Lo, the apostles’ holy train
Join Thy sacred name to hallow;
Prophets swell the glad refrain,
And the white-robed martyrs follow,
And from morn to set of sun
Through the Church the song goes on. [st. 3]

This hymn reminds us of the faithful service of those whom God has sent and continues to send. Soon our seminarians will be called to minister in many different contexts, our deaconess students sent to serve many different needs. The same day we sang this hymn we announced the call of a seminarian to the foreign mission field. He is not the first and will not be the last. Others have been and will be called to cities, to suburban settings, to rural locations where the people are few but steadfast, sometimes spread out across multiple parishes.

It is easy to look at our culture and the shrinking numbers in our pews and ask what the pastor or even the wider Church is doing wrong. But wherever Scripture is faithfully taught and the Lord’s Supper rightly administered, God’s Word does not return empty. The Church always grows when the Lord feeds it with His Word and Sacrament—even when that growth doesn’t show in numbers.

In this issue you will hear from a number of our alumni serving faithfully where our Lord has placed them. While traveling around our Synod, I continue to be encouraged by the servant leadership and pastoral hearts our alumni demonstrate. I hear of our pastors willing to take on the extra work of serving a vacant congregation rather than let those dear members go without a shepherd. I hear of laymen and women serving our Lord through their God-given vocations. I hear of pastors and people working together, sacrificing, and serving faithfully for the sake of the Gospel.

We know that in many ways the Seminary community is quite a bit different from the challenges that face our pastors, deaconesses, and lay leaders out in the field. Many of the men and women who study here are young with spouses and children who all faithfully and gladly attend church—even daily chapel—each week. Our students are here because they strongly desire a distinctively Lutheran theological education. The Fort Wayne community alone has 29 LCMS congregations, many of which also have schools. We recognize that the music and worship and conversations among colleagues and support we experience here are unlike anything you’ll experience anywhere else. And for that blessing we are incredibly thankful! And yet, our students come, not to stay and be served, but to be sent and to serve.

Here at CTSFW we have been teaching the Word of God in its truth and purity for nearly 175 years. This Word is the foundation of our mission to form servants in Christ who teach the faithful, reach the lost, and care for all. And through the Church that song goes on.

In Christ’s service,

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.
President
Concordia Theological Seminary
Fort Wayne, Indiana
4 Priesthood of All Believers: Living Stones
By Rev. Larry M. Vogel
How do we serve faithfully? It is still a threefold service of sacrifice, prayer, and proclamation. So we offer ourselves in love to others as “living sacrifices.” We pray in all times and places interceding for all manner of people and in the sacrifice of thanksgiving.

6 Priesthood of All Believers: Chosen as His Own
By Dr. David P. Scaer
God has chosen us. It was not our choice or doing but God’s. By grace we are God’s chosen race, His royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people. Being chosen by God to be His people is simply another way of saying that we are justified by grace.

8 The Day of Small Things
By Andrea L. Schultz
Don’t get caught up in numbers—the worship numbers, the attendance at meetings and events, or money—because you may not have the numbers, but the Word is still out there. The Holy Spirit is still working by your activities. The Church isn’t numbers. Church is the people, the souls.

11 Faithfully Serving
By Rev. Paul Gregory Alms
It really is all about the Gospel. Even when not engaged in worship or Bible class or catechesis or one-on-one pastoral encouragement, the Gospel is central in the obvious, ordinary things pastors do.

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Called to Serve ........................................p. 14
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Peter 2:4-10 is one small piece of Peter’s encouraging epistle to Christians living in a hostile world. In these verses of the second chapter, Peter employs two powerful images for the “elect exiles” who made up the church in Asia (1 Peter 1:1); that is, God’s precious people who had received His mercy (1 Peter 2:10).

The first image is of solid, pure stability, the image of a stone house built on a firm foundation. God’s people, says Peter, are living stones being built on the cornerstone of Christ Jesus into a “spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:5-8). It echoes Jesus’ words in Matthew 7:24-27 about the house built on a rock that will withstand the storm while the house built on sand is destroyed.

The second image is alive and active. God’s elect are a people at work. They are not cold, lifeless rocks but living stones, “built… to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices” (v. 5). The elect are alive and not dead for they do not stumble over Christ. No, the spiritual house is those who believe in Him and are therefore “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (v. 9).

This second image of the holy Church is repeated three times in Revelation. John rejoices that as Christ sets us free “by his blood”—that is, by His atoning sacrifice—He makes us “a kingdom, priests to his God and Father” (1:6). He reaffirms this in 5:9-10’s hymn of praise to the Lamb who “ransomed people for
God from every tribe and language and people and nation and... made them a kingdom and priests to our God.” Chapter 20 verse 6 is the third reference in Revelation. In each case the royal priests are active—called to serve faithfully.

In both Peter and John, the image of the royal priesthood is filled with the energy of new life. Yet it is also stable, solidly anchored in Christ. This is because the royal priesthood finds its identity and its calling only in our great High Priest. So Hebrews 3:1-2 says, “Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the High Priest. So Hebrews 3:1-2 says, “Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the high priest and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God’s house.”

The royal priesthood is called into faithful service as holy priests. This is for all the baptized, for all who believe in Christ. This means there were priests before there were Levites, because the call to priestly service is the call to service in faith. So Luther says that God accepts Abel’s sacrifice because it flows from faith. God “looks toward Abel’s offering and shows that the sacrifice of this priest pleases Him, but that Cain does not please Him and is not a true priest” (Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 1-5, AE 1:251). And such faith comes to Abel because the priesthood begins at the very beginning with our first parents: “let the reader ponder the following, above all: Adam and Eve are not only parents, nor do they merely provide for their children and educate them for this present life; but they also perform the office of priests” (AE 1:246, emphasis added).

We can see in all of this that one may define priestly service as mediatorial, extending in two directions. On the one hand, the biblical priest mediates for humanity to God, offering sacrifices and intercessory prayer. On the other hand, the biblical priest mediates from God to humanity, teaching God’s Word.

Our Lord is the great High Priest because He offers the one great sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the world. His is the atoning sacrifice that every Old Testament sacrifice anticipated. His intercession before the Father is the perfect intercession. And He makes God known before the world in both His person and work. He is the Word made flesh and His saving work—His life, death, resurrection, and ascension—is the justification of the world and the very Gospel by which faith is created.

All Israel is called to priestly service in Exodus 19:4-6 just as all the Church is called to it in 1 Peter 2:4-10. The whole people of God—all believers—in every age and from every people have the holy calling to faithfully serve as Christ’s royal priesthood. It is a calling to serve in the places where we live, in the home, at work, in our social settings, and among other believers in the Church.

How do we serve faithfully? It is still a threefold service of sacrifice, prayer, and proclamation. So we offer ourselves in love to others as “living sacrifices” (Rom. 12:1). We pray in all times and places interceding for all manner of people (Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:17; 1 Tim. 2:1) and in the sacrifice of thanksgiving (Phil. 4:6 and Heb. 13:15). And we teach; not that this is the office of public teaching and preaching, for the call to the royal priesthood is not the call to the Office of Public Ministry, but that we each are called to "proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). Parents, especially the head of the household, teach the children, making known these “excellencies.” Fellow believers encourage one another in the truths of God’s Word in “the mutual conversation and consolation of the brothers [and sisters]” (Smalcald Article III.IV). Christians share their faith with unbelievers, explaining the hope we have within us (1 Peter 3:15).

As the royal priesthood faithfully serves in these ways, the gifts of the Spirit are employed, the love of Christ is at work, and God is glorified. 

Church of God, elect and glorious,
Holy nation, chosen race;
Called as God’s own special people,
Royal priests and heirs of grace:
Know the purpose of your calling,
Show to all His mighty deeds;
Tell of love that knows no limits,
Grace that meets all human needs.

(LSB 646:1)


(Note: the reader is urged to consult the CTCR’s recently published report, The Royal Priesthood: Identity and Mission, and its companion Bible study. Both are available at www.lcms.org/ctcr.)

The Rev. Larry M. Vogel (Larry.Vogel@lcms.org) serves as Associate Executive Director of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.
This doctrine is not strictly a New Testament teaching but was taken over from the Old Testament and applied by the Apostle Peter in his first epistle to churches in what is now Turkey. These Christians were being persecuted most probably for refusing to engage in emperor worship, which was the patriotic duty expected of all subjects to the Roman Empire. This was impossible for Christians for whom Christ was the only object of their devotion. For this they paid dearly and the price was persecution. Our lot is no different. Privilege and persecution for Christians go together. In many places of the world Christians are suffering for their faith.

The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is derived from 1 Peter 2:9: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” Also important is what follows in verse 10: “Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” Unlike most other epistles, 1 Peter was an encyclical epistle.
sent to many churches and not just one. This may account for its formal style. It is well organized. Most of the Christians in these churches had been pagans whom, Peter says, God had called out of darkness into His marvelous light. They had not chosen God, but He had chosen them for the royal priesthood, just as He has chosen us. It was not our choice or doing but God’s. By grace we are God’s chosen race, His royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people.

God did not do this by an act of omnipotence, the power by which He created and controls all things, but because He, as Peter says, ransomed us from our futile ways of living by the precious blood of Christ, who was the Lamb of God without blemish or spot. The imagery of Christ’s death is that of the Passover lamb who was sacrificed to spare Israel’s firstborn sons from death in their fleeing captivity in Egypt. Being chosen by God to be His people is simply another way of saying that we are justified by grace. The Church is the chosen race, an entirely new humanity created by baptism in Christ to take the place of the sinful race descended from Adam.

In English it is hard to grasp that the Greek word for “royal” in Greek is taken from the word for “kingdom.” We might better grasp what Peter intends if the word “royal” was rendered as “kingly,” though that might sound awkward to ears accustomed to hearing “royal priesthood.” The words “king” and “kingdom” point to how Jesus described His work, death, and resurrection in the “kingdom of God” in the parables. This kingdom came to a pinnacle in Christ’s crucifixion where His cross proclaimed Him as the king of the Jews. In His suffering He established the priesthood to which we by faith belong and so we suffer with Him. To make this clear Peter wrote to those first century Christians.

In speaking of the Church as the royal priesthood, Peter was extending God choosing the Old Testament Israel as His unique people. All peoples, races, and nations had been created by God, but He chose only Israel as His own people. Israel was different from all other nations. They were His private possession. They comprised their special place as God’s own people by not leading other peoples on the earth to the God who had chosen them. On occasion this happened (Tamar, Ruth, and Uriah—all progenitors of Jesus—were non-Jews and still they believed), but rarely. Rather than being a light to the nations to lead them to God, Israel continually succumbed to the worship of false gods. Instead of worshipping and testifying to the God who made heaven and earth, they gave themselves over to idols made of carved stone and wood and they fell back into the darkness of unbelief out of which God had called them, and so they forfeited their election as the royal priesthood.

We Christians are not immune from the temptation to denounce the faith. That’s the reason Peter wrote this epistle. God’s promises to His Israel in choosing them as His royal priesthood have now been given to the Church. Believers in Christ are now the true sons and daughters of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and so we share in the inheritance that was given to Israel. This inheritance was perfected and purchased with a price. Our salvation cost Him something. “You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot” (1 Peter 1:18-19).

As Peter approaches the end of his epistle to these first century Christians, he speaks of himself in three ways: first as an apostle, then a pastor, and finally and most importantly as a member in the priesthood of all believers. “So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eager” (1 Peter 5:1-2). “Elder” is a New Testament word for a pastor, and Peter sees himself as a fellow pastor who with others serves the royal priesthood. He is also an apostle and in writing to these Christians he was entitled to say that he had seen the resurrected Christ. Strikingly, he presents himself as a witness of Christ’s sufferings and so identifies with persecution these early Christian were undergoing. Soon after Peter wrote this letter, he himself would be crucified in an upside down position.

Pastors are given Christ’s role as shepherds (that’s what the word “pastor” means) in tending to the Church, which Peter calls the flock of God, His chosen people and royal priesthood. These pastors are to do so with the same patience that Christ had, and to live the kind of life He led. As the Lord’s first apostle, a missionary, and an inspired writer of two books in the New Testament, there is every reason to think that in the next world Peter would be given a special reward. But this is not the way Peter sees it. Instead, he includes himself with the other pastors and the people in participating in a common reward: sharing in the glory that is going to be revealed. Believers come to life in confessing what we believe in the most difficult circumstances, evoking contempt from the world. In the next life, suffering for the faith will be replaced with the glory that only belongs to Christ. Here apostles, pastors, and people—the royal priesthood—will all be one. 

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The Rev. Scott Spihs has spent his entire ministry serving and ministering to the souls of the small, preaching of Him who set their paths straight. The Second Vice President of the South Dakota District, Rev. Spihs graduated from CTSFW in 1991 and was promptly called to a mission startup in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. “We had 39 members and no building,” Rev. Spihs recalled. Resurrection Lutheran Church finally broke ground in ’92, dedicated the building in ’93, and their pastor married their church organist in ’94. “We had a good team,” Rev. Spihs said of his wife, who passed away last November. “We’d go to nursing homes together. She would play the piano or organ for the residents before or after. That was what we enjoyed about small church.”

They were there for 14 years, but when it was time for their son to start kindergarten, the couple—both of whom had grown up in country schools—

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also complete it. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice, and shall see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel.”

Zechariah 4:8-10

Born in Babylon among the exiled Jews, the prophet Zechariah was called on by God to both admonish and encourage the remnant of Israel allowed by their captors to return home to begin rebuilding the temple. Construction had languished for years as crushing disappointment and apathy beset the returned exiles after devastating delays and obstacles crippled their work. These were the days of small things, when the size of their task, their numbers, and their progress blinded the Israelites to the greater foundations being laid by God through Zerubbabel, governor of the returnees and representative of the Messianic line. Used in construction, the plumb line in his hand would have been a cord with a weight attached to one end, which, when freely dangled, used gravity to establish a straight line.

**Don’t get caught up in numbers—the worship numbers, the attendance at meetings and events, or money—because you may not have the numbers, but the Word is still out there. The Holy Spirit is still working by your activities. The people (and not just your own members) see you and it’ll bring fruit later. You just don’t always know where or when it’s going to be. The Church isn’t numbers. Church is the people, the souls.**
decided to accept a call out of the city to St. John’s Lutheran Church in Wolsey, South Dakota, a town of 500 where everyone was either a farmer or rancher. The church has 230 baptized members but a peak weekly attendance of 94. Ten years later, Rev. Spiehs took on two additional congregations, vacant but too small to afford a full-time pastor on their own. Zion Lutheran in Wessington Springs has over 90 baptized members with a typical attendance of 23, and Mount Olive in Woonsocket sees 12 a week. “After a few months, we called a retired pastor to be our associate to the parish,” Rev. Spiehs said, explaining how the workload stayed manageable. “He preaches at the two smaller congregations three Sundays a month, and I do all the other work for him—the funerals and everything else, and the one Sunday a month. It works very, very well. The churches are growing a little bit, even though they’re small communities.”

The following is Rev. Spiehs’ take on shepherding small congregations:

**What are the blessings particular to a small congregation?**

You get to know the people and the people get to know you. You have such wonderful relationships in Christ with the people. For the most part you know when people are sick or hurting or needing some help.

**And the challenges?**

How to get the youth and the young adults active in church. They have busy lives and they’re just not very active. And the older people—the ones who are dedicated to doing the work—are dying. So it gets tough. But it just brings new challenges and new opportunities. We try to stay connected with the young adults, whether they’re in church or not, to let them know what’s going on and to keep them connected.
Pastors at small congregations are often tempted to feel like failures because of shrinking demographics and the size of their congregation. What would you say in encouragement?

Stick with it. Try and see the positive things that are going on. There are always positives. The message is powerful and it’s going out to people. You may not always see the response immediately in their activity or involvement, but, as the Scriptures say, the Word isn’t void; it’s active and it’s moving hearts. I’ve seen many times where, after I’ve done pre-marital counseling or confirmation, they walk away and then something happens and they’re back. They come back to you for help. They come to the church. They may not be active but they know where the church is and where they need to be.

Don’t get caught up in numbers—the worship numbers, the attendance at meetings and events, or money—because you may not have the numbers, but the Word is still out there. The Holy Spirit is still working by your activities. The people (and not just your own members) see you and it’ll bring fruit later. You just don’t always know where or when it’s going to be. That’s what I got caught up in: the numbers game. But that’s not the Church. The Church isn’t numbers. Church is the people, the souls.

Don’t let the world discourage you. Understand that the work is spiritual. It’s a matter of what you can’t see and how the Holy Spirit is working in people in the community. Though the membership is growing slightly at the two smaller congregations, the membership at St. John’s is declining because we’re not getting in as many new people as those being called home to the Lord. But it’s active in the community. The LWML is known for doing quilts and layettes. I know that St. John’s people in our community talk about St. John’s. It’s very well known. The community knows it’s Lutheran. They know it’s a church that cares. They know it’s a church that will help, that’s involved in everyday life as well as church life. I get asked to do weddings that are not from members, or funerals. I don’t do them often, but from that I know we’re recognized in the community. We have the opportunity to teach and bring Christ to the people.

Is it worth it?

Yes. Very much so. The joy is when you are helping somebody; when you’re comforting them at the loss of a loved one; when you are sitting by their bedside, and you’re bringing them God’s peace, God’s comfort; when you’re giving absolution to someone who has just been stomped by the world. It’s worth it. That’s what we’re here for. That’s what God has called us to do.

The world rejoices in size; the world glories in strength. But in the day of small things, we remember that God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, and what is weak to shame the strong (1 Cor. 1:27).

But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

2 Corinthians 12:9

Andrea L. Schultz (Andrea.Schultz@ctsfw.edu) serves as marketing specialist at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.
What is it like being a pastor week after week, year after year? I have been a pastor for over 26 years. Twenty-two of those years I have spent in one wonderful congregation, Redeemer Lutheran in Catawba, North Carolina. My ministry has been marked by lots of events and challenges, joys and difficulties. But from where I sit the ministry begins and ends with the Gospel. Being a faithful pastor revolves around delivering the eternal Good News of Jesus Christ. That is why I am a pastor: the fact that Jesus died for sin and rose for eternal life. That is the vocation of a pastor in its simplest terms. There is a lot of time spent doing many different things and those things may not all seem related to the Gospel, but in the end all that pastors do revolves around that Good News.
Yes, the Gospel, of course, you might say, but that is a pat answer isn’t it? A theoretical answer, a theological approach to being a pastor. But how do pastors really live and go about doing their work? Yet the Gospel is the answer there also. It is a practical, down-to-earth truth. It gets at the real, even physical and tangible ways pastors go about their work. Aiming at the Gospel as a pastor keeps one faithful to one’s calling, but also keeps a pastor anchored to real life, to the lives we and our congregation members actually live.

Let me give you an example of what I mean. How about distributing the Lord Supper? That is certainly a Gospel activity. We can easily think of the Lord’s Supper only as a doctrine, a thing to be taught and thought about. But there you are with an incredible treasure in your hand—the very body and blood of Jesus—according to His own words. Being a faithful pastor means not only upholding that biblical doctrine but actually saying those words at the altar: “this is My body.” It means actually giving that body and blood to God’s people, feeding them, sticking your fingers in their mouths and tipping the cup that they may swallow. It is a strange and wonderful moment when,

as a pastor, you are there feeding grown men and women (CEOs, poor widows, headstrong teenagers) who kneel and open their mouths as if they were babies as you give them God’s gifts.

It begins and ends with the Gospel, this Office of the Ministry. But it is not an abstract vocation. No, it is always up close and personal. Think of Ash Wednesday when the parishioners line up to hear you say to each of them individually, “You will die!” You smudge their foreheads with dirt. There are nervous looks as you push aside hair and take your thumb and physically mark them. There is a closeness in that moment between pastor and people. The smudge you make is in the form of a cross and the ritual points to Christ, to the Good News that sinners are redeemed by Christ and cleansed by the waters of Baptism. It is the Gospel up close and personal.

Preaching that Gospel is central to being a Lutheran pastor. But pastors don’t preach in a vacuum. We don’t preach to the wall or to a microphone somewhere in a studio. We don’t craft perfect specimens of homiletical glory to be admired in the classroom or on the internet. No, we preach to people who stumble into church every week full of weakness and sins and burdens. One has just been diagnosed with cancer. Another is wracked with guilt. Another is estranged from her family. The list goes on. Into this the pastor speaks the Gospel, the forgiveness of sins, the victory of Christ over death and disorder and evil.
has just been diagnosed with cancer. Another is wracked with guilt. Another is estranged from her family. The list goes on. Into this the pastor speaks the Gospel, the forgiveness of sins, the victory of Christ over death and disorder and evil. Little words from a little pastor, a small voice, but the power of God for salvation.

It really is all about the Gospel. Even when not engaged in worship or Bible class or catechesis or one-on-one pastoral encouragement, the Gospel is central in the obvious, ordinary things pastors do. It’s why I visit the sick. It’s why I hang around with the youth. It’s why I wander over to the diner across the street and shoot the breeze with customers. It’s why I serve on boards, get involved in the community, join with others to feed the hungry — that Good News of Christ. Even when I find myself doing things like cleaning up around church or running an endless meeting, the focus is on the Gospel. We do these little things to do the one thing: share the Good News of forgiveness and mercy and grace.

Let’s be honest for a moment. The daily life of a pastor is not always easy. As a matter of fact, it almost never is. A faithful pastor will encounter disappointment and heartache and suffering. But such experiences are shot through with the Gospel. The same Christ whom pastors proclaim also showers that pastor with mercy and strength and, yes, forgiveness. There is a funny thing that happens when you are a pastor for even a short amount of time. The people you serve turn out to be instruments of God to bless you as pastor. You are here to serve them but they pray for you, work in the church, assist and sing and serve in their vocations. Every pastor can tell of going to visit a shut-in or sick person and leaving with the feeling that he received more blessings than he gave. The people of God, weak and sinful as they are, are instruments of God’s mercy. God uses them to make your calling as pastor one of joy and fulfillment.

So, yes, being a faithful pastor begins and ends with the Gospel. Pastors get up close and personal to deliver that amazing Good News that Christ has died for us and forgiven us, the Gospel. That is what being a faithful pastor is all about.

The Rev. Paul Gregory Alms (almsgp@gmail.com) serves as pastor of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Catawba, North Carolina.

Let’s be honest for a moment. The daily life of a pastor is not always easy. As a matter of fact, it almost never is. A faithful pastor will encounter disappointment and heartache and suffering. But such experiences are shot through with the Gospel. The same Christ whom pastors proclaim also showers that pastor with mercy and strength and, yes, forgiveness. There is a funny thing that happens when you are a pastor for even a short amount of time. The people you serve turn out to be instruments of God to bless you as pastor. You are here to serve them but they pray for you, work in the church, assist and sing and serve in their vocations.
Please tell us a little about yourself.
I was born in Panama. I grew up in Hillsboro, Texas, where my father is a pastor. I attended Concordia University in Austin and graduated in April 2018 with a Bachelor’s in Multidisciplinary Studies. My mother is from Panama, and my father is from Michigan. I have two siblings, Grace and Diego. Grace is a sophomore at Concordia Austin, and Diego is a freshman in high school.

Who/what influenced you to study to become a pastor?
My father. Going on visits with him to hospitals and nursing homes influenced me to become a pastor.

What is it like following both your father and your grandfather at CTSFW and in the ministry—AND at the same fieldwork congregation?
It is neat to be a third generation seminarian following in my relatives’ footsteps. Being at CTSFW brings back a few memories of living in Fort Wayne. Many years ago I was a little kid walking the grounds when my father attended Seminary. Now my feet are walking these grounds again into the same classrooms and having a few of the same professors my father had. Going into the pastoral office like my father and grandfather is a blessing. To prepare to do what they do is a gift from the Lord, a gift that has been passed down through three generations.

What is your home congregation?
Christ Lutheran Church in Hillsboro, Texas.

How long have you been a member of the LCMS?
Twenty-two years.

Where have you attended school and what degrees do you hold?
Hillsboro High School and Concordia University Texas with a Bachelor’s in Multidisciplinary Studies.
Do you remember your father’s time at your fieldwork congregation? Do they remember you? How has this changed your experience there?

I do not remember his time at my fieldwork congregation except seeing a picture of my mother’s confirmation. The pastor and a few members remember me. It really has not changed my experience except it is interesting to bump into people I have not seen since I was a toddler.

What have been your greatest challenges and rewards thus far in your seminary experience?

The greatest challenge I faced was at the beginning of the Fall Quarter. For the first couple of weeks I was very homesick. It was hard being thousands of miles from home and it still is at times. The reward is, as the quarter moved along, the community at the Seminary and its atmosphere helped me realize Fort Wayne is where I need to be at this moment. It is where God has called me to be.

What do you think laypeople would find most surprising about the seminary experience?

I think what laypeople would find most surprising is that not everyone at the seminary has the same mindset. Each of us has different opinions on certain things.

How would you encourage someone who is considering studying to become a pastor?

The first thing I would say is pray for God’s guidance. Another thing I would say is have counselors, mentors, and friends who will be there for you when you are struggling. The pastoral office is one of the most stressful jobs out there, so always have a friend to turn to.

What are your personal goals/vision for your future service as a pastor?

I want to be involved in Hispanic ministry somewhere in the country. Hopefully in Texas, which is where I would like to be.

To learn more about church worker formation at CTSFW, go to www.ctsfw.edu/Future-Students. Connect with our Admission staff at Admission@ctsfw.edu or (800) 481-2155.
**JANUARY**

**Lessons and Carols for the Christmas Season**
Friday, January 4, 4:45 p.m. in Kramer Chapel
A special service in conjunction with the LCMS U campus ministry conference in Fort Wayne. Join hundreds of college students from across the country for Christmas lessons and carols with organ and choir.

**Epiphany Evening Prayer**
Sunday, January 13, 4:00 p.m. in Kramer Chapel

**Lenten Preaching Workshop**
Monday, January 14, 1:30 p.m.
Information and registration: www.ctsfw.edu/PreachingWorkshop

**Symposia Series**
January 15–18
Information and registration: www.ctsfw.edu/Symposia

**Symposia Choral Vespers**
Wednesday, January 16, 5:15 p.m. in Kramer Chapel

**Symposia Vespers and Organ Recital**
Thursday, January 17, 4:00 p.m in Kramer Chapel

**FEBRUARY**

**CTSFW Tours: The Holy Land**
February 3–March 4
Information: www.ctsfw.edu/CTSFWTours
Phone: (260) 452-2119

**Seminary Guild with Dr. Don Wiley**
Tuesday, February 12, 1:00 p.m. in Luther Hall
Information: www.ctsfw.edu/SemGuild or (260) 485-0209

**Christ Academy: Confirmation Retreat**
February 15–17
Dr. Arthur Just Jr. will teach on Baptism
Information: www.ctsfw.edu/Confirmation
Register: ChristAcademy@ctsfw.edu or (800) 481-2155

**Choral Vespers**
Sunday, February 17, 4:00 p.m. in Kramer Chapel

**Kantorei Tour to Florida**
Tuesday, February 23–March 1
See page 29 for full tour information

For more information please visit our website at www.ctsfw.edu or call (260) 452-2100.
MARCH AND APRIL

Seminary Guild with Andrea Schultz
Tuesday, March 12, 1:00 p.m. in Luther Hall
Information: www.ctsfw.edu/SemGuild or (260) 485-0209

Lecture/Recital Convocation: Church Music for Lent
Wednesday, March 20, 11:00 a.m. in Kramer Chapel

Prayerfully Consider Visit
March 21–23
Information and registration: www.ctsfw.edu/PCV
Email: Admission@ctsfw.edu
Phone: (800) 481-2155

Seminary Guild Spring Luncheon
Tuesday, April 9, 1:00 p.m. in Luther Hall
Information: www.ctsfw.edu/SemGuild or (260) 485-0209

Easter Evening Prayer
Sunday, April 28, 4:00 p.m. in Kramer Chapel

Vicarage and Deaconess Internship Assignment Service
Monday, April 29, 7:00 p.m. in Kramer Chapel

Candidate Call Service
Tuesday, April 30, 7:00 p.m. in Kramer Chapel

MAY AND JUNE

CTSFW Alumni/LCMS Clergy Golf Outing
Wednesday, May 15
Register: Alumni@ctsfw.edu or (260) 452-2260

Alumni Reunion for Years Ending in ‘4 and ‘9
May 16–17
Register: Alumni@ctsfw.edu or (260) 452-2260
See page 25 for more Alumni Reunion information

Baccalaureate
Friday, May 17, 10:00 a.m. in Kramer Chapel

Commencement Organ Recital
Friday, May 17, 3:00 p.m. in Kramer Chapel

Graduation Exercises
Friday, May 17, 6:00 p.m. in Kramer Chapel

Christ Academy: Timothy School
Christ Academy: Phoebe School
June 16–29
Information: www.ctsfw.edu/ChristAcademy
Register: ChristAcademy@ctsfw.edu or (800) 481-2155

Organist Workshop: Primer Level for Organists & Service Playing for Pianists
June 17–21
Information: www.ctsfw.edu/MusicWorkshops
Register: Music@ctsfw.edu or (260) 452-2224

Organist Workshop: Intermediate Level
June 24–28
Information: www.ctsfw.edu/MusicWorkshops
Register: Music@ctsfw.edu or (260) 452-2224
**What is your background?**

Born in Salem, Massachusetts, I am a thoroughgoing New England Lutheran. My parents were Rhode Islanders, and my paternal great-grandfather served as pastor of St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in Providence at the beginning of the 20th century. My father’s work took our family to New York City, México City, and Bilbao, Spain, before I graduated from college, so the Spanish language and Latin culture became part of my identity at an early age. I was privileged to attend high school at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts (that was the most formative educational experience in my life), and then to Union College in Schenectady, New York. My first Lutheran school was CTSFW. After Seminary I also studied at Wesleyan University, Yale Divinity School, and the University of Durham in Northern England.

**How did you serve before becoming a CTSFW faculty member?**

My call out of the Seminary was to Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Middletown, Connecticut, an old New England town on the Connecticut River, equidistant between Boston and New York City—thus the name. These were wonderful years learning to be a pastor, having our first child, Abigail, loving the saints at Grace and being loved in return, doing STM work at Yale, and having great colleagues like George Kraus and Tim Quill.

**In addition to serving as Professor of Exegetical Theology, in what other roles have you served at CTSFW?**

My teaching began in the Pastoral Ministry Department teaching homiletics, as well as courses in Spanish like Preaching Workshop. Now I serve as Chairman of the Department of Exegetical Theology, as well as serving as a half-time missionary in Latin America and the Caribbean. Ironic how I am now ending where I began—with Spanish-speaking pastoral formation. My 34 years at CTSFW have led me down many paths: Alumni Director, STM Supervisor, Dean of Graduate Studies, the first Director of Assessment, Dean of the Chapel, Director of Deaconess Studies, and now Director of Spanish-Speaking Pastoral and Diaconal Formation. It’s been a great journey.

**How has Seminary education changed in the years you have been on the faculty?**

As a student, and then four short years later as a faculty member, we were under the old curriculum, which was less integrated than it is now. Confessional and systematic courses were the most celebrated among the students, exegetical courses focused more on the languages and less on the christological and sacramental interpretation of Scripture, and the Pastoral Ministry Department was dominated by social science methodologies. The most satisfying and challenging courses were in history. But the old curriculum shaped students into theologians. Now we are more integrated between departments, and the core value of the new curriculum is that theology is done through the pastoral acts. Although it took a while for students to resonate with our approach, I believe we have the best of the old and the new—they are pastoral theologians whose identity is shaped at font, pulpit, and altar.

**How has the student body changed in the years you have been on the faculty?**

There are younger men now and fewer second-career students. When I was first on the faculty, I was younger than the average age of the students. Younger students change the dynamics of the classroom, where experience gives way to youthful enthusiasm and a cleaner slate upon which to form a pastor. Each era has its virtues and challenges. And now we have women in the classroom, which changed everything. I could go on and on...
about that, as founder and director of the Deaconess Program. It took a while for everyone to get used to having women studying alongside the men, but now it is part of the culture of CTSFW, which is a reason for joy.

What has been your favorite course to teach and why?

Tough question. Teaching texts—teaching any of the Gospels, especially Luke, is pure joy, and liturgy too, because of its centrality in the life of the Church and our Seminary curriculum. But I get a special joy in teaching Galatians, because I love the complexity of Paul’s personality and his identity as a missionary first and foremost, and that he was both a pastor and an astute theologian. And the real sublime joy is Hebrews, because of its eucharistic theology. So as you can see, it’s a tough question. All of them. How’s that?

What has been most rewarding to you as a professor?

Since 1996 and the Russian Project, a particular joy is teaching theology among those who hunger and thirst for it like many do in international contexts. How I love my students at Seminario Concordia “El Reformador” in the Dominican Republic. They are Fort Wayne students through and through, filled with a passion for Christ, for languages, for studying theology, and especially for missions, for planting Lutheran churches. It’s the same zeal that I’ve seen among our students at CTSFW over the last 34 years. So what is most rewarding to me as a professor is the students. They are my singular joy through all these years.

What is your best advice to your students who will be heading out to serve as pastors and deaconesses?

That reason they are pastors and deaconesses is to bring people into communion with the flesh of Jesus Christ, and by doing so they will show them how to interpret their sufferings through the sufferings of Christ, especially as they are joined to those sufferings in the Lord’s Supper. And that there is joy in suffering or, to paraphrase Stevie Wonder, that there is joy inside my tears.

The general theme for the issue is “Faithfully Serving.” Our pastors are serving faithfully, feeding their people with Word and Sacrament, in the face of challenging demographics, a hostile culture, and the work of the Devil who tries to drive wedges between pastor and people. Any comments to add to those thoughts?

As a young pastor and young professor, I was not bold enough in my witness to the hope that is within me. Maybe it’s my age, but now I find I have more courage to find opportunities to share that hope of Christ within me no matter what the context. It is a particular joy to do this in Spanish, to those who receive my witness with grace, despite my feeble Spanish, or perhaps because of it. I’ve found that it’s best to simply be yourself, speaking about who you are in Christ and embodying who you are in Christ through your love and compassion and mercy. And most important, as Jesus said, “Be not afraid.”

The rev. Dr. Arthur A. Just Jr.
In the first quarter of every academic year, our first-year incoming students work through an entry questionnaire to help the institution gauge the student’s transition to the Seminary. These vary from questions about their discernment to study at the Seminary, the admission process, relocation, and finally their orientation and on-boarding as new students. One of the most interesting pieces of information that comes back deals with the role of family, friends, mentors, influential church workers, and especially their home pastor on these prospective students’ lives and why they decided to study at the Seminary.

Out of all the different individuals who have sought potential in our prospective students and have told them to consider pursuing studies, it is their home pastor who has been one of the most significant impacts. When a prospective student is identified and encouraged by him, it is very likely that the individual will consider such studies some time during their lives. Sometimes all that is needed is a simple word of encouragement as seminary is already on their mind. Other times it may take years for the seed that is planted to bear fruit. The reality is that in some people it may never come to fruition. Regardless, our call is to speak words of encouragement and let the Lord handle the rest of it.

What does this mean? That pastors, laity, and other church workers should continue to encourage those in your sphere of influence to consider studies toward the Office of the Holy Ministry or in deaconess service. We all have a vital role in raising the next wave of workers for a harvest that is plentiful and ready to be harvested. We all need to be about the business of identifying and encouraging those who we think could make for good church workers to consider possible studies in these vocational avenues. What we have found here at CTSFW, primarily through our Christ Academy Program, is that young people are making decisions about what they want to do with their lives at a very early age—much earlier than in previous decades. It is essential to identify those you see in your life, your congregation, and even in your own family, and encourage them to consider possible church work vocations.

So what’s the takeaway? Just two words: identify and encourage. If you see someone in your life who might make a good pastor or deaconess, help them to consider pursuing studies here at the Seminary. If you have a young person in your life, talk to them about considering the Office of the Holy Ministry or deaconess service as potential future vocations as you speak to them about other possibilities and godly vocations they might have in their life. Regardless of who you are, you can help the Lord’s kingdom by identifying and encouraging. Finally, continue to raise them in your prayers, that the Lord would continue to send workers into His harvest.

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

Rev. Dr. Roland F. Ziegler

The Leipzig Debate in 1519 is one of those iconic moments that is included in every movie on the life of Luther. There is Luther, debating one of the foremost German theologians of his time, Johann Eck, professor at the University of Ingolstadt, on the issue that caused the Reformation: namely, indulgences and purgatory. And soon Eck, the able academic pugilist, gets Luther to say that councils can be wrong and thus pushes him from reform to revolution. It is the center piece between Luther before Cardinal Cajetan, the emissary of Pope Leo X, in Augsburg 1518, and Luther before Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Worms in 1521. These events show Luther arguing with the hierarchy, university theology, and highest secular authority and holding his ground.

How did Luther and Eck get to Leipzig? Luther had invited a disputation in his 95 Theses on indulgences, but though they were disseminated, nobody took him up on the offer to dispute. Eck formulated his critique of Luther’s position in a privately circulated writing called Asterisci, to which Luther wrote his answer as Obelisci, which he sent to Eck. Luther’s colleague and later adversary Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt got involved in the debate when he got his hands on Luther’s Obelisci, published and answered in 380 (later 406) theses. Thus the debate between the Wittenberg theologians and Eck had become public, both sides now eager for a public disputation.

Preparations took their good time, and it took till June 1518 for the debate to happen. Eck and Karlstadt debated for four days, then Eck and Luther for 13 days. Fortunately for us, minutes were taken. In great detail the question of indulgences and purgatory was discussed, but the topic of greatest significance for the history of the Reformation was the question of the authority of pope and councils.

In preparation for the debate, Luther studied church history and canon law. The more he studied it, the less convinced he was of the claims of the papal office. In a letter written in March 1518, he even stated that the papacy started to look more and more like the antichrist. At this point Luther was not asserting scriptural principle in such a way that he explicitly rejected the authority of tradition as it was found in the church fathers, the councils of the church, and canon law. But since his discovery through the study of Scripture of what the Gospel truly is—the free forgiveness of sins received by faith alone without works—he could no longer agree with the doctrine of the sacrament of penance and of indulgences of his time.

This opened the possibility of a conflict between Scripture and church fathers, the councils of the church, and canon law. Since the ecclesiastical authorities and the standard theology defended the doctrine of penance and of indulgences, the conflict turned very soon into a debate on the authority of the papacy and the norms of theology. Luther came to see that the claims of the papacy to have the final say in theological matters clashed with what the biblical Gospel said.

Thus the debate was on the meaning of Matthew 16:18. Could it serve as the biblical foundation for the supremacy of the pope? Luther denied that here the person Peter had been made the rock on which the Church was built. Rather, the rock is the confession of Peter. Does history prove the primacy of the pope? Luther argued that the early Church knew nothing of such a primacy. Not the pope but Christ was the head of the Church.

Yet not only was the authority of the pope under debate, but also that of the councils and the assemblies of bishops. Luther claimed that they had not always taught the truth in recent time. The famous case was that of the Council of Constance and the condemnation of John Wycliffe and Jan Hus in 1415. Luther stated that the Council was wrong in condemning some of Wycliffe and Hus’ statements; Eck triumphantly declared that Luther was a Hussite heretic.

The Leipzig Debate marked the public point of no return for Luther. The traditional structure of the church and authority in theology was rejected by Luther, because the church had contradicted in her teaching the biblical Gospel. Theological traditions in the church were henceforth no longer a criterion for truth, but at best witnesses to the truth of Scripture and at worst—when it contradicted Scripture—a corruption that had to be eliminated. The Roman Catholic Church determined the consequences: Luther was excommunicated. The refusal of the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church to believe the Gospel created the division in Christendom and led to the formation of the Lutheran Church.

The Rev. Dr. Roland F. Ziegler (Roland.Ziegler@ctsfw.edu) is the The Robert D. Preus Associate Professor of Systematic Theology and Confessional Lutheran Studies at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne.
God initiated the first cycle of time by the distinction of light and darkness. He created as an act of grace and blessing. God made all things good and took great care to place man and woman in the garden to care for the things that He created. The sad story of the first couple’s rebellion against their Creator brought forth His words that set the course for the rest of biblical history: judgment for sin and a plan of redemption found in His only Son, Jesus Christ.

"And there was evening and there was morning, the first day" (Genesis 1:5).

Today we remain part of the unfolding story in these end times. I am part of the story in faithful service across multiple vocations: as a husband, a father of four children, a parish pastor, a district regional vice president, and as an encourager and supporter of future teachers and preachers of the Word! “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace…in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 4:10-11).

That service to one another wound its path humbly through Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, through the years of pastoral formation that led to a divine call to Zion Lutheran Church in Grant Park, Illinois, where I have shared the joy of the Gospel for the past 13 years; preaching about God’s love, visiting the sick, and shepherding the flock. Zion still is not perfect, and neither am I. Daily challenges abound, but I simply couldn’t imagine being anywhere else than the place where God has called me to serve.

As an alumnus of CTSFW, the connection between Seminary and congregation continues to bear fruit. Sharing stories about the Food & Clothing Co-op brought about a Ladies Aid collection of items that was transported to the Seminary by church members who were then able to visit the campus and chapel. An offering from the congregation began with the renovated Walther Library project and continues annually for general Seminary support. Connections to seminarians and deaconesses are made each year through the Student Adoption Program, which the church offerings support. Organists have attended summer workshops and I have returned to campus to attend the multiple offerings for continuing education through Symposia and the Good Shepherd Institute. My growth as a pastor has been revitalizing to this ministry and the parish I have been called to serve.

Faithful service in parish life is bolstered by the building of godly relationships with brothers at circuit meetings. Studying, listening, and encouraging one another—even in serving as circuit visitor for a time. Two months after ordination, while attending the regional pastor’s conference, as the new young guy I was elected to serve as Registrar/Treasurer for the next few years. What a great way to learn names and faces of pastors in the district—especially fruitful over a decade later as I now serve as a district regional vice president, in which the joyful reminder of “We are in this Together” provides encouragement for pastors and congregations. We know that the One who really deserves all the honor and praise is the One at the center of our salvation, Jesus Christ.
“And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.”

One day at a time becomes the cycle, balancing the joys of serving in ministry with the God-given responsibilities of home and family. A color-coded calendar of activities provides the schedule for our homeschooling, the childcare help in assisting other families, the dance classes, transport for the teenager’s work days, and regular physical therapy sessions for two young boys with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. And it all usually begins with “Daaaaaaaaaaddyyyy”—whispers from the soft tones of a voice seeking to awaken me from my slumber before the greater light can emerge from the horizon. To any parent, those calls are gentle reminders of the gift of children, indeed a heritage from the Lord. Thus begins a morning prayer of thanksgiving for all He has provided. And then onto the day’s tasks—to bloom where we have been planted.

We have God and His promise that we will not be doing this alone. To the One who has given us new life in Christ, be glory forever and ever.

The Rev. Cory A. Estby (pastorestby@yahoo.com), CTSFW 2005, serves as pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in Grant Park, Illinois.

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Welcome to the Classes of 1949–2014 (Years ending in “4” & “9”)

Good times are here again!

Wednesday, May 15, 2019:
CTSW Alumni/LCMS Clergy Golf Outing

Thursday & Friday, May 16–17, 2019:
Official Reunion Festivities

* Worship
* Individual Class Gatherings
* Alumni Banquet
* Baccalaureate
* President’s Luncheon
* Class Pictures

Schedule and Registration Coming Soon!

Questions? Rev. Dr. Timothy Puls
Director of Alumni and Church Relations
(260) 452–2260 Alumni@ctsfw.edu
On October 24, the **Rev. Dr. Arthur A. Just Jr.**, Chairman and Professor of Exegetical Theology as well as Director of Spanish Language Church Worker Formation at CTSFW, was installed at the LCMS International Center in St. Louis as Associate Executive Director of Latin America, the Caribbean, and Spain. Dr. Just has been teaching at CTSFW and simultaneously serving as a half-time career missionary on the faculty of Seminario Concordia El Reformador in the Dominican Republic. As of his installation, he has now moved to a position on the executive committee of LCMS International Missions. He will continue to serve at CTSFW alongside his new duties, teaching full time in the Winter and Spring Quarters.

Last May, the **Rev. John T. Pless**, Assistant Professor of Pastoral Ministry and Missions, received an honorary Doctor of Letters from Concordia University Chicago during their spring commencement ceremony. He has served on the CTSFW faculty for the past 18 years and is currently chairman of the Synod’s Commission on Doctrinal Review. He has authored several books, including *Praying Luther’s Small Catechism* and *Handling the Word of Truth: Law and Gospel in the Church Today*, and is a familiar face at various conferences and seminars both in the United States and overseas as a lecturer.

On November 8, Concordia Historical Institute (CHI) held its 2018 Awards Banquet during which the President of the Seminary, the **Rev. Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr.**, received the 2018 Award of Commendation in recognition of his contribution to the field of Lutheran archives and history. He was awarded the commendation for his article, “Reflections on the Effects of the Reformation in American Lutheranism.” The article appeared in CHI’s quarterly publication, CHIQ, in the Fall 2017 issue (Volume 90, No. 3). You can purchase a copy of the full issue or just a pdf of the article by contacting CHI at (314) 505-7900 or by emailing chi@lutheranhistory.org.
On August 30, the Rev. Dr. Ryan M. Tietz, Assistant Professor of Exegetical Theology, successfully defended his dissertation, “The Deliberately Delayed Eschatological Vision: The Hermeneutical and Theological Function of Isaiah 30,” earning his doctorate from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. Isaiah has been of particular interest to him since his days as a seminarian at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. He has served as an assistant professor at CTSFW since 2015, after working as an adjunct professor at Concordia University Chicago and serving as an interim pastor in the city.

Art Exhibit: Call for Entries

The Good Shepherd Institute at CTSFW (which promotes and encourages pastoral theology and sacred music for the Church) is once again calling for entries for their 2019 Art Exhibit. “With Angels and Archangels” will open on September 28, to coincide with St. Michael and All Angels on the 29th, a festival that has been celebrated among Lutherans since the time of the Reformation. Artists are invited to submit works that depict the ministry of the angels, specifically soliciting distinctly biblical depictions of the angels.

All entries are due by June 8, 2019. For more information about the exhibit, ideas for a biblical depictions of the angels, and to download an entry form, go to www.ctsfw.edu/GSI.

CTSFW 2019 Wall Calendars Available

The 2019 wall calendar from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW), was mailed to all CTSFW alumni and all congregations of The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod in November. A limited number of additional copies are available to individuals and congregations by phoning (260) 452-2150 or emailing Colleen.Bartzsch@ctsfw.edu. There is a $6.65 mailing charge for quantities of two to 10 calendars.

Please note that November 2019 lists the wrong date for Thanksgiving. The correct date should be listed as November 28. We apologize for this error.
My path to Concordia Theological Seminary was something like a good amusement park ride, full of bumps, turns, and surprises!

I first thought of the ministry when I was 18. After speaking to my pastor about the route to ordination, I believed it was out of my reach. The barriers of admission to a Concordia College and paying for it were too high, so community college and law enforcement became my path. At the tender age of 21, I graduated from the University of Illinois Police Training Institute. But God was not done with me; little did I know that He would call me from a police uniform to a clergy shirt and alb.

I do not recall the exact time, but it was around 1997. I was a veteran railroad policeman, suffering with the depression of not making any difference with this world. Every day seemed like I was a garbage man, daily taking out the garbage. I had recently graduated from Lewis University with a BA in Criminal Justice, and I was now looking forward to graduate school in Criminal Justice. I thought that I would move up in police leadership roles, making a difference in lives, perhaps being the Chief of Police. I had a big dream, except that God had another thought for me. I remember well telling God that I would serve wherever He called.
me—only I thought of police work and the law and not the Gospel. After some difficult and dark times on the police force, God guided me in a new direction.

Fast forward to the summer of 2000. In one weekend my twin sons graduated from high school, shipped off to Marine Corp basic training, and I shipped off to the basic training of elementary Greek at Concordia Theological Seminary. I soon would understand that I could not handle all the pressures of my new life without the love and care of others. I would come to receive financial care from several sources, including a rather generous anonymous aid when things were at their darkest. I would like to tell you that somehow my family lived within our own wages, but a great amount of student loans tells me every month that this just was not true.

On Call night I was called to serve St. Michael in Rogers City, Michigan, and then eight years later to St. Paul in Mattoon, Illinois. During this time my son James would attend CTSFW and graduate and be placed at Lutheran Church of the Way in Raynham, Massachusetts. All this being said, I truly understand the burden of the cost of attending seminary. I also know the joy of serving the people of Christ Jesus and His flock of God’s people. Prayerfully consider the ministry of the Church and your participation in it. If you are not called to the ministry, understand that you are called in your vocation to support the Church. Many churches are looking for pastors, but there are just not enough to go around. Concordia Theological Seminary needs your help to form servants in Jesus Christ who teach the faithful, reach the lost, and care for all.

The Lord be with you as you prayerfully consider what shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits to me!

The Rev. Paul Hopkins (Paul.Hopkins@ctsfw.edu) serves as an Advancement Officer at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana. To learn more about supporting the mission of CTSFW, email Advancement@ctsfw.edu or phone (877) 287-4338.

Your gift of support TODAY will keep on giving eternally as the Gospel is shared!

Enclosed is my gift of:

☐ $1,000  ☐ $500  ☐ $250  ☐ $100  ☐ $50  ☐ Other $ ____________

My gift of support for CTSFW to be used as follows:

☐ Fund for CTSFW  ☐ Tuition Aid
☐ Other: __________________________

Giving methods:

☐ Check payable to CTSFW
☐ Charge: ☐ American Express  ☐ Discover  ☐ MasterCard  ☐ VISA

Card #: __________________________
Exp. Date: ________________________
Signature: ________________________

Or donate online at www.ctsfw.edu/Make-A-Gift

Gift matching opportunity:
If your employer matches charitable contributions, remember to request matching funds from your company.

Please send me information on:

☐ Endowments  ☐ Including CTSFW in my will
☐ Estate planning  ☐ Gift Annuities

Please detach and mail to Concordia Theological Seminary, 6600 N. Clinton St., Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825-4996
Caring for Both the Physical and Spiritual Needs of Our Students

Phyllis Thieme

Beginning in the 1850s, women of the LCMS started local auxiliaries to meet the needs of people—which included mending clothes for seminarians. In 1937 the Concordia Seminary Guild was formed. The mission of the Guild is to pray for the Seminary and to serve God by communicating the needs and encouraging support of the Seminary and its students.

Service projects undertaken by the Guild currently do not include mending clothes! Instead, our current projects include:
- A baby t-shirt (imprinted with the CTSFW logo) and booties for each newborn.
- A birthday skillet cookie for each student in the dorm during the month of their birthday.
- A gift for every fourth-year seminarian wife and deaconess at the May Student Women’s Assembly dinner.
- Snacks for the students and staff during all three finals weeks.
- Hosting receptions for Seminary functions like the Vicarage Assignment Service, Candidate Call Service, and Commencement.

- The Legacy Project—A copy of the Pastoral Care Companion (PCC) is distributed to every Seminary student when they receive their fieldwork assignment. Through the donations from individuals and groups, the Guild was able to purchase a PCC for each of the 64 students who received their fieldwork assignment on September 24.
- In May 2018, the Guild, through membership dues and donations, purchased new furniture for the Student Support Offices.
- In May 2016, the Guild, again through membership dues and donations, purchased 30 new chairs for the Student Commons and also refurbished the tabletops.

Meetings take place the second Tuesday of every month from September to April (except for January).

We invite our sisters in Christ to join us through membership and/or by making a donation to support our service projects. Whether you live in the Fort Wayne area and join our meetings or live outside the Fort Wayne area for whom attendance is not possible, join us through an individual membership of $10. If you are a Bible Study Group, Circle, LWML, Altar Guild, or other group in a LCMS congregation, consider becoming an organization member for $25 or more to help support the Guild service projects.

To find a schedule of the spring 2019 meetings and to keep abreast of the Guild activities, visit www.ctsfw.edu/SemGuild or email SemGuild@ctsfw.edu. Our mailing address is CTSFW Guild, Box 8, 6600 N. Clinton St., Fort Wayne, IN 46825.

Phyllis Thieme (fourten@frontier.com) serves as President of the Guild at Concordia Theological Seminary.
Kantorei

A service of Evening Prayer with music led by the Kantorei of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Saturday, February 23
5:00 p.m. service
Faith Lutheran Church
4150 Goodlette-Frank Rd.
Naples, FL 34103
(239) 434-5811
www.flcnaples.com

Sunday, February 24
8:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.
Grace Lutheran Church
860 Banyan Blvd.
Naples, FL 34102
(239) 261-7421
www.graceofnaples.com

Sunday, February 24
6:00 p.m.
Redeemer Lutheran Church
6465 Mayport St.
Englewood, FL 34224
(941) 475-2410
www.redeemerfl.com

Monday, February 25
7:00 p.m.
Grace Lutheran Church
4301 16th St. N.
Saint Petersburg, FL 33703
(727) 527-1168
www.grace-lutheran.com

Tuesday, February 26
7:00 p.m.
Our Savior Lutheran Church
5626 20th St.
Zephyrhills, FL 33542
(813) 782-1369
www.oursaviorlutheranzeephyrhills.org

Wednesday, February 27
6:00 p.m.
Shepherd of the Coast Lutheran Church
101 Pine Lakes Pkwy. S.
Palm Coast, FL 32164
(386) 446-2481
www.sotcpc.com

Thursday, February 28
7:30 p.m.
Abiding Savior Lutheran Church
9700 W. Newberry Rd.
Gainesville, FL 32606
(352) 331-4409
www.abidingsavior.info

Friday, March 1
7:00 p.m.
Immanuel Lutheran Church
24 W. Wright St.
Pensacola, FL 32501
(850) 438-8138
www.immlu.com
Bigger is better, or so we are often led to believe. The bigger it is, the more you get, and the more impressive looking a thing is, the better it is said to be. Warehouse stores offer us a month’s supply of things in one package, cars and airplanes advertise more leg room, and desirable homes these days feature bigger, more open spaces. This has become the case for many charitable causes as well. More often than not, smaller acts of mercy don’t make the news, but if a celebrity raises millions of dollars for something, it is a headline.
In many ways, all of this is a theology of glory—something that seeks to draw attention to the thing or the act rather than the mercy given in time of need. Christians can actually become jealous of big things: the bigger congregation in town that does more for the needy during the holidays, the well-to-do Christian who can give more to support a Lutheran school, or the people who seem to be put together enough to volunteer more at church on a regular basis. We see a big impact, and our covetous heart wants in on the action.

While such acts are certainly fine in their own right (and many a congregation, institution, and community depend on such generosity), ours is not to compare the levels of service and mercy among God’s people. To each is given a share of God’s good creation with which to be faithful stewards, and not everyone is given to grand acts of service to their neighbor. Read Matthew 25:31-40. What activities does Jesus highlight here? Are these considered to be “glorious” by today’s standards? Why do you suppose Jesus points them out as good? How does this shape our understanding of what it means to faithfully serve?

One of the marvelous things about the story of the sheep and the goats is that the ones whom Jesus praises had no idea how they had been faithfully serving. Offering food, drink, clothing, shelter, and companionship seems to have been something that flowed naturally out of a faithful heart. Serving the “least of these” is important to Jesus. It is not that any of these tasks were grandiose in nature. They were simply the ways in which the children of God faithfully respond to the grace that has been received.

Faithfully serving the Lord does not require grand gestures, but simply to live faithfully in the places where the Lord has put you. The multi-million dollar endowment and a mother’s care for her children in the home are equally good works that are done. Some have been blessed to do big things; some are blessed to do those things that no one else seems to want to do. Neither is better or worse than the other. Read Acts 3:1-10. What basis determines how Peter helps the lame beggar? What does this teach us about how we can meet the needs of others?

Of course, faithfulness in serving is never dependent upon our strength or intellect, but is itself a gift of God as we are equipped by the Spirit. Our heavenly Father has prepared us for the very things He will ask us to do in serving Him and our neighbor. Read Ephesians 2:1-10. What does Paul say we were created for in Christ Jesus? What comfort do we have when it comes to the works of service that we do, whether big or small? How do these words help us in seeking to serve God or our neighbor?

It is God who has called us and equipped us in faithful service to Him, to our family, to our church, and to our community and world. We serve, not out of obligation, but as we are moved by the grace and love of God. Read Matthew 20:25-28. How do the rulers of the Gentiles act toward those under their authority? What does Jesus say our attitude ought to be? How does He show us this truth in His own life?

Ultimately, our faithful service is founded upon the One who came first to serve us; the One who bears upon Himself our sins and who grants us forgiveness when our service falters; the One who feeds us with His life from His table; the One who has gladly given His life as a ransom for you. In Him we are free to serve, and by Him we do so faithfully. It doesn’t require grand gestures, but humbly finds ways wherever we are and however we can to bring the mercy of Christ to bear on the lives of the “least of these.”

The Rev. Brian B. Noack (stbnoack@aol.com), CTSFW 2004, serves as pastor of Saint Johns Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sayville, New York.
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