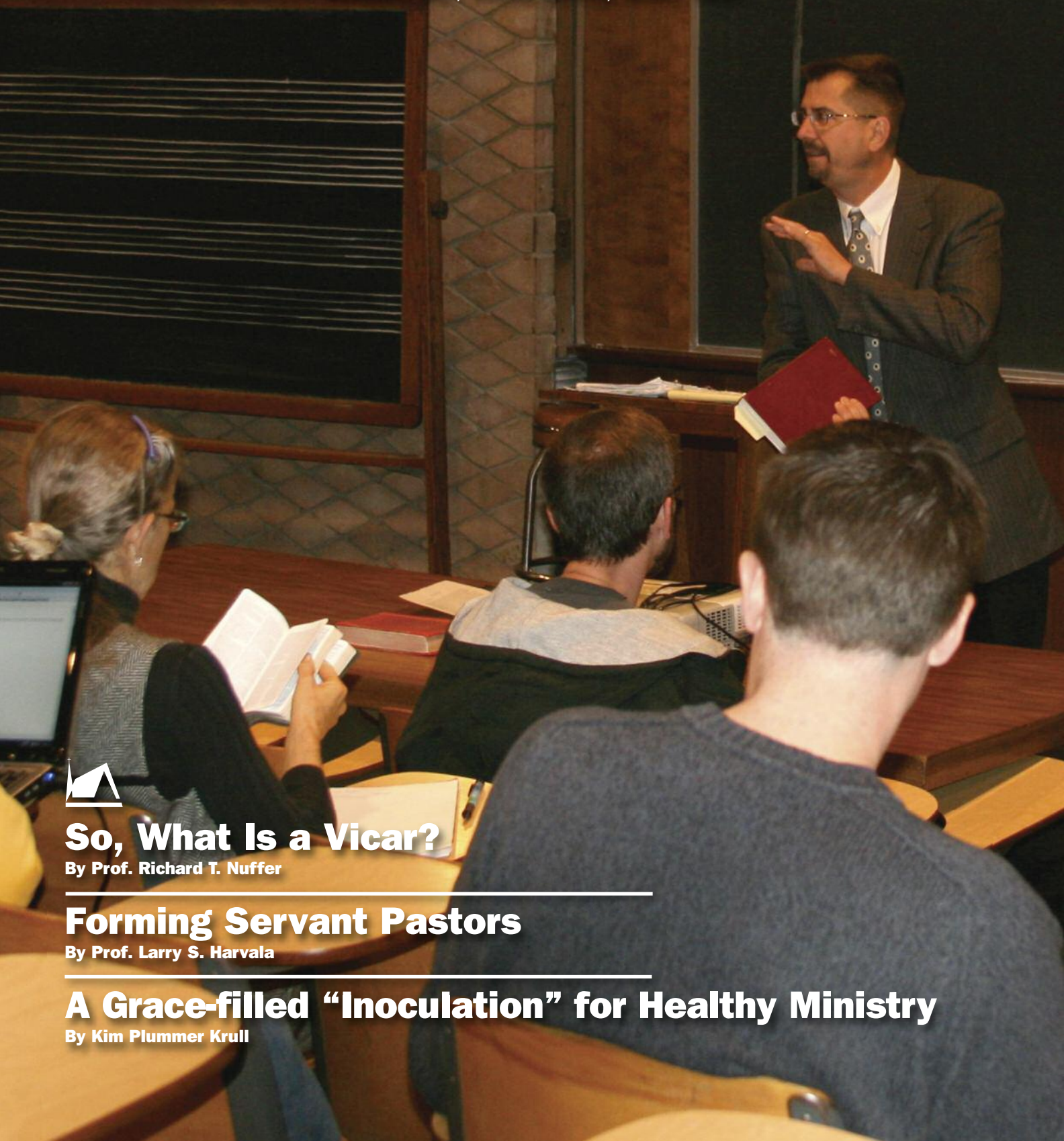


# For the Life of the World

## Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne

December 2009, Volume Thirteen, Number Three



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By Prof. Richard T. Nuffer

### **Forming Servant Pastors**

By Prof. Larry S. Harvala

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By Kim Plummer Krull

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# So, What Is a Vicar?

By Professor Richard T. Nuffer

I was serving my vicarage in my fourth seminary year. As I was greeting parishioners at the door one Sunday a woman said to me, “What is this *vicar* thing? Is that a special brand of cigarettes?” On another occasion, a man who was visiting from England said to me, “Oh, it is so great to have a vicar again! I have missed mine from home!” In the Anglican church, a vicar is a minister who, unlike a rector, does not have charge of church property.

One final event really brought home to me how little people know about vicars and vicarage. After my ordination and installation service, a woman, seldom in church, came up to me and said, “My goodness! All along I was thinking your name was *Victor!*”

Even though these people did not understand vicarage fully, we at Concordia Theological Seminary believe we do. Vicarage is a year of practical, hands-on training in which seminary students serve as interns under experienced pastors. They do so to “put legs on” all of their academic classroom training. They use their newly acquired skills in interpreting the Bible to preach and teach in the parishes they serve. They use a fuller understanding of the *Lutheran Confessions* to teach *Luther’s Small Catechism* to children and adults. They use the church history they have learned at the seminary to teach the faith of the one, holy, Christian and apostolic church to all. They begin to learn how to bring Christ to people who are hurting in a great variety of ways and to those who do not believe.

The seminary’s mission is to form servants in Jesus Christ who teach the faithful, reach the lost and care for all. This is not primarily an academic task but a pastoral one. What better way is there to teach students as they do pastoral things? They still need the academic skills, but all academics must serve the end goal of pastoral ministry to Christ’s people.

Another way of seeing vicarage is to think of it as an apprenticeship. Just as a young man was apprenticed to the blacksmith to learn his trade, so a vicar is apprenticed to his pastoral supervisor. Just as in olden days men read law in the office of a mentoring lawyer, vicars learn at the feet of their supervisors.

On vicarage, men desiring to be pastors gain experience doing the things pastors do. Who would want a doctor to remove an appendix if that doctor had not learned and practiced the surgery during an internship? Who would want an architect to design a skyscraper if the architect had not learned the skills required as an intern? Likewise, who would want spiritual advice and comfort from a pastor who had not learned and practiced them on vicarage?

The bottom line is that vicarage forms pastors. The other years of seminary do as well, including field education experiences in local congregations, but perhaps the most formative year is the vicarage year. Here is where the rubber hits the road. Here is where a student can be confirmed in his vocational choice. Here is where the vicar’s family can make sure that the pastoral vocation will work for them. Here is where a pastor and his congregation can have a lifelong impact upon the vicar through their interactions with him. Here is where the vicar is formed “to teach the faithful, reach the lost and care for all.”

The vicar is not Victor, nor a brand of smokes, nor an Anglican clergyman. A vicar is a student, an intern, an apprentice and an understudy who is being formed for pastoral ministry, so that he might teach, reach and care. Please pray that our Lord Christ will form future pastors of His Church through the vicarage year, so that they can joyfully proclaim His wonderful salvation for all. 🏡

*Rev. Richard T. Nuffer serves as an Associate Professor of Pastoral Ministry and Missions and Director of Vicarage at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.*



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**The seminary’s mission is to form servants in Jesus Christ who teach the faithful, reach the lost and care for all. This is not primarily an academic task but a pastoral one. What better way is there (other than vicarage) to teach students as they do pastoral things? They still need the academic skills, but all academics must serve the end goal of pastoral ministry to Christ’s people.**

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