



# Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne For the Life of the World

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## **Seminary Past**

By Cameron A. MacKenzie

## **Seminary Present**

By Charles A. Gieschen

## **Seminary Future**

By Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

# Seminary Present:

## Responding to the Church's Needs

By Charles A. Gieschen

**If you were to ask** people in the pews of the congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) what they would see upon a visit to their seminary in Fort Wayne, they would probably respond: “Some older men teaching a bunch of younger men to be pastors.” Although the central focus of Concordia Theological Seminary (CTS) is the formation of men to be Lutheran pastors, the varied needs of the church, both in the United States and globally, has led this seminary to offer a variety of theological education programs beyond residential pastoral formation. If you were to visit your seminary in Fort Wayne, you would see men studying to be pastors, but you

would also see women being preparing to be deaconesses, foreign students being trained to be theological educators and men who are ordained pastors back in the classroom for continuing education. You would not see the several men and women who are members of our seminary community but have a substantial portion of their educational program delivered online. And you may not see all the professors because some are on a short-term teaching assignment at a pastoral conference in one of our districts or overseas in one of our partner churches. In short, the seminary of the present day is responding actively to a variety of the church's needs by preparing servants in Jesus Christ in a variety of ways.



As at its founding in 1846, the central focus of CTS remains residential pastoral formation, which today is done primarily through the four year Master of Divinity degree program that culminates in certification and placement of men for ordination and installation as pastors in the LCMS. Much like Jesus teaching the Twelve for about three years and then sending them forth, this program includes three years of academic and practical studies at the seminary and one year out in the field under the supervision of an experienced pastor (vicarage). It is a rigorous and thorough program in order to assure that our pastors confess and proclaim the Scriptures faithfully as well as serve people with the care and compassion of Jesus. When applicants meet certain age and experience criteria, there is the option to enroll in a slightly shorter—three years instead of four—pastoral formation process called the Alternate Route Program. The long-term commitment of CTS to residential pastoral formation is very visible in the recent expansion of Walther Library. Our new library not only provides wonderful access to a myriad of resources for theological studies, but it also offers superb space for student reading and writing.

Not all of the men preparing to be pastors at CTS, however, are in these two residential programs. For various reasons, the need exists to train some future pastors in their geographical context. CTS, therefore, has also offered the

Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) Program for the past five years and, prior to that, the Distance Education Leading to Ordination (DELTO) Program. Through online technology, annual on-campus intensives and an on-site mentor, the SMP Program at CTS is preparing approximately 10 pastors a year in their own ministry context. Some fringe benefits of teaching in the SMP Program have been the integration of more educational technology by our faculty into the curriculum of our residential students and the use of this technology to help with pastoral formation in international contexts where residential Lutheran seminaries are not readily available.

Ten years ago several women began appearing in seminary classes and daily chapel. Why would that happen in a church body that does not ordain women? The LCMS asked both seminaries to begin training deaconesses. Since the inception of our Master of Arts in Deaconess Studies Program, over 70 women have become deaconesses through CTS. Because of the desire of several women who could not be in Fort Wayne full time for our residential deaconess program, CTS began a hybrid online/intensive program a few years ago for forming deaconesses. Women in this program take about 50% of their courses as on-campus intensives. They value their time of learning with professors and students on campus, but then return home to family and service in a congregation. It is noteworthy that the trust level



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is generally very high between pastors and deaconesses, in part because they have been trained alongside each other and, thus, share theological convictions.

One person that people in the pew may not expect to see at the seminary is their own pastor—he graduated and is finished with seminary studies—but over the years several experienced pastors have returned to CTS for our Doctor of Ministry Program. In response to the needs of parish pastors, CTS recently redesigned our Doctor of Ministry Program so that it is more accessible through classes that begin online and continue as campus intensives, more practical through three concentrations and more affordable through reduced costs. Furthermore, because it is difficult for many pastors to begin an extensive program, our professors teach many short-term continuing education courses, offered over two to five days, at regional sites across the country, especially during the summer months. These classes give pastors a chance to “recharge their batteries” and our professors a great opportunity to reconnect with pastors in the field.

The seminary also offers academic graduate programs for advanced theological study rather than the specific training of church workers. Our Master of Arts Program is sometimes used by Lutheran school teachers or laity who have an interest in additional studies in Theology. Our Master of Sacred Theology Program is especially designed for those who have gone through the Master of Divinity Program and

want advanced study in one particular area of Theology. This program also helps us identify future teachers for our colleges and seminaries, or those of our partner churches, as some of these students go on to doctoral programs, such as our own Ph.D. in Missiology. This doctoral program brings in students from all over the world, some Lutheran and others not, for an extensive study of biblical and Lutheran missiology. The variety of students in these graduate programs adds a rich dynamic to the experience of our pastoral and deaconess students as they cross paths here.

The seminary of today serves the LCMS in a variety of other ways beyond these programs. Seminary professors teach regularly in congregations, pastoral conferences and global mission contexts. They serve on the Commission on Theology and Church Relations as well as in other synodical offices or appointments. They write regularly for people in the pew, fellow pastors or the wider scholarly world. The seminary of today is still forming faithful pastors, but it is doing this in a variety of ways and doing much more than this as it forms a variety of servants in Jesus Christ who teach the faithful, reach the lost and care for all. 

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