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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).

FEATURES

4 Distinctively Lutheran Worship

By Jon D. Vieker

The seminaries of our Synod do well in preparing future pastors when they teach and model for their students a distinctly Lutheran approach to worship. It begins with a faculty that fully and passionately understands and embraces what it is to be distinctly Lutheran in a 21st century context. It is reinforced by a vibrant and healthy worship life that regularly and consistently trumpets a full-throated Gospel proclamation into the ears of seminarians and their families.

7 Distinctively Lutheran Teaching

By Charles A. Gieschen

Concordia Theological Seminary (CTSFW), Fort Wayne, has become known internationally as a bastion of faithful biblical teaching that is boldly Lutheran. We even have been referred to as the Wittenberg of the 21st century! The reason for such a reputation is the distinctly Lutheran teaching and learning that happens in our pastoral and deaconess formation programs.

10 Distinctively Lutheran in Word and Practice

By Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

A seminary is more than an academic institution. It is a community that brings together uniquely gifted individuals—future pastors and deaconesses eager to serve in works of mercy, and lay leaders committed to Christ's mission—who will go forth in dedicated service with the Gospel of Christ for the life of the world.

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Distinctively Lutheran in Word and

As a church historian, I receive a lot of invitations to speak at anniversaries. In the last two months I've spoken at a 90th, a 100th and a 150th! It is a great privilege to spend time with the people of God in very specific locations as they recall their heritage, celebrate their present, and prepare for a vibrant future in mission.



As Lutherans, we are passionate about digging deeply in the Scripture and in sharing with others the saving good news of Christ and the gifts we've been given. Our graduates leave with that passion and zeal for reaching the lost, teaching and sharing all that we've been given.

One thing I nearly always say in these settings is that anniversaries are, in fact, more about the future than they are about the past. A focus on merely the past can lead to reflections on a "golden age" when things were at least perceived to be better. That can result in a passive pining for happier days.

But God's Church is about Christ in action. The Church's culture is unique. It is the dynamic setting of the Spirit's activity in calling, gathering, enlightening and sanctifying the whole Christian Church on earth (Luther's *Small Catechism*, Explanation of the Third Article). As such the Church is always at work—and more than that, Christ is always at work through His Spirit in the Church.

When the faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary (CTSF), Fort Wayne, revised the Master of Divinity curriculum several years ago, it very intentionally used this understanding of the Church as the basis of its work. Knowing that the Church is unlike any other institution, the faculty sought to organize the formation of pastors around the distinctive pastoral acts of preaching, baptizing and celebrating the Lord's Supper. That is to say, pastoral formation occurs within the context of the means

that Christ uses to birth, grow and sustain His Church here in the United States and throughout the world.

In many ways this is not a new departure; rather it recaptures the best of Lutheran practice from its inception. Born in the context of higher education, the Lutheran tradition has always focused strongly on the *fides quae*, "the faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3), recognizing that such knowledge finds its application in the *fides qua*, personal faith that trusts in Christ as Savior. As one of the great theologians of Lutheranism put it:

Theology proceeds from God, teaches us about God, and leads us to God. Only theology is the light of our mind, the healing remedy of our will, the antidote against sin, and the most effective stimulant for true piety. Only theology unites us with God and God with us. It is the stairway from earth to heaven. By it we ascend to heaven, and God descends to us and overwhelms us with heavenly gifts of every description. And so earth becomes to us a heaven, and heaven and earth are the same to us, and God becomes our portion. In theology we who are on earth teach those things,

Practice

By Lawrence R. Rast, Jr.



Final-year seminarians prepare for Candidate Call Service, April 2017.

the knowledge of which continues even in heaven. By means of theology the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the dumb speak, the dead are given life; men are made partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). Such is the high value we place on the study of theology. “The declaration of Thy words giveth light and giveth understanding to little ones.” Psalm 119:130.¹

Of course, academics are of great importance in any institution of higher education, and the faculty is at the center. Daniel Aleshire, recently retired executive director of the Association of Theological Schools, captures the central role that a faculty plays in the life of a seminary.

These people, in their own ways, did not merely teach the theological curriculum, they became the curriculum. In them, there was a “wisdom pertaining to responsible life in faith.” They had studied hard for years and grappled with ideas and texts, and in the end, they had more than the sum of the intellectual work they had done—Christianity’s hopes and longings had taken up residence in them. The theological curriculum does not consist merely of courses and degree requirements. Perhaps more importantly, it consists of teachers and others who so embody theological wisdom that they form a cloud of witnesses who have become texts worthy of study. Theological schools are full of faculty like these.²

But a seminary is more than an academic institution. It is a community that brings together uniquely gifted individuals—future pastors and deaconesses eager to serve in works of mercy, and lay leaders committed to Christ’s mission—who will go forth in dedicated service with the Gospel of Christ for the life of the world. Faculty are first and foremost pastors, who model pastoral practice in their engagement with the students. The entire community—the Board of Regents, the faculty, the staff and the students—together are engaged in the Seminary’s mission to form students in Jesus Christ who teach the faithful, reach the lost and care for all.

As Lutherans, we are passionate about digging deeply in the Scripture and in sharing with others the saving good news of Christ and the gifts we’ve been given. Our graduates leave with that passion and zeal for reaching the lost, teaching and sharing all that we’ve been given.

In the end, however, we recognize it is all preparatory. The Seminary prepares and the Church assigns. However, it is our Lord Christ who sends. We are thankful for the great privilege of partnering with the larger Church here in the United States and throughout



CTSWF President Rast, Deaconess Amy Rast and Dr. James Bushur with first-year deaconess students at Opening Service 2017.

the world in forming future servants who will lead their communities in faithful confession and practice. As one author has reflected on this:

Christians understand congregations to be a primary mode—arguably *the* primary mode—through which the Christian gospel is organizationally embodied and made visible. They are settings in which people encounter the meaning of the gospel in word and sacrament, grow in their understanding and commitment to it, experience the community and support of fellow believers, and are empowered to participate in the church’s ministry and mission.³

The Church is always entering a new day. We may romantically pine for an imagined golden age of the past, but the Church’s history shows that our life together this side of heaven will be as fellow combatants in the Church Militant. Like our predecessors, we are continually entering a new day. What that future will look like is uncertain. But the promise of Christ is sure: His Church will prevail (Matt. 16:18). 🏰

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- 1 Abraham Calov, cited in Robert D. Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, vol. 1 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1970), 217.
- 2 Daniel Aleshire, *Earthen Vessels: Hopeful Reflections on the Work and Future of Theological Schools* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2008), 33.
- 3 Jackson Carroll, *God’s Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 11.

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