Bringing Christ to His People

By Rev. Thomas P. Zimmerman

Friends in Christ, you who are interested in the pastoral and diaconal ministry are special folks. You are people whom our Lord has been forming through your varied experiences. Through many experiences, good and bad, happy and sad, our Lord has been preparing you to be His tools of mercy.

The mission of Concordia Theological Seminary is to form servants in Jesus Christ who teach the faithful, reach the lost and care for all. Rev. Yeager writes in this issue about the preaching office. The proclamation of Law and Gospel is a vital part of the pastoral office. Proclaiming Christ, who He is, what He has done for you is what we’re all about. Dr. Scaer writes about the candidates for the ministry, what they are—poor sinners, who by God’s grace do His bidding.

Yes, we are sinners who preach to sinners. But there is more to the Office of the Holy Ministry than preaching. Our mission statement above is central to why we are here. We, faculty, students and staff, are united in a mission to form servants in Jesus. There is a personal side to the Office, the “caring for all.” Caring for all can be difficult, for we are by nature self-centered, narcissistic sinners. Forgiven and renewed we are set free to do the work of Christ here as we bring His Word and Sacraments to the sick, shut-in and dying.

We bring helpless people Christ in His Word and Sacrament as we proclaim Him on Sunday morning. We bring the peaceless, His peace. Christ through us cares for them, the widow, the orphan, the sorrowing and the down and out. No, it’s not all glamorous standing in the pulpit in those beautiful vestments. It is sitting and talking to the lonely, old soul who will never step out into public again, but who needs the Gospel just like I do.

We visit the grumpy, bringing the joy of Christ in His Word and Sacrament. We visit the offended and the offending, seeking to reconcile them through God’s Word. We go to those who haven’t been in God’s house for a long time. The parish pastor does many things, always bringing Christ to his people... people who desire peace, people who need peace, people who will receive the peace that passes understanding as we go out with the gifts of Jesus, seeking the lost and caring for all.

Rev. Thomas Zimmerman serves as Director of Admission at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.
Worthy Ministers?

By Dr. Peter J. Scaer

Who am I to stand up in the pulpit? What qualifies me to serve at the altar of our Lord? Every pastor worth his salt has asked himself these questions. When God called Moses, the would-be-prophet protested, “Who am I that I should go to the Pharaoh and bring the children out of Israel?” (Exodus 3:11). As our Lord approached, Isaiah backed away, saying, “Woe is me, for I am lost, a man of unclean lips” (Isaiah 6:5). Again, when our Lord called Jeremiah, he tried to back out, saying, “I am only a youth” (Jeremiah 1:6). This pattern is repeated in the New Testament as well. Called to follow, Peter cried out, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8).

What makes for a good man? And what qualifies you to be a pastor? To be sure, there is a list of requirements. Certain talents need to be developed. But, perhaps the greatest is self-awareness. That is, we must recognize our unworthiness. If you think that you are a good person, if you are impressed by yourself and think that sin is far behind you, if you have no doubts as to whether you can do the job, then frankly, you probably are not ready for the Holy Ministry. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Perhaps no one has been better equipped for ministry than Paul. He had the talents and the education. He knew the world of the Jews and the ways of the Greeks. Yet, one might also say that no one was less deserving of the ministry than Paul. Christianity had no greater foe than Paul who helped orchestrate the stoning of Stephen and breathed murderous threats upon the Church.

Yet, our Lord knew what He was doing. Those who have no illness need no physician. But Paul, having so fiercely persecuted the church, knew he had no claim to righteousness within himself. He knew the bitterness of haunting guilt, even as he recognized his own ongoing struggle with sin (Romans 7). He knew that pastors carry the Gospel treasure in lowly, fragile jars of clay (2 Corinthians 4:7). He knew, perhaps better than anyone, that pastors have feet of clay. And yet, even, and perhaps because he recognized his own unworthiness, he could write, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the Gospel!” (Romans 10:15).

Rev. Matthew Harrison, upon being elected the president of our church body, said this to the convention, “I wish to inform you, you have kept your perfect record of electing sinners as presidents of the Missouri Synod.” Indeed, President Harrison’s words resonate in the ears of all pastors. Are any of us worthy to enter into the pulpit? No. Yet if sinners didn’t enter the pulpit, there would be no sermons. And without those sermons, others would not come to know that our righteousness lies not in ourselves, but in Christ alone.

Dr. Peter Scaer serves as an Associate Professor of Exegetical Theology and Master of Arts supervisor at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.
Out of all the classes a first-year seminarian on the CTS campus takes, homiletics is a definite favorite. Homiletics is the craft of writing and delivering sermons. We’ve all heard a good sermon: short and to the point, yet exacting and powerful, rich in the language of Scripture yet current and understandable to the modern hearer, moving, Christ-centered, confident. But did you know that good sermons actually do something when the hearers hear them? We call it proclamation: putting to death the Old Adam through the Law, raising up new believers in Christ through the Gospel. Yes, our Lutheran theologians teach us that the sermon actually brings sinners to repentance and faith, making them alive by the Word of forgiveness, and this is what bright-eyed seminarians really want to achieve. Here is where they see their future ministry in vivid detail, imagining the great impact their lively sermons will have on the lives of their congregations.

Truth is, much of the change the newly-ordained and still fresh-faced pastor anticipates doesn’t happen. Good works in the Church don’t seem to abound. Attendance is even, but he expected more than flat-lining; he wanted exponential growth. Interest in other areas of biblical study is not great. No one is talking about the sermon. He begins to regard his work with uneasiness and disillusionment.

There is a reason this new pastor shouldn’t lose heart. And the reason is why he is there in the first place! Article 5 of the Augsburg Confession says, “To obtain such faith God instituted the Office of the Ministry (German: Office of Preaching) that is, provided the Gospel and the Sacraments. Through these as through means He gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where He pleases, in those who hear the Gospel. And the Gospel teaches that we have a gracious God, not by our own merits but by the merit of Christ, when we believe this.”

So, this Ministry of Preaching is not man-made or kept alive by the keen entrepreneurship of a pastor whose success is determined by his own efforts. The Holy Ministry is God-made: Christ sends pastors to convey His holy Word and Sacraments in His Name (see Matthew 28:18-20). Those words which so powerfully kill and make alive in Christ are God’s Words to the sinner, and when the pastor speaks them, he stands in Jesus’ stead: “The one who hears you, hears Me” (Luke 10:16). Good sermons often contain bold, declarative phrases like, “You are forgiven,” because they don’t just talk about God, but give God and speak for God. Good sermons are written by pastors who recognize the power and authority they are given are God’s. As the Father has sent the Son, so has Jesus graciously sent pastors into all the world to preach the Gospel unto salvation. And the Spirit moves where He wills!

Good sermons change lives. If you are considering the seminary, homiletics—learning how to craft and deliver great messages for God’s people, is one of the many joys of attending. May the Lord bless your prayerful consideration.

Rev. Andrew T. Yeager serves as an Admission Counselor at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.
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CTS Admission Counselor Tours

The admission counselors of Concordia Theological Seminary will be traveling throughout the United States to meet with men who are considering the vocation of pastor and women who are considering the vocation of deaconess. Please check to see when there will be a counselor in your area and contact him if you would like to set up a visit.

**Rev. Steven Wagner**

- November: Iowa East
- January: Tennessee
- February: Texas, Minnesota
- March: Iowa West
- April: Missouri, Kansas
- May: Texas

**Rev. Andrew Yeager**

- November: Northern Indiana, Ohio
- December: North Carolina
- January: Pennsylvania
- February: Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, CU-Ann Arbor, Maryland, CU-Chicago/Illinois
- April: Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama

**Rev. Thomas Zimmerman**

- December: Michigan, Nevada, Utah
- January: New Mexico
- February: Arizona, California
- March: Michigan, Nebraska, Wisconsin
- April: California, Idaho
- May: Montana

Please visit our website (www.ctsfw.edu) for more information regarding these upcoming on-campus events:

♦ Good Shepherd Institute: November 7–9, 2010
♦ Symposia: January 18–21, 2011
♦ Christ Academy/Phoebe Academy College: January 20–23, 2011
♦ Prayerfully Consider Visit: March 24–26, 2011