

# The LUTHERAN CLARION



Lutheran Concerns Association  
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## Planting Confessional Lutheran Congregations:

**A Matter of Confession and Divine Service, The Historic Liturgy, Blended Worship, or Contemporary Worship; Which is the Best Way Forward for a Confessional Lutheran Congregation?**

*This is the second of two parts of a presentation written by the Rev. Dr. John Wille, President of the SWD, LCMS for the LCA Conference on January 16, 2023 and presented by the Rev. Joe Fisher.*

From a confessional point of view it is essential that a new Lutheran congregation and its people are taught what makes us unique as Confessional Lutheran Christians. The historic liturgy is central to that.

Anecdotally, there is a new congregation forming in SWD that we have not planned or planted. It began with a Bible Study organized by a few LCMS people. It has grown. Many come from neo-evangelical backgrounds. They are in search of what they were missing in their now very liberal congregations, where Scripture is no longer taught in its truth and purity, where itching ears have now dictated their theology. As we assist this forming congregation, it will be a congregation of the historic liturgy. It will be a Confessional Lutheran congregation.

It is truly an amazing blessing to witness this unfold as this new congregation moves forward. It is the words of St. Paul to the Romans 1:16 taking place before our eyes, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'"

There is nothing more precious and uplifting than to hear the pastor begin with the Invocation, recognizing that the Triune God Himself is present among us. Can He be seen? No, but He is present in His gifts of Word and Sacrament. There is nothing more invaluable than to hear the pastor say, "In the stead and by the command of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Do the penitent look different? No, but they are forgiven. There is nothing more precious than to kneel at the altar for the Sacrament. The pastor places a wafer in your mouth or hand, saying, "Take eat, this is the body of Christ." "Take, drink, this is the blood of Christ shed for the forgiveness of your sins." Can you see the body? Can you taste

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## The Way Forward: Fellowship, Fidelity, Fearlessness

*This presentation was given by the Rev. Christopher S. Esget at the LCA Conference on January 16, 2023*

### Introduction

Do you remember those "Coexist" bumper stickers? They were everywhere ten or fifteen years ago. No longer. Like *tolerance*, coexistence was never the plan. The term *liberal* no longer applies to the leftist movement. Liberty, freedom, is not their goal. The goal is nothing short of the eradication of Christianity, and its radical love for human life, marriage, family, and the rights of parents to teach their children.

You've no doubt heard of Bishop Johanna Pohjola of Finland. He, along with minister Päivi Raasanen, despite their initial court victory, continue to be prosecuted by the Finnish government for the illegal teaching that marriage is between one man and one woman. Their attorney, international barrister Paul Coleman of ADF International, recently wrote about another horrific case happening in England. Last November, Isabel Vaughan-Spruce was arrested and charged with praying while inside a censorship zone outside a facility that murders children. The kicker is that she wasn't praying out loud. She was praying silently. Which means that she is being put on trial not for acting or speaking, but merely thinking.

Coexistence and tolerance are gone. In the recent celebration of our Lord's nativity, you doubtless read the Luke 2 Gospel. The familiarity of the text can prevent us from seeing its depth even when we are reading it in the original. This year something popped out at me that I'd never noticed: The decree of Caesar Augustus that went out, for all the world to be taxed, has a terrifying assumption underneath it: Εγένετο δὲ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις, ἐξῆλθεν δόγμα παρὰ Καίσαρος Αὐγούστου (Luke 2:1). World power issues its dogmas, which are both edicts and "that which is considered good," "the correct view," and normative.<sup>1</sup> Government and corporate power, working hand in glove, send forth the dogmas of homosexuality, transgenderism, and the abolition of human nature and

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## Planting Confessional Lutheran Congregations

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the blood? No. *It is hidden, “in, with, and under the bread and wine for us Christians to eat and to drink.”*

Such is the theology of the cross<sup>10</sup> in our historic liturgy. Herman Sasse helps to clarify:

*Cruce tectum*, “hidden under the cross” that is Luther’s formula for this character of the divine revelation. Hidden under the cross is Christ’s divine majesty before His resurrection and exaltation. Hidden under the cross is His royal office, His regnum (“That is always the kingdom which He quickens by His Spirit, whether it be revealed or be covered by the cross,” “...*sive sit revelatum, sive sit tectum cruce*,” Ap VII-VIII 18); likewise the church: “*Abscondita est ecclesia, latent sancti*,” “Hidden is the church, concealed are the saints” (*De Servo Arbitrio*, Aland 38, WA 18:652.23 [AE 33:89]). That cannot be otherwise. For “*opus est, ut omnia, quae creduntur, abscondantur*,” “Necessarily all objects of faith are hidden” (Aland 653, WA 18:653). Hidden is the Word of God in the letters and words of the Bible, in the human word of the preacher. Hidden are the true body and blood of Christ in the earthly elements of the bread and the wine at the Lord’s Supper. Faith and the cross belong together. The cross demands faith against the evidence.<sup>11</sup>

So what is the best Confessional course of action for a district and its congregations as new congregations are planted? Do we encourage contemporary worship services knowing that such worship serves a training ground for the neo-evangelicals?

My answer is, we are and we will be Confessional Lutherans in theology and in practice, in divine service and in life. Not the theology of glory, but rather the theology of the cross.

The South Wisconsin District Mission Executive, Rev. Dr. Nathan Meador, states this as describes our SWD church planting priority:

These new congregations and schools are distinctly Lutheran in that they are liturgical in nature, proclaiming the Word as Law and Gospel is rightly distinguished, that Word is taught in such a way that individuals are raised up as faithful stewards of the Gospel, and that the Gospel is borne and shared in the community where the congregation and/or school is planted.

This is more than merely theory. This is our *habitus practicus*.

Back in 1990 I was called by the South Wisconsin District of the LCMS to plant a new congregation in the western part of the district. It was planted upon the theology and practice stated above. It is and remains a Confessional Lutheran congregation, practicing the historical, Divine Service. In this strange new world in which we find ourselves, the historic liturgy sets us apart as a powerful witness to our Lutheran identity. This historic liturgy establishes a boundary between what is common and what is holy. The historic liturgy separates us from the world around us, defining those who gather at our altar as the

people of God in this place. As the Introduction to *Lutheran Service Book* states, the historic liturgy calls upon us to live our lives “in sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to Him and in loving service to one another.”

SDG

Rev. Dr. John C. Wille

President, South Wisconsin District LCMS

Presented to the Lutheran Concerns Association Conference, January 16, 2023

**Addendum 1:** A personal, and anecdotal, story regarding the importance of the historic liturgy.

In his final years my father struggled mightily with dementia. As the disease progressed, he didn’t recognize my mother to whom he had been married for more than 50 years. In their retirement they were constantly together. One time when I visited them in their Arkansas home, my father looked at me and said, “You look like your father.” Then, he asked, “Who is he?” My comment: “You. You are my dad.” The blank look on his face was one that I will never forget. He had no clue.

I could share with you other stories about his devastating journey through dementia. There were no memories of his wife, no memories of his children. But! But there was something deep and clear in his memory that no one expected. Shortly before his death, it surfaced powerfully. Here is that story.

The last time I visited him in the nursing home, one of our LCMS pastors was there and led a divine service, right out of the Hymnal. We had wheeled my dad into the service, thinking that at least he would hear the Word of God. But to our amazement, the man who knew no one, the man whose eyes were glazed over with the empty and distant look of confusion, sat up straight during the divine service. There was a sparkle in his eye that we had not seen for a couple of years. The man who had not spoken for months, was now speaking the words of the liturgy clearly. As the pastor led the group through the liturgy and its responses, my father knew every word and he spoke them. He spoke the Apostles’ Creed as clearly as when he led Sunday worship. He sang every song from memory, and he didn’t miss a word. He listened intently to the sermon. And then, when the service was over, my dad slumped back in his wheelchair with that empty, distant look of confusion back in his eyes. A few weeks later, he was called by our Lord to his eternal rest.

Does the historic liturgy matter? My father’s clear confession of faith during the historic liturgy tells me that the historic liturgy is *lex orandi, lex credendi, and lex vivendi*. His participation in that last divine service came from the depths of his being; evidence that, notwithstanding the complete dysfunction of his physical mind, the Word of God and the Sacraments had left an indelible mark deep in his soul. It is the essence of saving faith. My father was living the theology of the cross, his faith in the Triune God *hidden deeply* in his being, which bubbled up for a short time as a magnificent witness to God’s grace before it was hidden once again in the dark ravages of dementia. The Lord is gracious!

**Addendum 2:** I recently came across this timely quote from CFW Walther:

Whenever the divine service once again follows the old Evangelical-Lutheran agendas (or church books), it seems that many raise a great cry that it is “Roman Catholic;” “Roman Catholic” when the pastor chants “The Lord be with you” and the congregation responds by chanting “and with thy spirit;” “Roman Catholic” when the pastor chants the collect and the blessing and the people respond with a chanted “Amen.” Even the simplest Christian can respond to this outcry: “Prove to me that this chanting is contrary to the Word of God, then I too will call it ‘Roman Catholic’ and have nothing more to do with it. However, you cannot prove this to me.” If you insist upon calling every element in the divine service “Romish” that has been used by the Roman Catholic Church, it must follow that the reading of the Epistle and Gospel is also “Romish.” Indeed, it is mischief to sing or preach in church, for the Roman Church has done this also. . . Those who cry out should remember that the Roman Catholic Church possesses every beautiful song of the old orthodox church. The chants and antiphons and responses were brought into the church long before the false teachings of Rome crept in. This Christian Church since the beginning, even in the Old Testament, has derived great joy from chanting. . . For more than 1700 years orthodox Christians have participated joyfully in the divine service. Should we, today, carry on by saying that such joyful participation is “Roman Catholic”? God forbid! Therefore, as we continue to hold and to restore our wonderful divine services in places where they have been forgotten, let us boldly confess that our worship forms do not tie us with the modern sects or with the church of Rome; rather, they join us to the one, holy Christian Church that is as old as the world and is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

— C. F. W. Walther (first president of the LCMS), *Der Lutheraner*, vol. 9, no. 24 (July 19, 1853), p. 163.

<sup>10</sup> “This experience is the experience of faith. Of that faith which does not see. Of that faith which, like the faith of Abraham, is faith in a promise which, humanly speaking, cannot be fulfilled. It is belief in that which is hidden to human eyes. It is faith which sees the light in the darkness, as Luther describes it in a profound word which he wrote in his commentary to Genesis 17 (Aland 517, EA op. ex. 4:136; WA 42) about the faith of Abraham: “Clausis igitur oculis abdidit se in tenebras fidei, in quibus invenit aeternam lucem,” “With closed eyes he hid himself in the darkness of faith, and there he found eternal light.” Sasse, Hermann, *Letters to Lutheran Pastors*, vol. 1, p. 402, Concordia Publishing House, Kindle Edition.

<sup>11</sup> Sasse, Hermann, *Letters to Lutheran Pastors*, vol. 1, pp. 397-398, Concordia Publishing House.

**The Lutheran Concerns Association  
Annual Conference is January 15, 2024**

**See page 7 for the registration form  
and make your reservation today!**

## A Man on a Mountain A Warrior for Christ

It began on a Fall day close to the end of a cold November in Garrison, North Dakota when a baby boy was born to Reverend Victor and Lydia Disen. Choosing a name, they remembered his Uncle Walter and decided that would be the name of this little son.

Baptized by his father, this boy grew in stature and the knowledge of his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Each Sunday at the dinner table he and his siblings were questioned about the content of the sermon they had just heard during divine worship. It has been said they were attentive listeners in church because of this “after church” quiz time. Not knowing answers was frowned upon.



**Walter Disen**

Walter excelled in his early education, but longed for more. Upon high school graduation, in fact that very day, he and his brother left home to travel to Minneapolis, Minnesota to enroll in telegraphy classes. That gave him a job as an agent for a railroad in Pennsylvania where he served well. He also served our country well when he was drafted into the army.

More civil education followed along with more knowledge of his Savior as he faithfully attended worship services wherever he was located. His learning was intense and purposeful. His expectations of himself were continually being moved to a higher level.

Serving employers and our country were only the peripheral parts of his service. His highest service was to his Lord. Elected to the Board of Regents at both our Concordia Seminary in St. Louis and Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, he was instrumental in constantly examining the teaching curriculum for correct doctrine and the faculty for faithful teaching. If or when any error was detected, he did not hesitate to cry “WOLF” and proceed to convince other regents of the situation. Nor did he hesitate to hold any errorist’s feet to the fire no matter the standing or position of such.

We know that the true doctrine we see at both of our seminaries can be in part due to Walt’s discerning eye for solid doctrine, truth and faithfulness. Often he would describe a person as one who had “solid” doctrine.

He was only a man, a creature of God, but he was high on a mountain of knowledge, truth, wisdom and faithfulness for which he constantly thanked and praised his heavenly Father. He knew that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. That was his life.

Greta Zeller Martin



## The Way Forward: Fellowship, Fidelity, Fearlessness

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freedom. The dogmas of world power once drove Joseph to Bethlehem to be taxed, and demanded a myriad of holy martyrs offer their pinch of incense. Now these dogmas claim power to drive someone from their employment if they will not administer abortifacients, take the jab, or bake the cake. In this intolerant state religion, we are the heretics who reject the dogmas of the contemporary Caesars Augusti – the exalted ones.

The astounding good news of Luke, however—and this most certainly is the “way forward,” even if it is not as simple as a technique or quick-and-dirty tip—is that the dogma of world power sets in motion the divine plan of the incarnation, and establishes right under Herod’s nose, and soon enough the Emperor’s, a profoundly different dogma. This dogma is based not on the threats of an imperial army, but the song of peace ringing out from the heavens, and confirmed in the covenant of blood God Himself spills for the life of the world. That good news is what the left is determined to silence. We must prepare for an increasingly authoritarian federal government.

The radical left has captured academia, journalism, and most professional organizations in law and medicine. Their hostility to religion found its opportunity for action in the public health scare begun about three years ago. Their draconian restrictions revealed a militant authoritarian mindset, resulting in the forced closures of many of our churches. The topic assigned to me, “Local Congregations and the Post-Covid Path Forward,” I presume had in mind especially the attendance problems churches faced during and now after the lockdowns.

### Lies and Statistics

AEI has done extensive research into the effects of the lockdowns on the practice of religion in America across demographics and denominations. “The results show that religious *identity* remained stable through the pandemic.”<sup>2</sup> What did change were the attendance patterns of those particularly on the edges of religious practice. The number of those who never attend services is increasing. From 2018 to March of 2020, 25% of Americans reported never attending services. By the spring of 2022, that number jumped to 33%.

Yet the every-week attenders have nearly held stable. Prior to the pandemic, 26% attended once per week, falling to 24% after. Here are the most stable groups: “Conservatives, adults age 50 and older, women, married adults, and those with a college degree were more likely to attend than were other groups in both periods. Most adults continued to attend at the same rate as pre-pandemic.”

Here’s where things get interesting, and it to some degree confirms a theory I’ve had over the last decade or so. In the period before the pandemic, three-quarters of Americans attended a religious service at least once a year. After the pandemic, that number fell to two-thirds.

My theory has been this, and I’ll be curious if it matches your own experience: In my congregation there is a core group

of people who are deeply committed to living as Christians. They come to Divine Service every Sunday, participate in Bible studies, and are connected socially outside of Sundays with other Christians. They homeschool or send their children to Christian schools. A subset of this group attends midweek services, all three of our Christmas Eve and Day services, and every Holy Week service. Over the last decade or so, as hostility to Christianity increased, this group intensified in their commitment. Their social, financial, and even vacation patterns have changed, reflecting their deepening identity as practicing Christians.

In this same congregation are people with an historic affiliation with the church. At one point they were relatively active, attending at least once a month, and perhaps volunteering and connecting socially with others from the church. Often there is a family connection: parents and grandparents, now aged or dead, were faithful members. This group in the last few decades has drifted to attendance a few times per year, and over the last decade stopped attending altogether. They may still attend a funeral service (or more likely stop by the mortuary for the visitation), and some come by the church once every few years the way a person visits a grave.

We should certainly try to draw back those who have disconnected. But in many respects that ship has sailed. Are we hoping they’ll start attending twice a year again? Those who have capitulated to the culture are not coming back without repentance and reconversion. When time and people are limited, it seems to me to be wiser to strengthen the core, along with catechizing people who are enquiring into Christianity in a serious way, not treating it as a legacy attachment.

The lie is that Covid changed things. What the AEI survey shows, and probably your own experience as well, is that the government lockdowns merely accelerated trends already evident. The broad response to this—put everything online—is precisely the wrong response. Sacramental worship is impossible online; likewise genuine human connection. Streaming services and classes encourage people to disconnect from the embodied assembly of the saints.

I never allowed my congregation to shut down when the government tried to force us. But I did do my best to work within the parameters we were granted. In the spring of 2020

### Mark Your Calendar

#### LCA Annual Conference

**Monday, Jan. 15, 2024 Fort Wayne, Indiana**

Planning is underway for the 2024 Lutheran Concerns Association Conference on Monday, January 15, 2024 at CTSFW, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

An excellent lineup of speakers is scheduled.

The conference will again feature Sunday and Monday evening dinners.

**See page 7 for details! We hope to see you there.**

we were limited to ten people in the church at one time, including staff. So we had a group of ten gather at the church on Sunday mornings for the Service of the Word which we streamed on the internet. Then we had Lord's Supper services for nine people at a time. In order to accommodate all of the people, we had them sign up for thirty-minute services, for six hours on Sunday and again throughout the week. The biggest problem I had was getting people to leave, and to follow the flow I'd set up (we were required to have separate entrances and exits). The people were hungry for the Sacrament, and they were also hungry for human connection. The conversations continuing outside the church were at first annoying to me as I attempted to concentrate on the next group of people. Like the noise of crying babies, however, that noise of conversation soon became joyful music.

People need human connection, the kind you cannot get online. The modern communication tools we have are extraordinary, but also extraordinarily limited. There is no substitute for real presence. Computers are tools, but they are not means of grace. This led to another realization.

### Congregational Concordia

A sign in my church bothered me for years. It's two simple words: *Fellowship Hall*. To my way of thinking, the fellowship hall was above it, up in the church where we participated in the fellowship of the altar. So I would joke—but I wasn't really joking—that doughnuts aren't fellowship.

My big opportunity came, so I thought, when we grew to needing two services. I proposed changing coffee hour to coffee minute - a few minutes after the first service but before Sunday School. Forget your conversations, we're going to spend more time studying the Bible.

This was a colossal blunder. Connections with our fellow brothers and sisters need nourishing. It's why a family should eat at the table and not in front of the TV. The conversations strengthen our bonds.

The *koinonia* of the Extraordinary (the Lord's Supper) is foundational, apart from which other fellowship is deficient. Yet this needs to be connected to the "*Koinonia* of the Ordinary," the sharing of daily life. That chance to interact with other Christians leads to friendships, sometimes marriages, and forging the support that people will need from each other throughout the week and in times of crisis.

This is what people misunderstand about Rod Dreher's *The Benedict Option*. It is not about retreat or isolation. It's about buttressing the connections with other Christians beyond Sunday morning to withstand the world's attempts to destroy us. As the fabric of society deteriorates, without strong personal relationships people will slip away into that demographic of those who used to practice Christianity and now just loosely identify with it the way we do our ethnic heritage before we became Americans.

This idea was always in the liturgy. When the post-communion prayer asks God for strength through the Sacrament to have faith toward Him and fervent love for one another, I saw that as purely a worldly thing. "Okay, the service is

over, now go home, trust God, and be nice to each other in family and work." That's true, but it's incomplete. The love for one another is the church continuing to be family throughout the week.

Last year I read a collection of writings by Basil of Caesarea called *On the Human Condition*. The book concludes with answers to questions written to St. Basil. The concluding question is about whether we should live a solitary life (to avoid the temptation of quarreling or being led astray), or live a communal life with other disciples of Jesus.

Basil's answer focuses on the benefits of **life together**, one of our Synod's emphases. Life together, Basil says, is to be oriented toward the common good; left to ourselves, we will "fulfill our own passion for self-indulgence."

He then lists numerous positive benefits to living together, followed by what I call "negative benefits." This is a paradox, where the bad things in our lives are used for good, to train us in righteousness. Basil says a person shouldn't be alone,

For how will he manifest his humility, since he has nobody beside whom he can show himself more humble? How will he manifest his compassion, since he has cut himself off from the community of many? How will he train himself in longsuffering when nobody opposes his wishes?

In other words: Without proud people around us, we won't learn to be humble; without needy people around us, we won't learn to be compassionate; without someone opposing our wishes, we won't learn to be patient.

It's a tough lesson: the people around us who are most vexing are also a gift from God, put there to help us grow. This "life together" in congregation, district, and Synod also requires coordinated planning:

If we are not fitted together in the Holy Spirit to join in concord into one body, but each of us chooses the solitary life, we will not serve the common good with coordinated planning according to God's good pleasure, but fulfill our own passion for self-indulgence. When we are split off and divided, how can we preserve the relationship and service of the members to each other, or our submission toward our head, that is Christ? For one cannot rejoice with one who rejoices or suffer with one who suffers when living separately, since in all likelihood one will not be able to know each neighbor's concerns. Therefore indeed, as one is not sufficient to receive all the spiritual gifts, but the additional help of the Spirit is given in proportion to the faith of each [Rom 12:6], in community life the gift proper to each becomes common to those living together.<sup>3</sup>

This "living together" is not merely sharing a household or a congregation or a Synod; it's an outlook on our place in the world. We are not solitary agents. God has charged us to bear each other's burdens, not go our own way. The path forward is fellowship: Life together, daily, and in the Divine Service.

### Confidence in God's Appointed Means

The Lord forged us sacramentally into this life together. The means of grace are the foundation of our common life.

For those worried about church decline, the solution often appears to be greater effort. We will work our way out of the problem. Make no mistake, we must work, and work hard. But the problem is when we think our work is what produces the results. That comes from losing confidence in the means God has established for making disciples: catechesis and Baptism (Mt. 28; Acts 2). The Holy Spirit does the work; we scatter the seeds (Luke 8).

A perennial challenge is imagining the crosses we are experiencing must be addressed by new measures, as though the Church will not survive without our innovations. We are tempted to think, “What arises within me is the answer.” Our confessions address this clearly:

In short, enthusiasm clings to Adam and his descendants from the beginning to the end of the world. It is a poison implanted and inoculated in man by the old dragon, and it is the source, strength, and power of all heresy, including that of the papacy and Mohammedanism. Accordingly, we should and must constantly maintain that God will not deal with us except through his external Word and sacrament. Whatever is attributed to the Spirit apart from such Word and sacrament is of the devil.<sup>4</sup>

We are a liturgical church not because of human tradition, preference, or style. God has appointed the reading and preaching of His Word, and the administration of the Sacraments, as the way He grows and sustains His Church. There is incredible joy and freedom from anxiety in knowing that this is how the Holy Spirit delights to work. “The Holy Spirit certainly wants to be present with the Word preached, heard, and considered, and He wants to be effective and work through it.”<sup>5</sup>

Our friends who believe we need to be more “relational” in worship are, I fear, forgetting that the power of the Gospel is not to relate but to transform. One of today’s buzzwords is “authenticity.” My dear friend Leo Mackay recently wrote about the faithful church being authentically different:

My firm conviction is people come to a church NOT to see, and be fed, the same detritus our popular culture dishes out in heaping helpings. Quite the contrary, authenticity is the coin of the realm. This is true with GenX’ers and Millennials, but it is also true more generally. We need to be who we are, not what we might think ‘they’ want us to become. Why they come, and more to the point, why they STAY, is because of an authentic difference: different from the world; different from the ordinary and the debased; and different, above all, from the meaninglessness of the postmodern. They come FOR the difference, FOR an authentic faith, truly expressed.<sup>6</sup>

The Church is never in decline. She only expands. The whole company of heaven is in our fellowship. That fellowship is our path forward, our present and our future.

### Culture Warring or Cultivating Confessors?

Our path forward is also one of fidelity. That means speaking the truth, always with love, even when it is unpopular. Speaking the truth today about the assaults on human nature

can draw friendly fire from fellow Christians, who say we are more interested in fighting culture wars than evangelism. That is a false dichotomy.

Culture, cultivate, and *cultus* (Latin for worship) all stem from the same root. The human race was meant to cultivate the earth. Our life together is our culture, but there is an anti-culture that is making war with us. It starts simply with holding events such as sporting events on Sundays, and creating a host of “long weekends” that entice people away from the Lord’s gifts. The larger aim of the anti-culture is to shatter marriage and family, eliminate Christian schools, and capture our children for the destruction of their souls and bodies. The culture war is happening whether we like it or not. The only question is whether we care enough to help the church’s children survive it.

As church, the politics of these matters is not our arena. The path forward is cultivating confessors through catechesis so they can withstand the assaults of the devil and world. We are called particularly to confess the truth about what marriage is and the nature of the human race as male and female.

<sup>1</sup> See N. Walter, δόγμα, in Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990–), 339.

<sup>2</sup> Lindsey Witt-Swanson, Jennifer Benz, Daniel A. Cox, “Faith After the Pandemic: How COVID-19 Changed American Religion: Findings from the 2022 American Religious Benchmark Survey,” Jan. 5, 2023; <https://www.americansurveycenter.org/research/faith-after-the-pandemic-how-covid-19-changed-american-religion/> The remainder of the statistical information here comes from this study. Emphases are mine.

<sup>3</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *On the Human Condition*, p121.

<sup>4</sup> SA VIII.9s. Tappert, p313.

<sup>5</sup> FC SD XI.39. Paul Timothy McCain, ed., *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2005), 608.

<sup>6</sup> *For the Life of the World*, vol. 26, number 3, pp14f.

*Rev. Christopher Esget’s presentation will conclude in the January, 2024 issue of The Clarion.*

### The Lutheran Clarion—We Need Your Help!

Annual memberships and charitable contributions from our readers are currently tracking about half of what we received by this time in calendar 2022. Your annual membership payments and charitable contributions are a very important part of the LCA’s overall financial health and our ability to continue publishing The Lutheran Clarion.



We urge you to help with the costs of preserving Confessional Lutheranism. Use the enclosed envelope. Mail your tax-deductible gift to Lutheran Concerns Association, 149 Glenview Drive, New Kensington, PA 15068-4921. Do it now.

**Thank you!!**



## LUTHERAN CONCERNS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE

**Monday, January 15, 2024**

**"Do not be conformed to this world." Romans 12:2 (NKJV)**

The Conference will be held on Monday, January 15, 2024, on the Concordia Theological Seminary campus at Fort Wayne, Indiana.

**Dine with the Speakers and the LCA Board of Directors!** On Sunday evening, January 14, at 5:30 pm the Dining Hall Mezzanine will be reserved for a private dinner for LCA Conference attendees. Be sure to reserve your place right away on the form below. LCA Dinners afford attendees the opportunity to relax and enjoy fellowship with other participants at the Conference. The Sunday night dinner will consist of Beef Tenderloin and Chicken Marsala served buffet style with salad, vegetable, potato, dessert, and beverage. A cafeteria lunch is included for full-day attendees. Half-day attendees may attend the cafeteria lunch by remitting \$10, as noted on the registration form below.

Monday night, January 15, a special Seminary Dinner to honor the late Walter C. Dissen will be held. Details are forthcoming.

### CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

#### MORNING SESSION:

06:45 am: Registration Opens

07:30 am – 07:40 am: **LCA Opening Devotion**

The Rev. Dr. William Weinrich

07:40 am – 07:50 am: **Welcome from the LCA** (Mr. Mark Franke) **and Greetings from the Indiana District**

07:50 am – 08:35 am: **The Concordia University System: Opportunities and Challenges**

The Rev. Dr. Dean Wenthe

08:35 am – 08:50 am: Questions and Answers

08:50 am – 09:35 am: **Luther Classical College: Why Now?**

The Rev. Dr. Christian Preus

09:35 am – 09:50 am: Questions and Answers

09:50 am – 11:15 am: **Break for Chapel Service/Coffee with CTSFW Students & Faculty**

11:15 am – 12:00 pm: **Evangelism in the LCMS**

The Rev. Dr. Ken Schurb

12:00 pm – 12:15 pm: Questions and Answers

12:15 pm – 01:30 pm: **\*\*\* LUNCH \*\*\***

#### AFTERNOON SESSION:

01:30 pm – 02:15 pm: **Demographic Challenges and Faithful Responses for Lutheran Congregations**

The Rev. Heath Curtis

02:15 pm – 02:30 pm: Questions and Answers

02:30 pm – 03:15 pm: **Recruiting Pastors and the Set Apart to Serve Program**

The Rev. Dr. James Banek

03:15 pm – 03:30 pm: Questions and Answers

03:30 pm – 03:45 pm: **\*\*\* BREAK \*\*\***

03:45 pm – 04:25 pm: **Panel Discussion** (All Speakers)

04:25 pm – 04:30 pm: **Closing Remarks**

04:45 pm – 5:45 pm: **Annual LCA Meeting** – for LCA Members

06:00 pm: **Seminary Dinner to honor Walter C. Dissen**  
Details to be announced

08:00 pm: **LCA Board Meeting**

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### 2024 LCA Conference Registration Form

Concordia Theological Seminary – Fort Wayne, Indiana

Name _____	Annual LCA Membership Fee (\$60) enclosed _____
Address _____	Paid LCA Member Conference registration fee (\$110) encl. _____
Phone _____	Paid LCA Member half-day registration fee (\$44) encl. _____
Email _____	Non-Member Conference registration fee (\$120) encl. _____
	Non-Member half-day registration fee (\$49) encl. _____
	Seminary Students & Personnel registration fees waived _____
	Cafeteria lunch for half-day attendees if desired (\$10) encl. _____
	Dinner, Sunday, January 14, 5:30 pm (\$55) encl. _____
	<b>Total Enclosed:</b> _____



#### Check box for Dinner on Sunday, January 14.

Buffet (\$55): beef tenderloin and chicken marsala (price includes tax)

*Even if you pay at the door, please send in your registration form.*

Please indicate any dietary restrictions. If your plans change, email [jpanzigrau@comcast.net](mailto:jpanzigrau@comcast.net) as soon as possible.

Make check payable to the Lutheran Concerns Association. Please detach this registration form and mail to The Lutheran Concerns Association, 149 Glenview Drive, New Kensington, PA 15068-4921

Lutheran Concerns Association  
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New Kensington, PA 15068-4921



**Lutheran Concerns Association**  
November 2023

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The address for all matters pertaining to the LCA is:  
149 Glenview Drive  
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Rev. Jerome Panzigrau  
Dr. John F. Lang

Layout, Printing & Mailing: Mr. Ronald Kabitzke

Faithful Lutherans who are members of LCMS congregations are invited to submit articles of approximately 500 words for consideration. Inquiries are welcome. Manuscripts will be edited. Views and judgments expressed in articles are the author's own and do not necessarily represent those of LCA. Please email articles to Dr. John F. Lang ([johnflang1000@gmail.com](mailto:johnflang1000@gmail.com); 419.849.2610).

The Board of Directors for the LCA:

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