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FROM THE
PRESIDENT

Dear Friend of Concordia Theological Seminary:

“You Are What You Eat.” This motto has periodically been used to encourage a good diet. Our diets do point to who we are—our lifestyles, our priorities, and our preferences. Not only what we eat, but also how we eat reveals many things about us.

In our culture, millions increasingly eat quickly and in isolation from others though they may be in the midst of a crowd. This practice often points to a radical individualism. The social fabric is frequently woven apart from family and friends. The times when meals are defined by the presence of family and friends are fewer and fewer for many. Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter remain, but even then families strain to gather all their members due to schedules and geography.

Yet, there is a profound hunger in our day for relationships—whether of family or friends—that are true and enduring. All of us can recall a particularly festive meal with family and friends, which sparkles in our memory for its warmth and love. As the author of Proverbs states, “Better is a meal of herbs where there is love than the fatted calf with hatred” (Prov. 15:17).

Imagine a world where eating was viewed quite differently. Imagine a world where what one would eat, how one would eat, and with whom one would eat were questions at the center of daily life. Such was the world, which Jesus entered and lived in. Table fellowship among many of the Jews in Jesus’ day was an expression of a common faith—an agreed upon world-view. The character of others and their views of God were significant when one sat down at the table. Think how far such a practice is from the day-to-day eating habits of the western world. When Jesus ate with publicans and sinners it was noticed (Luke 15:1-2).

This issue of For the Life of the World is devoted to a meal unlike any other. This meal bestows forgiveness, life, and salvation. The Lord’s Supper or Eucharist was instituted by Christ in conjunction with the Passover. It is a holy gift to which the contrite and baptized children of God are invited. To participate in this meal is to participate in the very life of the Holy Trinity (1 Cor. 10:16), for Christ is truly present. This meal, far from being private and individualistic, expresses the profound unity which God’s people have been given. This meal is central to the church’s understanding of her Lord.

Imagine now a city where this meal is so highly revered that Friday penitential services required that the streets be closed to other traffic in preparation for Sunday’s observance of the Lord’s Supper. Such was the situation in Bach’s Leipzig as described in Gunther Stiller’s J. S. Bach and Liturgical Life in Leipzig (St. Louis: Concordia, 1970, 106).

Imagine the Reformer, Martin Luther, holding the Lord’s Supper at the center of the church’s confession. Luther vigorously defended the Lord’s Supper against Roman Catholic abuses and against Zwingli’s challenge to the Real Presence. For Luther, it was unthinkable that this meal would be at the margins of Christian thinking or privately interpreted. As Hermann Sasse states: “. . . for Luther the Real Presence meant that the Incarnation was more than a historical fact of the past. It was reality. Here is God who became man; here is Christ in His divinity and humanity. Here is the true body and blood of the Lamb of God, given for you, present with you. Here forgiveness of sins is a reality—and, with it, life and salvation” (This Is My Body [Adelaide, S.A.: Lutheran Publishing House, 1997], 328). The centrality of the Real Presence to the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper and Scriptural Christology is captured definitively in Martin Chemnitz’s The Lord’s Supper (Tr. J. A. O. Preus. St. Louis: Concordia, 1979).

Has the acculturation of Lutheranism led to the loss of this holy and defining meal? When the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America declared altar and pulpit fellowship with various Reformed churches in Philadelphia (1997), Lutheran identity suffered a tragic loss. Further, the casual or mechanical manner in which many observe this holy meal is inappropriate to the reality of Christ being truly present in the bread and wine according to both His human and Divine natures.

Concordia Theological Seminary confesses with classic Lutheranism the mystery and wonder of this meal. We confess what this meal is. It frees us from sin. We no longer eat in isolation, but as a part of the church across time and space. We no longer eat without hope, but “as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup we do show His death till He comes” (I Cor. 11:26).

May the articles of this issue renew and refresh you with the Scriptural portrait of this holy meal. Moreover, may John Gerhard’s reflections on the Lord’s Supper be reflected in our attitudes and practices at the Lord’s table. Listen to his Sacred Meditation on the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper:

How great the thanks I owe to You, highest God, that in the most sacred mystery of the supper, You feed me with the body and blood of Your Son! What in heaven or on earth is more precious and excellent than this divine body, personally united with Your Son? Where is there a more certain testimony and pledge of Your grace than in the precious blood of Your Son, poured out for my sins on the altar of the cross? It ever blesses me with new gifts of grace. In this body dwells life itself, from whence it restores me to eternal life and makes me alive. (Sacred Meditations XIII, Thanksgiving for the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper)

Sincerely yours, in Christ’s service,

Rev. Dr. Dean O. Wenthe
President, Concordia Theological Seminary
6 The Holy Supper: A Taste of Heaven
by the Rev. Dr. William Weinrich
Professor Historical Theology
Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

The Bread and the Wine are the very Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, which He has commanded us to eat and to drink. The Lord's Supper is something concrete, particular, real; it is Body and Blood.

8 In a Simple Way to His Household
by Leonard Payton
Chief Musician
Redeemer Presbyterian Church, Austin, Texas

The Catechism teaches that the Sacrament is "the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ," so that the soul self-evidently believes the words, "given and shed for you for the remission of sins."

10 Christ's Body and Blood Saves Us
by Kevin Leininger
A Member of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church
Fort Wayne, Ind., and Chief Editorial Writer for the Fort Wayne News-Sentinel

Holy Scripture and confessional Lutheranism make it clear that the Lord's Supper is where God works His forgiveness.

12 Sacrament of the Altar:
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by the Rev. Prof. Lawrence Rast
Professor Historical Theology
Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

The Lord's Supper is given as a daily food and sustenance to comfort the person whose heart feels too sorely pressed. The Supper gives us forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

14 Coming Home
by Ron and Marge Shumaker
Members of Grace Lutheran Church
Albuquerque, New Mexico

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Managing Editor
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Cover Photo: The cover photo features the Walther Chalice. Popular myth states that it is one of two ornate European chalices that were brought over to the United States in the 1830's by the Saxons. Photo by Concordia Publishing House from the collection of Trinity Lutheran Church, St. Louis, Mo.
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Sometimes we regard the most commonplace of things as the most insignificant. Perhaps this explains to some extent the increasing practice of Americans to “eat on the run.” The line of cars at local “drive-throughs” is often longer than the lines within the restaurants. Food and drink can be regarded as necessary “energy boosters,” needed to satisfy the pangs of hunger and thirst, but hardly defining of who we are and what we are. We eat and drink when we can; convenience dictates the time of meal and repaste. Although we eat and drink every day, the time of eating and drinking is hardly regarded as defining moments of our busy lives.

How different it is with the Holy Supper! For by partaking in the Lord’s Supper the people of God do not do something extraneous to whom they are. The eating and drinking of the Lord’s Table is not some sort of “add on” to the reality of being a Christian. This eating and drinking is, strictly speaking, not something Christians “do” at all. It is the means by which Christians are Christians and remain Christians.

Such statements may at first seem extreme. But, let us see.

Traditionally, Lutherans have concluded the communion liturgy with the hymn, “Nunc Dimittis”: “Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace according to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared before the face of all people, a Light to lighten the Gentiles and the Glory of Your people, Israel.” What remarkable words! We declare in these words that our eyes have actually seen God’s salvation, which is the Glory of Israel and the Light of the world. But what do our eyes see? This liturgical hymn assists us to recognize that the Bread and the Wine, which we have just eaten and drunk, that which we have just seen and that which we have just tasted, are in fact that about which we have just heard. The pastor, standing at the altar, repeats the words of Jesus: “Take eat, this is My Body, which is given for you; take drink, this cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.” We are given to see and to taste what we have been given to hear. And so in the Lord’s Supper we experience by participation—and through those senses which are the means through which we partake of all experience—that salvation which God has prepared for us.

The very sensory character of the Lord’s Supper indicates what we always assert by way of doctrinal statement. The Bread and the Wine are the very Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus, which He has commanded us to eat and to drink. The Lord’s Supper is something concrete, particular, real; it is Body and Blood. It is not something merely other-worldly, spiritual, non-material; it is not merely “soul food.” It is therefore received in a concrete, particular and real manner—by eating and drinking. Because it is the Body and Blood of Jesus, it is eaten and drunk even by those who do not believe what their ears have heard, namely, “This is My Body; this is My Blood.” Even unbelievers eat and drink the very Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus whenever they partake of the Bread and the Wine. The eating and drinking by faith, therefore, is not separate from the actually eating and drinking of the Bread and the Wine. Those who believe these words, “This is My Body; this is My Blood,” rather faithfully eat and faithfully drink and receive in faith that which the Father gives through the giving up of His Son into death.

This is to say that the forgiveness of sins, and the Life of the Spirit which comes with that forgiveness, is bound to a particular Body and to a particular Blood. On the very night in which Jesus was betrayed, He “instituted” the Supper, which was His own. By means of this “institution” Jesus gave to His Church for all times and all places that Supper, which would be the place and the time of His death for the forgiveness of sins. We may put it like this: the death of Christ which occurred once is “for us” in the Lord’s Supper. As hard as it may be to imagine, the time and the place of the cross of Christ may not be separated from the time and the place of the Lord’s Supper. “This is My Body given for you”—namely, the Bread which you are about to eat. “This is My Blood shed for the forgiveness of sins”—namely, the Wine which you are about to drink. Participation in the Lord’s Supper places us at Calvary. Or more accurately, in the Lord’s Supper, God brings Calvary to us. That is why in the liturgy, before the words of institution are spoken, we sing the “Sanctus”: “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth . . . Blessed
is He who comes in the Name of the Lord.” In these words the never-ending hymn of heaven (Isaiah 6; Revelation 4) is combined with the hymn of the people of Jerusalem, which they sang when Jesus entered Jerusalem to die (Matt. 21:9). Through this liturgical hymn we are reminded that in the person of Jesus heaven and earth are united, and most especially in the death of the Incarnate Son when sins are forgiven making man at peace with God. In the Jerusalem to which Jesus came to die, there is heaven and the Kingdom of God. Not surprisingly, the final visions of John are of the New Jerusalem, which comes down from heaven and in which the Lamb is on the throne (Rev. 21:10). What John sees is in fact the coming of the New Jerusalem in the coming of the Lord Jesus, namely, in His coming in the Bread and the Wine. “Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:17). This point is made explicit in the first century text, The Didache, where the hymn of Jerusalem (“Hosanna to the God of David”) is conjoined with the “Come, Lord Jesus” of the New Jerusalem (Didache 10:6).

Since the Body and the Blood, given and shed for us, are the place of heaven and of the New Jerusalem, we see why the song of Simeon (Luke 2:29-32, “Nunc Dimittis”) so early became a hymn within the eucharistic liturgy. For the Child, which Simeon saw, the Child, which was brought to Simeon so that He might be dedicated to God as “holy,” according to the requirements of the Law (Luke 2:22-24)—that Child became the Crucified in whose death the Law was fulfilled. In His death Christ was both Priest and Sacrifice, offering Himself up to God as an acceptable sacrifice. Through His steadfast faithfulness even to death, Jesus gave to His Father that right worship, which exists in faith alone. Likewise, in His death for us, Christ fulfilled the law of love, giving all that He is and possesses for our eternal good. And so, in the death of Jesus we recognize those two aspects which define the life of the Christian, namely, the worship of faith and the sacrifice of love.

This sacrifice, which Christ made to God and for us, becomes our own sacrifice when we eat the Bread, which is His Body given for us, and when we drink the Wine, which is His Blood shed for the forgiveness of sins. Bound to Him who is Priest and Sacrifice, we become a priestly people who render ourselves as sacrifices to God through faith and through a life of love toward our neighbor. This should be understood, once more, in a totally concrete, particular and real manner. When we eat His Body and drink His Blood we become members of His Body and of His Blood, that is, we become members of that Body and Blood given and shed for the sake of sinners. We, in soul and body, become the Body of Christ and so are sent forth on the way of peace to serve our neighbor through the forgiveness of sins and the vocation of charity. It is this of which Paul speaks: “By the mercies of God, present your bodies to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Rom. 12:1). Moreover, since Christ fulfilled all Old Testament sacrificial worship in His death, He began the worship “in Spirit and in Truth” of which the Gospel of John speaks (John 4:24). To partake of His death in the faithful eating of His Body and the faithful drinking of His Blood is to worship rightly in Spirit and in Truth. No higher worship exists than this, to commune at the Lord’s Table in faith. For that reason, communion in the Lord’s Body and Blood is surrounded by liturgy and hymn through which we thank and praise the Lord for the gifts which are proffered to us for the salvation of our souls and our bodies. This is given expression in the short hymn What shall I render to the Lord, which occurs in the communion liturgy of Lutheran Worship: “What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits to me? I will offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving and will call on the name of the Lord. I will take the cup of salvation and will call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord now in the presence of all His people, in the courts of the Lord’s house, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem” (p. 169).

The very sensory character of the Lord’s Supper indicates what we always assert by way of doctrinal statement. The Bread and the Wine are the very Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus, which He has commanded us to eat and to drink. The Lord’s Supper is something concrete, particular, real; it is Body and Blood.

The Rev. Dr. William Weinrich is a Professor of Historical Theology, at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.
I am writing as a dad, a dad with the world’s best wife and four kids strewn over ten years. Now with that kind of distance of age, what does it mean to teach the catechism to one’s family in a simple way? After all, the conventional orthodoxy of child growth and development looks at this picture and sees no solution. How odd! After all, this is a rather normal nuclear family. Were the reformers wrong to suppose that this thing was relevant to the entire family? Is there something inside the structure and nature of the catechism that causes us to shrink its application to the pastor meeting with junior high kids once a week during the school year?

As the Lord has granted me courage to embark on the adventure of simple fatherly catechesis, along with Band-Aids when I stub my toe and smelling salts when I faint, I have found that the catechism itself contains all the necessary pedagogical tools for such a diverse family. And nowhere does this become more apparent than in consideration of the capstone of the catechism—the Sacrament of the Altar. It is the last word on a complete hermeneutic of life, much less of Holy Scripture. It is a hermeneutic as relevant to my sixteen-year-old as to my six-year-old.

Our catechism times together are not grand, nor are they tightly structured. Most evenings we spend from five to fifteen minutes doing mostly rote memory with little or no commentary, not that commentary and explanation are necessarily bad. Rather, repeating the words over and over in exactly the same way elicits reflection at other times, reflection that results in personal discoveries. These are always the most thorough kind of learning. They bubble up seemingly spontaneously and unbidden. It is one of the ways the Holy Ghost calls us by the Gospel, enlightens us with His gifts, and keeps and sanctifies us in the true faith.

Once in a while, one of the kids will ask a clarifying question during catechism time that brings my rote memory program to a grinding halt. That’s OK. After all, isn’t this the permission given to the inquisitive boy in Deuteronomy 6?

Sometimes I will initiate some discussion. One night, a couple of years ago, we were contemplating coveting. What is coveting? Each child supplied thoughtful answers that clearly showed the weak points in their hearts. They had a strong grasp of how this sin works, all of them, that is, except for my then four-year-old son. His definition of coveting was “going potty on the carpet.” Needless to say, this has become a fixture in the family lore. This much, however,
can be said for the little guy: On the basis of the other kids’ answers, he knew that coveting was something bad, and for him, going potty on the rug was the worst thing he could invoke at the moment. I chose to defer an explanation of covetousness to a later date, knowing that with patience, he or some friend would craftily seek to get his neighbor’s Matchbox cars or Beanie Babies or obtain them by a show of right. Then my little guy would see and understand the mechanics of this black sin and know more fully that he needs to hear the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins.

My ten-year-old daughter and six-year-old son ride to school with me each weekday morning. We do a small portion of the catechism along the way, perhaps two to five minutes. It was during one of these rides that my ten-year-old discovered the structure of the catechism, that the Law comes first, then the Gospel. She was quite pleased because she understands from repeated hearings and intimate knowledge of her own life that whatever else the Law does, it always accuses us, for we never obey it perfectly.

Now to the Eucharist. We understand that we live in a world that has largely bowed to the false god of empirical truth, to the god of rationalism, a god made after our own image. So much for the evidence of things not seen! There is a lot of pressure to drive our hermeneutics simply by taking “this is My body” at face value and with no further comment. Of course, modern man will want to know how this can be. What he really needs to know is that it simply is because it stands written in God’s Word. The catechism knows what it is and that body is body. Rationalism says, “but a body cannot do that,” or “that body is out in heaven and, therefore, most expressly not on earth.” My children answer, “but that body rose from the dead on the third day; bodies are not supposed to do that kind of thing; what’s the big deal?” Is the body of Christ somewhere out in the Orion Nebulae? Has the Hubbell space telescope sited the right hand of God? Of course not! There is more to that body than our minds can or should grasp.

A Bible teacher recently speculated that Christ somehow miraculously opened the door to the upper room (by the way, this was also Calvin’s speculation in his commentary on Luke 24). My twelve-year-old daughter looked at me perplexed and said that the disciples thought Jesus was a ghost. For her, the simple reading of the biblical text was not that Jesus opened the door to walk in. After all, that is just what we would do. Rather, she understood it that somehow Jesus had mysteriously materialized in the room, and that to convince the disciples that He was not a ghost, but fully body, He ate a piece of fish in full view. Her catechetical theology helped her biblical theology, and her biblical theology helped her catechetical theology.

Good catechesis nurtures simple and steadfast faith while at the same time circumscribing speculation. It teaches that the Sacrament is “the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine.” “How can this man give us His flesh to eat and His blood to drink?” the people asked in John 6. It was the perfect empirical question, yet the silence was deafening. Only those who didn’t ask were still with Jesus at the end of the chapter. The catechism provides this hermeneutic simply by taking “this is My body” at face value and with no further comment. Of course, modern man will want to know how this can be. What he really needs to know is that it simply is because it stands written in God’s Word. The catechism knows what it is and that body is body.

Theology, when we speak of “the fall” of our first parents, this very formulation contains a philosophic abstraction that misses something important, namely, that our first parents wanted to know more than God intended them to know. Such is our flesh that still wars in us today. The old Adam needs to drown and die daily with all sins and evil lusts, and among them is the lust to have clean explanations of those things our Father in Heaven has graciously, and for our well-being, hidden from us. The Formula of Concord meets these speculations head on, continually censuring them. The catechism meets them by providing a healthy diet, which engenders stable faith.

I have no idea how many times we have said, “it is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine.” “How can this man give us His flesh to eat and His blood to drink?” the people asked in John 6. It was the perfect empirical question, yet the silence was deafening. Only those who didn’t ask were still with Jesus at the end of the chapter. The catechism provides this hermeneutic simply by taking “this is My body” at face value and with no further comment. Of course, modern man will want to know how this can be. What he really needs to know is that it simply is because it stands written in God’s Word. The catechism knows what it is and that body is body. Rationalism says, “but a body cannot do that,” or “that body is out in heaven and, therefore, most expressly not on earth.” My children answer, “but that body rose from the dead on the third day; bodies are not supposed to do that kind of thing; what’s the big deal?” Is the body of Christ somewhere out in the Orion Nebulae? Has the Hubbell space telescope sited the right hand of God? Of course not! There is more to that body than our minds can or should grasp.

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Good catechesis nurtures simple and steadfast faith while at the same time circumscribing speculation. It teaches that the Sacrament is “the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ,” so that the soul self-evidently believes the words, “given and shed for you for the remission of sins.” This catechesis inculcates in us the child-like expectation of good things from our Heavenly Father so that we may be confident that the wicked foe will do us no harm; and when the day is through, that we may go to sleep at once and in good cheer; and that when our last hour has come, God will graciously take us from this vale of tears to Himself in heaven where we will serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.

Leonard Payton is Chief Musician of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, Austin, TX
When I was in high school, one of my teachers in sociology class, I think, often allowed students to discuss religious issues. No matter which faith or denomination was being discussed, one girl always made the same speech—"I know exactly when I decided to become a Christian," she would say with a certain amount of implied superiority. "How do YOU know that you are going to go to heaven?"

That question confused and troubled me. I could remember no specific time I began to believe in God or became a Christian. I knew I had made no "decision for Jesus" nor experienced an emotional Paul-like conversion. And so I began to question the strength of my own faith and the certainty of God’s promise of salvation.

All of which proves two things—I’m so old I remember when God wasn’t a four-letter word in America’s public schools and, more to the point; nearly two decades of regularly going to a Lutheran church hadn’t yet given me the comforting assurance that God’s grace is found not in my own feelings and actions, but through faith and in the sacraments instituted by Christ and administered by His church.

It took years and the study of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions for me to develop an answer for my high-school classmate—I couldn’t remember when I became a Christian because I didn’t choose God, HE chose me through baptism, when I was only a few weeks old. And I can be sure of salvation not because I FEEL close to God, but because I have PROOF that God is close to me—proof found not only by God’s Word, but in the body and blood of Christ Himself.

Nothing separates Lutherans from most of American Protestantism quite like the Sacrament of the Altar—and not just because we believe that the sacrament is about something far more meaningful and profound than fellowship, grape juice, and biscuits. As Scripture and confessional Lutheranism make clear, the Lord’s Supper is where God works His forgiveness.

And what is HE forgiving? Something many Christians would like to think no longer matters—sin.

Several weeks ago, I received a letter from a non-denominational church that was about to open in my neighborhood. “Many folks view religion as a few people getting together and using God to spoil their fun,” the minister wrote. “I vowed to help change that perception by always sharing messages that emphasize the Good News, hope and comfort, rather than emphasizing shame and condemnation. Our commitment to you is always to consider your needs and feelings, and to present solid Bible-based messages that touch your mind and emotions.”

The words are different, but the message is the same as that expressed by my “evangelical” classmate all those years ago—come to church with us and you’ll know you are saved. How will you know? Your emotions will tell you so. You’ll feel good about yourself. None of that yucky sin stuff.

I suspect that message is just as confusing and alluring to uninformed Christians today as it was to me. It’s just as dangerous today, too—which is why Lutherans need to clearly confess the truth about Holy Communion.

Today too many well-meaning church
leaders seem to think that the historic Lutheran understanding of the Lord’s Supper will be a “turn-off” to Americans who don’t mind seeing bodies and blood on television, but demand a sanitized version of the Gospel at church. Don’t preach to us about our sins, we want to hear about God’s love. Don’t preach about how Christ suffered a human death on the cross because of those sins, we want to praise His heavenly glory.

Don’t preach to us that Christ invites us to receive forgiveness at the communion rail along with His true body and blood. Tell us that communion is something WE do for God. Then we can leave church feeling good about ourselves.

You don’t have to be a theologian—you don’t even have to be familiar with Christ’s own words of institution—to see how tragically shortsighted such an understanding of Holy Communion is. Far from being a blood-and-sin-drenched “downer,” the Sacrament of the Altar is a joyous, liberating gift of God. Far from a simple commemoration of Christ’s suffering, it is intended to free us from OUR suffering.

Luther called this sacrament a “food of souls” in his Large Catechism, and for good reason. “We must never regard the sacrament as something injurious from which we had better flee,” he wrote. “But as a pure, wholesome remedy imparting salvation and comfort, which will cure you and give you both life in soul and body. For, where the soul has recovered, the body is also relieved.”

Perhaps even Protestants who believe that communion is merely a symbolic act of fellowship would agree with Luther. But, rejecting the true presence of Christ’s body and blood in the bread and wine, they would say that any comfort found in the sacrament is merely psychological and emotional, not physical or spiritual.

But that’s not what Scripture teaches. St. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 11 that anyone “who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord, eats and drinks judgment upon himself. That is why many among you are sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.” If the Sacrament of the Altar has the power to make undiscerning participants ill, does it not also have the power to impart physical and spiritual health?

Luther’s words make it clear that he thought so. Personal experience helped lead me to the same conclusion.

It happened five years ago, but the memory is as fresh as if it were yesterday. I was driving home from work one cold, dark night in January when a man stepped out in front of my car for a reason I still do not know. Unable to stop in time, the resulting collision proved fatal for him, and overwhelmingly painful for me.

My mind was filled with what I suppose are all the “normal” thoughts following such an extraordinary event. I felt guilt at not having been able to avoid the accident and a deep sense of grief for the victim’s family. I was confused as to why the accident happened in the first place, and puzzled as to how this incomprehensible tragedy fit into God’s plan for my life and that of the man whose life had been prematurely and violently ended. Perhaps I was even a little angry with God for having allowed such a thing to happen in the first place.

Still numbed by what had happened, I nevertheless went to church the following Sunday morning. I knew that I needed God more than ever that day and, because I finally understood what it means to be a Lutheran Christian, I knew exactly where to find Him.

Instead of the memory of that body and blood on the street, I eagerly received the body and blood of Christ through the Sacrament of the Altar. My emotions that morning may not have told me that God loved me and forgave my sins—they in fact may have been telling me just the opposite. But the promise of God’s Word told me that He was present in the sacrament, sustaining my life and faith regardless of how I felt.

In the Large Catechism Luther writes, “If you are heavy-laden and feel your weakness, go joyfully to this sacrament and obtain refreshment, consolation and strength. For if you would wait until you are rid of such burdens, that you might come to the sacrament pure and worthy, you must forever stay away.”

The joy of the Sacrament of the Altar is that none of its blessings depend on our emotions. Either, as Luther noted, we will feel unworthy and reject the gift God would give us, or we will be so self-righteous in having chosen Christ that we will mistake the sacrament for a law-driven work we do, not as the pure Gospel it is. That is a joy the world can neither give nor take away; it is joy denied emotion-driven believers who mistake momentary euphoria for eternal peace.

Long before I was in high school, I had been taught Luther’s Small Catechism. If I had actually LEARNED it, I could have responded to my classmate by quoting Luther’s explanation to the Third Article of the Creed.

When did I become a Christian? How do I know I’m saved?

“I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified me and kept me in the true faith.” None of those gifts is greater than the forgiveness and peace found in Christ’s own body and blood.

Notice—the verbs in Luther’s explanation are (on our part) passive. God does it all, lest we should boast. I wish I’d been smart enough to say that 25 years ago.

Kevin Leininger is a member of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, Ind., and chief editorial writer for the Fort Wayne News-Sentinel.
In the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Melanchthon noted, “it is certain that most people in our churches use the sacraments, absolution and the Lord’s Supper, many times in a year” (Apology, page 180 in the Tappert edition). Less than a decade later, however, Luther painted a strikingly different picture, “Now that the people are free from the tyranny of the pope, they are unwilling to receive the sacrament and they treat it with contempt.” Luther bemoaned the situation, yet counseled patient teaching on the part of pastors in trying to correct the situation. “Here, too, there is need of exhortation, but with this understanding: No one is to be compelled to believe or to receive the sacrament, no law is to be made concerning it. . . . We should so preach that, of their own accord and without any law, the people will desire the sacrament and, as it were, compel us pastors to administer it to them” (Small Catechism, 340-1). Luther’s comments sound remarkably contemporary, for many pastors hope to achieve these very things. Yet, there seems to be a disconnect of sorts between pastors and people. All of us who have served in the parish have heard the responses from our people—“Having communion more often would make it less special,” “I am not prepared for receiving the sacrament every Sunday,” and the like.

What happened? Luther blamed it on “enthusiasm”—the idea that God deals with human beings apart from His Word and sacraments. In the Smalcald Articles he reserves some of his strongest language for a condemnation of the “enthusiasm” that he believes clings to every human being. So why is it that so many of Luther’s heirs have lost his perspective on this point? A partial explanation lies in the historical and theological development of Lutheranism. Simply put, the enthusiasm Luther feared found its way directly into Lutheran theology and practice and remains with us in the present.

Following Luther’s death in 1546, various Lutheran theologians attempted to “complete” Luther’s reforming work. One significant group, later called Pietists and led by Philip Jakob Spener (1635-1705), believed that, while Luther had taught justification by grace through faith more clearly than anyone since Paul, he had not succeeded in wedding that doctrine with a vigorous practice. Worse yet, they claimed that of some of Luther’s followers (the so-called “Orthodox”) endangered the Lutheran Confessions by over emphasizing the means of grace—that the mere reception of the sacraments guaranteed God’s favor. Spener argued that, though such a faith is a “fleshy illusion . . . There are not a few who think that all that Christianity requires of them is that they be baptized, hear the preaching of God’s Word, confess and receive absolution, and go to the Lord’s Supper, no matter how their hearts are disposed at the time” (Philip Spener, Pia Desideria [Fortress, 1965], 64, 65).

In contrast, true Christianity, according to Pietism, centers on the inner life of the believing Christian, the establishment and
of the Altar: 
and Sustenance

By Rev. Prof. Lawrence Rast

The Rev. Prof. Lawrence Rast is an Assistant Professor of Historical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

cultivation of the mystical union between the believer and Christ. “Our whole Christian religion consists of the inner man or the new man, whose soul is faith and whose expressions are the fruits of life, and all sermons should be aimed at this” (Pia Desideria, 116). Not surprisingly, then, Pietism’s reason for receiving the Sacrament of the Altar differs radically from Luther’s biblical teaching. For Pietism, the body and blood of Christ, while really present, are chiefly pledges and signs that move the Christian to a fuller expression of godliness (Pia Desideria 63, 67). Thus, Spener downplays God’s objective promises realized in the present Christ. He stresses instead the experience of the human participant. “It is not enough that we hear the Word with our outward ear, but we must let it penetrate to our heart, so that we may hear the Holy Spirit speak there, that is, with vibrant emotion and comfort feel the sealing of the Spirit and the power of the Word. Nor is it enough to be baptized, but the inner man, where we have put on Christ in Baptism, must also keep Christ on and bear witness to Him in our outward life. Nor is it enough to have received the Lord’s Supper externally, but the inner man must truly be fed with that blessed food. . . . Nor, again, is it enough to worship God in an external temple, but the inner man worships God best in his own temple, whether or not he is in an external temple at the time” (Pia Desideria, 117; emphasis added). Thus, for Spener and Pietism generally, the Word and the sacraments are effective only to the person who faithfully believes and accepts them.

By emphasizing the preparedness and faithfulness of man, later Pietists effectively barred believers from the Lord’s Table; the Supper was off limits to all except those deemed sufficiently “spiritual.” August Herman Franke (1663-1727) put it like this, “This then, beloved in the Lord Jesus, is the pure and unblemished worship in Jesus Christ and through Jesus Christ, considered according to a threefold duty toward oneself, toward one’s neighbor, and toward God, and consisting in the practice of the same through the power of the Spirit. Now enter into your hearts and observe there your circumstances in regard to this threefold duty. See how far you have progressed in them or how far you have not progressed. And if you do not wish to deceive yourself, you must admit that it is clear that your present Christian state does not yet merit the name of a righteous beginning. What help is there for us, then, if we always consider our worship to consist in . . . at a certain time going to confession and the Lord’s Supper, and yet always living according to our old manner?” (Pietists—Selected Writings [Paulist Press, 1983], 162).

What would Luther say to all of this? The Lord’s Supper “is not founded on the holiness of men”—either the officiating priest or the receiving layperson—“but on the Word of God” (Large Catechism, 448). For Luther, the Lord’s Supper is about the presence of the gracious Christ who gives forgiveness of sins, light and life. It is about the work of Christ for us, not an act of our obedience to Him. It is God’s application of an external, alien righteousness to sinners in need of forgiveness. “The Lord’s Supper is given as a daily food and sustenance” to comfort the person whose “heart feels too sorely pressed” (Large Catechism, 449). Should we choose to follow the path of the Pietists, we will become self-engrossed and miss the gracious promise that Christ has for us. And even if we don’t feel like receiving the Lord’s Supper, Luther advises, “if you cannot feel the need . . . at least believe the Scriptures,” which tell us that the Supper gives us “forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation” (Large Catechism, 455; Small Catechism, 352). For, “if you choose to fix your eye on how good and pure you are . . . you will never go” (Large Catechism, 453). Thus, “he is truly worthy and well prepared who believes these words, ‘for you’ and ‘for the forgiveness of sins’” (Small Catechism, 352).

“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2a), not ourselves. In reality, Pietism’s overemphasis on man necessarily leads to enthusiasm; it replaces Christ with the human subject. This is and will always be the danger for we human beings. Better instead to heed Luther’s warning, “Enthusiasm clings to Adam and his descendants from the beginning to the end of the world. It is a poison implanted and inoculated in man by the old dragon, and it is the source, strength, and power of all heresy. . . . Accordingly, we should and must constantly maintain that God will not deal with us except through external Word and sacrament. Whatever is attributed to the Spirit, apart from such Word and sacrament, is of the devil” (Smalcald Articles, 313). Listen also to Luther’s advice, “I go to the Sacrament of the Altar not on the strength of my own faith, but on the strength of Christ’s Word. I may be strong or weak; I leave that in God’s hands. This I know, however, that He has commanded me to go, eat, and drink, etc. and that He gives me His body and blood; He will not lie or deceive me” (Large Catechism, 444). The crucified and risen Christ is really present to us in this “daily food and sustenance” so that we might have “life and have it to the full” (John 10:10).
We first saw Grace Lutheran Church at night, illuminated on the horizon in the city of Albuquerque, New Mexico. The building had to compete against a challenging setting. Behind the church, the Sandia Mountains rose 10,000 ft. against a moonlit desert sky. Across the street, a monolithic Mormon temple undergirded a tall steeple topped by a gleaming, spotlighted statue of the angel Moroni. On two sides silver-gray sage stretched across acres of open desert. Grace Lutheran Church competed spectacularly well. Interior lights glowed through the delicate watercolors of unusual stained-glass windows. Lighted crosslets pierced a square tower, which bore an orb and cross, almost Byzantine in effect. Such architectural beauty drew us into an unfamiliar area of the city to which we had just retired after teaching for many years in an eastern state.

As we entered the parking lot for a closer look, our initial enthusiasm received a check. The stone signboard marking the entrance read “Grace Lutheran Church—LCMS.”

“Forget it,” said Marge. “Not another Lutheran church.”

We had had this experience many times—approaching a Lutheran church with the ardor of anticipation only to witness inside the recessional of Lutheran orthodoxy, Reformation faith, and Gospel reality. Our branch of Lutheranism, the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), had seemed to be faithful, seemed to be devoted to Word and Sacrament, seemed to welcome believers into a Christian family. Our churches had looked right—red doors, cruciform design, cross-topped steeples, and Martin Luther’s coat-of-arms prominently displayed. The LCA was clearly our church home. Marge’s entire family worshipped in an LCA church; Ron’s mother’s ancestors were among the founders of a colonial Pennsylvania Lutheran church; Tom, our son, was baptized, first-communioned, and catechized in an LCA church. Beneath that comfortable surface, however, uneasy conflicts roiled. Our denomination undertook a long, complex study of abortion, concluding that the whole issue was best left to the individual. Our pastors increasingly described the Old Testament as simply Jewish history and mythology, to be read symbolically, if at all. Secular ideologies, like feminism and the elevation of toleration above all other values, occupied the attention of church publications, synodical conferences and, especially, campus ministry efforts. Ecumenism, universalism, liberation theology, the entire panoply of mainline liberal concerns were visibly displacing Gospel teaching, evangelism, and missions at the center of the church’s work.

By the late 1980’s, we could no longer ignore the gap between our own belief and the direction of the church leadership. At that precise moment, the LCA joined in the merger which produced the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), and the three of us waited, wondering what this new church body would do. The answer was swift and devastating. A new, young pastor from an elite seminary came to our western Pennsylvania parish. A few Sundays after his arrival he treated us to a “feminist liturgy” complete with inclusive language, feminine pronouns, and prayers to the Mother God. Our previous pastor’s thoughtful sermons were replaced by brief “homilies” on the agony of rejection felt by those who deviate from social norms, or the social obligations which should be the true center of our Christian faith. All of this was probably well intentioned and sincere, but it was dismaying in a church
accustomed to hearing the Word preached from the pulpit, receiving the Sacrament each Sunday, and studying orthodox Lutheran doctrine. Our patience ran out when our son came home from a confirmation class amazed at the pastor's announcement that it wasn’t necessary to read the whole Bible. Indeed, the pastor said he had never read the entire Bible nor had many of his fellow pastors.

After that we began to drift away, first to other ELCA churches and then to other denominations. For nearly a decade we searched, eventually withdrawing from membership in the ELCA. Since we frequently attended professional conferences and spent extended periods of time working on research grants or participating in seminars, we experienced churches in many regions of the country. We clung to the mainline denominations, hoping to find churches which combined traditional belief with the worship styles we knew and cherished. What we encountered in that search attests to the urgency of LCMS President Al Barry’s recent pastoral letter concerning the direction of ELCA decisions. Our experience also bears witness to the indictment of liberal theology offered in “What's Going on Among the Lutherans” by Leppien and Smith (available from Concordia Publishing House). Their book explains historically and theoretically the liberal heterodoxy of the ELCA and other “mainline” denominations. What we saw “out there” dramatizes the effect of this theology when its gets translated into actual church practice:

1. In a large, beautiful ELCA church we visited, a silent congregation watched as a dance troupe interpreted the communion service. Blending modern dance and classical ballet, women in tutus and men in tights whirled and gesticulated as a recorded modern discordant setting of a non-dominational “liturgy” played over the sound system.

2. On an Easter Sunday morning, we listened to an ELCA pastor describe a bloody, dazed Jesus staggering out of the tomb, in which He had just awakened from a swoon. No triumphant, risen Savior. He was just an example of suffering and endurance.

3. In a Presbyterian church near his university campus, our son heard that no belief in a real resurrection is necessary. The true resurrection is just the “survival of the Church.” This sermon was also preached on an Easter Sunday.

4. In a redbrick and white-columned Episcopal church, the priest explained to his congregation that the Fall of Man occurred when Cain slew Abel.

5. In a Midwestern city we decided against visiting a Methodist church in which the women’s group was sponsoring prayers and dances to Gaia, the Earth Goddess.

6. On a Palm Sunday, we attended an Episcopal cathedral in which the Passion story was enacted as a dramatic reading. All of the readers were women—except two. Men were assigned the parts of Pilate and Judas Iscariot. No one seemed to notice the incongruity when the actress playing the part of Christ read, “I am the Son . . .”

To this list we could add countless examples from across the spectrum of liberal Protestantism. We heard from the pulpit that the real victim in an abortion is the mother; that the best example of marriage in our neighborhood is probably the gay couple down the street; and that the blame for the Littleton, Colorado, tragedy is neither human depravity nor Satan, but the failure of government to provide for “our children’s” needs. We have heard Jesus' words, “I am the Way . . .” contorted into a universalist demand for inclusiveness. And, at an ELCA parochial school in which she substituted, Marge observed in silent amazement as the pastor harangued a fourth-grade class on the sin of homophobia, not homosexuality. The music teacher sitting beside her, another horrified Lutheran lost in the brave new world of ELCA theology, explained that the pastor was recycling the sermon he had delivered on the preceding Sunday.

Sitting in the parking lot of Grace Lutheran Church—LCMS on that spring night, therefore, we were not drawn by the word “Lutheran.” As we drove away, our son quietly pointed out that this beautiful new edifice was a Missouri Synod Lutheran Church. Better informed than we, far ahead of us theologically, he had read much about Missouri Lutheranism. Since there are few Missouri Synod churches in western Pennsylvania and none close to the small college town where we lived for many years, neither of us fully understood the differences between the ELCA and the LCMS. Our son argued patiently for the orthodoxy, scriptural faithfulness and doctrinal purity of the Missouri Synod. In short, he persuaded us to try Grace Lutheran Church, and our first Sunday there proved to be the wonderful homecoming God had planned for us at the end of our decade of searching.

We have found at Grace a warm welcome, powerful preaching, orthodox teaching, beautiful music and liturgy, adherence to the Gospel, and a biblical perspective on social and moral issues. In the words of Ephesians 2:19-20, “[we] are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone.”

Along with our gratitude, however, we offer an admonition. Our experience has taught us how easily a church body can lose its tradition, its focus, and even its faith. Missouri Synod Lutherans, more than ever, must keep the light of Christian truth burning—both in faithful teaching, faithful Scriptural interpretation, and faithful dedication to doctrine and liturgy. Today we worry when we read letters to church publications urging accommodation of Lutheran worship and liturgy to the ethos of contemporary culture. We fear when voices in the church body accuse seminaries of “liturgical legalism.” We recoil when “ecumenism” or “Lutheran unity” is elevated at the expense of the enduring truth of the historic Lutheran confessions. We have seen it all before. We know that the wide boulevard of accommodation leads into the desert wilderness of unbelieving churches. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is indeed an oasis in that desert for seekers like us. The church must never surrender the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ or compromise its Lutheran tradition.

Ron and Marge Shumaker are members of Grace Lutheran Church, Albuquerque, New Mexico.
Leading Others to Christ
Featuring the Rev. David Stechholz,
Pastor of West Portal Lutheran Church, San Francisco, California

Never mind that Pastor David Stechholz was born into a family that had produced four generations of Lutheran pastors. For him it wasn’t family tradition or his Buffalo Synod roots, but rather a love for church music and a burning desire to tell others about Jesus Christ that influenced him to devote his life to leading God’s people.

Born in 1948 south of Buffalo, New York, David spent the first five years of his life moving to different New York and Pennsylvania villages as his father accepted pastoral calls. In 1953, the moving ended when the elder Pastor Stechholz accepted a call to serve St. Mark’s Evangelical Lutheran Church in Mendon, New York. It was here that David grew from a child into a young man.

Coming from a musical family, he had become involved in the church’s music life at a young age.

“I have always had a love for music,” he remembered. “I was given the opportunity to serve as V.B.S. pianist at age 11 and as the organist at church at 15.”

Graduating from high school in 1966, Pastor Stechholz went on to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Valparaiso University in Valparaiso, Indiana. Along with his major, he also minored in music and geography.

After receiving his bachelor degree in 1970, he then attended and graduated in 1972 with a Master’s degree in International Relations and Foreign Policy from American University in Washington, D.C.

“At that time I really wanted to make it big in politics,” remembered the Rev. Stechholz. “Whether that meant political office, the State Department, the United Nations or some sort of government service, I did not know. But what I did know was that I loved government and being around it.”

This attitude changed drastically when he went to work for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 1971 while still pursuing his Master’s degree.

“It was during that time that I came to the realization that government work was not my calling in life,” said Rev. Stuchholz.

Frustrated by what he had witnessed, Rev. Stechholz decided to go back to his first love, church music. Serving as Minister of Music at Lutheran Church of St. Andrew in Silver Spring, Maryland, his duties grew to include directing five choirs, a small orchestra, and serving as church organist.

“This was an exciting time for me,” remembered Rev. Stechholz. “I was serving the Lord through music and being given the opportunity to evangelize to those who didn’t yet know Christ as their Savior and Redeemer. It was during this time that I finally realized that the Lord was calling me to serve Him as a pastor.”

Applying to both the St. Louis and Springfield seminaries, Pastor Stechholz ended up choosing Concordia Theological Seminary at Springfield.

“This was during the time of Seminex and I felt because of the circumstances that Concordia Theological Seminary would provide me with the best education with the least amount of fighting,” explained the Rev. Stechholz.

Beginning his studies in the fall of 1974, Pastor Stechholz remembers his seminary years as being a marvelous time and making wonderful friendships.

“Concordia Theological Seminary had wonderful, caring professors who were genuinely interested in me as a person and...
as a future pastor,” explained Pastor Stechholz. “I was given the chance to involve myself in the seminary’s music scene by serving as Assistant Dean of the Chapel, as a volunteer organist, and directing the Chapel Choir. It was a great time in my life.”

As is the case with all seminary students, Pastor Stechholz spent a year of his studies on vicarage. His year was spent serving Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ridgewood, New Jersey.

“I learned many things while I was a vicar, but the three most important were how to effectively manage a large congregation, how to effectively supervise a vicar, and the serious nature of the theological divisions in our beloved Synod,” said the Rev. Stechholz. “Later on in my own ministry as a vicarage supervisor I found the lessons I learned from my vicarage year to be quite helpful.”

Graduating in 1978, Pastor Stechholz’s first call was to serve Evangelical Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer in Oakmont, Pennsylvania. A call that would last for ten years, during his tenure the church doubled its membership, built a new house of worship, and started a Christian pre-school.

“I am happy to say that today Redeemer Church is still growing,” said the Rev. Stechholz. “So much in fact that the pre-school we started has gone on to develop into a full Christian day school.”

While serving Our Redeemer, Rev. Stechholz was also able to complete most of the course work for a Ph.D. in Roman Catholic Systematic Theology at Duquesne University of the Holy Ghost in Pittsburgh. Unfortunately, he was not able to transfer his credits when he accepted a call to California.

In 1988, Pastor Stechholz left Our Redeemer to accept a call to Messiah Lutheran Church in Danville, California. “During my three years at Messiah we were blessed to construct a new church building and see the congregation double in membership,” said Pastor Stechholz. “It was only through the grace of God that all of these things were being accomplished.”

In May 1991, Rev. Stechholz left Messiah and accepted his current call to serve West Portal Evangelical Lutheran Church and School in San Francisco, California.

“I accepted the call to West Portal because I felt the Lord was calling me to go to a congregation that had a Christian day school and multiple Divine Services,” explained Pastor Stechholz. “Once again the Lord was right.”

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Situated in a highly multi-ethnic community with a growing Asian population, Rev. Stechholz believes the Church and School are blessed with a great opportunity for intentional evangelization. “West Portal has one of the largest Christian day schools in the Synod with 70 percent of the students being Asian,” he said. “This has proved to be a wonderful situation for introducing Christianity to children and families who have never had any kind of religion in their lives.”

Since 1991, the congregation’s Asian population has grown from 6 percent to 34 percent, with many people filling key leadership positions. Most of Asian descent are Chinese.

“This has been a tremendous outreach for the Asian people who do not yet know Christ,” said Pastor Stechholz. “If they see strong family values and good education, along with love and acceptance of them, they are willing to see their children sing in church services and attend on Saturday or Sunday.”

To further help the process along, the Rev. Stechholz, his vicars, and the Pastoral Deacon teach a SCF (Sharing the Christian Faith) class three times a year on Sundays and Thursdays where attendees learn more about what Christianity is, who God is, and what the benefits are to becoming a Christian. He also teaches classes on baptismal information throughout the year, especially for families of West Portal Lutheran School.

“I believe we constantly must catechize. Teaching is essential to getting the message of Jesus Christ out to the people,” said Pastor Stechholz. “That is why so much of my time as a pastor is spent doing just that, teaching God’s people and those who do not yet know Him, including in the homes. Home visitation is essential, and, yes, a house-going pastor makes for a church-going people.”

Pastor David Stechholz and his wife Janet are the parents of Andrew, Mary Rachel, and Sarah. Mary is a freshman at Concordia University-River Forest, and Janet teaches at Hope Lutheran School in Daly City, a school that West Portal has just helped begin. West Portal was also one of the founding entities of New Life Chinese Lutheran Church in San Francisco, and the congregation is about to start a five million-dollar new school campus building. The Stechholz family resides in South San Francisco, California.
Seminary Partners honor those who serve

We at the seminary are thankful for the many participants in the Seminary Partners Plan. Seminary Partners commit to ongoing prayer for, and support of, students preparing for the ministry. Seminary Partners are invited to submit the name of a pastor who has made a difference in their lives, someone who has shared the Light of Christ with others. The names submitted by our Partners this year included not only pastors, but spouses, friends and family, reminding us that we all share the responsibility to spread the Gospel message, and that we can each make a difference in the Kingdom. We thank those whose loving gifts and prayers have helped to sustain our students this past year. We give glory to God for the workers He has sent into His harvest, and honor those listed here—pastors, wives, husbands, parents, and friends—for their service and visible testimony of Christ’s love. May their faithful witness encourage us all to go out and speak the Good News of Jesus Christ!

Ken Aschenbrenner
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O. W. Linnemeier
Henry Littonold
Alfred Lueders
Arnold Lueker
David Lukefahr
Walter G. Maas
Walter A. Maier
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Wilbern Michalk
Roy Moeller
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E. H. R. Mueller
Henry Niermann, Sr.
G. E. Nitz
Donald Nord
William Oaksford
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Rich Pagan
Wayne H. Palmer
Timothy Pauls
Charles Piazza
John T. Pless
Steven Rasmussen
S. E. Rathke
Kenneth H. Reidenbach
M. E. Reinke
Daniel Reuning
Theodore Roache
Walter E. Roschke
William H. Roth
Kenneth Rozak
Robert W. Schaubley
Ken Schauer
Joseph Schultz
Carl B. Schultz
Paul Shoemaker
Richard Smith
Alan Stahlecker
William Stahlke
Mark Steege
Richard Wagner
Martin Walker
Walter M. Wangerin
George Wehmeyer
Mr. Edgar Wein
Martin Wenzel
Loel Wessel
Merrell W. Wetzstein
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In Memoriam

Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it.
1 Corinthians 12:27

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For the Life of the World
Seminary Welcomes New Admission Counselor—The Rev. Michael Scudder has joined the ordained staff at CTS as an Admission Counselor. He officially began his duties on Oct. 8.

A 1994 CTS graduate, Scudder previously served at Zion Lutheran Church in Tomball, Texas, from 1994 to 1997, and at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Marshalltown, Iowa, from 1997 to October 1999.

“…being a part of the seminary community and the pastoral formation process,” said Rev. Scudder. “People have asked, ‘If you have such high regard and excitement for the parish ministry, why did you leave?’ I respond that I wanted to pass on that excitement and joy to those who are considering the Holy Ministry. Working in the admission/recruitment office is one way to do that on a nationwide scale.”

Joining the Rev. Scott Klemsz, Director of Admission at CTS, and the Rev. David Kind, Admission Counselor at CTS, Rev. Scudder’s main responsibility is to meet prospective students and encourage them to pursue the Office of the Holy Ministry.

Rev. Scudder and his wife, Sara, have a son, Matthew.

Clothing Co-op Needs Your Support
— The Clothing Co-op at Concordia Theological Seminary (CTS) is in need of various household items for seminarians and their families. Items that are in need include gently-worn clothing and shoes for all sizes, especially summer clothing; small kitchen appliances, pots, pans and dishes; draperies; blinds; indoor and outdoor furniture; toys and sporting equipment.

For those who do not live in the Fort Wayne community, small items can be shipped to the seminary via UPS to 6600 N. Clinton, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825. Another option is to send items with those who are driving to visit the campus or the Fort Wayne area.

The Clothing Co-op provides clothing and household goods to seminary families at no charge. Everything is donated by individuals, organizations and churches. Some families report that their family's clothing needs, with the exception of undergarments and shoes, are entirely met through the Co-op.

For more information, please contact Cynthia Hall, Director of the Food and Clothing Co-ops, at (219) 452-2168.

Seminary Guild Continues Mattress Project
— The Seminary Guild at Concordia Theological Seminary has heard from many students as to how they love their new mattresses and can’t say “thank you” enough. The Guild also wishes to say “thank you” to all who helped the group reach their goal by donating funds to the Mattress Project.

Eighty mattresses were purchased for the single student dorms. It has been recommended that the project continue by purchasing box springs, which cost $70 each, or a total of $3,000 to complete the project.

For individuals who wish to donate to this project and take advantage of tax deductions or tax credits, make your check payable to Concordia Theological Seminary and designate “For Box Springs.” All others may make their checks payable to the Seminary Guild. Mail checks to Concordia Theological Seminary, Seminary Guild, Box 403, 6600 N. Clinton St., Fort Wayne, IN 46825-4996.

If you are a Lutheran Brotherhood member, be sure to request a Matching Funds Grant Form from your Lutheran Brotherhood representative. Fill it out and return it to the above address so that the seminary may receive matching funds for this project.

If you are an AAL member, be sure to request a form for the AAL Member Gift Matching Program from our Guild Advisor or President. Fill it out and return it to the above address so that the seminary may receive matching funds.
ANNUAL EVENT COMING THIS MONTH TO SEMINARY

2000 SYMPOSIA

Concordia Theological Seminary (CTS), in Fort Wayne, Ind., will again host its annual Symposia, Jan. 18-21, 2000. Held every year on the Fort Wayne campus, presentations on Exegetical Theology, the Lutheran Confessions, and Lutheran Liturgy will highlight the four-day event.

Celebrating its 15th year, the theme for the Exegetical Theology Symposium is “Biblical Eschatology for the New Millennium.” The 23rd annual Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions has chosen “At the Dawn of the Third Millennium: Fanaticism, Eschatology and Death” as its theme. Rounding out the event will be the 13th annual Symposium on the Lutheran Liturgy with the theme “250th Anniversary of the Death of Johann Sebastian Bach 1750-2000.”

On Tuesday, Jan. 18, the following lectures will be given:

• “Apocalypse Now”: Inaugurated Eschatology in the Book of Revelation” by Dr. Charles A. Gieschen, Assistant Professor of Exegetical Theology, CTS.
• Formal Welcome and Introduction by Dr. Dean O. Wenthe, President and Professor of Exegetical Theology, CTS.
• “The Heart of the Apocalypses: A Teaching for All Times” by Dr. James C. VanderKam, John A. O’Brien Professor of Theology, University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Ind.
• “Proleptic Eschatology in the Old Testament” by Dr. James G. Bollhagen, Professor of Exegetical Theology, CTS.
• “Tracing Eschatological Themes in Isaiah” by Dr. Walter A. Maier III, Associate Professor of Exegetical Theology, CTS.
• “We are yours, O David’: The Eschatology of Chronicles” by Dr. Daniel L. Gard, Associate Professor of Exegetical Theology, CTS.

On Wednesday, Jan. 19, the following lectures will be given:

• “Looking to the Past to See the Future: The Old Testament as Eschatological Portrait” by Dr. Dean O. Wenthe.
• “Eschatology and Lectionary” by Dr. Douglas McC. L. Judisch, Professor of Exegetical Theology, CTS.
• “Eschatological Events in New Testament Perspective” by Dr. Walter A. Maier II, Professor of Exegetical Theology, CTS.
• “Death and Martyrdom: Eschatology in the Early Church” by Dr. William C. Weinrich, Academic Dean and Professor of Historical Theology, CTS.
• “Eschatology and Fanaticism in the Reformation Era: Lutherans and the Anabaptists” by Dr. Carter Lindberg, Professor of Historical Theology, CTS.
• “Eschatology and the Decease of Johann Sebastian Bach 1750-2000.”

On Thursday, Jan. 20, the following lectures will be featured:

• “Pietism and Mission: 18th and 19th Century Millennialism” by the Rev. Lawrence Rast, Jr., Assistant Professor of Historical Theology, CTS.
• “The Death and Resurrection of Jesus as Eschatological Event” by Dr. David P. Scær, Professor of Systematic Theology and New Testament, CTS.
• “Eucharist and Eschatology” by the Rev. Kurt Marquart, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology, CTS.
• “Liturgy as Eschatology” by Dr. Arthur A. Just, Jr., Professor of Exegetical Theology, CTS.

On Friday, Jan. 21, attendees will hear “Sectarian Apocalypticism in Mainline Christianity at the Millennium’s Dawn” by the Rev. Larry Nichols, Pastor, Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Greenville, R.I., and will then have an opportunity to question the speakers.

Along with lectures, there will be a Matins service with music by the Seminary Kantorei and a presentation of a Bach Cantata by the Schola Cantorum. The annual symposia reception and banquet will be held on Thursday, Jan. 20, in the Grand Wayne Center.

Registration for symposia is $110 per person, which includes admission to symposia, chapel services, and a ticket to the reception and banquet. Meals are an additional expense. Housing will not be available on campus. All fees are waived for prospective students who are considering attending CTS.

The deadline for registration is Jan. 12. To register or for more information, please contact Marge Wingfield by calling 219-452-2247. Registration materials and information can also be found on the seminary’s web site at: www.ctsfw.edu or the seminary’s new customizable portal at: www.LifeOfTheWorld.com.
Tribute Paid to the Preus Family

On Oct. 8, 1999, a bust of Dr. Robert Preus, the 13th president of Concordia Theological Seminary (CTS) and renowned theologian, was unveiled along with the lower plaza of the seminary named the “Preus Plaza” in honor of Dr. Preus and Dr. J. A. O. Preus, who was the 11th president of the seminary and elected president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in 1969.

“CTS was accredited during the presidency of Dr. J. A. O. Preus and achieved an international standing as a confessional seminary in the presidency of Dr. Robert Preus,” said Dr. Dean O. Wenthe, current president of CTS. “It was a special honor to welcome Mrs. Donna Preus and many family members to our campus on this memorable occasion. May we remember our fathers in the faith and carry forward their clear confession in our time.”

The day’s activities included a family tribute to Dr. Robert Preus by his son, the Rev. Daniel Preus; a collegial tribute to Dr. Robert Preus by CTS faculty members and the current and a former chairmen of the CTS Board of Regents; a special Vespers service with a homily by the Rev. Klemet Preus, also a son of Dr. Robert Preus; and a banquet and reception in the evening.

Spring Invitational Campus Visit Coming

The Admission Office at Concordia Theological Seminary (CTS) is accepting registrations for its spring 2000 Invitational Campus Visit (ICV), which will take place on the seminary campus March 23-25, 2000. There is no registration fee for the three-day visit, and all food and housing will be provided free of charge.

“We want to invite men and their families to visit our community and prayerfully consider entering the seminary to prepare to become a pastor,” said the Rev. Scott Klemsz, Director of Admission at CTS. “Spend time with us as we pray for the Church, our leaders, our community and our guests. Relax and enjoy a conversation with our faculty and staff as they share their excitement for our seminary’s work around the world. Enjoy a reflective walk around our seminary campus with its lush landscape and lake as you ponder your pilgrimage.”

The ICV weekend will afford prospective students the opportunity to get to know both the seminary and Fort Wayne community. Some of the activities that are planned include presentations by the President of CTS, the Dean of Students, the Director of Admission, the Director of Financial Aid, the Relocation Coordinator, and the Supervisor of Vicarage; tours of the CTS campus and of Fort Wayne; numerous worship opportunities; a Presidential Dinner; a reception at the home of the President for prospective students’ wives and fiancées; and a display fair featuring local banks, employment agencies, realtors, insurance agencies, and schools. There is also free time scheduled for house hunting, attending classes and/or visiting local schools.

The director of the seminary’s child care facility, Christ Child’s Learning Center, the campus nurse, the Director of Information Technology, the Bookstore Director and the Director of the Food and Clothing Co-ops will also be on hand to answer questions about their respective areas.

Many current students intend to participate in order to answer those questions that they, themselves, asked before they came to the seminary. If you, or someone you know, have ever considered becoming a pastor in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), this is a great chance to explore the possibilities open to you at CTS.

For information or to register, please contact the Office of Admission at 1-800-481-2155.

For the second year in a row, Concordia Theological Seminary (CTS) will host an academy geared for high school young men who are interested in learning more about seminary education and the pastoral ministry, Christ Academy: July 16-29, 2000.

Called Christ Academy, young men from all over the United States will have an opportunity to take part in classes, worship services, service projects, and leisure activities. The participants will also have an opportunity to learn about the four divisions of seminary education: exegetical theology, systematic theology, historical theology, and pastoral theology.

“We are always blessed to have these men on our campus as they partake of the many aspects of our community,” said the Rev. Scott Klemsz, Director of Admission at CTS. “We are looking forward to hosting our second year of Christ Academy. It is a unique opportunity for Missouri Synod men.”

For additional information about Christ Academy or if you would like to attend, please contact the Office of Admission at 1-800-481-2155.
Concordia Theological Seminary (CTS) has introduced an alternative way to access the World Wide Web, www.LifeOfTheWorld.com. Daily Scripture, meditations and insightful articles about Christ, coupled with news, weather, and sports, gives Christians around the world a single site for information.

“The computer has become to many families what the radio and television were years ago. It is the center of information and activity,” said the Rev. Scott Klemsz, publisher of For the Life of the World and Director of Public Relations at CTS. “Our new portal, www.LifeOfTheWorld.com, is designed to give Christian families a place where they can gather, study God’s Word, read the daily paper, shop for new clothes or do research for a school project.”

Central to www.LifeOfTheWorld.com is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Users can access a wide variety of articles and journals, in addition to the seminary’s theological library. Sermon, liturgical, worship, and hymnody notes are also available to all users who access the site. All items dealing with Christ and the Church can be found in a section called “Life Links.”

“The technological innovations that are being used at this site will truly be a blessing to families that want to explore all the good that the web has to offer, but do so in a safe environment,” said John Klinger, Director of Information Technology at CTS. “Out of concern for the Christian family, we are able to offer something that is exciting and that has never been done before on the Net.”

The new interactive portal has complete customization, allowing users to enter stock portfolios, favorite sports teams, and news topics. They can create a page that has the content, look, and feel that he or she desires. CTS is using the latest technology available in the development of www.LifeOfTheWorld.com, including Net-scape Netcenter at its core to make the new site ready for the 21st century church.

“In a culture that increasingly reduces human beings to a moment of purchase, or pleasure, or power, our calling is to announce a life that is not simply a passing transaction, but a holy and real life before the Triune God who has redeemed us by the atoning work of His Son,” said Dr. Dean O. Wenthe, President of CTS. “Such a life regards the Christian family as a sacred gift. Faithful husbands and wives; nurturing fathers and mothers; the love of children and the elderly; these mark the Christian family as God’s own children. The seminary’s use of Internet technology through www.LifeOfTheWorld.com can enrich the Christian community even as it thwarts the shameful and ugly abuse of human beings of all ages.”

Once you make www.LifeOfTheWorld.com your home page, it’s easy to customize it with features and information you want. Just click and follow the instructions that appear on your screen.
CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Events

2000 Symposia Series
January 18-21, 2000
(219) 452-2247

Spring Invitational Campus Visit
March 22-25, 2000
1-800-481-2155

Vicarage Placement Service
April 11, 2000, 7 p.m.
Kramer Chapel

Candidate Call Service
April 12, 2000, 7 p.m.
Kramer Chapel

Worship and Music

Epiphany Lessons and Carols
January 16, 2000, 7 p.m.
Kramer Chapel

Passion Choral Vespers
April 9, 2000, 4 p.m.
Kramer Chapel

Easter Choral Vespers
April 30, 2000, 4 p.m.
Kramer Chapel

Retreats

Lutherhostel I
March 12-17, 2000
(219) 452-2247

Elders Retreat
March 31-April 2, 2000
(219) 452-2247

Catechesis with Peter Bender
May 5-7, 2000
(219) 452-2247

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If you would like to see For The Life Of The World on the World Wide Web, go to web site: www.LifeOfTheWorld.com. The current issue, as well as previous issues, can be found at this new site.
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You can see stewardship in the efforts of Lutheran Brotherhood district representative Kurt Gland, who helped the Hansons with their estate conservation needs. He found a way for them to support their charitable causes, without taking away from their children’s inheritance.

You’ll find examples of Lutheran Brotherhood building stronger Lutheran communities, congregations, institutions and families all across the country. Today, we’re on the Hansons’ front porch.

Serving through Stewardship

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