

RECOGNIZING PASTOR MATERIAL IDENTIFYING AND FORMING FUTURE PASTORS

At Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW), we are deeply blessed by the men who come through our doors, men sent from congregations across The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Every new student represents years of faithful formation by families and congregations who have nurtured them in the Christian faith.

By Matthew Wietfeldt

In homes, parents raise their children to love the Lord, treasure His Word, sing the hymns of the church, and delight in the rhythm of the liturgy. In congregations, pastors and people live out their vocations together through the proclamation of the Gospel, administration of the Sacraments, and passing on the faith from one generation to the next. This steady and faithful work lays the foundation for everything we do at CTSFW for our future pastors. When these men arrive on campus, already shaped by Word and Sacrament, our Lutheran Confessions, and our liturgical heritage, we have the privilege of continuing that formation, preparing them for the sacred task of shepherding Christ's flock.

Biblical Pastoral Qualifications

This work of formation is rooted in God's Word and the biblical qualifications for the pastoral office. Pastors are called to preach Christ crucified and to administer His gifts of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Anyone who has spent time with a pastor knows the work is heavy. The Office of the Holy Ministry carries strain, responsibility, and spiritual opposition. No man can bear such a burden on his own.

Only the Holy Spirit equips a pastor to serve. He does not stand on his own authority but acts in the stead and

by the command of the Lord. That is why St. Paul takes such care in describing the character of those called to this office. In 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9, he speaks of men who are trustworthy, faithful in marriage, self-controlled, sound in doctrine, and upright in life. They are to be sober-minded, hospitable, gentle, and able to teach. They must not be quarrelsome or greedy, but content and grounded. They are to manage their households well and earn respect even from those outside the church.

The bar is high because the work is hard, and the devil is trying to stop the message of the Gospel from being shared. The pastor stands on the front lines of a spiritual battle, tempted at times to despair or to give up. Yet by God's grace, he is forgiven, called, and placed into the office. He is armed with the Word and Sacraments, the weapons that endure.

What Makes a Good Candidate for Seminary?

So, what kind of man should consider studying at seminary and, God willing, submit himself to the church for pastoral ministry? The answer is not the "perfect man." No one comes with every gift in place. Instead, a good potential seminarian is one who is ready to be formed by Christ, by His Word, and by His church for a lifetime of service.



CTSFW students Ryan Skove and Benjamin Wessel talk at coffee hour after chapel.

At CTSFW, men are shaped not only by study but by daily worship, community life, and the challenges of formation together. Four qualities in particular stand out: **personal character, academic readiness, pastoral disposition, and vocational commitment.**

Personal Character

A man preparing to study at CTSFW should be one who is growing and continuing to grow in qualities like integrity, humility, emotional maturity, and resilience.

Integrity, revealed by strong character and principled action, builds trust. Humility keeps him focused on service rather than self-promotion. Emotional maturity steadies him when he encounters conflict or responsibility. Resilience allows him to keep going when ministry feels hard or thankless.

These traits are never perfect, but the willingness to grow in them is essential. At the seminary, men are tested and refined. In the parish, these traits sustain them as faithful shepherds in joy and trial.

Academic and Intellectual Readiness

Seminary study is rigorous. A pastor must be prepared to handle the Scriptures faithfully, to know the Confessions deeply, and to think theologically about the many situations

he will face in ministry. This rigorous and thorough seminary study allows the pastor to help and guide his congregation in this increasingly complex world.

This takes discipline, good study habits, and a teachable mind. At CTSFW, the classroom is not simply a place to learn facts. It is a workshop for learning to see every question of life and ministry through the lens of God's Word. That means wrestling with hard questions, thinking critically and faithfully, and learning to communicate the faith clearly in both writing and preaching.

Academic readiness, joined with a spirit willing to learn, equips a man to proclaim the Gospel joyfully with depth and pastoral care.

Pastoral Disposition

Even the best academic training must be joined with a heart for people. Pastoral ministry is, at its core, about loving and serving God's people.

A man with a pastoral disposition is open, welcoming, and empathetic. He listens well, speaks kindly, and shows compassion in great and small ways. He can comfort the grieving, encourage the struggling, and rejoice with those who rejoice. He values community and works well with people of different ages and backgrounds. He is a leader.

This disposition is cultivated at the seminary not only in the classroom but in the chapel, in the dining hall,



First-year students enter Kramer Chapel at the Opening Service of the 180th Academic Year September 8.

and in the community's daily life. Later, in the parish, it enables the pastor to build trust, form relationships, lead, and apply God's Word faithfully in the lives of His people.

Practical and Vocational Commitment

Finally, seminary life requires commitment. Formation is not only academic but a way of life. A man preparing for ministry must learn to manage his time, work diligently, and balance study with worship, service, and family.


Pastoral ministry is not a career but a vocation, a response to God's call to serve His people with Word and Sacrament. That conviction shapes the way a student approaches every part of his formation. For married students, family support is a vital part of this journey. Spouses and children share in the challenges and joys of seminary life. Our families are shaped by this community through the rhythm of our worship life together, through the people that we live with day in and day out, and with the people praying for and supporting our seminary and seminarians throughout the church. Through these residential experiences, the seminarian's family is also formed to walk alongside him as he prepares for service.

These habits of discipline and devotion, learned during seminary, will sustain a pastor through the many challenges and blessings of his life of service.

Shaped by Christ for His Church

At Concordia Theological Seminary, we strive to send out men of polish and conviction, humility and confidence. But above all, we strive to form servants for Christ's church. Personal character, academic readiness, pastoral disposition, and vocational commitment provide the foundation for faithful ministry.

These qualities are nurtured, tested, and strengthened at CTSFW in a community rooted in Word and Sacrament. Here, men are prepared not simply to bear the title of pastor but to live and lead as shepherds of Christ's flock, proclaiming Him crucified and risen for the life of the world. This is what the world needs more than anything.

CTSFW seeks men who are ready and willing to take on this challenge for the sake of the church: men who are academically capable, emotionally steady, relationally compassionate, and vocationally committed to the sacred task of pastoral ministry in the LCMS. The church needs faithful shepherds. If you feel that the Lord might be calling you to this service, now is the time to start the conversation. 



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