.” TDNT 5:199-220, esp. p. 200, “an agreement through a common logos.”

Old Testament

The Hebrew word יָדָּא (*yāḏā*) means both to confess sin and to praise God.⁴ King Solomon's dedicatory prayer of the Temple is illustrative. It combines the confession of sin with offering praise to God's holy name through repentance and faith. The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament widely used by the New Testament authors, translated *yāḏā* with ἐξομολογήσεται (*exhomologeisthai*), a compound word from the *homologeîn* word group, which basically means "to admit, confess, acknowledge, or promise."⁵

³³"When your people Israel are defeated before the enemy because they have sinned against you, and... ³⁵When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against you, if they pray toward this place and acknowledge your name (יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ ; LXX: ἐξομολογήσονται τῷ ὀνόματί σου) and turn from their sin..." (I Kings 8:33, 35)

King Solomon requested that God would show mercy upon His people whenever they acknowledged God's name. Such a request is nothing new for throughout the Mosaic Law, God's people were instructed to confess God's name during times of calamity and prosperity, during worship, and in daily life. Repentance is saying about one's sins what God has already said about them through His law. Repentance coupled with faith in God's promise brings about forgiveness, a right standing before God, and true devotion. This is confessing God's name in the confidence that He is also the Savior.

King Solomon's prayer combines the confession of sin and repentance with worship and praise. However, the English Standard Version of the Bible translates *yāḏā* with "acknowledge" rather than "praise" or "give thanks." This weakens the need for verbal confession coupled with public worship. A richer translation might be "When your people ... turn to you and give thanks to your name and pray and plead with you in this house...if they pray toward this place and give thanks to your name and turn from their sin..." For God's people to confess their sins in His name with the confidence that their sins are forgiven is to praise the Lord in joy and thanksgiving for His love and goodness. Faith in God's promise to forgive and renew is the highest form of worship.

The specific confession of repentance and praise in Solomon's prayer is associated with God's name graciously revealed to the children of Israel almost five hundred years earlier through Moses and the burning bush incident of Exodus 3. God the Father, speaking through the Angel of the Lord, commissioned Moses to return back to Egypt to deliver His covenant people. Moses asked to know God's name. The patriarchs Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and even Jacob's uncle, Laban, knew God's proper name (cf. Genesis

⁴ This is specifically true in the hiphil and hithpolel. Michel, "ὁμολογεῖν ktl." TDNT 5:199-220, esp. p. 204; BDB, "יָדָּא" p. 392

⁵ Michel, "ὁμολογεῖν ktl." TDNT 5:199-220, esp. p. 213

4:26, 9:26, 12:8, 26:25, 28:16, 30:27); but four hundred years later, their enslaved descendants had forgotten it.⁶ Moses and the children of Israel needed a fresh revelation of God's name so they might be able to confess true faith and trust in Him. The reintroduction of God's proper name is instructive for understanding the nature of Biblical confession. Consider Exodus 3:13–15:

¹³Then Moses said to God (אֱלֹהֵימֶֿ; LXX: τὸν θεόν) “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God (אֱלֹהֵי; LXX: τὸν θεόν) of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” ¹⁴God (אֱלֹהֵימֶֿ; LXX: ὁ θεός) said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” (אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה; LXX: Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν) And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM (אֶהְיֶה; LXX: ὁ ὢν) has sent me to you.’” ¹⁵God (אֱלֹהֵימֶֿ; LXX: ὁ θεός) also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘The LORD, the God (אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה; LXX: Κύριος ὁ θεός) of your fathers, the God (אֱלֹהֵי; LXX: τὸν θεόν) of Abraham, the God (אֱלֹהֵי; LXX: τὸν θεόν) of Isaac, and the God (אֱלֹהֵי; LXX: τὸν θεόν) of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.”

In this passage, אֱלֹהִים (*Elohim*), the more generalized term for God or deity used throughout the Old Testament, is contrasted with God's proper name in vs. 14 and 15. God reveals His name using the verbal form of “to be” converted to a proper noun and pronounced as יְהוָה (*Yahweh*), the LORD, I AM.⁷ *Yahweh*, as God's proper name, reveals who He is, the self-existent one, the Lord over heaven and earth. It is this self-existent God who revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and now to Moses and the children of Israel.

God's name reveals that everything which exists or ever will exist does so by participation in God's life. There is no existence or reality outside of God Himself. Salvation can only be found in the Lord God of heaven and earth. To speak the truth about anything that is real, physical or spiritual, of necessity requires that one speak what God Himself has said about that particular thing. Any thought, word, or deed that is contrary to the truth is a false confession for it speaks something contrary to what God has said. To explain this by way of the explanation to the Second Commandment, “You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God” from Luther's Small Catechism, one must conclude that saying anything that is contrary to the truth necessarily means “to lie or deceive by His name (i.e., God's name).” For God is *Yahweh*, the self-existent One by whom all things find their existence, nature, and purpose. A true confession in word and

⁶ Stuart, D. K. (2006). *Exodus* (Vol. 2, p. 120). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

⁷ In vs. 14, God's proper name is revealed using the first person, common, singular, imperfect form אֶהְיֶה (*'ahyeh*) of the Qal verb הָיָה (*hayah*). *hayah* carries the basic meaning of “fall out, come to pass, become, be.” BDB, “הָיָה” p. 224.

deed, according the explanation from the Small Catechism, is to “call upon His name in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.”

Exodus 3 is fundamental to understanding how one confesses rightly, that is, to speak God’s own words in faith and thanksgiving. Without knowing God’s personal name, Moses could not proclaim the salvation coming to the children of Israel. A generic understanding of God or the divine (i.e., *Elohim*, *theos*) was insufficient for true faith; that was true then and remains true today. The enslaved Israelites could not know whom they should believe and trust without revealed knowledge of God’s proper name (c.p. Zechariah 13:9; Joel 2:32). *Yahweh* had seen their affliction and sent Moses to confess God’s name and salvation to them. The Israelites were to receive His name, repent of their sins, call upon His name, and give thanks to Him for His gracious visitation. Anything less than confessing the truth and living according to it meant life under the tyranny of Egyptian false gods and taskmasters.

Another example of confession which specifically links God’s name with the giving of thanks is the restoration of the Passover celebration under King Hezekiah described in II Chronicles 30:22b:

“So they ate the food of the festival for seven days, sacrificing peace offerings and giving thanks to the LORD, the God of their fathers” (וַיִּתְּנוּ לַיהוָה אֲלֵהֶם זְבוֹלֵתִיָּהִם; LXX: καὶ ἐξομολογούμενοι τῷ κυρίῳ θεῷ τῶν πατέρων αὐτῶν).

In this passage, the Hebrew *yāḏâ* is used as a participle translated as giving thanks. The Septuagint follows this pattern with the participial form of *exhomologeisthai*. The Passover meal was celebrated in homes, but the peace offerings were sacrificed in public. Thus, believing Israelites spoke to one another, at home and in public, God’s saving name as they rehearsed His mighty deeds of the past in the divine liturgy of worship. The peace offerings gave public expression to the thanksgiving of the heart. Giving thanks to God is saying what He has already said as God’s people receive His love and grace for life in this world and the world to come.

The confessional nature of proclaiming what God has said and done gives insight into various psalms which are a retelling of God’s mighty works in Israel’s history, specifically Psalm 78, 106, 135, 136. There is no need to be innovative or original in a godly, pious act of confession; in fact, the desire to be novel indicates a faulty understanding of Biblical confession and faith. God revealed His name anew to Moses in the burning bush, but it was the same divine name revealed to the patriarchs. This is a warning to not sin against the Third Commandment by despising God’s Word rather than holding it sacred and gladly hearing and learning it. The instructions given by Moses regarding the annual commemoration of the Passover included retelling the children what God had done in the past. The structure of the Passover is very catechetical and provides

a godly tradition of handing over from generation to generation what God had said and done for the salvation of His people. Consider Exodus 12:26–27a:

²⁶And when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ ²⁷you shall say, ‘It is the sacrifice of the LORD’s Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.’

The Passover meal was God’s appointed means of uniting believers living in the present to believers who had confessed the same trust in the Lord in the past. The catholicity of all Christians is grounded in the entire Biblical witness not simply the New Testament. The great confession of praise and faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6:4, “Hear O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one”, the various sacrifices and festivals including the Passover celebrations, and the entire Mosaic Law combined with the prophets gave content and boundaries to true confession and praise. The result of such true confession was redeemed men, women, and children living together in love toward God, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:5), and love for one another, “... but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:18). True confession requires living according to the boundaries of the truth revealed by God Himself in His Word. Loving God and loving man means confessing the truth in thought, word, and life.

Any contemporary confession of sin, or of doctrine, or of thanksgiving and praise must be connected to what God has already said and done. King David’s Psalm 23, “The LORD is my Shepherd...” is both a confession praising the Lord God for shepherding the patriarchs and people of Israel in the past as well as a prophetic description of Jesus, the Good Shepherd (c.p. John 10). Our confession that Jesus is our Good Shepherd is established upon what God’s Word revealed about God’s actions millennia ago reaching its fulfilment in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Every contemporary confession of sin, of truth and doctrine, or of praise and thanksgiving must be established upon God’s Word; without God first speaking and acting, there would be nothing to confess except lies and man’s vain imagination.

New Testament

The New Testament writers read and quoted regularly from the Greek Old Testament from which they acquired the *homologeîn* word group; thus, it was the inspired witness of the Old Testament that provided the contours for Christian usage. The New Testament authors understood confession to be inseparably linked to a right usage of God’s name and His mighty deeds of salvation. The glorious message of the Christian gospel is that God’s name and His final, perfect work of salvation are now made manifest in Jesus of Nazareth.

In the Septuagint, *Yahweh* was typically translated as κύριος (*Kyrios*). The New Testament used *kyrios* to refer to human masters or to God, *Yahweh*. Context is determinative in this regard.⁸ When referring to Jesus, *kyrios* can be used in both ways. One example is John 9:35–38, the account of Jesus healing a man born blind:

³⁵Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” ³⁶He answered, “And who is he, sir (κύριε), that I may believe in him?” ³⁷Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.” ³⁸He said, “Lord (κύριε), I believe,” and he worshiped him.

In this passage, Jesus healed a man born blind but he did not know Jesus had performed the miracle. Eventually, Jesus asked if he believed in the Son of Man. The man responded by calling Jesus Lord, meaning, “sir” or “one who is to be respected.” After Jesus revealed that He is the one responsible for the healing, the man worshipped Jesus as God, *Kyrie* (singular, vocative). Jesus received the man’s worship without objection.

On other occasions in John’s Gospel, Jesus unequivocally designates Himself to be *Yahweh*, the I AM of Exodus 3. The Jews responded to His divine claim with murderous intent to stone Him to death (John 8:58–59; 10:31–33). The New Testament witness consistently acclaims that Jesus of Nazareth is the Lord, *Yahweh*, the one true God of Israel. For example, having seen the resurrected Jesus, Thomas confessed, “My Lord and my God” (Ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου; John 20:28). Jesus is God in human flesh.

A key New Testament text concerning the necessity of confession and its content is Matthew 10:32–33:

“³²So everyone who acknowledges me before men (ὁμολογήσει ἐν ἑμοὶ ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων), I also will acknowledge before my Father (ὁμολογήσω καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ πατρὸς μου) who is in heaven, ³³but whoever denies me before men (ἀρνήσεται με ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων), I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven (ἀρνήσομαι καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ πατρὸς μου).”

Jesus used the more general word, *homologein* in this passage. Publicly, before men, Christians will say the same thing about Jesus what they themselves have heard from apostolic teaching recorded in Holy Scripture. It cannot be merely private or internalized and remain genuine. Confession in this passage is contrasted with denial, ἀρνέομαι. The eternal significance of right confession is highlighted with the reciprocal relationship between confessing Jesus before men and Jesus confessing His people before His heavenly Father. There simply cannot be any neutral ground when it comes to Jesus.

⁸ <https://larryhurtado.wordpress.com/2014/08/22/yhwh-in-the-septuagint/> Accessed March 25, 2021. In general, *Yahweh* was typically translated as *Kyrios* (κύριος) without the article. *Kyrios* with an article is generally used to designate any person who holds lordly authority. The New Testament authors used *kyrios* with much less formality than the Old Testament authors.

Those who confess Jesus publicly before men, Jesus will confess publicly before His Father. Conversely, those who deny Jesus publicly before men, Jesus will deny publicly before His Father. Confession is necessary. Luther rightly understood the eternal consequences of making a true confession of faith in Christ according to God's Word. To deny Christ and the truth would imperil Luther's soul. Standing before emperors and kings is one thing. Standing before the Father without Christ is horrific.

The question that must be asked regarding Matthew 10 is, "What is the content of the Christian's public confession?". What is the Christian to say about Jesus that has already been said? To begin with, it must include more than mere historic knowledge of Jesus. The English Standard Version, once again, translated *homologeîn* as "acknowledge." While not wrong, it is not helpful either. Christian confession of Jesus requires more than mere recognition or notice.

The immediate context leading up to Matthew 10:32–33 provides guidance as to the content of Christian confession. In Matthew 10:7–8, Jesus sent out the twelve disciples to proclaim, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" authenticated with miracles of healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing lepers, and casting out demons. The apostles' ministry was to be identical to Jesus' ministry. The disciples confessed Jesus. What they heard and saw in Jesus' ministry was to form the content of their ministry, not only in this one, unique situation of Matthew 10, but until the end of time. The gospel of the forgiveness of sins and the healing of broken lives and bodies were signs of the Messianic age (c.p. Isaiah 35). Though Matthew 10:32–33 does not give the explicit content of confession, the immediate context of Matthew 10 and the entire witness of Holy Scripture does: Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ of God's kingdom.

One must also recognize that the Christian's confession of Jesus is not only provided by the Lord Jesus Himself through His teaching and healing ministry, but by God the Father. At Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River, the Father spoke from heaven saying, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). The Father reiterates this on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:5). A Christian confession says the same things about Jesus which the Father Himself has spoken. That confession is then corroborated by living according to the confession regardless of the consequences imposed by mankind.

Matthew 10 details the necessity and content of Christian confession. It also teaches such true confession will provoke persecution resulting in suffering for Jesus' sake and His name. Brothers will deliver their brothers, fathers their sons, over to death. And Christians will be hated not because they have done evil deeds but "for my name's sake" says Jesus in Matthew 10:22. This is already seen in the New Testament. The Jews in John 9 had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Christ was to be excommunicated (John 9:22; οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἵνα ἐάν τις αὐτὸν ὁμολογήσῃ Χριστόν, ἀποσυνάγωγος γένηται). The blind man was excommunicated because he confessed Jesus

to be a prophet (vs. 17). Later, he worshipped Jesus as Lord, *Kyrios*. Though the terms are not interchangeable, “Jesus is Lord” (John 9) requires a confession that “Jesus is Christ” (Matthew 10).

Later, in Matthew 16, the Lord Jesus asked His disciples the question that every human being must ultimately answer, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” (vs. 13). Peter gave a godly confession that remains foundational in the Church until the end of time, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (vs. 16). The combination of the title Christ with the Son of the living God demands that Christian confession and life find their source and substance in the person and work of Jesus. According to His person, Jesus is the Son of God and Son of Mary; according to His work, Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world. Such confession, however, can never be achieved by the strength and merits of the individual. God the Father must reveal it supernaturally. “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven” (vs. 17). Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit working through the pure preaching of God’s Word, the Father reveals who Jesus is and what He came to do. The content of confession is thoroughly Christological: Jesus is Christ, Jesus is Lord, Jesus is the Son of God. The ability to make such confession is a supernatural gift given by the Father through the Spirit using the means of the gospel. “.... No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except in the Holy Spirit” (καὶ οὐδεὶς δύναται εἰπεῖν· Κύριος Ἰησοῦς, εἰ μὴ ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ; I Corinthians 12:3).

The Old Testament antecedents are evident. Confession consists in declaring what God Himself has said and done in the past for the salvation of His people. New Testament confession incorporates God’s mighty deeds under the old covenant into the perfect, completed work of salvation found in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The necessity, content, and boundaries of Christian confession emerge from these selective, but representative, passages from the Old and New Testaments. Jesus, the incarnate Son, is also anointed by the Holy Spirit in order to be the Christ. God the Father has reconciled the world unto Himself through Christ. Christians who confess that Jesus is the Lord Christ and Son of God heartily confess their sins and receive His forgiveness. Faith in Christ leads to people with changed lives who thank and praise, serve and obey God publicly in life and deed.

Confessing Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit is not an additional, optional activity of the Christian (c.p. Romans 10:9–10). Nor is it extrinsic to what it means to be human. To say, to believe, and to live according to what God said and did was established from the very beginning, at creation. To confess the truth is to be human.⁹

⁹ Cochrane, Arthur C., “The Act of Confession-Confessing,” in *Formula of Concord: Quadricennial Essays; The Sixteenth Century Journal* VIII, 4 (1977): 61; cited by Robert Kolb in *Confessing the Faith: Reformers Define the Church, 1530-1580*

Creation

To confess one must speak. This observation takes us to the first words spoken of which we have record, “And God said...” (Genesis 1:3). Man’s ability to confess the truth is a gift of God the Holy Trinity reflecting God’s own verbal abilities. God spoke and created the universe from nothing (*ex nihilo*) by the power of His Word (Psalm 33:6). Hebrews 11:3 declares, “By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.”

It is this truth about the origins of the universe which gives greater content to the Church’s confession of salvation revealed in the Lord Jesus. The gospel itself is described as a new creation from nothing through God’s Word. The apostle Paul, in II Corinthians 4:6, combines the language of creation from Genesis 1 with the mystery of the Christ’s Incarnation:

⁶For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The darkness of sin that reigns in a sinner’s heart is scattered by Christ’s gospel spoken into the heart and mind of the sinner who now hears in faith created by the Holy Spirit. With new life now bestowed, the Christian, a justified, forgiven sinner, confesses Jesus as Lord, Christ, Savior, and Son of the Father. Every confession of sin in repentance and faith, confession of doctrine, and confession of praise is an *ex nihilo* creation through the powerful word of God.

Man’s creation in the beginning, however, was unique. The Lord God formed man “of dust from the ground” (*materia ex qua*) as well as *ex nihilo*, “(God) breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature” (Genesis 2:7). Two things must be noted here: First, the unique circumstances surrounding man’s creation gives rise to the teaching that man has a unique role within the created order. Second, man is bipartite, consisting of body and soul. The body was created from preexisting material; the soul from nothing but God’s very breath. To be human, whether male or female, necessarily means possessing a physical body and an immaterial soul interrelating as a composite whole. The bipartite nature of man is not found in the animal kingdom¹⁰ nor among the angels. Man has the distinction of possessing a spiritual nature originating from the creative breath of God. There is no human life outside of being an embodied soul or, if you prefer, an in-souled body. God the Father created man from the dust of the earth and breathed into physical man a soul through the Holy Spirit, thereby implanting within man God’s image.

¹⁰ Genesis 1:30 describes every animal having “the breath of life” as is true of all humans; however, animals were not created in God’s image and likeness.

Imago Dei

Genesis 1:26–27 is the primary passage of Scripture that teaches man was created from the beginning in the image of God (*imago dei*):

²⁶Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” ²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

The greatest minds throughout history have produced a varied and rich body of literature to define the image of God. For the purposes of this paper, the *imago dei* can rightly be defined as the composite nature of man wherein he was created with original righteousness, wisdom, love, and trust in God and all associated concomitant characteristics of human nature such as the use of reason, will, imagination, bodily strength, health, and vitality.¹¹ Christians have debated amongst themselves what the limiting factors are of the *imago dei* especially after man’s original sin. What must be maintained, according to God’s Holy Word, is that the image and likeness of God was utterly shattered and marred in man’s fall to such an extent that it cannot be restored by any merit or work performed by man. What remains true is that the *imago dei* separates human beings from the animal kingdom. And since man is also physical, he is different from the angels. The *imago dei* is constituted in man’s bipartite nature of body and soul.

The lordship bestowed upon Adam and Eve over all creation was an integral part of them being created in God’s likeness. When they spoke, they spoke with the voice and authority of God whose image they reflected. The Bible hints at this when the Lord God brought all the animals before Adam. Genesis 2:19–20:

¹⁹Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field...

Adam did not speak as a taxonomist, giving labels for the various animals. Rather, Adam was speaking on behalf of the Lord Himself, exercising and extending His rule and reign over the creation. Adam spoke what God commanded him to speak. Therefore, Adam confessed the Lord God before all creation as the image-bearer of God. Confession, which is declaring God’s praises to all creation with joy and thanksgiving, is part and parcel of humanity’s nature. To confess is to be human.

¹¹ Jastram, Nathan, “Man as Male and Female: Created in the Image of God,” in *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 68, No. 1, January 2004, p. 15. The definition provided in this paper, however, is my own.

The perfection of human nature and man's ability to confess God's truth is revealed in the Lord Jesus. John's Gospel gives special attention to the Son's work of creation and His incarnation for the restoration of humanity's confession. John 1:1–3, 14:

¹In the beginning was the Word (*Logos*), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made....¹⁴And the Word (*Logos*) became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John purposefully described God's Son as the Word of God. The Greek word translated "Word" in English Bibles is λόγος (*logos*); its most basic definition is that which gives meaning and coherence to reality. The Son of God is the underlying coherence upholding creation and God's kingdom. He provides meaning and rationale to all that is seen and unseen. In the beginning was the Word (*Logos*)...All things were made through Him. The Word stepped into time and history by becoming fully man for the purpose of redeeming fallen humanity from sin, death, and judgment.

The New Testament also declares Jesus to be *the* image of God (II Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:14). Man was originally created to reflect God's image, a true, substantial reality filled with honor, but only the eternal Son, now incarnate in the man Jesus, can be predicated as *the* image of the Father. The author of Hebrews described Jesus as the imprint or exact character of God's nature (1:3), a very near synonym for "likeness" from Genesis 1:26¹². The New Testament witness about Jesus is that He is the eternal Son, the Word and Image of God. Only He who is Word and Image of God, through whom all creation came into existence, can restore and perfect the broken *imago dei* in man.¹³

When Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, the image of God graciously created in them by the Father was shattered. They and all their posterity lost their original righteousness, love, and trust in God. The beatific relationship Adam and Eve had with God was broken. Adam, now corrupted by sin, death, and disobedience,

¹² John Kleinig does not refer to "the likeness of God" (Genesis 1:26) in his commentary on Hebrews 1:3. He asserts that χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ (exact imprint of his nature) would invoke in the imagination of the Hebrew Christians images of the Roman Caesars erected to mediate between the divine and human realms. *Hebrews*, (p. 46), St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, p. 46. While this may have been true, I wonder if the more significant reference is to man being created in God's likeness. χαρακτήρ is only used here in the New Testament. The LXX uses the term ὁμοίωσιν for likeness in Genesis 1:26.

¹³ Athanasius, "For being Word of the Father, and above all, He alone of natural fitness was both able to recreate everything, and worthy to suffer on behalf of all and to be ambassador for all with the Father" (p. 40) ... "What then was God to do? Or what was to be done save the renewing of that which was in God's image, so that by it men might once more be able to know Him? But how could this have come to pass save by the presence of the very Image of God, our Lord Jesus Christ?...None other then was sufficient of this need, save the Image of the Father" (p. 43) in "On the Incarnation of the Word" (Vol. 4, Second Series), Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.

became afraid and hid from God when he heard the voice of the Lord God in the Garden (אָדָם יָרָא אֶת־קוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים; LXX: τὴν φωνὴν κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ; Genesis 3:8–10)¹⁴. Before his original sin, the voice of the Lord God was beautiful, giving meaning and coherence to Adam’s existence. Adam heard God’s commanding voice to refrain from eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:15–17). Adam heard the righteous judgment of Lord God when He declared that it was not good for man to dwell alone (Genesis 2:18a) followed by the promise, “I will make a helper fit for him” (Genesis 2:18b). These divine words did not create fear in the sinless Adam for the *imago dei* remained intact.

Like so much that was marred and lost at the Fall, a right confession was replaced with fear and novelty. When Adam admitted that he was naked and afraid of God, the Lord asked him, “Who told you that you were naked?” (Genesis 3:10). Adam spoke words that he had not heard from the Lord. He was not speaking the same thing as God. Mankind’s right and godly confession was broken.

Through the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the image and likeness of God was perfected and restored for those who have faith in Jesus and confess Him as Lord and Christ. Through baptism, sinners are made into a new creation (Galatians 6:15). Born again by water and Spirit, sinners who once bore the image of the man of dust now bear the image of the man of heaven (I Corinthians 15:49; Colossians 3:10). The glory of the Christian gospel is that because of the incarnation of the Son, humanity’s inheritance in the new creation is greater than the honor and majesty given to humanity through Adam and Eve. Every baptized Christian receives by grace the image of the man of heaven, Jesus, so that the life given to us by the Spirit is participation in the life of Him who is *Yahweh*, I AM. The apostle Peter wrote eloquently (II Peter 1:3–4) about the excellence of the divine life into which Christians are born:

³His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature ...

This we believe, teach, and confess before the hosts of heaven and the citizens of earth with joy and thanksgiving to the glory of God. Jesus, the Word and Image of God, is the Son of the Father become flesh for the salvation and restoration of man. By this name, Jesus, salvation has come to man (Acts 4:12). Thus the Church confesses joyfully with heart, mouth, and life that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father in heaven (Philippians 3:10–11).

¹⁴ BDB, “קוֹל” p. 876-877

Conclusion

We have seen in our sweeping survey of the Biblical witness that God the Holy Trinity is the source and content of all godly confession. Creation is, by its very nature, a verbal spoken reality brought into existence and sustained by the Word and Image of God. God the Trinity is *Yahweh*, I AM who I AM. The creation participates in the Father's existence through the Son of God, the eternal Word, who upholds all things by the power of His might through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Human beings were created in the beginning by God the Father to be like God and reflect His divine image before the rest of creation. Adam confessed the love and truth of God as he named the animals and received Eve as God's pure gift of love. Adam received all that God gave to him with thanksgiving and praise. To make confession, that is, speaking what God has said and living according to it, is what it means to be human from the very beginning.

The ability to confess God's truth as God's image bearers was shattered in man's original sin. The perfectly ordered universe became corrupted with evil and lies. For mankind to be saved from the tyranny of deceit, death, and demonic evil, the image of God must be restored by One who shares in man's true nature yet without sin. The very Word and Image of God must be the One who restores mankind to his rightful place in the creation. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The Lord Jesus Christ is the exact imprint and image of God the Father. To see and hear Jesus is to see and hear the Father.

The Bible requires Christians to make confession in three specific contexts. The first is the home. The Passover was celebrated in homes where patriarchs taught their children and extended family and even servants the meaning of God's redemption revealed in the slain lamb and bitter herbs. The New Testament commands fathers to train their households in the fear and discipline of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). Beginning in the home and then going out into the world, Christians confess in life and conversation that Jesus is Lord. The second context of confession is worship, which by its nature is public. Speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs in the divine service is Christians speaking to one another, and back to God, what the Lord has said in His inspired Word (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). The sound pattern of words in Holy Scripture provides the content of confession in worship and life. Third, confession of Christ must be made in situations of persecution, adversity, and conflict. For true confession will produce opposition and persecution from the devil, humanity's sinful nature, and the world, which do not want to hallow God's name or let His kingdom come. The devil's intention of tricking mankind into living according to lies has not changed since the Garden. To confess Jesus as Lord and Christ is to confess the truth and live and die according to it. In this regard, "...we do not concede one square millimeter of territory to falsehood, folly, contemporary sentimentality, or fashion."¹⁵ In each of these three situations of confession, we pray to God the Father to give strength and courage by

¹⁵ Anthony Esolen in *Touchstone Magazine*, Quodlibet, April 2017, p. 4.

His Spirit to confess the truth in life and death. Jesus is the crucified and resurrected Lord of glory. Humanity's Lord and God.

The Church's ministry from the beginning is to confess before the world the truth that Jesus is the Lord Christ, the Son of the Father come to this world to redeem man from his fallen condition and the suffocating lies which permeate all human existence. Such a confession is to say what God Himself said from the beginning. The natural powers of man are not sufficient to apprehend such knowledge and to make a godly confession. Through the precious gospel, the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, restores the divine image in man so that by His grace, every Christian confesses in life and conversation what the Father Himself testifies concerning Jesus. He is Son and Savior, the Christ of the Father, Savior of the world.

To be human is to receive God's gifts of grace for life in this world leading into the resurrection of the just on the Last Day. Confessing love for God and love for man while calling upon the precious name of Jesus in faith with prayers, praises, and thanksgiving is living a full human life, one that is fashioned after the life found in Christ Himself. Through the inspired Word of God, we Christians made new by the saving gospel behold "the glory of the Lord, (and) are being transformed into the same image (as Christ) from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (II Corinthians 3:18). Martin Luther did, on April 18, 1521, what all Christians have done since the beginning of time: confess Jesus. Here we stand. We can do no other. To God alone be all glory, honor, and praise.

Rev. Kenneth Mars
Wyoming District Convention – May 7, 2021

Lessons from Magdeburg for Today

Wyoming District Convention, May 7, 2021

Rev. Christian Preus

At Worms 500 years ago a single man made a confession at the risk of his own life. There is no denying the historical impact of that confession. Nor should we fail to learn from Luther's example to put our confession of the true faith above our own life. But we are not Martin Luther. He is inimitable, the man of God his contemporaries labeled the third Elijah and identified with the angel of Revelation 14, the fulfilment of the prophecies of Daniel, the man God raised up to end the Babylonian Captivity of the Church. And we are not that. Not the laymen here, not the pastors here. Every one of us has a more humble, localized role. Luther changed the world in a matter of years, because God gave this to him to do through call and through circumstance. We have our own calls, our own circumstances, and it is our duty to make our confession within these circumstances and according to our callings. We may dream for grand results, for changing the world, but we cannot make this our goal. Man makes the plans, God decides the outcome. Our goal is instead to follow Luther in being faithful, in making the true confession, and this in itself we must learn to consider our victory and our success, even if our eyes see something quite different, even if we witness the church declining in numbers and losing her standing in the world. Regardless of anything else, the church wins, she conquers, when she makes the true confession. What is it that has overcome the world, St. John asks, except our faith? (1 John 5:4)

I will be taking as the basis for considering the Church's confession in our day the example not of Luther but of the churches he inspired after his death. Luther's confession at Worms is well known, the Augsburg Confession of 1530 is famous, but relatively unknown is the Magdeburg Confession of 1550. And it's this confession that I think speaks most directly to our circumstances today. So first, we will go through the history of this Magdeburg Confession; second we will hit on four points the Magdeburg Confession teaches us about how the church confesses. And third we will look into a number of practical applications of this in our day, with specific attention to the recent restrictions the governments of our country have attempted to impose on churches in the name of public safety.

In 1546, the blessed Martin Luther passed to heavenly glory. Philip Melanchthon, the obvious leader and spokesman for the Lutheran Church after Luther's death, hailed Luther once again as an Elijah, speaking the words of Elisha as he saw his teacher rise in a whirlwind to heaven, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and her horsemen." But Melanchthon was sadly no Elisha. God didn't grant him the double portion of His Spirit. So when in the spring of 1547 Emperor Charles V, in alliance with the pope, invaded Lutheran lands, attacked and decisively crushed the Lutheran armies, captured the Lutheran princes, and forced the surrender of Lutheran cities, there was no Luther, no Elijah, no Elisha to lead the church. Melanchthon failed miserably. He played politics instead of fighting for the pure confession. The Emperor imposed on Lutheran lands the so-called Augsburg Interim, which ordered Lutherans to worship like Roman Catholics and in many points of doctrine, including justification by works and the sacrifice of the mass, to confess like Roman Catholics. Melanchthon, along with many pastors, princes, and professors, instead of

outright rejecting the Interim, made a compromise document called the Leipzig Interim, which said they would worship like Roman Catholics, but would not confess the Roman faith.

Meanwhile the faithful Lutheran pastors who refused to compromise were either killed or driven from their cities. Hundreds of them fled to the north. Most cities compromised and most pastors caved in. The most prominent city to refuse to compromise was Magdeburg. They would worship as Lutherans and confess as Lutherans, come hell or highwater. What came were thousands of imperial troops, which surrounded Magdeburg and put up a siege that lasted well over a year. The order was simple. Start worshipping like Roman Catholics, submit to the authority of your emperor, or we will take your city by force, capture your pastors, and convert your churches to the pope's control.

It was in the face of this violent threat to their city, to their church, to their confession, that the church of Magdeburg wrote and issued their Confession in 1550. It was authored by Nicholas von Amsdorf, who had accompanied Luther at Worms 29 years previous. As the troops surrounded their city, the Magdeburgers refused to compromise in the least. They had learned from Luther's example. They were obviously hoping and praying for success. They even called for assistance from other cities, told them that they were guilty of their blood if they failed to defend them in their time of need. But the Magdeburgers also knew and confessed implicitly, that their Confession was a victory in itself. They were holding to the truth. So even if their city burned to the ground, even if they were all slaughtered, even if they were ravaged by plague (the great risk to besieged cities), even if their church steeples tumbled to the ground, the victory was theirs. As it happened, God crowned their confession also with military victory in the end. Not only did the Magdeburgers pick off hundreds of imperial troops, but by 1551 the commander of the imperial troops switched sides and turned the same troops against the Emperor, which forced the Emperor to retreat from Lutheran lands. Magdeburg had won the day.

We turn now to the four lessons this Magdeburg Confession teaches us.

First, to confess is itself the victory of the church. The Magdeburg Confession states it plainly, "The truth is not conquered by strength of arms. Military victory cannot change anything about what is true nor does it always accompany the truth."¹⁶ It may look like the church is losing. It may look like it's losing precisely because it is confessing. But the confession of the truth is victory, it is the goal, and that means that if we are confessing and standing uncompromisingly on the truth of God's Word, we have every reason to be optimistic, to be confident. There has been, since the last election in the United States, a gloom of depression and pessimism hanging over the church in our country. It is unsettling to see the so-called Equality Act passed by the House of Representatives, a bill that openly opposes Christ's commandments and threatens the persecution of institutions that confess the truth about man and woman. It has been astounding to see the government overreach into churches in our country during the Corona crisis and tragic to

¹⁶ *Confessio et Apologia Pastorum & reliquorum ministrorum Ecclesiae Magdeburgensis* (Magdeburg: Michael Lotther), 1550, preface. All translations are my own. LOGIA will begin publishing this translation serially in its next several issues. An English translation is already available, a valiant first attempt, but with numerous and sometimes serious translational flaws. *The Magdeburg Confession*, trans. Matthew Colvin, (Matthew Trehwella), 2012.

see so many Christians and churches abandon gathering together for fear of death and a misguided, unqualified obedience to the government. This pessimism that has infected us in the face of this persecution and in light of this cowardice is from the devil. We need to knock it off.

The Magdeburgers were not pessimistic. The confession of the church is never pessimistic. We are the church militant, so we fight. But we fight with the outcome of the battle already determined, that the head of the serpent is crushed, and that every knee will bow to our Lord in heaven and on earth and below the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. So the Magdeburgers, as military defeat seemed to loom over them and they'd been abandoned by the other cities and had every earthly reason to be pessimistic, the Magdeburgers write, "The enemy's recent victory should not give them occasion to condemn Luther's cause or to be overly haughty, nor should it lead the pious to be overly distressed. The cause of the prophets, of Christ, and of the apostles first truly began to come to light in their oppression, and they themselves began to be more glorious after their death. For this purpose, in fact, God appointed His prophets and apostles, that they might go forth and bear fruit, and that their fruit may remain, that He himself might work power from their weakness, life from their death, glory from their shame, and planting from their being uprooted. And so Luther himself also, though dead, lives to eternity, and the fruit of his work, like the dead man himself, as it were, lives, will live, and will shine to all ages, among still more nations."¹⁷ That was written while troops surrounded their city and defeat seemed a foregone conclusion. And it smacks of optimism grounded on the reality of God's Word.

Nor did the Magdeburgers see the cowardice of the other cities and the compromising Lutheran churches to be a reason for despair. Instead, it was another reason for them to confess, to call out the cowardice, call out the compromise, and recall their former brothers to the faith and the fight. After condemning the compromise of other Lutheran states and churches in no uncertain terms (they call it apostacy and fornication with the Antichrist), they warn them with these words: "We ... warn all the godly of all churches, both magistrates and subjects, and we ... point out not only how great a crime they have committed who have brought aid against us and to the persecutors of this doctrine and church, but also how they also are not without fault who have failed to lend us their aid, and how each of these offenses, the attack against us as well as the desertion of us, will be perilous to their temporal wellbeing and to their eternal salvation, as well as to all their posterity."¹⁸ This boldness and confidence and naked optimism is really refreshing. Again, the Magdeburgers are surrounded by troops. They're alone. By every earthly measurement they're going to lose. But they still call out the compromisers, and not only this, but they tell them that if they continue to compromise, they risk their temporal wellbeing and their eternal salvation, which will extend down to their children and grandchildren. Here are the people whose city is literally being besieged and they warn others who are living in earthly peace about their temporal welfare. Why? Because they actually believe in God. They actually believe that He is in charge and that He will reward those who stand on His Word and He will judge those who compromise it. They believe the words of the Psalmist, "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading

¹⁷ *Magdeburg Confession*, preface.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

himself like a native green tree. Yet he passed away, and behold, he was no more. Indeed I sought him, but he could not be found” (Ps. 37:35). This is the optimism of the Church’s confession and it’s an optimism that must reign among us today. So long as we make the good confession, the victory is ours and the future is bright for us and for our children.

Second, the Magdeburg Confession teaches us that the church and her members are called to make certain confessions at certain times. Obviously we confess the creed every Sunday. Obviously we confess throughout the Church year the incarnation of our Lord, His death and resurrection, His ascension into heaven, the sending of the Spirit, the reign of the holy Trinity over His Church. This is simply our life. But circumstance forces specific confessions. Luther, for instance, was called before the Emperor and told to recant his writings, and he made the good confession and refused to withdraw a word. St. Peter was brought before the Sanhedrin and told to stop preaching Jesus, and he said, “We ought to obey God rather than man” (Acts 5:29). The Magdeburgers were told to worship like Roman Catholics and they answered by burning everything outside their city, locking their gates, and putting up armed resistance to the Emperor, together with their great Confession published during the siege.

So we too make our confession not only constantly and generally as we teach the faith at home and at church, but also according to circumstance, when confession is called or forced from us. So, for instance, when the Supreme Court of the United States calls perverted homosexual contracts marriages and forces them on the states, the church should respond with definite confession that this is wrong. To be silent, to ignore it, would be to give the impression that this is of little concern to the church or that God’s Word leaves such things up to the individual conscience. More recently, we all experienced the government telling churches whether they could worship, how they could worship, what they should wear when worshipping, and even how to distribute the body and blood of Jesus. And the answer of the churches, whether it was to acquiesce or to disregard and reject these mandates, was a confession, whether we wrote it down or not. And we’ll be taking up that issue here shortly. The point right now is simply to emphasize that sometimes the church has no choice. It must confess a very specific issue, must take a stand one way or another. And silence, as the Magdeburgers make very clear, silence is itself a confession. The Magdeburgers, in fact, considered it their duty to make the confession they made, precisely because the circumstance required it. The Confession states, “[T]here remains still a poor remnant of states, however weak they may be...who also hold to the articles of doctrine handed down to us by the ministry of Luther, and thereby confess Christ, like the thief on the cross. Since among these is also our magistracy and our Church, the Church of this city, so that, in fact, the enemies themselves brag that in attacking us they are attacking the last of this Confession, we have decided that it belongs to our office, since we seem by the singular kindness of God to have a voice still free to speak for the whole Church, that we publicly set forth something for the purpose of vindicating in some way the revealed doctrine of the Gospel against this unjust oppression.”¹⁹

Third, every confession we make has to do with the entire Word of God and therefore with Christ and His Gospel, which is the material, the stuff, of God’s Word. The Magdeburgers could

¹⁹ Ibid.

have simply had their pastors start wearing chasubles, start observing certain holy days, start enforcing a fast during Lent, start elevating the host during communion. This is what the Emperor really wanted. Outward conformity. They could have pretended to be in compliance, could have compromised on some practices, and they would have been able to teach the truth otherwise. That, at least, was Melancthon's argument and his tact in Wittenberg. But the Magdeburgers correctly noted that if they compromised in one area, it would bleed into the rest, it would in the end compromise their confession of Jesus Christ Himself. And this, not simply as a slippery slope, that once you cave on one thing you're bound to cave on another, though that is true, but that when you cave on a single article of Christian doctrine or its practice you are compromising the body of doctrine. And so, and this is simply beautiful, even though the Emperor had not challenged every single article of the faith directly, the Magdeburg Confession sets forth the entire Christian faith, article by article, from God and creation all the way through Christ and the Church and to the power of the government, in order to show that this, all of it, the entire body of doctrine, was at stake, and this is what they would not give up. You tell me I must sacrifice the mass, or even give the impression that I am sacrificing the mass, and you have just brought into question everything the Bible teaches, which centers in the once and for all sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

And so it is in our day. The issues we must confess and address may not seem to directly touch on the Gospel (though in the end they do). The so-called social issues, homosexuality, transgenderism, abortion, divorce, feminism, these are front and center in our culture. These are questions of the law of God, of God's creation, His order in the world. But to dissociate them from the Gospel is an impossibility. The Son of God took into His person created human flesh, He came to fulfill this law, restore order in the world, to redeem marriage, man and woman, family, from sin in order for us to live according to His law by His Spirit. You strike at the law, at morality, at marriage, at the difference between man and woman, you erase it or part of it, and you are striking at the eternal will of the God who became our Bridegroom and laid down His life to sanctify His Church by His blood. Marriage itself, after all, is a God-given picture of Christ's redemption and union with His Church.

Fourth, the Magdeburg Confession makes very clear that the church may not change its confession or its practice because of the edicts of the government. The government is God's institution. We should not and must not conclude from this that we are obligated to obey its every decree. No more than we would say we should obey the church's every decree. Or a father's every decree. Neither the government, nor the church, nor the father of a home has absolute authority. Their authority depends on Christ, who meant what He said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt. 28:18).

It is in fact the primary duty of both the home and the government to serve the Christian church, and the final goal of every one of these estates is the glory of God and the salvation of men. It can't be otherwise, because this is Jesus' goal and He's the one with all authority, His is the authority the home, the state, and the church all wield. So the Magdeburg Confession states, "Although [God] does not want the estates to be confused with one another, He does want them so to serve one another that in the final result they all harmonize one with the other and each in

its own place and its own way promotes as of first importance the true knowledge and glory of God and the eternal salvation of their members; or, when it does not attain this ultimate goal, at least effects the secondary goal of men living peacefully, honestly, and beneficially in this life's civil society.”²⁰

The Magdeburgers point out that every time the Bible commands obedience to the government, it qualifies it, gives a reason for it. The government is to reward the good and be a terror to evil. And this “good” must be understood to include not only the last seven commandments, but also the first three commandments. If the government punishes or persecutes or becomes a terror to the good of confessing Jesus, going to church and worshipping Jesus according to Jesus’ instruction, then it is owed no obedience. They sin, the Confession states, “who think that [governmental] powers are so sacrosanct and inviolable even when they try to oppress the good works which they ought to honor, and on the other hand, to establish and honor the evil works to which they ought to be a terror.”²¹

So when it comes to the church and the home, to Christians as members of their churches and to Christian parents as leaders of their homes, and to pastors who are to conduct services in the Christian congregation according to God’s Word, the government may make no law to oppress the good. And if they do, we are at the very least to disobey it. It depends on our calling in life and our ability as to what else we should do. So the Magdeburgers confess, “Just as it is for God’s sake that citizens necessarily owe obedience to their leaders, and likewise children and the rest of the family owe obedience to their parents and masters, so on the other hand, when magistrates and parents depart from true godliness and virtue, obedience is not owed them because of God’s Word. When they openly persecute true godliness and virtue, they remove themselves from the offices of magistrate and parents before God and their own consciences, and instead of an ordinance of God they become an ordinance of the devil, which can and ought to be resisted in an orderly manner according to one’s vocation.”²²

So when the government told the Magdeburgers to worship like Roman Catholics, it’s not simply that it was stepping outside its God-given role, it’s that it was exactly contradicting, denying, and removing itself from its God-given role to protect the Church and serve it. And at that point it becomes the duty of the Christian to resist and disobey. And we resist of course according to our vocation. A pastor will still preach the truth, that is, even if the government tells him not to. A layman will still bring his family to church, even if the government tells him it’s illegal. A pastor will still distribute the blood of Christ from the chalice, even if the government mandates something else.

And by so doing, not only does the Church confess the Word of truth, she exalts it to its proper place, which is over the church, over the government, and over the home. Jesus’ Word is simply the final authority.

²⁰ *Magdeburg Confession*, chapter 7.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

So now we turn to some practical application of these lessons in our day. And the segue should be quite clean and obvious. In the last year, our government did in fact order the Christian church, our congregations and congregations all over this country, to do bad things. In some states they banned meeting together completely for weeks or months. In other states they banned the Lord's Supper. In still others they banned singing in churches. In Wyoming they attempted, very briefly thank God, to tell us we couldn't use the common cup for the distribution of Christ's blood. These are objectively bad things. The government has been instituted by God to be a terror to these bad things, not to promote them and most certainly not to mandate them.

The word of God commands us in no uncertain terms to take the Lord's Supper often, and gives us the example of the ancient church, which celebrated the Lord's Supper every single Lord's Day, with far more disease going around then than in our day and with no such thing as plastic jiggers or hand-sanitizer. The word of God commands us not to forsake meeting together, as is the habit of some. The Bible exhorts us to sing with one another (Eph. 5:18-19). Most instances of the command to pray in the Bible, even, are not commands to pray at home by ourselves or with our families (though that is certainly our Lord's will), but specifically commands for public prayer in the congregation (Eph. 6:18-19, 1 Tim. 2:1-2; cf. Acts 2:42). And the commands to read the Scripture are likewise commands that Scripture be read in the gathered congregation (1 Timothy 4:13, Col. 4:16). This is the command, the assumption, the context, the background of the entire New Testament.²³ Christ's Church is to meet together to hear the Scripture, hear preaching and exhortation, receive the body and blood of Christ, and pray together. This is the greatest goal, the overriding priority of our Creator and it is the end to which He directs all authority in heaven and on earth, including the authority exercised by the government.

So, in the first place, it was wrong and it is wrong for the government to order the closure of Christian churches or for them to dictate how the Christian church is to distribute the body and blood of Christ. The argument that the government's job is to protect the lives of people and therefore has the right to ban the gathering of Christ's church or to mandate how we distribute the Holy Supper is completely misguided. The government's job is to protect and promote the good, and having the Christian church meeting together regularly is a greater good than having temporal health. It is the greatest good. This is how the Magdeburg Confession puts it, "[W]e must hold the eternal salvation of souls more important than the fleeting health of the body, and that the preservation of His few members is more precious to Christ than all the rest of the world of unbelievers, together with all their trappings and gifts."²⁴ Besides this, going to church contributes to overall health, something most epidemiologists can't wrap their minds around, but which a seven-year-old Christian knows very well.

Now as to the Church's confession in this last year of Covid, it was our duty to have church. Real church, with people gathering together around the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. What an amazing thing. That the greatest confession we could make in A.D. 2020 was to actually have church, to actually do what God commands us to do, what we simply took as a matter of course until March of 2020 – as did the entire Christian

²³ The term church (*ekklesia*) means a bodily gathering, an assembly.

²⁴ *Magdeburg Confession*, preface.

Church for two millennia, through hundreds of serious pandemics – the gathering together for church on a Sunday morning.²⁵ And this, our very simple duty, this meant in many cases defying the state’s mandates.

It was our duty to do so. I want to stress this generally, and then to talk about a few specifics.

First, generally, it was our duty to put first things first. It is more important to hold church and distribute the body and blood of Jesus than to live a long life or to be healthy or to possibly slow the spread of a disease. The people of God needed not only to hear that but to see it. I’m not saying that we should have told people who are obviously sick and symptomatic to come to church – we don’t do that with any disease; we don’t want people vomiting in church: individuals can and sometime should miss church for a week or for a time because of sickness. And I’m not saying that it was wrong to hold smaller assemblies or offer more services to avoid crowded sanctuaries. Not at all. I’m saying it was our duty to hold church so that the faithful could come and in order to encourage those who were inordinately frightened, to teach them and everyone that hearing God’s Word and receiving the body and blood of Jesus and singing and praying as Church is more important than anything in the world. Our children needed to see it, our youth needed to see it, our young families, our middle-age, our elderly, all of us needed to see it and know it. We ask our children to risk death fighting needless wars. Is it really so hard a thing to ask Christ’s Church to risk getting a cold with a .3 percent mortality rate in order to receive the medicine of immortality? In short, any government mandate to close Christ’s church and ban its assembly altogether should be defied.

Now for a couple of specifics. The government told us, here in Wyoming and in many other states as well, to distribute the Lord’s Supper in (prepackaged) individual containers.²⁶ Jesus says something different. He tells us to distribute bread. And then to distribute wine. To distribute the body. Then the blood. None of us would have thought of distributing the body and blood of Christ in a prepackaged individual container or of allowing such a thing in our congregations, had the government not ordered us to do it. When the government ordered it, they decided to be a terror to the good – Jesus’ clear command. So we were dutybound to disobey.

The second specific was the mandate to wear masks, especially that pastors wear masks.²⁷ Masks, even if they have some health benefit, have also obvious deficits. I have several old ladies in my congregation, for instance, who can’t understand me on the phone, because they can’t see my lips and my voice is too deep for them. They need to see my face to hear me preach.

²⁵ Some have argued that the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic is precedent for shutting down churches. There are 5 reasons this is not a good precedent to cite. 1) The Spanish flu was a far more serious pandemic than Covid-19, killing 1 percent of the U.S. population, and primarily affecting the young, not the old, as is the case with Covid-19. 2) The lockdowns were localized, especially in big cities. 3) We have records of Lutheran churches meeting despite the lockdowns. 4) The lockdowns were very brief. 5) Precedent of banning church services is precedent of a bad thing, not justification for further banning of church.

²⁶ The Wyoming health order of May 13, 2021 included this mandate: “g. Communion shall be served in individual containers.”

²⁷ The Wyoming health order of May 13, 2021 included this mandate: “i. Staff who come within 6 feet of attendees or other staff must wear a face covering.”

More than this, the face itself is a vehicle of communication. Everyone knows this. When you cannot see the face and its expression you can very often misunderstand the meaning of words. It would have been one thing if the government recommended masks. It was quite another to mandate it. It is a bad thing, an evil thing, if people can't hear the Word of God because of a mask. If the government's goal were God's goal, as it should be, it would not make such mandates. The church must know this and act accordingly.

The confession from our District has been, as far as I have seen, the good confession. Our president has urged us pastors throughout this whole ordeal, as was his duty, to have regular services and to fulfill our callings as pastors to the sheep committed to our care. Our congregations have in large part insisted on remaining open and holding church. This is the good confession. It puts first things first. It encompasses all the elements of confession taught by the Magdeburg Confession. 1) It evinces an optimism that preaching Christ is the end goal, that so long as we do it we have everything. 2) It understands that this particular time called for a specific confession, a simple one, but a necessary one, to stay open and do what the church does, even in the face of death. 3) It realizes that not just the doctrine of the role of church and state was at issue, but the Gospel and its primacy. 4) And finally it shows that the Church obeys God rather than man. And God has and will bless this confession.

If we have failed in this confession, and most of us, if not all of us, did fail in one way or another, especially at the beginning, then we need to own this failure and admit it as pastors and congregations. At the beginning we were caught off guard. We were told any closure would be temporary. We were told about outrageously high mortality rates of 8%. But instead of justifying shutting down services or obeying unrighteous mandates because we didn't know any better, we should learn from any mistakes made and never let them happen again.

The response of the synod at large has been quite mixed. From the synod, we received no encouragement to stay open. In fact, Palm Sunday of last year pastors of the synod received an email telling us to "refrain from regular congregational services" and to obey the government, even though some state governments had banned meeting altogether and banned the Lord's Supper.²⁸ A similar appeal was made in the Lutheran Witness.²⁹ Many churches have remained closed for over a year. And many pastors have decided to pretend to give the Lord's Supper over the internet. Some banned singing. Others banned the common cup. It's become common to assert, "I go to church over the internet," as if watching a service online is the gathering of the church. These are all bad confessions. They were and remain wrong. They obey man rather than God. They evince fear. Some are just silly. And just as the Magdeburg Confession called on those who had obeyed the government instead of obeying God to return to the good confession, we should do the same according to our calling and ability and circumstance. We should first correct any impression we ourselves may have given that gathering as church and singing and

²⁸ The email of April 3 included the following: "Please, for your safety and well-being and that of your parishioners, refrain from regular congregational services. While we cannot gather together, many pastors are using the best technology to stay in contact with their people." And: "The government is not persecuting us (Fourth Commandment). These rules apply to all, as reasonably as possible. And it appears we are nowhere near the end of this."

²⁹ "This pandemic is temporary," Lutheran Witness, Matthew Harrison, May 1, 2020.

praying and receiving the Holy Supper as Christ instituted it is somehow secondary or non-essential or dangerous to human life. We should commit to never making this mistake again. We should thank God that here in the Wyoming District we have had brothers – and I know I have benefited from this tremendously – brothers and fellow congregations who have encouraged us by word and action to put church first. And then we should call on the rest of our brothers in the Synod to walk with us in this. That there are still churches closed after a year, that churches were closed for more than even a Sunday or two, that pastors are robbing people of the chalice or of the Lord's Supper, that they have banned singing, these false confessions need to be addressed for the good of the church and the glory of God.

Many in the synod have already worked to correct these false confessions to some extent. I would point to a Lutheran Witness article of June/July, 2020, where Rev. Thoma writes, commenting on Acts 5, “[T]he apostles’ flexibility [with the government] came to a screeching halt the moment they were commanded to stop preaching and teaching the Gospel. Again, as Christians, we know that a government born of God’s truest intent – one that can rightly be called good – would not call for the silencing of the Gospel, but at a minimum would let the church be.”³⁰ But even here, the article stops short of addressing what it means to silence the Gospel. Banning the assembly of the church is silencing the Gospel, period. Mandating masks on a pastor is silencing the Gospel (again, for my old ladies, this is literally true). That this was not the message from synod from the start is one thing. It is quite another for synod not to realize it now and confess it. A confessing church is a repenting church. I recommend Dr. Joel Biermann’s short article on the necessity of meeting together, which comes much closer to calling on the synod to realize the obvious danger and error of shutting down church services.³¹

There are finally some conclusions we should draw, both from our review of the Magdeburg Confession and from its application to our time. First, it is never too late to confess. Magdeburg stood alone for some time, but the Lutheran lands returned to Lutheran control and the Lutheran confession before too long, spurred on in part by the written and visual confession of Magdeburg, which put gathering as a Lutheran church over their health and over their government’s decrees. So also, those who made the mistake of slavishly obeying the government’s mandates instead of obeying their confirmation and ordination vows can and will, I pray, come to realize their mistake, especially if we humbly realize ours and we continue to confess the truth frankly. Secondly, God has put us here at this time and in this place to confess the truth of God’s Word, and this confession will last all our life through. So long as we are doing it, we have every reason to be optimistic. Luther confessed at Worms fully expecting death as a result, but God gave life to His church through Luther’s confession. Magdeburg confessed to

³⁰ “When does the church say, “Enough?”, Lutheran Witness, Christopher Thoma, June/July, 2020.

³¹ “The Post-pandemic Pew: A reflection for pastors,” <https://issuesetc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/The-Post-Pandemic-Pew-A-Reflection-for-Pastors.pdf>, accessed 5/5/2021. “Perhaps the notion that ‘the church can still be the church even when we can’t be together’ has merit in the teeth of a legitimate crisis (a flood or a fire) and for a few week’s duration; but it cannot ever become a normal way of thinking or behaving, which is, I believe, precisely what we have allowed to happen. We need to be together in the flesh, and separation for any reason should provoke a restlessness and yearning that will not be satisfied until we gather again in person. Despite our sincerest aspirations, love of technology, or yearning for the avantgarde, the virtual church is a patent oxymoron. To pursue this course for the church is complicity with the designs of the enemy.”

its own bodily detriment, even though it meant lack of peace and constant war and death for over a year, and through that confession God overturned armies and gave peace to Lutheran churches all across Germany. So we confess that the Lutheran faith, the truth of the Bible, hearing it at church, singing it, praying it at church, confessing it at home, this is our life and can never be given up. And God will bless this confession now and forever.

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Confession in Our Culture and World Today

In this closing essay of our 2021 convention, I wish, first, to lift our eyes away from the here and now, and to review confession across time and space. Second, I will sketch the contours of our contemporary situation in America. Finally, we will ask: *quo vadis?* Where do we go from here?

The essential themes that tie these three sections together are sounded in the story of Stephen, the protomartyr. Let us begin there. *“Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, ‘It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.’”* (Acts 6:1-3 ESV).

Part I: Confession across the Centuries and across Continents

Stephen was ordained for the work of the diaconate. His duty was to reform the distribution of daily bread to the Church’s widows. Despite the purely temporal nature of this work, *“[s]ome of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called... rose up and disputed with Stephen. But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking”* (Acts 6:9-10).

Theological conflict culminated in the accusation that Stephen was contradicting Jewish culture. *“This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law, for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us”* (Acts 6:13-14). This charge brought him to a hearing before Jerusalem’s city council—the Sanhedrin. His speech there so stirred up the crowd that *“they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him”* (Act 7:57-58).

Note several points. First, Stephen is not a “servant of the word,” but a “server of tables” (Acts 6:2). Second, his ministry to the bodily needs of the Church’s widows led directly to public theological engagement.³² Third, his public confession constituted a direct contradiction of his

³² Some may question whether Stephen’s public theological engagement was intrinsic to his diaconal office, or extrinsic—related only to his extra-curricular conversations with the various synagogues. I assert the former with four observations in mind. First in context, Stephen’s story is preceded by Peter and John’s faithful confession; and is followed by Philip, another deacon, preaching in Samaria (8:5). Second, the deacons were chosen specifically for their quality of “μαρτυρουμενους” (i.e. martyrs—witnesses) (Acts 6:3). Third, the biblical text seamlessly connects the ordination of the deacons, the growth of the Jerusalem Church, and the preaching of both Stephen and Philip. There is nothing to suggest, in either case, that they were operating outside their office. Fourth, the ordination of the seven deacons finds its counter in the simony of Simon the Magician who sinfully desired to purchase the “laying on of hands,” (cf. 6:6 and 8:18).

city's culture—"the customs that Moses delivered to us." That cultural contradiction became the cause of his martyrdom.

A. Individual Christians Confess against Culture

The word "culture" is related to the Latin word, "cultus," meaning "worship."³³ This verbal link is no accident. It bears witness to an unbreakable bond between religion and the way of life that it shapes. What anyone believes about God—whether consciously or unconsciously—informs the way he relates, the way he communicates, the institutions that he builds, and the customs that he hands down to the next generation. In fact, all communities are shaped by religious notions.

For this reason, "deeply held religious beliefs" in a culture—to whatever extent that they deviate from the One True Faith—will precipitate clashes between Christians in the culture and the laws, customs, mores and traditions of that culture. Precisely in this cultural context, the Christian is called to confess Christ both in word and in deed, rather than concede to the culture's false teaching.

For Stephen, the point at issue was the status of the Herodian Temple and its accompanying covenantal laws. His very life was threatened for confessing that God is located in Jesus of Nazareth, and no longer in the temple. His refusal to compromise that confession led directly to his death.

As Christianity moved out of the Jewish culture and into the Greco-Roman world, the dynamics remained the same. There it was claimed that Caesar is a god. He demanded not only the obedience due to temporal authorities, but the obeisance due to a deity. Early Christians were required to acknowledge this by offering Caesar a pinch of incense (ca. 160). Many who refused participation in this cultus, forfeited their lives.

Each culture has its own cultus—its own faith about the nature of God and where he may be found.

India

In 52 A.D., St. Thomas the Apostle brought the Gospel to the western coast of India. According to the *Thomma Parvam* ("Song of Thomas," 1601), he converted a number of Brahmin families in the region and founded what is known today as Thomas Christianity. Ever since its founding, this branch of Christianity has faced the cultural challenges inherent in the Indian context.

That context involves a caste system inseparably tied to the Hindu religion. Accordingly, every man is born into a caste which separates him from those born in other castes. Eating together, marrying, and religious activity all are controlled by the caste of one's birth. No change of caste is possible. Neither can a member be redeemed from its stigma or renounce its privilege. Caste is irrevocable until death and reincarnation.

³³ While treatises have been written debating the exact derivations, Latin lexicons agree that cultus is a form of the verb "colere," meaning "to till, farm, cultivate; worship." cf. <http://latindictionary.wikidot.com/verb:colere>

The caste system itself is a cultural confession of the Gnostic worldview. Hence, the cult that is Hindu Gnosticism comes into head-on conflict with the culture of Christianity. The very act of a Brahmin eating the Body and Blood of Christ in common with an untouchable is an affront to the Hindu culture. As such, it discredits the Church, hinders evangelistic opportunities, and sometimes brings violent persecution.

Over the course of two millennia, different Christian communities in India have been marginalized by living out the unity of the Gospel. Others, to their shame, have declared that caste is a matter of “indifferent external things” (*adiaphora*) and “of no theological significance.”³⁴

Constantinian Rome

Meanwhile, back in the cradle of Christendom, the first Christian emperor, Constantine, had only recently affected the first ecumenical council which unified Christendom under the banner of the Nicene Creed. However, only a decade later, he deposed Athanasius of Alexandria, the great defender of Nicene orthodoxy. Over the next 17 years Athanasius would be exiled by three other emperors and flee for his life an additional six times.

In each case, Athanasius was contending against the Arian heresy. Nevertheless, in the eyes of the emperors, his exiles were imposed under the color of sedition and defiance of imperial authority. The Roman Empire did not know of any separation between church and state. It cared nothing about what citizens might believe in their hearts. But it cared very much that words and actions could change the balance of power. Any stand for orthodoxy was a stand against the culture, and thus, against the cult of Arianism.

Islam

In the early seventh century, a new heretical religion swept across the middle east. In less than a decade (from 634-643) the cradle of Christianity from Damascus to Jerusalem to Egypt was taken in conquest by Muslim armies.

For the next 12 centuries, excepting the interlude of the Crusades, Middle eastern Christians have thrived in a culture that knows no separation of Church and State and in which evangelism is forbidden and conversion from Islam to Christianity—along with open contradiction of the Arian Allah, or criticism of the false prophet, Muhammad—is punishable by death.

While Christians are permitted to live in this culture, strict laws consign them to dhimmi status. They are second-class citizens by law who cannot hold certain jobs, or build superior homes, or even repair broken churches. The intent of dhimmitude is not to exterminate, but to humiliate. Under these conditions, it is the children of the next generation who are severely tempted to accept formal Islam to gain full participation in the culture.

³⁴ David Mosse, *Caste and Christianity*, p. 2.
https://casteout.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/david_castechristianity.pdf

In all three of these situations, our brothers and sisters in Christ have been living for centuries under conditions that we have never known. Full acceptance in communal life, inclusion in society, even the protection of law, depended upon a person's confession of the cultus of his day. Failure to give proper obeisance to the cultural deity results in a person being shunned, marginalized, and considered "outlaw"—literally outside the protection of society's laws.

Even Luther, living in the Holy Roman Empire, found this to be the case. He was pronounced an "outlaw" for confessing against the cultic errors of his day. His confession at Worms resulted in the loss of safe conduct and his friendly imprisonment in the Wartburg castle.

B. The Church Guides and Supports

In every culture and against every false cult, the true worship of Christ must be confessed even at the cost of death. Still today, every Lutheran confirmand vows "to live according to the Word of God, and in faith, word, and deed to remain true to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, even to death." This vow of personal faithfulness is immediately followed by a vow to corporate faithfulness: "to continue steadfast in this confession and Church and to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it" (LSB 273). Thus, we give our lives and livelihoods into Jesus' keeping both in the present and in eternity—both individually and corporately. Christ responds by promising, "*be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life*" (Revelation 2:10).

Jesus' response to persecution is not only for the future. Even now He entrusts to the Church on earth to care for the persecuted. That, after all, is the very reason why Stephen was ordained (Acts 6:6). Christians, baptized as children of the Father and brothers of our Lord Jesus Christ, concretely forsook Abrahamic family ties. As a direct result, they were cut off from the "social security" of the Jewish world. This left widows and orphans destitute with no means of support.

The Church did not simply look on their lot and say, "*blessed are you*" (Matthew 5:11)! They labored to do everything that could be done to alleviate their suffering. The apostles ordained deacons for the Church in Jerusalem. St. Paul organized a collection for that same Church of outcasts during the famine.³⁵ He willingly journeyed to his own arrest in Jerusalem so that he could personally deliver the offerings that he had collected.³⁶

³⁵ "Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come. And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredited by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me" (1 Corinthians 16:1-4); cf. 2 Corinthians 8:1-5.

³⁶ "And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, 'Thus says the Holy Spirit, "This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles."' When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, 'What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.' And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, 'Let the will of the Lord be done.'" (Act 21:11-14)

In all his travels and travails, the faithful supported Paul with parchments, cloaks, bodily care, appeals to authority and personal visits. Only when Jesus Himself granted him the martyr's crown, did the Church adopt the posture of holy resignation. At that point, she could do nothing more than commend him into the faithful hands of the Crucified.

Martyrologies were written that catalogued many of our fellow-believers and how they were granted the martyr's crown. These martyrologies were not only meant to memorialize the past and encourage present Christians. They were also meant to teach the balance between holy resignation and material support of the faithful.

Eusebius of Caesarea, who wrote in 310 A.D. includes a second-century letter from the Church of Smyrna (modern Izmir, Turkey) memorializing the martyrdom of Polycarp (ca. 160). In the very first paragraph, the author strikes a central theme: “[Polycarp] waited for his betrayal, just like the Lord did, so that we might follow him, in looking out for the needs of others as well as ourselves.”

This teaching is underscored in the back-story that follows. Quintus, a Phrygian believer, rashly handed himself over to the proconsul. While appearing to be filled with a martyr's zeal, his initial willingness turned into cowardice. In the end, he cravenly offered the pinch of incense to save his own life. His lesson is spelled out in the fourth paragraph: “This is why we do not approve of voluntary martyrdom, something the Gospel does not teach us to do.”³⁷

This is the “both/and” of the Church's response to persecution. She trusts in her Lord, fully, to care for those persecuted for their confession while at the same time lending material support to whatever extent that she is able. *Ora et labora*. Pray and work.

Part II: The American Cultus and the Myth of Secularism

Just as every culture in history, 21st century America has a cultus of its own. It demands its own rituals of virtue as conditions of inclusion and protection. Persons unwilling to virtue-signal with words and rituals that affirm the acceptability of sexual perversions, the legitimacy of false marriages, and the plasticity of sexuality are today's outlaws. The legal system no longer guarantees protection for such “heretics.” Governmental fines, corporate cancellation, and social shunning are signs that a new cultus dominates.

To tell the story, we need to go back at least to the formation of the LCMS. In 1846, during the lead-up to our constituting convention in Chicago, George Holyoake coined the term “secularism.”

³⁷ *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*. Translated by J.B. Lightfoot. Abridged and modernized by Stephen Tomkins. Edited and prepared for the web by Dan Graves. <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/study/module/polycarp/>

Secularism defies the clear teaching of Jesus that “*Whoever is not with me is against me*” (Luke 11:23). It propounds the false doctrine that there exists a realm of society which is neither sacred nor demonic. Secularism invents a middle ground where pure reason holds sway. This new religious claim stakes out the halls of government as “holy ground” where Christian opinion is disallowed as illegitimate.³⁸

During the LCMS’ centennial celebration, in 1947, the American Civil Liberties Union launched a sustained and pervasive campaign to inculcate secularism into American hearts and minds.³⁹ It has been spectacularly successful. Between 70 and 80 percent of Americans believe that “the wall of separation between Church and state” is a Constitutional statement. It is not.⁴⁰ Its widespread acceptance is, rather, the rotten fruit of the so-called Enlightenment.

Meantime, many protestants have confused Secularism with Martin Luther’s Two Kingdoms doctrine, as though the temporal sword of Romans 13 is exempted from submission to the Word of God. Absent the Word of God, the holiness and goodness of temporal authority must also be denied. This denial gives rise to popular notions that government is merely “a necessary evil” and is purely “a consequence of the fall.”⁴¹

³⁸ In a breath-taking example of this sentiment, Representative Gerry Nadler (D-NY) recently stated in the well of the U.S. House of Representatives, “what any religious tradition ascribes as God’s will has no concern of this Congress.” <https://www.cnsnews.com/article/washington/cnsnewscom-staff/rep-jerry-nadler-what-any-religious-tradition-ascribes-gods>. A significant change occurred in early 2009 when then Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, began to speak publicly and exclusively about “freedom to worship.” While sounding like a defense of the First Amendment, this phrase, in fact, represented a profound shift. It is a rejection of the First Amendment’s protection of the full and “free exercise” of religion in the public square. Rather, it would confine religion within the doors of the sanctuary. To historians, this is recognizable as the atheistic doctrine of Marxism that fueled the French, Mexican and Bolshevik revolutions.

³⁹ *Everson v Board of Education* (1947) kicked off a series of Supreme Court cases that instantiated this doctrine. “In 1948, the Supreme Court ruled in *McCullum v. Board of Education*, 333 U.S. 203 (1948) that religious education provided by churches on public school grounds in Illinois during the school day is unconstitutional. Then in 1952, in *Zorach v. Clauson*, 343 U.S. 306 (1952), the Supreme Court found that allowing New York students to leave school grounds for religious education is constitutional. Dissenting in *Zorach*, Justice Black wrote, “I see no significant difference between the invalid Illinois system and that of New York here sustained.” If Justice Black, the author of the court’s majority opinion in *Everson*, could not distinguish these cases, how could state, county, city, or municipal school officials be expected to make the distinction reliably?” Justin O. Smith, “The Fallacy of ‘Separation of Church and State,’” *The American Thinker*, August 7, 2017.

https://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2017/08/the_fallacy_of_separation_of_church_and_state.html

⁴⁰ The phrase first appeared in an 1802 letter from Thomas Jefferson to the Baptists of Danbury Connecticut. <https://billofrightsinstitute.org/primary-sources/danburybaptists>

⁴¹ “If we think of the left hand realm primarily or even exclusively in terms of the first use of the law, we will think of this realm as dealing primarily with the restraint of destructive human behavior. However, we might then view God’s left hand reign as primarily negative He reigns solely as judge, as punisher. When we think this way, we will tend to think of government as a burdensome thing, as more a necessary evil than an honorable form of service. This can lead to an unhealthy view of the vocation of service to society through government. For who would want to get their hands dirty with “the government” when we can serve God in the church and focus our work exclusively on the Gospel?” Charles Arand, “God’s Two Sustaining Hands,” *Concordia Theology*, July 2, 2012:

<https://concordiatheology.org/2012/07/gods-two-sustaining-hands/>. N.B.: The notion that government is exclusively a result of the fall has even been articulated in a CTCR report drafted in 1968: “The Creator instituted government as a means whereby He wills to preserve and order life in community among fallen men. It is an interim structure, designed to direct and regulate the political relationships among men during the interval between the Fall and the

These confusions contributed to a theological mood that muted the voice of American Christianity during the turbulent decades of the sexual revolution. Churches drew inward. The doctrine of creation and the fifth and sixth commandments, while still preached in the sanctuary, were largely muted in the public square. Some, perhaps, consider their public proclamation as casting of “*pearls before swine*” (Matthew 7:6). For others, it is a legalistic attempt to “legislate morality.”⁴²

A corresponding political philosophy called “Fusionism,” was developed in the pages of Bill Buckley’s *National Review*.⁴³ Commentator David French remains one of its contemporary apologists. It asserts that the only way to prevent government from infringing on “the free exercise of religion” is for the Church, not the state, to abandon any transcendent moral claims in the public square.⁴⁴ The First Amendment’s guarantee to the “free exercise of religion” is completely collapsed into a more general “freedom of speech” where transcendent truth is tolerated the same as any other obscenity.

As a result of this strategy, all of us—preachers and lay-leaders alike—have witnessed the destruction that the sexual revolution has wrought upon the sons and daughters of our congregations. We have counted the human costs in lost souls, fractured families, and compromised confession.

Beguiled by the promise of a truce, we allowed ever-increasing affronts to basic morality to become written into public law.⁴⁵ But the promised peace never came. The church’s reluctance to address a succession of issues from divorce to abortion to homosexuality, has not resulted in protecting the church from cultural attacks. Rather, it has only emboldened more. Each successive concession only provided the so-called secularists a new platform to launch the next assault.⁴⁶

Lord’s return. (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17)” “Christian Citizenship: A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod,” May 26, 1968.

⁴² “Justifying his opposition to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Senator Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.) claimed that, despite his personal opposition to racial segregation, ‘you can’t legislate morality,’ and thus that he would oppose the bill.” Henry Glitz, “The Limits of Legislating Morality,” Merion West, October 20, 2017.

<https://merionwest.com/2017/10/20/the-limits-of-legislating-morality/>

⁴³ “Fusionism” combines social conservatism with economic libertarianism. It is most associated with Frank Meyer and his book, “In Defense of Freedom.” It was further developed under the editorship of William F. Buckley at the *National Review*. See Jonah Goldberg, “Fusionism Today,” *National Review*, November 15, 2018.

<https://www.nationalreview.com/magazine/2018/12/03/frank-meyer-fusionisms-impact-today/>

⁴⁴ David French, “Viewpoint Neutrality Protects Both Drag Queens and Millions of American Christians,” *National Review*, September 9, 2019. <https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/viewpoint-neutrality-protects-drag-queens-and-millions-american-christians/>

⁴⁵ Hadley Arkes has spoken and published much to document the results of fusionism on American jurisprudence. See, for example, “The Moral Turn,” *First Things*, May 2017. <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2017/05/the-moral-turn>

⁴⁶ Most recently, demands for “tolerance” morphed into a new religious demand for “love.” This “love,” however, is redefined contrary to the Trinitarian God who is Himself Love (1 John 4:8). As a result, Christian love is not merely

American culture is increasingly defined by the atheistic cult of materialism. It has replaced the purposeful God of creation and redemption with the purposeless god of infinite time and random chance. At first blush, this seems to be the final break with every notion of deity carried over from the pantheon of the Greco-Roman world. In fact, it is not. Rather, the cult of modern America has returned to the primordial gods of Roman myth. *Chronos* (time) and *The Fates* (chance) are credited as the creators of our universe. They, in turn, have spawned their own pantheon of rival lesser gods, as President Hill so aptly noted in his opening essay.

Same old religion

“*There is nothing new under the sun*” (Ecclesiastes 1:9). Not only do we find ourselves, again, in a culture of paganism. But also, that culture demands that we pay lip-service to its tenets. It was never the government *per se* that threatened the Church’s confession and existence. Now, as always, it is the false cultus of the culture.

The Constitution in general, and the First Amendment in particular, are powerless to protect the truthful confession absent a broader cultural commitment to do so. America’s founders were fully aware of this. John Adams famously wrote, “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”⁴⁷

Consider the story of Masterpiece Cakeshop. For nearly nine years this tiny bakery has been under incessant attack from the aggressive adherents of America’s emerging cult.⁴⁸ Beginning in the summer of 2012, the Colorado Civil Rights Commission (CCRC) used a novel interpretation of Colorado’s Anti-Discrimination Act to shut down 40 percent of Jack Phillip’s business because he could not lie by creating a wedding cake for a non-wedding.

In June 2018, the Supreme Court of the United States finally intervened to stop the Commission’s prosecution. Immediately, it opened a new investigation prompted by an activist lawyer who asked Phillips first to create an obscene cake celebrating Satan, then another celebrating his gender change from Adam to Autumn.⁴⁹ When the Commission was compelled to drop the investigation, he re-filed on his own.

marginalized. It is anathematized. Correspondingly, Christians are excluded from economic participation on main street as misanthropes (haters of mankind) or, as Tacitus once put it “*odium humani generis*.”

⁴⁷ John Adams, To the Massachusetts Militia, October 11, 1798. <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-02-02-3102>

⁴⁸ Brittany Bernstein, “Jack Phillips will not back down: ‘Worth the fight,’” *National Review*, March 28, 2021. <https://www.nationalreview.com/news/jack-phillips-is-not-backing-down-after-a-decade-of-legal-battles-worth-it-to-fight/>

⁴⁹ Born Adam Charles Scardina, in 1978, (<https://www.mylife.com/adam-scardina/e751305402192>) he now lives as Autumn Charlie Scardina (<https://www.mylife.com/autumn-scardina/e100036035667206>). Colleen Slevin, “Colorado baker sued again over alleged LGBTQ bias,” Associated Press, March 22, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/us-supreme-court-jack-phillips-lawsuits-colorado-denver-a589873d7c2be64d07e1dc0433b13f64>

Thus, an agency of the state colluded with a culture warrior in perpetual lawfare to drain a tiny business of time and prohibitive legal costs.⁵⁰ This war of attrition is calculated to threaten any Christian who would confess the Christian faith by the conduct of business.

We see similar collusion between government and culture-warriors in social media giants that de-platform Christian information sources like LifeSite News.⁵¹ We see international banks cancel the credit cards and financial services of Christian-oriented organizations like Mass Resistance⁵² and the Ruth Institute.⁵³ We see the anti-Christian Southern Poverty Law Center libel Christian charities with the label “hate group,” to suppress fund-raising capacity. We see the American Bar Association abandon its own ethical guidelines⁵⁴ to block access to legal counsel for Christians like David Daleiden and Sandra Merritt.⁵⁵ We see corporate headquarters and human resources departments used to implement far-reaching and ungodly social policies regardless of their effect on the bottom line.⁵⁶

Recall how we began. It was the synagogue of the Freedmen that dragged Stephen before the Sanhedrin. Stephen was martyred as much by the mob as by the Jewish legal system. Likewise, Hindu society punishes the Thomas Christians for living out their unity in the Gospel. Most often, it is Muslim mobs, and not government officials, that enforce dhimmi status on their

⁵⁰ Brandon Showalter, “Colorado baker Jack Phillips back in court after refusing to make gender transition cake,” *The Christian Post*, March 24, 2021. <https://www.christianpost.com/news/colorado-baker-jack-phillips-back-in-court-for-cake-refusal.html>

⁵¹ “BREAKING: YouTube shuts down LifeSite’s channel, every video completely gone,” *Lifesite News*, February 10, 2021. <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/breaking-youtube-shuts-down-lifesites-channel-every-video-completely-gone>

⁵² “Major US pro-family group MassResistance suddenly dropped by bank,” *Lifesite News*, February 22, 2021. <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/major-us-pro-family-group-massresistance-suddenly-dropped-by-bank>

⁵³ “Another Scalp? Donation Processing Company Drops ‘Hate Group’ Christian Nonprofit Attacked by the Southern Poverty Law Center,” September 8, 2017. <http://www.ruthinstitute.org/ruth-speaks-out/another-scalp-donation-processing-company-drops-hate-group-christian-nonprofit-attacked-by-the-south>

⁵⁴ “Legal representation should not be denied to people who are unable to afford legal services, or whose cause is controversial or the subject of popular disapproval. By the same token, representing a client does not constitute approval of the client’s views or activities.” ABA Rules of Professional Conduct, https://www.americanbar.org/groups/professional_responsibility/publications/model_rules_of_professional_conduct/rule_1_2_scope_of_representation_allocation_of_authority_between_client_lawyer/comment_on_rule_1_2/

⁵⁵ Dr. John Eastman, Henry Salvatori Professor of Law & Community Service at Chapman University’s Fowler School of Law and Senior Fellow and Director of the Center for Constitutional Jurisprudence at Claremont Institute, said, “The Left has been trying to cancel legal representation for positions they disagree with for near[ly] 20 years.... I remember when I tried to file a brief in support of the Boy Scouts way back in 1999 at a fairly conservative-leaning law firm, I was told ‘we’re not allowed to do that.’ And yet there were hundreds of briefs coming in from major law firms on the other side. The same thing went on in the David Daleiden exposé of Planned Parenthood selling baby parts. No major law firm would allow their lawyers to work on his behalf, so he’s got a small little non-profit helping him with scores of lawyers on the other side with some of the most prominent law firms in the country. This is an attempt to deprive people of valid representation.” Dan Hart, “Liberals launch attack against conservatives’ right to a lawyer,” *Lifesite News*, November 13, 2020.

<https://www.lifesitenews.com/opinion/liberals-launch-attack-against-conservatives-right-to-a-lawyer>

⁵⁶ We can see this same phenomenon unfolding as New York City implements a “vaccine passport” not by exercising state power to coerce, but by deliberately enabling private industry to deny services to the non-vaccinated. We see this in commissioner Brad Avakian soliciting the long-time friend of Baronelle Stutzmann to sue her.

Christian neighbors. The demand for total cultural acquiescence, enforced by an alliance of government and private entities, may be new to us, but it is the natural state of societies that are not shaped by a Christian worldview.

Part III: Where do we go from here?

The first order of business is to learn the stories of Christian persecution across space and time. Martyrs—ancient and modern—are as much a part of our heritage as Gerhardt’s hymns, Luther’s Works, and the Lutheran Confessions. God gave us the martyrs.

That’s why our churches teach, “that the memory of saints may be set before us, that we may follow their faith and good works, according to our calling” (AC XXI.1). We “*are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses*” (Heb 12:1). Their stories inform, equip, and encourage all who study them. It is the vital work of our time and place to regain a “martyr’s eye perspective” that has been dimmed to a great extent by centuries of freedom and prosperity.

A. Fear not.

To speak of a “martyr’s eye perspective” requires some definition. By it, I mean not how we see the martyrs, but how they view us. It is a way of viewing the world that cannot be taught fully by words alone. Only the experience of persecution itself can bring the gift. Consider the report of Eric Foley, founder of Seoul USA. He is one of a handful of Western Christians who has direct contact with the underground church in North Korea.

These brothers and sisters in Christ face some of the most severe persecution in history.⁵⁷ American Christians often ask Foley, “How can we pray for the North Korean underground church?” His answer is stunning: “When I put this question to Christians in North Korea, they often answer: ‘You, pray for us? We pray for you ... because South Korean and American churches believe challenges in the Christian faith are solved by money, freedom, and politics. It’s only when all you have is God do you realize God is all you need.’”⁵⁸

These persecuted saints make clear that talk of persecution is not for the purpose of spreading woe and dread. Persecution does not mean that the sky is falling upon the Church. It means, rather, that the Church is falling into the embrace of her crucified Lord. Fear not! You were baptized for this moment. The rising cultural pressures are answers to many fervent prayers. God Himself is leading His Church into ever greener pastures.

⁵⁷ “Religious freedom conditions in North Korea are among the worst in the world. The North Korean constitution nominally grants freedom of religious belief, but it also prohibits the use of religion for “drawing in foreign forces or for harming the State.” Anyone caught practicing religion or even suspected of harboring religious views in private is subject to severe punishment, including arrest, torture, imprisonment, and execution.” United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, <https://www.uscifr.gov/countries/north-korea>.

⁵⁸ Angela Lu, “North Korean Christians Pray for ‘Free’ Christians to ‘Realize God is All You Need,’” *Christian Headlines*, November 4, 2013. <https://www.christianheadlines.com/blog/north-korean-christians-pray-free-christians-realize-god-is-all-you-need.html>

B. Reclaim Luther's ecclesiology

The second thing we must do to face the changes coming upon us, it to stop thinking of the Church primarily in institutional terms. All faithful Christians know that the Church does not consist of property, buildings, health care plans, or educational institutions. Nevertheless, as pressure on Church institutions mounts, we are tempted in two equally errant directions.

One error concentrates on the marks that identify the Church—"the Gospel...rightly taught and the Sacraments...rightly administered" (AC VII.1)—to the exclusion of the temporal needs of the saints. The other concentrates on protecting ecclesial institutions to the exclusion of individuals.

In 2015 we saw the sad results of this second error when the overwhelmingly Mormon legislature of Utah cut a deal with the LGBT lobby that earned the derisive moniker, "the Utah Compromise." This deal created legal protections for the \$100 billion-dollar LDS organization, Roman Catholic institutions, and other denominational players. But those same protections were stripped from individual Christians in their persons and businesses.⁵⁹

On the other hand, the path of indifference to temporal concerns can overlook our duty to care for the bodies and material needs of Christ's members. Just as the first Christian martyr was not a "servant of the word," but a "server of tables," so also today, the first to feel persecution are not the preachers and ecclesial institutions, but the people in the pew. Long before the threats of fines and incarceration come to ecclesial institutions and clergy, their flocks will have been driven from the marketplace, discharged from government posts, and brushed off the corporate ladder.⁶⁰

The ecclesiology of the Smalcald Articles is most helpful in this regard. "[A] child seven years old knows what the Church is, namely, the holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of their Shepherd" (SA XII.2). While Luther teaches us to mark the location of the Church by Word and the Sacrament, he teaches us to view the substance of the Church in terms of people, not institutions. Such clarity helps the Church recognize that persecution is not on the horizon. It is already upon us.

⁵⁹ Russell D. Moore, "Is Utah's LGBT-Religious Liberty Bill Good Policy?" *Christian Post*, March 6, 2015. <https://www.christianpost.com/news/is-utahs-lgbt-religious-liberty-bill-good-policy-135283/> cf. how the Chinese Communist Party plays the Roman Catholic Church in China; how the Bolsheviks played the Russian Orthodox Church; and how American ecclesiastical institutions from Yale and Princeton to Concordia Portland and Dallas Theological Seminary have been coopted by attempts at self-preservation.

⁶⁰ Students, from preschool through graduate school are facing persecution in the classroom, on the playground and across the campus. Corporate employees who refuse to participate enthusiastically in the culture demanded by human resources department are being passed over for promotions or fired outright. Small businesses that refuse to signal pagan virtues face canceled insurance policies, denied financial services, exclusion from government contracts, perpetual investigations and more. Government employees—from the mail carrier to the soldier, to the teacher's aide—are already being dismissed for wearing Christian jewelry, refusing to endorse ungodly documents, and otherwise speaking the truth.

C. Teach

“When [Jesus] went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things” (Mark 6:34). The Church’s response to the culture’s harassment of our sheep must begin with teaching.

Christ’s flock must be taught in very concrete terms how to respond to the challenges they face in their various vocations. This is exactly what John the Baptist did when the crowds asked him how they should live. *“Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise”* (Luke 3:11). John went on to give specific instructions to tax collectors and soldiers, as well.

Faithful shepherds must not simply leave each individual lamb of God to figure it out in isolation from the flock. The teaching office should explain what to confess in the face of cultural pressures and ever new temptations to contradict the good confession. The principles are timeless, immutable, and rooted in creation itself. But as deceptions multiply, God’s word needs specific application.⁶¹

Demands for “a pinch of incense” always emphasize that it is only a very small pinch. Satan ridicules sheep who refuse by pointing out that it is too small of a hill to die on. In the Upper Room, Peter professed his willingness to die rather than deny Jesus before kings. But in the courtyard, he was unwilling to make the same confession before a servant girl.

Many will stumble and fall at these supposedly insignificant confessions. The fallen may even join the chorus urging other Christians to follow their example. Satan will use such peer pressure among Christians to pick off sheep one by one. But clear teaching that unifies the flock can prevent many from falling to temptations to their eternal harm and to the weakening of the flock’s unity.

Shepherds, therefore, must be in constant discussion with the members of the flock to understand the temptations that they face in their professional, educational, and social lives. These precious sheep need clear and definite answers. They need to know both the principles upon which decisions are made, as well as the consensus of the Church on these matters. Pastors should compare notes in conference with fellow shepherds. They should also teach these things plainly from the pulpit.

In short, the Christian response to public false doctrine should be so well known that even the unbelieving world will know ahead of time how true Christians will respond to specific ethical demands.⁶² Policymakers may require blasphemies despite all our entreaties. But the Church

⁶¹ The proper distinction between law and gospel will prevent this guidance from becoming a new legalism. Omitting specific guidance altogether will not. The flock of Christ desperately needs it to avoid snares of false confession and living that could shipwreck the faith. They need it, also, to be comforted and encouraged by knowing that they are not alone but unified with the whole flock.

⁶² Early Christian preachers, like St. John Chrysostom and Leo the Great, abound with sermons that mix the profound heights of Nicene orthodoxy with such direct practical instruction. To American ears, they seem almost

must not allow unbelievers to remain ignorant that specific policies will be disobeyed as blasphemies. The Church, after all, has a duty to “*teach all nations*” (Matthew 28:19)—including those in government office.

D. Care for the canceled.

When Jesus led His flock to the green pastures of His Word, He simultaneously led them out of the towns and villages and into “*a desolate place*” (Mark 6:31). There, the harassed and helpless flock suffered real hunger that threatened their well-being. Jesus recognized the concrete bodily consequences that His disciples paid in following Him: “*I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way*” (Matthew 15:32). So, Jesus not only taught them, He also fed them.

The feeding that followed is not only an account of Christ’s miraculous work, it serves also as instruction to the Church of Christ. Still today, the flock who follows Christ’s guiding will not only be hated on an emotional and verbal level. Some sheep will suffer concrete, economic and physical consequences. Jesus commanded his disciples, “*You give them something to eat*” (Mark 6:27).⁶³

From the very day of Pentecost, the church heeded this command both physically and sacramentally. Sacramentally, “*they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers*” (Acts 2:42). Physically, “*they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need*” (Acts 2:45). In short order, the apostles appointed seven deacons (establishing a new church office) dedicated to the physical care of the needy.⁶⁴

As the government itself becomes increasingly complicit in depriving Christian citizens of their livelihood, it cannot be counted on to justly distribute welfare to those whom it deems “haters” (cf. *odium humani generis*).⁶⁵ Again, this should not be seen as a dire threat. This dawning

“legalistic.” Rather than dismissing them for this reason, modern Lutherans should relearn why John was deemed, “the golden-mouthed” and Leo was “the Great.”

⁶³ “In the second place, Christ commands the disciples to set the loaves before the multitude, by which he shows he will administer his work and gifts through the instrumentality of human agencies. He thus also teaches those who have an office or commission (especially the office of the ministry) and those who stand before others, that they should, in obedience to Christ, faithfully and conscientiously serve the people by cheerfully and meekly giving of their own and imparting to others what God trusted and gave to them.” Martin Luther, “Sermons of Martin Luther” ed. John Nicholas Lenker, Grand Rapids, Baker, 1904, vol. IV. p. 230, para. 42, etc. cf. Martin Luther, “Sermons of Martin Luther: The House Postils, ed. Eugene F.A. Klug, Grand Rapids, Baker, 1996, p. 331, para. 15, etc.

⁶⁴ We do not have time, here, to trace the history of the Church’s physical care for her members. Much could be said about St. Lawrence in Rome, Luther’s concern for the Community Chest in Leipzig, and Loehe’s work in Neuendettelsau. Suffice it to say, here, that the recent American development of allowing the federal government to take over sole responsibility for the physical welfare of our members demands serious reconsideration. It is yet another consequence of capitulation to the lie of secularism.

⁶⁵ Styling Christians as “haters” is strikingly similar to the crime attributed to Christians by Nero. According to Tacitus, they were killed “not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind (*odium humani generis*)” (*Annals* 15:44).

situation should be received as a gift from God and as an answer to many fervent prayers. How else can we be so blessed to relearn the joy of our complete interdependence as the family of God in Christ Jesus? But relearn it we must. It is nothing less than an answer to the Church when she prays:

“Grant us hearts, dear Lord, to give You Gladly, freely of Your own.
With the sunshine of Your goodness Melt our thankless hearts of stone
Till our cold and selfish natures, Warmed by You, at length believe
That more happy and more blessed ‘Tis to give than to receive” (LSB 851.2).

As with the first Christians, so with us, some will pay an economic price for their good confession while others in the congregation are yet unscathed. The Wyoming District’s own Ruth Neely was made the first public example of one whose reputation and livelihood was taken by the government for not bending the knee to the progressive cult.

Many in the Church came to the defense of her name, but few ever learned that she also lost her job. By God’s grace, this did not make her destitute. For others, it will. The incessant attacks on Masterpiece Cakeshop have, in fact, caused severe economic, familial and social consequences to Jack and his wife, all of his children and all of his grandchildren.

When similar events happen in your congregation, will the saints of God honor a faithful confession by concrete and significant contributions of rent, education, automobiles etc.? Or will they say, “*be warm and filled*” (James 2:16) while directing them to the nearest food bank and government welfare office? Let us pray and prepare for the former and not for the latter.

Conclusion

The changes that we are seeing in our world cannot be denied. American culture is undergoing a rapid and catastrophic collapse. But we should not delude ourselves into thinking either that it is new to America, or that it is new to Christendom. Our current situation is best described as the sudden unmasking of cultural changes that have been at work for centuries.

The false doctrine of secularism has served as a smokescreen to obscure the advance of neo-paganism and to provide Christians a plausible reason to deny that advance. By unmasking it, the Lord of the Church Himself is blessing His Church to experience what He promised His disciples—and what most Christians have experienced throughout space and time.

The Christian Church, from the day of Pentecost, has always confessed her Lord in open conflict with the culture. As that becomes more apparent in our world, the American Church has a golden opportunity to relearn our roots by studying the lives of our brethren across space and time. This reclamation of our Christian heritage drives home the utter inseparability of the Spirit and the flesh, soul and body, faith and love, justification and good works.

Bodily persecution for the beliefs of the soul means that confession of Christ cannot stop at words, but must be lived out in deeds. Faithful confession involves concrete words and specific behaviors that openly contradict the false confession of the cultus that surrounds us. The consequences of this bodily confession are themselves bodily. Real people with real families will suffer economic, social and bodily consequences for their faithful confession.

This reality, in turn, hands the Church a golden opportunity to relearn and reintegrate the spiritual care of her members with the bodily care of her members. As the Church of Jerusalem learned from the moment of its inception, the integrated care of our members is itself a confession that the Word has become flesh.

Looking to the witness of martyrs across space and time, we can and will learn to thrive amid the challenges that are new to us, but old hat to the Church catholic. As the Church's teaching, confession and mutual community becomes more and more deeply integrated, we will learn—as the Church in every place has learned before us—that concrete care for one another is far more than a practical necessity in an increasingly hostile world. It is of the essence of the Church itself.

Supporting Christians who are persecuted for their confession is itself the good confession. This is what John, the Evangelist and Apostle, wrote in his first epistle. *“By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth”* (1 John 3:16-18).

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PART 4

STATE OF THE SYNOD REPORT

REV. PETER K. LANGE
LCMS FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF REV. LANGE'S REPORT IS INCLUDED IN THE CONVENTION MINUTES. TO ACCESS THE VIDEO PLAYED DURING HIS PRESENTATION PLEASE VISIT [HTTPS://REPORTER.LCMS.ORG/2020/LIFE-TOGETHER-WITH-PRESIDENT-HARRISON-OCTOBER-2020/AMP](https://reporter.lcms.org/2020/life-together-with-president-harrison-october-2020/amp)

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PART 5

CONVENTION ADOPTED RESOLUTIONS

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**To Confess the Immortality of the Soul
And to Clarify the Synod’s Public Doctrine**

**RESOLUTION 1-01-2021
(OVERTURE 1-01-2021)**

WHEREAS, *Luther’s Small Catechism* teaches us to say, “I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my *body and soul*, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them” (First Article); and

WHEREAS, the Synod’s first Explanation of the Small Catechism by Johann Konrad Dietrich (1517-1639), explicitly affirms that the soul is immortal: “But why do you believe in the resurrection of the body only? Because, properly speaking, only that shall rise which has perished; but the body only has perished; therefore only the body shall rise again. The soul can literally neither die nor rise again, because it is immortal. Matt. 10:28, Eccl. 12:7, Acts 7:59, 1 Pet. 3:19, Rev. 6:9, Wis 3:1” (p. 130, q. 312, 1902 English tr.); and

WHEREAS, the 1896 Schwan Explanation teaches concerning eternal life, “That all believers when they die are, according to the soul, at once present with Christ, and, after the last day, shall be with Christ, *body and soul*, and live with Him in eternal joy and glory. Luke 23:43, Rev. 14:13, John 10:27-28, 1 John 3:2, Ps. 16:11, John 17:24, Rom. 8:18” (p. 108, q. 205, 1905 English tr.); and

WHEREAS, the 1943 Explanation likewise teaches, “(A.) That at the time of death the *soul* of the believer is at once received into the presence of Christ. Phil. 1:23, Luke 23:43, Rev. 14:13. (B.) That at the Last Day the believer will live with Christ, according to *body and soul*, in eternal joy and glory. 1 John 3:2, Ps. 16:11, John 17:24, Rom. 8:18” (p. 143, q. 197); and

WHEREAS, the 1991 Explanation also teaches, “(A.) Eternal life is a present possession. John 17:3, John 3:16, Rom. 10:9, John 3:36. (B.) At the time of death, the *soul* of a believer is immediately with Christ in heaven. Eccl. 12:7, Luke 23:43, John 17:24, Phil. 1:23-24, Rev. 14:13. (C.) At the Last Day the believers, in both *body and soul*, will begin the full enjoyment of being with Christ forever. 1 Cor. 15:51-52, Matt. 25:34, Ps. 16:11, Rom. 8:18, 1 John 3:2” (p. 166-7, q. 190); and

WHEREAS, the 2017 Explanation, while it teaches that “I will enjoy being with Christ in His new creation, in *body and soul*, forever.” (p. 225, q. 224), yet avoids speaking of the immortality of the soul and the Christian’s soul dwelling with Christ upon death, and so breaks with the pattern of words (2 Tim 1:13) used by all previous synodical Explanations, when it teaches, “What happens to me as a Christian when I die? When I die, the God-given unity of my *body and spirit* will be broken. *I* will immediately be in the presence of Christ, in heaven, but my *body* will remain in the grave until the resurrection. Philippians 1:23-24, Philippians 3:20, 2 Corinthians 5:8, 2 Timothy 4:18, Luke 23:43, John 17:24” (p. 224, q. 223); thus, the newest synodical catechism conspicuously avoids confessing what happens to the *soul* in death; and

WHEREAS, the Synod’s newest systematic theology teaches, “What does the scriptural understanding of *body and soul* mean for the ‘immortality of the *soul*’? It denies this view, if by *soul* one means, as is usually intended, a separate principle that a human being has or receives” [Samuel H. Nafzger, ed., *Confessing the Gospel: A Lutheran Approach to Systematic Theology* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 1:285, and see footnote 68]; and

WHEREAS, the 1969 Commission on Theology and Church Relations position paper, *A Statement on Death, Resurrection, and Immortality*, rejects the immortality of the soul, claiming that, “The Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions compel us: ...To reject the teaching that the *soul* is by nature and by virtue of an inherent quality immortal” (III, 6, e). The paper does not, however, affirm that, like the angels, the soul is immortal by the ongoing and active will of God; and

WHEREAS, any denial of the immortality of the soul clearly contradicts the synod’s first catechism by implying that the *soul* can literally “die” and “rise again.” This, in turn, contradicts the bipartite anthropology of the Athanasian Creed wherein “the rational *soul and flesh* is one man.” It also contradicts Luther’s Small Catechism confessing that God “has given me my *body and soul*,” and

1 WHEREAS, the Scriptures in various places speak of the soul or spirit as distinct from the “personal
2 identity of a person,” e.g. “My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior” (Lk 1:46-47);
3 “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and let all that is within me bless His holy name.” (ps. 103:1), etc.; and

4 WHEREAS, our hymnody and accepted prayers of the Church follow this sound pattern of words, e.g. in
5 *This Body in the Grave we Lay* (LSB 759/TLS 596, stanza 3), “The soul forever lives with God, etc.”; and in *Awake,*
6 *My Heart, with Gladness* (LSB 467, stanza 1), “My Savior there was laid/Where our bed must be made/When to the
7 realms of light/Our spirit wings its flight!”; and in the common bedtime prayer, “And if I die before I wake,/I pray
8 the Lord my soul to take.” And

9 WHEREAS, the Holy Spirit never teaches us to say, “My ‘personal identity’ magnifies the Lord” or “Into
10 Your hands I commit my ‘personal identity’ or “The ‘personal identity’ is willing, but the flesh is weak” and the
11 Church does not sing, “our personal identity wings its flight,” and

12 WHEREAS we do reject a pagan or Platonic or philosophical concept of the soul, which imagines the soul
13 as eternal by itself, as having no beginning, or as being a spark of the divine essence; but the Scriptures teach that
14 the soul is created by God to live forever; and

15 WHEREAS, we confess both the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body; therefore be it

16 *Resolved*, That the Wyoming District in convention affirm the immortality of the soul; and be it further

17 *Resolved*, That the Wyoming District in convention commend to its pastors the study of Howard Tepker’s
18 two-part article titled, “Problems in Eschatology” published in the *Springfielder*, vol. XXIX, no 2 (1965) & vol.
19 XXX, no. 2 (1966); and be it further

20 *Resolved*, That the Wyoming District both commend and make available the paper of J.A.O. Preus titled,
21 “Immortality of the Soul and Resurrection of the Body” that was presented to the CTCR in discussion immediately
22 prior to its 1969 issuance of *A Statement on Death, Resurrection, and Immortality*; and be it further

23 *Resolved*, That the Wyoming District request that President Hill choose a theologian from our District to
24 write a paper on the immortality of the soul to be presented at the Fall pastors conference, and invite the contributing
25 author of Nafzger’s *Systematic Theology* to give a defense of calling the soul “personal identity” instead of soul; and
26 be it finally

27 *Resolved*, That the Wyoming District in convention ask the CTCR to clarify: Does the Synod, in its
28 teaching, affirm that man has in any way an immortal soul, deny this, or leave it as an open question?

1 **To Form Theological Committees to Address Contemporary Heresies**

2 **RESOLUTION 1-02-2021**

3 *(PRESIDENT'S REPORT - TAB 2, P. 6)*

4 **Rationale**

5 WHEREAS, Wyoming District President John Hill rightly includes “feminism” and “transgender theories”
6 among the heresies we should watch out for and oppose as Christians and pastors in Christ’s Church,

7 Therefore be it

8 *Resolved*, That the Wyoming District in its 2021 May Convention commission committees to write
9 theological resolutions condemning “feminism,” “Communism,” “Marxism,” “Critical Theory” and “transgenderism”
10 as heresies, to be presented to and discussed at the Fall Pastors Conference of 2021, for the possibility of a Spring
11 2022 conference presenting them as overtures to the 2023 LCMS synodical convention.

**To Produce Biblically Faithful Textbooks/Curricula
For our Day Schools, High Schools, and Home Schools**

RESOLUTION 1-03-2021
(PRESIDENT'S REPORT, TAB 2 P. 5)

Rationale

WHEREAS, education in all subject areas is first and foremost about what is taught, namely that which is good, true, and beautiful; and

WHEREAS, secular education in all subject areas is increasingly subject to forces from anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-family, pro-death, amoral, anti-truth, and even anti-beauty perspectives; and

WHEREAS, the Holy Scriptures provide the norm and framework for knowledge in all subject areas, all being interwoven in significant ways with right theology, ethics, history, and human nature as revealed by God therein; and

WHEREAS, the LC-MS has the second largest system of parochial schools in America, but too often they are using secular textbooks/curricula, or publications from non-Lutheran traditions; and

WHEREAS, many Lutheran parents who homeschool their children find good, biblically faithful textbook/curricula options to be sorely lacking; and

WHEREAS, Christian schools and home schools in general would benefit greatly from having more biblically faithful Christian textbook/curricula options; and

WHEREAS, the natural sciences, especially biology and earth sciences, are prone to the grievous errors of Darwinism and Deep Time which directly undermine the integrity of the Scriptures, and the Gospel itself by putting Death before the Fall; and

WHEREAS, the Discovery Works science textbooks available from Concordia Publishing House, the only day school curricula available from CPH besides Religion Curriculum and some Lesson Plans, are outdated (© 1999) and rather limited (Grades 1-6); and

WHEREAS, it was resolved in Synodical Convention in 2019 'that pastors and other church workers be encouraged to confess, witness to, and uphold in their teaching the Synod's publicly stated positions as set forth in A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod, Article 5 (adopted 1932):

We teach that God has created heaven and earth, and that in the manner and in the space of time recorded in the Holy Scriptures, especially Gen. 1 and 2, namely, by His almighty creative word, and in six days. We reject every doctrine which denies or limits the work of creation as taught in Scripture. In our days it is denied or limited by those who assert, ostensibly in deference to science, that the world came into existence through a process of evolution; that is, that it has, in immense periods of time, developed more or less of itself. Since no man was present when it pleased God to create the world, we must look for a reliable account of creation to God's own record, found in God's own book, the Bible. We accept God's own record with full confidence and confess with Luther's Catechism: "I believe that God has made me and all creatures." '

which certainly should include writings as presented to students by their teachers via textbooks/curricula; and

WHEREAS, the need is urgent, as common experience among shows many young adults rejecting their baptismal vows, their doubts arising in middle school and high school when Darwinism and its many related false "isms" are preached by the secular textbooks, while either no counter arguments for biblical truth are available or those presented are inadequate; and

WHEREAS, the LC-MS has a university system and two seminaries housing expertise across all subject areas, including early childhood education, for producing excellent textbooks/curricula for grades K-12 as well as providing theologically sound editorial oversight to ensure content is biblically faithful in its Christian apologetic (defending Gen. 1-11 as it defines marriage between one man and one woman, and human nature as fallen, infected with original sin from Adam, but tells of the seed of the woman, the second Adam, Who would crush Satan's head,

1 and as it describes Earth’s early history with creation ex nihilo in six natural days and the global flood in Noah’s day);
2 and

3 WHEREAS, the LC-MS has its own publishing house; therefore, be it

4 *Resolved*, that the Wyoming District of the LC-MS memorialize the Synod in convention to direct and coordinate
5 the systematic preparation and production of biblically faithful textbooks/curricula across all subject areas, prioritizing
6 biological and earth sciences, for grades K-12; and be it finally

7 *Resolved*, that this curriculum be ready for market by 2026.

1 **To Develop Lutheran Curriculum for our LCMS schools and home school families**

2 **RESOLUTION 1-04-2021**

3 WHEREAS, the schools and homeschooling parents of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have a
4 need for faithful Lutheran curriculum; and

5 WHEREAS, there are many capable individuals within the LCMS who can write and prepare curriculum;
6 therefore be it

7 *Resolved*, that the LCMS District President and Education Executive of the Wyoming District appoint a
8 taskforce to research, fund, develop, and publish sound Lutheran Curriculum in all liberal arts subjects.

1 **To Commend the Paper “Lessons from Magdeburg Today” to the Synod and its Officers**

2 **RESOLUTION 1-05-2021**

3 *(ESSAY III, 2021)*

4 WHEREAS, at the Wyoming District Convention, May 7, A+D 2021, the Rev. Dr. Christian Preus of Mt. Hope
5 Lutheran in Casper, gave a clear and Biblical presentation on how Christ’s Church should react to the kind of
6 government mandates made in America during the Covid-19 crisis (*Lessons from Magdeburg Today*); and

7 WHEREAS, our synod is divided on how to react to government mandates to cease gathering together, to withhold
8 the sacrament from Christians, to refrain from using the common cup, to silence the congregation’s singing, to muffle
9 with facemasks the voices of pastors and congregations during the preaching, praying, and singing of God’s Word;
10 and

11 WHEREAS, there is disagreement in congregations of synod on whether such government mandates ought to or
12 can be obeyed, and such disagreement is deadly to walking together in the unity of Spirit (Phil. 1:27; Eph. 4:3; Gal.
13 5:15); and

14 WHEREAS, the Rev. Dr. Preus’s paper promises to answer such disagreement with the pure doctrine of Holy
15 Scripture; therefore be it

16 *Resolved*, that the Wyoming District in convention, request that their district president, Rev. John Hill, distribute
17 a reviewed version of Pr. Preus’s paper to the praesidium of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LC-MS), and be
18 it finally

19 *Resolved*, that President Hill encourage President Harrison to facilitate reading and discussion of this paper among
20 the synod’s praesidium, and among the synod’s theologians.

Name Change and Maintenance Responsibility to the Wyoming District Handbook

RESOLUTION 2-01-2021 (OVERTURE 2-01-2021)

Rationale

Various communications and concerns with the current state of the “Wyoming District Handbook: Guidelines, Policies, and Strategies 2018” prompted the suggestion that the book be reorganized and portions of it placed into the care of those who are responsible for its various sections.

In effect, this would remove all but the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws from the direct supervision of the District in Convention. Convention time, as well as Workbook and Proceedings space, would be economized. Most of the items would be placed in the care of the Wyoming District Board of Directors (BOD), who have the task of carrying out those items. Amendment of non-convention items could take place on an as-needed basis, rather than every three years during valuable convention time. The BOD will consult or receive proposed amendments or additions from the commissions or entities and act upon them.

All these items are public, and both the Handbook and the BOD Operating Manual shall be made available upon request to any member of the District (i.e. congregations and rostered workers).

Therefore be it

Resolved, That the Wyoming District Supplement, previously known as the Wyoming District Handbook include a notification that the Handbook of Synod is also the Handbook of the Wyoming District; and be it further

Resolved, That the Wyoming District Supplement be divided as noted below (according to 2018 page numbers), with ongoing maintenance by the responsible entities identified below;

Convention

- 4–6 Articles of Incorporation
- 7–19 Bylaws

Pastors Conference

- 20–23 Wyoming District Ordained Ministers (Pastors) Conference Guidelines

Circuit Visitors (including Praesidium)

- 24–25 Guidelines and Procedures for Ordained Ministers (Pastors)
- 26–28 Guidelines/Procedures for Vacant Congregations. . .
- 37–53 Ministry Support: Compensation Guidelines for Church Workers

Board of Directors

- 29 Wyoming District Moving Procedure Guidelines
- 31 –36 Wyoming District (LC-MS) Pastor Compensation
- 54 Housing Guidelines for Professional Church Workers
- 55–56 Stewardship of the Parsonage

1	• 57–60	Guidelines for Articles of Agreement for <i>Multi-Congregation</i> Parishes
2	• 61	Conflict of Interest Policy
3	• 62	Consulting with District President on Appointments
4	• 63	Guidelines for Recognition of District Service
5	• 64	Guidelines for Expenses Incurred by District Officers
6	• 65–66	Wyoming District Travel Procedures and Guidelines
7	• 67	Wyoming District Office Mail Policy
8	• 68	Worker Salary Increases, Effective Date
9	• 69	Wyoming District Data Policy
10	• 70–71	District Office Personnel Electronic Communications Systems Policy
11	• 72	Guidelines for District Website
12	• 73	Endowment Guidelines
13	• 74	Wyoming District-LCMS “In Kind” Gift Policy
14	• 75	“In Kind” Gift Receipt
15	• 76	Wyoming District Capital Reserve Policy
16	• 77–78	REVISED: Investment Policy
17	• 79	Church Worker Assistance Guidelines
18	• 80	Gifts for District Missionaries and Office Staff
19	• 81	Compensation Policy for District President Transition
20	• 82–86	Wyoming District Sexual Misconduct Guidelines
21	• 87–91	TO BE REMOVED: Guidelines for Investigating Alleged Sexual Misconduct
22	• 92–93	Indemnification of Directors in Lawsuits
23	• 94	Wyoming District LCMS Image, Likeness, Picture Release Form
24	• 95	Honoraria Guidelines
25	• 96–97	School Grants Fund
26	• 98	Wyoming District Library Guidelines
27	• 99	Guidelines and Directives for Mission Work in the Wyoming District
28	• 100–102	REVISED: Procedure/Communication Guidelines . . . Assisted Cong. . .
29	• 103–104	Relationship and Communication Guidelines, St. Andrew’s
30	• 105–106	Wind River Reservation Mission Strategy
31	• 107	Remunerated and Un-Remunerated Extra-Curricular Activities. . .
32	• 108–113	Guidelines for Awarding of Student Financial Aid
33	• 114–116	Lander Camp (various)
34		
35	and be it further	

1 *Resolved*, That the Wyoming District Board of Directors be granted discretion to include some of its items in its
2 BOD Manual and others in the Supplement; and be it finally

3 *Resolved*, That the Wyoming District Supplement be published electronically at least once every three years
4 before the Convention to all delegates and members of the District, with paper copies printed upon request.

Amendment to Wyoming District Bylaws

RESOLUTION 2-02-2021

(OVERTURE 2-02-2021)

WHEREAS, LCMS Secretary Sias submitted a letter to the Wyoming District dated 2019-12-04 with recommended wording to facilitate changes in governing documents following an action of Synod in Convention; therefore be it

Resolved, that the routine and obligatory alignment of language to the Wyoming District Bylaws necessitated by synod convention action be reviewed by the district Constitutions Chairman before it is brought to the Wyoming District Board of Directors; and be it finally

Resolved, That the following language recommended by Synod Secretary Sias be added to Section V of the Wyoming District Bylaws in an appropriate location:

When necessitated by amendments to the Synod Constitution or Bylaws, or otherwise directed by a resolution of the Synod in convention, amendment may be made by a two-thirds majority of the district board of directors. Such amendments shall be drafted by the district secretary and shall be reviewed in advance by the LCMS Commission on Constitution Matters.

1 **School Grant Guidelines**

2 **RESOLUTION 2-03-2021**

3 *(OVERTURE 2-03-2021)*

4 WHEREAS, the 2018 Wyoming District Convention adopted Resolution 2-12-2018 To Strengthen, Publicize, and
5 Fund the School Grants Fund; therefore be it

6 *Resolved*, That the current School Grants Fund guidelines (2018: 96-97) be replaced with simpler language based
7 on the Church Worker Assistance Guidelines (2018: 79) as found below:

8 **School Grant Guidelines**

9 The purpose of this fund shall be for assisting schools that are in financial need where immediate relief will
10 make a genuine difference. This assistance, while primarily financial, may also include financial guidance on
11 budgeting, tuition rates, and development.

12 Situations that come to the attention of the district president or education executive shall be considered in
13 light of circumstances surrounding the request for aid. Investigation of need, background history, etc., shall be
14 conducted as a basis for assistance. The Board of Directors (BOD) shall determine appropriate boundaries for
15 granting assistance.

16 Funding shall be determined by the BOD as to source of funds, the amount provided for these purposes, and
17 the method of dispersing these funds. Grants may be provided as appropriate to the circumstances of the school
18 needing assistance. The BOD shall determine appropriate amounts for dispersal at the discretion of the district
19 president, and the level of amounts requiring consultation before dispersal.

20 Accountability shall be set up for the sake of the school through the district president or education executive.
21 Reports of a general nature shall be made to the BOD as appropriate on a regular basis.

22 and be it finally

23 *Resolved*, That members of the congregations of the Wyoming District and congregations themselves be
24 encouraged to contribute to the School Grants Fund and include communication to the education executive of the
25 Wyoming District.

To Give Thanks to God for the Work of Circuit Visitors

RESOLUTION 2-04-2021

(OVERTURE 2-04-2021)

WHEREAS, our Lord instructs us in Holy Scripture, “do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain” (Deuteronomy 25:4, 1 Corinthians 9:9), and writing by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Saint Paul warns the church, “Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.” (Galatians 6:6-7); and

WHEREAS, in recognition of this, the Wyoming District has established guidelines for congregations to support their pastor in his work as an encouragement to follow these scriptural obligations; and

WHEREAS, the bylaws of synod require that the Wyoming District elect Visitors from among the pastors of each circuit to assist the District President in his duties; and

WHEREAS, the Synod Handbook bylaw 5.2(d) states “All nominated pastors serving congregations and emeriti pastors whose names are nominated prior to the day of the circuit forum shall be eligible for election in accordance with section 4.3 of these Bylaws” which trusts the wisdom of the circuit and district in nominating and electing the best pastor for the job, and noting that a nominated pastor may reject the nomination; and

WHEREAS, the office of Circuit Visitor is critically important to the health and wellbeing of our district congregations, assisting the District President in his duties of visitation and ecclesiastical supervision of congregations and pastors in the circuit; and

WHEREAS, this assistance takes a great deal of time (100 hours or more a year) away from the congregations and especially the family of the Circuit Visitor; and

WHEREAS, the District reimburses expenses of the Circuit Visitor, such as mileage, meals, etc., while the congregation continues to account for his time and effort, as Scripture requires of us; and

WHEREAS, the Wyoming District Praesidium, and the Board of Directors are to look after the care and well being of the Circuit Visitor and his congregations(s) and can provide means to aid in cases of need; therefore be it

Resolved, that the congregation(s) of the Circuit Visitor continue to support their pastor in his role as both pastor of the parish and in his role as Circuit Visitor and see their importance to the health of the congregations of the Wyoming District; and be it further

Resolved, that congregations view the time and finances (like pulpit supply) incurred by their pastor serving as Circuit Visitor as gift and service to the congregations of the Wyoming District; and be it finally

Resolved, that the Wyoming District give thanks to God for the work of Circuit Visitors in assisting the District President to provide Ecclesiastical Supervision, encouragement in the work of ministry among our pastors and congregations, and brotherly advice to pastors as they carry out their ministries.

To Give Thanks For Convention Worship and Music]

RESOLUTION 3-01-2021

WHEREAS, Dr. Steven Hoffman has done excellent work preparing the music for the District Convention which provides opportunity to joyously receive the gifts of the Lord through His Word; and

WHEREAS, there have been numerous pastors who have led us in prayer and the preaching of God's Word faithfully, rightly dividing Law and Gospel and encouragement for us in our life; and

WHEREAS, Mt. Hope Lutheran Church in Casper has hosted the Divine Service for the Wyoming District Convention and have blessed us with the gifts of the Lord entrusted to the congregation's care; and

WHEREAS, an offering was taken at the Diving Service and the District Convention entrusts the faithful use of those funds to the congregations; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the delegates of the 20th Convention of the Wyoming District stand and that we sing the Doxology in thanks to the Lord for their service to our district

To Thank the Convention Essayists

3-02-2021

WHEREAS, The Reverend Doctor Christian Preus, the Reverend President John Hill, the Reverend Jonathan Lange, and the Reverend Kenneth Mars have delivered essays to the Wyoming District Convention on the theme, “Here I Stand Before Kings and Princes”; and

WHEREAS, their presentations have been of benefit to those in attendance at the Convention, both in strengthening our unity as a district and edifying the faith of those claiming Jesus as Lord; be it therefore

RESOLVED, that the Wyoming District Convention rise to express our appreciation and thanks by speaking in unison “THANKS BE TO GOD” for the presenters for their essays.

1 **To Praise God for Jeff Snyder and Tiffany Hoff**

2 **3-03-2021**

3 WHEREAS, Mr. Jeff Snyder and Mrs. Tiffany Hoff are employed by the Wyoming District; and

4 WHEREAS, Jeff and Tiffany have demonstrated faithful service to the district in preparing for this convention;
5 therefore be is

6 RESOLVED, that the delegates and guests of the Wyoming District Convention stand in order to express thanks
7 with applause for these devoted workers.