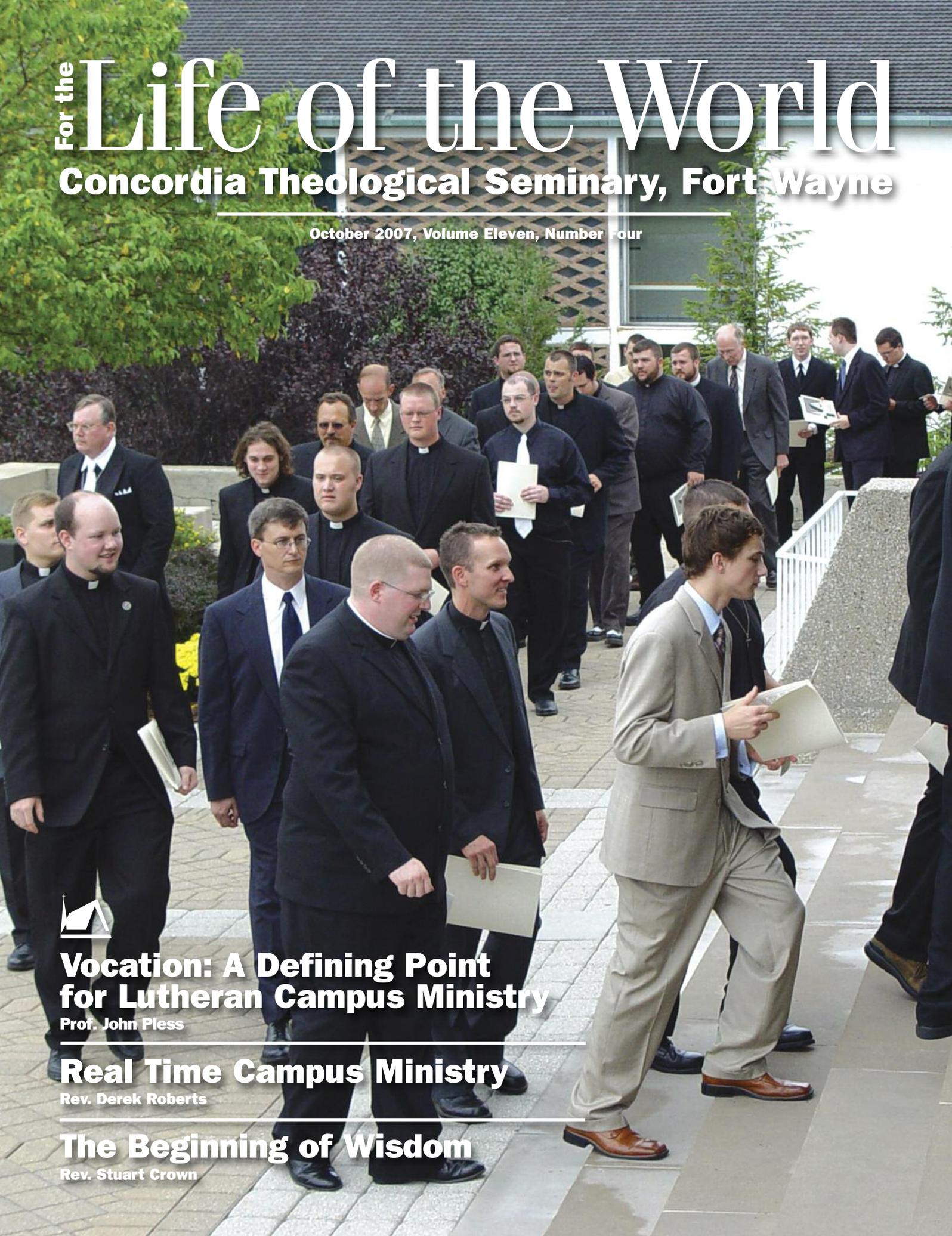


For the Life of the World

Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne

October 2007, Volume Eleven, Number Four



Vocation: A Defining Point for Lutheran Campus Ministry

Prof. John Pless

Real Time Campus Ministry

Rev. Derek Roberts

The Beginning of Wisdom

Rev. Stuart Crown

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by Prof. John Pless

Campus ministries exist to maintain young Christians “in the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). Given the pressures of campus culture, this is no small task.

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by Rev. Derek Roberts

I expect basic questions about when we meet, why there’s more than one Lutheran group on campus, plus a surprise question or two like, “Why do Lutherans think that water baptism saves?” It’s times like these that it’s good to have the *Small Catechism* memorized.

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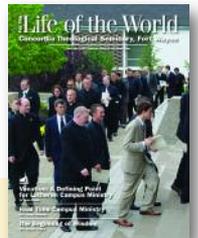
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Stanford’s physical scenery differs, its religious life holds up pluralism and post-modern thought, and its academic prestige and rigor can be intense, but the needs of the faithful at this private university differ little from any other school.

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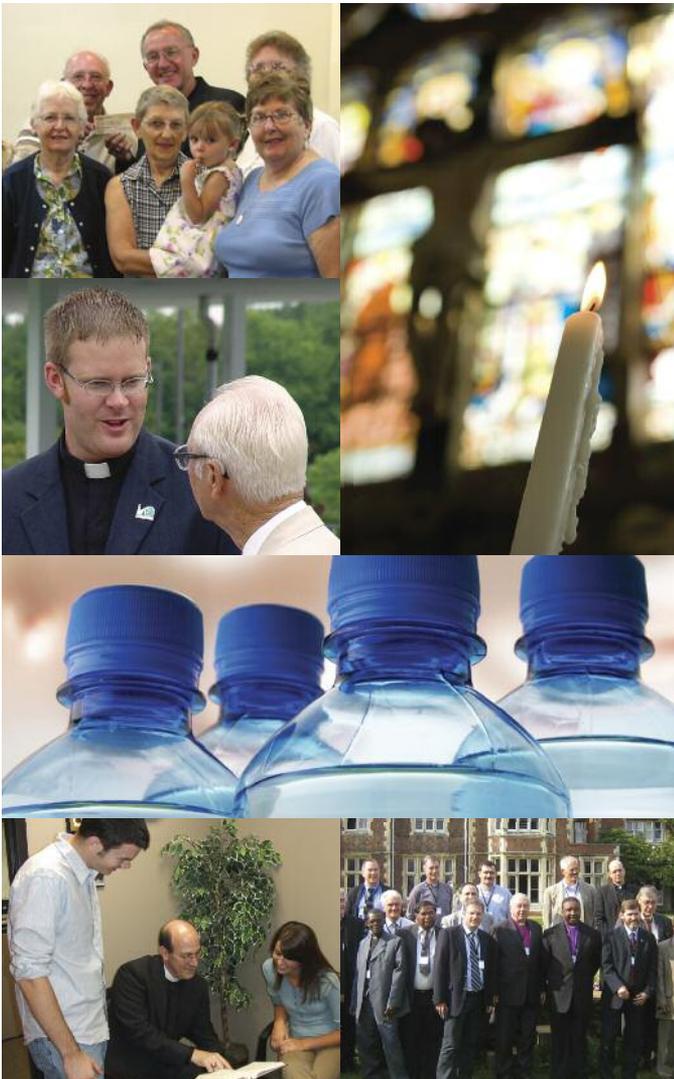
by Rev. Steven Smith

In Mequon, Wisconsin, and at our sister schools around the country, Concordias start to live up to their names. That Latin word concordia implies a connection of faith, meaning something like “with one heart” or “with the same heart.” We who are privileged to serve on campus once again get a chance to live and forgive and grow and show Christ’s love to each other - to be Concordia.



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The Beginning of Wisdom

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By The Rev. Stuart Crown

“Congratulations! Based on your excellent academic record, I am pleased to offer you admission to the Coterminal Master of Science program in Mechanical Engineering.”

Thus was she greeted in an official correspondence from Stanford University, honored with a privilege and welcomed with a distinctive letterhead. Take for granted the incessant push to refine lab methodologies, Sunday night revisions of research papers, and looming grant deadlines – common hurdles for the nascent generation of scholars in public and private institutions. And then there’s the label of “Stanford student” to bear. But how will she as theologian be challenged by the world-renowned research institution?

Stanford, a private institution, has always made room for students’ spiritual growth – sitting prominently at the hub of campus is Memorial Church – but the University’s motto, “the wind of freedom blows,” suggests other familiar and soul-proving tests: the professor who publicly has derided the Christian faith and organizations that advocate every alternative to God’s created order.

Yes, the proverbial challenges to the faithful, those that aim at the identity, security, and meaning of the Christian, seem to have gathered at Stanford and to stand aligned against this young woman (which parish pastor hasn’t warned the departing student of a freedom that leads to a slavery?), other faith-testing issues should be acknowledged. For what purpose is this education at Stanford – a reputation that allows greater flexibility of service? But what about the two-week long biology lab that failed? Or the antipathy or even bitterness in the fraternity house? Whether by a single massive problem or by the accumulation of many irritants, weaknesses are revealed, and the chastened student is urged to pray,



Stanford’s physical scenery differs, its religious life holds up pluralism and post-modern thought, and its academic prestige and rigor can be intense, but the needs of the faithful at this private university differ little from any other school.

“What, Father, are You teaching me? What am I to learn by these distractions and setbacks?”

With a smorgasbord of generic spirituality and decidedly unorthodox philosophy and practices, one could be dismissive to Stanford’s Office of Religious Life and the Deans of Memorial Church. Even though the increasingly diverse staff of the Office of Religious Life seeks to protect the integrity of every religious gathering, should we depend upon a private, secular institution to support an orthodox confession of the Christian faith as generously and purposefully as it builds labs and libraries? No, Stanford fashions students with a demanding academic training to fit them for a particular trajectory into the world, even as emissaries for a Stanford education. This private institution thrusts the student into a modern Areopagus, by God’s grace to take her stand with Paul (Acts 17:22-34).

Stanford’s physical scenery differs, its religious life holds up pluralism and post-modern thought, and its academic prestige and rigor can be intense, but the needs of the faithful at this private university differ little from any other school. Viewed from within Luther’s dictum *oratio, meditatio, et tentatio faciunt theologum*, the pursuit of scholarly knowledge and the official spirituality at Stanford often serve as an instrument of *tentatio*, demonstrating how flesh and heart may fail.

As for *oratio* and *meditatio*, Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church (about two miles from the campus center), through Lutheran Student Fellowship (LSF) and Christ on Campus (CoC) serves as their location, for we preach and distribute through “foolish means” that God is the strength of the heart and the fear of Him is the beginning of wisdom. The community of LSF/CoC is a refuge and place of solace – not an escape from the demands of Stanford, but by the wisdom and understanding that Stanford cannot produce through academic rigors. (If there are degrees of glory, they will not have been granted by any department at Stanford.) To gather at the Table of the Lord, invited by grace and fed by mercy, recreates and strengthens the student, whose life on campus is defined by merit through class achievement and surrounded by the icons of different creeds. By its regular studies of the Word, LSF/CoC reinvigorates the students with enduring knowledge; study weekends occupied with C. S. Lewis, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Christian faith and history, and retreats with other LSF groups offer the students opportunities to integrate the faith with the academic world. Trinity’s campus ministry cultivates thoughtful, lively theologians who contend in the public arena; the young woman’s vocation will be grounded in the life of faith, and will be enhanced by a right understanding of the First Article. And as those well-versed in the language of the culture, we will not be conformed to any trite caricature of Christians.

This pluralistic private institution, though facilely labeled as adversary, serves as God’s tool through *tentatio* to refine the student vocationally as one who understands creation and perceives it through genuine wisdom, God’s recreation in Christ. Christian tradition will not allow us to relinquish the realm of the First Article to the campus; and while we do not believe that we can recreate the world through our vocations, the students, in *oratio* and *meditatio*, grow as theologians by studying His creation in conjunction with the wisdom that is in Christ alone.

When I landed as a student freshly tossed into the salad of university life, the Dean of the Chapel of the Resurrection and the Vicar served me well, enfolding me in the fellowship of the Church through the Father’s Word and by the Body and Blood of Christ and surrounding me with brothers and sisters in Christ. Through Trinity, LSF, and CoC, I pray that this young woman and the other students find the same solace and understanding that I was given. 🏳️

The Rev. Stuart Crown is pastor of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in Palo Alto, California.



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