

WYOMING DISTRICT ROUND-UP

Wyoming District—LCMS
2400 Hickory St.
Casper, WY 82604
(307) 265-9000

www.wylcms.org



WINTER 2022



The Christian in Community

A very Merry Christmas to you all! That is, God give you merriment, joy, and eternal blessings as you celebrate the incarnation and birth of our Savior Jesus Christ. God bless your congregations in Word and Sacrament, hymns and liturgy and prayer, enjoyed together this Christmastide and Epiphany. And a blessed and happy New Year of grace to you all! --from Tiffany Hoff, Jeff Snyder, and Pastor Hill.

With this month's Roundup we begin a new theme for the 2022–2025 term. The Wyoming District's leadership team recommended that we broadly consider the blessing of "community".

The reason for their choice of theme is immediately apparent. People are increasingly isolated and lonely. In the last two years, we can point to the numerous mandates that have deliberately separated people in the name of public health. The elderly are virtually abandoned. People cannot see each other's faces, as a matter of course. Physical presence is shunned. Teenagers struggle with loneliness and loss of identity and purpose. Little children grow up unable to read faces and emotions behind masks.

But even before the virus we were witnessing the loss of community. Community organizations lost membership and faded away as people stopped joining, stopped attending, and stopped making commitments. Extended families were stretched to the breaking point as they were separated by many miles, diverging faiths and values, and interpersonal conflict. Immediate families suffered from a devastating rate of divorce, loss of marital commitment, and the abandonment of a home-life centered in God's Word and expressed in the sharing of a pious domestic culture.

There are other signs to read. Businesses and workers no longer share a common, long-term commitment to each other that forms permanent relationships and a secure community. The effects of first radio and television, then computers and cellphones, and now the all-consuming lure of social media and the "metaverse"—all this technology has not created actual community, that is, human bodies and human faces forming enduring commitments to each other lived out together in real time and real places.

In short, we are alienated from God, from the creation around us, and from each other in countless ways. The problem has become so deep that people no longer know how to think about their own bodies. Each person is alienated even from himself. Man no longer recognizes that God created his own particular body and soul for the many particular communities of household, community, and church in which God has placed him.

Continued on page 2

(continued from page 1)

Our congregations and our district are holdouts in our disintegrating communities. Our fellowship in Christ and His Gospel is a bastion and fortress of communal commitment and life. We are, of course, not immune to all the attacks noted above. The devil's first strategy is often to divide the fellowship of our congregations with sin, impenitence, and false doctrine. False doctrine always divides. Without repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation, sin always divides. Lovelessness always divides. Faithless attitudes and behaviors always divide. Divide and conquer. Satan conquers Christians by separating them from the fellowship of Christ's church.

In the coming months we will meditate on divine community, man's communal nature, the breaking and healing of our bonds of love, and much more. In the great Advent hymn we sing and pray,

O come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all mankind;
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,
And be Thyself our King of Peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel! (LSB 357.7)

This deep longing and prayer of the church—of Christians in community—continues to be reflected in the undercurrents of Christian doctrine and piety found even among non-Christians in their celebration of Christmas. They also long for peace, for reconciliation among warring factions, for communities characterized by acceptance and mutual love. They still love Christmas carols, gather as family and friends, and speak of peace and goodwill. Even those with sin-corrupted lives, broken marriages and families, decaying schools and communities—even the isolated and lonely—wish for true human community.

But without Christ, all efforts at building community are temporary and soon pass away. As we shall see, the very idea of community and its reality in our lives is rooted in God Himself. God is an eternal community of love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We are made in God's image. We are created for fellowship with God and man. We are to be fruitful and multiply. It is not good for us to be alone. But our sin has broken, marred, and destroyed not only fellowship with God, but often even the possibility of healthy families and united communities.

But Jesus our Emmanuel has come, just as we pray in the hymn. He came as man and lived in the communities that God gave Him: the family of Joseph and Mary, the extended family of David in Bethlehem, the hometown of Nazareth, the nation and church of Israel. He did not contribute to the brokenness of these communities, for He did not sin. He brought true healing with His obedience to the law and His intense devotion to the Word of God. His death for sin and His resurrection from death brought reconciliation and life eternal to the nations. Even now, He continues His work of reconciling sinners and restoring true community in the church through His blessed Word and sacraments. In these treasures, the Spirit of Christ comes to us with forgiveness and life and fellowship with God and one another.

All is reconciled, all is restored, all is healed in the coming of the Prince of Peace, our dear Lord Jesus. Here is the new beginning of true unity and community:

Forth today the Conqueror goeth,
Who the foe, Sin and woe,
Death and hell, o'erthroweth.
God is man, man to deliver;
His own Son Now is one
With our blood forever. (TLH 77.2)

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

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

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)**.

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

Trinity, Gillette is being served by **Rev. John Christensen (emeritus, Thermopolis)** during the vacancy.

Trinity, Cheyenne (Rev. John Preus) has decided to call a pastor to serve as assistant pastor and headmaster for the school.

Rev. Joshua Scheer (Our Savior's, Cheyenne) received a call to Trinity Evangelical Church in Nokomis, Illinois and has returned that call.

Future Dates

January 2: Panhandle Family Gathering, 3:00 PM, Immanuel, Alliance

February 11-12: TTGNAJ Convocation, Ramkota, Casper (registration and information included)

February 18-20: 9th-12th Youth Breakaway, St. Andrew's, Laramie



CONCORDIA
UNIVERSITY
NEBRASKA

We are working on compiling a list of all of the students within our district who are currently attending school to become a church worker. Moving forward, if you have students in your congregation who are enrolled in one of the Concordia's or attending Seminary, please forward their name, address, and email or phone number to Tiffany at the District office. Her email is thoff@wylcms.org. Beginning with the spring edition, there will be a section in the expanded roundup that includes all of our students with their contact information. It is our hope that you would pray for them during their time in school and prayerfully consider helping support them financially to reduce the amount of debt they will have when they enter into the work field.



CONCORDIA
UNIVERSITY
WISCONSIN



REFORMATION 500

Is it lawful for Christians to organize and rebel against corrupt authority? Does God sanction such insurrection? Do these questions sound familiar in our present national governance?

At the end of December, 1521, Luther completed an appeal to his fellow countrymen that may sound like it was written for our times 500 years later. Germany and much of Europe had been restless for many years because of changes to society and church. The new Lutheran reformation of church and society caused further unrest, as Luther challenged the authority of the papacy and many of its teachings and practices. The peasants were ready to revolt. University students rioted in the streets. Radical reformers were ready to throw out all traditions in a rejection of the past. Although Luther was back in hiding at the Wartburg after a quick trip to Wittenberg, the unrest he saw in hometown and country prompted him to write, “A Sincere Admonition by Martin Luther to All Christians to Guard against Insurrection and Rebellion” (AE 45.57–74).

Luther did not hesitate to express his understanding and sympathy for those who were deeply troubled by the evil teachings and practices of the papacy. He also recognized the incompetence or even collusion of leaders who had received duly constituted authority to resist or correct such evils. But he rejected insurrection as being an unwise and illegitimate course for correcting such wickedness.

Ultimately, Luther taught that only the Word of God can stop the evils found in church and state. But he also recognized that God’s Word created and constituted the authorities in both church and state. Therefore, he insisted that Christians should plan no action without the initiative and blessing of those who have some authority to act (including those we would call “lesser magistrates”).

He gave four reasons for this advice: 1) God Himself is likely using these evils to pour out His wrath and punishment on those who do evil. 2) Even if insurrection is possible, it never brings about the desired result. “For insurrection lacks discernment; it generally harms the innocent more than the guilty” (62–63). 3) God has forbidden insurrection. “Now insurrection is nothing else than being one’s own judge and avenger, and that is something God cannot tolerate” (63). As the Scriptures teach, “Revenge is mine; I will repay” (Deuteronomy 32:35). 4) In any case, insurrection is surely “a suggestion of the devil” (64).

What then should a Christian do if he sees or experiences such evils, yet the lawful authorities refuse to help? Luther was reacting especially to papal teachings and papal leadership in church and state, but the present reader will undoubtedly find application in addressing the apostatizing churches and increasingly immoral governments and laws of our own day. Luther wrote:

Suppose you ask, “What are we to do if the authorities are unwilling to act? Are we to continue to put up with it and encourage their wantonness?” I answer: You are to do nothing of the kind. There are three things you should do. First, you are to acknowledge your own sins, because of which the strict justice of God has plagued you with this anti-Christian regime, as St. Paul foretold in II Thessalonians 2[:11, 10], “God sends upon them false teaching and government because they refuse to love the truth and so be saved.” We alone are to blame for all that the pope and his adherents have done to our property, our bodies, and our souls. Therefore, you must first acknowledge your sins and put them from you before you try to escape the plague and punishment; otherwise you will only bring down judgment upon yourself.... (66)

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

Second. You should in all humility pray against the papal regime as Psalm 10[12–15] does and teaches us to do where it says, “Arise, O Lord God, and lift up thy hand; forget not thy poor... Break thou the arm of the ungodly; seek out his wickedness, and his godlessness will be no more, “ etc. (66–67)

Third. You are to let your mouth become such a mouth of the Spirit of Christ as St. Paul speaks of in the text quoted above, “Our Lord Jesus will slay him with the mouth of his Spirit” [II Thessalonians 2:8]. This we do when we boldly continue the work that has been begun, and by speaking and writing spread among the people a knowledge of the rascality and deceit of the pope and the papists until he is exposed, recognized, and brought into disrepute throughout the world. For he must first be slain with words; the mouth of Christ must do it. (67)

Luther acknowledged that in this way—by using God’s Word alone—we would see that the changes and reforms enjoyed by the Lutherans are not man’s work, but God’s. To that end he exhorted, “Get busy now; spread the holy gospel, and help others spread it; teach, speak, write, and preach” against the many errors now visited upon faithful Christians (68).

The progress of the reformation raised profound questions about the church and her unity. Luther made it clear that he was not seeking to create a Lutheran sect, but rather that the church return to her one Lord and master, Jesus Christ. “I neither am nor want to be anyone’s master. I hold, together with the universal church, the one universal teaching of Christ, who is our only master [Matt.23:8]” (71).

Then Luther taught his reader to make a clear distinction between two kinds of people when handling the Word of God. On the one hand, there are those who are obstinate, “those who are hardened and will not listen, and who, in addition, deceive and poison others with their lying mouths” (71). These should be sharply

rebuked with God’s Word. But then he added,

On the other hand, there are some who have heretofore not yet heard the gospel and who would be willing to learn if someone would tell it to them, or who are so weak that they cannot readily grasp it. These you should not bully or beat up, but instruct in a kindly and gentle manner, giving them a defense and explanation. If they are not able to grasp it at once, bear with them for a time. (71–72)

He closed with these words: “Let this suffice for the present as a renewed admonition to guard against insurrection and giving offense, so that we ourselves may not be the agents for the desecration of God’s holy word. Amen” (74).

Luther’s advice here would be tested in the coming years. A year later he wrote a well-known treatise, “Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should be Obeyed.” In the following couple of years, a full-blown insurrection did break out, led by unhappy peasants. Thousands were killed. Luther’s words here look prophetic in the light of these subsequent events. We do well to ponder his admonition in our day.

THE NEXT ROUNDUP

The next Roundup will be delivered to congregations around January 20 (February 2022 issue).

The “...Remembering you in my prayers...” and “Pastors and Congregations” sections have been moved to page three for this edition.

21ST CENTURY PROBLEMS 1ST CENTURY SOLUTIONS

Tell the Good News About Jesus Convocation 2022



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A MAN?
WHO IS A WOMAN?
WHAT IS A FAMILY FOR?
DOES THE CHURCH HAVE FREEDOM FROM THE STATE?
WHAT IS FREEDOM?
CAN THE GOSPEL STILL BE PROCLAIMED TO ALL NATIONS?
WHERE DO WE FIND OUR HOPE?



FEB 11-12
RAMKOTA HOTEL, CASPER, WY

SPEAKER: REV. DR. ADAM KOONTZ

WWW.WYLCMS.ORG/2022TTGNAJ

IDENTITY AND CREATION

The church faces heightened opposition to its gospel message and its way of life.

In our families, our congregations, and our nation, former certainties about who men and women are, what a family is, and what freedom the church has from the state all face vehement challenges. None of this is unprecedented, and the earliest Christians faced similar trials. How did they withstand these assaults and prevail through Christ?

We will look at the opposition to the church in the Book of Acts to understand what we face now that they faced then and how we can proclaim the gospel to every creature despite every difficulty now, just as they did then.

REV. DR. ADAM KOONTZ

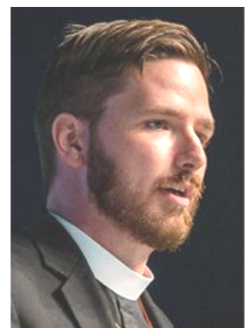
Rev. Dr. Adam Koontz Adam Koontz has been on the faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne since 2019. A 2014 CTS MDiv alumnus, he was the pastor of Mount Calvary, Lititz, Pennsylvania, and planted Concordia, Myerstown, Pennsylvania. He successfully defended his dissertation on the imitation of Paul in the Greco-Roman world in January 2020 and was awarded the PhD in Religion from Temple University in May 2020. Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and raised in a small town in central Pennsylvania on the Appalachian Trail, he met and married his wife, Jennifer while an honors major in comparative literature of Swarthmore College outside Philadelphia. He and Jen have six children; Christian, Lydia, Isaac, Julia, Paul, and Maria.

Listen to him on these podcasts:

A Brief History of Power: revfisk.podbean.com/category/abhop/

A Word Fitly Spoken: wordfitlyspoken.org

Read his work at: www.ctsfw.edu/about/faculty/dr-adam-koontz/



SCHEDULE & REGISTRATION INFORMATION

FRIDAY FEB 11

1-7pm Registration
1:45-3:00pm-Session 1 with Dr. Koontz
3:15-4:00pm-Session 2 with Dr. Koontz
4:30-5:30pm Vespers
6-7pm Social Hour (cash bar)
7:00-8:45pm Banquet
8:45-9:00pm Compline

SATURDAY FEB 12

Breakfast on your own
8:00-8:40am Matins
9:00-10:15am Session 1 with Dr. Koontz
10:30-11:45am Session 2 with Dr. Koontz
11:45-12:00 Daily Office
12:00-1:30pm Lunch (provided)
1:30-2:45pm Session 3 with Dr. Koontz
3:00-3:45pm Closing Remarks
3:45-4:00pm Closing Prayer

Cost: \$120 for a Family of 3 or more OR \$45 per individual adult and student (11 and over)
\$25 college students (**No refunds after Jan 31**)

Hotel Rooms are available at the Ramkota Hotel (307) 266-6000 for \$84/night
(mention the "Lutheran Ministries Block Rate")

Register online at www.wylcms.org/2022ttgnaj (preferred)

or with the following form:



REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Primary Contact: _____ Phone: _____

Address/City/State/Zip: _____

Home Congregation: _____

Email: _____

Banquet is included in the registration costs below

Family of 3 or more _____ x \$120.00 = _____

OR Individual adult and student (11 and over) _____ x \$45.00 = _____

College Students _____ x \$25.00 = _____

Number attending banquet (11 and over) _____ Children 10 and under attending banquet _____

Total Amount Enclosed \$ _____

Please make checks payable to: Wyoming District--LCMS
and mail to Wyoming District--LCMS, 2400 Hickory St, Casper, WY 82604