

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, FORT WAYNE
For the Life of the World

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Hope Among the Remnant

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

**Why Your Congregation
Is More Important Than Ever**

Dale A. Meyer

**Take Care of the Souls and
Do the Work of an Evangelist**

Klaus Detlev Schulz

FROM THE PRESIDENT



These days it's so easy to find all kinds of negative articles and studies about the state of the Christian church in America—"U.S. Church Membership Down Sharply in Past Two Decades" (Gallup, April 2019), "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace" (Pew Research Center, Oct. 2019), and on and on they go. This hits home quickly when you see pews that used to be filled with children now sparsely populated, less in the offering plate, church volunteers feeling burned out, and family members forsaking the gifts we receive in Word and Sacrament. It is easy to feel discouraged.

I recently completed the second half of my sabbatical, which I spent continuing work on a comprehensive history of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). In my research, I have studied a number of "disruptions" that have confronted our church body over time—theological, financial, structural, and cultural. History is always interesting, but if it has no application to the present, it's merely an academic exercise. My study of the LCMS over the course of its nearly 175 years has led me to the conviction that we are in the midst of another significant disruption. And this present disruption is changing and will continue to change our life together as a Synod. Indeed, I think this is as profound a disruption as we experienced when our Synod transitioned from being a German Synod to an English one; that is, when we decided to become an American denomination.

We are in difficult times and there are many challenges ahead. No doubt about that.

Yet, we have even more reason to rejoice—because Jesus Christ is Lord! Just as we not only survived but thrived in the transition from German to English, the present offers an opportunity we have not had in Western culture in nearly 2000 years: the opportunity to share the Gospel with a generation that has literally never heard it before. We have something to offer that is different from anything else people will experience in this impersonal, harsh world. With

that in mind, we offer the following articles as a source of encouragement as we engage in the mission Christ has given to us.

My friends claim that I tend to be pessimistic; I prefer to call it "historical realism." All joking aside, the truth is that I am filled with hope and absolutely optimistic about the state of the Church and the opportunities we have now and in this place. Why? Because Jesus Christ is faithful. We are His Church. His Word endures forever. As we at CTSFW and you in your own congregations partner together to form servants in Jesus Christ who teach the faithful, reach the lost, and care for all, let us never lose sight of this.

*But this I call to mind,
and therefore I have hope:
The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.
Lamentations 3:21-23*

In Christ's service,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "L R Rast Jr." in a cursive style.

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.
President
Concordia Theological Seminary
Fort Wayne, Indiana

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For the Life of the World

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Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture verses are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

Hope Among the Remnant

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

“Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to all the remnant of the people, and say, ‘Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes? Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the Lord. Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the Lord. Work, for I am with you, declares the Lord of hosts, according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not.’” Haggai 2:2-5

We are the remnant of Israel. And we are that by the grace of God; we are preserved by the grace of God. We have been scattered in wrath, but gathered in grace. We are smaller than we were, but God continues faithfully to work in and through us, for our Lord works all things through the weak, the small, the low, the despised, and the foolish.

God called Haggai to prophesy to the remnant of Israel after the Babylonian captivity (about 520 B.C.). The returned exiles had by this time rebuilt the foundation of the temple of the Lord, but they had become discouraged and their own doubts overwhelmed them. Haggai’s ministry served as the channel through which God roused this foundering remnant to trust in His care and to carry out their vocations. They completed the temple four years later in 516 B.C.

Wishing for a return to an imagined past can lead to apathy. Things were so much better *back then*. What would you rather dwell on, challenges or successes? For me, it is always easier to recall a former glory. *Back then* church buildings were sacred, pastors honored, and all church workers trusted and respected. *Back then* the church served as the center of social life. *Back then* the pews were full.

But *now* what do we see? At least here in the United States, ridicule for

the Church, plunging membership statistics, and increasing difficulties for the institutional church simply to maintain itself, much less to grow, seem to be the order of the day. The alarming statistics are before us: pastors retiring at irreplaceable levels, low numbers of pastoral candidates, declining membership, and pews without children.

And so we long for *back then*. Things have changed so much that it can tempt us to lose hope.



Certainly the Bible speaks, particularly during the early days of the Christian church in the Book of Acts, of multiplying and adding to their numbers. Yet the word “grow” is about God working in us. “We are to grow up in every way into him who is the head,” Paul wrote to the Ephesians in 4:15. “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,” Peter said in 2 Peter 3:18. When Paul heard that the Corinthians were dividing themselves into camps according to their favorite teacher, he admonished them to look past the laborers to the One who had not only sent them but was doing the real work of growth: “What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth” (1 Cor. 3:5-7).

We know this, of course. We make plans, but we know those plans only stand according to God’s will. He guides and directs all things, often for a purpose we neither understand nor see. In fact, the first time the word “remnant” is used in the Bible is in Genesis 45:7, when Joseph begs his brothers not to be distressed or angry with themselves for selling him into slavery, “God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors.”

We know these things. But to believe in challenging times is, well, challenging!

The truth is, we are the remnant of Israel. And we are that by the grace of God; we are preserved by the grace of God. We have been scattered in wrath, but gathered in grace. We are smaller than we were, but God continues faithfully to work in and through us, for our Lord works all things through the weak, the small, the low, the despised, and

The present age presents us with an opportunity to serve our Western culture in a way not granted to our forefathers: to sow seeds in a generation that has tried to ignore the Law written on their hearts, and that has never heard the Gospel that would grant them relief from terror. This was the Church’s vocation *back then*, is the Church’s vocation *now*, and it *will be* the Church’s vocation until Jesus returns.

Above: President Lawrence R. Rast Jr. with the participants of the 2019 Christ Academy high school students. “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Matt. 9:37b-38).



the foolish. These words, taken from 1 Corinthians 1:27-28, are simply a summary of centuries of history in which God proved it was so, generation after generation. And so we always hold “fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God” (Col. 2:19).

Does this lead to lethargy? It mustn't! Rather, the present age presents us with an opportunity to serve our Western culture in a way not granted to our forefathers: to sow seeds in a generation that has tried to ignore the Law written on their hearts, and that has never heard the Gospel that would grant them relief from terror. This was the Church's vocation *back then*, is the Church's vocation *now*, and it *will be* the Church's vocation until Jesus returns.

Dear friend in Christ, you and I are so loved that our evil has been washed in the blood of the Lamb, every sin bought and paid for by Jesus's once and for all sacrifice. We know to whom we belong. A promise Christ met when He was lifted up on a cross: “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” (John 12:32).

The church is always a remnant. It was *back then*, it is still *now*, and it *will be* until Christ's return in glory. As we live our lives as Christ's remnant people, we do so confident in the hope that is ours because of Jesus. “We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Rom. 5:3-5). 🏠



Above: *The Rev. Paul Gregory Alms welcomes a new member in Christ through the waters of Baptism at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Catawba, North Carolina.*

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Why Your Congregation Is More Important Than Ever

Dale A. Meyer



Photo courtesy of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod/Erik M. Lunsford.

The congregation where you worship has always been important. It's the place where the faithful gather around God's Word and Sacraments. As eternally important as that is, changes in American life make our weekly gatherings at church more important than ever. If you're concerned about the challenges facing your congregation in these changed times, remember our hope is Jesus, the Lord of the Church. We need to trust He's leading us.



In our impersonal 21st century, your congregation has a more important role than ever. Your church is a place where people can come together, receive the nurture of Word and Sacrament, and learn through faithful and relevant Law/Gospel preaching, teaching, and conversation how to go out into the impersonal world as people loved by God and by one another.

Previous page: *The Rev. Tyrel Bramwell preaching at St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ferndale, California.*

Above: *Immanuel Lutheran Church, Murphysboro, Illinois, enjoying a fellowship dinner together.*

Opposite page: *The Rev. Matthew Wietfeldt distributes the Sacrament during chapel at Concordia Theological Seminary.*

I've been privileged to travel and preach throughout The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod for over three decades. For some years now I've seen and heard older church members grieving what's been lost in our American culture and specifically in the life of their congregations. Those of us who are older grew up in "Christian" America. Public morality was Judeo-Christian, the Ten Commandments often seen in public places. Most of our neighbors were church members who attended with some regularity. No sports on Sunday mornings! People back then had some knowledge of the Bible, its main stories and especially Jesus. To be sure, not everyone sincerely believed in Jesus and the Bible, but public life was not at odds with the message and practices of the Church. When I graduated from Lutheran grade school and went into a public high school, the two environments were different but still complementary. That "Christian" America is gone and not about to return.

One reason is Americans have changed how they look at government. The Declaration of Independence says "All men...are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights." The founders believed the Creator, not government, gives individuals their rights. And so they crafted the

Constitution knowing that individuals will pursue their rights, their self-interest, and often do so by joining with like-minded people. The founders also recognized that government and whatever partisan group happens to be in the majority will likewise pursue their own interests. A realistic view of human nature! In 1788, James Madison wrote in Federalist Paper No. 51,

If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself.

In the 19th century, another way of looking at government began to arise. Beginning with European philosophers and then championed by American intellectuals and politicians, this new way, "Progressivism," advocated a less limited and more dominating role for government. In the severe times of the Great Depression, President Franklin Roosevelt led a great expansion of governmental power in the lives of individuals. That increased immensely during President Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society." Big government indeed does some good things, maintaining the military and Social Security being two examples, but today Americans are conditioned to look to government for our rights (think about our litigious society) and take care of our needs (think about entitlements).

As limited government has given way to ever bigger government, the individual self-interest the realistic founders recognized has become almost unrestrained. "You have your opinion; I have mine. Who are you to tell me that I'm wrong?" It leaves you, me, and others in our communities trying to cope in an increasingly uncaring society. Hyper-individualists don't care about others, and government is so big and powerful that it's impersonal. What's to become

of me? The challenges of living in this impersonal society are far greater than in 20th century, “Christian” America.

Across the street from our home in Collinsville, Illinois, sits the American Legion. It is a “mediating institution,” a place where individuals can gather to enjoy one another’s company and share perspectives on life in our larger society. Civic clubs and municipal governments are also mediating institutions, and so is your family and your congregation. Over the decades, “go it alone” hyper-individualism and unrealistic dependence upon government to take care of us has weakened mediating institutions. You can see it in the decline in church membership and weekly attendance.

Yet who’s Lord of the Church? Let us not grieve like people who have no hope! In our impersonal 21st century, your congregation has a more important role than ever. Your church is a place where people can come together, receive the nurture of Word and Sacrament, and learn through faithful and relevant Law/Gospel preaching, teaching, and conversation how to go out into the impersonal world as people loved by God and by one another. This is an invigorating mission opportunity for our times.

When one of our professors said our new residential curriculum was theology for the 21st century, he got pushback. “What was wrong with the theology of the 20th century?” Nothing, save that in the last century people generally believed in God; today, more and more people don’t and many who claim they do are in fact virtual atheists. God’s Word and Luther’s teaching shall to all time endure, but how do we apply those teachings evangelically to today’s Pandora box of challenges? Atheism and agnosticism rising, gender and sexual issues increasing, almost unrestrained immorality, uncivil public discourse, social media, and so many other contemporary challenges that were not known or flaunted in “Christian” America now swirl around us all. How’s a person to cope?

No doubt about it, these are challenging times, but with confidence in the Spirit of Christ at work here-and-now through the Means of Grace, these are

invigorating times for your congregation to be God’s mediating institution, showing people how to navigate impersonal society with the love of the Body of Christ. “Who is the man who fears the Lord? Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose. His soul shall abide in well-being” (Psalm 25:12-13). And when we go out every Monday into our workaday world, take our hits, get our griefs, we have more motivation to gather again with like-minded believers in the Body of Christ, to have our faith in God and our life in Church validated. “When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul” (Psalm 94:19). We are then fueled with new hope to go back into our neighborhoods and communities as witnesses. What a mission!

The ultimate soul-forming institutions in a free society are frequently religious institutions. Traditional religion offers a direct challenge to the ethic of the age of fracture. Religious commitments command us to a mixture of responsibility, sympathy, lawfulness, and righteousness that align our wants with our duties. They help form us to be free.

(Yuval Levin, *The Fractured Republic*, 204)

“Christian” America is gone, and that’s not all bad. In today’s challenging times for the Church, we learn anew or for the first time that faith means we’re staking our lives on Jesus Christ. He’s your personal hope and He’s the hope of your congregation for these challenging times. God’s people have always gathered around the Word and Sacraments of Christ—as important today as ever—but in post-churched America there are new reasons that energize your congregation’s gathering and mission. It’s a great time to be the Church!! 🏰

The Rev. Dr. Dale A. Meyer (MeyerD@csl.edu) serves as Professor of Practical Theology and President of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.



No doubt about it, these are challenging times, but with confidence in the Spirit of Christ at work here-and-now through the Means of Grace, these are invigorating times for your congregation to be God’s mediating institution, showing people how to navigate impersonal society with the love of the Body of Christ. “Who is the man who fears the Lord? Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose. His soul shall abide in well-being” (Psalm 25:12-13).

Take Care of and Do the Work of an

“The Church will remain forever.” We hear this statement, and similar ones, quite often. It comes from the Augsburg Confession and it wants to give assurance to Christians that the Church, in spite of all the setbacks and challenges, will always remain. What optimism! Can the Church really not die?

The Lord does not want His Church to be idle. Before He returns, He obliges the Church with two tasks that need to be done by the pastor: take care of My souls and do the work of an evangelist. One leads to the other; they are inseparable and equally needed. For if the Church remains then the call to serve also remains. God needs agents who preach, teach, and administer His Word. That task promises the Church’s future, because she receives the food that keeps her alive.

What if the 16th Century confessors had been able to take a peek into the 21st Century to see what churches in the West are currently going through? Would they not have been more cautious? The list of worries is endless: dwindling membership, the low birth rate and old age, reduced tithing to the central office, a drop in student enrollment at both seminaries, shrinking congregations that can’t afford a full-time pastor, and, last but not least, an outside world that seems to have turned its back on the Church and her message. Putting all these factors together, the future looks bleak for a graduating seminarian. His ministry will entail struggles, burials may well outnumber baptisms, and his congregations will likely either plateau or decrease in membership.

And yet, “the Church will remain forever.” We certainly are in need of that comfort. Indeed, the Lord does not, nor will He, abruptly stop His own work on His Church, nor decide to turn His back on His children. “For I will be with you always” (Matt. 28:20). Thus, where the Word is preached, taught, and administered, there faith will be awakened and strengthened. For this

reason, the Lord does not want His Church to be idle. Before He returns, He obliges the Church with two tasks that need to be done by the pastor: take care of My souls and do the work of an evangelist. One leads to the other; they are inseparable and equally needed. For if the Church remains then the call to serve also remains. God needs agents who preach, teach, and administer His Word. That task promises the Church’s future, because she receives the food that keeps her alive.

But we are not here saving ourselves; it remains the Church’s task to save others. The Church is not the end itself. She is placed in a world and community and there becomes God’s instrument into which outsiders are invited and welcomed. And the pastor is accountable to the Lord Himself for upholding that divine prerogative of reaching out to others so that through teaching and preaching about it and demonstrating it in practice, the members will be motivated to participate in their own respective ways. Being the instrument in the mission of God, a church does not adopt mission when it is opportune or decide against it at her own will and

Opposite page: The Rev. Dr. Douglas Spittel, senior pastor of First Trinity Evangelical–Lutheran Church, Pittsburgh, prays with recipients of First Trinity Homeless Ministry, part of Pittsburgh Area Lutheran Ministries.

f the Souls Evangelist

**Preparing the
Seminarian for
Ministry in the
Church and to
the World**

Klaus Detlev Schulz



Photo courtesy of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod/Erik M. Lunsford.



Feed my sheep and do the work of an evangelist is what the Lord calls His ministers to do. Differently put, preach, teach, and care, but also defend, translate, and commend the Gospel. The Church will remain forever, but so also will these tasks.

time; she is already in God’s mission even if she is reluctant to accept that fact.

Thus, both tasks of feeding and doing the work of an evangelist are priorities for every graduating seminarian. He is committed to feed the Lord’s children with excellence and to turn to a world out there and extend to it an invitation to come and see something that is special. An African proverb says it well: “Where there is sugar, the ants will come.”

But what exactly does that mean to raise one’s focus to the world outside, beyond the walls of the Church? How can a seminarian be prepared in class to address it? The key issue is to learn to ask questions, the right ones; they are those that occupy all people’s minds, albeit answered in different ways.

The apologist Ravi Zacharias mentions four areas on which all humans seem to converge, Christians and non-Christians alike. First, they think about their origin. Where do humans come from? There are only two options: either from God, the creator, or from mere matter. Second, meaning. What is the true meaning and purpose of my life? Do I exist to praise and serve the Lord of life, or is it to seek pleasure and enjoyment for my own self? Third, morality. Around which moral principles do I shape my life and from whom have I received them? From God, or are they products of society? Fourth and finally: hope. What do I look forward to when my life ends? To be in the company of the creator, or will it end in void and darkness?

The ability to ask the right questions in a world searching for answers is a learned and practiced skill, and they must be relevant to an audience that lives in the 21st Century. We do not speak to people as if they are made out of stone. To that end, we heed the advice of a notable theologian who once said: “Take your Bible and take your newspaper, and read both. But interpret newspapers from your Bible.” (Karl Barth) There is a different way of putting it. Every student ought to be bilingual, not in the sense of being conversant in both English and Spanish or German (though that too would be good), but bilingual in the sense that he can speak the never-changing biblical truth to an ever-changing world by translating it to the

minds and experiences of the audience.

But of what is the world out there comprised? Is there a way of boiling down society’s multi-configuration to something that is less intimidating and overwhelming? Rev. Timothy Keller, a leading theologian among the evangelicals and a successful church planter of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, not only calls denominations to focus on urban ministry but to be aware of encountering there, in this ever-changing society, essentially two groups: those who belong to a religious group of one kind or another, and those who are the skeptics. In terms of the first group, we should be aware that there are all types of people in the cities (and elsewhere) such as the Hindu, Muslim, or Orthodox Jew. And then there are the skeptics, those with the “buffered self,” who are less inclined to be approached with advice from a religious leader because they have largely rejected every religion and replaced it with their own. For this dubious postmodern, who has created the world on his/her own terms, the Christian solution, too, is not an option.

Given this diversity in society, Keller’s advice is fitting: “You can’t have a little outline that you use on everybody.” However, it seems that the best entry point into an audience is the First Commandment and to inquire about people’s god. Luther once said: “That to which your heart clings, is your God.” We can and should inquire from someone, regardless of race, color, or standing: “Is God in the center of your life or is it something else that has taken His place? And what does that God or something else look like?”

Feed my sheep and do the work of an evangelist is what the Lord calls His ministers to do. Differently put, preach, teach, and care, but also defend, translate, and commend the Gospel. The Church will remain forever, but so also will these tasks. 🏠

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What Does This MEAN?

The Church Is Always Growing!

Peter K. Lange

During my first years in ministry, in the early '90s, few if any realized the sea change that was underway in American Christianity. At least, no one was talking about it. Instead, the steady numerical growth of congregations and denominations was the expectation. And if it wasn't happening, the suggestion (spoken or not) was that something was wrong with the ministry, or methods, or leadership of that congregation or institution.

So the thinking went. It put great pressure on pastors and church leaders who simply didn't have the historical perspective that we have 30 years later.

Today, most everyone is aware that Christianity is experiencing a significant numerical decline in the U.S. This is true across congregations and denominations, and it's also true of the general population in the United States who profess the Christian faith. Even *within* Christian congregations and denominations, the commitment of church members—as measured, for example, by frequency in worship attendance—is declining.

One key result is that, today, the *nature* of the pressure has changed. Whereas decline is no longer automatically correlated with the quality of the ministry, the new pressure and concern is for institutional viability and even survival.

And yet, along with these new and great challenges come new and great opportunities, including the opportunity for renewed trust in all that God's Word promises us. As St. Paul writes in Romans, "we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame" (Rom. 5:3-5). The apostle James exhorts us, saying, "Count it all joy, my brothers,

when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (James 1:2-4).

This growth in faith and trust, which is a blessed fruit of trials and testing, is an important way in which the Church grows. But the Church is growing numerically too. I'm not talking about any particular congregation or denomination, or even visible manifestations of the Church in various global regions. I'm talking about the *true* Church—the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church—i.e., the total number of believers in Christ throughout all places and times, that ever-increasing number who rejoice and live in the presence of the Lord forever in heaven.

Of this Church Jesus gave His absolute promise: "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). About this Church Jesus told the parable of the mustard seed which "is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree," as well as the similar parable of the leaven in the following verse, "hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened" (Matt. 13:32-33). And the reason for this sure and certain growth of the Church is that

God has promised that His Word "shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it" (Is. 55:11). Jesus has promised us that, in spite of whatever forces might seem to be overwhelming to us, "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt. 28:18). These divine words and promises are cause for great confidence, endless optimism, and supreme joy in the midst of today's challenges.

Sure, there will be seasons of growth and decline for particular congregations, denominations, and even entire global regions of Christianity. But God's promises remain. We shouldn't think lightly of them. The Church must and will grow because God has said it will. It may not be according to our human standards, definitions, or measurements. It may not even be visible to our human eyes. But the Church will grow, nevertheless, in the only way that matters—God's way.

As we pray and do the work God has given us to do while it is day, before the night comes when no one can work, let's do so with supreme confidence and joy that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus. He is Lord of the Church, as well as of heaven and earth. We are simply His instruments—His hands, feet, and mouths in this world. And this Lord of all has given us His sure and certain promise: "I will build my church!" 🏰

*The Rev. Peter K. Lange
(Peter.Lange@lcms.org)
serves as First Vice President
for The Lutheran Church—
Missouri Synod.*



Called to SERVE

Getting to Know Seminarian E



Please tell us about yourself.

I was born in Fort Wayne and grew up on my family's farm three miles east of Ossian, Indiana. I attended my home congregation's parochial school and the local public high school before going to college. My dad is a machinist and farmer, my mom is a receptionist, and I have a twin and two younger siblings. Over the Christmas holiday, I proposed to my girlfriend Lauren, and we will get married in July.

What is your home congregation?

My home congregation is Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Ossian, Indiana.

How long have you been a member of the LCMS?

I am a lifelong member of the LCMS.

Where have you attended school and what degrees do you hold?

I studied Classics, German, and the Humanities at Valparaiso University, where I was a Christ College scholar. I graduated in May 2018 with a Bachelor of Arts degree.

Have you had any significant work experience before coming to the Seminary?

During high school, I worked as a janitor at my church's parochial school. It was the best job I've ever had because it taught me hard work, patience, and attention to detail. It also gave me an opportunity to give back to the church and school community that had given me so much during my formative years. I was also active in campus ministries and Greek life at Valpo, which gave me invaluable experience working with people.

Who/what influenced you to study to become a pastor?

My home pastor Bill Brege and his wife Ruth encouraged me early on to consider pastoral ministry. At Pastor Brege's recommendation, I did a year-long internship during my senior year of high school with Pastors Dan Brege and Peter Brock, who both inspired in me a passion for pastoral care and theological study. I also had several friends at Valpo

who continue to be valued conversation partners and mentors, particularly the Rev. Jim Wetzstein and Dr. David Weber.

What made you decide to attend Christ Academy?

I came to Christ Academy on a whim the summer after I graduated high school. My experiences with Pastors Brege and Brock certainly made me want to learn more about becoming a pastor, and Christ Academy showed me what that formation process looks like.

How was your Christ Academy experience influential in your decision to come to the Seminary and to CTSFW in particular?

Christ Academy exposed me to the depths of theology and the beauty of the Christian life. It also showed me the rich worship life at CTSFW and gave me an opportunity to engage with the Seminary community, even before I started college. These factors weighed heavily in my decision to attend CTSFW.

How Second-Year Students at St. John's in Copenhagen



What have been your greatest challenges and rewards so far in your seminary experience?

One of my biggest challenges has been grappling with people who take themselves and their studies a little *too* seriously (myself included), which is why getting to see theology and ministry in action through my fieldwork experiences has been my most rewarding experience.

What do you think laypeople would find most surprising about the seminary experience?

What might be most surprising about life at the Seminary is how much time the community spends together outside of worship and the classroom. Students, faculty, and family members have many opportunities to interact such as meals, coffee hour, intramurals, and *Gemütlichkeit* (Friday afternoon fellowship), to name a few. This is probably where the most important learning happens!

How would you encourage someone who is considering studying to become a pastor?

Shadow your pastor and see all the “non-Sunday” stuff he does—go on hospital calls, sit in on marriage counseling, grieve with a mourning family, spend time with the youth group, and interact with little kids. It’s in these face-to-face interactions where the real pastoral care happens, and you will want to figure out if it’s for you before heading to seminary.

What are your personal goals/vision for your future service as a pastor?

I will be happy to serve Christ and His Church wherever I am called, particularly in a congregational setting. 🏡

To learn more about church worker formation at CTSFW, go to www.ctsfw.edu/Future-Students. Connect with our Admission staff at Admission@ctsfw.edu or (800) 481-2155.

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Upcoming Events at CTSFW

MARCH & APRIL



Seminary Guild with Dr. Paul Grime **Tuesday, March 10, 1:00 p.m. in Luther Hall**

Information: www.ctsfw.edu/SemGuild or (260) 485-0209

Lenten Evening Prayer with the Kantorei **Sunday, March 22, 4:00 p.m. in Kramer Chapel**

Prayerfully Consider Visit

April 2-4

Information and registration: www.ctsfw.edu/PCV

Email: Admission@ctsfw.edu

Phone: (800) 481-2155

Seminary Guild Spring Luncheon

Tuesday, April 14, 12:30 p.m. in Luther Hall

Information: www.ctsfw.edu/SemGuild or (260) 485-0209

Easter Hymn Festival with the Schola Cantorum

Sunday, April 19, 4:00 p.m. in Kramer Chapel

Vicarage and Deaconess Internship Assignment Service

Tuesday, April 28, 7:00 p.m. in Kramer Chapel

Candidate Call Service

Wednesday, April 29, 7:00 p.m. in Kramer Chapel

MAY & JUNE



CTSFW Golf Outing

Wednesday, May 20

Register: www.ctsfw.edu/Alumni or (260) 452-2260

Alumni Reunion for Years Ending in '0 and '5 **May 21-22**

Register: www.ctsfw.edu/alumni or (260) 452-2204

See page 26 for more Alumni Reunion information

Baccalaureate

Friday, May 22, 10:00 a.m. in Kramer Chapel

Commencement Organ Recital

Friday, May 22, 2:00 p.m. in Kramer Chapel

Graduation Exercises

Friday, May 22, 4:00 p.m. in Kramer Chapel

Christ Academy: Timothy School

Christ Academy: Phoebe School

June 14-27

Apply: www.ctsfw.edu/TimothySchool (high school men) or

www.ctsfw.edu/PhoebeSchool (high school women)

Organist Workshop: Primer Level for Organists & Service Playing for Pianists

June 15-19

Information and registration: www.ctsfw.edu/MusicWorkshops

Contact: Music@ctsfw.edu or (260) 452-2224

Organist Workshop: Intermediate & Advanced Level Organists

June 22-26

Information and registration: www.ctsfw.edu/MusicWorkshops

Contact: Music@ctsfw.edu or (260) 452-2224

Mark your calendars and register today!

For more information, please visit our website at www.ctsfw.edu/Events or call (260) 452-2100.

SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER



Opening Service of 175th Academic Year
Tuesday, September 8, 10:00 a.m. in Kramer Chapel

Seminary Guild

Tuesday, September 15, 1:00 p.m. in Luther Hall
Information: www.ctsfw.edu/SemGuild or (260) 485-0209

Lutheranism & The Classics VI: Beauty

October 1-2
Information and registration: www.ctsfw.edu/Classics
Contact: LeeAnna.Rondot@ctsfw.edu or (260) 452-2204

Christ Academy: Confirmation Retreat

October 2-4
Information: www.ctsfw.edu/Confirmation
Register: ChristAcademy@ctsfw.edu or (800) 481-2155

Seminary Donation Day

Tuesday, October 13, 9:00 a.m. in the Student Commons
Information: www.ctsfw.edu/SemGuild or (260) 485-0209

Prayerfully Consider Visit

October 15-17
Information and registration: www.ctsfw.edu/PCV
Contact: Admission@ctsfw.edu or (800) 481-2155

Christ Academy: College

October 30–November 1
Register: www.ctsfw.edu/College
Contact: ChristAcademy@ctsfw.edu or (800) 481-2155



Make Known His Deeds!

175th Anniversary Events Schedule

September 2020

Tuesday, September 8, 2020 Opening Service

October 2020

Tuesday, October 13, 2020 Seminary Guild Donation Day
Sunday, October 18, 2020 Special 175th Music
and/or Lecture Series

November 2020

November 4-6, 2020 Luther Hostel
November 8-10, 2020 Good Shepherd Institute

January 2021

Sunday, January 17, 2021 Special 175th Music
and/or Lecture Series
January 19-22, 2021 Symposia

April 2021

Sunday, April 25, 2021 Special 175th Music
and/or Lecture Series
April 26-27, 2021 Placement and Call Services

May 2021

Friday, May 21, 2021 Commencement

September 2021

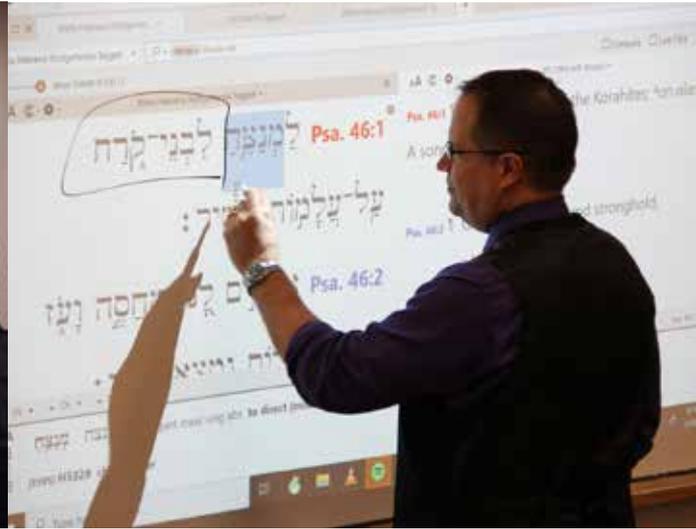
Tuesday, September 7, 2021 Opening Service

October 2021

Sunday, October 24, 2021 Culminating Anniversary Event

Faculty FOCUS

The Rev. Dr.



Please tell us about yourself.

I joined the Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW), faculty in 2015. I am passionate about exploring and teaching the prophets, wisdom literature, Old Testament eschatology, and Hebrew poetry. I'm originally from West Lafayette, Indiana, where I grew up attending St. James Lutheran Church.

I earned my BA from Concordia University Nebraska, and my Master of Divinity degree and Master of Sacred Theology (STM) degree from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri. I received my PhD at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, in the fall of 2018, examining the theme of the delay of salvation in the book of Isaiah.

My wife, Jeanine, and I have two children, Isaiah and Amaya.

How did you serve before coming to CTSFW?

I have served in multiple parish settings including as assistant pastor at Zion Lutheran Church, Schenectady, New York, as well as interim pastor in several congregations in the Chicago area. I also taught multiple courses in theology

and Hebrew as an adjunct instructor at Concordia University Chicago.

What led you to pursue an advanced degree? Drew you to the Old Testament in particular?

Growing up, the Old Testament was always a bit of an obscure, closed book. We did not even read the Old Testament reading during worship services when I was young. I became curious and fell in love with the Old Testament and the Hebrew language while studying at Concordia University, Nebraska. That's when I began to discover the beauty and theological richness of the poetry in the Old Testament. While taking an STM course on Isaiah 1-39, I became excited about Isaiah's vision of Christ's first and second comings. Then, after serving in the parish for several years, I became convinced that I should continue my studies so that I could help others understand why the Old Testament is still relevant in our world today. I decided to write my dissertation on Isaiah while earning a doctorate at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

How have you seen students grow in their time on campus?

At times, I feel like a proud parent watching my students grow up to become pastors or deaconesses. The growth happens at so many different levels, not only academic, but also interpersonal and intrapersonal. I enjoy watching them integrate these three aspects of pastoral and diaconal work. One of my great joys is talking with fourth-year seminary students who have had supervised ministry experience on vicarage and learning how they integrate theology with their care of people.

What has been most challenging to you as a professor?

For me, the biggest challenge as a professor is balancing the time I spend teaching and mentoring students with the time I spend writing journal articles, commentaries, podcasts, and continuing education courses to contribute to the broader Church.

Ryan Tietz



What has been the most rewarding to you as a professor?

I absolutely love watching students as they discover the Old Testament's vision of hope in terms of Christ's first and second comings. One emphasis of our Seminary that I treasure is being able to spend time talking with students in a variety of settings beyond the classroom such as coffee hour, the library, and lunch off campus. These informal conversations are where much more mentoring happens than in the structured classroom environment.

Are you working on any special writing or research projects? What has captured your interest lately?

I am currently writing the Obadiah commentary for the Concordia Commentary Series. After spending so much of my life in the 66 chapters of Isaiah, I am enjoying wrestling with the challenges of an obscure book that is a mere 245 words long. I am excited to be able to share what this book means as Christian Scripture, even though at first glance it is addressing the end of Edom, which happened a long time ago.

What is your best advice to your students who will be heading out to serve as pastors and deaconesses?

The parish is different than the classroom. When you go out in the field, you are dealing with real people whose lives are oftentimes extremely messy. The messiness of ministry will impact you as a person. You should always be aware of how you, theology, and your people interact as you faithfully proclaim Christ's message of hope in the midst of situations that are not nearly as sanitized as they are in the classroom. Practice good self-care by also pursuing other interests that re-energize you for your ministry.

As the Church—and the LCMS in particular—faces new challenges including a hostile culture, what lessons can we take from the Old Testament to provide comfort and direction? Any favorite story of God's faithfulness in the midst of trials?

I would not necessarily think of it in terms of lessons. The Old Testament is not a collection of stories with morals to

be derived. Rather, the Old Testament points to Christ's first and second comings and gives us a rich, powerful picture of hope. My favorite passage is Isaiah 65:17-25. These verses are the culmination of Isaiah's message and a response to the people's lament in Isaiah 63-64. God's great response in Isaiah 65:17-25 is to proclaim His victory. These verses use so many rich images that we as readers cannot help but be awestruck. These include the imminent new creation, the defeat of death, and the bringing about of perfect peace. This passage shows us that evil does not have the final victory even while we cry out in the pain of our daily lives for Christ to come again. 🏔️

To learn more about the faculty at CTSFW, go to www.ctsfw.edu/faculty.



ADMISSION



Kyryl Corlov | Dreamstime.com

Preparing Servants for the Harvest

John M. Dreyer

Have you ever considered a vocation as a pastor or deaconess? Perhaps it's been on your mind for some time—months or years even. Maybe you've only begun contemplating a future in church work. Or it may only be a seed right now, planted by an encouraging word or stray thought, something that you might consider more seriously down the road.

Regardless of where you're at in the process, a good first step is to contact the Admission Office at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW). The admission counselors at the Fort Wayne Seminary are ordained ministers (plus one deaconess), bringing years of parish and other field experience into the admission process. They've been where you're at: wondering if church work is for them, preparing to study for service in the Church, transitioning to seminary and then studying for the years asked of them, and finally having served in the field as laborers called by God to His harvest. Even if you are not sure in what capacity you would like to serve the Church, the counselor can assist you in assessing your aspirations and your desire to serve.

For those who are beginning to move beyond contemplation to preparation, what should you keep in mind as you anticipate coming to the Seminary? Consider yourself already a part of the community. After you have contacted CTSFW and talked with your admission counselor through the discernment process, it is good to recognize that you are a part of the Seminary as one who is anticipating joining us. One of the best ways to truly begin to feel like a part of the community is to come and visit. Worship with us in Kramer Chapel, attend classes alongside current students,

and meet your brothers and sisters in Christ who will be studying with you or teaching you. For many, this will mark the beginning of your journey in preparation for the Seminary.

However, while visiting can be a very impactful part of your preparation, the groundwork for your life at the Seminary begins with your devotional life and with the study of God's Word. Devotional life does not begin with your own personal studies but flows from the place where God gives of His gifts through Word and Sacrament. It begins with your participation at the Divine Service and with the life of your church. Consult your pastor on unique opportunities to involve yourself with the life of your local congregation.

Reading and studying the Holy Scriptures and the Small Catechism is an important part of your formation. Other books include *The Book of Concord*; *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel* by C.F.W. Walther; *The Hammer of God* (Bo Giertz); *The Lutheran Difference* (Edward A. Engelbrecht); *Luther the Reformer* (James Kittelson); *The Spirituality of the Cross* (Gene Veith); *Here We Stand* (Hermann Sasse); and *The Sermon on the Mount* (David Scaer). These books can be found through Concordia Publishing House (cph.org) or Amazon. Your seminary

counselor will also be able to provide a reading list of other books for your preparation for the Seminary.

And we do not automatically disqualify those who have dealt with—or may even be currently dealing with—difficult and troubling issues. “Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little” (Luke 7:47). He who is forgiven much, loves much. Many times these issues can be addressed appropriately so the Seminary finds you ready to attend school and prepare for a ministry in which you will deal with the burdens of the flock the Good Shepherd has given into your care; burdens you will be able to deal with in deep understanding and compassion. However, you will need to first heal, spiritually and perhaps even physically. First, consult your pastor for pastoral care. Pastoral care is an essential part of addressing our struggles and issues that we face in life. Secondly, if you need professional therapy, consult a professional counselor to identify ways to address your issue.

The admission counselors at CTSFW are here to advise and assist you throughout your preparation, whatever that entails. They will not only guide you through the practical aspects of Seminary, but will provide pastoral care or diaconal mercy. At the Seminary, we share in the joys of the life we have in Christ in His mercy and forgiveness. 🙏

The Rev. John M. Dreyer (John.Dreyer@ctsfw.edu) serves as Senior Admission Counselor at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne.



June 1-3

Kansas City Area-Basehor, Kansas
Dr. William Weinrich
Sacramental Theology in the Gospel of John

June 1-5

Crawford, Nebraska (Wyoming District)
Dr. Gifford Grobien
*Natural Law: Objective Principles,
Practical Judgement, or Chimera?*

June 8-10

St. Cloud, Minnesota
Prof. Adam Koontz
*Identity and Creation: 21st-Century Problems,
1st-Century Solutions*

June 9-11

Cupertino, California
Dr. Adam Francisco
*Making Sense of a Pluralistic World:
A Tour of Worldviews in America*

June 15-17

Auburn, Michigan
Rev. Eric Andrae
*"The Atheist Who Became a Bishop"—Bo Giertz
Is a Unique, Broad, & Deep Voice North
Americans Need to Hear*

June 15-17

Knowles, Oklahoma
Dr. Roland Ziegler
Luther's Bondage of the Will

June 16-18

Cedar Falls, Iowa
Rev. Chad Kendall
Early Christian Mercy to the Secular Culture

June 16-18

Le Mars, Iowa
Dr. Naomichi Masaki
*Refreshing the Confession of the Office of the
Holy Ministry*

June 22-24

Davenport, Iowa
Dr. Peter Scaer
Christian Identity in an Age of Identity Crisis

June 22-24

Gonzales, Louisiana
Prof. John Pless
Using the Catechism in the Congregation

June 22-24

Hickory, North Carolina
Dr. Reed Lessing
Jonah: A Tough Mission for a Tender God

June 22-24

Shawano, Wisconsin
Dr. Dean Wenthe
Scripture and Sacramentality

June 22-26

Grand Rapids, Michigan
Dr. James Bushur
Topic TBA

June 23-25

Plano, Texas
Dr. Naomichi Masaki
Luther on the Lord's Supper

June 30-July 2

Anaheim, California
Prof. John Pless
*Letters from a Lonely Lutheran:
Confidence and Joy Under the Cross*

July 6-10

Grass Valley, California
Dr. Jeffrey Pulse
*The Joseph Narratives: A Tale of Two Brothers
in Genesis 37-50*

July 7-9

Westminster, Massachusetts
Prof. John Pless
Using the Catechism in the Congregation

July 13-15

Detroit, Michigan
Prof. John Pless
Using the Catechism in the Congregation

July 13-15

Riverton, Utah
Dr. William Weinrich
Sacramental Theology in the Gospel of John

July 27-29

Nashville, Tennessee
Dr. Adam Francisco
Apologetics for the 21st Century

August 3-5

Farmville, Virginia
Dr. Reed Lessing
Exodus: "Let My People Go!"

August 3-5

Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania
Dr. Daniel Gard
*Past, Present, and Future: Lessons from the
Chronicles for Our Uncertain Times*

August 3-7

Albuquerque, New Mexico
Dr. Naomichi Masaki
Luther's Great Galatian Lectures

August 3-7

Flathead Lake, Montana
Dr. Joel Bierman
Christian Americans...or American Christians

August 10-14

Council Bluffs, Iowa
Dr. Peter Scaer
Right to Life Issues

August 17-21

Denver, Colorado
Dr. Benjamin T. G. Mayes
*Johann Gerhard on Exegesis, Study,
and Preaching*

August 25-27

Carlyle, Illinois
Kantor Richard Resch
*Giants of Singing the Faith: Luther, Gerhardt,
and Bach*

Please note that information is subject to change. Check our website
at www.ctsfw.edu/CE for the most current information.

ADDITIONAL CLASS AND REGISTRATION INFORMATION

To Register by Phone with Credit Card:

Contact LeeAnna Rondot at (260) 452-2204.

To Register Online:

Go to www.ctsfw.edu/CE and select the site for which you'd like to register.

Additional Information about Individual Classes

(Including Accommodations):

Contact the site coordinator listed on each site's webpage.

To Find Additional Continuing Education Classes:

Visit our website at www.ctsfw.edu/CE.

To Inquire about Adding Continuing Education Opportunities:

Kara Mertz
Administrative Assistant, Continuing Education
Email: CE@ctsfw.edu Phone: (260) 452-2103

Dr. Jeffrey Pulse
Director of Continuing Education
Email: Jeffrey.Pulse@ctsfw.edu Phone: (260) 452-2273

Encouraging People for P

An Interview with Military Chaplain Paul Ferguson

Jon D. Scicluna



I would like to encourage all of our readers to see that they, too, play a key role in identifying and encouraging those around them to consider a call to serve the Church in one capacity or another. And, for the faithful men who serve this great nation as military chaplains, I challenge you to look around you.

As you may be aware, one of the challenges facing our church today is the recruitment and retention of professional church workers. There has been much debate as of late as to the cause and impact of this challenge upon the future of our church; one thing that is not up for debate is the fact that we are facing a potential shortage of pastors. We at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW), have decided to take a comprehensive approach to the recruitment of future pastoral and deaconess students. In mid-2019, CTSFW President Lawrence R. Rast Jr. assembled a small group of his administrative team and challenged us with putting together a non-typical enrollment management plan to address this challenge. One of the nearly 35 objectives was to utilize our LCMS chaplains to help identify and encourage men and women currently serving in the armed forces to consider professional church work as either a mid-career shift or a second-career calling upon retirement from their service.

Professional Church Work

As part of this initiative, I recently had the opportunity to interview a 1999 graduate of CTSFW, the Rev. Paul Ferguson Jr., who currently serves Our Savior Lutheran Church in Rockwall, Texas. Paul is also one of 200 chaplains supported by the LCMS who serve the armed forces, assigned as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Texas Air National Guard, to the 136th Airlift Wing Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base (NAS JRB), Fort Worth, Texas.

Although Paul was hesitant to talk about himself, I was able to pry out of him the following information about his background. Paul was raised in the Dallas metroplex and, as a child, attended Our Redeemer Lutheran School in Dallas where his mother was a second grade teacher. When asked when he first thought about becoming a pastor, Paul pointed to third grade, when his then pastor, the Rev. Fred Mattil, called him aside and told him he would be a good pastor. So the seed was planted. A one-week youth retreat in high school further nurtured that seed. After high school, Paul attended Concordia University in Austin, Texas, to study business. There he met and married his wife, Jennifer, in his senior year, who herself was an LCMS pastor's child and was studying to become a Lutheran school teacher. Although Paul said he did everything he could to avoid attending the Seminary after graduating from what is now Concordia Texas, the Lord eventually led him to enroll at CTSFW in 1995.

"How did you get interested in serving as a military chaplain?" I asked.

"It was the various times that Dr. Daniel Gard brought the military chaplains onto campus that first made me consider this ministry opportunity" Paul responded.

Upon graduation and ordination, Paul and Jennifer decided it would be best for them if Paul served both as a parish pastor and a reserve chaplain in the Air Force. In the years since his ordination,

Paul has faithfully served the Church and the U.S. Air Force as a parish pastor in Rockford, Illinois; Houston, Texas; and Rockwall, Texas. Militarily, he has served the 183rd Fighter Wing, 149th Fighter Wing, and is currently the Wing Chaplain at 136th Airlift Wing at NAS JRB Fort Worth, Texas.

In his role as an Air National Guard Chaplain, Paul has deployed several times in support hurricane response, once to New Orleans after hurricane Katrina and once to Houston after hurricane Harvey. One of his most unique deployments was to Antarctica in 2018, where he served as chaplain to over 1,100 people, both military and civilian contractors.

While at McMurdo Station, Ross Island, Antarctica, worship was held in the "Chapel of the Snows," which is one of eight churches on the continent of Antarctica and has the distinction of being the second southernmost church on planet earth. During this deployment, Paul was also able to lead worship at the bottom of the world when he led a midweek service at the South Pole station. Later this year, Paul will deploy to an undisclosed location in Southwest Asia.

"Do you see similarities or a natural progression from serving our country in the Armed Forces to serving our church, either as a pastor, deaconess, or other professional church worker?" I asked.

"Most definitely," he responded. "It's all about service to others. In fact, one of the Air Force's core values is Service Before Self. The leadership skills, interpersonal skills, and maturity one gains from his or her service to our country create a solid foundation upon which a second career of service is a natural fit."

"How can you and other chaplains help in the identification and encouragement of future church workers whom you serve in the armed forces?"

"There are several ways" he replied.

"First, day-to-day interaction with the troops, the modeling of loving, caring relationship. And although I never thought of my role outside the congregation as one who might identify and encourage future church workers, it makes all the sense in the world that the military chaplain, intentionally or unintentionally, is in a key position to be that influencer."

In conclusion, I would like to encourage all of our readers to see that they, too, play a key role in identifying and encouraging those around them to consider a call to serve the Church in one capacity or another. And, for the faithful men who serve this great nation as military chaplains, I challenge you to look around you. Be it here at one of our bases stateside, on the deck of one of our ships anywhere in the world, or as you are deployed with those tasked in keeping this great nation safe and secure, look at those brave men and women whom you care for. Help your Church in the identification and encouragement of future church workers. 📌

The Rev. Jon D. Scicluna (Jon.Scicluna@ctsfw.edu) serves as Vice President of Operations and Chief Operating Officer at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne.



Opposite page, clockwise from top, left: *Chaplain Paul Ferguson at the geographic South Pole.*

Chaplain Ferguson praying with soldiers and airmen as they head out in response to Hurricane Harvey.

Airmen gathered for worship.

Chapel of the Snows at McMurdo Station, Antarctica.



ALUMNI

The One Thing

Douglas H. Spittel



Photo courtesy of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod/Erik M. Lunsford.

The First German Evangelical Lutheran congregation of Pittsburgh has heard the Gospel and received the forgiveness of our Lord for 183 years in four different church buildings dedicated to the Holy Trinity in the City of Pittsburgh. Andrew Jackson was president of the 25 states in America when the congregation was founded. Since then, the city of Pittsburgh grew into the world's leading producer of glass, aluminum, and steel. Then, beginning in the late 1970s, all of that industry collapsed over the course of a decade. Pittsburgh reinvented itself as a world leader in banking, healthcare, and robotics. Alcoa Corporation and Pittsburgh Plate Glass gave way to Google, Uber, and PNC Bank. Carnegie Steel gave birth to Carnegie Mellon University and the National Robotics Consortium. The University of Pittsburgh Medical Center gave us the polio vaccine and advances in organ transplants. Children who once grew up in the smoke of the mills began growing up in Mister Rogers' Neighborhood. The once blue-collar population turned increasingly white collar and, like the national trend, birth rates plummeted.

First German, now sporting the conflated name of First Trinity, weathered the changes, but not without cost or peril. Records from the 1870s show a congregation of over 1,500 in which the pastor conducted a wedding, baptism, or funeral every day. If you were Lutheran and spoke German in Pittsburgh, you were a member of First Trinity.

Due to the size of the congregation and the growing character of the Pittsburgh metropolitan area, First Trinity was instrumental in the establishment of many new congregations throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Industries grew, families moved to newer and wealthier areas, babies were born, and the church grew numerically. It was simple.

Until it wasn't.

The sexual revolution of the 1960s, which caused a nationwide fertility drop, coupled with the economic disaster of the early 1980s created a perfect storm in Pittsburgh that many congregations, regardless of denomination, did not weather. Given the tenacity of even the smallest congregations, it took 20 years for the tsunami of demographic death to sweep over the churches. As the older generation made their way to the Church Triumphant, there was no one to replace them. No one was reaching out to people in the community. Even the mighty Roman Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh saw their weekly attendance at Mass drop from 200,000 in the year 2000 to 100,000 by 2015. Parishes have been consolidated and churches have been closed. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has seen nine Pittsburgh congregations close in the past 30 years, with a few more presently struggling.

g Needful

First Trinity could have been one of them. The congregation shrank to a membership of just about 20 people by 1990. Supporting the ministry and a large cathedral building was burdensome but not yet impossible. As their pastor prepared to retire, the congregation was under pressure to sell the property for a handsome sum and close. They chose not to close. They chose wisely.

Today the city of Pittsburgh is flourishing. New technological industries have taken hold, employment is abundant, and housing prices are affordable for now. The recession of 2008 had little effect on Pittsburgh and our banks came out stronger than ever. Unfortunately, the shrinking congregations of Pittsburgh followed national denominational trends trying to rebrand themselves in order to make themselves relevant to an increasingly secularized culture. The mainline denominational churches followed trends to discard ancient biblical beliefs that were seen as archaic in favor of more “inclusive” ideologies. Other churches followed trends to discard ancient Christian rituals that were seen as archaic in favor of more “contemporary” popular culture forms.

Both approaches failed in the city. The first approach that abandoned the moral teachings of Scripture ended up watering down the importance of Jesus as the Savior of humanity. The second approach presented what was perceived as a sellout to consumerism by a new generation that values authenticity and confessional integrity. Those congregations are now gone or will be soon. They have run out of people, money, and motivation because they ran away from what made them who they were.

Opposite page: *The Rev. Dr. Douglas Spittel, senior pastor of First Trinity Evangelical–Lutheran Church, Pittsburgh, leads Divine Service.*

Right: *CTSFV Vicar Timothy Kern assists recipients of Pittsburgh Lutheran Center for the Blind, part of the Pittsburgh Area Lutheran Ministries.*

First Trinity decided to stay. They decided to stay in their beautiful cathedral church within walking distance of two major universities. They decided to stay and call two more full-time pastors since 1990 to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments. They decided to stay and call a full-time campus pastor. They decided to stay true to their confession as Evangelical Lutheran Christians. They decided to stay gathered around Word and Sacrament with the liturgy that has nurtured Christians through the ages. They decided to stay and reach out to the people that the Lord had placed in their community. Missions to the university campuses, the blind, the Deaf, and the homeless and marginally housed people were all started, and the little congregation grew. A mission outreach was recently begun in a nearby neighborhood to distressed people that lost their steel mill but may soon gain new industry. These missions began organically with the need to reach out with the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the people who are our neighbors. The congregation was, is, and will remain one of biblical honesty, confessional fidelity, and liturgical integrity.

These decisions were not man-made nor was the growth of the congregation. Decisions were not made based on demographic surveys and focus groups. Decisions were not arrived at out of desperation. The people simply believed the promise of Jesus to be where His people are gathered around Word and Sacrament, and that the Holy Spirit would provide opportunities to proclaim the Gospel to people. They believed and knew that they could not abandon the city. While the denominational “Marthas” were working to “fix” the Church, the “Mary” of First Trinity Congregation held to the “one thing needful,” sat listening at Jesus’ feet, and believed His promise of forgiveness, life, and salvation. It is the Lord who comes to His people. It is the Lord who gives the increase. It is our privilege to hear Him, receive Him, and proclaim Him. 🏡

The Rev. Dr. Douglas H. Spittel (dspittel@gmail.com), CTSFW 1990, serves as senior pastor of First Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and is President of Pittsburgh Area Lutheran Ministries an LCMS Recognized Service Organization.



Photo courtesy of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod/Erik M. Lunsford.

Hymn Writing Competition

As part of CTSFW's 175th anniversary celebration, the Seminary is announcing a hymn writing competition. Submissions are to be text only, correlating with the anniversary theme: "Make Known His Deeds!" Please note that the scope of the hymn text should not be limited to the Seminary's anniversary but should fully encompass the theme.

Download a copy of the full competition guidelines at www.ctsfw.edu/175th/HymnCompetition. Guidelines include notes about which hymn tunes the text should be written for, the maximum number of stanzas, including Scripture references, and copyright and other permissions. One entry per author should be submitted as a Word document (.doc) to HymnCompetition@ctsfw.edu.

\$500 will be awarded to the winner of the competition. Deadline for entries is May 1, 2020.



SAVE THE DATE

Alumni Reunions from 1950–2015
(Class years ending in "0" & "5")

May 21–22, 2020

Wednesday, May 20, 2020:

Optional CTSFW Golf Outing

Thursday & Friday, May 21–22, 2020:

- Worship
- Alumni Banquet
- President's Luncheon
- Individual Class Gatherings
- Baccalaureate
- Class Pictures

To register visit www.ctsfw.edu/Alumni

For more information, please contact us at
Alumni@ctsfw.edu or (260) 452-2204.

Mercy Meal Packing Event

Over the dates of January 29-30, 73 volunteers among the students, families, faculty, and staff of CTSFW gathered in Luther Hall to pack Mercy Meals for Orphan Grain Train, Nebraska. Orphan Grain Train generously donated supplies to the CTSFW Food & Clothing Co-op and in turn asked for the community's assistance in assembling Mercy Meals to go to children and families starving overseas.

More than 30 students volunteered the first evening, packing 57 boxes in just over an hour. Each box contained 36 bags, with every bag comprised of six meals. Director of the Co-op, Deaconess Katherine Rittner, who gathered the community volunteers, noted that the number of meals came out to 216 per box, connecting it with James 2:16: "And one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?"

By the end of two days, the community had assembled 27,391 meals, which will be sent to Haiti. As one pastor and missionary explained, these meals are used not only to feed the bodies of the hungry, but to feed their souls. For example, children will go to a school to pick up their meals (which will then be shared with their families), where they also learn about Christ. Thanks be to God for this opportunity to share the Bread of Life alongside the bread we break with our neighbors.

"What an incredible way for our CTSFW students to not only live out the mission statement of CTSFW to teach the faithful, but how these are used to reach the lost and especially care for all in all of the world!" Deaconess Rittner wrote in an email of her thankfulness to the community. "How wonderful and merciful is our God!"



Profiles in GIVING

Together with

Larry D. Wright



Jessica Toth | Lightstock.com



Above: *The Rev. Daniel Conrad (CTSFW 1984), with wife Kathy and daughter Ana. Opposite page, right:* *The first graduating class of Concordia the Reformer Seminary (Seminarío Concordia el Reformador) in the Dominican Republic.*

In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul writes: “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15:4-6).

God’s message of the hope of salvation is vividly written throughout Scriptures, as witnessed by His endurance and His encouragement for us to live in harmony with each other and to glorify God. Certainly, living in harmony with our fellow man in our fallen world is challenging, to say the least. Each day we face the world around us, which seems to unfold, change, and permutate in both positive and negative ways we

never thought possible. Yet St. Paul’s exhortation to the Romans, and us, is that we “live in such harmony” that we “may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Facing challenges with one voice is certainly daunting, yet it can be even more so for those who would proclaim the hope of salvation in lands beyond our borders. The Rev. Daniel Conrad, his wife Kathy, and their daughter Ana serve our Lord

One Voice

in Mexico, having also served in Venezuela and the United States after he graduated from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW), in 1984. Both Daniel and Kathy are second career missionaries, having graduated from the University of Michigan with Bachelors of Science in Engineering and Education, respectively.

Rev. Conrad joyfully proclaims the saving Gospel of Christ in addition to instructing pastors who serve throughout Mexico. Through technology Daniel also teaches future pastors in the Dominican Republic, Chile, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela, encouraging and instructing workers to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He does all this with Kathy and Ana at his side. Notably, they are also gracious supporters of our Seminary.

So how does one speak so many languages, in so many places, to so many people and still proclaim with one voice? Pastor Conrad writes:

“Throughout the many countries of Latin America there exists a diversity of cultures. The culture of Mexico is unique as is the culture of the other Latin American countries. At the same time, the theology of Christ remains the same in all parts of the world.

“The Lord commissioned His disciples to make disciples by baptizing and teaching. The cultures of the world change but the teaching of Christ remains the same. The Lutheran Synod of Mexico continues to form pastors who baptize and teach all nations. Without a doubt, the challenges will continue to present themselves. Yet the Lord continues to strengthen His Church in all parts of the world.

Our present-day seminarians of Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana, as well as the seminarians of Seminary El Libertador in the Dominican Republic have a certain amount of anxiety regarding the future. Yes, the future will present challenges as the seminarians continue to prepare for the Holy Ministry. Moreover, they will face challenges as they serve the Lord throughout the world as pastors. The theological training that our seminaries provide equips our seminarians to comfort the hurting, strengthen the faithful, and seek the lost. At the same time a seminarian never truly graduates. The Lord will continue to provide new learning experiences throughout his ministry.

“The Apostle Paul experienced his share of difficulties in the course of his missionary journeys. He suffered persecution, imprisonment, and ultimately death for the cause of the Gospel. Yet he confidently stated, ‘I can do all things through him who strengthens me’ (Philippians 4:13). This same Christ who strengthened Paul also strengthens His seminarians, His pastors, His deaconesses, and all His kingdom workers wherever they may serve. All future church workers approach call night with a certain amount of anxiety: they wonder where they will serve the

Lord. Moreover, they may even have some doubts as to their ability to serve the Lord at their new calling. Let us always remember that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. His grace provides the strength to carry out the ministry in all circumstances. Therefore, let us go forward with all confidence knowing that Christ strengthens us to serve Him throughout the world. *Soli Deo Gloria.*”

Consider joining in supporting the cultivation of the next generation of servants who will proclaim with one voice God’s saving Word. Your support is always welcome and can be conveyed for the benefit of the students in so many ways. Today our church is facing an unprecedented need for pastors. Please pray with us that the Lord will lead men into this Godly vocation. Thank you, one and all, who have given generously to the Seminary over the years. 📌

The Rev. Larry D. Wright (Larry.Wright@ctsfw.edu) serves as Advancement Officer at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. To learn more about supporting the mission of CTSFW, email Advancement@ctsfw or phone (877) 287-4338.



Johanna Heidem



God Is Faithful

Warrens E. Berger



Wasmel | Dreamstime.com

When hasn't there been a time of wars, rumors of wars, famines, and earthquakes? As a result of Eve's coveting and Adam's partaking, fallen creation's sustained push against humanity hasn't eased in the least. Weeds, sweat, pain, anxiety, death—these serve as constant reminders that all people are challenged from conception to grave.

Even so, God did not relegate us to the hellish condemnation our disobedience earned. By grace, the Lord promised His Savior to undeserving people and He fulfilled that promise in Jesus Christ. **Read Genesis 3:15, Isaiah 7:14, and Luke 1:26-38.** What does God's "track record" of keeping His promises mean to you? Does knowing this add to your confidence and hope in His promised return? Do you feel comfortable sharing your confidence with others? Why? Why not?

Read Romans 5:1-11. St. Paul often experienced hostility toward the Gospel, yet wrote these beautifully comforting words. The apostle's first sentence is the focal point. What is it about being "justified" that gives Paul such great confidence and hope? Does Paul's use of "we" throughout this passage mean his words apply only to himself and the church in ancient Rome or to all Christians in every generation?

God is faithful! **Read 1 Corinthians 1:9, 2 Thessalonians 3:3, and 1 John 1:9.** According to these Scripture passages, what tangible ways does God's faithfulness positively impact your life?

But how do we answer our skeptic family member’s question “Where is God in the midst of your _____ (insert your troubling trial here)?” Even stalwart Christians sometimes wonder what God is up to. **Read John 16:33.** Jesus does not hide the ugly truth—tribulation will come—but do you find comfort in knowing Jesus has “overcome the world”? **Read Romans 15:13.** Do you find it strange that St. Paul uses words such as “joy and peace” and “hope” in a letter read by persecuted Christians? According to Paul, what is the source of Christian joy, peace, and hope?

Do you know a fellow Christian who has faced a difficult trial yet became closer to God as a result? Scripture knows many such people. **Read Luke 8:43-48.** This poor woman spent all her money on doctors hoping for a cure but suffered for 12 years with no end in sight. How would you have done in similar circumstances? What did Jesus tell her in verse 48 that applies to you as well?

Or consider Martha, Lazarus’ grieving sister. Though Martha’s trial was a relatively short four days, it ended with Jesus’ wonderful proclamation concerning the resurrection and Martha’s confession of faith. **Read John 11:25-27.** What did Jesus say? With what words did Martha respond? How would knowing “the resurrection” stands before her in the person of Jesus Christ have helped Martha? How does knowing Jesus is your resurrection life now help you to appreciate that God’s future promise of heaven also includes God’s resurrection blessings for you today? What are those blessings?

Read Romans 6:3-11. Paul writes that Holy Baptism incorporates Christians into Christ’s death and resurrection. By virtue of your Baptism into Christ, how would you describe your proximity relative to God? Is it near or far? Do you think it a good idea to offer a baptismal reminder to a Christian who is feeling separated from God?

Lastly, consider King David. David was a man well acquainted with trial and grief—some of it self-inflicted. **Read Psalm 23.** The ancient shepherd kept constant watch over his flock and personally protected them by keeping close proximity. How would this basic knowledge of shepherding have provided great comfort to David knowing the Lord is his Shepherd? Consider verse 5. With trouble all around, by what means does the Lord provide for David? How does the Lord provide for you at the Lord’s table of Holy Communion?

At the conclusion of your pastor’s sermon, you likely hear him say words from **Philippians 4:7.** Read this beautiful text and ponder the impossible-to-fully-understand-this-side-of-heaven peace of God. According to Scripture, what benefit does God’s peace bring you? Can Christians trust God’s faithfulness even when they don’t feel His peace or experience a physical or emotional improvement?

Life with God in Christ Jesus changes how we view and mentally process the trials and tribulations of the world. As counterintuitive as this sounds, trials can bring us closer to Him as Christians cling to Christ and His Gospel at all times and in all places. While we cannot see what God is doing behind the scenes, we know He always has our best interest at heart. **Read Romans 8:28.** Are you able to see the good God has done for you in Christ? If so, thanks be to God.

The Rev. Warrens E. Berger (rev.weberger@gmail.com), CTSFW 2007, serves as associate pastor at Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church in Snohomish, Washington.



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