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For the Life of the World

PUBLISHER

Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr.
President

PUBLISHER ASSISTANT

Carrie M. O'Donnell

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Colleen M. Bartzsch

EDITOR

Rebecca S. Ahlersmeyer

COPY EDITOR

Trudy E. Behning

ART DIRECTOR

Steve J. Blakey

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Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture verses are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

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Looking at Lutheranism today, one would ask how have we gotten where we are? What factors have helped us to become a worldwide reality? How has our identity been nurtured over time? Any answers provided would have to include the contribution of CTSFW. There can be no doubt over the Seminary’s pivotal role in the inculcation of Lutheran identity among people both here in North America and in all other continents. Our Seminary has become a hub in which foreign and national students converge and leave fully loaded with theological fuel.

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Among the Peoples:

Reflecting on Our Seminary's Mission Responsibility

K. Detlev Schulz



Photo: Erik M. Lunsford/The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

Looking at Lutheranism today, one would ask how have we gotten where we are? What factors have helped us to become a worldwide reality? How has our identity been nurtured over time?



Through its programs (the Master of Divinity, Master of Arts in Deaconess Studies, the STM here and in Gothenburg, the Doctor of Ministry, and the PhD in Missiology and Theological Studies), it sends back home well-informed and soundly-tested theologians who will confess with conviction their faith in the authority of Scripture and in the *Book of Concord* as the true explanation of Scripture. They affirm *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, and *solo verbo* not as mere slogans, but as true descriptions of how God grants salvation to humanity regardless of location and race.

Any answers provided would have to include the contribution of CTSFW. There can be no doubt over the Seminary's pivotal role in the inculcation of Lutheran identity among people both here in North America and in all other continents. Our Seminary has become a hub in which foreign and national students converge and leave fully loaded with theological fuel. That's how it has been for 175 years now. The Seminary receives these students with gratitude and joy. Through its programs (the Master of Divinity, Master of Arts in Deaconess Studies, the STM here and in Gothenburg, the Doctor of Ministry, and the PhD in Missiology and Theological Studies), it sends back home well-informed and soundly-tested theologians who will confess with conviction their faith in the authority of Scripture and in the *Book of Concord* as the true explanation of Scripture. They affirm *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, and *solo verbo* not as mere slogans, but as true descriptions of how God grants salvation to humanity regardless of location and race. Anyone who has attended our annual commencement ceremony has seen the pentecostal nature of our Seminary education as flags from the countries of graduating students are proudly displayed. This institution is here for all nations. From its humble beginnings in 1846 in a sleepy Midwestern town, who would have thought that the Seminary would make such an impact around the world!

A little peek into history offers insight into CTSFW's international impact. Seminary founder Wilhelm Löhe, a pastor of a small parish in a town called Neuendettelsau, in Southern Germany, pursued the vision to have Native Americans and German settlers in a faraway country hear the deeds of God. His famous treatise, *Three Books about the Church* (1845), expounded on this mission. He recognized that the Gospel he daily preached and taught has a universal call (*vocatio catholica*) and thus cannot be confined to a single location or people. He decided that he would embrace and promote this universal call by becoming a facilitator

for missions to North America, Papua New Guinea, and Australia, and our Seminary became a key component in that mission. From then on all theological education has had a missionary outlook to all nations. In its humble beginnings, our Seminary prepared young men for wherever there was a need for preachers: from Alabama and North Carolina to the freed slaves, to the Native Americans, from China to India, Nigeria, Ghana, and many other locations around the globe.

The universal and catholic call of the Gospel continues to this day. Psalm 105:1 underscores this "Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples!" In Isaiah 56:7, we read that the Lord wants His house to "be called a house of prayer for all nations." The apostles Paul and Peter were guided in their missions to the Gentiles by the principle that God "is impartial" (Rom. 2:11; Gal. 2:6) and "in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him." (Acts 10:35). CTSFW is carrying on this biblical and missiological tradition. We are determined to uphold the universal call with a theological education that teaches young aspiring theologians the one true Gospel in Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:19-20). We are committed to lives of sacrificial service: on the side of the student leaving his family back home and on the side of faculty members who teach, travel, and write for all to hear and read what marvelous deeds the Lord has done.

This focus makes no regional or geographical exceptions. North America represents a mosaic of nations who now call this country their home. This is a nation of nations, representing a remarkable configuration of people with incredible diversity who are brought together to one essential commonality: our faith. We all hold sacred the Word of God, the Gospel, and the Sacraments. The Lord Himself told His disciples and us to keep a lookout for people around us who are not like us. These are the *ta ethne* and it behooves the preacher of the Gospel to know exactly who his audience is both in terms of cultural and racial identity. The Gospel is not preached in a void.

How could anyone question such an endeavor? Is it not the Lord Himself who wants the Gospel to be preached and taught to all nations, calling out individuals and gathering them into a worshiping community? That is what a church literally means in Greek: those whom the Word of God has called out (*ekklesia*=is comprised of the preposition “from” *ek* +the verb “call” *kalein*) from all corners of this country and the world. There is an eschatological ring to that word, *ekklesia*, in that we come together here and now in a visible configuration of diverse peoples that already reflect heavenly life. It is the Gospel that does that important work. Together as preachers, theologians, students, and supporters we merely serve and obey the Lord’s will. “For how can they call upon him as Lord if they have not heard someone come to them and preach the Gospel” (Rom. 10:14). In fulfilling the mission, we all become observers of God’s miraculous work. Just like Peter after reaching out to Cornelius, we draw with him the same conclusion: that truly

our God does not show favoritism, but accepts men from every nation. CTSFW will continue its mission of forming servants in Jesus Christ who teach the faithful, reach the lost, and care for all. This is an enormous and challenging task indeed! It is for this reason that we humbly ask the Lord to grant us the resolve and continual support to uphold this 175 year long tradition. Our supporters may already belong to His flock, but they also recognize that the harvest is plentiful and that more preachers are needed, regardless of their location and who they are. This Seminary would not fulfill its global mission without the support of such special people. 📌

The Rev. Dr. K. Detlev Schulz (Detlev.Schulz@ctsfw.edu) serves as Professor of Pastoral Ministry and Missions, Dean of Graduate Studies, Director of PhD in Missiology Program, and Co-director of International Studies at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana.



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Dr. Schulz (third from right) with LCMS missionaries and some former CTSFW students from India at Concordia Theological Seminary in Nagarcovil, India, a missionary organization of the LCMS.