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4 Formed in Christ by Primary Texts

By James G. Bushur

Due in part to the tragic wars among Christians following the Reformation, the Renaissance movement called “Humanism” began to take on a new character. These texts are a kind of Christian DNA that bears the genes of the Spirit producing sonship. Thus, these texts are not dead words or inert artifacts of a distant past; they are living seeds that penetrate the fleshly soil of our lives and generate abundant fruit.

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By Peter J. Scaer

Our future pastors must become, more than ever, bold defenders of the faith. This will not be a watered-down Christianity or a church that wants to look like the world. We will be a church that recognizes the voice of the Good Shepherd, who says, “I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world” (John 17:14).

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Formed in Christ for Public and

The Word of the Lord Endures Forever.” That is the motto of the Lutheran Reformation. Here at Concordia Theological Seminary we take that proclamation seriously. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever, and the words of Scripture are as fresh and bracing as they have ever been.

Perhaps, though, you have noticed that some words of our Lord now have a different ring. As a child, I recall hearing Christ’s words from the Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all

kinds of evil against you falsely on my account” (Matt. 5:10-11). To whom was our Lord referring? Surely the apostles suffered, even died, for bearing the name of Christ. So also we might recall the martyrs of the early church or those who suffered in communist lands. But do those words have meaning for us today? We might not have given it much

thought, but now the meaning of such words is coming into clearer focus.

Our Lord has told us, “And you will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved” (Mark 13:13). What can we say? The Word of the Lord endures forever, and those words are for us today. As our society becomes more secular, we hear more about love as opposed to the evil of hate. But what do they mean



Witness Service

Dr. Peter J. Scaer

when they speak about hate? How about Barronelle Stutzman, a dear Christian woman and talented florist? She served everyone in love, no matter what. But because she did not want to design flowers for a same-sex wedding, she was branded a hater, then sued and fined. Her livelihood is at stake as the courts sort this out. This is hardly an isolated case. We may consider our own Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS)

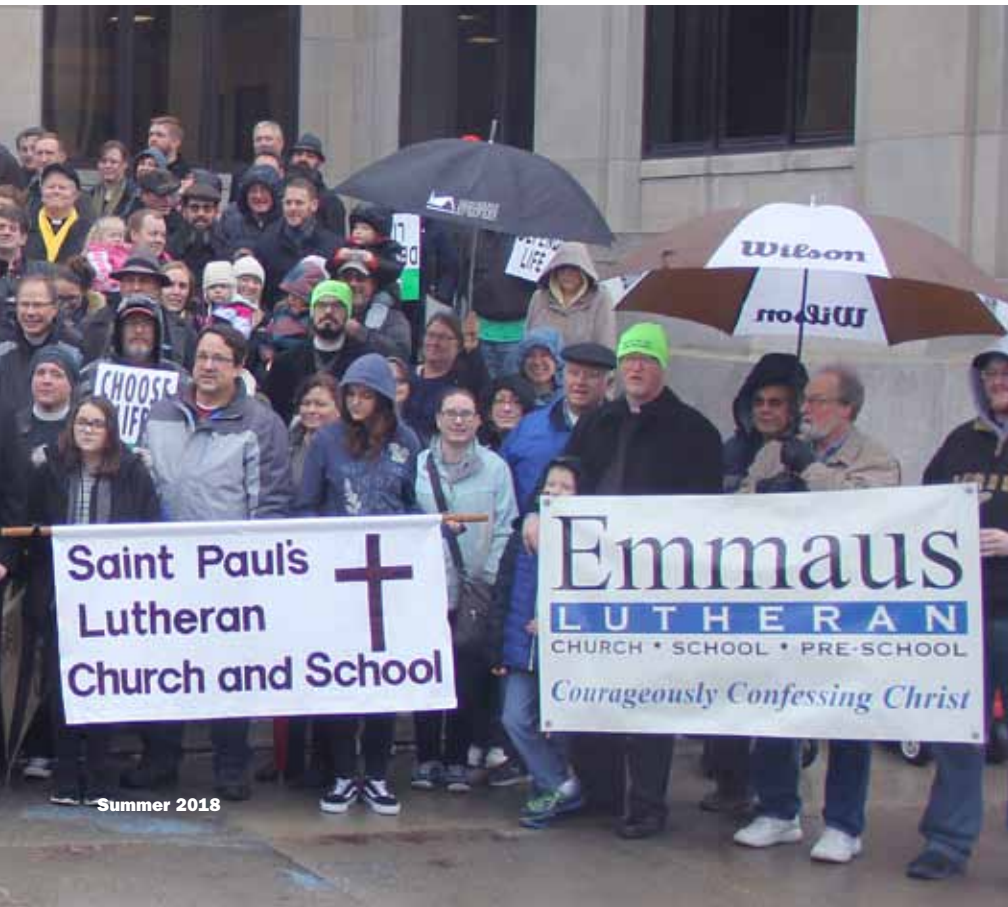
judge Ruth Neely who came under fire for maintaining the truth of marriage, even though in her capacity as a judge she did not preside over any weddings. Christians seem to walk with a target upon their backs.

The sexual revolution – flying the rainbow flag – represents a new kind of secularism. Our era is not simply post-Christian, but is fast becoming virulently anti-Christian. With the

Will we be allowed to recognize that there are indeed men and women and to set our bathroom policies accordingly? Will we be fined for not using the new gender pronouns? Will our Christian social workers and our adoption agencies be allowed to continue serving in the confession that marriage is the union of one man and one woman?

killing of 60 million unborn children, this has been a long time coming. But now with such court cases as Obergefell v. Hodges, society has turned directly against Christians who adhere to biblical values. We wonder whether our Christian schools will long be able to act according to their principles. Will we be allowed to recognize that there are indeed men and women and to set our bathroom policies accordingly? Will we be fined for not using the new gender pronouns? Will our Christian social workers and our adoption agencies be allowed to continue serving in the confession that marriage is the union of one man and one woman? With the transgender movement having arrived, what will Christian parents do should their children suffer from gender dysphoria? Recently, in Ohio, a judge ordered a girl removed from the household of parents who refused to give her testosterone to help her “transition.”

What then does this all mean for us at the Seminary? In one sense, we will keep doing what we are doing. The Word of the Lord endures forever. We will continue to teach the truth about our good God of creation, the One who made us male and female, who instituted marriage and gives us children as a gift. We will teach marriage as our Lord Himself taught, and we will study St. Paul, who reminds us that marriage is a glorious picture of



Christ and His bride, the Church.

Yet as we do so, we recognize that the future of the Church will most likely not be business as usual. Our future pastors must become, more than ever, bold defenders of the faith. This will not be a watered-down Christianity or a church that wants to look like the world. We will be a church that recognizes the voice of the Good Shepherd, who says, "I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world" (John 17:14).

In these realities, our Seminary is becoming ever more intentional in fortifying our pastors and deaconesses with the Word of God. Those who come here must read, mark, learn and inwardly digest our Lord's Word. When the time comes, each of us must be prepared. Having put on the armor of Christ, we hear Him say, "Do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour" (Matt. 10:19b). Fearing not those who can kill the body, we shall make the great confession to a world that so desperately needs to hear the soul-saving Gospel. Of course, this will only be possible in the knowledge that we are never alone, that Christ is our Emmanuel, who has promised to be with us. Christ is our Good Shepherd, who walks with us even in the valley of the shadow of death.

All of this seems pretty dramatic, I must admit. Still, it is better to be prepared. What we say to our students is simply what our Lord has said to us. But then there is good reason to hope. For as we confess Christ, so also He confesses us before His Father in heaven. Indeed, difficult times can be the best of times. In the struggle, the Church is made stronger. In the trial, we recognize that Christ alone is our hope, and the crucified Savior is our all in all. I cannot help but think of St. Paul, who said, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Rom. 8:18). Paul may very well have been in prison when he wrote to the Philippians, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice" (Phil. 4:4). For indeed, our future is secure in Christ, in whom we have the peace that passes all understanding.

Yes, the skies are darkening. But in that darkness the light of Christ will shine all the more brightly. What better time is there to be a Christian? What better time is there to serve in Christ's Church as a pastor? What better time might a deaconess choose to share Christ's healing love with a wounded world? As students stream into the Seminary, we are reminded of the fact that our Lord continues to care for His flock and to bring others into the fold.



Barronelle Stutzman, the Washington florist being sued for refusing to create floral designs for a same-sex wedding, meets with Seminary students after sharing her story at CTSFW.

Ten years ago we embarked on our new curriculum. We intentionally put the words of our Lord, the Gospels themselves, front and center. Even more, we began to offer a new set of courses based on our Christian identity. In a world in which we are challenged, our people must be taught to claim their identity in Christ as ones baptized, who now call in prayer upon our Father who art in heaven. In a world that fears, we are dedicated to be a Eucharistic people, the Body of Christ that is fortified by the very body and blood of Christ. Our future pastors must be bold to proclaim all that we hold dear as Lutherans. We must be willing to live, suffer and die in Christ, knowing that in Him we shall rise. This we will do in pulpits and Bible classes, but so also will we shout out this good news from the rooftops, in print, over the internet, on the radio and in every place imaginable. Our God is good. Through His Son He brings

us into a new and revitalized creation. Though our world is dying, the promise of the resurrection awaits.

There is no reason to be afraid. The Lord who calmed the storms is with us, even today. Especially today. Though the boat appears to be taking on water, Christ says, "Peace! Be still!" and then He asks, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" (Mark 4:39b, 40b). He adds, in Matthew 10:29-31, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them

will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows."

This is the faith and confidence in which Concordia Theological Seminary will move forward. Knowing the weakness of our flesh, we shall rely entirely upon our Lord. His words will be our words, in our hearts and on our lips. This is the life we joyfully embrace. This is what it means to be formed in Christ for public witness and service. The Word of the Lord endures forever. 🏰

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