

For the

LIFE of the WORLD

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P R E S S

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FEATURES

4 Real and Abundant Life

By Dr. Dean O. Wenthe, President, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Real and abundant life now and forever is God's free gift in Christ. Death is defeated. As Christians walk through a corrupt and dying world, they are called to embody real life, showing Christ to all who are dying. If Christian vision ever becomes blurred, faith in Christ again pierces the darkness with His light and life.

7 Whatever Happened to the Human Race?

By Dr. Jean S. Garton, a Co-founder and President Emeritus of Lutherans For Life, resides in Benton, Arkansas

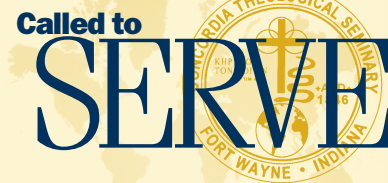
We are responsible not only for what we ourselves do but also for what we allow to be done. Abortion isn't about the right to choose or the right to privacy. Essentially, it is about the decline of human significance. That is why it is an issue for the church. This country desperately needs renewal and restoration, but this country is going nowhere unless the church goes there first.

10 Avoiding the Fence: Pro-life Education in Preparation for the Parish

By Mrs. Maggie Karner, Director of Life Ministries for the LCMS World Relief/Human Care, St. Louis, Missouri

This is where our Lutheran theology, with its proper distinction between Law and Gospel and its roots firmly planted at the foot of the cross, becomes so precious. This theology has so much to offer to people who are struggling with difficult life and death issues. It holds out the real hope of forgiveness and reconciliation, and our Catechism provides a wonderful window with which to examine these issues in the light of God's Word.

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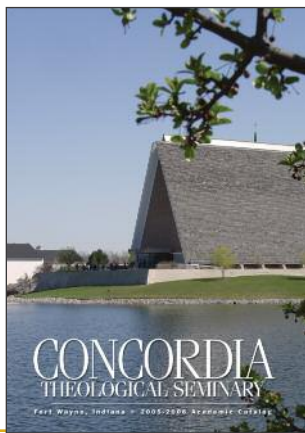
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“They Bear Witness to Christ, the Scriptures, and the New

By Dr. Charles A. Gieschen

Since being called to teach at Concordia Theological Seminary in 1996, I have been frustrated that our curriculum did not require more study of the Gospels. There is a longer history to this concern. Already when I began my studies at this seminary as a young man in 1980, I was a bit surprised that I was required to take only *one* course on the Greek text of a Gospel (Luke or John). I took Luke as my “required Gospel,” but also ended up taking an elective course in the Gospel of Matthew as well as an independent study in the Life of Jesus that used all four Gospels. During a year of



Whereas the present curriculum required *one* course on *one* of the Gospels, the new curriculum will require *three* courses on *all four* Gospels. Are we confident that future pastors will be blessed through seeing and hearing Jesus so much? Absolutely!

additional graduate work at Princeton Theological Seminary, I had a course on the Gospel of John as well as another on the Life of Jesus. This study of the Gospels has enriched my understanding of Jesus and shaped my life in Him. Once I began serving a congregation in 1985, I quickly realized the value of the time spent carefully studying Jesus in the Gospels since so much of a pastor’s preaching and teaching are drawn from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. In addition, the Gospels have been invaluable in my understanding of the centrality of reading Christ from the rest of the Scriptures, including the Old Testament. As Jesus told fellow Jews of His day: “It is they [the Scriptures] that bear witness to Me” (John 5:39).

It was not, however, primarily my personal experience that contributed to some significant changes to the study of the Scriptures in our new curriculum that will begin this fall. If you were to ask faithful Lutherans who fill the sanctuaries of congregations across the globe what they want to see in their pastor, the description that would regularly be repeated is this: “A pastor who knows the Scriptures well,

proclaims Christ clearly from them, and lives the life of Christ in serving his flock as well as the world.” It is just such a “view from the pew” that has helped shape many courses in our new curriculum, including the courses that involve the careful study of the Scriptures in the original languages of Hebrew and Greek (what is known as “Exegetical Theology”).

The centrality of God’s revelation in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus has been shown in the church for centuries through the prominent use of the four Gospels in worship and teaching. Of all the Scriptures that “bear witness” to Christ, none do it more powerfully than the Gospels as they fix our eyes and ears on the climax of God’s redemption of fallen creation: Christ’s death and resurrection. Even as the four Gospels have a dominant role among the Scriptures that are read and preached in worship, so also they have become a more dominant part of the formation of future pastors at our seminary. Two of the first courses every future pastor will take are Gospels I and Gospels II. The first Gospels course will introduce students to the interpretation of Scripture through an intensive study of Matthew. Not only will students have professors who “open” to them this Gospel in class lectures (Luke 24:32), but students will also be engaged in this process through weekly small group sessions focusing on the interpretation of a specific text from Matthew. The principles and process of interpretation will be learned by seeing how Jesus and Matthew interpret the Old Testament. Lutherans will be practicing what we preach about *sola scriptura* (the Scriptures are the only source and norm of Christian faith and life) by learning the doctrines of the Virgin Birth, substitutionary atonement, Baptism, sanctification, the Lord’s Supper, the mission of the church, and much more from the narrative of Matthew. Gospels II will continue this pattern by studying major sections of the Gospel of Luke and some key portions of Mark. This immersion into the life and teaching of Jesus will not only be at the start of a student’s life here, but will be capped off in the final year with a course on the Gospel of John (Gospels III). Whereas the present curriculum required *one* course on *one* of the

Me:” Curriculum

Gospels, the new curriculum will require *three* courses on all *four* Gospels. Are we confident that future pastors will be blessed through seeing and hearing Jesus so much? Absolutely!

Nor is that all. To cultivate the habit and practice of using the Greek text of the Gospels in preaching, students in this new curriculum will take Greek Readings during their two years prior to vicarage. This course will meet for one hour each week in groups of four to seven students with one professor in order to study the Gospel reading for the following Sunday and how it should be preached. An accent of the new curriculum is the small group setting in order to encourage future pastors to *speak* about texts that they will soon have to *preach* and *teach*!

A similar approach will be used with our Old Testament course sequence. Rather than requiring only courses on Genesis and Isaiah, we will now require Pentateuch I (Genesis), Pentateuch II (Exodus, with a few selections from Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), Major Prophets (Isaiah, with selections from Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel), and Psalms (an interdisciplinary course that will focus on both the interpretation of individual psalms and their use in worship). Furthermore, whereas the old curriculum required one course in the Apostle Paul’s epistles (Romans *or* Galatians), students will now take “Pauline Epistles” which will focus on key portions of *both* Galatians and Romans, as well as several important selections from other letters of Paul.

As you can see, at the heart of this “new” curriculum is something quite “old”: the Scriptures, especially the Gospels! Students will hear Jesus, see Jesus, and be formed by Jesus for the mission He has given to the church. May the Chief Shepherd say of shepherds formed at this seminary: “They know Me well through the Scriptures that shape sermons and service which bear witness to Me!”

Dr. Charles Gieschen is an Associate Professor and Chairman of the Exegetical Theology Department at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

