The Advent of Our King
By Paul J. Grime

The Hymns of Christmas
By Richard C. Resch

“On the Thirteenth Day of Christmas . . .”
The Season and Songs of Epiphany
By Jon D. Vieker
When we hear Andy Williams croon, “It’s the Most Wonderful Time of the Year!” we know that things are getting close—close to Christmas. It is a wonderful time of year—but also a hectic one.

The run up to Christmas has become a race for so many of us, sprinting from one party to another, one store to another to get the hot gift of the year, one website to another to try and find that perfect present. And in the midst of it all, there is a background soundtrack of songs that, for most of us, evoke feelings of family and friends.

The church has its “soundtrack,” too. The hymns and carols of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany feature some of the best loved and most theologically rich texts of Christian hymnody. Beyond that, the music of these hymns is powerful, evocative and memorable.

The wedding together of text and tune creates a potent theological vehicle, something that Martin Luther understood very well. Indeed, how highly Luther valued music is well known. As he writes, “I would certainly like to praise music with all my heart as the excellent gift of God which it is and to commend it to everyone . . .” (Luther’s Works, vol. 53:321), and “Music is an outstanding gift of God and next to theology, I would not want to give up my slight knowledge of music for a great consideration. And youth should be taught this art: for it makes fine, skillful people” (Plass, What Luther Says, p. 979).

Not surprisingly, Luther had some colorful language to describe those who did not appreciate this marvelous gift of God, suggesting that they would be better off singing along with the animals of the barnyard. (See Walter Buszin, Luther on Music [Minneapolis: Lutheran Society for Worship, Music and the Arts, 1958], p. 6).

Why such strong opinions for Luther? Most fundamentally, for Luther music was evidence of God’s grace—pure gift. And when coupled with the message of Christ—incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension—God’s Gospel of salvation in Christ expressed itself in its most powerful form.

In this issue of For the Life of the World we focus on the hymnody of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany. Advent prepares us to receive God’s purest gift, the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. Christmas rejoices in Christ, God’s perfect Gift, come in the flesh to bear our sin and be our Redeemer. Epiphany brings Christmas to its culmination where “Heaven and earth, now proclaim this great wonder: Jesus has come and brings pleasure eternal!” (Lutheran Service Book [LSB] 533).

Here we highlight three of Lutheranism’s finest theologians/musicians reflecting on the place of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany hymns in the life of God’s people. CTS Professors Paul Grime and Richard Resch, with the Rev. Jon Vieker, senior assistant to LCMS President Matthew Harrison, offer insight into not only the theological substance of these hymns, but also the way in which they affect our preparation and celebration of the coming of God’s greatest Gift, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

So sing the songs of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany and celebrate that most wonderful Gift of God, the Manger King, the Savior!

In His Service,

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.
President, Concordia Theological Seminary
4 The Advent of Our King
By Paul J. Grime

We need to cultivate a sense of expectancy, which is precisely why Advent is beneficial for us. When we rush too quickly through Advent in order to get on with Christmas, we shortchange ourselves. Thus, it is good to hear the Advent readings and sing the Advent hymns as they gently prod us to set our minds on things above and not on earthly things.

7 The Hymns of Christmas
By Richard C. Resch

A survey of hymnals from a wide range of denominations reveals that the “Hymns of Christmas” section will usually end up being the clearest and strongest theology in the whole book. Perhaps that is because regardless of what a church believes, at Christmas there is a strong expectation that “Once in Royal David’s City,” “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing,” “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” “Angels We Have Heard on High” and “Joy to the World” will be sung.

10 “On the Thirteenth Day of Christmas...”
The Season and Songs of Epiphany
By Jon D. Vieker

Within a few days after Christmas, the world has had enough. Following months and months of commercial hype, the decorations are down, the tree is on the curb and most folks are preparing for the obligatory, end-of-the-year countdown and half-hearted New Year’s resolutions. Yet the Church continues with its Christmas celebration... for 12 days and beyond. For throughout the Season of Epiphany, the Church confesses and proclaims to a world of darkness the Incarnation of the Jesus Christ, “the light who was coming into the world” (John 1:9).

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- CTS Marks 167th Academic Year p. 23
- Bible Study: Advent—Time of Anticipation p. 30
The Advent of
Over the course of her 60-year reign, Queen Elizabeth has made thousands upon thousands of appearances before her subjects. No matter where she goes, the reaction is nearly always the same: wild anticipation and excitement at the prospect of standing in the presence of royalty. While television and the Internet have lessened the distance between the people and their queen, there’s nothing that can quite replace an actual face-to-face encounter with her.

In ancient times, rulers would often travel through their territories in order to assess the conditions in which their subjects lived. While most people, especially in remote regions, ordinarily had little communication with the outside world, you can be sure that communication stepped up in advance of a royal visit. Runners would go ahead of the king’s entourage, entering each village with the exciting news, “The king is coming! The king is coming!”

That, essentially, is the message of Advent: “The King is coming!” And He’s coming not just passing through town but coming to dwell with you! The hymns of Advent are replete with such announcements. One example, of Danish origin, begins like this:

O bride of Christ, rejoice;  
Exultant raise thy voice  
To hail the day of glory  
Foretold in sacred story.  
Hosanna, praise, and glory!  
Our King, we bow before Thee. (Lutheran Service Book [LSB] 335:1)

And another begins:

Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates!  
Behold, the King of glory waits.  
The King of kings is drawing near;  
The Savior of the world is here. (LSB 340/341:1)

Other hymns of Advent have titles like “O Lord, How Shall I Meet You” (LSB 334) and “Prepare the Royal Highway” (LSB 343).

As one might expect, these hymns don’t appear out of a vacuum. For centuries, the Holy Gospel for the First Sunday in Advent was the story of Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Admittedly, that choice seems somewhat out of place. Why would we hear about an event that
occurred just days before Jesus’ crucifixion when we are getting ready to celebrate quite a different event, namely, Jesus’ birth?

The season of Advent, though the first on our Church Year calendars, was actually the last season to be added. Like the other seasons of the Church Year, its origins are far from clear. Once the celebration of our Lord’s birth became firmly established in the fourth century, some churches began to add a period of preparation. At first, it was only a week or two; later, additional weeks were added. In some places, Advent consisted of a full seven weeks! Eventually, the Church settled on a four-Sunday observance.

The name “Advent,” as you’ve likely heard before, comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which means “coming.” Over the years, many have suggested a threefold “coming” that characterizes our Advent devotion: Christ came, Christ comes and Christ will come again. (We even have a hymn that embraces all three of those comings; see *LSB* 334.)

For most people, however, it’s only the first coming, the coming at Bethlehem, that occupies their imagination. That’s certainly fitting. Taking time to ponder God’s promise of a Savior, a promise that was kept at that birth in Bethlehem, sets the joy of Christmas in its proper perspective. In one sense, our Advent devotion enables us to join with expectant Israel, capturing the centuries of anticipation during which God’s people waited for their release from bondage to sin.

And so He came. By His life, death and resurrection He accomplished salvation for the whole world. But with His ascension, our Lord in no way wants to suggest that He has, in the meantime, left us to fend for ourselves. No, our Lord comes to us now to serve us. Through His divinely appointed means—through Word and Sacrament—Jesus continues to come to us with forgiveness, life and salvation in His wake. Weekly, even daily, we celebrate our Lord’s advent among us.

There is still one more promise of our Lord—namely, that He will come again in glory. That will be His final advent, the coming for which the Church waits in anticipation. Through the ages, the Church’s persistent prayer for the Lord’s return has gone forth: “Come, Lord Jesus!”

Every season of the Church Year has its own character that shapes our prayer. At Christmas, we rejoice. During Lent, we express remorse for sin. At Easter, we celebrate Christ’s victory over sin and death. Similarly, Advent has its own watchwords that characterize the season: hope and expectation. Given that the Christian lives with one foot planted in this world and the other planted firmly in heaven, those are good words. We need to cultivate a sense of expectancy, which is precisely why Advent is beneficial for us. When we rush too quickly through Advent in order to get on with Christmas, we shortchange ourselves. Thus, it is good to hear the Advent readings and sing the Advent hymns as they gently prod us to set our minds on things above and not on earthly things.

As we now enter a new Church Year, savor these weeks of Advent. Heed the preaching of John the Baptist and his call to repentance. Rejoice in the Lord and His gracious visitation among us. Join your voice with the saints of every age in that ancient prayer, “Come, Lord Jesus!”

As we now enter a new Church Year, savor these weeks of Advent. Heed the preaching of John the Baptist and his call to repentance. Rejoice in the Lord and His gracious visitation among us. Join your voice with the saints of every age in that ancient prayer, “Come, Lord Jesus!” And in the words of one Lutheran hymnwriter, Valentin Thilo,

*Arise, O Christian people!*
*Prepare yourselves today;*
*Prepare to greet the Savior,*
*Who takes your sins away.* (*LSB* 354)

*The Rev. Dr. Paul J. Grime (Paul.Grine@ctsfw.edu) serves as associate professor of Pastoral Ministry and Missions and dean of the Chapel at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.*
Singing fills the air at Christmas like no other time of the year. People who usually only use their singing voice for “Take Me Out to the Ball Game” and “Happy Birthday,” find themselves humming and singing snippets of the carols that seem to be everywhere in the weeks leading up to Christmas. What is this music that so defines the season and celebration of Christmas? I am happy to report that for the most part it is a type of hymnody that sings the birth of Christ. Now it is not news to anyone that Christmas music has become quite a mixed bag, but let’s leave that bag with the world from which it came and focus instead on that which sings of Christ and His birth.

The singing I am talking about is incarnational theology (God made flesh and dwelling among us) in a poetic, strophic (stanza) and simple musical form. It is carol-like hymnody that is often wonderfully tuneful, accessible and memorable. Simply put, it is a combination of music and poetry that voices, announces beautifully and at times almost shouts, to all what God did for the world in a manger.

“A rejoice, ye Christians loudly, For our joy has now begun; Wondrous things our God has done.” (Lutheran Service Book [LSB] 897:1a)

A survey of hymnals from a wide range of denominations reveals that the “Hymns of Christmas” section will usually end up being the clearest and strongest theology in the whole book. Perhaps that is because regardless of what a church believes, at Christmas there is a strong expectation that “Once in Royal David’s City,” “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing,” “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” “Angels We Have Heard on High” and “Joy to the World” will be sung.

But there are different levels of presenting incarnational theology. This is where things become quite extraordinary...
and wonderfully rich for Lutherans. For us, singing at Christmastide is far, far away from snowflakes and a sugar-coated, watered-down theology. We instead will sing of our great need for this Savior, and in doing so, we will not shy away from words like sin, blood or a cross.

Martin Luther sets this beautiful standard for singing the Nativity of our Lord in hymns like, “From Heaven Above to Earth I Come” and “We Praise You, Jesus, at Your Birth.”

**Instead of soft and silken stuff**
You have but hay and straw so rough
On which as King, so rich and great,
To be enthroned in royal state. (LSB 358:11)

The gift from God’s eternal throne
Here clothed in our poor flesh and bone. (LSB 382:2b)

But Luther was not the first or last to give such clear incarnational theology to the church’s singing. “Of the Father’s Love Begotten” of Prudentius, “From East to West, from Shore to Shore” of Sedulius and “A Great and Mighty Wonder” of Germanus all sang with the same richness centuries before Martin Luther.

**Oh, that birth forever blessed,**
When the virgin, full of grace,
By the Holy Ghost conceiving,
Bore the Savior of our race,
And the babe, the world’s Redeemer,
First revealed His sacred face
Evermore and evermore. (LSB 384:2)

And then, after Luther, Paul Gerhardt develops this theme in a truly magnificent way giving us some of the finest hymns in the whole hymnal. Here he freely talks of hell, Satan, sin, a Lamb, grief and bondage, cross and suffering—subjects that will not be dealt with in most churches on Christmas Eve.

**O Jesus Christ, Thy manger is**
My paradise at which my soul reclineth.
For there, O Lord, Doth lie the Word
Made flesh for us; herein Thy grace forth shineth.

Thy light and grace Our guilt efface,
Thy heav’nly riches all our loss retrieving.
Immanuel, Thy birth doth quell
The pow’r of hell and Satan’s bold deceiving.

(From: LSB 372:1,3)

**See the Lamb, our sin once taking**
To the cross, Suff’ring loss,
Full atonement making.
For our life His own He tenders,
And His grace All our race
Fit for glory renders. (LSB 360:4)

From the bondage that oppressed us,
From sin’s fetters that possessed us,
From the grief that sore distressed us,
We, the captives, now are free. (LSB 375:4)

“*What Child Is This*” by William Dix is one of the very few well-known, popular Christmas hymns that does indeed tell it like is.

**Why lies He in such mean estate**
Where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear; for sinners here
The silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear shall pierce Him through,
The cross be borne for me, for you;
Hail, hail the Word made flesh,
The babe, the son of Mary! (LSB 370:2)

A Christmas hymn by Pastor Stephen Starke has given us yet a new way of singing this theology. I can think of no better words to end my short commentary on Christmas hymns than this stanza, for it expresses the heart of all our music-making at the celebration of our Lord’s birth.

**Lord Jesus Christ, You deigned to dwell**
Among us here on earth
As God with us, Emmanuel,
To bring this holy birth.
Though rich, You willingly became
One with our poverty,
That we might share Your wealth and name
For all eternity! (LSB 362:4)

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Choral Evening Prayer

Music of the Christmas and Epiphany season presented by the Kantorei of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Wednesday, January 2 • 7:30 p.m.
St. Mark’s Lutheran Church
7 St. Mark’s Pl.
Yonkers, NY 10704
914-237-8199

Thursday, January 3 • 7:30 p.m.
St. Peter’s Lutheran Church
208 Newtown Ave.
Norwalk, CT 06851
203-847-1252
www.stpeternorwalk.org

Friday, January 4 • 7:00 p.m.
First Lutheran Church
299 Berkeley St.
Boston, MA 02116
617-536-8851
www.flc-boston.org

Saturday, January 5 • 4:00 p.m.
Immanuel Lutheran Church
154 Meadow St.
Bristol, CT 06010
860-583-5649
www.immanuellutheranbristol.org

Sunday, January 6 • 9:30 a.m.
Christ the King Lutheran Church
14 Pine Dr.
Pawling, NY 12564
845-855-3169
www.pawlinglutheran.org

Sunday, January 6 • 4:00 p.m.
Zion Lutheran Church
3917 Waverly Rd.
Owego, NY 13827
607-687-1205
www.zionowego.org

Monday, January 7 • 7:00 p.m.
Pinnacle Lutheran Church
250 Pinnacle Rd.
Rochester (Henrietta), NY 14623
585-334-1392
www.pinnaclelutheran.org

Sunday, January 13 • 4:00 p.m.
Concordia Theological Seminary
6600 N. Clinton St.
Fort Wayne, IN 46825
260-452-2224
www.ctsfw.edu
The word “epiphany” comes from the Greek New Testament and means “manifestation” or “appearing”—“. . . the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel . . . .” (2 Tim. 1:10).

The Season and Songs of Epiphany

Within a few days after Christmas, the world has had enough. Following months and months of commercial hype, the decorations are down, the tree is on the curb and most folks are preparing for the obligatory, end-of-the-year countdown and half-hearted New Year’s resolutions.

Yet the Church continues with its Christmas celebration . . . for 12 days and beyond. For throughout the Season of Epiphany, the Church confesses and proclaims to a world of darkness the Incarnation of the Jesus Christ, “the light who was coming into the world” (John 1:9).

Christmas Beginnings

Evidence from the first and second centuries suggests that the very earliest celebrations of the Church Year centered around commemorating the most important events in Jesus’ life, that is, His suffering, death and resurrection. Thus, Holy Week began to form as a first giant pillar of the Church Year, from which eventually grew the seasons of Lent and Eastertide on either side.

By the end of the second century, a second giant pillar gradually emerged as Christians began to commemorate not only the meaning of Jesus’ death and resurrection, but also His beginnings as “the Word made flesh” (John 1:14). Already by A.D. 200, Clement of Alexandria wrote that the Basilidians (a Gnostic sect) celebrated the baptism of Jesus on January 6, but that he himself was familiar with the tradition of celebrating Christ’s birth on January 6. For the Eastern Church, then, the Festival of the Epiphany (January 6) was the original Christmas—a celebration of Christ’s Incarnation, from which eventually grew the seasons of Advent and Epiphany on either side.

Incarnation Manifestations

The word “epiphany” comes from the Greek New Testament and means “manifestation” or “appearing”—“. . . the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel . . .” (2 Tim. 1:10). “Epiphany” is an Incarnation word—God’s Son appearing in the flesh for sinners. The themes of the Sundays during the season of Epiphany reflect Christ’s gracious appearing:

- Epiphany (January 6)—the visit of the Gentile Magi to worship the toddler Jesus as King of the Jews (Matt. 2:1–12).
- First Sunday after the Epiphany—the Baptism of Jesus and the voice of the Father from heaven, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:3–17).
- Second Sunday after the Epiphany—the Wedding at Cana and Jesus’ “first sign,” where He showed forth His glory “and His disciples believed in Him” (John 2:1–11).
- Additional Sundays after the Epiphany—various miracles of Jesus, demonstrating that He is the Son of God and calling forth faith from unbelief.
- Last Sunday after the Epiphany—the Transfiguration of Jesus, where He displayed His divine glory to His disciples and then headed down the mountain toward Calvary and the empty tomb (Matt. 17:1–9).

Songs of Thankfulness and Praise

The hymns of Epiphany reflect the central, incarnational themes found in the Holy Gospel for each Sunday. One of
The hymns of Epiphany reflect the central, incarnational themes found in the Holy Gospel for each Sunday. One of the oldest hymns in the Epiphany section is “The Star Proclaims the King Is Here” (LSB 399). Written in Latin by the fifth-century poet, Sedulius, this hymn was originally part of a much longer hymn tracing the whole life of Christ—literally “from A to Z,” with each stanza beginning with the next letter of the alphabet. The hymn as we know it today tells the Incarnation portion of that story: of cruel King Herod and his “senseless fear” (stanza 1); of the “eastern sages” who “saw from far/And followed on His guiding star” (stanza 2); of Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan as “the heav’ly Lamb . . . of whom no sin was known” (stanza 3); and of “the miracle divine/When water reddened into wine!” (stanza 4).

Sedulius’ ancient hymn captures wonderfully the central themes of Epiphany all in one hymn, as does Christopher Wordsworth’s “Songs of Thankfulness and Praise” (LSB 394). And yet, whole hymns are also dedicated to each of these themes:

- The Visit of the Magi—“As with Gladness Men of Old” (LSB 397);
- “Brightest and Best of the Stars of the Morning” (LSB 400).
- The Baptism of Jesus—“Jesus, Once with Sinners Numbered” (LSB 404);
- “To Jordan Came the Christ, Our Lord” (LSB 406/407).
- The Wedding at Cana—“Come, Join in Cana’s Feast” (LSB 408).
- The Transfiguration—“O Wondrous Type! O Vision Fair” (LSB 413);
- “‘Tis Good, Lord, to Be Here” (LSB 414).

Each of these hymns beautifully unpacks the theme of the Gospel reading for the Sundays during the Epiphany season, and then retells that Gospel story on the wings of song.

One final theme of the Epiphany season—a theme woven in and around the themes of each Sunday’s Scripture—is the theme of “light,” specifically, Jesus as the light of the world or “Morningstar.” “Arise and Shine in Splendor” (LSB 396) expounds the words of Isaiah 40: “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you” (Is. 60:1). “The People That in Darkness Sat” (LSB 412) proclaims in song the words of Isaiah 9: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light . . .” (Is. 9:1).

But the most famous hymn of light among our Epiphany hymns is Philipp Nicolai’s “O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright” (LSB 395). Oddly enough, Nicolai never conceived of his hymn as an Epiphany hymn. During the summer of 1597, he stood at the graves of nearly 1,400 members of his parish. In the face of death at every turn, Nicolai clung ever more firmly to the promise of eternal life . . . for himself and for his parishioners. He wrote “O Morning Star” shortly thereafter as a meditation on the life of the world to come. The abiding presence of Christ, the “Morning Star,” from this life into the next is further underscored as Nicolai penned each stanza in the shape of a chalice:

O let the harps break forth in sound!
Our joy be all with music crowned,
Our voices gladly blending!
For Christ goes with us all the way—
Today, tomorrow, ev’ry day!
His love is never ending!
Sing out! Ring out!
Jubilation!
Exultation!
Tell the story!
Great is He, the King of Glory!

Indeed, “Christ goes with us all the way”—from Incarnation, to font, to His body and blood in the Supper and into life everlasting. And great is the celebration . . . from the Thirteenth Day of Christmas and beyond! 🎄

The Rev. Jon D. Vieker (Jon.Vieker@ctsfw.edu) is senior assistant to the president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.
Advent Is for Preachers

By John T. Pless

Advent is for preachers. Well, of course, so is Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and the whole of the Church Year. But Advent accents preaching, making known that it is the Lord who comes to bring salvation, to proclaim this in all the earth.

Scholars point out that the Lutheran Reformation nuanced Advent preaching to give priority to proclamation; in contrast to medieval preaching where the dominant theme was preparation. Early Lutheran preachers accented proclamation, echoing the words of the Prophet Zechariah: “Behold, your King is coming to you; righteous and having salvation.” Now that is a word to be proclaimed. So the Palm Sunday crowds will not be quiet. They cry out as we heard in Sunday’s Gospel: “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest” (Luke 19:38). And the Pharisees, who are unsettled by this ruckus, get nowhere when they attempt to get Jesus to tone the commotion down. Jesus says that if His disciples were silent, the very stones would cry out.

Advent evokes proclamation and praise for the Holy One of Israel who comes to redeem sinners. Now if you have been reading along with the lectionary through these early chapters of Isaiah, you know that the coming and presence of God is not necessarily good news. For example, the Prophet Isaiah proclaims the comfort of God’s salvation, deliverance and mercy in Chapter 12. But these words are wedged in between oracles of woe and wrath, destruction meted out to all those who draw their life from dead idols and live in lethal unbelief acting as though the Lord God was powerless to call them to account.

There is a dark side to Advent. Isaiah speaks of it as he preaches the alien work of God, wielding the axe against every outgrowth of sin, cutting through the thickets of our hearts entangled in the monotonous futility of exchanging God’s truth for lie. The thorns and briars will crackle as they are kindled by sparks of divine judgment. Hungry flames will ravish Israel, the “remnant of the trees of his forest will be so few” the Prophet Isaiah says, “that a child can write them down” (Is. 10:19). But out of that charred earth there comes forth a tender shoot from the stump of Jesse, the insignia of an unquenchable mercy and a divine favor for sinners that will not cease. In His wrath God remembers His mercy, so Isaiah proclaims the promise: “You will say in that day: ‘I will give thanks to You, O Lord, for though You were angry with me, Your anger turned away that You might comfort me’” (Is. 12:1).

That’s why Advent is for preachers. God is coming not in anger, for that wrath has been turned from us and absorbed in the suffering and death of God’s own Son, the Lamb of God who has answered for our sins on the cross. He came into His Zion, the holy city—the place of temple and sacrifice to suffer the fate of our unrighteousness, to bear our sin and be our Savior. Preachers are to proclaim Him, for it is only in this Jesus that sinners find the comfort of which Isaiah speaks, the consolation of sins forgiven.

Preaching makes known what the Lord has done in all the earth. No wonder John the Baptist figures so prominently in Advent, for he embodies the preaching of which Isaiah speaks. Yes, he gives voice to the Law as he swings the blade of God’s judgment at sapless trees, withered in unbelief and shriveled up in the death that is the fruit of sin. But his voice calling out in the wilderness calls to repentance and faith in the One who comes in the name of the Lord, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Advent announces that this Lord is near. Luther says that we can’t draw this Lord too deeply into the flesh. How deeply He is drawn into the flesh we know from Palm Sunday, from Bethlehem and finally from the Last Day when He will return as Judge yet still our Brother.

In the meantime, it is Advent. It’s always Advent for the Christian remarked Dietrich Bonhoeffer. It is always Advent, for we wait for what we already now receive by faith. The Lord who is coming is already here with a word of promise. “In your midst is the Holy One of Israel.” His name is Jesus. Faith comes by hearing His words. Advent is for preachers. Proclaim His promises. We can’t remain silent less the stones cry out.

The Rev. Prof. John T. Pless (John.Pless@ctsfw.edu) serves as assistant professor of Pastoral Ministry and Missions at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

1 Haemig, Mary Jane. “Sixteenth-Century Preachers on Advent as a Season of Proclamation or Preparation” Lutheran Quarterly (Summer 2002), 125-152.
Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana, will again host its annual Symposia January 22–25, 2013. Held every year on the Fort Wayne campus, presentations on Exegetical Theology and the Lutheran Confessions will highlight the four-day event.

Celebrating its 28th year, the theme for the Exegetical Theology Symposium is Love and Marriage: Does the Bible Still Mean What It Says?

The 36th annual Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions has chosen Morality and Ethics in the Church and in the Public Square: The Lutheran Challenge as its theme.

For more information go to www.ctsfw.edu/Symposia or call 260-452-2204.
The 36th Annual Symposium on The Lutheran Confessions
Morality and Ethics in the Church and in the Public Square: The Lutheran Challenge

Wednesday, January 23, 2013
1:15 p.m. Ethics as Part of a Seminary Curriculum—Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr.
1:45 p.m. Abortion, Incarnation and the Place of Children in the Church: All One Cloth a Common Basis—Dr. David P. Scaer, The David P. Scaer Chair of Biblical and Systematic Theology and Chairman of the Department of Systematic Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary
2:45 p.m. Man Reconstructed: Humanity Beyond Biology—Dr. Brent Waters, The Jerre and Mary Joy Stead Professor of Christian Social Ethics, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Illinois
3:45 p.m. Lutheran Support for Pro-Life: A Case of Faith Without Works?—Dr. Peter J. Scaer, Associate Professor of Exegetical Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary; President, Allen County Right to Life
4:45 p.m. Liturgical Re-Adjustments: Off Ramp to Apostasy?—Dr. Paul J. Grime, Dean of the Chapel and Associate Professor of Pastoral Ministry and Missions, Concordia Theological Seminary
5:30 p.m. Choral Vespers (Kramer Chapel)
6:30 p.m. Dinner

Thursday, January 24, 2013
9:00 a.m. The Church’s Place in the Public Square: Can the Shoes of Richard John Neuhaus Be Filled?—Rev. Peter A. Speckhard, Pastor, Faith Lutheran Church, Green Bay, Wisconsin
10:00 a.m. Chapel (Kramer Chapel)
12:00 p.m. Lunch
1:30 p.m. The ELCA: Quo Vadis?—Dr. Mark D. Menacher, St. Luke’s Lutheran Church, La Mesa, California
2:30 p.m. The NALC as Alternative to the ELCA—Dr. J. Larry Yoder, Director of The Center for Theology, Lenoir-Rhyne University, Hickory, North Carolina
3:30 p.m. Panel Discussion—LCMS and ELCA as Dissonant Voices in the Public Square

Friday, January 25, 2013
9:00 a.m. Defining Humanity in the Lutheran Confessions and in Post-Reformation Lutheran Theology—Prof. Roland F. Ziegler, Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary
10:00 a.m. Marriage and So-called Civil Unions: Biblical and Natural Law Arguments—Dr. Gifford A. Grobien, Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary
11:00 a.m. Itinerarium (Kramer Chapel)

Lenten Preaching Workshop
Preaching the Lord’s Passion with Dr. Luther

Monday, January 21, 2013
8:30 a.m.—4:00 p.m.

From November 1528 through June 1529, Dr. Luther left us with his most extensive treatment of the Passion text from John’s Gospel in his Saturday Vespers sermons in Wittenberg. Instead of focusing on the details of Christ’s suffering that provoke an imitative participation in His Passion, Luther rejoices in the forgiveness of sins that Jesus has accomplished as the Lamb of God and bestows to us through the Pordigtant.


The presenter is Dr. Naomichi Masaki, associate professor of Systematic Theology and S.T.M. supervisor at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Cost for the workshop is $40.00. You may register online at www.ctsfw.edu/Symposia or by phoning 260-452-2204.
Called to SERVE

See If This Is for You

By Jayne E. Sheafer

A quick Internet search will show that the most popular degrees at Big 10 universities are Engineering, Business and Social Sciences. Daniel Grimmer was certainly on that track by pursuing a degree in Engineering from the University of Michigan. While at the U. of M. he also became part of the community at University Lutheran Chapel, Ann Arbor, and some other doors began opening for him.

“While in college, I became very involved at University Lutheran Chapel in Ann Arbor, helping with the service and Bible studies. Through these experiences, I became interested in pursuing the Office of the Ministry. Particular influences were my college pastor, the Rev. Scott Giger, and my grandmother,” explained Grimmer. “I met Rev. Tom Zimmerman while he was on a recruiting trip and he encouraged me to attend Christ Academy College. I attended four visitation weekends in four years and became convinced that the ministry was for me.”
Pastoral ministry is certainly not the easiest calling. This isn’t a nine to five job. Seminary is really a lifestyle, but it’s also a blessed calling! Here at CTS, you will learn what it means to live a life under the cross, but you will also find that there is joy and blessing in every cross you bear as a student.

To learn more about becoming a pastor or deaconess, go to ctsfw.edu/Admission or contact the Office of Admission at Admission@ctsfw.edu or 800-481-2155.
In 1994, the Rev. Brian Noack (CTS 2004) transferred from a small liberal arts college in Louisiana to Concordia University, Seward, with the plan to pursue the pastoral ministry. He took the courses offered in the Pre-Seminary concentration and graduated with a degree in Accounting, returned to his native Texas and went on to work in accounting for two years. During those years he spent much time contemplating if he should, in fact, become a pastor.

“Part of the reason why I transferred to Seward was to consider pursuing the pastoral ministry, which did not end up happening at the time. After graduation, I began to consider it more seriously. In conversations with my wife, and also with my good friend from Seward (the Rev. Ryan Wendt, currently pastor at Christ the King Lutheran Church in Billings, Mont.), who was also considering seminary, and after prayerful discernment, it became clear that I was being called into this vocation,” explains Noack. “At the time of my deliberation about seminary, the one I was most familiar with was St. Louis. However, in visiting the Fort Wayne campus and seeing all that the campus and the community had to offer, it was clear that CTS was the choice for me.”

Upon graduation from CTS, Noack was called to St. John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sayville, N.Y. This was also the congregation where he served his vicarage year. He is quick to admit there was a bit of a learning curve for a Texan to adapt to the fast paced, New York lifestyle. As the years have progressed, he sees that adjustment was one of his easiest challenges. “The challenge has also been spiritual in trying to help people, in the midst of that fast-paced life, grow in their understanding of how their faith plays a role in the midst of all that busyness. This area has so many things to offer and because of that, there are many temptations that can lead people astray. The blessing of this challenge is that we also have many resources to draw from to do the work of God, both financial and in terms of helping hands.”

The members of St. John’s are also using those helping hands to reach out to their community. They support the church preschool that has a high enrollment of non-churched families, giving them the opportunity to introduce Christ to their neighbors. For years they have run a successful youth basketball program and have recently begun a community garden that provides produce to local soup kitchens and families that are in need. The music program at the church has also grown as youth and adults are encouraged to use their talents in service to the church.

In reflecting upon these joys, Noack is filled with gratitude and motivation to continue his service. “I love to watch the parking lot begin to fill on Sunday morning with people coming to be fed on the riches of God’s grace. I find joy in seeing people put their faith into action as they find a place to serve within the Church or by living out their God-given vocations in the world.”
as they find a place to serve within the Church or by living out their God-given vocations in the world.

“I also have joy in seeing the resiliency of the congregation as we have gone through some of the challenges we have faced and to see their eyes ever fixed upon the cross of Christ. I find joy in seeing how God’s people can also stand strong together to support those in need, whether it be a family in the church that is struggling to make things work when the husband has stage four cancer, or when a need arises in the congregation and people offer the vast resources available to them in talent and treasure, or when a group of folks decides to set aside their lives to go and offer relief to a place devastated by a natural disaster. But most of all, the greatest joy is in being able to bring the forgiveness, comfort and hope of Christ to people in the church and in the community. In short, I suppose that everything that happens in being called to serve in this place is a joy: from the many blessings we have received and will receive to the challenges we have been through and will experience, there is joy to be found in all of it.”

Noack knows as he leads his parishioners through the joys and the challenges, the most important thing he can do is to teach them the one true faith through the Divine Service, Bible study and works of mercy. “They want Christ, and as those called to stand in His stead, we are asked to give them just that—Jesus. But it is also important for us as pastors and leaders of our church to catechize our folks as to why this is important and to continue to hand on the faith as it has been given to us through Scripture and the Confessions.”

Part of that teaching comes through the cycle of the Church Year. “This is such a beautiful time of year in the Church. Everything about it is new and exciting: a new Church Year, new hope, new life. The music of the Church aids us in this as well, helping us to rejoice in our Lord’s coming, to wonder in awe at His Incarnation and to be renewed in Christ’s light shining forth through creation. It is especially meaningful when all is dark and dreary in the winter months and we sing such marvelous words of hope and life. In our own parish, we move through this time of year singing the great hymns of Advent and the familiar hymns of Christmas and ending with the joyous and powerful hymns of Epiphany,” says Noack.

“And this year, since Epiphany falls on Sunday, we are hosting a joint service for our two closest circuits on this holy day and singing our way through Robert Hobby’s Holy Light. The hope is to have choirs and clergy from the various parishes in our area come together to celebrate this blessed event in Word and song. We have such a rich musical heritage in the Church, and in many ways, these seasons give us some of the best music and hymnody that has been handed down to us.”

As Noack and the members of St. John’s begin a new Church Year, he takes a moment to ponder the years to come. “My hope and prayer is that God will continue to help our parish to grow in their understanding of His Holy Word and in faithfulness in receiving His gifts, to grow in mercy toward each other and the community around us and to continue to lead us to find ways to bring the love of Christ to the world.”

To learn more about St. John’s Lutheran Church, Sayville, N.Y., go to www.stjohnsayville.org.
For the Life of the World

Today is a day to give thanks for the new faces of our M.Div. students, A.R. students and deaconess students. For those who are beginning their adventure, their journey, in the area of service to which Christ is guiding them,” said CTS President, the Rev. Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr., in his welcoming remarks during the Opening Service for the 167th academic year at Concordia Theological Seminary on September 9, 2012. “We are delighted to have each of these students in our midst and look forward to working with them in the years to come, both here and throughout the world.”

The seminary community is blessed to welcome a diverse community of recent college graduates, as well as second-career, distance learning, Master of Sacred Theology (S.T.M.), Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) students. They come from every region of the United States as well as Brazil, Ghana, Haiti, India, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Philippines, South Africa, South Korea and Venezuela.

The Rev. Dr. Daniel J. Brege, Second Vice-President of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s Indiana District, installed new faculty and ordained staff members. The Rev. Dr. Gifford Grobien (CTS 2005) was installed as an assistant professor in the Systematic Theology Department and supervisor of the Doctor of Ministry Program. “I am honored to be serving with the world-class faculty at Concordia and I look forward to forming pastors for the current and next generations. I am also very enthusiastic to be supervising the D.Min. Program. I am dedicated to building on the excellence of previous supervisors in making this one of the premier programs in the country,” said Grobien.

The Rev. Randall Wurschmidt (CTS 2008) was installed as an admission counselor. He served Faith Lutheran Church, Overgaard, Ariz., from 2008-2012. “I’m delighted to be back on campus. I have many fond memories of studying here, and I look forward to sharing my experiences with those who are considering future work in the ministry,” offered Wurschmidt.

The seminary community asks for your prayers of support as we serve together to form servants in Jesus Christ who teach the faithful, reach the lost and care for all.
Rast Receives CHI Distinguished Service Award

Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr., president, Concordia Theological Seminary, was honored with the Distinguished Service Award from the Concordia Historical Institute (CHI) on November 8, 2012. This award is the highest honor bestowed by CHI. The award consists of the Colonel Koch Luther Medal, named after the Institute’s benefactor, Col. Edwin T. Koch. The award is presented to those whose contributions and service to the cause of Lutheran History and Archives in America is exemplary. Dr. Rast is the 30th recipient of the award.

“History, especially the history of our beloved Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, has been a lifelong passion of mine. I have been blessed to share this love of history with students at Concordia Theological Seminary and laypeople all around the world,” shared Rast. “Receiving this award from Concordia Historical Institute, and following the distinguished recipients before me, is a true honor.”

Carved Relief Honors Wenthe’s Service

On November 5, 2012, the CTS community unveiled a carved relief to honor the years (1996-2011) Dr. Dean O. Wenthe served as president of the seminary. The new work of art, found in the Walther Library expansion, was inspired by the carved relief in the dining hall and the great mosaics in the foyer to Wyneken Hall and at the entrance to Walther Library.

The new work begins at the bottom of the staircase with Christ and continues with images depicting the foundation of the Law and the prophets, as well as the apostolic witness, on the first column. The second column begins with Luther nailing the 95 theses and Chemnitz holding a Book of Concord. This biblical and confessional identity is handed on to our seminary founders, Lohe, Craemer, Sihler and Wyneken, who in turn hand it on to our students: diaconal, international and pastoral.

The work was created by William L. Lupkin Designs of Fort Wayne.
CTS Professors and Students Take Seminary to All Parts of the World

Eastern Europe
In July 2012, the Rev. Dr. K. Detlev Schulz visited the regions of southern Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia where he lectured at various conferences and meetings. En route he also visited our recent graduate, the Rev. Tony Booker, sent by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to Prague to serve as pastor and missionary at the Evangelical Church of Our Savior. We wish him God’s guidance in gathering new sheep into his fold in this bustling, international metropolis.

Helsinki
In August 2012, CTS professors the Rev. John Pless, the Rev. Roland Ziegler and the Rev. Dr. Naomichi Masaki traveled to Helsinki, Finland, for two occasions. First, invited by the Luther Foundation Finland (LFF), they held a pastoral conference (August 2–4). The LFF is a young and growing confessional Lutheran communion where graduates of the CTS Master of Sacred Theology (S.T.M.) Program play an integral role. After 13 years of existence, the Lord’s blessings on the LFF can be seen in the increase of congregations from one to 30, in locations from Helsinki to all over Finland, and in regular worshipers from about 25 to more than 3000. But for the people of the LFF who struggle daily under very challenging circumstances, such a tremendous growth is only secondary to the most important matter—the unity of doctrine and its vitality in the life of the faithful. So, on this occasion, they asked Pless, Ziegler and Masaki to guide pastors and theological students into the study of the Smalcald Articles (SA) in the Book of Concord, so that with the voice of SA they may confess Christ together and address contemporary issues in their congregations.

The second purpose of the travel was to participate in the 12th International Congress for Luther Research at the University of Helsinki (August 5–10). Under the general theme of “Luther as Teacher and Reformer of the University,” a record number of more than 200 Luther scholars from 27 countries assembled to engage in stimulating dialogue and discussion. At the congress, Pless presented his latest project of Luther as pastoral theologian, “Catechesis in the Context of University Theology”; Ziegler made the scholarly contribution of, “Faith and Reason in Luther’s Thought”; and Masaki delivered, “Luther’s Memoir in His Funeral Sermons and Orations” during the seminar entitled, “The Reception of Luther and Melanchthon among Their Students.” The next congress is set for 2017 in Wittenberg.
Seminary to All Parts of the World

Madagascar

CTS students Aaron Uphoff and Anthony Dodgers accompanied Prof. John T. Pless on a “Mercy Mission Expedition to Madagascar” under the sponsorship of LCMS World Relief and Human Care in June 2012.

While in Madagascar, the group was hosted by Bishop David Rakotonirina of the Antananarivo Synod of the Malagasy Lutheran Church. The group visited two seminaries, Lutheran schools for the deaf, a Lutheran school for the blind, two church-run radio stations, several Lutheran hospitals and three tobys, “camps of mercy,” operated by the church for the destitute.

While visiting a regional seminary in the coastal city of Morondava, the group presented books for the library, and Pless gave a convocation lecture on the theology of “Witness, Mercy and Life Together.” The CTS group also presented books for the library at the regional seminary in Antsirabe. These books were purchased with a grant from the Oregon District of the LWML.
CTS Community in Print

Bearing the Cross: Devotions on Albrecht Dürer’s Small Passion was written by Deaconess Carolyn S. Brinkley, the CTS Military Project coordinator. For the first time in 500 years, this one-of-a-kind devotional pairs Scripture and hymnody with Dürer’s exquisite woodcuttings. The reader is escorted from Genesis to Revelation on a personal, intimate journey with Christ.

In the Foreword, LCMS President the Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison said, “Deaconess Brinkley’s meditations on each woodcut explain the detail that a casual or even an interested onlooker would miss—in fact, would never see without her able assistance. How wonderful that the deaconess employs her diakonia in leading us more profoundly into the Passion of Christ, as an aid to the great Dürer.”

Bearing the Cross is appropriate for:
- Individual and family worship
- Teaching the Christian faith
- Comforting the suffering
- Evangelism

The Rev. Jeffrey H. Pulse, associate professor of Exegetical Theology at CTS, has written A Year in the Old Testament: Meditations for Each Day of the Church Year. The book guides readers through the major stories of the Old Testament in the course of a year and does it in a way that is encouraging and manageable. Along the way readers gain an understanding of the message of God’s Word.

Each Day Includes:
- Main Psalmody
- Additional Psalmody
- Old Testament Reading
- New Testament Reading
- Prayer of the Day
- Brief Meditation

A Year in the Old Testament takes the reader from their own experiences of daily life into the Bible. There is no greater source of comfort, hope, help and counsel than the Word of God itself. Nothing serves the Christian faith more than diligently and daily reading and searching the Holy Scriptures. (Description from cph.org)

Both books may be ordered by contacting the CTS Bookstore at CTSBookstore@ctsfw.edu or 260-452-2160.

CTS Press Publishes Two Wars We Must Not Lose

Secularism and the rise of Islam around the world is a hot-button issue throughout the world. In a response to both, Concordia Theological Press has published Two Wars We Must Not Lose by Mr. Bill Hecht. He has worked more than 40 years in Washington, D.C., first as a congressional aide and then as a lobbyist. He also served as a Lutheran pastor in Illinois and Oklahoma until 1967. After working in the Reagan for President Campaign, he started Hecht, Spencer & Associates in 1981 and still serves as its president.

“If I could recommend one book for clergy and laity to read on the crisis of the American experience, how we got here, and what we must do, hands down, this book is it,” commented the Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, president, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

“Whether or not you agree with all of Bill Hecht’s points, there is no question that he is uniquely positioned, as a theologically trained LCMS Lutheran, to interpret past, present and future challenges,” says the Rev. Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr., president, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne.

Mr. Hecht will be on the CTS campus for a book signing event and to present “The Christian Challenge in the Public Square: A Lutheran Voice,” on January 24, 2013, as part of the 36th Annual Symposium on The Lutheran Confessions.

Copies of the book ($14.95 each, plus shipping) may be ordered by going to www.ctsfw.edu/TwoWars or phoning 260-452-2105.

CTS Offers 2013 Wall Calendars

The 2013 wall calendar from Concordia Theological Seminary features photos of the seminary community, CTS events for 2013 and the lectionary for the year. The calendars were mailed to all CTS alumni in mid-November. Congregations may request a complimentary copy, supplies are limited. Additional copies are available to individuals and congregations for a mailing charge of $5.00 for quantities of two to 10. For quantity requests of 10 or more, please call 260-452-2150 or email Colleen.Bartzsch@ctsfw.edu.
Dear Deaconess Brinkley,

I wanted to take a moment to praise the work that you are helping to lead, facilitate (and grow) through the CTS-FW Military Project. My Chaplain Assistant (Sergeant Matthew Ziegler) and I are grateful for the direct support that the Military Project has rendered to us. The most immediate impact of that support is with our soldiers. Through the project’s linkage, we now receive care packages from gracious donors like Trinity Lutheran Church and School in Edwardsville, Ill., Redeemer Lutheran Church in Lodi, Calif., and LWML #205 from Hanover, Ill. (just to name a few of the many that you have put us in contact with).

By generously giving their time and effort, the churches, schools and para-church organizations that the Military Project partners with make sure that we never lack the needed donations that we put into the hands of our soldiers. In this austere and hostile environment, simple comfort items like snacks and hygiene products help our troops remain physically healthy and spiritually encouraged as they drive arduous hours and grueling miles on the “mean streets” of Southern Afghanistan.

On a more deeply personal note, I thank you for the many gifts that the Military Project has provided for the sustainment of our core mission here: to preach the Gospel, to teach the faith and to administer the Sacraments of the Church to our soldiers. Every Sunday, I provide a Divine Liturgy for my battalion followed by a study-group. Our group is studying Christians Can Be Soldiers (the 2010 translation of Luther’s seminal 1526 treatise Whether Soldiers, too, Can Be Saved). The Military Project provided us with copies of the book needed to teach this class. One fruit born by the class has been working through Adult Catechism with a soldier who, while baptized a Lutheran, never underwent catechesis. When he requested adult confirmation, it was the Military Project that responded to my appeal for a copy of Luther’s Small Catechism. Additionally, whether CDs of the “Sacred Music of Kramer Chapel,” copies of The Lutheran Witness, Concordia Theological Quarterly, the Reporter or cards with photos of campus, we are not just supported but intimately linked with the life and ongoing mission of CTS-FW.

On behalf of Sergeant Ziegler and our entire Task Force: May grace and peace be multiplied unto you, in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, Amen.

Rev. Shawn J. Found (Chaplain, Captain) NJARNG
CTS-FW ’08
117th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion (Task Force “Trenton”)
Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan (OEF 12-13)
The 2012-2013 year for the Concordia Theological Seminary Guild began on Sunday, September 9, serving as hostesses at the reception following the Opening Service of the 167th academic year of the seminary.

The first Guild event for 2012-2013 was an Invitational Tea on September 11. Our guest speaker was the Rev. Dr. Robert L. Rahn, founder of the Lutheran Heritage Foundation, Macomb, Mich.

Donation Day, an annual October event with emphasis on donations given to the Food and Clothing Co-op, opened with morning worship in Kramer Chapel. Following the service, mission grants were presented by district presidents of the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League from Indiana, Michigan and Ohio. Seminary President Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr. was the keynote speaker for the afternoon program.

The theme of the November 13 meeting was “Supporting Our Armed Forces.” Our guest speaker was Susan Reusser, wife of a military chaplain, who shared how those “at home” also need our prayers and encouragement.

Programs for 2012–2013 include:

December 11: Christmas with the Kantorei;
February 12: “A Study on Law and Gospel” by Dr. Carl Fickenscher II, professor of Pastoral Ministry and Missions and dean of Pastoral Education and Certification;
March 12: Appreciation Luncheon;
April 9: Planning for the 2013-2014 year and election of officers.

Concordia Theological Seminary
Affiliate Guild Registration

☐ Yes, we are interested in becoming an Affiliate Guild. Please send more information to:

Name: ________________________________________________________________
Organization: __________________________________________________________
Address: _______________________________________________________________
City: ___________________________ State: _____ Zip: _________________
Email: ________________________________________________________________

☐ Please contact me with more information.

☐ We have enclosed our yearly $25 check for our group to be an Affiliate Guild.

☐ I have enclosed my yearly $10 check to be an individual affiliate member.

☐ Donation Day gift.

For more information on the Seminary Guild go to www.ctsfw.edu/Guild or contact Seminary Guild President Elfrieda Spencer at espsalm63@gmail.com.
Zechariah’s song, the Benedictus, is one of the most remarkable hymns within the Gospel of Luke, often sung and recounted in the Matins service, *Lutheran Service Book (LSB)* pp. 226-227. It is a very fitting hymn to ponder, especially in Advent and Christmas, when we consider the vibrant ministry of John the Baptist, who not only prepares the way for our annual celebration of our Lord’s entrance to this world as the Babe of Bethlehem, but who also inaugurates Jesus’ ministry at His Baptism very early in Epiphany.

Fellow alumni and pastors, what is more encouraging or comforting to you during this very busy and wondrous time of the Church Year than to reflect on the concrete fact that you, like John, share the same privilege and honor; giving people salvation and faith through the forgiveness of their sins?

As you prepare the hearts and minds of God’s people this Advent and throughout the new Church Year so that all may behold again Jesus Christ as the Son of God and their Savior, may you be encouraged and sustained daily in Him and by Him. This One, Jesus, whom you direct others to consider, is the only source of forgiveness, life and salvation. “God is merciful, He has compassion on His people in their misery and distress; and moved by these feelings, He has sent the Redeemer.”

Just as giving salvation to the world was the essence of the ministries of John and Jesus, so it is the essence of your ministry now. You preach, teach, absolve, baptize and break bread all for the forgiveness of sins.

Be encouraged in that labor, dear friends! Although the work and preparation for ministry are often arduous, know that your ministry is significant and is bearing fruit; bringing faith, forgiveness, hope and courage to many people.

The Rev. Dr. Timothy R. Puls (Timothy.Puls@ctsfw.edu) serves as director of Alumni and Church Relations at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Arlene Ponitz was just 10 when she overheard a conversation between her uncle and her father that would change her life. As they sat outside on the beach near her uncle’s lake home, her uncle and father were discussing information that had recently been shared at a church meeting regarding the giving of various congregation members. Through that meeting, it was revealed that her uncle gave to the church at a significant level. Then her father asked him, “How do you give so much?” Her uncle’s answer would always remain with her, “Because God has blessed me with so much.” When you ask Arlene why she gives to this day, she’ll give the same explanation, “Because God has blessed me with so much.”

Mahlon and Arlene Ponitz were blessed to attend Lutheran grade schools, marry in 1945 and have two children. Their own children would attend grade school at Our Shepherd Lutheran Church of Birmingham, Mich., where the Rev. Dr. Howard Allwardt was the pastor and very influential in their lives.

Mahlon graduated from Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine in Kirksville, Mo., and then would serve for 40 years at the old Art Centre Hospital in Detroit, later named the Michigan Osteopathic Medical Center, both in anesthesia and then in the front office.

In retirement, they split their time between their homes in Canyon Lake, Calif., in the winter and Interlochen, Mich., in the summer. It was during this time that the Ponitz’s relationship with the seminary blossomed. They made several trips to the Concordia Theological Seminary campus in Fort Wayne to deliver food and clothing that had been collected by the members of Trinity Lutheran Church in Traverse City, Mich. They also encouraged their congregation at First Lutheran in Lake Elsinore, Calif., to direct funding to the seminary.

In 2008, they sold their lake home in Interlochen. Arlene Ponitz viewed the profit from the sale of the house as a gift from our Heavenly Father. Thus, she mentioned to her husband they should do something significant with the money. It was at that point they decided to gift the proceeds to the seminary. The money would be put toward the construction of a major library expansion on the seminary campus. Mahlon entered his heavenly home in June of 2011.

In recognition of the blessing she has been to the Church and the seminary, it was announced in the
Scicluna Joins Advancement Team

The CTS Advancement team welcomes the Rev. Jon Scicluna (CTS 2007) as vice president for Resource Development. “My wife, Linda, and I cherished every moment we spent on these hallowed grounds while attending school almost a decade ago,” said Scicluna. “My vision for the future is to see that day when every congregation that needs a pastor will have one, and every man who is committed to preach, teach and care for God’s children as well as every woman who is committed to becoming a deaconess can graduate from this awesome institution with a clear path to just such service.”

spring of 2012 that the Miles Christi (Soldier of Christ) Award would be presented to Arlene. This award has been created by the seminary faculty to honor a Lutheran layperson who has glorified God through a real contribution in some field of human endeavor and who has displayed the characteristics of a good soldier of Jesus Christ. While on campus, she would also see the fruits of their generosity by visiting the ongoing progress of the library expansion project.

Arlene’s love for the Lord, the Church and her family has sustained her through life’s journey. This love would often be brought out in poems she would write. In awarding her the Miles Christi Award, Dr. Charles Gieschen, CTS academic dean and their former pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Traverse City, read one of her treasured poems:

Jesus, Sweet Jesus
The more I know Him, the sweeter He gets, On His need in my life, I'll take no bets. He’s there in the morning when I awake, Giving of Himself freely, for my sake.

He’s my constant companion all day long, Willing to lead when I’m tempted to do wrong. He’s given His Word to guide me through life. What more do I need for everyday strife?

Again at night when I lay down my head, Sleep soon takes over, once my prayers are said. There’s no greater peace than knowing He’s there. I can place my life in His tender care.

For all of His sweetness, what can I do? By reading His Word, I will find my clue. It is great knowing He will show me the way If I let Him take over day by day.

Jesus, sweet Jesus, You’ve called me by name To be Your witness, to help spread Your fame So all may know You, and what You have done, Our sins are forgiven, salvation’s been won!

We ask that you join Arlene Ponitz in your support of Concordia Theological Seminary as together we fulfill our mission to form servants in Jesus Christ who teach the faithful, reach the lost and care for all.
My seventh grade grandson was sitting at the dining room table working on his homework. Before him was his Nexus 7, a “tablet” from Google. His fingers were flying over the keyboard as he worked on his assignment. Then he came to a place where he had handwritten part of his assignment in class. He said to me, “Hey Grandpa, watch this.” After a few keystrokes he began reading what he had written. His tablet began typing his words with almost no errors. (However, it cannot discern between to, too and two.) After a little while he said it was time to deliver his homework to his teacher. He emailed his work to the teacher’s blog and his assignment was complete. I could only marvel at how education and learning has changed over the years. I cannot help but believe that the rate of change will increase. Soon there will be no textbooks, only “tablets” or “iPads” or some other such device. Communication will become more instant. When I desire to communicate with most of the young couples who come to be married, they no longer use voice mail or email, they text. Everything happens now. My smart phone is my constant companion and gives others immediate access to me via texting, although some still dare to use the ancient method and phone.

All of this instant communication and instant access to information has created a climate where waiting has become a foreign concept. But Advent is all about waiting. It is about waiting for the coming of the promised Messiah. The time of anticipation was fulfilled at Bethlehem. But we are still in a time of waiting. We live in a time of anticipation. For the Messiah will come again. The Christ will come in power and glory. Jesus will come to receive us to Himself when He comes to judge the living and the dead.

1. A. Read Luke 21:29-33. In this parable Jesus tells us we can anticipate that “the kingdom of God is near.” What illustration does Jesus use to help us understand that we can see and understand the signs of the coming of the kingdom? ____________________________________________________________________________________________

B. Read Luke 21:34-36. Of what does Jesus caution us as we anticipate His coming? ____________________________________________________________________________________________

Luke records in 3:15 of his Gospel that “the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ.” As we live in this time of Advent, people are also “in expectation.” We have questions about what we see happening in our world. We wonder about the days in which we live. The world seems to be less secure than before. In this time of Advent, Jesus encourages us to live out our Christian vocation with acts of mercy.

2. Read Luke 3:10-14. What acts of mercy does Jesus encourage from us as we anticipate His second coming? ____________________________________________________________________________________________

We are living in a time when people are offering many different versions of “truth.” This is a time of moral relativism. Our society has come to a point where people are becoming more comfortable with the thought that there is no one truth, no absolute truth. As John sat in prison, he sent two of his disciples to Jesus to learn the truth about Jesus. Is this Jesus the Christ? Jesus points John to the absolute and unequivocal truth. Jesus clearly demonstrated who He was by what He did.
3. Read Luke 7:22-23. What did Jesus do to convince John that He was the Christ? ____________________________________________________________
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There are some things that cannot be rushed. One of those things is the time it takes to bring new life into the world. Many a parent has waited with great anticipation for the birth of a child. Mother and father see the changes that take place as the baby grows and develops in the safety of the womb. Mary, the mother of our Lord, was no different. As a young expectant mother she visited her cousin Elizabeth who was pregnant with her son, John, who would come to be known as John the Baptist. As Mary anticipated the arrival of her son, she sang a beautiful song known to us as the Magnificat. In this song Mary anticipates the blessings that will come to all through her son, Jesus.

4. Read Luke 1:46-55. To what blessings does Mary give voice in her song about her son? ____________________________________________________________
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What blessings do we anticipate Jesus will bring when He comes again in power and glory to judge both the living and the dead? ____________________________________________________________
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In this time of Advent we anticipate the arrival of the Christ who will come to take us to be with Him in the glory and majesty of heaven. With eyes focused on the cross and an empty tomb we know that we shall be blessed beyond measure on that great and glorious day of His appearing.

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