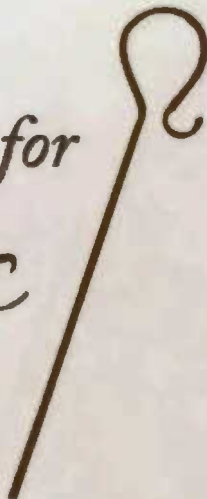




# Shepherds *for* *Christ's* Sheep



Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne,  
Meets a Spiritual Need

By the Rev. Robert E. Smith

Edited by the Rev. Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr.



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# Shepherds for Christ's Sheep

*The Voice from the Wilderness*

A cool, fall wind blew the sweet smoke of burning hardwood into the clearing where a tall, young pastor prepared to mount his horse. "Stay with us!" cried the German pioneers. "We need you to be our pastor. Who will baptize our children? Who will teach them the faith?"

"I wish that I could," the missionary softly replied, rubbing his eyes, "but I must visit the others who live scattered in this wilderness."

As he rode away, his heart breaking, Pastor Wyneken promised to find a shepherd for them. He and others kept that pledge, moving the hearts of thousands to become laborers in God's harvest field. With God's blessing, Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana, continues to keep that promise today. What follows is the story of how that work began and continues.



*Rev. Friedrich Conrad  
Dietrich Wyneken*

Pastor Friedrich Conrad Dietrich Wyneken, missionary to Indiana, Michigan and Ohio, pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran

Church of Fort Wayne and Zion Lutheran Church of Friedheim (Decatur), Indiana, knew firsthand the spiritual need of the frontier. Beginning in the 1830s, tens of thousands of German immigrants fled the hardships of Europe where farms were shrinking, jobs were few, freedoms were scarce and religion was sometimes forced on people by their governments. Hope for better times and opportunities drove them to the Midwest, where they established homes in the vast American forest. But reality often proved more challenging than their dreams. Alone in their cabins they had no church bell to call them and no pastor to serve them. The hard work tempted them to forget God.

The Lutheran churches already in America were still mainly in the East and had few shepherds to serve people on the frontier. The churches occasionally sent pastors to ride the rivers and trails of the West, looking for Lutherans from Ohio to Missouri. They preached, taught, baptized, confirmed, communed, married and buried wherever they went. Sometimes they would organize a congregation. Yet they could not stay. They had to move on. Many pioneers saw a pastor only once every few years.

From Fort Wayne and Decatur, Wyneken rode throughout the forests and swamps of Indiana, Ohio and Michigan. He worked long and hard to establish congregations and care for his flocks. Yet it never was, nor ever could be, enough. So he wrote letter after letter begging for help, urging men to answer the Lord's call to serve in America.

When few came, he visited Germany, where he personally touched the hearts of many. He published his plea in a booklet nicknamed the *Notruf*, "The Cry of Need" or "Emergency Call." Wyneken's call for help moved people to help their friends across the sea. In a little country town in Bavaria, Pastor Wilhelm Löhe responded to Wyneken's cry. Löhe and his friends raised money,

published newspapers and tracts and wrote basic church books all for the good of the emerging church in America. They also founded a school in Neuendettelsau, near the city of Nuremberg, to teach volunteers the basic skills a pastor needed to care for God's people. Cobblers, schoolteachers, carpenters, barrel makers, professors and others came to prepare for the mission to America.



*Rev. Johannes Konrad  
Wilhelm Löhe*

Although these future pastors still needed to learn more, they could not wait. The need was too great. They began their ministries while finishing their training at an American seminary, first at Columbus, Ohio, and later at Fort Wayne. Löhe called them *Nothelfer*, "Emergency Helpers," and *Sendlinge*, "Missionaries" or "Sent Ones." What they lacked in education, they supplied with burning love for the Lord's flock, sometimes lost and wandering in the wilderness.

### *A New Church Body*

*As* they threw themselves into the work of the ministry, it became clear to the *Sendlinge* that a new church body was needed to care for German-Americans. In 1845 and 1846, they met with other Lutherans to plan for the founding of "The German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States," today's Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. At the same time, they planned to meet the need for laborers in God's American harvest field.

In Germany, Wilhelm Löhe had dreamed of founding a seminary in America to prepare pastors, teachers and missionaries to the Indians. Pastor Wilhelm Sihler, who had read Wyneken's

*Notruf* and was moved to serve in America, volunteered to lead the new school for pastors. Dr. Sihler had succeeded Wyneken as pastor in Fort Wayne. The congregations of the area knew the need well and supported the new school wholeheartedly. Pastors Wyneken and Sihler had already been tutoring three pastoral students: F. Husmann, G. H. Jäbker and C. H. F. Frincke. Eleven men from Germany joined these three to become the first class of The German Evangelical Lutheran Preacher's Seminary of Fort Wayne, Indiana. Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, was born!



*Dr. Wilhelm Sihler*

### *The Parsonage Seminary*

The school held its first formal classes in October 1846. Since the seminary did not have a campus, classes were held on the second floor of Pastor Sihler's parsonage next door to St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Fort Wayne. Some of the students lived in a rented house, others with Dr. Sihler and his wife, Susanna. Still others lived in the homes of area Lutherans.

The students who attended the seminary were often poor. The seminary had few resources to help. For example, the boarding students were asked to choose between butter for their bread and sugar for their coffee. They chose sugar. Fort Wayne area Lutherans helped them out in many inventive ways. Mrs. Sihler organized a ladies' society to sew and mend for the students. A Lutheran physician cared for the seminarians without charge. Mrs. Sihler, and later Mrs. Crämer, often rode out into the countryside to gather donations of food from area farmers.



## *The Seminary's First Home*

As soon as Dr. Sihler was convinced that a seminarian was ready to minister, the man would be sent to the congregations of the area to shepherd the many new and growing congregations. In this way, the seminary combined its basic theological training with pastoral experience.

At the first convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), the new church body asked Wilhelm Löhe and his friends to donate the seminary to them. Löhe agreed, giving only three conditions: The seminary was forever to serve the Lutheran Church alone; it was to teach its students in German alone; and it would always produce pastors as quickly and thoroughly trained as possible. At its 1848 meeting, the Synod formally received Pastor Löhe's gift.

The first seminary campus was purchased in 1849. On the 15-acre estate, there was a four-room brick house. The property, purchased from Mrs. Marshall S. Wines for \$2,500, was located one mile east of town. This first campus of the seminary later served Concordia College and Concordia High School. The Indiana Institute of Technology occupies the site today.



*Fort Wayne Seminary—Wines' Home and Additional Structures*

Plans were made immediately to erect the seminary's first new building. St. Paul's congregation and other nearby churches contributed most of the cost of the new structure. The building was dedicated in 1850 and named the Wolter House, after a young instructor at the seminary. August Wolter was a talented and dedicated teacher. In 1846, he joined Sihler and Pastor Albach of Trinity English Lutheran Church as one of the first permanent professors of Concordia Theological Seminary. He was well loved by his students, respected for his integrity, hard work and brotherly counsel.

The summer of 1849 brought a plague to Fort Wayne. Cholera ravaged the city. Sixty members of St. Paul's congregation died and many more were ill. Sihler, Wolter and the seminarians ministered to the sick and dying. Wolter himself contracted the disease and died shortly thereafter. The seminary was devastated. After a short committal rite, Wolter was buried under a peach tree near the building that later bore his name.

### *The Seminary Grows*

Soon thereafter, August Crämer joined the faculty. He served the Lord at the seminary for 41 years as professor and later as president. His complete dedication to the preparation of pastors, his self-sacrifice and love for students, his strong sense of discipline and his determination to train seminarians as thoroughly as possible earned him the nickname Uncle Crämer. His wife Dorothea, who worked hard at meeting the physical needs of students, was called Mother Crämer by several generations of LCMS pastors.



*Prof. August Crämer*

The work of the seminary grew and prospered in spite of hardship and loss. In 1852, the Synod added a third year of study to the seminary's program. Called the "Pro-Seminary," this first year of study prepared students for the study of theology. A new building was erected in 1857, with \$3,000 of its \$7,000 cost donated by St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Fort Wayne. The same year, the LCMS moved its new teachers' seminary from Milwaukee to Fort Wayne. A short-lived English Academy began that year. A seminary student organization, the *Kollegium Fratrum*, was founded in 1857 as well.

Sadly, a doctrinal dispute over the nature of the pastoral ministry arose between the LCMS and its benefactor, Wilhelm Löhe. In 1853 they parted ways, ending a fruitful partnership. Yet the seminary continued to prepare pastors to serve on the frontier.

During its first Fort Wayne years (1846-1861), the Practical Seminary fulfilled much of its mission. The severe shortage of laborers had been met. By 1861, 106 of the Missouri Synod's 155 pastors were its alumni. On average, one pastor served two congregations at that time.

### *Working Together*

The combination of overcrowding, the outbreak of the Civil War and economics led the LCMS to move the Fort Wayne seminary to St. Louis. From 1861 to 1875 the Practical Seminary and the Theoretical Seminary shared the same building. During this period, C. F. W. Walther served as president of both institutions. Crämer (who had made the move to St. Louis while Sihler remained



*Prof. C. F. W. Walther*



*Combined Seminaries at St. Louis, Missouri*

as pastor of St. Paul's in Fort Wayne) worked well with Walther and the two quickly became friends. The instructors taught classes in both schools, and educational standards rose at both seminaries.

Shortly before the seminary moved to St. Louis, Pastor Friedrich Brunn had founded a training school in Steeden, Nassau, Germany, using it to prepare shepherds for the rapidly growing LCMS. Pastor Ludwig Harms of Hannover, Germany, also provided a steady stream of men to serve in America. The efforts of these two pastors kept the supply of students growing until the sons of the Synod's own congregations could begin their studies in large numbers.

### *The Prairie School of the Prophets*

**I**n the 1870s, the first full classes of students born in America began to arrive at St. Louis. The building shared by both schools soon became overcrowded. The LCMS found that it could not afford to build a large new campus at that time and decided to move the Practical Seminary once again, this time to Springfield, Illinois. During its 14 years at St. Louis,

Concordia Theological Seminary provided the LCMS with 268 pastors. As the first school year began at Springfield in 1875, the majority of the Synod's pastors were Concordia Theological Seminary graduates.



*Seminary at Springfield, Illinois*

The Springfield seminary accepted students whose backgrounds differed from those who attended the St. Louis seminary. Beginning in the 1880s, most of the students at Springfield were Americans. Some of these men were called by the Lord later in life than the usual 13 years of age. The Practical Seminary provided another way for them to train for ministry. Other students at Springfield were trained for service in synods whose congregations used English, Norwegian, Slovak and other languages. Most of these small church bodies could not support their own institutions.

For 100 years the school remained in Springfield (1875-1976). Springfield was very good to the seminary and helped it bless the church with many faithful shepherds. During its Springfield century, the school consistently raised its admission standards, introduced advanced course work and ultimately grew into a full-fledged graduate school.

### *Changing Times and the Golden Age of Missions*

The seminary changed as the need for pastors changed. German immigration continued to flood America with new citizens until the early 1900s. In the 1890s, the LCMS began sending missionaries to other nations, along with reaching out to the deaf, African Americans and others. The field that had received missionaries half a century before now was sending





*The "Coffee Mill" at Springfield, Illinois*

missionaries around the world. Between 1914 and 1945, the LCMS changed its language from German to English and its culture from Northern European to American. The seminary was well positioned to help this change, as it had already been training its students in the use of English for many years.

Following the Second World War, the Synod's first golden age of missions began. The American population grew and once again turned its attention to spiritual things. The seminary answered this need by training increasing numbers of well-educated pastors, many of whom were veterans, to meet the expanding opportunities.

### *Back Home Again in Indiana*

In 1976, Concordia Theological Seminary moved once again, this time home to Fort Wayne. At its 1975 convention the LCMS, in the hope of saving operating expenses, combined Concordia Senior College, Fort Wayne, with its Junior College in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Seminary operations were transferred



*Fort Wayne Seminary—Aerial View*

from the aging campus in Springfield to the architecturally stunning, 20-year-old campus on Fort Wayne's north side, where the seminary remains today.

In the years following the move, Concordia Theological Seminary has continued to flourish and enhance its programs. The seminary is a fully accredited graduate theological institution, offering the Master of Arts (M.A.), Master of Arts in Deaconess Studies (M.A.), Master of Divinity (M.Div.) and Master of Sacred Theology (S.T.M.) degrees, along with the Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degrees. In 2003, the seminary began training deaconesses to serve in congregations and a wide variety of Lutheran service organizations.

In January of 2015, the seminary dedicated the Wayne and Barbara Kroemer Library Complex. The building has ample space for the library's collection of over 180,000 books and for a wide variety of study spaces with views of the campus' contemplative landscape and Saarinen architecture. The library provides a place where students, faculty and staff can study the wisdom of the Church throughout the ages and add their own contributions to its witness to Jesus Christ. From this base the seminary is positioned to support theological education, not only in Fort Wayne, but throughout the world.



*Wayne and Barbara Kroemer Library*



*Kramer Chapel and the Wayne and Barbara Kroemer Library*

Today, the seminary remains true to its founding mission—to to provide pastors, deaconesses and missionaries to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It welcomes students from all corners of the world. Its faculty is engaged in the LCMS at home and in missions around the world, holding to the model provided by the likes of Wyneken, Löhe, Sihler and Crämer.

God's harvest field of souls remains ripe. Generations of wandering souls throughout the world need to see Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who was crucified and raised again to take away their sins. At the same time, large numbers of pastors—faithful veterans of the cross—will soon retire, while fewer men are available to take their place. The expense of providing them with seminary education is considerable. The harvest is plentiful and the laborers indeed few. Who will God send? Who will hold up the prophet's hands?

The faithful people of God have supported Concordia Theological Seminary and its mission for over 170 years. Through their prayerful and generous support the seminary has achieved and expanded its mission. God will see to it that His Word is preached. Now as always, Concordia Theological Seminary is God's answer to His people's prayer to send shepherds for Christ's sheep.



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Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, exists to form servants in Jesus Christ who teach the faithful, reach the lost and care for all, by bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to fearful people. By God's grace, through your prayers and financial support, we prepare these faithful servants to deliver the hope, comfort and strength found in Christ and His living Word, assuring us that we have forgiveness, life and heaven.



*Rev. Dr. Lawrence R. Rast*  
*President*

Your generous gifts are vital in this mission of preparing these pastors and deaconesses who declare the risen Jesus Christ. Thank you for your faithful prayers and financial support.

In Christ's service,

*L R Rast*

President

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