

CONTENTS

Volume Twenty-Two, Number Three

FEATURES

4 Through the Ages

By **Andrea L. Schultz**

The history of Christ Jesus feeding His people is one that cycles through the same story, generation after generation. Pastors feed His sheep, who feed their shepherds. Bound as we are by time, so often we see only the age that is set before us. But the tuition grants, financial aid programs, donation drives and Co-ops that serve the students at CTSFW are the bricks mortared on groundwork that was laid over 170 years ago by other men and women.

7 Blessings He Provides

By **Rev. Mark C. Sheafer**

What started as a three-year grant from the Lilly Endowment Inc. has now become a continuing project of “Improving the Economic Well-being of Future Servants of Jesus Christ” for the years to come. Thanks be to God for all the blessings He provides!

10 “We are Your Seminary!”

By **Rev. Jon D. Scicluna**

We say what we do and we do what we say. And what we say is that “We Are Your Seminary” and “We exist to form servants in Jesus Christ who teach the faithful, reach the lost, and care for all.” And, because our congregations do matter and future generations are counting on us, we will remain consistent in our business practices.

Also in this issue:

What Does This Mean?	p. 13
Called to Serve	p. 14
Upcoming Events at CTSFW	p. 16
Faculty Focus	p. 18
173rd Academic Year Begins at CTSFW	p. 20
Stewarding God’s Gifts	p. 22
Alumni	p. 25
Profiles in Giving	p. 26
Seminary Guild	p. 28
Military Project	p. 29
Bible Study	p. 30



For the Life of the World

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

“We Are **YOUR** Seminary!”

Rev. Jon D. Scicluna



This was the phrase we at Concordia Theological Seminary (CTSFW), Fort Wayne, Indiana, adopted as the theme to represent the Seminary at the last Synod convention in Milwaukee. The decision came after much discussion about our identity, both externally and internally. So how does one adopt this theme and make it part of what we do every day in support of our mission of forming servants in Jesus Christ who teach the faithful, reach the lost and care for all?

As the chief operating officer of CTSFW, it is my job to ensure we are all pulling the rope together in the same direction with a clear purpose, which is plainly spelled out in our mission statement. So how does one help the president in leading an institution of higher education to these ends?

First, a little bit about my background. Prior to coming to the Seminary early in 2004, I spent my career in law enforcement working for a large sheriff's office in the Midwest. At the time of my retirement, I had reached the rank of commander and had spent time overseeing law enforcement operations, as well as spending an equal amount of time as the jail administrator. My first assignment upon being promoted to commander was that of jail administrator, a position I felt unqualified to hold as I had spent my entire career working on the law enforcement side of the organization. So what to do?

At first I didn't do anything; I simply immersed myself in the day-to-day operations of a several-bed jail and learned. And what I learned quickly from the professional command staff under me was the fact that they already knew how to do the job. However, there was some hesitation when making decisions as over the years the operations manual had become overly complicated. If one wanted to find fault with an employee, there were plenty of ambiguities available in the manual.

One of the most important things I learned as I progressed through the ranks was the fact that, as a whole, we had great people working for the department. When faced with a decision, all of them wanted to do what was right and, if they were

given simple and clear guidelines, they would always do just that. So, in a short time, we boiled down the volumes of operations manuals to three talking points that would become the foundation to all of our policies and procedures: 1) no one escapes our custody, 2) no one dies in our custody and 3) none of the deputies gets hurt (the most important to me). Within no time, when a member of my command staff came in with a proposal for a new policy or procedure, they simply held up three of their fingers and justified the change within the lens of the pillars established for everything we did.

In the fall of 2012, after serving a dual parish in Arizona, I received a call to serve the Seminary as the vice president of Advancement, the fundraising arm of the operation. Again I found myself serving in a capacity that was foreign to me. And again I found myself surrounded by a group of highly capable, professional and committed church workers. They knew why they were there and they gladly accepted the challenge of raising the funds needed to provide the world-class residential education our students receive here at CTSFW. Providing the best possible candidates to serve our congregations either as pastors or other professional church workers is not an easy task, and in today's world it's expensive. It is these committed fundraisers, working with the generous members of the LCMS, who provide for the majority of our students' tuition as well as the bulk of our operating budget. That is right, it is only through this partnership with the Church and her members that pastors and other church workers can be trained and sent into our Lord's harvest field where, indeed, "The harvest is plentiful, but the



It is only through this partnership with the Church and her members that pastors and other church workers can be trained and sent into our Lord's harvest field where, indeed, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few" (Luke 10:2). And, for this partnership and support, we at CTSFW are forever thankful as together we "pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2).



During the first few days in (my) new assignment (at CTSFW) I met with all of the departments' leadership and learned what was important to them. And again, not to my surprise, I learned that CTSFW has recruited and retained committed professionals over the years who knew what was important and understood very clearly the role that they played in successfully accomplishing (our) mission.

laborers are few” (Luke 10:2a). And, for this partnership and support, we at CTSFW are forever thankful as together we “pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:b).

In the fall of 2015, little did I know but a new assignment awaited as President Rast asked me to serve as the Seminary’s chief operating officer. And, in the words of the late Yogi Berra, “It’s déjà vu all over again.” At this point in my professional life I did what any of us would do: I simply looked back at the challenges I had faced before and built upon them.

During the first few days in this new assignment I met with all of the departments’ leadership and learned what was important to them. I was interested in learning how they saw their department in the big picture of the Seminary’s operations. I wanted to know if they understood what our mission was and how their individual talents supported this mission. And again, not to my surprise, I learned that CTSFW has recruited and retained committed professionals over the years who knew what was important and understood very clearly the role that they played in successfully accomplishing this mission.

All I needed to do was provide vision, empowerment, resources and the encouragement to keep things moving smoothly in our service to the Church. In doing so, again I thought of what simple, yet effective guiding principles could be introduced to ensure our professional staff would always know they were pulling the rope in the same direction. And so, the three guiding principles which we have adopted are:

Transparency. Transparency means we can take our books or financial records out to the flagpole in front of the campus at high noon and expose all of our business practices to the entire world. After all, it is not our monies we spend to operate this institution, but yours, gifted to “Your Seminary,” that your grandchildren might have a pastor.

Equality. We insist that all of our staff as well as students, from top to bottom, are treated equally and have access to a long and fulfilling career in service to the Church.

Consistency. We do what is right even when no one is looking. There should be no surprises; we are a nonprofit organization that exists to fulfill our mission. We say what we do and we do what we say. And what we say is that “We Are Your Seminary” and “We exist to form servants in Jesus Christ who teach the faithful, reach the lost, and care for all.” And, because our congregations do matter and future generations are counting on us, we will remain consistent in our business practices.

None of this would be possible without your partnership! So, on behalf of our student body, our faculty and our entire staff, I say thank you and may the good Lord continue to bless you all. 🏰

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