

WYOMING DISTRICT ROUND-UP

Wyoming District—LCMS

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FALL 2021



“Here I Stand” on the Word in My Community

Here I Stand: Cultivating Culture

There is only one true religion. That’s because there is only one God. This one and only God is the triune God, who has revealed Himself and spoken to us in His Word, the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. One religion, one God, one truth, one point of reference for every life, yours and mine. As the Holy Spirit teaches us, “There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in you all” (Ephesians 4:4–6). Only one.

So also there is only one standard for our beliefs, speech, arts, customs, and way of life. The truth that is taught us by the Holy Spirit in His Word gives us forgiveness and life, but also informs, shapes, controls, and directs every aspect of our lives. This is what young people today might call a genuine, or authentic, life. It is life that fully matches what is true and what we believe. We Christians **cultivate** the knowledge of the truth and a manner of life that corresponds to the truth.

Cultivate is a farming word. It means to plow and prepare the ground, to grow things. In human life, to **cultivate** is to teach, train, correct, and improve ourselves and our children. Like the farmer who strives to grow good, useful, and beautiful crops and livestock, the cultivated man or woman learns and keeps the truth, praises and does what is good, and loves and makes what is beautiful. Our bodies and souls, hearts and minds, are the gardens that we cultivate by hearing and learning God’s Word and by educating and exercising ourselves in all that is true, good, and beautiful.

The word for this cultivation is **culture**. Sometimes “culture” is used deceptively to refer generally to a society’s beliefs, practices, language, rituals, and the like. We might say, for example, that our national and community culture is changing rapidly and dramatically. We might even talk about a corrupt or degenerate culture. But this is deceptive. Culture cannot refer to lies, evil things, or ugly and malformed things. Farmers do not sow weeds in their fields (Matthew 13:24–30). They don’t strive for sickly, malnourished, and ugly livestock. They don’t try to grow things that disgust or poison the eater. Such things are not cultivation. These are evil deeds done for wicked purposes by a malicious enemy.

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In other words, the teaching and publishing of lies is not culture. Schools, literature, movies, news reporting, and works of art that fail to reject falsehood and promote the truth are not culture, but anti-culture. They are anti-human. Anything that stands against truth—from the revelation of divine truth in the Bible to all the ordinary truths that are finally bound up with this divine truth—any opponent of truth is anti-culture.

Likewise, books, TV shows, schooling, arts, and daily discourse that do not praise and teach the goodness of God's creation and works—man as male and female, marriage, child-bearing and child-rearing, home life, and all the other wonders of His creation—such works of anti-culture are sown by the enemy for the destruction of man and the communities into which God has placed him. The works and deeds of man that replace the triune God and the saving work of Jesus Christ with teachings, politics, customs, and ways of life that oppose the true God and His true Word are works of evil, to be rejected by all good and decent men.

So also the books, shows, movies, news feeds, YouTube videos, Facebook posts, and the like that glorify ugly words, ugly ideas, ugly music, ugly art, and ugly deeds is not culture, but the destruction and end of culture among us. These things poison and degrade us. They do not cultivate beauty. Sin is ugly. Rebellion against parents and other authorities is ugly. Fornication, forbidden sexual acts, pornography, and divorce are ugly. Theft and greed, slander and cruel speech, and the coveting of your neighbor's people and stuff is ugly. And deeper than that, the idolatry that drives all these things, the idolatry that uses God's name for evil, the idolatry that denies the clear truth of God's Word, is ugly. It is anti-culture.

We Christians have a duty to give attention to culture, first for ourselves and our children, and second for our neighbors and communities. It is part of the duty to love our neighbors as ourselves. Parents receive this duty for their children, for God has commanded parents to enculturate their children and homes with convictions, language, virtues, and rituals that are true, good, and beautiful. Congregations have this duty especially in their worship, their place of worship, their music, and so on. Citizens have this duty in their houses, neighborhoods, and communities. All Christians are to cultivate such blessings in their vocations, their relationships, the things they make and do and say.

We are not left without resources, works, and examples of culture. The Bible is our starting point. From infancy we learn God's Word, together with the liturgy, hymns, and catechism that cultivate our hearts and minds. We grow up cultivating all the works and deeds and truths that correspond to God's Word. We receive truthful instruction from our Lutheran Confessions and other writings. We read the best of 3,000 years of edifying literature, from Homer to Milton to Tolkien. We enjoy good food and good wine and good conversation. We make and view good art, attend good theater, and recite good poetry. We are edified by beautiful Lutheran hymns, beautiful music and art, beautiful architecture, and the like.

The one true God, the triune God revealed in Holy Scriptures, is not ignorant of these things. He commands and encourages us to hold fast to the truth, receive and give to others His good blessings, and conform our faith and lives to the beauty of His divine revelation. "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable, and perfect" (Romans 12:2). God is the teacher and giver of culture. So the Apostle Paul writes,

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, set your mind on these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.
(Philippians 4:8–9)



Rev. Ken Mars, pastor at Kimball and Burns, gave a presentation on science, reason, and faith at Immanuel in Alliance. A geologist before going to seminary, Pastor Mars discussed how we're able to know what we do, and how misunderstanding that can lead to false assumptions about our Christian faith and the world in which we live.

This event was put on by the congregations in the Nebraska Panhandle on August 29. These congregations will be hosting a youth gathering and family gathering alternating the last Sunday of each month. Please watch the Wyoming District– LCMS Facebook page and calendar for specific dates for these future events. These events are open to all members of the Wyoming District– LCMS.

Next year's TTGNAJ Convocation will take place February 11-12, 2022, with Rev. Dr. Adam Koontz presenting on "Identity and Creation: 21st Century Problems, 1st Century Solutions." Registration materials will be included in the Winter Roundup published in December and congregations will be notified when online registration is made available.



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ of the Wyoming District,

Seventy-five years ago, faithful Lutherans in Morrill, Mitchell, and the surrounding area first came together to receive God's gifts of Word and Sacrament in the basement of the Morrill Public Library. In 1948, a sanctuary along US 26 was dedicated as Trinity's new home, which served for many years. With God's gracious provision, the current church was built in 2000 with the help of many faithful members as well as Laborers for Christ.

With 2021 marking 75 years of ministry for Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, we are celebrating with a special service at 10am on October 24th, with a luncheon following. We would love to have you join with us in hearing the Word of God proclaimed and receiving the body and blood of our Lord in the blessed sacrament. Trinity's choir will be providing special music for this service, and we hope many former members as well as other LCMS parishioners will be here as well. If you have any questions, please contact Trinity at 308-247-2432 or trinitymorrill@gmail.com.

Pax Xp,
Rev. Kenneth Humphrey



REFORMATION 500: "Against Latomus"

One of the early projects Luther tackled in his time at the Wartburg (May 1521 through February 1522) proved to be one of the most significant labors of the entire Reformation. I'm not speaking yet of the translation of the Bible into German, though that had an unmatched impact. I'm referring to his work of writing model sermons for use by pastors as they served their congregations. The reform of preaching—the central task of the pastoral office—led to vibrant, joyful, deeply convicted, and faithful congregations and Christians among the Lutherans.

Luther had begun this work before going to Worms, preparing sermons in Latin as a kind of commentary on the traditional Gospels and Epistles appointed throughout the liturgical year. (See the Gospels and Epistles for the Historic Lectionary in LSB pages xx–xxi or TLH pages 54 and following.) At the Wartburg he changed course and wrote sermons in German. These were not merely commentaries, but actual sermons to be used by pastors for their preaching preparation. They could be preached (at least in part) by pastors who were incapable of writing sermons. In any case, they could be read as devotional and catechetical literature by the whole church, both pastors and their hearers.

While at the Wartburg, Luther only managed to prepare sermons for the Gospels and Epistles appointed for the Advent and Christmas season. These were published in March 1522. It was not till 1525 that he managed to finish the sermons for Lent. Luther considered these books of sermons among his best writings. But in the following years, as Luther became too busy to write out sermons, his students or others would transcribe the sermons that he preached in church or in his home. These sermons were published in various editions and filled out the rest of the church year. Luther's sermon books (called Postils) were edited and published frequently dur-

ing his life and long after his death, including many volumes in the American Edition of Luther's Works.

And why? What prompted Luther to prepare and publish his sermons? The decay of the Roman Catholic church, its false doctrines and practices, the absence of proper training of pastors, the failure of bishops to visit and help the pastors and parishes under their care, and the lack of faithful pastoral care all contributed to the loss of good preaching. In fact, the Bible itself was not well known. Faith in the merits of Christ was replaced by trust in the performance of rituals and works designed by man. True good works were rarely taught, while Christians were directed instead to indulgences, pilgrimages, and other man-made works. Furthermore, Luther knew that if the Biblical reforms he was teaching were to take root and thrive in the congregations, this would come about only through good Biblical preaching.

In fact, the preaching and hearing of God's Word is the central activity of the church. Luther loved, taught, and praised Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and Confession all his days. But he saw preaching as the central task of the church and, in particular, of the pastoral office. In our Confessions he named preaching as the first gift of God's superabundant grace in Christ: "First, through the spoken word, in which the forgiveness of sins is preached to the whole world (which is the proper function [or office] of the gospel)" (SA III.4). In fact, he often referred to the pastoral office as the *Predigtamt*, the Preaching Office.

Luther also knew that the congregation, the members, needed help in the work of being good and faithful hearers of sermons. So he included an introduction to the first book of sermons entitled, "A Brief Instruction on What to Look for and Expect in the Gospels" (AE 35.117–124; cf. AE 75.7–12). In it he gave a simple explanation of "gospel": "For at its briefest, the gospel is a discourse about Christ, that he is the Son of God and became man for us, that he died and was raised, that he has been established as a Lord over all things" (118).

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He taught preachers and hearers how to hold fast to Christ: "Therefore you should grasp Christ, his words, works, and sufferings, in a twofold manner" (119). The first is to take Christ as an example for the Christian life. But the second way is the most important:

The chief article and foundation of the gospel is that before you take Christ as an example, you accept and recognize him as a gift, as a present that God has given you and that is your own.... This is the great fire of the love of God for us, whereby the heart and conscience become happy, secure, and content. This is what preaching the Christian faith means. This is why such preaching is called gospel, which in German means a joyful, good, and comforting "message." (119–120)

But flowing from faith in the gospel is receiving Christ as an example. "Christ as a gift nourishes your faith and makes you a Christian. But Christ as an example exercises your works. These do not make you a Christian. Actually they come forth from you because you have already been made a Christian" (120).

In short, preaching is all about Christ, His saving work and ongoing service to us, His Word and doctrine, His example and commands for life, His law and His gospel. Luther: "For the preaching of the gospel is nothing else than Christ coming to us, or we being brought to him" (121). This preaching applies to all of Scriptures, Old and New Testaments. Luther emphasized that the gospels and epistles were also written

to be our guides, to direct us to the writings of the prophets and of Moses in the Old Testament that we might there read and see for ourselves how Christ is wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in the manger [Luke 2:7], that is, how he is comprehended in the writings of the prophets. It is there that people like us should read and study, drill ourselves, and see what Christ is, for what purpose he has been given, how he was promised, and how all Scripture tends toward him. (122)

So we are taught to pray (LSB p. 305): "Almighty God, grant to Your Church Your Holy Spirit and the wisdom that comes down from above, that Your Word may not be bound but have free course and be preached to the joy and edifying of Christ's holy people, that in steadfast faith we may serve You and, in the confession of Your name,

abide unto the end; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

THE NEXT ROUNDUP

The next Roundup will be delivered to congregations around October 20 (November 2021 issue).

"...REMEMBERING YOU IN MY PRAYERS..." (Eph. 1:16)

For **Rev. Ralph Jaeger** (emeritus, Laramie), health.

For **Rev. Michael and Jennifer Wittrock** (emeritus) with health needs.

For **Rev. David Caspersen** (emeritus, Cheyenne) as he recovers from heart surgery.

For our active-duty chaplains, **Rev. Lynn Christensen (Japan)**, **Rev. Ryan Mills (Colorado)**, **Rev. Scott Shields (Alaska)**; and national guard chaplain **Rev. Gerald Heinecke (Prince of Peace, Buffalo)**.

PASTORS AND CONGREGATIONS

St. Paul's, Sidney, is being served by **Rev. Ted Bourret, (St. Paul's, Potter and Salem Gurley)** during the vacancy.

Rev. Travis Sherman (Grace, Gordon) is serving **Grace, Merriman, NE** (Nebraska District) while it considers its future.

Rev. Jared Tucher (Trinity, Gillette) has accepted a call to the dual parish of **St. John, Farmers Retreat** and **St. Paul, Cross Plains (Dewberry)**, Indiana. His last Sunday will be September 26. **Pr. John Christensen (emeritus, Thermopolis)** will serve as vacancy pastor.

Future Dates

October 3-6: Teachers and Pastors Conference, Mount Hope, Casper

October 24: Trinity, Morrill, 75th Anniversary service, 10:00 AM

October 24: Panhandle Lutheran Family Gathering, 3:00 PM, Immanuel, Alliance

November 1-3: Continuing Education for Pastors, St. Paul, Thermopolis

November 12-13: 5th-8th Youth Breakaway, St. Andrew's, Laramie

November 28: Panhandle Lutheran Youth Gathering, 3:00 PM, Immanuel, Alliance

Welcome, Teachers, to the Wyoming District!

Nathanael Hahn teaches upper-level math, science, and music at Mount Hope Lutheran School in Casper. He grew up in Wisconsin and previously taught there at Peace Lutheran Academy. While he loves teaching, he also enjoys composing music, singing, basketball, watching good movies, and spending time with his family.



Hannah Engwall is originally from Florida and recently graduated from Concordia University in Wisconsin with a degree in Parish Music. She began teaching



Kindergarten-2nd grade at Mount Hope Lutheran School in Casper, where she also teaches Music Theory and directs choirs. She enjoys playing the organ, singing, reading, and having good discussions.

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Natasha Bonine was born in Powell, Wyoming and lived there until her family moved to Fort Wayne, IN where her father attended the Seminary. Her family currently resides in Haven, KS though will be moving shortly to Nebraska to serve at a new congregation. She recently graduated from Concordia University in Seward, NE with a degree in Elementary Education and multidisciplinary concentration. She is serving her first call at Trinity Lutheran Church and School in Riverton, WY as the 3rd & 4th grade teacher. She enjoys reading, painting, playing games, watching

movies, being outdoors, learning new things, and spending time with family and friends.

Jesse Wisroth, a Panhandle native born in Crawford, NE, has returned to the area to teach at Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran School in Alliance, NE., after living and working in Alaska for eight years. She teaches 5th grade as well as 5th through 8th grade music. Reading, singing, cooking, worship services & church activities, and spending time with loved ones fills up the “extra” hours in the day. God has richly provided a warm welcome and abundant gifts throughout the summer as Jesse has purchased a house, established her classroom, and settled into the church family at Immanuel.

