

CONTENTS

Volume Twenty-Three, Number Two



For the Life of the World

PUBLISHER

Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr.
President

PUBLISHER ASSISTANT
Carrie M. O'Donnell

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Colleen M. Bartzsch

EDITOR
Andrea L. Schultz

COPY EDITOR
Trudy E. Behning

ART DIRECTOR
Steve J. Blakey

For the Life of the World is published by Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 6600 N. Clinton St., Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825. No portion of this publication may be reproduced without the consent of the Editor of *For the Life of the World* by email at SeminaryRelations@ctsfw.edu or (260) 452-3150. Copyright 2019. Printed in the United States. Postage paid at Berne, Indiana.

For the Life of the World is mailed to all pastors and congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in the United States and Canada and to anyone interested in the work of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

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

FEATURES

4 CTSFW: Forming Servants in Jesus Christ By Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

The people, pastors, and congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have always taken pastoral formation seriously and have supported their seminaries generously. They want pastoral candidates who are “able to teach” in the fullest biblical and Lutheran sense of the phrase.

7 Financial Sustainability Today and For the Future By Theresa R. Brown

While financial health does not necessarily mean superior academic quality or programming, having a lack of financial resources would impact the ability to maintain existing programs or develop new programs, along with investment in faculty and staff as well as facilities. God has provided these positive financial results over the past several years. This provides protection against adverse financial events and allows CTSFW to have the financial capacity to fulfill its mission and provide 100% tuition scholarships to church worker students.

11 Up the Mountain By Matthew J. Wietfeldt and Andrea L. Schultz

As the Church, we must continue to lift the need for pastors and other church workers to our Lord. He will continue to provide for us according to His will. As He continues to provide for us, let us continue to identify and encourage those in our lives who should consider studying for the Office of the Holy Ministry.

Also in this Issue:

What Does This Mean?	13
Upcoming Events at CTSFW	16
Called to Serve	20
Faculty Focus	22
Admission	25
Alumni	26
Profiles in Giving	28
Bible Study	30

Up the Mountain

Matthew J. Wietfeldt and Andrea L. Schultz

*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news,
who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness,
who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." Isaiah 52:7*

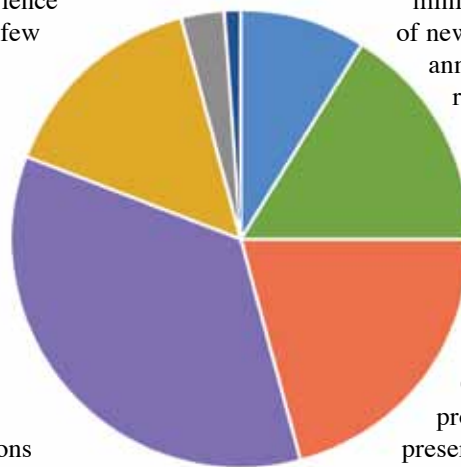
There is nothing easy about climbing a mountain. You must prepare yourself both physically and mentally for the task at hand, securing provisions appropriate to the duration of your travels and mapping a route beforehand so that you can make it to the top.

Getting to the summit of the mountain is an exhilarating experience. Not only have you conquered the climb, you now get to experience the view from the top, which only a select few will ever see. At that moment, the cost of the preparation, hard work, and training is wiped out.

The mountains we currently face in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) are built on numbers. Year after year, CTSFW and our sister seminary in St. Louis have to tell our brothers and sisters in Christ that we simply do not have enough candidates for them. This past April, 22 calls for candidates from congregations had to go unfilled. In 2018, that number was 29. According to projections published by the LCMS Office of Rosters and Statistics in 2017, though membership in the LCMS will have dropped from about 2 million baptized members to 1.3-1.5 million within 15 years, the number of congregations (though shrinking individually in membership size) will hold largely steady at close to 6,000. The number of joining congregations won't quite keep up with the number of those closing, but the widening gap isn't a substantial one, staying within a couple hundred net loss of congregations.

The problem finds its focus in the age of our currently active pastors. Today, the average age is 52. Thirty-five percent of all active pastors (the largest portion) are 55-64 and the next largest at 21% are those 45-54. Only 9% of today's pastors are under 35. Though retirement age

Ages of Active Ordained Ministers



- Under 35 = 9%
- 35-44 = 16%
- 45-54 = 21%
- 55-64 = 35%
- 65-74 = 15%
- 75-84 = 3%
- 85-94 = 1%

**Average age:
52 years old**

has increased from 65 to 69 since 1998, by the early 2030s over half of current active ministers will be 70 or older while the number of new graduates entering the ministry declines annually by about 5%. As pastors age and retire, more congregations become unfilled vacancies. This typically leads to a decrease in members, the remainder of whom can then no longer afford a pastor (even if one should become available). This drives membership down even more. The negative loop feeds itself.

Please note, however, that we do not quote these statistics to frighten the Church into response; we rest on God's promises, who has and will continue to preserve His bride, providing for her in both plenty and want. The need isn't even new to the LCMS. When our founders first came to the Midwest they found the frontier full of spiritual challenges. Today is no different. We see the rise of the religious "Nones," who claim no religious identity. Persecution of Christians throughout the world is a growing threat. The mountain seems insurmountable. Yet, like our founders, we pray to the Lord of the harvest, and consider how we, in our individual vocations, can climb it.

There are different solutions to propose and do, according to who we are and where God has placed us, whether in Synod, in one of the seminaries, in some other organization, or in a congregation, urban or rural. Yet even as a single sheep in Christ's flock, you have a path forward. First, remain in Word and Sacrament. All good flows from the

Vine to the branches, and the Word never returns empty. We are strengthened by God’s good gifts, for the Church always grows when fed with the Word, whether that means in numbers or in something far harder to see. Second, do what Christ has commanded: pray to the Lord of the harvest for laborers. And third, identify those who might make good pastors. Possible candidates for the Office of Holy Ministry are most often recognized first by their pastor and their home congregation. Who in your family, among your friends, and at your church could you see serving as your pastor someday? Who in Bible study seems interested in theology, God’s Word, and our Lutheran Confessions? Are you that person?

At CTSFW we are called to equip men for Word and Sacrament ministry. We work hard to keep costs down and develop—with the support of all those in the Church—financial assistance programs like the 100% Tuition Grant in support of residential formation. It is here on campus that these men learn theology not only from their professors but from each other, debating and discussing and drawing each other closer to a clearer understanding of Scripture, as iron sharpens iron. The long climb up the mountain through the pastoral formation process takes years; sometimes even years of consideration before a prospective future pastor ever sits in his first class as a seminarian. There are financial demands to navigate, preparation for the academic rigors of graduate school, and perhaps a general sense of unworthiness from those who desire to study the Word but tremble at the depth of their sin and their audacity in imagining they could be an undershepherd to Christ’s flock.

“[Jesus said] ‘For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you’” (Matt. 17:20). And yet His strength is made perfect in weakness. “The mountains melt like wax before the Lord, before the Lord of all the earth” (Psalm 97:5).

As the Church, we lift the need for pastors and other church workers to our Lord. He will continue to provide for us according to His will. Let us continue to identify and encourage those in our lives who should consider studying for the Office of the Holy Ministry, and pray for strength for those already in the program. The need is great for the Church right now, and the demand is only going to grow in the coming years. While the mountain can look unconquerable, the Lord will continue to keep His promises to provide laborers for His harvest. 🏔️

It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it,

and many nations shall come, and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Micah 4:1-2

The Rev. Matthew J. Wietfeldt (Matthew.Wietfeldt@ctsfw.edu) serves as Director of Admission at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.



Andrea L. Schultz (Andrea.Schultz@ctsfw.edu) serves as Marketing Specialist at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.



Forecast Based on Baptized Membership Size

