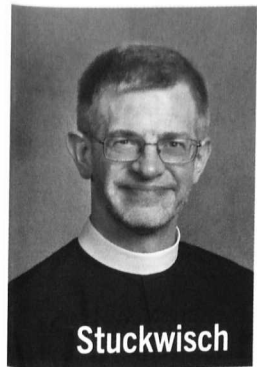
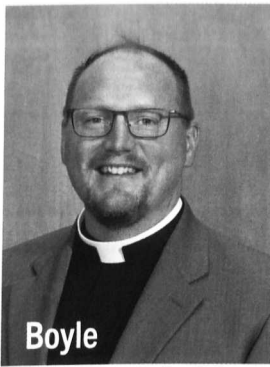


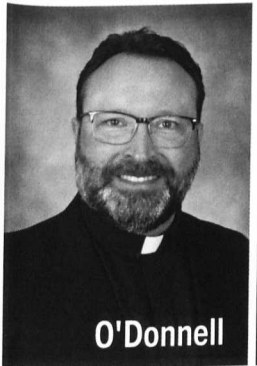
REFLECTIONS ON THE BENEFITS AND BLESSINGS OF RESIDENTIAL FORMATION



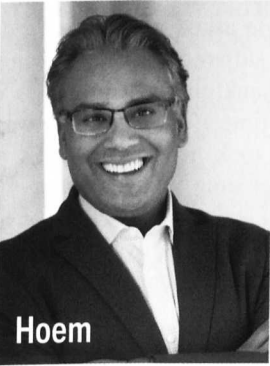
Stuckwisch



Boyle



O'Donnell



Hoem



Dr. D. Richard Stuckwisch

President

LCMS Indiana District

CTSFW MDiv 1993; STM 2003

It was almost thirty-six years ago that I moved my family to Fort Wayne and began my studies at the seminary, and I spent two years on campus both before and after my vicarage. It was not the most tranquil period in the Seminary's history, and that certainly had an impact on the benefits of being in residence. Chapel attendance suffered, and conversations in the commons and dining hall regrettably diminished over the course of that time. Even so, I would not trade the blessings of my experience on the campus of CTSFW for any alternatives. The fraternal friendships that were formed in the course of those four years remain to this day, decades later, and they are perhaps all the stronger

because of the difficult circumstances that we lived through and navigated side-by-side.

Such friendships are certainly among the tangible benefits of residential seminary education, but they are far from the only advantage to be gained through years of campus life. Whether in the best or worst of times, what happens in the classroom—face-to-face with the professors and side-by-side with classmates—in the chapel, in the commons, and around the dining hall tables at lunchtime, simply cannot be short-cutted, nor can it be duplicated or replaced by virtual classes and online interactions. I do not say there is no place for distance learning, hybrid classes, or internet instruction, each of which I have assisted with, contributed to, and/or utilized in my own teaching and pastoral care over the years. But surely in the wake of the separation and isolation that all of us experienced to varying degrees with the pandemic precautions, it cannot be denied that being together in person is extraordinarily valuable.

ON THE BENEFITS AND BLESSINGS OF RESIDENTIAL FORMATION

The pastoral ministry is embodied and personal, as is our Lord Himself, the Word-made-Flesh, who reveals and gives Himself to us and to His whole Church in bodily means of grace. Holy Baptism and Holy Communion cannot be administered except in person, and though the Word can be communicated over great distances and across spans of time (whether in writing or by various technological means), it is most naturally conveyed from the lips and tongues of preachers and teachers into the ears of hearers (Luke 4:17–22). Accordingly, “beautiful feet” are called for, that the preachers should go in person to those who need to hear and believe by the preaching of the Word of Christ (Romans 10:14–18).

My eldest son, Zachary, was an infant when I started my residential studies at the seminary in the fall of 1989, and now he is in his own first year of seminary instruction, training, and formation at CTSFW, with a wife and children of his own. Over this past year, he left his job, and they sold their home and moved from Texas to Fort Wayne so he could give himself over to the work of the Lord and the needs of His Church. Visiting with him about his classes and experiences, I am reminded of what a benefit and blessing this opportunity is for one who aspires to the office and work of the Holy Ministry. I am thankful that campus life is more peaceful and harmonious now for Zachary and his classmates than it was in my time there as a student in the early 1990s. But even more so, I am especially grateful for his time in the classrooms, and for the conversations that extend from the classrooms into the halls and beyond, with both peers and professors. I am exceedingly grateful for the personal attention that my son and his fellow future pastors are receiving from faithful men who take the time and make themselves available to teach and mentor these students of the Scriptures and of the Church’s faith.

I give thanks that my son is being formed for the pastoral ministry by his time on the seminary campus, by his frequent opportunities to be gathered together with the entire community by and for the Word of God and prayer, by the ready accessibility of such a rich collection of theological treasures in the library, and by the living and learning of the faith once delivered to the saints along with other men (some older, some younger) who will continue to challenge, sharpen, encourage, and support each other, not only for the next few years on campus, but for decades to come, wherever the Lord calls them. I pray for such benefits and blessings for all our future pastors, to the fullest extent possible. And I pray that the Church would make it possible for all those men who give themselves for this good work. ▀

Dr. Geoffrey Boyle

Assistant Professor of Pastoral Ministry and Missions
Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne
CTSFW MDiv 2009

When I arrived, I knew nothing. The first year was drinking from a fire hose. I loved it. New ideas, new engagement with the Scriptures, new historical frameworks, new friends and colleagues and brothers-in-arms. The classroom served as the guide, while the conversation spilled over into coffee hour after chapel, the lunchroom, *Gemütlichkeit*, and an ever-growing collection of books. These were the refining fires that made theology come alive.

But the most memorable and formative aspects of seminary life took place in the hospital and nursing home on the one hand, and the chapel on the other.

My wife and I both took Kantor Richard Resch’s Liturgics class that first year (she studied for the Diaconess MA). He asked us to visit “a dear friend of his,” who recently suffered a stroke, leaving him faithful but mumbling. (Thankfully, I had no idea who Kenneth Korby was at the time!) Twice a week we gathered his wife, Jeanne, and took her to Kenneth’s room to pray Vespers. I had never sung Vespers at that point. I still tell stories about what I learned during those visits. That same year, a member of the small Hispanic Ministry at our field work congregation was diagnosed with cancer—Juan, a 16-year-old boy. We also visited him twice a week. I learned pastoral care in real situations, the comfort of our prayers and hymns, and what it looks like to put our theology into action.

Then there was the chapel. Preaching, chanting, singing, and the liturgy—it was all new; it was all beautiful; it was all *daily*. In the chapel, the various disciplines found lively expression and unity. I didn’t like all the hymns, and I didn’t like all the preaching. But it all shaped who I am. For that, I’m thankful.

I remember the profs—not necessarily their particular class, but who they were and how they modeled a love for theology. Most of them are now my colleagues. (Yes, that’s still strange.) They cared about what they taught, who I would become, and how I would carry out the pastoral task. They prayed with us, preached and taught, and let us bend their ear in between.

Teaching begins in the classroom, but it carries on in the library, the lunch table, and the liturgy. When I came, I knew nothing. When I left, I not only knew something, but had a desire to know more. And what I still didn’t know, this band of brothers pursued with me, and does so to this day. ▀

Rev. Lance O'Donnell

Senior Pastor

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
CTSFW MDiv 2001

In April 2020 I administered the "Commendation of the Dying" via Skype to ✠ Don Gauerke ✠, who had suffered for years from complications related to the Agent Orange to which he was exposed in Vietnam. Don was a great servant of our country and an elder in our congregation, and—in the early days of the pandemic—the VA didn't let me, his pastor, see him in person. His daughter couldn't be there. His wife couldn't be there. His granddaughter and brother and best friends couldn't be there. Skype was something . . . but it was *shallow*.

Don deserved better than that. He deserved for his wife to hold his hand, and for his pastor to make the sign of the cross on his forehead as he administered the benediction. As Don faced death, he deserved to taste and see that the Lord is good as the resurrected Christ fed Don with His Body and Blood for the forgiveness of sins.

So much of our life is now lived virtually. Most of our seminarians interact constantly with friends and family and classmates that way, but Christ's ministry is always in-the-flesh because abundant life is lived in the flesh, here in time and there in eternity.

Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW) has always been good at facilitating the human interaction that we so desperately need—in chapel, in class, in social gatherings—but she will have to do even more in the years ahead to help students and their families learn what it is to live in the flesh, in community. When the future parishioners of CTSFW students experience the cross—and they will—they need a pastor who knows how to kneel and hold a hand and listen by a bedside, and—since many of their future parishioners will have been swallowed by the shallowness of the digital world—they will benefit from a pastor who learned how to cultivate community at seminary.

We have done well at CTSFW. God help us to do even better. 🏡

Rev. Joe Hoem

Administrative Pastor

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne
CTSFW MDiv 2012

Reflecting on my time at CTSFW, I recognize that those four years were some of the best of my life. Through study, community, and guidance, I wasn't just trained in theology—I was formed into a humble servant of Jesus Christ. These lessons continue to guide me in my ministry today.

Seminary can be intense and demanding, and the challenges—whether academic, personal, financial, or spiritual—become easier to navigate when you have a community to walk alongside you. We weren't isolated in our academic pursuits; we shared life, moving, laughter, struggles, loneliness, and sorrows. This on-campus community helped us understand the reality of caring for others in their most vulnerable moments, which is at the heart of ministry.

For example, when one of our classmates had to bury a child, or another classmate died and went to heaven, it was our shared bond and strong relationships that allowed us to support one another and lean on Christ. Whether offering a listening ear, providing meals, praying, or simply being present, we supported each other through these heart-wrenching experiences, always keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus. These moments taught us how to share the love of Christ in a unique way, which is something pastors and deaconesses are called to do every day.

Alongside relationships with classmates, we cultivated strong bonds with faculty members. My classmates and I enjoyed direct access to them through office hours, casual conversations over lunch, fireside chats, and home-cooked meals. I may have even helped one or two buy a car. These one-on-one opportunities offered invaluable insights into theological education and practical pastoral life, providing wisdom, knowledge, and encouragement for our journey toward our first calls. I still reference these conversations often.

Looking ahead, the new strategic plan shows great potential for strengthening the mission of forming servants in Christ. While residential education may have changed, its importance remains unchanged. CTSFW recognizes the need for appropriate married and single-person housing, as well as a more robust co-op to support students' and families' practical needs. Enhancements like these will help the next generation of seminarians and deaconesses grow, learn, and build relationships as they become humble leaders and support those entrusted to them in their sacred calling. 🏡