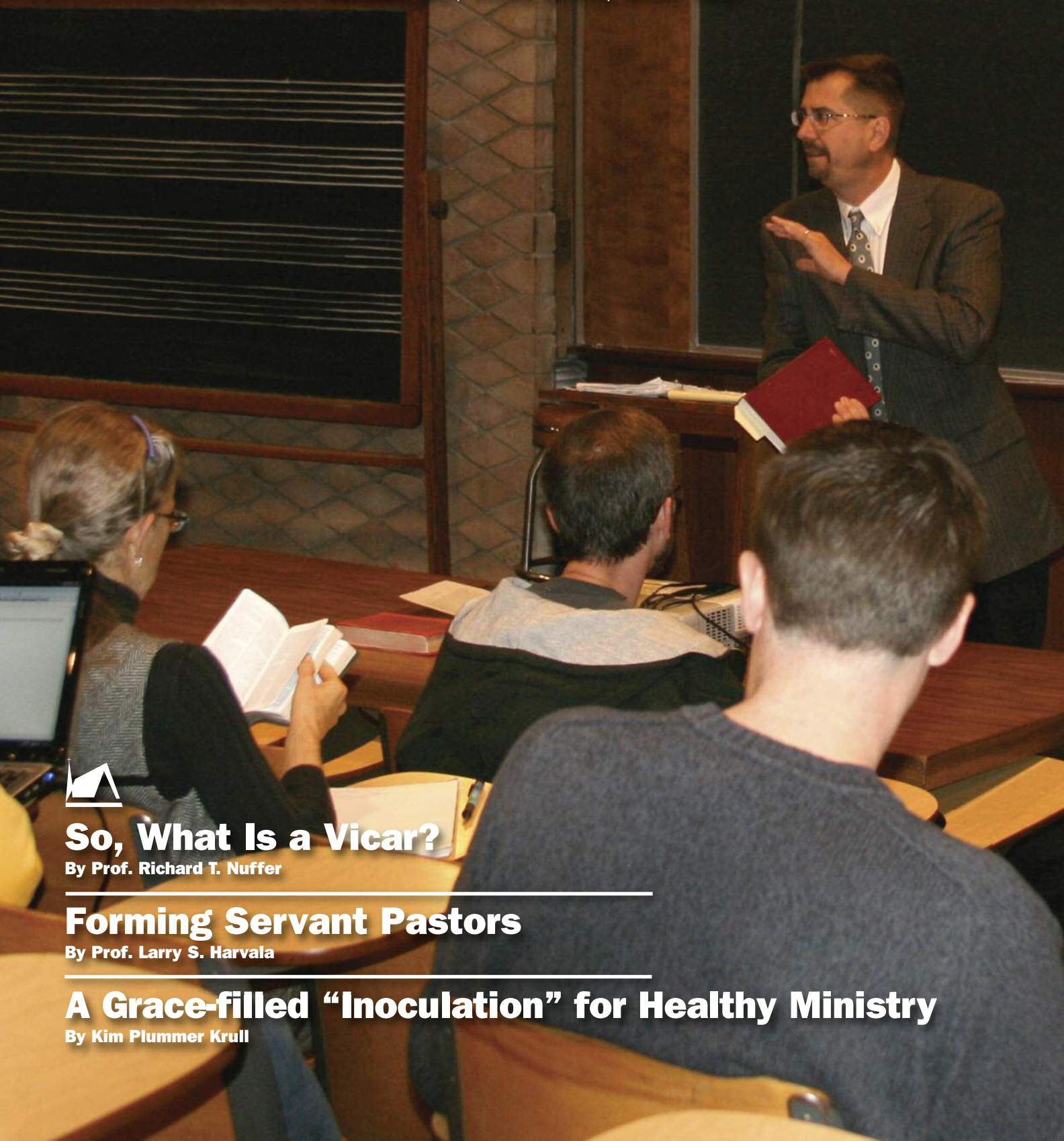


For the Life of the World

Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne

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By Prof. Richard T. Nuffer

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By Kim Plummer Krull

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Vicarage is a year of practical, hands-on training in which seminary students serve as interns under experienced pastors. They do so to “put legs on” all of their academic classroom training. And they begin to learn how to bring Christ to people who are hurting in a great variety of ways and to those who do not believe.

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The important things are that the faithful are faithfully taught, the lost are vigorously reached and all are cared for by the Word and Sacraments with which Christ has marked His beloved Bride.

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By Kim Plummer Krull

In 1999, Dr. John Eckrich, a physician and lifelong Lutheran, founded Grace Place Lutheran Retreats. After years of treating church workers and seeing how their vocational challenges led to health problems and a pulpit exodus, he started Grace Place to help clergy who “were burning themselves out while they cared for others but did not take care of themselves.”



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Forming Servant Pastors

By Professor Larry S. Harvala

“Forming servants in Jesus Christ who teach the faithful, reach the lost and care for all” reflects the mission of Concordia Theological Seminary in pastoral formation for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. There once was a time when the primary mission of a seminary was theological education. Students were trained in systematic, exegetical, historical and practical theology. They were certified as competent theologians. Pastoral formation took place in the church when the theologically

prepared candidate received a divine call from a congregation. These calls were often to smaller congregations that understood their role in pastoral formation. Unable to afford a full salary and benefit package for an experienced pastor, these congregations were served by a series of candidates from the seminary. The congregations knew that these men were still learning to be pastors and were patient with them. The new pastors quickly gained a multitude of pastoral skills as the Lord continued to strengthen them with a pastoral heart for their flock. Other candidates were called to serve as associate pastors in larger congregations where an experienced pastor would work with them. Not only were these congregations aware that the new associate was still learning, the senior pastor was often a kind and wise man who was able to guide the new pastor as the Lord continued to strengthen them together. In most cases, after a few years, those new pastors were called to positions of greater responsibility and looked back fondly on the formative years spent in their first calls.

At some point, a change began to take place in the Synod. Many of the congregations that had called seminary candidates were no longer able to afford even this minimum salary and benefit package. They became permanent vacancies and were served by neighboring pastors or a retired pastor instead of a candidate. Larger congregations now turned to the seminary for candidates, and since they were familiar with veteran pastors, they expected the new pastor to have all the pastoral skills in place. Similarly, larger congregations calling an additional pastor needed someone to specialize in a certain area of ministry, often youth ministry, and the senior pastor no longer assumed the role of mentor for the new pastor.

The seminaries have, therefore, revised both their theological curriculum and contextual training so that more and more pastoral formation takes place prior to the candidate's first call. There is a greater integration of the theological disciplines to focus on how systematic, exegetical and historical theology can be put into practice in the congregation. With the arrival of many alternate route programs that allowed theological education to take place in a specific context, the seminary also expanded contextual opportunities for pastors and now deaconesses. Fieldwork in a local congregation in the first two years of the residential program is more targeted toward pastoral formation. The vicarage year, preferably in the third year, takes on an even greater significance. Vicarage was always intended to be a year of intense training under a gifted and capable supervising pastor. Congregations were always asked not to consider the vicar as cheap help, but now the need to have regular, quality and close supervision has become more important than ever. Even upon returning to the seminary in the fourth and final year, the candidates are placed on personalized growth plans to assure the church that pastoral formation will not begin with the first call, but is already well underway.

There seem to be more and more areas where we would like to turn back the clock to an earlier time, and theological education and pastoral formation are among them. Short of that, the shift from training students to "forming servants" is a reality from which both pastors and parishes can benefit. The important things are that the faithful are faithfully taught, the lost are vigorously reached, and all are cared for by the Word and Sacraments with which Christ has marked His beloved Bride. 🏰

Rev. Larry S. Harvala is an Associate Professor of Pastoral Ministry and Missions and Dean of Placement at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.



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