This Is Our Mission

By John T. Pless

Missions are in the DNA of Concordia Theological Seminary (CTS) in Fort Wayne. It runs deep; all the way back to the school’s beginnings fueled in large part by a Bavarian pastor, Johann Wilhelm Konrad Lohe (1808-1872), whose work wedded confessional fidelity with energetic missionary outreach. A pastor in the village of Neuendettelsau, Lohe would never sail the oceans. Yet without leaving Germany, his missionary efforts would bear rich fruits in North and South America as well as Australia. Due to his untiring zeal for the Gospel and his unwavering commitment to Lutheran missions, congregations were planted that are today part of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne is also a direct result of his vision.

This commitment to mission is evident in Lohe’s response to the plea of a German-American pastor, Friedrich Wyneken, in 1840. Wyneken told of the plight of Germans living in scattered settlements on the frontier without church or pastor. Troubled by stories of Lutherans being seduced into the sects or abandoning their faith altogether, Lohe responded by collecting funds and books and recruiting two craftsmen, Adam Ernst and Georg Burger, to study with him and then be sent to America as “emergency helpers.” Others would follow, including colonists who would settle in the Saginaw Valley of Michigan and form strong Lutheran communities like Frankenmuth. Disappointed by the lack of commitment to Lutheran doctrine that Lohe’s men found in other Lutheran bodies, they would find in C. F. W. Walther and the Saxons men who
shared their loyalty to the Scriptures and the Confessions. When the Missouri Synod was established in Chicago in 1847, over half of its pastors were men sent by Lohe. But even before the Synod was organized, Lohe had already proven instrumental in the founding of the seminary in Fort Wayne. Our seminary is a beneficiary of Lohe’s legacy, and this inheritance is made manifest today in our life together.

Our seminary curriculum requires two courses in missions. A first-year course, “Confessing Christ in Today’s World,” covers the foundational theology of mission, introduces students to apologetics in the post-modern context and sharpens skills for Christian witness. Another course, generally taken in the fourth-year, “Ministry in a Pluralistic Context,” exposes students to competing world views and other religions with the aim of increasing their ability to identify and engage ideologies and movements that Lutheran pastors are likely to encounter in our world.

But mission moves beyond the classroom at CTS. One venue for missionary formation is Field Education where students are involved with local congregations in evangelism and outreach. All of our first and second year students are involved with a congregation within the greater Fort Wayne region. The congregational settings vary quite a bit, ranging from inner-city congregations marked by ethnic diversity to some rural congregations that are older than the Synod itself. Some students work in mission congregations; others in large center city or suburban parishes. In Field Education, we aim to keep theological education and pastoral formation closely bound together. While students are engaged in a rigorous study of the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, learning doctrine and church history, they are grounded in the life of a congregation gathered around font, pulpit and altar. Here they see week after week that theology serves proclamation. Part and parcel of Field Education is involvement in institutional settings such as homes for the aged, group homes and jails. In these settings, students learn valuable attitudes and skills that will increase their capacities for faithful confession of Christ to those who do not know Him. All students are required to take six modules, one-day learning experiences, taught by a guest who is knowledgeable in the particular field. A third of these modules are devoted to outreach, so here a student might gain deeper insight into campus ministry, prison ministry, mission to a particular ethnic group or urban ministry, for example.

There are also opportunities for students to see and be involved in missions overseas as the seminary has sponsored mission trips and study abroad courses in such places as India, Siberia, Haiti, Kenya, South Africa, Germany and Madagascar. I have been pleased to lead several student trips to Madagascar over the last few years.

The Malagasy Lutheran Church is one of the fastest growing Lutheran church bodies in the world with a membership of nearly four million baptized people. Founded by Norwegian missionaries in the middle of the 19th century, the Malagasy Lutheran Church has remained distinctively Lutheran in a religious culture marked by traditional animistic religious practices. They exhibit a vibrant liturgical life and teach the Catechism with rigor. While contextualization is sometimes seen as a sacrifice of biblical and confessional teaching, our Malagasy brothers and sisters have demonstrated that it is indeed possible to be distinctively Lutheran on this African Lutheran island. They have largely avoided letting geography determine theology. I am pleased to have our seminarians witness this first hand. It is also important for them to see how our fellow Lutherans in Madagascar are living under conditions of poverty and need but with joy in the comfort of Christ Jesus. It is also my hope that students will not only carry these valuable lessons with them into parish ministry, but that they will find ways to form partnerships with our Malagasy friends to strengthen their capacity for faithful mission in a challenging situation.

Wilhelm Loehe once defined mission as “the one, holy Christian church in motion.” This definition of mission guides and energizes the approach of Concordia Theological Seminary both in and beyond the classroom as our campus expands into all the world where our Lord sends us to make disciples by baptizing and teaching.

Wilhelm Loehe once defined mission as “the one, holy Christian church in motion.” This definition of mission guides and energizes the approach of Concordia Theological Seminary both in and beyond the classroom as our campus expands into all the world where our Lord sends us to make disciples by baptizing and teaching.
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has a long and strong mission tradition. The Great Commission to “Go into all the world” is a familiar text and calls us to fields far and wide. Concordia Theological Seminary (CTS) has always been a strong supporter and key player in this holy endeavor. What our seminary recognizes, however, is that the journey into all the world may be as short as one step.

It is only “one step” and the deaconess students are doing mission work at the care center. It is only “one step” and the students are at the hospital bedsides. It is only “one step” and the faculty, staff and students are engaged in “life” activities and standing firm in the defense of marriage. Only “one step” and the mission field engulfs us.

Five years ago I was asked to take that step, and while it may have been more of a stumble, I ended up as vacancy pastor at Shepherd of the City Lutheran Church. I was not the first; Dr. Harold Senkbeil stepped out before me, but in his retirement the mission field called me.

Shepherd of the City is an urban church with 105 members in Fort Wayne, Ind. Approximately 65% of the membership is African American, and the neighborhood is collapsing around us. Poverty is the chief affliction, but it brings along its usual companions. I remember my first Easter Sunday. I arrived early and cleaned the parking lot of bottles, needles and other unwelcome trash. A mission field, but an unfamiliar field to me. My previous parish experience ranged from rural to suburban—not the usual preparation for this type of mission field. Still, the Gospel is the Gospel and people are people—what we lacked were resources. Where do you find resources for mission work in the inner core of the city of Fort Wayne? Well...there is the seminary...

With the help of a deaconess, vicars, deaconess interns, field workers and some help from fellow faculty and staff, Shepherd of the City is hard at the work of the Great Commission. As we begin to realize the goal of being a teaching congregation engaged in the preparation of men and women to serve in the urban mission field, we have also been greatly blessed. Attendance has increased 50%, the debt is retired and the congregation now supports the Indiana District with its mission offerings, as well as other missionaries around the world—but that is only the beginning!

Shepherd of the City has a strong desire to reach out into its neighborhood. Beginning with outreach meals that provided both nutrition and an opportunity to meet our neighbors, we began to see the needs of our community...and then the Lord opened a door. The building across the street went up for sale. It was previously a hardware store, a clothing shop and, most recently, the Elite Ballroom. Today it is called The Shepherd's...
Hand and is being renovated into a community outreach center. The members of Shepherd of the City and CTS students have worked together with a local contractor to prepare this space for service in God’s mission field.

The goal is large: multiple spaces for meetings, health screenings, community functions, a commercial grade kitchen for outreach meals, nutrition training and cooking classes, room for after school tutoring and mentoring—whatever the needs of our neighborhood we will strive to be there. We also envision a neighborhood food co-op in another building across another street and an urban housing project. With all of these goals and plans we give thanks to God for Concordia Theological Seminary and its partnership in our urban mission field. We hope to continue as a teaching congregation and even become an Urban Mission Training Center for our seminary and the church.

There are many mission fields out there and many of them are not that far out there! Just “one step” and we find ourselves in the midst of the harvest wherever we might be. Our goal as a seminary of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is to prepare men and women to be about the work of God’s Kingdom in the midst of the world’s harvest fields.

The Rev. Prof. Jeffrey H. Pulse (Jeffrey.Pulse@ctsfw.edu) serves as associate professor of Exegetical Theology, director of Placement and director of Continuing Education at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

In the World for Good: A National Urban Ministry Conference

OCTOBER 21–23, 2013

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY • FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

Urban areas are rapidly expanding but the Church’s footprint in the cities is declining. As God’s people, we must work to reverse this trend by being both compassionate and wise as we work in the areas of justice, human dignity and capacity building.

Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., responds to this great need by offering In the World for Good: A National Urban Ministry Conference with the Rev. Dr. John Nunes, Emil and Elfriede Jochum Professor and Chair, Valparaiso University, as the keynote speaker.

Additional information and online registration is available at www.ctsfw.edu/Urban-Ministry-Conference or by phoning 260-452-2204.
Concordia Theological Seminary’s mission in North America and around the world

By K. Detlev Schulz

Concordia Theological Seminary’s (CTS) world-wide commitment to mission is truly staggering given its location in a “sleepy” part of the Midwest in the United States. Part of the reason for its mission mindedness and involvement goes back to the founder of CTS, namely, Wilhelm Lohe. As a pastor in Neuendettelsau, a small village located in a remote area called Franconia in southeastern Germany, Lohe showed concern for German Lutheran immigrants’ spiritual welfare in North America and also for the Native Americans in the Saginaw Valley of Michigan and in parts of Iowa. Motivated out of a love for them, Lohe wanted them to hear the Lutheran doctrine, which for him was the truest representation of the Gospel far above what all other denominations offered. In 1846 the seminary was established in Fort Wayne which would form pastors in that same mission-mindedness modeled by Lohe.

CTS continues the tradition to form pastors in missions, of letting students know that part of their service in the world is to bring the Lutheran teaching to people in North America and wherever else they may be sent. Just last year one student was called to shepherd Lutherans in Horsham, Australia. Another has decided to serve a foreign vicarage in the Dominican Republic under The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s (LCMS) Area Director for South America, the Rev. Ted Krey (CTS 2001). The list goes on and on of former students who have served abroad throughout the years.

There are also short term, student study trips. In regular intervals, groups
of 10-15 students have been to countries like South Africa, Kenya and India, meeting with fellow students at the seminaries of the partner churches, listening to lectures, visiting churches and sightseeing in the beautiful countryside. These trips have been eye openers for many and have truly sown the seed for a life-long commitment to mission in one form or another. The same can be said for trips to church planting sites in North America. Fort Wayne’s unique location in proximity to the huge population centers of Chicago, Detroit and Indianapolis avails itself for students to get first-hand experience into how pastors reach out to non-Christians and bring them together to worship the Triune God.

The theological curriculum, too, has subject matter which helps to form students not only to be aware of the missionary dimension of Lutheran theology but also to recognize the opportunities for planting churches and preparing their members for witness and reaching out to people who are non-members. The need for that preparation is crucial since we are facing an expanding secularization of North America and a change in the population through immigration of non-Europeans of other religions. And so the mandatory courses, “Confessing Christ in Today’s World” and “Ministry in a Pluralistic Context” address a timely concern, and they underscore CTS’s mission statement of forming students who will “…reach the lost,” which CTS shares with the overall vision of the LCMS’s Martyría, that is, to witness to an unbelieving world.

We should note also how much all programs of CTS, the M.Div., the M.A., S.T.M, D.Min. and the Ph.D. in Missiology draw students from all over the world, especially from partner churches of the LCMS. In fact, the Ph.D. program enrolls students from non-Lutheran churches. Thus, with all these students coming from countries such as Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, Kenya, South Africa, Russia, Nigeria and Tanzania, the student body is amazingly diverse, and exchanges with one another become eye opening experiences. The result is that international friendships are forged among the students which last for a lifetime. Moreover, these students return to their countries and serve as pastors, teachers and leaders in their churches. In that way the theology taught at CTS is exported and new partnerships are forged between these students, their churches and the faculty at CTS. There are now church leaders like Dr. Joseph Omolo, professor and regional bishop in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kenya; Dr. Andrew Pfeiffer, professor at Australian Lutheran College, Adelaide, Australia; Joseph Lu, professor at China Lutheran Seminary, Taiwan; and Clovis Prunzel, professor at Seminario Concordia, Sao Leopoldo, Brazil. The CTS international footprint is staggering. Invitations are continuously extended to individual faculty members at CTS to teach all over the world. In this way CTS has become the hub for Lutheran theological expansion that in the end facilitates the forging of new and genuine church partnership relations with the LCMS.

The Lord has truly blessed Concordia Theological Seminary. It was He who instructed His disciples to look beyond Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria and the rest of the world. As faculty of CTS, we know that the same Lord instructs us to form students who will look beyond Fort Wayne, to the population in North America and the rest of the world. Missionary education is what it’s all about and we welcome all students to participate in that vision.

The Rev. Dr. K. Detlev Schulz (Detlev.Schulz@ctsfw.edu) serves as chairman and professor of Pastoral Ministry and Missions at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.
What is Christ Academy?
A two week retreat at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Who should attend Christ Academy?
High-school-aged young men of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod who are (or should be) considering becoming pastors. It is open to those who have completed their freshman year through those who have completed their senior year.

What does it cost?
The current cost of $500 is all inclusive (housing, meals, Christ Academy polo shirt, admission to an amusement park and other events, etc.) Limited financial aid may be available at the recommendation of your pastor. For qualifications and the tuition assistance application please visit the Financial Aid tab on the Christ Academy website.

How do I get there?
Please arrange your own transportation to and from Christ Academy. We can offer suggestions for planning air or rail travel, airport shuttles, carpooling, directions and the like.

On a separate sheet of paper, please answer the following questions: (Please mail with application.)
1. What does the Gospel mean to you?
2. How does the Holy Spirit work in your life?
3. Why do you seek to attend Christ Academy?

Please return this form to:
Christ Academy Registration
Concordia Theological Seminary
6600 North Clinton Street
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825-4996
ON CAMPUS VISITATION EVENTS
Concordia Theological Seminary—Fort Wayne, Indiana
Visitation events for future pastors or deaconesses

Prayerfully Consider Campus Visit
October 10–12, 2013
www.ctsfw.edu/PCV

Christ Academy College & Phoebe Academy College
October 17–20, 2013
www.ctsfw.edu/CAC

Christ Academy High School
June 15–28, 2014
www.ctsfw.edu/ChristAcademy

Phoebe Academy High School
August 1–3, 2014
www.ctsfw.edu/PhoebeAcademy

For more information you may also call 1-800-481-2155, email Admission@ctsfw.edu or visit www.ctsfw.edu/Admission.