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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).

Cover photo: Interior photograph in the Wayne and Barbara Kroemer Library Complex at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind. LCMS Communications/Erik M. Lunsford.

FEATURES

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By Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

For the first time, but certainly not the last, Concordia Theological Seminary (CTSFW), Fort Wayne, made use of the Old Latin School as a forum for its Gothenburg S.T.M. Extension Program. Taking advantage of an absolutely unique setting and using fully the many scholarly and historical resources that Wittenberg and the Old Latin School offer, students from Sweden, Norway, Latvia, Russia and the Czech Republic focused their attention on the years 1546 to 1580, the period in the history of the Lutheran Church when it struggled with a number of theological, social and political questions.

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By Bill Johnson

We live in an age of unprecedented communication technology. Digital technology has enabled access to resources that in the past might have remained available only to a handful of people. Just as the Church has always pioneered the use of new technologies, the technical and library staff at CTSFW have worked hard to take some of the best of the materials we're creating daily and making them available to pastors and laypeople around the world.

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Make America a Mission Field Again

Inner City

By Klaus Detlev Schulz



LCMS Communications/Erik M. Lunsford

The Rev. Roy Axel Coats, pastor of Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, visits the house of a member in Baltimore.

In recent weeks and months, the political slogan “Make America great again!” reverberated throughout this country. Maybe it would be a good idea for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) to have a slogan something like “Make America a mission field again!”

We shall refrain from the statistics to prove the point. One trend worth noting, however, is that the LCMS largely has its eyes set elsewhere—abroad. It’s a field that captivates our Synod’s congregations’ attention most. In the December 2016 issue of the *Fort Wayne Lutheran*, the Rev. Paul S. Zimmerman, vacancy pastor at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Grabill, Indiana, reflected on a short-term mission trip to Guatemala. “Over the years I’ve found it’s easier to get people to swing a hammer for the Lord than it is to get

them to teach Vacation Bible School for Him.” In this way, much good is being done for churches that are in great need all over the world. However, in his provocative study “Toxic Charity,” Robert D. Lupton, founder of Focused Community Strategies, Atlanta, Georgia, cautioned Christians in North America that much of the revenue raised and spent, which exceeds three billion dollars annually, creates dependencies and relationships overseas that if stopped, or not appropriately guided with a strategy, easily turn toxic.

One would hope that Christianity in North America comes to the full realization that this one-track orientation to the world outside is not always as healthy as it at first seems. Two factors affected by that trend come to mind. First, for a decade career missionaries of the LCMS have had to raise their own support. Second, large areas in North America, inner cities in particular, are in dire need of compassionate ministries, and especially of the important message of Christ’s forgiveness that is given freely as a gift. These areas had once been the Synod’s backyard, but now stand abandoned and neglected. They deserve our attention once again. One student in the Concordia Theological Seminary (CTSFW), Fort Wayne, Ph.D. in Missiology Program is an ordained pastor of the LCMS working among the Muslim communities in Chicago. Originally, a Muslim himself from Lebanon, he converted to Christianity as an adult and now serves under difficult conditions. Similarly, another recent CTSFW graduate, an SMP educated, bi-vocational African American pastor, serves a congregation in downtown, a neighborhood in which his members are literally dodging bullets.

Thankfully, efforts to address North America as a mission field are on the rise. CTSFW has intentionally focused on this, and as a result started a formation track for students in inner-city work and church planting. Students who are up for the challenge are given the opportunity to serve a summer vicarage in inner cities under the guidance of local pastors and congregations. They see first hand the work that some pioneers are already doing. We wish to thank such pastors and

Vicarages


congregations for receiving our students and providing their support. In some cases, students are exposed to gentrification at work in places such as in Baltimore. Improvements may not be as noticeable in other areas, such as Milwaukee, but good work is being done. To learn more about that, be sure to read about CTSFW student, Joshua Ralston, who served a summer vicarage in Milwaukee (pages 16-17). We are thankful that the LCMS Office of National Mission (ONM) has risen to the occasion and struck a partnership with CTSFW offering a stipend to every student who serves in such vicarages, in the hope that some of them will one day after graduation serve as missionaries of the LCMS, not overseas but here in this country.

The LCMS mission paradigm is on the verge of shifting. The Rev. Steven D. Schave (CTSFW 2006), director of

LCMS Urban & Inner City Missions and also a current student in the CTSFW Doctor of Ministry Program, has compiled and published a manual that will serve as the blueprint for our future missionaries' efforts, "Mission Field: USA. A Resource for Church Planting" (lcms.org/churchplanting). We at CTSFW are joining in the effort to address needs in the inner city. In a CTSFW course on church planting, students receive the Lutheran underpinnings of church planting and combined with the inner-city experiences, interviews conducted with church planters and consultations with the LCMS' ONM staff. Thankfully, it is emerging as a concerted effort involving numerous parties: congregations, districts, pastors and LCMS ONM staff.

The vocation of a pastor, under regular circumstances, can be a challenge. Inner city ministries and church planting projects offer situations and conditions to which the average student may not be accustomed. But this unchartered territory offers beautiful work, work which the Lord Himself will bless because He has charged us with it in the words of Matt. 25:35-36: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me." Indeed, such people to whom our Lord directs our attention truly exist here and now, and how beautiful it is to have our Synod walk together with our Seminary in this direction. Whether or not we adopt the slogan "Let's make America a mission field again," we cannot deny it is so already. 

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CTSFW Vicar Jacob Benson greets visitors to the first domestic Mercy Medical Team event at Shepherd of the City Lutheran Church in Philadelphia.

LCMS Communications/Erik M. Lunsford