

Table Talk



LUTHERAN SEMINARY
GETTYSBURG, PA.

RECEIVED

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V. 6 NO 4

"What do Graduates of this Seminary Think of Its Capacity to Prepare Them for the Parish?"

This poll was sent to members of the last four graduating classes from the seminary taking every second or third pastor from the seminary's list. The questions I asked are given on pages 2-5 with the comments given by the participants to clarify their answers on pages 6-9. Forty-seven polls were sent, eighteen were returned, 38%. The populations of the (cont. p. 13) (See OUCH on p. 14)

"How Contemporary do we Have A Right to Be?" or (what began as an article on the curriculum turned out to be an article on theology)

Inasmuch as we are all theologians in the sense that we must work out some kind of theology for our ministry, it would seem to be of importance that we should give some consideration to the kind of input which constitutes such a theology. Theology never exists (cont. on p. 9 middle of second column)

W.O.T.S HAPPENING

The upcoming WOTS meetings, which will explore a variety of topics, promise to be interesting as well as informative. Put these dates on your calendar now.
Jan. 27 8:30 movie "Lord of the Flies" showing at the college Student Union Building. Seminary Community Welcome.
Feb. 4 8:00-Review and discussion of "Lord of the Flies" led by Professor and Mrs. Jensen in their home.

(cont. bottom of second column of p. 12)

"Studying in a Black Class"

I would like to share with you some of the following ideas I have concerning the course I just completed at Morgan State College in Baltimore, Md. As you probably know, five of us G-burg Seminarians went to Morgan one night a week during last term to take a course called: "The Sociology of Deprivation."

I feel that it was one of the (cont. middle of second column on p. 11)

(Vietnam-Love it or Leave it) ed.

Below I will give the questions used in the poll and after each question I will put comments made by those answering the poll. Also in the blanks I will put how many answered each way for a question.

1. If you took C.P.E., did you find it worthwhile?
yes 12 no 0 (the only comment was that a member of the class of 1966 did not know what C.P.E. was)

2. If you did not take C.P.E., do you regret not taking it? yes 4 no 1

3. If you took internship, did you find it worthwhile?
yes 14 no 0 (one person wrote a double yes to emphasize his answer)

4. If you did not take internship, do you regret it?
yes 2 no 1 (the no answer was explained "but I worked in a parish last two years of seminary, this was invaluable")
This pastor also answered no to question 5. Also for question 9 made his own list of areas that should be studied in the seminary. His article will be the first one following these questions.)

Between questions four and five I added "if you too either, please include them in your thinking of the following questions as part of your total seminary education.

5. On the whole do you feel that the seminary adequately prepared you for the parish? yes 14 no 2
(one yes answer was qualified "yes and no, but mostly yes"- another "yes, somewhat"- another "yes and no"(neither was tallied)- another yes answer from the class of 1967 "Prepared me adequately ---but didn't prepare me abundantly----i.e. I got enough to get by, but a lot more would have made possible some expertize")

6. What area of the parish were you prepared most inadequately by the seminary(all questions suppose you took fair advantage of all that was offered), and this

of course need not necessarily be the least important function of the parish? (below are the answers given by class)

class of 1969

- administration and christian education
- classroom basis poorly prepared for counselling, but taken care of by CPE and internship
- administration and counselling(only had one good course)
- finances and psychology

class of 1968

- administration and counselling
- administration and group work
- Christian education
- how to deal with people whose understanding vastly different-conservative and doctrinal- than what is taught

class of 1967

- administration
- preaching(he underlined it four times)
- Biblical studies-I majored in them and must still say this!

class of 1966

- evangelism and prespective calling
- counselling, committee work and changing youth work patterns
- person to person relationship and practical administration
- preaching should be approached from a view toward theological security rather than techniques of communication. This transition was beginning but not completely accomplished.

7. What area of the seminary were you prepared most adequately for by the seminary?

class of 1969

- theology, biblical and church history
- CPE and internship-dealing with self
- theology-and perhaps the entire spectrum as it relates to all

class of 1968

-preaching

-personal contact-preaching-one-to-one basis- christology

-preaching-liturgics-practical pastoral work(sick calls etc.)

-to preach

class of 1967

-preaching

-preaching-intern year good too, without internship

I'd have been very much at sea in my first parish

class of 1966

-counselling

-preaching, teaching, theological and biblical studies also counselling

-pastoral care

-intellectual and worship areas

8. What year did you graduate?

1969-I sent to 13 of 40 members and received 7 (53%)

1968-" " " 9 " 20 " " " 4(44%)

1967 " " " 13 " 36 " " " 3(23%)

1966 " " "12 " 32 " " " 4(33%)

(Following will be a list of areas that the seminary offers its programs and will be used in answering the remaining questions)

	not enough	enough	too much
a. Preaching	<u>3</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>1</u>
b. Theology	<u>3</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>0</u>
c. Church History	<u>0</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>3</u>
d. Biblical Studies	<u>10</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>0</u>
e. Pastoral Psychology	<u>13</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>0</u>
f. Field Studies	<u>6</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>0</u>

9. Rank in order those areas first that are now most important for you in effectively fulfilling your total parish activities. a. 3.00 b. 2.86 c. 4.71 d. 2.86

e. 2.26 f. 4.00

10. Fill in the blanks under the proper heading above to denote how well you thought you were prepared by the

seminary in proportion to their importance in the parish for you, not enough, enough, or too much emphasis.

Comments to clarify question 9

The number in the blanks is the average place that that area received, ie, preaching averaged third place.

-one added that his spread was not great

- " " " b. is necessary for a., therefore rated them both the same (1)

-this man made his own categories of importance

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Ability to relate | 4. Ability to communicate |
| 2. Ability to work in a group | 5. Ability to teach and preach |
| 3. Ability to inspire | 6. Ability to gain insight |

Comments to clarify question 10

The number in the spaces is the number of times it was checked.

-one person could only check b. and d. as enough because he took several electives in those areas

-need better quality in d. and e.

-one c. was put to the right of middle a bit and one f. was put slightly to the left of the middle

-f. is a least enough with CPE and internship. I understand field studies to be jr. field studies and not including CPE and internship, then if field studies is intended to include CPE and internship, I would say that they are most helpful in anticipatory ways-born in hours of personal identity, congregations and mood and atmosphere we are now engaging in--- (class of 1969)

-f. needs better quality

-e. in sense of relating to people, f. in sense of practical experience

I also asked all the participants to add anything they felt would be helpful.

Class of 1966 Criticism

Regarding question #9, its not only a matter of how much of a subject is offered, but the content of the course. Most of my seminary courses I find to be quite irrelevant.

The main emphasis of seminary was for me to absorb facts that I could regurgitate on a test. I now, and then, greatly resent this emphasis. I feel I have learned more, and learned it faster since being out of the seminary than I did while in seminary.

I resent the massive assignments that kept me so busy I could not follow my own interests.

I resent the attempt to indoctrinate rather encourageing me to do my own theological wrestling. For the time spent seminary was more of retarding than a growing experience.

I would suggest:

1. Allowing the students far more freedom to persue their own interests.
2. Encourage and stimulate personaltheological wrestling.
3. Drop language requirements.
4. Cut required courses down to bare minimum.
5. Incourage personal involve-ment in tasks and projects that relate to people and/or the parish.

6. Shift emphasis from data transmission to learning by experience.

"Most problems call for an integrated response" (ed. I lifted this title from the text)

The questionnaire which you sent to me is very interesting and marks a good attempt to get at the problem of seminary curriculum. However, I sense one defect in the questionnaire which I wonder about. It would appear to me that the questions imply that each of the areas of study in seminary are independently applied to situations in a parish. You have a theological problem, or a biblical problem, etc.

My limited experience is that most problems call for an integrated response which necessitates the use of a little theology, a little Bible, a little psychology. Therefore the one point that the seminary hammers home which tends to be most helpful when followed is the point about learning to synthesize the various disciplines.

As indicated in the questionnaire, I do think that more study is needed in most areas.

(cont. p.7)

(cont. from p. 6)

Especially is there a need for a course in parish administration.

I hope these comments are of some value to you. Good luck in your work on the curriculum revision.

William Dreikorn 1969
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Class of 1968 "Gap"
(ed. again my title)

I feel the student should be made to realize and taught how to cope with, the gap between what is taught in Seminary and where the people actually are! Too often a new pastor reacts like a bull in a china shop when he runs into the realities of prejudice, apathy and double standards. I suppose this is the careing and application of all that is learned.

Practical application, of any course, is a tedious job. At the seminary there is a degree of idealism-which I suppose is good, however the student should be taught through clinical training, pastoral psychology, and internship, that there is a big difference between what should be and what is. This may not apply to all
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-7- (cont. from bottom of left column)

situations, but since I can only speak from personal experience, I have found, as I look around that this is a big problem. (Be with the people, instead of above them)

"The best classroom is still the parish" (ed.'s title)

Preaching is most important, along with biblical studies, because whether we like it or not, this is what most people still see as the job of the minister, but the real work of the church is done in small groups and in individual contacts, therefore seminarians must be better prepared to work with groups and people, both who resist change and who seek positive directions in which to act. Seminarians also should have a good understanding of the pain of people's lives, such as when they experience death, terminal illness, and the whole range of emotional problems. They must be trained to take a supportive and not geared to changing people, as is often what young men as myself at first try to do before recognizing limitations. Change seems to be an
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(cont. from bottom of p.7)
important by-product, however.

Also, many young ministers face a severe identity conflict when they discover that they are not sure about what their role is. It sounds strange, but it happens, especially when one is frustrated by a congregation which resists your understanding of ministry as been taught in seminary.

The best classroom is still the parish, where one must sink or swim.

Still swimming,

Mark H. Gruebmeier
p.s. You may find helpful the recent collected findings of "The Ohio Academy of Parish Clergy;" Granger Westberg, Hamma, Springfield has them.

(class of 1967- English W.
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"Seminary-Groundwork-Maturity"

I feel your questionnaire and interest in curriculum are good. The seminary prepares men for the ministry to an extent. CPE and the parish intern experience are great additions. I don't think we can expect or should expect that these items will do the job,
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(cont. from bottom of last column of this page)

completely though they are vitally necessary. Experience as an ordained pastor in the parish brings the groundworks of seminary education and CPE to fuller maturity. During the first few years a man must learn his liabilities and strengths as he experiences parish life. I guess I'm saying there's no substitute for the real thing. The gap between theological education and the parish can certainly be narrowed, never closed entirely.

John W. Swyers '66
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37130

Short note from '66

The central focus of the parish is increasingly dealing with person-to-person relationships. One-to-one pastoral relationships have a greater long range effect on individuals (ed. can't read a word here) do occasional corporate gatherings
The theological and biblical basis is important for both corporate and personal dealings. How to preach is relatively
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unimportant. More important is content for preaching and ability to know to whom we are preaching.

'68 Critic of the poll

I appreciate your attempt to gather data to improve the quality of seminary education; however a more carefully prepared questionnaire(perhaps in consultation with a recently graduated pastor) would have been more helpful. I don't think your questions are insightful as the situation is not as simple as presupposed by the questions. (ed.- this pastor on the poll made only the comment that question 9 seemed to presuppose more of a gap than he saw. I wish he would have given us some of his insights.)

Editor on a letter from a graduate student Bob Pielke at 1111 Dartmouth-117, Claremont, Calif. 91711

The editor's reason for basing this on the parish was the LCA's rule that the parish ministry must precede any specialized ministry. Bob said he never intended to enter the parish but would fill out the poll. He did not regret not
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taking either CP. or internship. On question 5 he underlined "on a whole" and said yes, the seminary adequately prepared him for graduate school. For question 6, he felt philosophy, social ethics and criticisms of theological positions were the areas he as least adequately prepared. He felt most adequately prepared in the ability to express and defend his own positions. For question nine he only ranked theology(phil+social ethics) and history in that order and felt he had too much of the rest.

"How Contemporary... from page 1

as an abstraction--that is, it always bears some relation to all other knowledge. With this in mind, it seems to me that we should ask ourselves a fundamental question. Namely, what should be the sources of the input of a contemporary theology?

My point is whether, in searching for a way of expressing what the Gospel is to the people to whom we want to minister, we ought to take into account

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(cont. from bottom of p.9)

"How Contemporary...
the thinking of the members of our churches. I wonder if we are sometimes not guilty of taking a handful of intellectuals more seriously than the whole people of God in a local situation.

Let me say immediately that this comment has nothing at all to do with the value and worth of intellectuals. Some people will read this article with the viewpoint that here is another Spiro Agnew. All I am raising here is the issue of--granted that the thinking of people must be taken into account of in the formulation of theology--what people it is that should be of primary concern.

It seems to me that by neglecting the average church member, we are running two risks. The first is that of being misunderstood. I would not want for a minute to call into question the valuable things which contemporary thinkers have done for theological thought. But one must admit that there have been many destructive influences. The first is a question of simple word choice. Why cannot theology use words in their commonsensical meaning--
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"How Contemporary...
instead of in some rarified way which even other theologians often cannot understand? For example, how can one explain the "death of God" to a layman? Why is it that we must use "revolution" to mean "social change," when the term "revolution" has a violent meaning? Why must we use "secular" to mean nearly what used to be meant by "sacred?" And so forth. There is another danger here-- that of speaking a language which is not that of common people. The layman has no sense at all of what it means when we say to him that the Gospel "frees" him--he didn't even know he was bound! He does have at least some notion of what sin is, but we can't talk about that because we have to "affirm man"--whatever that means.

The second danger of contemporary theology is that we run the risk of getting the Gospel so inextricably connected with certain ideas that the two entities become equivalent-- at least in the mind of the everyday Christians. Certainly it is in the retelling of the story of Jesus as that story bears on the contemporary situation that
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"How Contemporary...
the Gospel is proclaimed, but that is not the same as saying that the Gospel and revolution are on the same side. The last statement is not far, after all, from saying that God is always on the side of the Americans. When has the Gospel ever been on one side of any movement or idea only, and never at the same time not equally on the other side?

Lest I be excused of being too vague, consider the "secular city" movement of about 6-7 years ago. This movement, to be sure, served the much needed need of developing a theology for an urban culture. But, having done this, why was it necessary to almost equate the two, so that people started to say that the Gospel needed the city for its full expression. It would seem that in our rush to be contemporary, we often leave out of consideration the ordinary individual. I sometimes wonder if this does not sometimes betray a fear on our part --a fear of the Gospel's losing its authority. To be sure, this is a very real fear, but in overreacting to it, I think we can easily destroy the very thing we are trying to create.

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(cont. from last column)

"How Contemporary..."

I like the idea of the Church as the leaven of society, but one should not forget that after the bread has been baked, one can still smell the yeast!

I feel that the church needs some rethinking of these attitudes. I would appreciate the responses of others to this question.

Jim Weiss

(cont. from bottom of second column p. 1)

"Studying in a Black Class"
most valuable experiences I have had so far in my Seminary education. It was the first time I was in a class consisting of slightly more black students than white students and taught by a black professor. (The college I graduated from had about the same ratio of black and white students as our seminary has.) For me the main value of the course was not in the subject matter, although Dr. Brooks our professor, said it was the only course dealing with the sociology of deprivation, he knew of this side of the Mississippi River, but in the discussions we had with the black students both in and out of the class.

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"studying in a Black Class"

The most valuable insight I got during the course came when a woman told how when she and her husband visited a particular church for the first time, a clergyman ruined a great welcome when he gave them (an insult) by adding the comment that they could feel at home since the congregation already had one black man who was a member and sang in the choir. (The clergyman probably wondered why they never came back.

I feel that among the remarks of having an opportunity to study with black people are the following: while I have always been an integrationist intellectually, I am now also emotionally an integrationist. If I am to ever minister to black people, I need experience like this to help me feel comfortable with blacks. (Last summer during CPE, I came to sort of really know a couple of black people for the first time. My experience at Morgan seemed to reinforce the concept- If I dare state it in a trite-expression: They don't bite you if you try to talk with them.)
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"Studying in a Black Class"

If I should someday be ministering in an area like the one I came from where not only are there no black people in the congregation, but none in the county, I can with emotional conviction tell a white congregation that black people are no different from themselves. While I am aware of many more rewards from the experience, the final one I would like to mention is that in the class, social workers and teachers, who knew the inner city through years of experience in it shared with us their insights into its problems.

Myron Schevy

(cont. from p. 10)

W.O.T.S.

The seminary Community is again invited to join us.
Feb. 18 Tentative meeting.

Several speakers are being arranged for the Spring. Details later.

p.s.- Bowling on Tuesday evenings has been enjoyable for everyone (couples, singles, faculty, etc.). Meet at Baughman Hall at 9:00 to bowl at 9:15.

Jan Ferra

(cont. from p. 1)

"..does the seminary prepare?" towns sent to were, 12 to pastors in towns of less than 2,500, 11 to pastors in towns between 2500-5000, 9 between 5000-10,000, 7 between 10,000-25,000, 1 between 25,000-50,000, five between 50,000-100,000, and 3 over 100,000. That means almost 3/4ths are in towns under 10,000. Articles written by the pastors are identified only by their class unless they signed their names-postmarks were not allowed for identification.

What I wanted to find out from this poll was if what is offered here was doing its job in preparing us for the parish. Does it do what is expected of it? Were the graduates able to use their seminary experiences to do what they think is necessary in the parish? Could courses be dropped or added? Could courses be given a different direction or emphasized differently?

As we see from the results of question six, what the pastors felt they needed and did not get was practical experiences, and heading the list was administration and counseling needs. There was some feeling that Christian education needed more emphasis, but several other practical experiences were asked for such

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(cont. from bottom of the last column)"..does the seminary prepare?"

as preparation for calling, group work, and dealing with people. However looking at question ten we see ten people felt a need for more Biblical studies. One thing I should mention about question ten, I forgot Christian education (maybe a Freudian slip) and languages. Basically we note that most of the curriculum except for Biblical studies and psychology are adequate for what these pastors needed. Biblical studies was also high on the list of importance, along with theology for use in the parish. Theology in question ten also was seen as taught enough for its good use. However pastoral psychology was ranked first in importance in question nine, but only five of eighteen felt enough was offered.

Preaching also ranked high. In question seven preaching was the only thing mentioned often for being that area most adequately prepared for by the seminary. In question nine preaching was ranked close to theology and biblical studies as what is needed the most. Most people also felt

(cont. top of p. 14)

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"..does the seminary prepare?"

it was taught in proportion to its need in the parish (question ten). Possibly the term field studies was not understood so I'll let you draw your own conclusions.

History was ranked as the least important for the parish out of this list, yet it was given the emphasis by the seminary that was needed, therefore since much history is taken, one drawback of this poll is that it does not show the spread between the areas. This is also born out by the fact that a high majority felt they were prepared adequately for the parish-background materials plus that push that makes use of our background materials.

Also added to the above was the fact that comments from the pastors held that personal relations needs were the highest and they still felt the seminary adequately prepared them. Another point, very few said that some courses were offered too much (question ten). And finally to confirm what we mostly know, CPE and internship were given overwhelming recommendations.

These are a few remarks.
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(Con. from the last column)

I would like some of you to make some more remarks- such as why this poll came out the way it did? (do you think these pastors have already joined the "establishment?" Do you agree with my remarks? Or do you agree with the pastors as you reflect or project on your either internship or upcoming internship?

I would like to thank all those who contributed to this issue. It seems that the question provoked some thinking on their part. Thanks again.

OUCH!

To show that we should not be complacent I quote from a church bulletin of a recent supply

"The organ prelude is a veil dropped between every-day life and the sanctuary; in crossing the threshold, the music should separate the world without from the world within. Let us cease our conversation with each other and use the organ period for quiet meditation and communion with God."

Editor- Kenneth Hilston

Typist- Mrs. Kenneth Hilston