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Every Christian is called to hear the Word of God and keep it and therefore “Make Known His Deeds!” In this COVID-19 infected world, we need more than ever to sit at the feet of Jesus like Mary and hear His Word in the company of fellow saints, even if that hearing is at home through our devices.

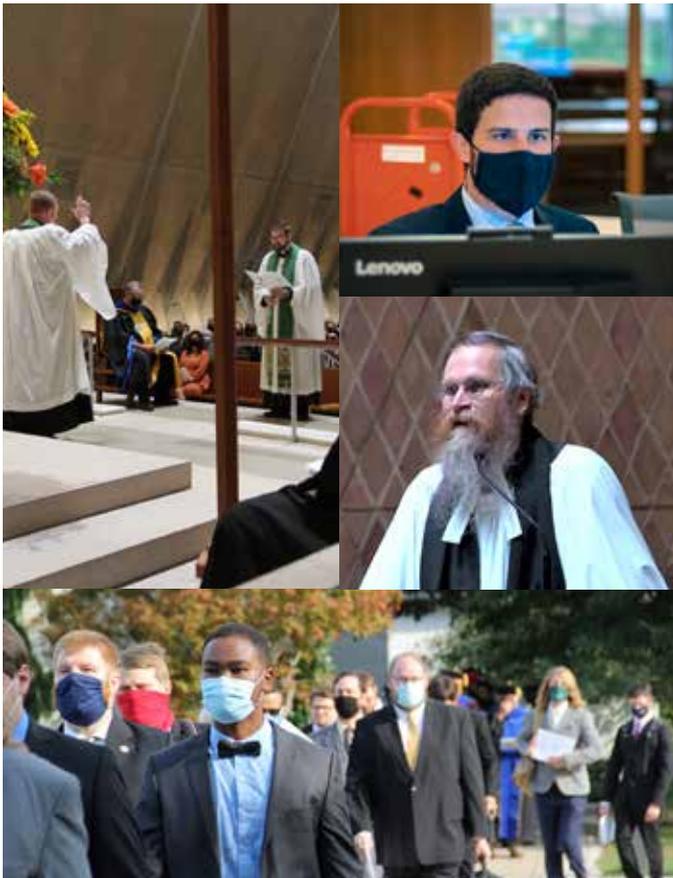
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By Dr. K. Detlev Schulz

Looking at Lutheranism today, one would ask how have we gotten where we are? What factors have helped us to become a worldwide reality? How has our identity been nurtured over time? Any answers provided would have to include the contribution of CTSFW. There can be no doubt over the Seminary’s pivotal role in the inculcation of Lutheran identity among people both here in North America and in all other continents. Our Seminary has become a hub in which foreign and national students converge and leave fully loaded with theological fuel.

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PUBLISHER

Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr.
President

PUBLISHER ASSISTANT

Carrie M. O'Donnell

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Colleen M. Bartzsch

EDITOR

Rebecca S. Ahlersmeyer

COPY EDITOR

Trudy E. Behning

ART DIRECTOR

Steve J. Blakey

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Life at the Sem: Now and



In my position handling campus communications, more than a few people have expressed interest in getting to know more about our seminarians and campus life. The many and varied questions have sparked curiosity in me as well. Upon our celebration of 175 academic years, how has life changed for our students across our storied history? How different would it feel to step a laced boot on campus in 1846 versus stepping a laced tennis shoe on campus today?

Recently, I had the blessed little adventure of tagging along with fourth-year seminarian Martin Hill as he navigated his daily schedule on campus. It was fun and interesting to get a glimpse into modern day-to-day student life, especially when considered through the lens of times gone by.

Worship

Thankfully, while the bell for morning chapel rang at 5:00 a.m. in 1847 and 6:00 a.m. by 1890, our morning together began at about 7:25 a.m. The campus hadn't quite shaken the night's stillness and even the bell seemed to peal more soothingly, as if to ease us into the day. We left the quiet of Melancthon dorm for the peaceful walk in late summer's lukewarm morning. In less than five minutes we were climbing the steps of Kramer Chapel for 7:35 a.m. Matins. The crowd was more intimate than the main chapel service of the day. The lighting was more subdued.

I felt like a comfortably-stabled horse with blinders on, starting the day in shared worship without distraction. Not everyone may resonate with an early alarm, but I get why they do it. In attending 10:00 a.m. Daily Chapel and 6:00 p.m. Vespers as well, one can feel something unique about each service and something reassuring in the rhythm of devoting the opening, middle, and close of every day to God in worship. When I asked Martin about his choice to worship three times a day, he responded, "Why not? We are not here to simply download information. This is part of forming men of God. To hear God's Word and be constant in prayer is one of the most important parts."

Classes

While the theological foundation for classes has not changed, the structure certainly has. While modern schedules can vary from student to student and allow for plenty of free time, in 1874

there was a strict daily schedule for all. Every moment was accounted for from 5:00 a.m. wake up to 10:00 p.m. bedtime, with seven hours of classes every day. From 1861 to 1875 "the dictation-lecture method dominated in the classroom, entailing much note taking by the student. Discussion was not encouraged. Little was assigned in the way of collateral reading and research. Instead, the student was expected to memorize mountains of material (p. 58*)."

In contrast, present-day classes are more interactive and intriguing. The professors invigorate the mind, encouraging questions and discussions, sprinkling in healthy doses of humor along the way. Whether it was Dr. Ziegler's poignant questions posed to the class, Dr. Masaki's engaging slides and tales from far-off lands, or Prof. Pless's application of practical, insightful ministerial advice, each class brought its own enlightening and enjoyable golden nuggets of knowledge.

Coffee Hour and Social Time

It's always neat to hear and see the fellowship happening at each and every one of the Seminary's intentionally-designed social times, from post-chapel coffee hour to Friday evening *Gemütlichkeit* (beers and bonding, from the German meaning "Comfort" or "Coziness"). As tasty and invigorating as a hot cup of joe can be, coffee hour



is never about coffee. These spiritual leaders of tomorrow will need to be well versed in the art of connecting with others, and church coffee hours are ripe with opportunities to do so. Allowing for time outside of work and classes to casually hang out and chat about everything from theology, to family, to which Star Wars movie was the best (“clearly *The Empire Strikes Back*”) is so vital in building relationships and creating a supportive, tight-knit community. As Martin put it, “The community was a pleasant surprise. All of the profs, musicians, students, and staff form a family of sorts, unique for a graduate school. The school provides opportunities for socials, barbecues, and other things. Profs will stand and talk with you about life and lectures and joke around. You enjoy getting to know them.”

History’s Seminary had tighter and stricter reins on its students, but there were still some opportunities to socialize. *Kollegium Fratrum* (“College Brothers”), occurring Saturday nights from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., was established in 1857 and remained a mainstay for student life for 50 years. Pipe smoking “immediately followed opening prayer” and meetings were held in German, “the ruling tongue of the seminary” (pp. 50–51). The 10:30 p.m. professor-imposed curfew created an uproar among seminarians. Funnily enough, they were concerned that the hour was too late.

Work and Free Time

The hour between coffee and lunch generally enables Martin to get schoolwork done in the library, which also allowed for a glimpse into his campus job. Martin showed us what an average shift’s duties entailed, saying that it is distinctive from work at other libraries. Beyond everyday tasks such as reshelving books and performing patron counts, student employees work on special projects, including sorting donated books to prep them for shipment overseas to places like Nigeria. “The library is working not just for itself. It is a mother library starting other theological libraries around the world.”

For many years, seminarians did not seek gainful employment while in attendance, but did perform tasks to support the Seminary’s operations. “On free days and periods the students voluntarily worked in the yards and gardens of the professors. Some of them chopped wood, others tended the gardens, while from the college building the sounds of music and singing drifted across the campus” (p. 89). However, the droves of GIs returning home after WWII were accustomed to earning a paycheck and not of a mind to return to prewar campus patterns that didn’t include a cash flow. “No one begrudged the men a few extra dollars, but the administration was concerned that off-campus work might interfere with studies. It was finally

decided that outside work should be limited to 16 hours per week . . . in free periods after 3:30 and before supper on school days or on Friday evenings and Saturdays” (p. 158).

Meals

Seminary dining has certainly changed in 175 years. In the 1900s, “food often consisted of bread, onions, syrup (a staple at all of the Synod’s colleges), oleo, and coffee” (p. 107). They were, however, occasionally “treated to the odor of pancakes” cooked for the kitchen staff (p. 107). Our cafeteria experience was as striking as it was savory. Coordinator Jeff Rude always ensures that there is a splendid spread of enticing aromas wafting from well-prepared food amid the murmur of congenial chitchat. Upon hearing of a dietary constraint, Chef Chris Redden was very knowledgeable and said that he would ensure that there were always available options. It felt like the perfect combination of modern accommodations meeting small town considerations. I was utterly charmed and very well fed.

Women, Marriage, and Family

While our featured seminarian, Martin Hill, got engaged over the summer to the lovely Amberlyn Tuma, such a thing was not always possible for students at the Seminary. For many years they were not to have anything close to

romantic relationships while attending the Seminary. By 1940, officials noted that “the girl question is getting acute” (p. 133). One student was seen brazenly holding a young woman’s hand off campus while walking down the street. Yet another was seen “walking arm in arm with a female companion” while visiting a local farm (p. 133). In 1942, a new student arrived who openly spoke against Seminary policies concerning women, but was dismissed by faculty consensus as “rather opinionated and a girl chaser” (p. 134). It wasn’t until 1945 that the Seminary changed its policy on married seminarians. Even then, part of the policy dictated that families be kept “well under wraps” and “not frequent the campus and its buildings,” nor allow their homes to become “hangouts for unmarried students” (p. 161).

In stark contrast, Martin told a very different story about family life at the Seminary of today. “The Seminary is very nurturing to dating, engaged, and married couples and families. Everyone is so supportive.” It really is a joy to hear little ones chattering in chapel and their little feet pattering about the grounds. It’s wonderful to regularly see women around. From deaconesses to girlfriends, fiancés, and wives, these ladies make the campus a better place and are the very fibers of our strong and supportive social networks. When I asked if he felt left out when he was single, he was quick to convey the opposite, saying that everyone “watches out for each other.”

Men at Work Play

One could not fully tell the story of the Seminary, past or present, without throwing in a bit of the humor that has banded brothers together and shaped them for future ministry across the

decades. Although the fun may manifest in different ways, students, regardless of when they attended the Seminary, are no different in their need to cut loose and goof around a little bit. Martin laughed as he relayed what he called “nerdy Sem student fun,” often concluding each story with the same smile and remark, “only at the Seminary.” His first year, a dorm mate set up a little coffee shop outside of his room, hosting poetry readings amid serving hot beverages to classmate customers. This entrepreneurial eatery was reminiscent of another visiting alum’s tale of opening up a small dorm restaurant in the 70s, showing where the hole had been drilled for the running of power cords through a closet doorway (kids, don’t try this at home or in your dorm). Hill’s mates would host what they jokingly called “heretic nights” where two people would defend a heresy while the opposing side would seek to disprove it and defend an orthodoxy (actually a great training tool for debates and practicing defending the faith). He did say there was an especial amount of pressure on the guys arguing for the truth, because sometimes the heretical side was almost too good and, of course, they couldn’t win. When I pressed for more tales of seminarians running amok—as a few grads from the 70s indicated the possibility of more—he chuckled about the freedom one has to talk when so far removed and smiled with an implied wink, “I’m not at liberty to say.” I nearly titled this section “Shenanigans” because—whatever the alumni story I’ve heard from “back in the day” to now—it has all been in the spirit of really rather innocent fun and a time-honored means for developing camaraderie among these young men and preparing them to be real and relatable in their service as future pastors.

O God, Our Help in Ages Past, Present, and Future

Throughout the years there have been a great many changes at the Seminary. From locations to lodgings, schedules to socializing, grub to girls, each year has brought with it fresh perspectives, just as His mercies are new each morning. For whatever changes have occurred, the most important things have remained the same. Any seminarian from any point in history could step in a class and recognize the same rigorous theological teachings and self-examination. Whether from 1846 to 2021, any student could walk into a chapel service and feel right at home, participating in the Divine Service, singing the beautiful old hymns, and hearing the Word of God held up as the central, enduring truth. The Seminary’s central teachings center on Christ and likewise are the same yesterday, today, and forever. For 175 years we have been forming servants in Jesus Christ to teach the faithful, reach the lost, and care for all. We pray that the Seminary endures and is able to “Make Known His Deeds!” for many years to come as it has in ages past.

It is interesting to think, if our Lord has not yet returned by 2196, what will our future students think of our times now? 🏡

Rebecca Ahlersmeyer
 (Rebecca.Ahlersmeyer@ctsfw.edu)
 serves as Communication
 Specialist at Concordia
 Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne.
 *Excerpts were taken from *Prairie School of the Prophets: The Anatomy of a Seminary 1846-1976*
 by Erich H. Heintzen.



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 Admission Counselor
 Rev. Tryel Bramwell.

