



One Voice for Public Policy

MINNESOTA DISTRICTS

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We're Not in Kansas Anymore!

“We’re not in Kansas anymore!” This familiar line from the Wizard of Oz has, of course, become a shorthand way of indicating that something around us has fundamentally changed ... that, in one way or another, we’re no longer living in the same world we were before. More and more, I believe this is an apt description for the cultural circumstance we Americans find ourselves in recently. Which is to say, from my perch as the Public Policy Advocate for the LCMS Districts here in Minnesota, it seems to me the societal turmoil we’ve been experiencing of late no longer stems from the kind of garden variety political disagreements we’ve faced in the past. No longer are we arguing about which policies will serve the common good as we operate *within the bounds* of the democratic, republican form of government set out by our Constitution. Rather, we often seem to be wrestling over whether that form of government should continue to exist at all. It seems to me what we’ve been experiencing is a battle between that majority of Americans who want to continue to improve our nation by moving incrementally closer to the ideals articulated in the Declaration of Independence and other founding documents, and that minority which simply wishes to destroy this system of governance we’ve lived under for the past 250 years in favor of some unnamed and ill-defined alternative that somehow emerge from the ruins. In short, we seem to be engaged less and less in politics and more and more in revolution.

While for some years now I’ve personally resisted the notion that we are inevitably taking or have taken such a dire turn, I now find myself coming to the same conclusion as have many other respected cultural observers, namely, that we are in fact living through a cultural revolution¹ ... that we are, in fact, now living under a soft form of totalitarianism.² With the constant and forceful advocacy of a woke ideology that rejects the basic underpinnings of Western civilization; with the wholesale abandonment of physical reality we see in transgenderism and same-sex marriage; with the aggressive and unrelenting attacks on the Church, the sanctity of life, the authority of parents and the nuclear family, it’s obvious we are not all

living in the same world anymore. Clearly, we are not all playing by the same constitutional and legal rules of the past, nor do we all share an appreciation for the classic virtues of truth, goodness and beauty.³ Even the fundamental American freedoms of religion and speech have become controversial and contested. Indeed, the classic liberalism of the past, that attitude which, within the bounds of civility, accords all people the dignity of freely expressing and living out their beliefs and values in the public sphere ... allowing all to “live and let live”... may soon no longer be an option as militant forces coerce Christians and other conservatives into not only acquiescing to, but actually celebrating the new anarchic, atheistic worldview of the revolutionaries.

So, what does all this mean to us as citizens of this nation and especially as followers of Jesus Christ?

First and foremost, it means that both **individually and corporately**, we must continue to be in earnest prayer for our state and nation and its leaders, asking God to bless them with wisdom and with a genuine desire to do what is in the best interest of the people. It means each of us **individually** must resolve to be more active in living out our twin callings, as citizens of this nation by virtue of our birth, and as citizens of God’s Kingdom by virtue of our baptism, by nurturing in ourselves those personal virtues which have collectively served as the nation’s foundation in the past. It means **each of us committing to** grounding ourselves more deeply in God’s Word and choosing to educate our children within explicitly Christian homes and explicitly Christian schools ... schools where that Word is central, where it is clearly taught we are created (not evolved) beings made in God’s image, beings who are called to live in conformity with the good order God has infused in all dimensions of His creation. It means **each of us** becoming more actively engaged in our local communities, building bridges of trust and friendship with our neighbors and refusing to speak propaganda-inspired lies about our neighbors, lies designed to cause division.

And, finally, for **pastors especially**, I believe it means recognizing that, since in a very real sense “we don’t live in Kansas anymore,” it may be time to reconsider our past hesitancy to preach and teach about matters in the public sphere because they are “political” in nature. For the fact of the matter is that many of these public matters have ceased to be political and have actually become religious in character. And so, with discretion, I encourage pastors to take up these topics within their “Winkels” and elsewhere. I urge you to discuss how best to help your members understand the nature and gravity of this battle, as well as, how to resist the encroachment of these alien ideas. To that end, allow me to suggest the following as helpful resources for those discussions:

- 1) “*America’s Cultural Revolution*” by Christopher Rufo, 2023
- 2) “*Live Not By Lies*” by Rod Dreher, 2020
- 3) “*Endangered Virtues*” by Michael Phillips, 2023
- 4) “*The Genesis of Gender*” by Abigail Favale, 2022

May the Lord bless you as you seek to be faithful to your Christian callings both here in time and for eternity.

In Christ,

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