

The Lutheran Church cannot escape the campus; she was born in 1517 on the academic turf of a German university at Wittenberg. Throughout her history she has not forsaken the campus either.



Campus ministry comes naturally to Lutheranism as there is a desire that her sons and daughters grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, and mature in their faith at one of the most formative and crucial times of their lives, all while they acquire the learning and useful skills necessary for life lived "in," but not "of," the world around them.

The Lutheran Church need not ever escape the campus. The university campus is a melting pot of both secular and religious thought, and provides us with a challenging training ground where young people may be equipped to live as faithful confessors of Jesus Christ and His Word.

In this spirit, campus ministry has always been near and dear to the hearts of Lutherans in Laramie, as well as throughout Wyoming, Nebraska, and beyond.

THE EARLY YEARS . . .

The ministry to Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) students at the University of Wyoming in Laramie was initially carried on under the supervision of the Pastor of Zion Lutheran Evangelical Church since that congregation's organization in 1934.

However, in order to provide greater impetus to the student ministry, the then Northern and Southern Nebraska Districts of the LCMS jointly purchased a former fraternity house in 1957 to become a "home away from home" for Lutheran students at the University of

Wyoming. That converted fraternity house served as the Lutheran Student Center for the better part of a decade.



With continued growth of the University, and a large increase in the number of Lutheran students, it soon became clear that further arrangements would have to be made in order to provide for the spiritual needs of these young people. Therefore, in 1964, the Northern and Southern Nebraska Districts determined to call a full time campus pastor for the University of Wyoming. On January 12, 1965, this call was accepted by the Rev. Edward A. Schmidt, then Zion's pastor, who became the first full time Lutheran campus pastor at the University of Wyoming.

... A NEW HOME

The construction of a new chapel and student center, until that time only a dream in the minds and hearts of those interested and concerned with the Lutheran student ministry at the University of Wyoming, now became a matter of the utmost importance. Through the vision, foresight, and continuing efforts of District leaders, local church officials, and those involved in the Lutheran student ministry, decisions were made to proceed with a building program.

Because of the old Student Center's fine location in relation to the campus, it was considered most important that this location be retained and additional property be purchased for expansion. The property immediately

adjacent and to the east of the old Center was purchased by the two Districts in June, 1967. Due to the excellent foresight of all involved, the present property consists of 140 feet of prime frontage on Grand Avenue, just one block from the university library and student union (the heart of the campus), and in close proximity to the dormitories.

A building committee was appointed, consisting of Rev. William Bornemann, Chairman, Dr. Conrad Kercher, Rev. Nolan Obermueller, Mr. Charlie Miller, and Rev. Edward Schmidt. Mr. Peter Hanson, Professor of Architectural Engineering at the University, was commissioned by the two Districts to prepare the plans and specifications for the new building. Mr. Joseph Deaderick, a University art professor, was also commissioned to design a stained glass window to be the focal point of the sanctuary. Grothouse Construction Company of Laramie was awarded the contract, and ground breaking ceremonies were conducted on Sunday, September 24, 1967. The 14,500 square-foot facility was completed in less than 14 months at a cost of just over \$250,000.

The service of dedication was conducted, fittingly on the birthday of Martin Luther, November 10, 1968. It marked the completion of a project involving many persons, many talents, and many prayers, all to the glory of the Almighty God. Both District Presidents participated in the service, with Rev. Henry Niermann (President, Southern Nebraska District) preaching, and Rev. Frederick Niedner (President, Northern Nebraska District), presiding over the rite of dedication for the new facility.

On that date St. Andrew's was dedicated:

"to the glory and to the honor of Thee, the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; to the preaching and teaching of Thy Holy Word, to proper administration of the Holy Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; as a House of Prayer for all who would call upon Thy name and worship Thee in spirit and truth."

For nearly two generations this place has been home to the faithful proclamation of God's Word and the administration of His sacraments. Countless Lutheran students have been nurtured in the faith through the ministry of the following pastors:

1965 – 1977	Rev. Edward A. Schmidt
1977 – 1984	Rev. Richard O. Boche
1985 – 1988	Rev. Dean A. Dummer
1989 – 1991	Rev. Dr. Patrick T. Ferry
1992 – 1997	Rev. Daniel J. Decker
1998 –	Rev. Marcus T. Zill

Over the last two generations, many young people at the University of Wyoming have also been initiated into the Christian faith, and have become confessing Lutherans due to the ministry that takes place here. Well over 400 baptisms and confirmations have taken place at 1309 Grand Ave. over the years (as well as 175+ weddings).

SERVICE TO THE GREATER CHURCH . . .

The impact of a faithful campus ministry is never an end to itself. Not only has St. Andrew's impacted the lives of countless young people over the years, but it has also impacted the greater church. The fruit of the ministry at St. Andrew's includes countless well trained and faithful laymen and women, as well as numerous pastors and teachers. Those who have served as St. Andrew's pastors have also taken their experience here and served the larger church faithfully in a variety of capacities. Her first pastor (Schmidt) served as the first LCMS Campus Ministry Counselor, her second pastor (Boche) presently serves as the Wyoming District President, and her fourth pastor (Ferry) presently serves as the president of Concordia University—Wisconsin.

The mission zeal of confessing Lutherans in and around the University of Wyoming has also been expressed in a willingness to invite the greater church to Laramie. Among other things, in 1980 the University of Wyoming

served as host for the National Lutheran Laymen's League Convention, as well as a National Classical Education Conference in 2003. In July 2000, the Wyoming District and St. Andrew's served as hosts for the Dying to Live National Lutheran Youth Conference, the conference which served as the beginning of the youth organization known today as "Higher Things" (previously the name of St. Andrew's campus ministry newsletter).

St. Andrew's continues to serve the greater church by opening its doors to host weekends for the youth of the Wyoming District and beyond, while seeking to continue to reach out to Lutheran students, and an increasingly large number of international students. The Wyoming District and St. Andrew's stand ready to assist others in learning about campus ministry and encouraging them to use God's resources to bring Christ on Campus.

THE FUTURE . . .

The Evangelical Lutheran Church has been involved in campus ministry for well over five hundred years. Fifty-some years later the University of Wyoming is still a fertile ground for mission work among those who have yet to be brought to the knowledge and salvation found only in Jesus Christ and also a place for vigorous ministry among those whose faith is to be strengthened and nourished as they pursue God-pleasing vocations.

It is because of the great foresight and continued commitment of those in the Wyoming District and elsewhere that God's Word still goes forth in and around the University of Wyoming. May the sung confession begun at St. Andrew's dedication over forty years ago continue to resound both within and outside her walls:

*Built on the Rock the Church shall stand
Even when steeples are falling.
Crumbled have spires in ev'ry land;
Bells still are chiming and calling,
Calling the young and old to rest,
But above all the souls distressed,
Longing for rest everlasting. (LSB 645:1)*

From Wittenberg to Wyoming



A History of Campus Ministry in Laramie

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