

# POST CHRISTIAN AMERICA

HOW DID WE GET HERE?  
HOW DO WE RESPOND?



OCTOBER 20-22, 2024  
MISSOURI DISTRICT  
PASTORS' CONFERENCE  
MARGARITAVILLE RESORT

## Plenary and Sectional Guide

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### Plenary Presentations

- Plenary I**      **Monday, October 21**      **9:30-10:15 a.m.**  
[Post-Christian America: How Did We Get Here?](#) (Part One)  
[Dr. Russell Dawn](#) *President, Concordia University Chicago*
- Plenary II**      **Monday, October 21**      **10:30-11:15 a.m.**  
[Post-Christian America: How Did We Get Here?](#) (Part Two)
- Plenary III**      **Monday, October 21**      **12:45-1:30 p.m.**  
[Coming to Terms with Cultural Nihilism](#) (Part One)  
[Rev. Dr. Joel Biermann](#) *Professor of Systematic Theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis*
- Plenary IV**      **Monday, October 21**      **1:45-2:30 p.m.**  
[Coming to Terms with Cultural Nihilism](#) (Part Two)
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## Plenary Presenters

### Plenary I and II

#### **Post-Christian America: How Did We Get Here?**

This paper unpacks the events, intellectual movements, and social trends that have influenced American culture away from a prevailing Christian framework and toward a framework that worships the self through a confused mixture of isms, including Gnosticism, atheism, and paganism. Part I traces centuries of spiritual devolution, ending just before the invention of the smart phone. Part II explores the outworkings of that devolution in a seeming (and perhaps actual) spiritual freefall over roughly the last two decades.



**Dr. Russell P. Dawn** is the 12th president of Concordia University Chicago. He holds three degrees from Oxford University, including a doctorate in historical theology. He also holds advanced degrees in law and business from the University of Colorado. An award-winning historian of Lutheran higher education, he has taught in History, Political Thought, Theology, and Religious Studies. Prior to his academic career, Dr. Dawn practiced corporate law in Denver, Colorado. He and his family are members of St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church in Forest Park, Illinois. He is devoted to his wife and two daughters, dotes on his three small dogs, and is dedicated to swimming, sarcasm, and the Oxford comma.

### Plenary III and IV

#### **Coming to Terms with Cultural Nihilism**

While every generation is prone to overestimate the singular significance and decadence of the times in which they live, there is no question that our western culture is shifting in ways that make our present world distinctly different than it was only a few decades ago. Many important and helpful voices have provided keen insight into the forces and ideas that have shaped our present situation to the point that simply arriving at an accurate diagnosis can be overwhelming. Dr. Biermann will strive to offer a direct and accessible way better to understand our contemporary situation, and more importantly suggest ways for the church to respond confidently and faithfully to the world in which God has placed us.



**Rev. Dr. Joel Biermann** is the Waldemar A. and June Schuette Professor of Systematic Theology. A Concordia Seminary, St. Louis faculty member since 2002, Dr. Biermann teaches doctrinal theology with a special interest and emphasis centered on ethics and the correct role of the Law in the life of the believer. Outside of his Seminary responsibilities, Dr. Biermann serves as a frequent speaker at various gatherings of the church at many levels and has helped produce material for congregational small group Bible studies. He has authored four books: *Courageous Fathers of the Bible*, *A Case for Character*, *Wholly Citizens*, and *Day 7*. Dr. Biermann and his wife, Jeannalee, have three adult children: Jasmine, Justine, and Jess; and eleven grandchildren.

**Sectional A: Tuesday, October 22****8:45 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.**

| <b>Sectional</b> | <b>Title</b>   | <b>Facilitator</b>                             |
|------------------|--|--|
| A-01             | <a href="#">The Fruit of the Spirit: Living the Life of Christ</a>               | <a href="#">Rev. Randy Asbury</a>              |
| A-02             | <a href="#">Teaching the Faith at Home</a>                                       | <a href="#">Rev. Steve Andrews, Jr.</a>        |
| A-03             | <a href="#">Teaching the Three R's of Biblical Stewardship</a>                   | <a href="#">Rev. Dr. Wayne J. Knolhoff</a>     |
| A-04             | <a href="#">Volunteer Leaders: Recruiting, Retaining, Training</a>               | <a href="#">Rev. Peter Kirby</a>               |
| A-05             | <a href="#">How NOT To Let Issues Prevent Relationships</a>                      | <a href="#">Rev. Dr. Chad Lakies</a>           |
| A-06             | <a href="#">Leading People to Baptism</a>  | <a href="#">Rev. John Perling</a>              |
| A-07             | <a href="#">Genesis, Genetics, and Gender</a>                                    | <a href="#">Rev. Dr. Michael T. Fieberkorn</a> |
| A-08             | <a href="#">Care Team Ministry: Equipping the Saints to Care for One Another</a> | <a href="#">Rev. Matthew Resner</a>            |

**Sectional B: Tuesday, October 22****9:45 – 10:30 a.m.**

| <b>Sectional</b> | <b>Title</b>  | <b>Facilitator</b>  |
|------------------|---|---|
| B-01             | <a href="#">Teaching the Catechism with Love</a>  | <a href="#">Rev. Rod Benkendorf</a>   |
| B-02             | <a href="#">Discipleship Reboot</a>   | <a href="#">Rev. Bill Geis</a>  |
| B-03             | <a href="#">Financial Wellness for All Ages</a>   | <a href="#">Laura Scheer</a>  |
| B-04             | <a href="#">Church-State in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod: Past and Present</a>                            | <a href="#">Rev. Dr. Richard J. Serina, Jr.</a>                                   |
| B-05             | <a href="#">Assertive Engagement of Religious Freedom in the Military - A Chair at the Table or on the Menu</a> | <a href="#">Rev. Dr. Steven Hokana</a> and <a href="#">Rev. Dr. Craig Muehler</a> |
| B-06             | <a href="#">Preaching Without Notes</a>   | <a href="#">Rev. Robert Gadeken</a>   |
| B-07             | <a href="#">Theology is for Teaching...and Preaching</a>  | <a href="#">Rev. Dr. Gregory R. Truwe</a>   |
| B-08             | <a href="#">Talking about God &amp; Sinners</a>   | <a href="#">Rev. Elden Kohn</a>   |

**Sectional C: Tuesday, October 22****10:45 – 11:30 a.m.**

| <b>Sectional</b> | <b>Title</b>   | <b>Facilitator</b>                         |
|------------------|--|--|
| C-01             | <a href="#">Living as Exiles in the 21st Century</a>   | <a href="#">Rev. Dr. Lee Hagan</a>         |
| C-02             | <a href="#">Ministry and Mental Health Challenges</a>  | <a href="#">Rev. Marty Hasz, LPC</a>       |
| C-03             | <a href="#">An Early (Written) Fourfold Gospel?</a>  | <a href="#">Rev. Paul Landgraf</a>         |
| C-04             | <a href="#">Lament in Post-Christian America: A Lenten Sermon Series on the Psalms of Lament</a> | <a href="#">Rev. Matthew Berry</a>         |
| C-05             | <a href="#">Ministry to Gen Z (How to reach a generation who has deconstructed faith)</a>        | <a href="#">Rev. Brandon Boos</a>          |
| C-06             | <a href="#">Hebrews: Affirmation and Encouragement for Christians in Post-Christian America</a>  | <a href="#">Rev. Thomas Cowell</a>         |
| C-07             | <a href="#">Help! I'm My Own Unintentional Interim!</a>  | <a href="#">Rev. Dr. Darrell Zimmerman</a> |
| C-08             | <a href="#">Whom Shall I Send? Raising Up Workers for the Harvest Through Alternate Means</a>    | <a href="#">Rev. Lawton Thompson</a>       |

### **A-01: The Fruit of the Spirit: Living the Life of Christ**

**Rev. Randy Asburry**

How do we live the life of Christ in a post-Christian culture? St. Paul's warning about the works of the flesh and his teaching on the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-26) provide the necessary Christ-centered lenses for looking at all of life. Through these Christ-centered glasses, we will also explore our identity in Christ and how we live it out in our vocations.

**Rev. Randy Asburry** (M.Div., M.A., S.T.M.) serves as Senior Pastor of Hope Ev. Lutheran Church, St. Louis, MO (since 2001). A graduate of DOXOLOGY: The Lutheran Center for Spiritual Care and Counsel, he has served as staff writer for Good News magazine, author of Bible studies, devotional booklets, and tracts for Concordia Publishing House. He has authored essays for Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Hymns and Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Services. He currently serves as Third Vice-President of the Missouri District and is the general editor of the forthcoming book *The Resurrection Changes Everything: Essays in Honor of the Rev. Dr. Herbert C. Mueller Jr.* (CPH, 2024). Randy and his wife Rachel have two children and two grandchildren.

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### **A-02: Teaching the Faith at Home**

**Rev. Steve Andrews, Jr.**

American culture teaches parents to outsource every aspect of their children's lives, and teaching the faith hasn't been an exception. There are tools that pastors and congregations can use to help encourage parents to again take up their God-given vocation of teaching their children about who God is and what He's done for them. In this presentation, you'll learn about milestones, events hosted by a congregation that bring parents together every year as their child grows up and equips them with the knowledge and ideas to have a Christ-centered home.

**Rev. Steve Andrews Jr.** is a child of God, husband of Hannah, father of six children, and the pastor of St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Lee's Summit, MO. He has served as an associate pastor of family discipleship in both of the congregations he has served. He has been using milestones with families for the past decade, and after starting with another series of milestones, has slowly been developing a series that is distinctly Lutheran.

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### **A-03: Teaching the Three R's of Biblical Stewardship**

**Rev. Dr. Wayne J. Knolhoff**

Stewardship has traditionally been taught using the Three T's (Time, Talent, Treasure). While this can be helpful it is not adequate when teaching Biblical stewardship. This presentation suggests that the Three R's of Biblical Stewardship (Relationships, Responsibilities, and Resources) is a more comprehensive way to teach what the Bible says about our identity as stewards. Resources will be suggested for use in the congregation.

**Rev. Dr. Wayne Knolhoff** graduated from Concordia University, Chicago, Illinois with a degree in education and taught in Lutheran schools in New York and Wisconsin. He attended Concordia Seminary in St. Louis and upon graduation in 1983 became the pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in Humboldt, IA. From 1991 – 2008 he served as an executive for missions and stewardship in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod districts of Iowa East and Missouri. He also served as the Director of Stewardship for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod for five years. In 2012 he accepted the call to serve as the Director of Placement at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. While there he established the Center for Stewardship to help seminarians, pastors, and congregations in their stewardship task. He has advanced degrees in Education (M. Ed.) and Theology (M. Div. and D. Min.) He retired from Concordia Seminary in 2016. He continues to serve in stewardship as a consultant to congregations, writing stewardship materials, volunteering at Orphan Grain, and co-teaching a financial management course at Concordia Seminary.

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### **A-04: Volunteer Leaders: Recruiting, Retaining, Training**

**Rev. Peter Kirby**

Ephesians 4: 11-12 encourages "shepherds and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." The work of the church gets done through the activity of many lay volunteers. But in our changing society, members are less willing to give of their time and energy in support of the church and those that are willing are often burned out and discouraged. We will discuss the challenge of recruiting lay leaders and volunteers, effectively equipping and training them for the work they are called to do and keeping them energized in positions of service to the church.

**Rev. Peter Kirby** grew up in Illinois and met his wife Carla (nee Mize) at the University of Illinois. He has worked as an engineer, church planting missionary in Jamaica, parish pastor in Carlinville, Illinois, Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia with Lutheran Hour Ministries, and now almost 2 years as Director of Congregational Services for Missouri District. The Kirbys have 2 grown children and live in St. Louis.

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#### **A-05: How NOT To Let Issues Prevent Relationships**

**Rev. Dr. Chad Lakies**

Race, Sex, Guns, Climate, Politics, Gender, Religion, Ethnicity, Immigration, Poverty, and more. Are we letting issues prevent relationships? Data shows marriages are breaking because of disagreements. Family members are disowning their kin for similar reasons.

Friends are no longer talking to one another. Why do we feel as if we MUST disassociate from people with whom we disagree? How can we model and foster relating to others in our fractured, pluralistic culture that bridges relationships, even if we can't bridge ideologies? Let's learn from Jesus, who never let an issue prevent a relationship.

**Rev. Dr. Chad Lakies** is the Vice President for Ministry Engagement within the United States for Lutheran Hour Ministries. His work centers around helping the church become more outreach focused by empowering it to share the Gospel with non-churched individuals at more personal levels. His former life as a non-believer provides exceedingly relevant experience for thinking about how to engage with our friends and neighbors outside the kingdom of God. Lakies regularly speaks at national conferences for pastors and church professionals and has published in several journals on the topic of faith and culture. He is the author of *How the Light Shines Through: Resilient Witness in Dark Times* (Concordia Publishing House, 2024), a guide for helping the church engage in winsome witness while facing the challenges of contemporary culture. Lakies most recently served as department chair and associate professor of religion at Concordia University in Portland, Oregon (one of the most secular cities in North America). He holds a bachelor's degree in philosophy and psychology from the University of Michigan and an M.Div. and Ph.D. in systematic theology from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. He and his wife Bethany have two daughters, Anabel and Daphne.

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#### **A-06: Leading People to Baptism**

**Rev. John Perling**

This presentation will describe practical steps for leading skeptical people to Baptism, study in the Scriptures and Confessions, and a life of repentance.

- + The Triune God is at work
- + Initial invitation
- + Story Telling Skills: Your Story, The Lord's Story, Your Neighbor's Story
- + Leveraging the Lectionary-Reading Scripture with the Church
- + Accepting and Processing Questions as Co-Learners
- + Putting it all together in An Ancient-Future Process: The Catechumenate

**Rev. John Perling** attended Concordia Seminary, St. Louis and Westfield House Theological College, Cambridge, UK, graduating in 1997. He has since served rural, small town, and urban congregations in Minnesota, Connecticut, and now, Missouri. Presently, he serves as Pastor of Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church in St. Robert, Missouri, on Route 66 at the front gate of Fort Leonard Wood, 2 hours down I-44 from St. Louis and just over an hour from Springfield.

Pastor Perling has been an advocate for personal evangelism throughout his ministry. He conducted Witness Workshops and Dialog Evangelism in the Minnesota South and SELC Districts as part of Synodical Evangelism emphases. Served on Mission and Evangelism Boards for both Districts during both the Tell the Good News about Jesus and Ablaze campaigns.

Pastor Perling continues to be an advocate for all the baptized working to speak the promises of our Lord Jesus Christ as the Holy Spirit directs and gives opportunity in their various callings. Pastor Perling is a PhD student through Concordia Seminary, St. Louis in the History of Biblical Interpretation with a particular emphasis on 2nd generation Lutheran exegetes.

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**A-07: Genesis, Genetics, and Gender****Rev. Dr. Michael T. Fiebertorn**

The last decade has witnessed the rapid advent of the transgender movement, and more recently the social contagion of rapid onset gender dysphoria, especially among female adolescents. What does Genesis say about biological sex and gender? Is being transgender tied to our genetics? Most importantly, how do we respond with pastoral care for those families caught up in this phenomenon? This session is designed to help pastors better orient themselves to transgender issues and also to better situate themselves to be able to provide care for suffering individuals.

**Rev. Dr. Michael T. Fiebertorn** is associate pastor at Zion Lutheran Church in St. Charles, MO and author of *Battle of the Soul: Luther Reforms Vice and Virtue*, published by CPH in 2023. Dr. Fiebertorn earned his PHD in Doctrinal Theology from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO, in 2021.

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**A-08: Care Team Ministry: Equipping the Saints to Care for One Another****Rev. Matthew Resner**

This past year, a team from our congregation has received training to make "care visits" among the members. These visits work within set boundaries with the aim to listen and to pray. We want to be known as a congregation that cares for one another, just as the Apostle Paul gives the charge "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). The goal of this presentation is to share the early experiences of one congregation, as we have already begun to notice a shift in attitudes from being distant and divided to becoming more caring and compassionate for one another.

**Rev. Matthew Resner** was ordained and installed as the pastor of a dual parish in South Dakota in 2015. He now serves as pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in Moberly, MO, since 2019. He and his wife, Kathleen, have been blessed by the Lord with two children, Malachi (age 9) and Eliana (age 1).

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**B-01: Teaching the Catechism with Love****Rev. Rod A. Benkendorf**

Teaching the Christian Faith from Luther's Small Catechism is a true joy! The Six Chief Parts as found in the Catechism cover the high points of our Lutheran, Biblical Theology so very well. Except, there is a theme in Scripture, that unless you are intentional, can be overlooked far too easily when just teaching from Luther's Small Catechism. The theme is LOVE. The purpose of this session is to empower the catechetical teacher with the "lesson plan" to integrate into our catechism classes God's Call to love Him and our neighbor so that God's People not only learn sound doctrine but are also better equipped to live as His People in the love to which God calls us.

**Rev. Rod A. Benkendorf** was trained as a Lutheran H.S. teacher and spent seven years full-time in the classroom. After going to the Concordia Seminary St. Louis and receiving M.Div. and STM degrees, he has served as parish pastor, development officer for Lutheran Heritage Foundation, and now, again, as parish pastor. Rev. Benkendorf has a true passion for helping people understand and live in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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**B-02: Discipleship Reboot****Rev. Bill Geis**

Making Disciples in a "post-everything" world is both an opportunity and a challenge. Our Gospel mission and message never changed. Our "operating system" and "programs," however, are booting up to an ever-changing environment. Explore simple ways to reboot, refresh, and reinvest in making disciples, with a focus on supporting churches of every size, setting, and generational opportunity.

**Rev. Bill Geis**, the Missouri District Mission Director, has led and coached churches for a new century of disciple-making. His approach involves simplifying programs and focusing on back-to-basics biblical mentoring in a "post-everything" mission field. Pastor Geis' emphasis on personal relationships over programs is a testament to his commitment to fostering spiritual formation, developing next-gen leaders, and building collaborative and strategic alignment among our churches.

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**B-03: Financial Wellness for All Ages****Laura Scheer, AFC, CEBS, Financial Educator**

While the underlying foundations of financial wellness are the same at every age, we have different goals at different points in our lives. This session will teach you how to create and maintain healthy financial habits and give actionable items for different life stages, ages and financial concerns such as managing debt and saving for retirement.

**Laura Scheer** joined Concordia Plans in 2011, overseeing the administration of the Concordia Retirement Savings Plan 403(b). Now she engages directly with workers, using her financial coaching experience to help them build healthy financial habits and reach their financial goals. By educating workers about the important role their benefits play, she helps them improve their overall financial health. Scheer has a bachelor's degree from University of Missouri – Columbia, is an Accredited Financial Counselor® and a Certified Employee Benefit Specialist focusing on church retirement plans.

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**B-04: Church-State in the LCMS: Past and Present****Rev. Dr. Richard J. Serina, Jr.**

The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod has faced unique challenges in the American context as it adapted from the state-run churches of Germany to the representative democratic polity of the United States. It has also viewed its particular role in the state in very different ways over the course of its history. This presentation will briefly survey some of the key changes in those views and relationships, especially as seen through the documents of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, as well as identify some specific challenges we must confront in the present.

**Rev. Dr. Richard J. Serina, Jr.** is associate executive director of the LCMS's Commission on Theology and Church Relations. He served for more than a decade as parish pastor in rural West Texas and suburban New Jersey, and has taught at both Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and Concordia College, Bronxville. He also received his PhD in Reformation Studies from Concordia Seminary and has published multiple books and essays dealing with the theology and history of the late Middle Ages and the Reformation. In his work with the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, he is specially focused on how the church navigates the emerging theological, technological, political, and ethical challenges of the present day.

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**B-05: Assertive Engagement of Religious Freedom in the Military- A Chair at the Table or on the Menu****Rev. Dr. Steven Hokana and Rev. Dr. Craig Muehler**

Assertive Engagement of Religious Freedom in the Military is necessary in order to keep and maintain religious liberty for the men and women who serve in the defense of the United States. This brief session explores the awareness that religious liberty is constantly challenged and that the Church must give an answer to the constant challenges of this modern era to remove freedom of worship from the public square. Active engagement brings positive results. Nonparticipation fulfills the saying, "If not a chair at the table our liberties are on the Menu."

**Chaplain Steven Hokana** serves as the Assistant Director of Ministry to the Armed Forces for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). He brings more than 26 years of experience as an active-duty U.S. Army chaplain to the position.

Hokana graduated with a Bachelor's degree in History from Concordia College—New York, Bronxville, N.Y., in 1982. He earned his Master of Divinity degree from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in 1987, and his Doctorate of Ministry degree from the Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio, Texas, in 2006. His dissertation illustrates the redemptive love of God to heal those with anxiety disorder through confession and prayer. He is a board-certified chaplain and an active member of the Association of Professional Chaplains. In addition, he is a member of the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE) and a Diplomate, of the American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress, in collaboration with the National Center of Crisis Management.

Hokana's military service took him to Southwest Asia, Cuba, Bosnia, Germany, Denmark, Alaska, and on multiple stateside assignments. His military and combat operations include Desert Shield; Desert Storm for the Liberation of Kuwait; and Stabilization Force 6, a multinational peacekeeping force deployed to Bosnia and Herzegovina

after the Bosnian war. His involvement in military operations includes Inherent Resolve, Freedom's Sentinel, Enduring Freedom, and Resolute Support deploying to Kuwait, Afghanistan, and Jordan. He has provided pastoral care in diverse units, including Combat Service Support, Airborne Infantry, Light Infantry, Medical Units, and Armor.

Among his awards and decorations are the Legion of Merit, the Army Meritorious Service Medal (awarded nine times), the Army Commendation Medal (awarded six times), the Army Achievement Medal (awarded three times), the Humanitarian Service Medal (awarded twice), and the Parachutists and Air Assault badges. Hokana also is the recipient of the Army Medical Command, Order of Medical Military Merit, The United States Army Chaplain Four Chaplains Award, and the Bronze St. Martin of Tours award for more than 20 years of service as a chaplain in the LCMS.

Hokana and his wife of over forty years, Mary, have three children and five grandchildren

**Chaplain Craig Muehler**, retired U.S. Navy Captain, serves as the director of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Ministry to the Armed Forces. He has held that position since August 2014, after retiring as deputy chaplain of the U.S. Marine Corps. He was commissioned in 1986 as a Chaplain Candidate and moved on to serve as a Navy Chaplain from 1988 to 2014. Muehler received his MDiv from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in 1988, and his Master of Theology from Trinity International University in Deerfield, Ill., in 2001. He has been serving as the Director for LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces since August 2014. He is blessed with a wonderful wife, Kristen (nee Mehl) and 4 adult children (Seth, Jesse, Faith and Hope).

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#### **B-06: Preaching Without Notes**

**Rev. Robert Gaden**

Ted Talks are not done with notes. Soloists do not perform reading music. Business leaders are taught not to present with notes (though they love to use slides). Speaking without notes communicates, especially in our modern world, that the speaker is competent, prepared, and cares about his subject and his audience – not impossible with notes – just harder. “The sum and substance of Homiletics amounts to what is contained in the little word ‘better.’...The one grand duty of Homiletics is to show us all along the line the things and the ways that are better.” – Lenski. This is why he taught that all preachers should work toward preaching without notes, and that was in his book on preaching in 1927. Preaching without notes may be better for you and your hearers. Let's talk about reasons, how to's, share helpful suggestions, things to avoid, and generally support each other in striving to be better preachers of God's Holy Word in today's world.

**Rev. Robert Gaden** is a retired pastor living in St. Louis who has served congregations in Iowa, Nebraska, and Michigan. He has also preached without notes for more than 30 years and knows firsthand the difficulty and the benefits of trying to do it well. He does not pretend to be an expert, only an encourager. A group of supportive elders in his first congregation encouraged him to preach without notes, he accepted the challenge, and never looked back.

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#### **B-07: Theology is for Teaching...and Preaching**

**Rev. Dr. Gregory R. Truwe**

We often operate as if there is a separation between the tasks of preaching and teaching. Sometimes this is what we've been taught; other times we've simply succumbed to the "sitz im leben", which takes up certain subjects in the pulpit, but leaves others to be treated in Bible class, or not at all. Using the pastoral epistles as a starting place, and Gerhard Forde's book, "Theology Is for Preaching" as an unfortunate example, this presentation will seek to destroy this false dichotomy and encourage pastors towards a view that sees all preaching and teaching- even pastoral care- as a stewardship of the office of the Word.

**Rev. Dr. Gregory R. Truwe** is husband to Jamie and father to Naomi, Micah, Hannah, Abi, Josiah, & Eden, Pastor Truwe serves as Senior Pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Cole Camp, MO. In addition to his pastoral duties, he is a member of the Board of Directors for David's Harp: A Center for Musical Development. He is a 2007 graduate of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (CSL) and in 2022 earned a Doctor of Ministry from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSF), writing a dissertation entitled: *Speaking with One Voice: Catechesis for the Home, the Congregation, and the School.*

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**B-08: Talking about God & Sinners****Rev. Elden Kohn**

Statements like "God loves sinners," "We're all sinners" and "Love the sinner; hate the sin" reflect SOME Scriptural truth BUT don't tell the WHOLE story of Law & Gospel, Sin & Grace, Justification & Sanctification in Christ. In fact, without these elements (and without the cross of Christ as the primary lens), the statements above can result, functionally and practically, in a harmful way of thinking... This session offers a framework for examining the language challenges and striving for faithfulness in our Christian witness.

**Rev. Elden D. Kohn:** Child of God since March 8, 1981; husband to Molly since July 11, 2008; father of Matthias, Eleanor, Nehemiah, Micah, and Sylvi; and pastor to the saints of Zion Lutheran in Macon, MO, since July 2013. Pastor Kohn is a former elementary school teacher who enjoys playing stringed instruments, reading about the Early Church, learning languages, running, and hanging out at home with his family.

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**C-01: Living as Exiles in the 21st Century****Rev. Dr. Lee Hagan, President of the Missouri District**

Individual Christians and the Church struggle with the question of how to engage the culture in our post-Christian society. This session will use 1 Peter as a paradigm for considering our relationship with culture and pathways for cultural engagement.

**Rev. Dr. Lee Hagan** serves as the president of the Missouri District. Previously, he served as senior pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Concordia, MO from 2002-2015. He is a graduate of Concordia University NE and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. He is married with two children and one grandchild.

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**C-02: Ministry and Mental Health Challenges****Rev. Marty Hasz, LPC**

Mental health challenges managed allow workers to serve joyfully, so this sectional will discuss common issues workers and congregation members face, consider how to handle them with grace, and how to access appropriate interventions, including but not limited to professional help.

**Rev. Marty Hasz, LPC** holds a Master of Arts in mental health counseling from Southeast Missouri State University. He is a National Board-Certified Licensed Professional Counselor. Rev. Hasz served as a Director of Christian Education in the Indiana District before ministering as a pastor in Missouri. He is a Christian Reconciler through Ambassadors of Reconciliation and has been leading people through biblical personal and group peace-making, with LCMS church workers and congregations since 2015.

Rev. Hasz accepted the call to serve in the Missouri District and serves as the Director of Church Worker Support. Rev. Hasz is a family man. He and his wife have three sons and live in the rolling hills of Cape Girardeau near the Mississippi River in Southeast Missouri. Rev. Hasz says, "What I love about serving the Lord in full-time ministry is seeing people light up with the joy when they hear of the Good News of our Lord Jesus." Rev. Hasz loves to spend time in God's creation with his family hiking, traveling & snow skiing, when headed north to visit extended family.

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**C-03: An Early (Written) Fourfold Gospel?****Rev. Paul Landgraf**

One could go a lot of different directions with the so-called "choosing of the seven" in Acts 6. William R. Farmer, in his book (with Denis M. Farkasfalvy), *The Formation of the New Testament Canon*, states (on page 50) that "The first evident need for writing down the words of the Lord may have been in connection with the need for the oral tradition to be translated in a reliable way into languages other than that spoken by Jesus..." The Greek widows wanted to hear about Jesus, and that interest continued to grow as the book of Acts progressed. The Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 ends with four men carrying a small decree that is quite similar to the first verses of the Gospel according to Luke. And with a Jewish perspective, the four prohibitions within that decree could also be connected to the four gospel accounts.

**Rev. Paul David Landgraf** is a 1990 graduate of Concordia Seminary. Since then, he has received two advanced degrees from that institution.

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#### **C-04: Lament in Post-Christian America: A Lenten Sermon Series on the Psalms of Lament**

**Rev. Matthew Berry**

Many Christians know how to pray, praise, and give thanks. But do they know how to lament? This breakaway will present a comprehensive sermon series for Midweek Lent and Holy Week services on the Psalms of Lament. Created and implemented by the presenter for Lent/Holy Week 2024, this series taught the presenter's church how to lament and recall Christ's promises as she engages a Post-Christian America. This series includes full service outlines with hymn and accompanying readings for the Psalm that speak to the development of lament in the Old and New Israel.

**Rev. Matthew Berry** is pastor of Concordia Lutheran Church in Sikeston, MO. Pastor Berry is in the D.Min. program at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis developing a Congregational Identity Reformation Process for small, revitalizing congregations. At home, he is blessed by his wife, Amanda, and their three young children.

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#### **C-05: Ministry to Gen Z (How to reach a generation who has deconstructed faith)**

**Rev. Brandon Boos**

As one of the first Gen Z pastors in the LCMS, I have had a unique opportunity to see how the post-Christian culture has affected my generation and their response to the church. In this presentation, we will discuss some practical ways to adjust ministries to reach the next generation, while staying faithful to our confessional beliefs.

**Rev. Brandon Boos** is a Lutheran SMP pastor in Saint Louis, MO. He oversees missional efforts as a church as well as the ministry for young adults. He has five boys (all under 7) and enjoys eating new foods, exploring the city and trying to not lose a kid through it all.

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#### **C-06: Hebrews: Affirmation and Encouragement for Christians in Post-Christian America**

**Rev. Thomas Cowell**

The book of Hebrews was likely written for a group of Christians who, being heavily persecuted for their faith, were beginning to question if they made the right decision to leave the relative safety and familiarity of Judaism to follow Jesus. Hebrews affirms that Jesus is, in fact, the perfection of humanity, of the priestly office, and of all the sacrifices that came before Him. In the midst of establishing these truths, the letter encourages Christians to suffer with Christ who suffered for us, believe with Christ who is faithful over God's house as a Son, and to enter with Christ into the Holy Place which He opened for us by His blood.

The goal of this presentation is to outline how these affirmations and encouragements to follow Christ throughout Hebrews can be communicated to Christians in post-Christian America who are facing similar persecutions, temptations, and doubts as were the original audience of the letter.

**Rev. Thomas Cowell** is an associate pastor at Christ Lutheran Church in Platte Woods, MO, where he has served since August 2023. Pastor Cowell spent the first six years of ministry serving a dual parish in northwest Iowa. Pastor Cowell's interest in the book of Hebrews began in seminary where he wrote two papers titled: "Moving into the Perfect Tent: Perfection and the Divine Service in the Book of Hebrews" and "Thoughts on the Translation and Interpretation of teleios and teleiotes in Hebrews 5:14 and 6:1." Pastor Cowell has also enjoyed teaching Bible studies on Hebrews with a focus on encouraging Christians to consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near (Heb. 10:23-25).

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#### **C-07: Help! I'm My Own Unintentional Interim!**

**Rev. Dr. Darrell Zimmerman**

You've accepted a Call. Enthusiasm is high! You arrive with great expectations, but soon discover that you've inherited from the previous (generations of) Pastors some unresolved issues that hinder your ministry. You've just become the "Unintentional Interim Pastor." How do you navigate through the issues of a past of which you were not a part? We'll discuss some of the challenges and pitfalls of this difficult time in pastoral practice with biblical guidance to help you calm the troubled waters of the past in order to move with grace into the congregation's future.

**Rev. Dr. Darrell Zimmerman** served thirty years in parish in Missouri and Michigan, and after eleven years leading Grace Place Wellness Ministries has returned to parish life as Transitional Ministry Pastor (Intentional Interim) at Cedar Hill Lutheran Church.

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#### **C-08: Whom Shall I Send? Raising Up Workers for the Harvest Through Alternate Means**

**Rev. Lawton Thompson**

With each passing year, more and more pastors step into retirement. Our seminaries are working diligently to train workers for the harvest who will shepherd these vacant congregations. In some situations, an alternate route to ordination may best serve the needs of the ministry context. But what is the reality for both congregations and those called to serve in these alternate ways? Join us for a presentation and panel discussion geared toward exploring the lived realities of pastors and congregations who have engaged in ministry in this way.

**Rev. Lawton Thompson** is a Florida native who has been married to his amazing wife Jessica for 21 years. Together they have two sons, Noah who serves in the Missouri National Guard as a combat medic, and Jonathan who is a junior at Lutheran High School South in St. Louis with eyes set on a church work vocation. Pastor Thompson is a second career pastor who served as a firefighter for twenty years in Florida. For the last four years of his career, he was engaged in bi-vocational ministry as he was also enrolled in the Specific Ministry Program. He later went on to complete his Master of Divinity at Concordia Seminary St. Louis and now serves at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Des Peres, MO.

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