

# WYOMING DISTRICT ROUND-UP

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SUMMER  
2024

## Japan Free Conference

I have reported with a smile that it took my wife Angela and me three days to travel to Japan and one hour to return. It's the first time that I have crossed the date line into the Far East. I was asked by LCMS International Missions, the Asia Region, to be the presenter at a free conference in Niigata, Japan. It was a joy to represent the Wyoming District in serving the Lutherans of Japan. We were in Japan May 18–25 and I presented at the conference May 21–23.

“Free conferences” have a long history for the LCMS. Throughout our Synod’s history, when we wanted to have theological dialogue with Lutherans with whom we were not in fellowship, we would hold a free conference. These gatherings were occasions for exploring areas of unity and the areas of division between the participants, without exercising church fellowship in worship prematurely.

You may know that at the 2023 convention the LCMS publicly recognized that we are no longer in fellowship with the Japan Lutheran Church. Our daughter church had been cooperating with the Lutheran World Federation for some time, but when it voted to begin ordaining women the inevitable became obvious. We could no longer share pulpit or altar with these persistently erring Lutherans. As the Scripture says, “Do not be deceived, ‘Bad company corrupts good morals’” (1 Corinthians 15:34), and, “Watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have learned and avoid them” (Romans 16:17). Many decades of faithful labor were snatched away by the teachers of false doctrine.

*We know and believe that God alone breaks through unbelieving hearts and minds, creates faith, and forms a Christian culture in the midst of a dark and unbelieving world.*  
—Rev. John E. Hill

Under the leadership and the guidance of our one LCMS missionary to Japan, Rev. Dr. Daniel Jastram, our Synod has determined to renew our work in Japan by starting at the doctrinal foundation. It is hoped that by returning to the biblical basics taught in Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions the Holy Spirit will once again gather to our Lord Jesus a faithful church in Japan. We currently have one congregation in fellowship with us, Kobari Lutheran Church and their Pastor Wakabayashi.

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My assignment at the free conference was to give six lectures on “Church and Ministry.” It was a joy to concentrate on the clear teachings of Scriptures and the Confessions without entangling my hearers in the past and present debates of the European and American Lutheran churches. I especially wanted to show how the doctrine of the church and her fellowship, together with her ministry, are part and parcel – one body – with the full revelation of Holy Scriptures.

Twenty-four participants attended the free conference, including a majority of the confessional pastors with whom Dr. Jastram works, laity from their congregations, and the English-speaking guests. I read my English text and a translator gave the Japanese. Another translator relayed an English translation of the questions of the participants. I had anticipated that the participants would be reluctant to ask questions, but we enjoyed a lively conversation.

Dr. Jastram and his wife Joan proved to be wonderful hosts. We enjoyed several days of sightseeing in and around Tokyo and Niigata: the Imperial grounds in Tokyo, walks in the cities, a household pottery maker, gardens, Shinto shrines, and Buddhist temples. I ate more raw fish and seaweed in one week than I had in my whole life. We enjoyed a very conservative culture, modest and formal in dress, polite and deferential, clean and beautiful, efficient, with highly organized and heeded etiquette. Greater Tokyo has 38 million inhabitants, but we never felt in danger, nor did we see rudeness, uncleanness, or squalor. The trains were often packed and the train stations were a veritable river of humanity.

Dr. Jastram and I held an eight-day conversation on how to reach the Japanese people with the Gospel. The island nation is less than one percent Christian, though it has had missionaries for centuries. I was mindful of the comparison to three other peoples familiar to us: first, our own country, which is hardening itself against Christianity and Natural Law; the Indian Reservation in our midst, which has a far different culture but a similar hardness against Christianity; and West Africa (Liberia and Sierra Leone where some of our pastors have taught), with another different culture but a great hunger for the Word of God.

From my outsider’s vantage point, Japan has retained so many aspects of Natural Law (and therefore also Divine Law): male-female distinction, modesty, politeness, commitment to raising children, preservation of cultural norms, etc. These virtues are combined with more or less open violations of Natural Law: deliberate limitation or rejection of childbearing, enslavement to pornography, abandonment of so many elderly to “lonely deaths,” and the like. It is quipped that Japanese are born Shinto (their native “nature religion”), are married Christian (using wedding halls designed to look just like churches), and are buried Buddhist (the religion imported from India through the Far East). But they believe none of it. I was told that what is important to them is “being Japanese.” What would it take for Christianity to gain a foothold in Japan?

Here we can see the power of community at a national, cultural level. A strong sense of identity and belonging formed in such community as a conservative, preserving effect, either for good or for ill. In the case of Japan, a conservative social culture is preserved but a hard barrier is created against Christianity. When Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6), and the Holy Spirit says that the church is the pillar and foundation of the truth,” (1 Timothy 3:15), we are being taught that all our communities and cultures must be subjected to the judgment of truth. Those who do not have God's Word are already judged according to the truth of Natural Law, and those who do are judged by God's Word.

Here is the truth of Christianity in the midst of any culture: Christianity is transformative: “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 good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2). “Repent and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15). “You must become like children” (Matthew 18:3) and learn the Christian culture in the family of your heavenly Father. Christian faith and life, as taught by the Holy Spirit in Holy Scriptures, are the foundation and measure for Christians in America, the Reservation, West Africa, and Japan.

Christianity is transformative. We are justified by faith, but faith is never alone. The faith taught by Scriptures in law and gospel gives us a new heart and a new mind, created and formed by the Holy Spirit according to the truth of God's Word. God alone teaches us what we are to believe and think. God alone teaches us holy desires, just virtues, good works, and a culture that embodies and expresses these divine truths. Christian culture is separate and distinct from American culture, native Indian culture, West African culture, and Japanese culture. We live in the world, but we are not of the world. To be Christian, our lives must change, transformed by the truth of God's Word.

We know and believe that God alone breaks through unbelieving hearts and minds, creates faith, and forms a Christian culture in the midst of a dark and unbelieving world. In this confidence, more free conferences are planned for our fellow confessional Lutherans in Japan. God grant to these dear Christians the unity of the truth of His Word! God grant that the Word of God may find access to the hearts and minds of the Japanese people, that they believe the saving truth of His Word and enjoy lives transformed by its brilliant light!





## **REFORMATION 500**

The Reformation of Christian doctrine and piety must be accompanied and taught by the use of sound liturgy and hymns in the congregation. Ever good pastor knows this. This is not a question of favorite tunes and easy melodies, but of sound text and quality music that can be learned and loved by the congregation. Good liturgy and hymns are loved when they are learned well, and they do not wear out with frequent use. Lutheran liturgy and hymns teach Lutheran doctrine and practice and Lutheran piety and good works. These treasures of the Lutheran church put into joyful song the clearest, soundest, and most beautiful confession of the Holy Word of God, encouraging the minds and strengthening the hearts of God's dear people.

In his introduction to the 1524 Wittenberg hymnal (*Geistliche Gesangbuchlein*, "Spiritual Hymn Booklet") Luther taught us that the writing and singing of truly Christian hymns has the command and blessing of God Himself:

That it is good and God-pleasing to sing hymns is, I think, known to every Christian, for everyone is aware not only of the example of the prophets and kings in the Old Testament who praised God with song and sound, with poetry and psaltery, but also of the common and ancient custom of the Christian church to sing Psalms. St. Paul himself instituted this in 1 Corinthians 14:15 and exhorted the Colossians (3:16) to sing spiritual songs and Psalms heartily to the Lord so that God's Word and Christian teaching might be instilled and implanted in many ways. (AE 53:315-316)

As we learned last year, the first Lutheran hymnal (the *Achtliederbuch*—Hymnal of Eight) was published in Wittenberg in 1523 and contained eight hymns, four by Luther, and included the great justifi-

cation hymn by Paul Speratus, "Salvation Unto Us Has Come" (LSB #555). Luther's hymns were paraphrases of Psalms 98 ("Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice," LSB #556), 130 ("From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee," LSB #607, TLH #260), and 14 ("Although the Fools Say with Their Mouth"). Two unauthorized hymnals were published in Erfurt in the summer of 1524, each containing 18 of Luther's hymns. The *Geistliche Gesangbuchlein* contained 38 hymns, 24 by Luther. This means that between late 1523 and the summer of 1524, Luther wrote the text and most of the tunes for a hymn every week or two. In some hymns, however, he only translated and strengthened hymns and liturgical verses from the Scriptures or the medieval church. The hymns were published in a polyphonic format (4 or 5 parts), designed especially for schools and school choirs to sing the parts and thus teach the hymns to the congregations.

Luther wrote hymns for the church, to be learned by heart and sung by everyone. They were Biblical, rich in sound doctrine, and fitted for regular use in the congregation and home. They summarized the feasts or seasons of the church year and the chief parts of the catechism:

- The Advent hymn, "Savior of the Nations, Come," a translation of the hymn by Ambrose (c. AD 339-397), LSB #332.
- Two Christmas hymns: "Now Praise We Christ, the Holy One," translated from Coelius Sedulius (early 5<sup>th</sup> century AD), TLH #104; and "We Praise You, Jesus, at Your Birth," LSB #382.
- The Epiphany (or Presentation) hymn and canticle, "In Peace and Joy I Now Depart" (*Nunc Dimittis*), LSB #938.
- Two Lent and Ten Commandments hymns: "These Are the Holy Ten Commands," LSB #581; and "Man, Wouldst Thou Live All Blissfully."
- Two Maundy Thursday and Lord's Supper hymns: "Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior," translated and modified from John Hus (c. AD 1369-1415), LSB #627; and "O Lord, We Praise Thee," LSB #617.

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## Welcome to our incoming Pastors!

*"I charge to you in the presence of God...preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching." 2 Timothy 4:1-2*



Peter Preus will be ordained and installed at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Bridgeport, Nebraska on Sunday, July 7 at 4:00PM.

Before attending Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, IN Peter attended St. Andrew's Lutheran Church in Laramie, WY. His is the son of Rolf and Dorothy Preus and has 10 brothers and 1 sister. Peter and his wife, Taitlyn have four children.

Please keep Peter in your prayers as he begins his ministry to the saints at St. Paul's Lutheran Church.

Pictured: Taitlyn (holding Samson), Peter (holding Charlotte), Naomi, and Moses.

Andrew Hill will be ordained and installed as Pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church (Rock Springs) and Emmanuel Lutheran Church (Green River) on Saturday, July 20 at 11:00AM. The ordination will take place at Trinity Lutheran Church in Rock Springs.

Andrew is the son of Rev. John and Angela Hill and has 1 brother and 3 sisters. He and his wife, Sarah have four children.

Please keep Andrew in your prayers as he begins his ministry to the saints of Trinity Lutheran Church and Emmanuel Lutheran Church.

Pictured: Lydia, Daniel, John, Sarah (holding Adam), and Andrew.



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- Two Easter hymns: “Christ Jesus Lay in Death’s Strong Bands,” LSB #458; and “Jesus Christ, Our Savior True.”
- Three Pentecost hymns: “Come, Holy Ghost, Creator Blest” translated from Thabanus Maurus (c. AD 780-856), LSB #498/499; “To God the Holy Spirit Let Us Pray,” LSB #768; and “Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord,” LSB #497.
- Two Trinity hymns, the second one also a Creed hymn: “God the Father, Be Our Stay,” LSB #505; and “We All Believe in One True God,” LSB #954.
- Three more Psalm hymns: “May God Bestow on Us His Grace” (Psalm 67, also a mission hymn), LSB #823; “Happy who in God’s Fear Doth Stay” (Psalm 128, also for marriage and family, Epiphany); and “If God Had Not Been on Our Side” (Psalm 124), TLH #267.
- A death and funeral hymn: “In the Very Midst of Life” (translated from the medieval funeral liturgy, *Media Vita*), LSB #755.

Most of these hymns are a part of the regular worship life of our congregations and ought to be learned, some even by heart. Here are some observations about Luther’s style as a hymnist. His hymn stanzas are written or translated into simple German. He uses direct language and vivid imagery, unlike the soft and ornate styles of later poets. His texts come sometimes directly from Scriptures, sometimes from traditional liturgical verses and antiphons, and sometimes from ancient and medieval hymns. His melodies are most often adapted from chant tones and traditional hymn melodies. Overall, his hymns are manly and rugged.

But most importantly, Luther’s hymns convey the beautiful doctrine of Holy Scriptures in words and music. They impress this doctrine in the mind, on the heart, and in the spirit of the Christian. They provided a common language for worship in the Luther-

an Church. His hymns, together with his Small Catechism, effectively taught whole households and communities the pure doctrine of the Lutheran faith and instilled it in their lives for many generations.

### **“...REMEMBERING YOU IN MY PRAYERS...” (Eph. 1:16)**

For our active-duty chaplain, **Rev. Ryan Mills (Colorado)**.

For **Tiffany Baikie (wife of Rev. Marcus Baikie, Our Savior, Cheyenne)** as she heals from a car accident.

### **PASTORS AND CONGREGATIONS**

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

**Our Savior’s, Chadron** (served by **Rev. Travis Sherman, Grace, Gordon**) is engaged in discussions about a multi-congregation parish.

**Trinity, Morrill** (served by **Rev. Scott Firminhac, Our Savior’s, Torrington**) is engaged in conversations about a multi-congregation parish.

**St. Paul’s, Bridgeport** (served by **Rev. Richard Neugebauer, Faith, Gering**): **Pastor-elect Peter Preus** will be ordained and installed on Sunday, July 7 at 4:00 PM.

**Zion, Laramie** (served by **Rev. John Hill**): **Rev. Mark Mumme (Trinity, Riverton)** has accepted the divine call and will be installed July 14 at 4:00 PM.

**Emmanuel, Green River** (served by **Rev. Dan Mulholland**) and **Trinity, Rock Springs** (served by **Rev. Patrick Baldwin**): **Pastor-elect Andrew Hill** will be ordained and installed on Saturday, July 20 at 11:00 AM.

**Redeemer, Harrison** (served by **Rev. Darren Pflughoeft, St. Paul’s, Lusk**) and **Bethlehem, Crawford** (served by **Rev. Richard Mueller, Immanuel, Alliance**) will begin the pre-call process.

**Rev. Lincoln Winter (Trinity, Wheatland; Grace English, Pine Bluffs; Zion, Grover)** has announced that for health reasons he is resigning his call to Grace and Zion, effective December 31, 2024. He will continue as pastor at Trinity.

**Grace, Greybull** and **Zion, Emblem** are being served by **Rev. Jacob Benson (St. John’s, Lovell)** during their vacancy.

**Trinity, Riverton** is being served by **Rev. Sam Needham (St. Paul, Thermopolis)** during the vacancy.

**Rev. Allan Wierschke (Zion, Hay Springs and St. Paul’s, Rushville)** has received a call from the parish of Concordia, Cresbard and Immanuel, Wecota, South Dakota.

Women and teens of Mount Hope Lutheran Church and Trinity Lutheran Church (Casper) gathered together on Saturday, June 29 for Camp Titus, a place for young women to build deep relationships with both their Lutheran peers and with older women in the church that they can learn from. It focuses on the blessings and definition of Biblical womanhood; from the gift of motherhood to the unique contributions of single ladies, God has a plan for us all and has declared it good.

With 10 teens in attendance, Emily Olson presented to the girls 'The Art of Hospitality', giving them practical advice (and practice) for how to be a good host, from making conversation with new people at church to having guests at your home for dinner. Later, Victoria Haight presented them with "The Happiness Scam" and led them in a great discussion on happiness vs. joy.

Camp Titus is based on Titus 2:3 "Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior...to teach what is good, and so train the young women..."



# SAVE THE DATE

**July 16-18:** 5th Annual Homeschool Retreat, Lion's Camp, Casper Mountain (registration available at [wylcms.org/homeschoolretreat](http://wylcms.org/homeschoolretreat))

**August 4-8:** Wyoming Lutheran Youth Camp at Lander (registration attached to this roundup and online at [wylcms.org/camp](http://wylcms.org/camp))

**October 6-8:** Teacher's Fall Conference, Mount Hope Lutheran Church, Casper

**October 7-9:** Pastor's Fall Conference, Mount Hope Lutheran Church, Casper

## THE NEXT ROUNDUP

The next Roundup will be delivered to congregations after July 20 (August 2024 issue).







Dear friends in Christ,

What an outstanding time we had at the second annual Christian Culture Conference in June.

With over 260 guests in attendance, not counting over 50 children attending the conference "VBS" at Mount Hope, we were grateful to welcome the vibrancy of our rich Lutheran culture to Casper.

The conference began on the 16-acre campus of Luther Classical College, right next to the WY District Office and Mount Hope Lutheran Church. Guests gathered for coffee and pastries, Christian fellowship, and our groundbreaking ceremony.

The first thing many of our guests noticed was the number of different license plates in the parking lot. Of the over 260 guests in attendance at the conference, nearly 30 different states were represented. What an honor to welcome supporters from all around the country, and even internationally.

There were many in attendance who remember the first beginnings of a Lutheran school in Casper 30 years ago. On June 4, those people gathered around to watch the first shovel pierce the ground for construction of a premier Lutheran college for young Lutheran men and women across the country. See how God chooses to bless our labors for His Church!

The conference itself featured five papers, a banquet speech, and a presidential address. The video recordings of the five papers and presidential address have been released and can be found on our Facebook page ([facebook.com/lutherclassical](https://facebook.com/lutherclassical)) or our YouTube channel ([youtube.com/@lutherclassicalcollege3657](https://youtube.com/@lutherclassicalcollege3657)).

With classes beginning in August 2025, there is still much work to be done. Please keep our President, staff, and future students in your prayers as we continue the work God has set before us.

Blessings,

LCC Team

Donation may be sent to:  
Luther Classical College  
2300 Hickory Street  
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