



PHOTOS: LCMS/ERIK M. LINSEFORD



Update

Fall 2015

Let's Talk

by Michael Salemink

A S A LIFELONG U.S. CITIZEN AND MEMBER OF LCMS CONGREGATIONS, I thoroughly enjoyed the information and fellowship shared at the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty's conference in Washington, D.C. As an ordained minister and executive director-elect of Lutherans For Life, I also was encouraged by our gathering under the theme, "Let's Talk Life, Marriage and Religious Liberty."

I and the several dozen other attendees got to know each other as Lutheran leaders and

action-takers over the course of two-and-a-half days (though it felt more like we received a whole week's worth!) of lectures, receptions and chapel services. We celebrated the work of some of our Washington-based laypeople in the arenas of policy and ethics, such as Rep. John Shimkus (R-Ill.), Rep. Dr. Larry Bucshon (R-Ind.), Sen. Ben Sasse (R-Neb.) and journalist Mollie Hemingway (*thefederalist.com*), as well as Beltway veterans Mr. Timothy Goegelein (Focus on the Family) and Mr. Bill Hecht. The presence of four select young ambassadors (two from Concordias and two from state universities) gave special pride and hope.

A further joy was connecting and sharing with like-minded Christians of other denominations. Keynote presenters for the conference were Dr. Ryan T. Anderson and Mr. Sherif Girgis, who are distinguished and eloquent public faces of our culture's recent marriage debate. Multiple lawyers from Alliance Defending Freedom's D.C. office also briefed us on the state of the three issues we considered. Dr. Barrett Duke of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission

brought warm greetings from that church body.

The distinctly Lutheran emphases, embodied in regular worship and doctrinal exhortations by LCMS President Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, LCMS Vice President Rev. Dr. Scott R. Murray and LCMS Vice-President and conference Chaplain Rev. Christopher Esget were certainly the highlight of our time together. As I have been given the responsibility and privilege of leading current and coming Lutheran generations to witness to Christ as the Way, Truth and Life, I am excited and strengthened to walk, work and serve shoulder-to-shoulder with these brothers and sisters. The environment the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty advocates and enacts — a safe, orderly, fair and free society — is surely the kind in which the Gospel may best be proclaimed and prosper.

The Rev. Michael Salemink is executive director-elect of Lutherans For Life.

Want to get involved? Go to lcms.org/freetobefaitful for more resources on how to speak like a Lutheran regarding marriage, life and religious liberty.

Pastoral and lay members

of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod who have expressed an interest in the public square issues of marriage, life and religious liberty — and the formation of the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty in the nation's capital — were invited to attend a lively discussion regarding those topics Sept. 8–10 in Washington, D.C. Presenters such as Dr. Ryan Anderson, Sherif Girgis, Mollie Hemingway and others engaged the gathering in candid conversation about confessing the faith in the public square in a uniquely Lutheran way.



Senator tells LCMS losing tax-exempt status due to religious liberty infringement would be **"a devastating blow"** by Adriane Heins

IN A RECENT Free to be Faithful-sponsored webinar, Senator Mike Lee (R-Utah) today told LCMS members that if churches were to lose their tax-exempt status, it could "be a devastating blow from which they would not recover."

"It would make it difficult, if not impossible, for our churches to do good things" in their communities, Lee explained. He is co-author of the First Amendment Defense Act (S. 1598, H.R. 2802), legislation that would, as the bill notes, "ensure that the Federal Government shall not take any discriminatory action against a person, wholly or partially on the basis that such person believes, speaks, or acts in accordance with a sincerely held religious belief or moral conviction that marriage is or should be recognized as the union of one man and one woman, or that sexual relations are properly reserved to such a marriage, and for other purposes."

Living out
the Christian faith in witness
and mercy while honoring the
governments and rulers set in place
can sometimes be tricky business.
Learn more at
lcms.org/socialissues.

One of the key components of the bill involves allowing churches, faith-based charitable organizations and schools to continue to care for those around them without threat of government retaliation.

Losing the right to religious freedom "would be catastrophic to so many churches and charitable organizations," Lee acknowledged. "We can't allow them to be subjected to unfair retaliatory treatment as a result of their beliefs."

Lee, who hopes to see movement on the bill yet this fall, had a final word of encouragement for LCMS members: "It's important for us to get the word out that the American people are free, that the sons and daughters of the United States of America were meant to live in freedom, that in our worship of the Lord, Jesus Christ, we demand to be free from retaliation from our government."

Adriane Heins is managing editor of The Lutheran Witness.

Beautiful Distinctions in Washington, D.C. by Timothy Goeglein



Does your congregation host a BOY SCOUT TROOP? Is your son or grandson involved in the Boy Scouts? Go to lcms.org/freetobeforthful and click on "Youth Organizations" to get the latest on the Boy Scouts' recent lifting of the nationwide ban on openly gay adult Scout leaders.

ONE OF THE GREAT JOYS in life is being surrounded in our nation's capital by men and women of faith who are passionate about exploring the role of Christians in the public square — fellow Lutherans who are intrigued by Jesus' admonition that we are to "render unto Caesar" those things which are the government's yet to "render unto God" those things which are His.

That was the animating, absorbing narrative of the LCMS's recent Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty meeting in Washington, D.C.; it turned out to be an often breathtakingly interesting three days just a few blocks from Capitol Hill and the Supreme Court.

We heard from, absorbed and interacted with experts on the cutting-edge public policy questions of marriage, human life and religious liberty questions. There was ample time for unsurpassed conversation and discussion but also beautiful worship and praise to leaven our time together led by Rev. Christopher Esget of nearby Alexandria, Virginia.

As a band of brothers and sisters in Christ, we learned that while we live in a world that seems to have ample amounts of genius, there is often too little courage on the great questions of our time: What constitutes marriage, what is a family, how should we defend our God-given

religious liberties and conscience and how can we play a significant role in the burgeoning pro-life movement?

The theme was "Let's Talk Marriage, Life and Religious Liberty," and the nourishing, refreshing first principles were held up to new light for a new era and an altogether new chapter of American life. The stakes for Lutheran Christians could not be higher.

Timothy S. Goeglein serves as vice president for External Relations at Focus on the Family and is a board member of the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty.