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The Move to Fort Wayne: The “How,” the “What,” and the “Why”

David P. Scaer

I. Why Two Seminaries?

Both seminaries of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) can trace their origins back to the synod’s founding.¹ Thus, there has never been a time when the LCMS has been without two seminaries. Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, modeled more closely what the first LCMS leaders experienced in Germany (a “theoretical seminary”), and Concordia Theological Seminary, which would be associated with the city of Springfield, Illinois, for a century (1875–1976), was driven not by a prior model of education but by a desire to find an efficient way to provide pastors as quickly as possible (a “practical seminary”).² It was not that their teachings and goals to prepare pastors made them different, but that each seminary had taken root in different contexts. This shaped how they saw themselves and how they were seen in the LCMS, which supported both. Attempts at resolving differences between how pastors were prepared in Germany and how higher education evolved in America was another factor in how our seminaries would grow and change over time. Germany and America had parallel but not identical systems of education.

II. Education in America

American education has three layers: elementary or grammar school, high school, and college. Post-baccalaureate education appeared in the nineteenth century. Though the goal of some of our governmental leaders now is to assure everyone an opportunity for a college education, it was not so long ago that most of the population attended no more than an elementary or grammar school. Upon completion, people in the cities went out to seek their fortunes and those in

¹ Walter A. Baepler, *A Century of Blessing: Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, 1846–1946* (Springfield, Ill.: Concordia Theological Seminary, 1946), 11–12.

² Erich H. Heintzen, *Prairie School of the Prophets: The Anatomy of a Seminary, 1846–1976* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1989), 54–56; Herbert George Bredemeier, *Concordia College, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 1839–1957* (Fort Wayne, Ind.: Fort Wayne Public Library, 1978), 315–322.

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agricultural areas took over the family farm. In the prairie states in which the LCMS established congregations, elementary education was often provided by the church. Where it was provided by local government, one-room schoolhouses accommodated children of all grades living within walking distance of these schools. Later, high schools were established and their diplomas were regarded as the passports to success, and still are in some places. Some of us may have grandparents who had no more than an elementary education and went on to live contented and successful lives. With the population shifting to the larger cities and then the more affluent suburbs, not only is a college education seen as a key to success but almost as a constitutional right to which all are entitled. Whereas post-baccalaureate education was rare at the beginning of the twentieth century, in some cases it is now required to maintain professional status. This would have an influence on seminary and college education in the LCMS.

Things have changed since the two seminaries were founded. Post-graduate programs are now in place at all LCMS colleges and its two seminaries. What may be less obvious is how they have changed in the last eighty years. These changes, as small as they might have appeared when they happened, were factors leading Concordia Theological Seminary to return to Fort Wayne in 1976 and relating to the seminary course offerings and its confessional image in the LCMS.

III. How Pastors Were Prepared in Germany

Germany, the homeland of the forefathers of the LCMS, had a structured system of education in which only students who had finished a level of education called the *Gymnasium* would be admitted to the university, where students for the ministry were prepared by the theological faculty. This faculty existed alongside of faculties for other disciplines, such as philosophy, history, and medicine; together they constituted the university. A student studying in the theological faculty could simultaneously study at another faculty and be accredited by it. Only students from a *Gymnasium*, where they learned Latin and the biblical languages of Hebrew and Greek, were admitted to the university. Even now the diploma from the *Gymnasium* known as the *Abitur* is highly prized. The *Abitur* certificate was not quite an equivalent to the American high school diploma, since German *Gymnasien* spanned not only the four years of the American high school, but five years, and so resembles the American junior college. Entrance requirements for enrollment in the *Gymnasium* were stringent, and so at the beginning of adolescence academically gifted students who would eventually attend the university had already been identified. In entering the German university, a student did not hear lectures in a

smattering of general topics but began taking courses and hearing lectures in his chosen discipline, as for example, philosophy and medicine. In America, academic preparations for these professions are generally reserved to graduate schools. Students preparing for the ministry would hear lectures from the university's theology faculty.

IV. Papering over Discrepancies

From its establishment in St. Louis, Concordia Seminary followed the German university model with this seminary's last two years, which when measured against the American model would be equivalent to two years of graduate school. It was inevitable that the German model would have to be adjusted to the American one, and for this purpose Concordia Senior College, Fort Wayne, Indiana, was established by the LCMS in 1957. Even before this, there was a "paper" adjustment for students who had entered Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, without the required baccalaureate degree required by nearly all American seminaries. After their second year at the seminary, students received the bachelor of arts degree. In October 1971, the faculty under its president John Tietjen awarded the Master of Divinity degree to all alumni who had graduated with the Bachelor of Divinity degree. Before this, seminary students who had attended an LCMS junior college were awarded the degree of Bachelor of Divinity.

For those from the outside looking in, this could be confusing. Facing the same discrepancy, Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, awarded the Master of Divinity degree to students who graduated with a Bachelor of Divinity degree with the stipulation they enroll for two additional courses. The academic maneuvering that provided Master of Divinity degrees to those who had long since finished their programs may not have been all that necessary, since standards at both seminaries were so high that its graduates were often, with rare exception, accepted into other institutions of higher learning. Doctoral degrees in America are relatively new phenomena taken over from Germany in the early twentieth century and today are awarded by both seminaries.

V. A Confessional Lutheran Seminary

At its founding, the LCMS had no universities in which a theological faculty could be established, as could be done in Germany, so its seminaries as freestanding educational institutions were owned by the synod, whose congregations nominated candidates for professorships. The founders of the LCMS did not want to replicate the German university model, in which the particular provincial governments had the final word over who could teach. There the knife could cut both ways. The

radical New Testament scholar David Friedrich Strauss was not allowed a university post, and confessional G. C. A. von Harless was removed from his. Provincial governments had a say on who could join the faculty and who could stay. It was in the academic environment of university theological faculties that the founders of the LCMS had confronted Enlightenment Rationalism and the God-conscious theology of Friedrich Ernst Schleiermacher, which was taken over into the faculty of the University of Erlangen, where C. F. W. Walther and Francis Pieper found their theological nemeses. In America, the church and not the government would determine the confessional character of its theological faculties.

VI. The Transformation of the Gymnasium into the Concordia University System

Most of what is now the Concordia University System was modeled after the German *Gymnasium* that was transplanted onto American soil to prepare students for Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.³ The first and flagship *Gymnasium* began in St. Louis as a part of the seminary there. It moved to the former practical seminary campus in Fort Wayne early in the Civil War. That campus is now home to Indiana Tech.⁴ There are LCMS pastors still active who learned German, Greek, and Latin (and in some cases Hebrew) at these *Gymnasias*, which were established in nerve centers of Lutheran populations from California to New York.

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, was referred to by the synod's leaders on the pages of the synod's official paper, *Der Lutheraner*, as "our seminary," since all its entering students had academic pedigrees of the *Gymnasium*, and LCMS presidents and vice-presidents were inevitably St. Louis graduates. It was not that Springfield did not count, but the St. Louis seminary with its academic tradition and a campus architecture modeled from Princeton University had a prestige that the "other" seminary, which moved in its first quarter century from Fort Wayne to St. Louis and then to Springfield, did not match. It could not develop the tradition that a school with a permanent campus has.

Until the 1930s, German was a language of instruction at both seminaries. One major difference between the two seminaries must be singled out. Students entering Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, had to be graduates of the LCMS schools that were modeled after the *Gymnasium*, with their stringent language requirements. Students who intended to enroll by going to a *Gymnasium* of the LCMS had to submit in

³ Franz Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, trans. Walter William Frederick Albrecht, 4 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950–1957).

⁴ David P. Scaer, *Surviving the Storms: Memoirs of David P. Scaer*, ed. Robert Ernest Smith (Fort Wayne, Ind.: Luther Academy, 2018), 88–89.

writing every year their intention to study for the ministry and obtain the signatures of their pastors and of the appropriate district president to attest to the sincerity of their intent. This contributed to the *esprit de corps* of graduates of the St. Louis seminary. Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, would be known for its exclusively recruited student body with high academic requirements. Whatever fame Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, had, it was preparing pastors who would faithfully serve LCMS congregations. However, things did not stay this way.

VII. Houston, 1953

In the 1950s, the LCMS would take actions that were not directly related to Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, but that would lead to enhancing its academic program, upgrading its faculty, and replanting it in Fort Wayne, where it had been established in 1846. At its 1953 Houston convention, the LCMS voted to close Concordia College in Fort Wayne and establish Concordia Senior College on farmland to the north of the same city. Thus even with the closing of one school, the Fort Wayne tradition that began with the founding of the LCMS would remain in place.

This decision would have widespread repercussions for the LCMS educational system and its theology that could not have been envisioned then, the first of which was a restructuring of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, which from its founding had accepted students from all LCMS junior colleges, in which students studied from their freshman year in high school through the sophomore years of college. This model was out of sync with the American model, in which a college degree was required for graduate schools. In order to keep the *Gymnasium* system of its schools intact, at least partially, students finishing their college sophomore year would then transfer for their junior and senior college years to Concordia Senior College. This was a hybrid solution that let the *Gymnasium* concept remain in place at the synod schools, which were well established throughout the nation, and would allow the introduction of the American model: the seminary, like graduate schools, would admit graduates of accredited colleges with baccalaureate degrees. The direct link that Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, had with *Gymnasium*-modeled schools would be cut. Whatever academic and theological value these schools had was compromised, and they would soon have to repurpose their curricula, in which the pre-theological programs would lose their prominence.

VIII. Concordia Senior College, 1957

To prepare students for a world that was seen at that time as more academically and educationally advanced, Concordia Senior College would offer a broader

curriculum with courses in the sciences, history, philosophy, and classical languages. Students majoring in these disciplines would have to wait an additional two years to get into the serious theology offered at a seminary. For students with serious intent for the ministry, this could have only been frustrating. Theology was not the queen of the disciplines as it was in the junior colleges. Only a fraction of the students continued in undergraduate theological studies. With interests developed in other areas besides theology—what was called “religion” then—some students after graduation fell between the cracks and pursued other professions and did not go on to Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

In an attempt to maintain previously assured high enrollments with students coming from the LCMS schools, this seminary would soon begin admitting students from non-synodical private colleges and state-owned universities. All well and good, but this would disrupt the previous arrangement, that students graduating from non-synodical schools, including Valparaiso University, would go to Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield. Taking students from outside of the synod system would soon change the complexion of the St. Louis student body, which before this time came from the synod schools exclusively. Lost would be the bonds of a common heritage that all its students shared. This would have a major effect on the LCMS junior colleges in that those desiring to enter seminary to study for the ministry did not have to obtain a pre-theological education at one of these schools. Their survival required offering more expansive programs to attract students who were planning to go neither to a seminary nor a teachers college. To remain financially viable institutions, these schools dispensed with their programs of four years of high school and advanced their college programs to four years. Without high school programs, they were then hardly different from other American colleges.

Eventually, in all these schools non-Lutheran students would outnumber Lutheran ones, and soon the pre-theological curriculum once offered by these schools would be overshadowed almost to the point of being eliminated by programs preparing students for positions more lucrative than the ministry. Nowhere to be found were schools following the German *Gymnasium* model, in which students preparing for Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, had to know German, Latin, Greek, and, in former years, Hebrew before entering. The Lutheran climate and character of these schools would be compromised. With students no longer going directly from the junior colleges to Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and with graduates from Concordia Senior College pursuing other professional and academic goals, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, had to compete for students from non-

synodical colleges who until that time would have gone to Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield.

IX. The Emergence of Co-Equal Seminaries

Shuffling the LCMS system of higher learning might seem at first unrelated to Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, but it provides the groundwork for why Concordia Theological Seminary is now in Fort Wayne. Eventually both seminaries would be competing for the same students. Graduates of Concordia Senior College, whom the LCMS had intended for enrollment at St. Louis, had the option of going to Springfield, and some took it. What the forefathers of the LCMS had wanted to keep in place had been dissolved.

From its beginning, the senior college was an anomaly in that it disrupted the older *Gymnasium* system and did not correspond to American four-year college. Students intent on studying for the ministry would soon have the option of completing their third and fourth years of college at the schools where they were already studying. For some, an all-male college environment would not be appealing. In establishing Concordia Senior College, leaders of the LCMS did not consider the affects this hybrid institution would have.

X. An Underappreciated Theological Achievement

For most, it would be difficult to locate published theological contributions to the LCMS by faculty members of Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, but there was an outstanding one. Professor Walter W. F. Albrecht, uncle to Professor Eugene F. Klug, translated Francis Pieper's *Christliche Dogmatik*⁵ into English as *Christian Dogmatics*,⁶ which on its own merits and not just as a translation was a significant theological contribution. After completing the translation which appeared in 1953, Albrecht prepared as a fourth volume a thousand-page *Index to Christian Dogmatics*. These volumes made their way to the shelves of students of both seminaries and eventually all LCMS pastors. Long before the publication in 1957 of Pieper's *Christian Dogmatics*, this *Christliche Dogmatik* was no longer accessible to a ministerium who was less likely to be competent in German. Publication of Pieper's *Christian Dogmatics* was a monumental theological and literary achievement and has played a crucial role in making the LCMS's classical Lutheran theology available at a time when it was being questioned by some on the St. Louis faculty. With continued publication by Concordia Publishing House, it is

⁵ Franz Pieper and Ernest Eckhardt, *Christliche Dogmatik* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1917–1924).

⁶ Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*.

positioned to play this key role for future generations. Albrecht's preparation of the index and fourth volume in itself without the benefit of a computer for cross-referencing and accuracy was an equally great achievement. For his effort, Albrecht received a well-earned honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Luther Theological Seminary in Australia, which would have been better conferred by Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to whose students its president Franz Pieper delivered the lectures that would be published as *Christian Dogmatics*.

XI. A Change in the Wind

Until the 1950s, the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, was regarded as the primary institution for educating the synod's pastors and providing its leadership. Its presidents and professors served as the editors of its theological journal, *Lehre und Wehre*, from which emerged *Concordia Theological Monthly*, and *Der Lutheraner*, a periodical intended for the laity, which later merged with *The Lutheran Witness and Reporter*. In many aspects, synod and seminary worked together and were regarded as one.

Concerns about newer theologies taking hold in the St. Louis faculty in the 1950s would eventually deprive this seminary of its roles of theological leadership and the synod's theological watchdog. Responsibility for theological supervision was transferred to a newly created Commission on Theology and Church Relations, which was organized to represent broader aspects of the synod membership. In it, the Springfield seminary was given equal standing with the St. Louis seminary.

What signaled a change at Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, and would lead to its taking a leading theological role in the LCMS was the role of its journal *The Springfielder* in calling attention to neoorthodox theology⁷ and the drive to wider ecumenical participation that had made a foothold at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. It originated as a student publication around the year 1936.

How the name was chosen is not known, and the name itself, *The Springfielder*, has a kind of folksy flavor without definition of the place of its publication origin or its theology. "Springfield" may be the most popular name for an American city and could refer to any number of cities, all of which could be seen as typically American. For fans of the TV show *The Simpsons*, Springfield is where Homer and his family live. Springfield in the neighboring state of Ohio was once the home of Hamma

⁷ Exemplified by the theology of Karl Barth, neoorthodox theology accepted the higher critical view of the Bible but also attempted to maintain certain aspects of traditional Christian theology over against previous liberal theologies.

School of Theology, which was later merged into Trinity Seminary, and later into Capital University as its theological faculty.

Not many years passed before it became a faculty journal. *The Springfielder* became a synonym for the confessional Lutheran theology on which the LCMS was founded. From its inception in 1936 until 1958, *The Springfielder* resembled other college student publications in having a student editor, a faculty advisor, articles from both faculty and students, and information about forthcoming campus events. Almost since its founding, the seminary was as much a college as it was a seminary and had an athletic program to match.

The Springfielder's last appearance as a student publication came in 1958 and featured one article by Professor Fred Kramer on the danger of neoorthodoxy and another by Professor Martin Naumann on the lack of commitment to the Confessions by the Lutheran World Federation. Acting seminary president Clarence Spiegel and *The Springfielder* were alerting students and faculty to troubling theological developments at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, that would disrupt the LCMS in the next three decades. Changes were in the wind, and the big change would come when George Beto came from Concordia in Austin, Texas, to be seminary president in 1959.

This new president of Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, was politically astute. He was well positioned within the state of Illinois's political world. His height matched his prestige and stature in church and state, and he was rightfully known as "Big George." A well-credentialed man and a Texan in the classical sense, Beto was ambitious for the seminary he now headed and called several academically credentialed men to the faculty.

The editorial of the December 1958 issue of *The Springfielder* began this way: "To many readers this journal will doubtless come as a stranger, but a stranger who is eager to make your acquaintance." It went on: "Therefore, the faculty recently resolved that THE SPRINGFIELDER should be altered to serve as a theological voice of the seminary, placed in charge of the president, to appear four times a year, and to reach a wider circulation." All theological disciplines would be covered, and along with book reviews and homiletical studies, it would offer "editorial comment on questions and issues confronting the Church." Besides preparing men for the ministry, which was the seminary's original purpose, Beto was intent that his seminary have a major role in the LCMS's theological arena in addressing issues troubling the synod. He made this clear by saying the following: "There must also be the freedom to discuss these [allowable] differences among brethren," which is followed by this caveat, "An author who is compelled to disguise or betray his true confession simply cannot write with that integrity demanded of a Christian scholar." This *coup d'état* of a student journal that was published at most once a year, turning

it into a theological journal published by the faculty, was a decision by a recently chosen seminary president who said he would be responsible for its content.

In coming to the seminary, Beto already had his troops in place. One year before Beto became president, J. A. O. Preus Jr. had joined the faculty and was listed as one of *The Springfielder's* associate editors, with the lead post going to historian Erich Heintzen, from whom I would inherit the post in 1968. Mark J. Steege was put in charge of preparing homiletical studies. Whereas *The Springfielder* as a student publication appeared what seems to be once a year, as the faculty publication it was to appear five times a year with the fifth one as the seminary's catalog. If the LCMS did not know much about the Concordia Theological Seminary that was located in not-often-visited Springfield, Illinois, it would now.

Beto came to Springfield as president in 1959 and left to head the Texas state prison system in 1962, but in three years he made the seminary's confessional commitment clear. In the April 1960 issue of *The Springfielder*, he wrote an editorial entitled "Unrest in Synod" centered around inspiration, revelation, and the doctrine of the word generally.⁸ Questionable is his assessment that there were some in the LCMS who esteemed the King James Version of the Bible as authoritative and that the distinction between *antilegomena* and *homolegomena* was a problem for some. The real problems were with those who held that the Scriptures were not the word of God but only contained it. Neorthodoxy "would ultimately denude the Scriptures of the miraculous." Beto wrote:

Luther, who never developed a locus on the Scriptures, is quoted as a champion by any and all who would write or speak on the subject.

The seriousness of this unrest—we hesitate to use the word controversy—must not be minimized. The foundation of the Christian faith is involved. The basis for authority in faith and life is at stake.

In our opinion, a part of the difficulty arises from the fact that we are living on "borrowed theological capital" in the Missouri Synod. To paraphrase Goethe, we have never really apprehended the theological heritage of our fathers.⁹

After saying that people should recognize that these problems are real, Beto goes on to make what might sound like a radical proposal: pastoral conferences should give less time to practical problems and synod reports and give more time "to a thorough study of the doctrine of the Word" and he "caution[s] against the use of 'canned materials.' Guidelines prepared by joint-faculty committees are not the solution.

⁸ George J. Beto, "Unrest in Synod," *The Springfielder* 24, no. 2 (April 1960): 1.

⁹ Beto, "Unrest in Synod," 1.

Only intensive study by the brethren themselves will enable them to heed the counsel.”¹⁰

In the collective memory of the LCMS, the Preus brothers—Jack as seminary and then LCMS president and Robert as both seminary president and prominent twentieth-century classical Lutheran theologian—have a firm place and remain the object of research by church historians, yet the memory of George Beto has fallen by the wayside. His name does not often come to mind, and he along with his achievements will probably continue to be overlooked. It might not be going too far to say that if it were not for George Beto’s initiatives, Concordia Theological Seminary would not have developed into an academically credentialed seminary with a confessional reputation that would be enhanced through the seminary presidencies of Jack (1962–1969) and Robert Preus (1974–1989), and less attention would have been given to the academic excellence of future faculty members.

Changes in the educational system of the LCMS came together in 1960 to shape the future of the Springfield seminary. Some junior colleges had become four-year colleges and competed with Concordia Senior College to send students directly to either seminary. The structure of the LCMS’s colleges and seminaries and how they understood their roles evolved. Such leading theologians as Martin Naumann and Walter Albrecht had served brilliantly without advanced academic degrees. In the same issue of *The Springfielder* in which Beto provided remedies for dangers he saw facing the LCMS, Martin Naumann wrote an article entitled “Notes on European Lutheranism” in which he gave an overview of the sad state of Lutheranism in Germany.¹¹ The United Lutheran Church in Germany (VELKD) had enticed established Lutheran churches into its membership to expedite their later entry into the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), which was an association of Lutheran, Union, and Reformed churches and in which distinctive Lutheran doctrines were compromised. Maybe Naumann wrote with prophetic vision. In the summer of 1970, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, awarded several honorary doctorates to Lutheran World Federation theologians, who were meeting in St. Louis.

Subsidies from the LCMS to its seminaries diminished and had to be complemented by federal government benefits to students, which were only available at academically accredited educational schools (e.g., G.I. Bill support and federal student loans). This required that nearly all the instructors have earned doctorates. Among the professors called to Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, there were some men with outstanding academic credentials but who

¹⁰ Beto, “Unrest in Synod,” 1.

¹¹ Martin J. Naumann, “Notes on European Lutheranism,” *The Springfielder* 24, no. 2 (April 1960): 15–24.

also were sympathetic to the new theology emerging at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

XII. Faculty Transformation

Through his association with Beto, J. A. O. (Jack) Preus Jr. became academic dean and then, upon Beto's departure, became acting president. He was called to be its full-time president in 1962. Fred Kramer followed Jack Preus as academic dean in 1962. When the seminary moved to Fort Wayne, Kramer chose to remain in Springfield to finish translating the remaining three volumes of Martin Chemnitz's four-volume *Examination of the Council of Trent*.¹² The importance of Kramer's work can never be overestimated in making sixteenth-century confessional Lutheran theology available to the LCMS.

In 1966, four new men were called to the seminary, and three accepted. John Frederick Johnson, Kenneth Ballas, and I were installed at the opening service on the Sunday following Labor Day in 1966 by the Central Illinois District President Lewis Niemoeller. Documents accompanying my call to the seminary gave me a primary responsibility in teaching dogmatics with a secondary one in the New Testament.¹³

When Jack Preus was elected president of the Missouri Synod, to the surprise of many, including the man chosen for the job, the electors chose Richard J. Schultz, an articulate professor in Christian education with a fine mind for philosophical issues, to be the next president of the Springfield seminary. His election took place around December 1969. Though Schultz was elected as president in December, he wanted to finish his academic work toward a doctorate degree at the University of Illinois before assuming the presidential duties on July 1, 1970.¹⁴ Around 1972, three new additions to the faculty were made: William Wickenkamp in speech, Milton Sernett in ethics, and Jon Diefenthaler in historical theology, who later was Southeastern District president.¹⁵

Forty-five out of fifty faculty members left Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in February 1974. Robert Preus's election as president of Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield left only four members around whom to reconstruct that faculty.

¹² Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, trans. Fred Kramer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971).

¹³ Scaer, *Surviving the Storms*, 88–89.

¹⁴ Scaer, *Surviving the Storms*, 143.

¹⁵ Scaer, *Surviving the Storms*, 150.

XIII. The Move to Fort Wayne¹⁶

Moving a seminary with close to four hundred students and about twenty faculty members was a logistical challenge that was carried out without a hitch. Students enrolling in the fall of 1976 moved directly to Fort Wayne from their homes or colleges. Third-year students went on vicarage and did not return to Fort Wayne until the following year. Students returning from their vicarage for their fourth year went directly to Fort Wayne. Vicarage moving expenses of these two classes were assumed by the congregations they served. Only students completing their first year in Springfield had to be financially assisted in moving to Fort Wayne for their second year. Faculty members were provided large shipping boxes in the Springfield seminary fieldhouse, and all were required to pack their own belongings in them. The Springfield campus was soon sold for four million dollars to an elected Illinois official, who leased it to the state department of corrections for officer training for one million dollars annually under a six-year contract. An urban legend circulated that in moving the seminary to Fort Wayne, the synod had gone in the red. It did not. Since leaving Springfield in June 1976, I have visited the campus twice, and after forty years the campus looks as it did when the seminary occupied it.

A handful of faculty members did not move with the seminary to Fort Wayne. These were William Meyer, Jon Diefenthaler, John Costello, Milton Sernett, John Frederick Johnson, William Wickenkamp, Lorman Petersen, Victor Bohlmann, and James Weis, who continued his residence in Springfield. Staff librarian Dale Hartmann went to Christ College (now Concordia University) at Irvine, California. Added to faculty during this transitional period were Alvin Schmidt, C. George Fry, William C. Weinrich, Kurt Marquart, Norbert Mueller, William Houser, and James Voelz.

Concordia Theological Seminary moved onto a campus that was still occupied by the faculty, staff, and students of Concordia Senior College. Students in their fourth and final year of the two-year senior college program would be graduating in May 1977. Herbert Bredemeier, the college's last president, remained in charge of the campus and occupied what is still the president's office in the administration building. He had previously served as the last president of Concordia Junior College in Fort Wayne. At both institutions, he had served one year.

Seminary president Robert Preus had his office in what became the registrar's office on the upper level of Loehe Hall. With two educational institutions on one campus, assigning classrooms was masterfully accomplished. Senior college faculty were absorbed in finding new places of service, and seminary faculty were arranging housing and locating churches to join and schools for their children. Melvin Zilz, a

¹⁶ Scaer, *Surviving the Storms*, 173ff.

physics professor who later qualified for the ministry through colloquy, was retained at the seminary as business manager and later professor of pastoral theology. Edgar Walz served as an administrator and offered courses in church administration. Senior college students continued with a wide variety of extracurricular campus activities to which the seminary community was invited.

The final graduation ceremony of the senior college was conducted outdoors along the north side of the chapel with its sharply sloping roof as the backdrop. Some senior college graduates, upon the recommendation of its faculty, enrolled at “Concordia Seminary in Exile” (Seminex), which was established in 1974 by professors who had walked out in protest from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.¹⁷ Others made their way to the newly reorganized Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and a few chose to remain in Fort Wayne to study at Concordia Theological Seminary.

Students of both the senior college and the seminary ate their meals together in the dining room and worshiped together, with the seminary responsible for three mornings each week and the senior college for two. At the time of the seminary’s arrival in Fort Wayne, Martin Bertram—a translator of Luther’s writings who had been a professor of German at the junior college and then the senior college—continued to live in Fort Wayne. He was a link from the *Gymnasium* through the senior college to the seminary. Now none of the surviving senior college professors reside in Fort Wayne.

Senior college faculty members were well established in the Fort Wayne Lutheran community, and there was a reluctance by parishes to absorb the seminary personnel. This was soon overcome by its field work program, which placed first- and second-year students in congregations to assist with the liturgy and Bible classes. It was not long before Fort Wayne Lutheran congregations and their members began serving the needs of students by providing low-rent housing. Some students lived in unused parsonages. Food and clothing banks were reestablished, providing students and their families with clothing and food, including fresh fruits and vegetables and meat products. Congregations from throughout Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan made frequent and generous contributions. Off-campus employment was available to students and their wives with their diverse talents. A gymnasium allowed for seminary students to engage in intercollegiate basketball with educational institutions of similar size. Students also used the fields around the gym for soccer and had an intercollegiate team for several years. A Christian radio station was located in one of the dorms.

¹⁷ See Kurt E. Marquart, *Anatomy of an Explosion: Missouri in Lutheran Perspective*, Concordia Seminary Monograph Series 3 (Fort Wayne, Ind.: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1977).

Sleeping and eating accommodations on the Fort Wayne campus and nearby allowed for the first annual Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions to take place in 1978.¹⁸ Robert Preus provided the idea for the occasion. This type of gathering would have been difficult if not impossible on the Springfield campus. After a slow start, the annual gathering continues to attract hundreds of guests to the campus each January, and in some years it has become a rallying point for pastors with a commitment to the Lutheran Confessions. These annual gatherings are held in the campus auditorium and feature lecturers from other Lutheran synods and Catholic, Reformed, Episcopalian, and Orthodox churches. In 1986, the annual exegetical symposium came into being and both bring world-renowned scholars to speak. Concordia Theological Seminary was demonstrating that a confessional Lutheran seminary could be scholarly and ecumenically engaged.

While the seminary was in Springfield, morning chapel services were sometimes held at Immanuel Lutheran Church, at that time on the east edge of the campus, and sometimes in the second floor chapel of the major classroom building. Now in Fort Wayne, the seminary had a chapel that could seat close to five hundred, a world-class organ, and a marble altar in the chancel that grabbed the attention of those entering the chapel. A crucifix that was once used in the Springfield chapel was recovered and placed on the altar of Kramer Chapel.

The bell that was rung by each student in Springfield when he completed his last examination before graduation was placed in a belfry to the east of the chapel, where the tradition is continued. The statue of Martin Luther holding an open Bible facing outwards was set on a pedestal on the road leading into the seminary at the point where the campus buildings come into view. This statue remains symbolic of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, as it was in Springfield.

Buildings that were known at the senior college by a succession of letters in the alphabet (A, B, etc.) were given names. One cluster of dormitories was named for the early church fathers, another for former professors, and another for the Lutheran orthodox fathers. Luther was commemorated as the seminary's formal gathering place and Melancthon by an extensive book depository. Main classroom wings were named for Friedrich Wyneken, the seminary's founder, and for Wilhelm Löhe, the German pastor who first took steps to provide pastors for Lutheran immigrants who settled in America. Sihler Hall, the auditorium, carries the name of the seminary's first president.

The youngest graduates of the senior college are now in their mid-sixties, and when they return to visit the campus of their alma mater, little has changed. Startlingly new is a world-class library rivaling any similar building at any Lutheran

¹⁸ Scaer, *Surviving the Storms*, 199–202.

institution. The tennis courts have become a parking lot for parents of community youth soccer. Remaining plaques are reminders of the senior college days. One on the pulpit side of the chapel lists those senior college students who lost their lives in the Vietnam War. Another plaque on the wall of the first staircase leading to the second floor of Wyneken Hall lists members of the LCMS Board of Higher Education and the senior college's first board of control at the time of its founding.

When the seminary came to Fort Wayne, the title of the faculty's theological publication was changed from *The Springfielder* to *Concordia Theological Quarterly*. The word *theological* did not carry that much weight and did not really distinguish one seminary from the other. Stationery sold to students at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, had the heading "Concordia Theological Seminary," referring to that school.

Now that the seminary was located in Fort Wayne, whatever meaning was attached to the name *The Springfielder* was lost. Professor Eugene Klug among others saw that a tradition had been established in the name; however, when the seminary left Springfield for Fort Wayne this was a tradition of barely twenty years. Since the official name of the institution in Fort Wayne was "Concordia Theological Seminary," it was as natural as it was convenient simply to call the periodical the *Concordia Theological Quarterly*. One name suggests the other, and as the word "Springfielder" brought to mind a certain type of confessional theology, so does the word "Fort Wayne" now.

The transition of Concordia Theological Seminary from Springfield was done with such surgical precision that it seems that the institution has been in Fort Wayne since its inception. How can one explain this? It may be that Concordia Theological Seminary and Fort Wayne were meant for each other as the founders of the LCMS and the seminary intended 175 years ago.¹⁹

It remains to others to trace the past theology of its faculty for the benefit of future generations. The names of Kurt Marquart and Robert Preus are likely to remain prominent for some time. Mention must be made of the successful Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics series initiated and at first edited by the seminary's still well-recognized former president Robert D. Preus.

This is not a full narrative of how events in the LCMS and its institutions gave form to Concordia Theological Seminary and its theology. But to combine and rephrase several passages from the books of Kings and Chronicles in the Old Testament: what is not written here is written somewhere else.

¹⁹ Other related topics not mentioned in this essay can be found in Scaer, *Surviving the Storms*, chs. 7–12.