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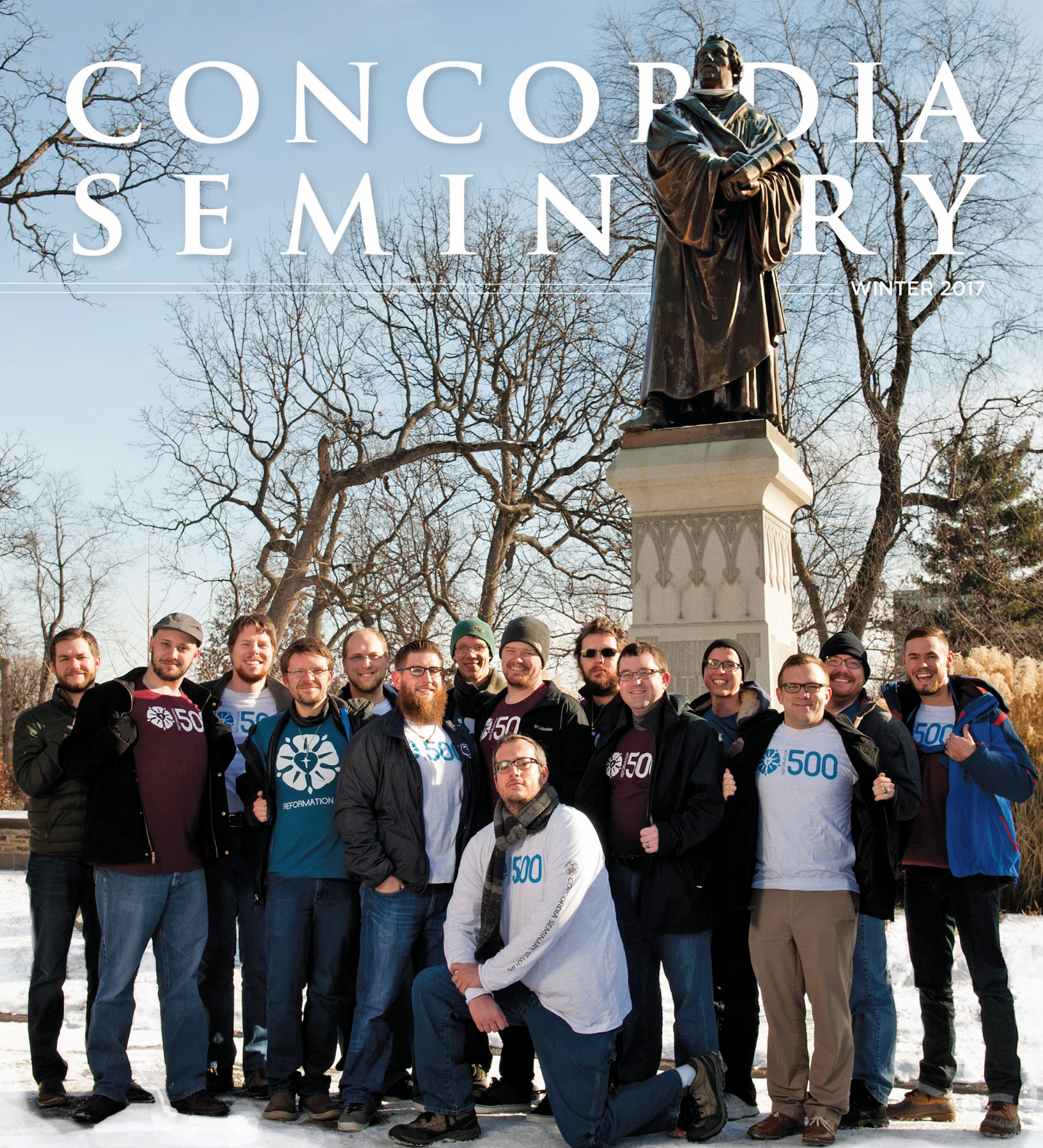
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CONCORDIA SEMINARY

WINTER 2017



HERE WE STAND

PREPARING PASTORS

CONTINUING THE
REFORMATION'S MESSAGE

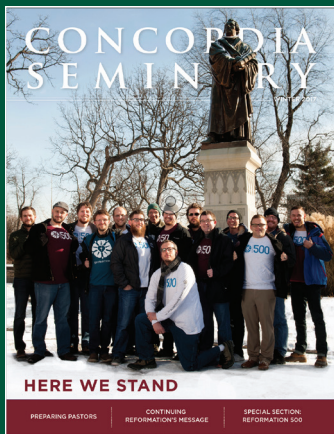
SPECIAL SECTION:
REFORMATION 500





Laudamus

Proclaiming the Gospel through song. The Seminary's Director of Musical Arts James Marriott, bottom left, leads members of the Laudamus choir in song during a Seminary Guild luncheon in December 2016. The choir will tour congregations in Nebraska, Colorado, New Mexico and Missouri in February and March. Photo: Jill Gray



ON THE COVER
Seminarians ring in the 500th anniversary year of the Reformation in front of the Luther statue on campus.
 Photo: Sid Hastings

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CONCORDIA SEMINARY

THE MAGAZINE OF CONCORDIA SEMINARY, ST. LOUIS

WINTER 2017

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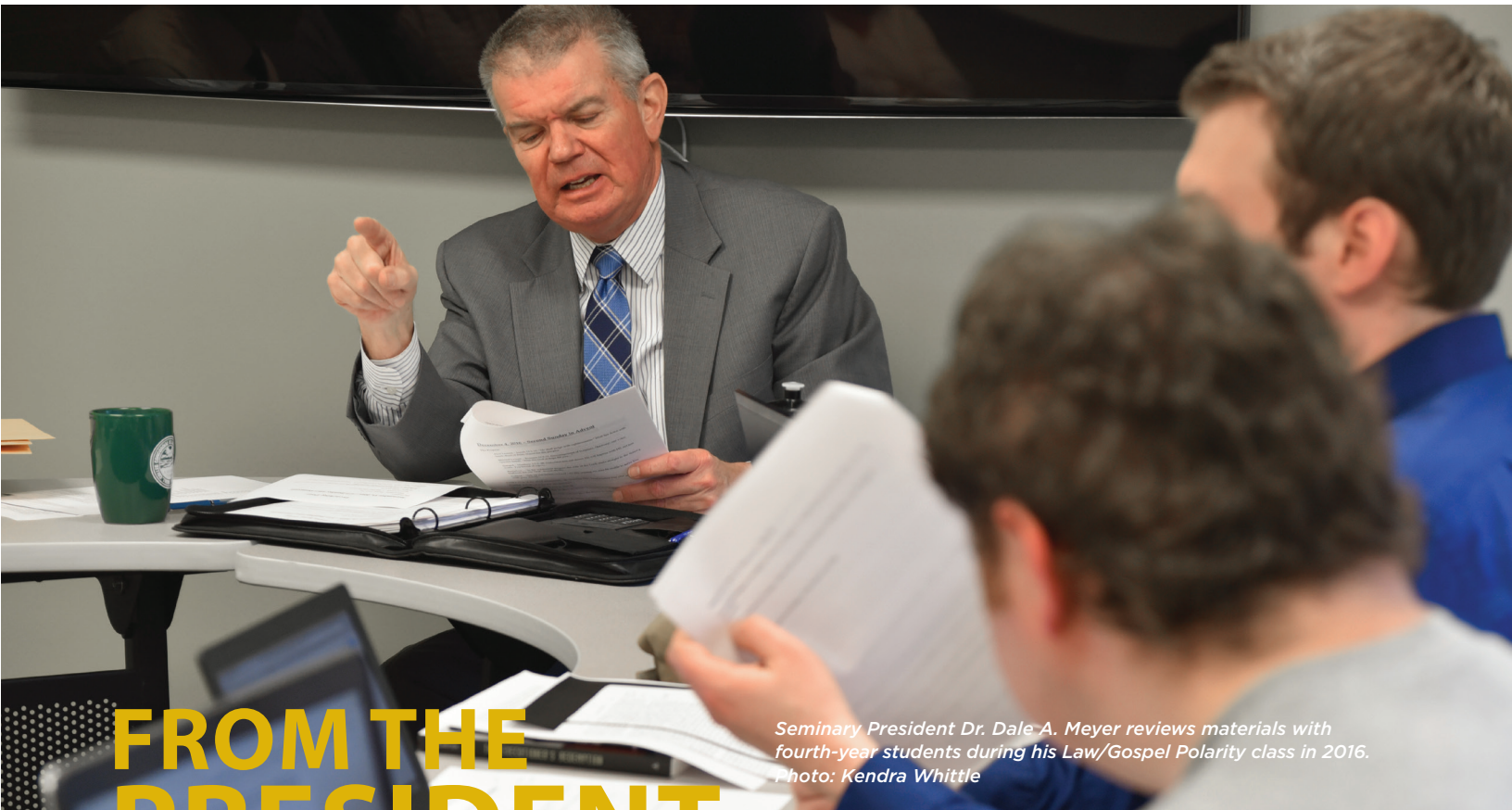
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Seminary President Dr. Dale A. Meyer reviews materials with fourth-year students during his Law/Gospel Polarity class in 2016. Photo: Kendra Whittle

FROM THE PRESIDENT

“Do you get it?” If you’re on the receiving end of that question, it can be exasperating. Whatever the subject is, you try to put it into words but the judgment finally comes, “You just don’t get it.”

From time to time we all fumble for the right words. When we do, clichés easily come out of our mouths. As we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, church jargon will be spoken loudly and often. “Scripture Alone, Grace Alone, Faith Alone.” “Justification.” “A Mighty Fortress is Our God.” You can add to the list, but they’re just words until we get it.

The test is being able to speak a truth using different words. When I push students to explain some theological truth to me in their own words, they sometimes fumble their way into defeat, “I know it; I just can’t put it into words.” To which I say, “Then you don’t get it.” A purpose of our faculty’s thorough revision of the residential curriculum is to teach our future pastors and deaconesses to put biblical truths into words that can be understood by the people to whom they witness and minister. This does not mean throwing out the inheritance of precious words from the Reformation. It means teaching what those words really mean.

This is not just a matter for the head. A student’s heart — yours and mine too — must struggle with truths in the depths of our being. Martin Luther did that. What the church of his day was teaching and practicing left him deeply troubled, and the Bible didn’t help him

until he properly understood its teaching — until he “got it”; that righteousness before God is His gift to us and not earned by our religious efforts. What spoke to Luther’s heart and what he articulated with his keen intellect have bequeathed to us the truths we celebrate this anniversary year and that God wills us to share in our time.

There’s a better example for us than Martin Luther. It’s Jesus. Meditate on the Gospels and feel His frustration with the religious leaders of His time. “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me” (Mark 7:6; Is. 29:13 ESV). To them He said, “You know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Mark 12:24 ESV). Those who don’t get it will finally hear, “I never knew you” (Matt. 7:23 ESV). May you and I never hear that said to us by our Judge and Savior! Your many kindnesses to the Seminary in word and deed help form servants among us who are both faithful to God’s truth and able to witness that truth in our churches and communities.

If we have only entered an anniversary year of memories, we don’t get it. If you and I, our Seminary, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and all who observe and celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation take to heart the grace and truth that is in Jesus, then we are getting it.

Dale A. Meyer

PREPARING PASTORS FOR TODAY'S WORLD

BY JACKIE PARKER

During a recent class this winter, first-year students were reminded how the posts they make on social media can have a positive — or negative — effect on a person's view or understanding of Christianity and the church. Tweets and Facebook status updates carry immense weight in today's world.

"Every interaction you have is a witness to an outsider," the professor said. The students nodded in approval, taking in the weight of his words.

The class, Pastoral Ministry 101, introduces students to the Office of Public Ministry. But the class reaches far beyond the pulpit, covering topics like social media, finances, hospitality and alcohol use. It is just one example of the multifaceted approach Concordia Seminary, St. Louis takes to prepare students to share the Gospel in an increasingly anti-church world.

The Seminary aims to equip students with the theological and practical knowledge they need to be prepared to meet the challenges they will face as pastors.

"At the end of the day, people out in the world are crying out for belonging and community. They're crying out for meaning and purpose in life. They're crying out for balance and rest in a restless world," said Dr. Leopoldo A. Sánchez M., associate professor of systematic theology and the Werner R.H. Krause & Elizabeth Ringger Krause Professor of Hispanic Ministries. "Students at Concordia Seminary are formed to tell the Christian story that addresses and answers all these cries and to do so in faithful but also winsome and persuasive ways. Even in a world that is hostile, people are looking for a story that provides hope and purpose."

“It’s a great time to be in the church and it’s an exciting time to be a pastor.”

— CASEY KEGLEY

Dr. Mark Rockenbach teaches Pastoral Ministry and emphasizes to his students that the most important skill a pastor can have is the ability to listen.

"We listen, so that we don't miss the many opportunities to care for broken hearts with the joy and peace of the Gospel," said Rockenbach, an associate professor of practical theology and adviser of personal growth and leadership development.

"No one can effectively proclaim the Gospel without first listening," he said. "Foremost, those serving in ministry must listen to the Word of God. The joy and peace of the Gospel needs to impact their hearts before they can be sent out to care for the

Dr. Joel Okamoto, left, gives Mark Duerr, a fourth-year student, a guide to his Christian Apologetics class. Okamoto is the Waldemar and Mary Griesbach Professor of Systematic Theology. Photo: Jackie Parker



hearts of others. But when they are sent out into the world, they are sent out into a variety of different contemporary contexts. In order to understand how to minister in those contexts, they need to do more listening.”

Throughout a student’s ministerial formation process, the Seminary’s faculty shares the current situation of

post-Christendom with students, said Dr. Joel Okamoto, associate professor of systematic theology and the Waldemar and Mary Griesbach Professor of Systematic Theology. He said there is a need for a systematic approach to theology because “you can’t assume people understand God,” he said. “We have to have answers.”

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Casey Kegley, a fourth-year Master of Divinity student, believes that even with a decline in church attendance and other challenges facing the church, “It’s a great time to be in the church and it’s an exciting time to be a pastor,” he said.

Kegley said in Okamoto’s World Religion class, the professor explained how religion is a narrative, or an account of the way things are, and whether people know it or not, it offers a true reality.



“Christianity can open doors and start conversations,” Kegley said. “Dr. Okamoto encouraged us to hear and to listen with interest to what others have to say.” But reaching others with the hope of the Gospel goes beyond just listening, he said.

“I feel like more and more what’s required for us is to live a life so different and compelling that others wonder at it,” Kegley said. “If we take seriously what Jesus says, we should look like a pretty strange people who produce curiosity and wonder in others.”

Students are encouraged to engage with the culture in their communities and neighborhoods both now and in the future, after they are called as pastors.

“We want to prepare students to be able to engage with people outside the church and with different cultures and be comfortable doing that,” Okamoto said. “This is our situation today. We are no longer in a predominant Christian culture.”

Kegley recalled being a student in Rockenbach’s classroom and how the professor discussed the courage it takes for people to open their lives to pastors.

“When they pour out their hearts to you, you should not take a hammer and smash that heart but validate what they’ve done and give them the truth of the Gospel in a gentle way,” he said. “I’m not out to win arguments. I’m just going to give people what I believe because God has done some pretty cool stuff in my life and I can tell them that He has done that for them as well.”

Understanding the contextual heart of each person means you need to be a good listener, Rockenbach said. Church workers should listen to God’s Word first; then, listen to the people around them.

“They need to listen to the hearts of people who struggle everyday with being sinful creatures and living in a fallen world. And in that listening, the pastor or deaconess begins to understand the specific concern that needs to be attended to,” he said. “This listening is important because you don’t care for people in the same way. How you care for someone who is grieving is different from how you care for someone struggling with identity issues.

“How you care for someone who is dying is different from how you care for someone who is celebrating the birth of his or her first child. How you care for someone who is a lifelong Christian is different from how you care for someone who doubts there is a gracious God.”



In Dr. Joel Okamoto's Christian Apologetics class, students discuss the definition of apologetics: a rational explanation and defense of Christian faith and life. Photo: Jackie Parker

While serving his vicarage at a church in Tennessee, Kegley asked 15 people to church each week. What appeared to be a simple conversation with a stranger often ended with a new visitor to church.

Now as a concluding student at Concordia Seminary, Kegley said he often asks himself, "Are people going to see evidence of Jesus in me?"

Looking ahead to Call Day and his first placement into ministry, he said he hopes to equip the people he shepherds to show and share the Gospel with their family, friends and colleagues. "Sometimes when an accountant or car salesman shares his or her faith, it can come through louder and clearer than when the same message comes from a pastor," Kegley said.

Even so, Kegley said he feels prepared to reach out to all kinds of people, including those with serious questions and doubts about Christianity.

"At some point, we all have had doubts," Kegley said. "There are things God does that confuse and

frustrate us, so I think it is important to help people see it is OK to have questions. We must encourage them to go back to Scripture and to the cross, to the places where God finds us. God has His own timing. The important thing is to encourage those conversations even when it feels like the questions have been answered.

“When they are sent out into the world, they are sent out into a variety of different contemporary contexts. In order to understand how to minister in those contexts, they need to do more listening.”

— DR. MARK ROCKENBACH

"Each of us is a finished work yet still in progress," he said. "The work is never done, but in a sense, it's complete because of what Jesus did."

Jackie Parker is a communications specialist at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.



STUDENTS SHARE HOPES FOR CONTINUING REFORMATION'S GOSPEL MESSAGE

BY KIM PLUMMER KRULL

As Lutherans throughout the world celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, Seminary students are preparing to carry forth the Reformation's Gospel message, each with their own hopes and dreams of preaching and teaching.

Here's what four current students say about how they hope to touch lives and share the Good News of Jesus Christ in the years to come:

TRANSIENT PAST SHAPES CHURCH WORK FUTURE

By age 12, Adam Rodriguez had lived in half a dozen cities and knew how to "talk to new people and make new friends" easily. Now this once-transient kid looks forward to serving in pastoral ministry or perhaps even church planting.

"As I go forward, I hope I can teach and preach the message of the Reformation — Jesus — to people wherever they are, in the best way that they can understand," said the second-year seminarian, who was born in Panama City, Fla., but lists a string of cities when asked where he's from.

"People say, whoa, that must have been hard, but actually it gave me the experience and abilities I don't think I'd otherwise have," said Rodriguez, whose father's vocation led to multiple family moves.

Despite his changing address, Rodriguez grew up with a solid faith foundation — Lutheran congregations. Now he wants to "meet people where they are and bring them the life-giving words of Jesus," he said.

He appreciates the "simple message" of the Synod's tagline for the Reformation anniversary celebration — *It's Still All About Jesus* — and finds strength knowing that "so many people have gone before me doing what is not an impossible task. We're all standing at the foot of the cross and carrying that same message."

One such person is his father, Rev. Jimmy Rodriguez, associate pastor at Immanuel Lutheran in Seymour, Ind. The elder Rodriguez's path toward pastoral ministry was the reason one city where Adam lived as a child was St. Louis, when his father was a Concordia Seminary student.



Adam Rodriguez. Photo: Jill Gray

Today, Adam Rodriguez prays that he uses "the gifts and abilities God has given me to reach people, wherever He places me."

FROM MILITARY SERVICE TO SERVING 'WHEREVER GOD PLANTS US'

Iraqi Christians inspired a "spiritual awakening" in Dawn Werner while she was stationed in Baghdad with the military — and the desire to strengthen her own theological foundation so she can help strengthen others.

"They were so joyous in their faith despite the uncertainty and violence in their lives," Werner said of Iraqis she was privileged to fellowship with during her final deployment with the U.S. Air Force.

Now this retired lieutenant colonel is a second-year Seminary student, pursuing a Master in Spiritual Care as part of the Deaconess Studies program.

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“I want to help people see the truth and help them grow in that truth.”

— DAWN WERNER



Dawn Werner. Photo: Jill Gray

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Luther worked to steer the church to God’s Word, and she’s working to grow in her understanding of that Gospel.

“I love to teach, and by having a stronger theological grounding, it will make a huge difference in how I can approach teaching,” Werner said. She is helping teach an adult Sunday school class at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Collinsville, Ill., near Scott Air Force Base where her husband is stationed.

Noting that Bible studies and other classes she has taught over the years included many non-Lutherans, Werner appreciates how the Seminary is equipping her to “enter into intelligent and faithful conversations.”

“I want to be strong in my faith and not condemning,” she said. “I want to help people see the truth and help them grow in that truth.”

While her husband remains on active duty, Werner and her family likely will move again with the military. Even so, she looks forward to “blooming wherever God plants us.”

“There’s always a church looking for a Bible study leader, always the need for someone to visit shut-ins,” she said. “However I can contribute is what I want to do, helping to make sure faith is strengthened and the truth revealed.”

USING EXPERIENCES TO CONNECT WITH THE FRUSTRATED, ALIENATED

Adam Woldt grew up in a variety of faith denominations. For years he considered “the organized church broken and not a system I wanted to be involved with,” he said.

Today as this fourth-year seminarian prepares for his first call in the spring, he looks forward to connecting with people who may be struggling with similar frustrations and disappointments.

“I definitely think that my experiences and perceptions can help me help people who see the church as broken or who have turned away from Christ,” Woldt said.

He notes that the need for the Gospel that helped fuel the Reformation remains strong.

“Five hundred years later, people who feel alienated and separated from the church still need to hear the promise of Christ,” he said. “Even when the organized church has problems, the Gospel is still about Christ and His love for us.”

Woldt knows the difference an encouraging congregation and pastors can make. He was in high school when he began attending King of Kings Lutheran Church in Omaha, Neb. As a college student, he joined the church staff.

“I didn’t grow up Lutheran, and I really appreciate these people who walked alongside me and encouraged me,” Woldt said of congregants and pastors who recognized “gifts for pastoral ministry in me” and pointed him toward the Seminary.

The support he received as a high school student has deepened his desire to connect with those who “don’t understand Lutheran theology and let them know that’s OK.”

“I want to help them understand and then keep walking with them in their journey,” said Woldt, whose own journey includes pursuing a Master of Divinity. “I want them to know that the church isn’t about pushing them away but pulling them back into a life worth living.”

GOOD WORKS LEAD TO GOOD CONVERSATIONS

Martin Luther never shared popsicles and Gatorade with airmen, but Travis Ferguson might assume that the reformer would approve of such opportunities to “connect with people and start conversations that lead to deeper conversations.”

An Air Force reservist and member of the Air Force Chaplains Corps, Ferguson served on active duty last summer at five bases where he discovered a thirst for more than cold treats.

Serving in chaplaincy includes what he calls “awesome challenges.” Chaplains aren’t allowed to proselytize, he explained, but “faith can come up organically, through conversations.”

“Good works can lead to good conversations,” said Ferguson, who is in his final year toward a Master of Divinity. “Good works is a huge part of chaplaincy, opening up so many conversations that otherwise wouldn’t happen.”

He reflects on Luther’s writings on vocation and how “all are called to show that love, whether a pastor or a plumber.”

“Martin Luther was looking for a savior, found Him and wanted to tell others,” he said. Sharing Christ doesn’t require “grandiose theological lectures,” but “loving our neighbors.”

Growing up “with a lot of trials and errors,” the Kansas City, Mo., native said “the one thing that kept me going was knowing that Jesus loves me, no matter what. I think that’s a message our reformed-yet-catholic theology teaches so well,” he said.

Today, Ferguson said he’s thankful for “some great pastors from home and great pastors here at the Seminary who have instilled that message in me.”

Although unsure where God will lead him this spring, he looks forward to sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with others. And, perhaps, sharing more popsicles.

Kim Plummer Krull is a St. Louis-based freelance writer.



Adam Woldt. Photo: Jill Gray



Travis Ferguson. Photo: Jill Gray

LUTHER: *‘THE WORD DID EVERYTHING’*

BY ERIK HERRMANN

Martin Luther is often described as a theologian of the Word. One can understand this in several ways. First, Luther’s formal vocation was “*doctor in Biblia*”— a teacher and professor of the Bible. It was not an uncommon calling, yet Luther transformed his work at a small university into a platform for widespread church reform and the reshaping of Christian life and piety across Europe.

In the university, Luther brought the Bible into the center of theological instruction by changing the focus of the curriculum and, for the common person, Luther produced his magisterial German translation of the Bible. His work with the Bible became the touchstone for new forms of worship, hymns and catechisms, alongside a renewed appreciation for the sacredness of domestic life and the workplace. All of this was kindled by Luther’s profound conviction that the Bible was the Word of God.

Such a view was not in itself unusual in his day. What was unusual, however, was his singular focus on the Word as the source and goal of the Christian life. While the medieval church tended to focus its faith and piety on devotional and liturgical ritual — both priestly and lay — Luther believed that the Church was born and sustained solely by the Word — preached, heard, read, sung and believed. As we remember Luther and the Reformation 500 years later, we do well to remember clearly that the religious core of his work was his deep love and reverence for the Word of God.

Luther’s concept of the Word of God permeated his entire theology; it always included the Bible, but it also was much more than this. For Luther, God’s Word was, first of all, the primordial Word of creation that brought into being all things from nothing: “and God said, ‘Let there be’ ... and there was.” Yet this Word of creation was not simply a thing from the ancient past but continued to sound throughout the creation, sustaining, making new, making life possible without which no life could be. Not just “God has made the heavens and the earth,” but “God has made *me*, my eyes and ears and all my senses” (Small Catechism). And it is this same creative Word that, incomprehensibly, also became flesh (John 1:14). This means that the very life and light of creation became inseparable from Jesus who embodied and proclaimed this creative, Spirit-filled Word to a broken, dark and chaotic world. This was, for Luther, the primary sense of “the Word

of God.” Jesus was a preacher; this was not accidental or incidental. It was the crucial core of how God deals with his people:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor
(Luke 4:18-19; Is. 61:1-2 ESV).*

Thus, when it came to the Bible, it too was the Word of God, but especially because it was a witness to this same Jesus. Through its recorded histories, its laws, its poetic and prophetic utterances, and its apostolic testimonies, the Bible is the Word that urges us onward toward Christ, or as Luther put it, “*was Christum treibet*.” Thus, the Old Testament was like the “swaddling cloths” of Christ, clothing God’s great plan of salvation with age-old acts of judgment and deliverance. The ancient people described therein appear to us as a kind of “mirror of life,” indicating by their encounters with God and His Word the range of responses in both faith and unbelief. All of this would point to God’s definitive act of judgment and deliverance exhibited in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

This Christ-centered view also holds for Luther’s understanding of the New Testament. For Luther the New Testament is not so much a book, as we are accustomed to think — (I suppose we owe that to the printing press as much as anything) — but it is first and foremost a divine *promise*. The New Testament is God’s promise to save humankind from its own destructive path — a promise that stretches back to Eden and runs through the lives of the patriarchs, prophets and kings until its fulfillment arrives in Christ.

Another word for promise is “covenant” or “testament,” and Luther especially latched on to this last word. This promise is God’s “testament” — his last will and testament, in fact (cf. Hebrews 9:16f.) — and in making it, God has set forth the scope of the whole redemption of Christ: “For if God is to make a testament, as he promises, then he must die; and if he is to die,

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Watercolor painting of Martin Luther by Erik Herrmann



then he must be a man. And so, that little word ‘testament’ is a short summary of all God’s wonders and grace, fulfilled in Christ.”

At its heart, then, the New Testament is not only a set of writings but God’s faithful fulfillment of a promise, a declaration of grace, an announcement of good news — that God has reconciled us in His Son: “It is the manner of the New Testament and the Gospel that it must be preached and performed by word of mouth and a living voice. Christ Himself has not written anything, nor has He ordered anything to be written, but rather to be preached by word of mouth.”

“I DID NOTHING; THE WORD DID EVERYTHING.”

– MARTIN LUTHER

THE SECOND INVOCAVIT SERMON, MARCH 10, 1522

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that Luther’s dealings with the New Testament books are largely in his sermons rather than lectures or commentaries. In the sermon, the living voice of the New Testament finds its home, that is, in the faith of the one who hears. The promise that was fulfilled in Christ spills over and is fulfilled again and again in the hearts of those that believe. Consider this excerpt from Luther’s Advent sermon in 1522:

[Christ’s] taking upon himself of humanity would have profited no one had it not meant the proclamation of the Gospel. The Gospel was to present him to the whole world, revealing the fact that he became man for the sake of imparting the blessing to all who, accepting the Gospel, should believe in him. Paul tells us the Gospel was promised of God; from which we may infer God placed more emphasis upon the Gospel, the public revelation of Christ through the Word, than upon his physical birth, his advent in human form. God’s purpose was concerning the Gospel and our faith, and he permitted his Son to assume humanity for the sake of making possible the preaching of the Gospel of Christ; that through the revealed Word salvation in Christ might be brought near — might come — to all the world. ... How can Christ profit us unless he be embraced by faith? But how can he be embraced by faith where the Gospel is not preached?

Preaching, then — when it rightly proclaims Christ — is every bit as much the Word of God as the Bible or that which brought the world into existence. Through the proclamation of the Word — whether publicly by a pastor or by any brother or sister baptized into Christ — God continues to destroy our presumptions, idols and false pieties in order to create new hearts that cling to “the one thing needful” (Luke 10:42). Through hearing the Word, we are brought to repentance, receive forgiveness and find reconciliation to God in Christ and with one another. Even the Sacraments are such a proclamation of the Word, bringing the faithful into a new world and new kingdom in which the Savior’s supper and story are celebrated until He comes again.

For all of Luther’s lofty language about the Word, he also celebrated the lowly, quotidian, even fragile means through which God’s Word comes to us. The “swaddling cloths” mentioned above are “shabby and poor, yet precious is the treasure wrapped in them for it is Christ.” The preacher, too, is just one

sinner among many — a clay vessel carrying this same treasure. God’s Word takes up no uniquely divine language, but clothes itself in what seems all too human and too foolish to accomplish such great things. Nevertheless, both prophet and apostle profess the same: *the Word of God endures forever.*

As we commemorate Luther and the Reformation, there is much to remember and celebrate. But nothing gives us greater cause for confidence, humility or gratitude, than the life God gives us by His Word.

What is Luther? The teaching is not mine. Nor was I crucified for anyone ... How did I, poor stinking bag of maggots that I am, come to the point where people call the children of Christ by my evil name? ... I simply taught, preached, wrote God’s Word; otherwise I did nothing. And while I slept, or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philip and Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses upon it. I did nothing; the Word did everything.

Dr. Erik Herrmann is chairman of the Department of Historical Theology, director of the Center for Reformation Research and associate professor of historical theology.





EVENTS

Final Reformation500 Speaker Series Annual Lecture *Luther's Fiercest Foes: Satan, Sin, the Wrath of God*

Dr. Robert Kolb
*Concordia Seminary Professor Emeritus
of Historical Theology*
7 p.m. Tuesday, April 18, 2017
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

Theological Symposium: 500th Anniversary of the Reformation

Sept. 19-20, 2017
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
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500th Anniversary of the Reformation Service

Tuesday, Oct. 31, 2017
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Special Reformation-focused double
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500: The Impact of the Reformation Today

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interested in learning more about the background and
significance of the events of the Reformation and the
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German exchange student invigorated by time in U.S.

BY JACKIE PARKER

German exchange student Niklas Brandt is studying abroad for a year much like his father did when he was a seminary student in the 1980s.

Brandt is a student in Concordia Seminary's International Seminary Exchange Program. His father, Hinrich Brandt, is a pastor who spent a year studying at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Ind. The elder Brandt serves in the *Alllutherische Parochie Greifswald*, a congregation of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK) in Greifswald, Germany, a partner church of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS).

This is the first time the younger Brandt has been to the United States.

"The mentality is different," he said. "In Germany, we tend to be more reserved, closed. In America, people are more open."

And another observation – cars, cars and more cars.

"Nearly every student in America seems to have a car," he said with a laugh. "In Germany, students can use buses and trains for free."

Brandt became interested in coming to Concordia Seminary in 2013 after attending a symposium at Lutheran Theological Seminary in Oberursel, Germany, where he is a student. Lectures were given by two Concordia Seminary faculty members including Dr. James W. Voelz, graduate professor of exegetical theology and the

Dr. Jack Dean Kingsbury Professor of New Testament Theology, and Dr. Timothy Saleska, associate professor of exegetical theology and dean of ministerial formation.

"I was impressed with the literary exegetical approaches in comparison with the historical critical approaches," he said. "We don't have that in Germany."

Brandt said that he also was impressed with the formation sessions during Orientation.

"That is something that I really missed in the German studies, where the studies are mostly focused on improving intellectual skills," he said. "It would be very helpful to have formation sessions like this in our studies as well."

Brandt has another personal connection to the Seminary. In 2015, Brandt met Chris Conkling, a Master of Divinity student now in his second year at Concordia Seminary, at a conference in Prague. Conkling said the conference was held in a monastery and he and Brandt struck up a conversation, talking about the state of the church and different forms of theology. The two became friends, getting together again in May 2016 during a return visit to the Czech Republic to see mutual friends and visit churches.

At the time, Conkling was studying abroad at Westfield House in Cambridge, England. When the two returned stateside to begin fall quarter classes, Conkling included Brandt in get-togethers at his parents' home in St. Peters, Mo. Conkling's mother, Brigitte, is German, which helped Brandt feel more at home.

"We have fun but our conversations always go back to theology," Conkling said. Frequent topics of conversation? Evangelism, as in how it's done, and issues facing the church such as declining attendance.

"He reveals to me a different context of ministry," Conkling said. "He's wise about



Niklas Brandt became interested in coming to Concordia Seminary in 2013 after attending a symposium at Lutheran Theological Seminary in Oberursel, Germany. Photo: Jackie Parker



Left: When he's not in class, Niklas Brandt, front row far right, enjoys playing soccer on the Seminary's team. Photo: Courtesy Niklas Brandt. Right: Exchange students Niklas Brandt, left, and Gabriel Schmidt Sonntag discuss topics covered in Homiletics II, a class taught by Dr. David Schmitt, the Gregg H. Benidt Memorial Professor of Homiletics and Literature. Photo: Jackie Parker

what he does and will listen to other people. He's genuine and tells you how things are."

Brandt is soaking in as much as he can while in the United States.

"The experience of being in a whole different environment is great," Brandt said. "In Germany, church life has lost a lot of things. It is a blessing to see how the church is going here in the United States. The LCMS is more widespread and organized, in comparison. I hope to take a lot of theology back with me."

He sees great value in the "blue books" — the *Concordia Commentary* series by Concordia Publishing House — and wishes they were available in German so that his peers could avail themselves to the practical approach they present.

During the fall quarter, Brandt audited five classes and is taking three of his five winter quarter classes for credit. "The workload is much more here," he said. "In Germany, there is more academic freedom and students have the opportunity to choose to study whatever they want. Here, it is very focused."

When he becomes a pastor, Brandt plans to focus on catechesis.

"That is something I really want, to have a good catechesis basis for everyone, especially for young adults," he said. He believes that "we lose them because we do not have enough faith-growing programs for them after confirmation."

**"IT IS A BLESSING TO
SEE HOW THE CHURCH
IS GOING HERE IN
THE UNITED STATES."**

— NIKLAS BRANDT

While his Seminary course load is more defined than what he had in Germany, he said that he sees the advantages of both. Outside of class, Brandt is getting the full Concordia Seminary experience. He plays on the soccer and volleyball teams, sings in the choir and lives in the dormitory with other unmarried seminarians.

Nils Niemeier, his next-door neighbor, said Brandt visits a different church each Sunday with other seminarians.

When Brandt went with Niemeier to Emmaus Lutheran Church in Dorsey, Ill., Niemeier said Brandt engaged many members of the church with his take on the state of the church in Germany.

"He said that because the DDR (*Deutsche Demokratische Republik*) suppressed the church, there is a clean slate for evangelism in East Germany and a great opportunity to share the Gospel," Niemeier said. "It was great having Niklas along because he speaks German and many of the folks there remembered the German church services at Emmaus from when they were kids. It brought back a lot of memories for them and they learned a lot from him in turn. They love it when he visits."

It was a positive experience for Brandt as well.

"I really feel like I'm a part of the community," he said.

Jackie Parker is a communications specialist at Concordia Seminary.



Dr. Erik Herrmann emphasizes a point to students during a class in May 2016. Photo: Kendra Whittle

Professor and Reformation scholar makes Luther come alive

BY KENDRA WHITTLE

Dr. Erik Herrmann devotes significant time and energy at Concordia Seminary studying and talking about a man who lived, worked and died nearly 500 years ago. But to Herrmann, the Seminary's chairman of the Department of Historical Theology, Martin Luther is a vibrant figure whose impact is still very real.

"He was absolutely obsessed with the Word of God, not just the Bible, but every way the Word of God comes to us, whether in preaching or in two people talking with each other," said Herrmann, associate professor of historical theology, director of theological resources and special projects, and director of the Seminary's Center for Reformation Research. He says bringing the faith and influence of Luther, as well as other historical theologians and events, come to life is what his teaching career has been all about.

It wasn't always that way. The son of German Lutheran immigrants, Herrmann was a biology major at the University of Tennessee who experienced a dramatic change of heart, switching to theology and transferring to Concordia University Wisconsin, Mequon, halfway through his undergraduate studies.

Arriving at Concordia Seminary in 1995, Herrmann had every intention of serving as a parish pastor. After completing his Master of Divinity in 2000, he began serving at St. Timothy Lutheran Church in St. Louis while beginning his Ph.D. While working toward the advanced degree, he says something changed. "I realized I was preparing for a different kind of work," he said. "I realized it was a different vocation, and that would be OK.

“I realized that this was another way to serve the church. So I threw myself into it, not knowing I would be called to the Seminary.”

But that’s exactly what happened, as Herrmann was called to the historical theology department upon completion of his doctorate. Herrmann says he hasn’t looked back since.

Herrmann says he knows that on first glance, historical theology classes might not seem as pertinent to the pulpit as homiletics or languages. But helping students understand why they are required to take historical theology courses goes beyond facts and data.

Herrmann asserts that historical theology can have a very practical use for pastors as they communicate with their congregations.

“When you’re studying history, it’s as if you’re traveling and listening to people in different times and in very different places,” he said. “Our goal is to help our students listen carefully for the sake of understanding. We want to encourage a habit of listening carefully in our students. We want them to listen to people who are different from them, understand them first and then direct them to Christ.”

Herrmann said many of the students who come to the Seminary initially have very little knowledge about the history of the church, excluding the life of Christ and the Protestant Reformation. He said his department’s goal is to provide a broad framework and to bring the vibrant history of the church to life.

“It’s about curiosity and interest in what other people have said about God,” he said. “It’s not memorizing facts from old archives; it’s about bringing to life the people that students are reading about.”

He said one of the finest examples of this came recently from his “Luther as a Pastoral Theologian” class during the summer 2016

quarter. His students were fascinated by the idea that Luther’s writings, from the 95 Theses onward, stemmed from a desire to provide pastoral care to people.

“Understanding Luther as a pastor was a huge deal for them,” Herrmann said.

projects and is slated to speak at multiple conferences, including at the International Luther Conference in Wittenberg this summer.

A trip to Brazil also is in the works for the summer. Also, he’s helping lead the Seminary’s Reformation celebration on campus,



Dr. Erik Herrmann leads a discussion with first-year students in his spring quarter Introduction to Historical Theology course in May 2016. Photo: Kendra Whittle.

“IT’S NOT MEMORIZING FACTS FROM OLD ARCHIVES; IT’S ABOUT BRINGING TO LIFE THE PEOPLE THAT STUDENTS ARE READING ABOUT.”

— DR. ERIK HERRMANN

In addition to his classroom responsibilities, Herrmann is involved in several special projects relative to the milestone Reformation anniversary this year. The 500th anniversary of the Reformation and the Synod’s year-long commemoration has thrust Luther scholars into the spotlight. Herrmann is working on five publishing

including a worship service in the Chapel of St. Timothy and St. Titus on Oct. 31. “The occasion of the Reformation’s anniversary is a great opportunity to raise up the many positive things that Christians can learn from Luther,” Herrmann said.

Kendra Whittle is a communications specialist at Concordia Seminary.

Library transformation gets underway this spring

BY JACKIE PARKER

Concordia Seminary's motto, "Light from Above," grows even more meaningful as a \$6 million renovation to the campus library gets underway this spring. The exciting transformation will bring both new light and new life into the learning center.

The first step in the transformation involves the move. In a two-week timeframe, almost 300,000 volumes located in the library will be boxed, categorized and relocated to a temporary storage facility, said Rev. Ben Haupt, the Seminary's director of library services.

level of Loeber Hall between Feb. 18 and March 6, the break between the winter and spring quarters.

At the October Board of Regents meeting, the Board authorized Seminary President Dr. Dale A. Meyer to sign contracts to begin renovation of the library. Through generous gifts to *Generations: The Campaign for Concordia Seminary*, the library will be revamped into a state-of-the-art learning facility and high-tech initiatives will be expanded across the campus, bolstering the Seminary's position as a global leader in theological education and ensuring the ability to connect with pastors, teachers, students and lay members around the world.

With much gratitude, the library's \$6 million fundraising goal has been met, in large part because of Glenn and Kay Hasse, members of the Seminary's National Campaign Council and long time supporters who have committed \$3 million for student scholarship endowments and needed renovations to the library as part of the Generations Campaign.

Renovations to the existing library building are set to begin in June 2017 and is expected to take about a year to 18 months to complete. The library will be named the Kristine Kay Hasse Memorial Library. Kristine was a star high school golfer and "wonderful and mature girl" who treasured her Lutheran upbringing, said her mother, Kay Hasse.

In October, Glenn Hasse and his sister, Lisa Hoekstra, also donated a family Bible to the library that belonged to their grandparents, Matthias and Louisa Buehler, who lived on a farm in Cologne, Minn. It is a 1902 edition Bible, written in German.

"When the Bible was found, the meaning of it didn't register fully," said Lisa Hoekstra. "But it reflects the LCMS heritage, with it written all in German." Once the renovation is complete, the Bible will be displayed on the main floor of the library. "Our mom's parents



From left, Glenn Hasse, Director of Campus Facilities Martin Hague, Seminary President Dr. Dale A. Meyer, Lisa Hoekstra, Director of Principal Gifts Michael Flynn, and Administrator of Public Services Dr. Beth Hoeltke take a tour of campus in October 2016. Photo: Jackie Parker

The estimated value of the collection is \$55 million and includes one of the largest collections of Lutheran Reformation reference materials and more than 6,000 rare volumes.

The current plan is to relocate the second-largest Lutheran library in North America to its temporary operations center in the lower



Endowment Funds and Estate Gifts

\$110 million

- Operational endowments
- Endowed faculty chairs
- Scholarship endowments



Annual Support and Scholarships

\$60 million

- Sustain and grow scholarships
- Retain and develop world-class faculty
- Maintain the campus



Left: Local resident Jim West, left, listens as Rev. Ben Haupt, the Seminary’s director of library services, reviews the library renovation plans at an open house Dec. 7, 2016, for the neighborhood. **Right:** From left, Lisa Hoekstra and her brother, Glenn Hasse, present their family Bible to Seminary President Dr. Dale A. Meyer and Dr. Beth Hoeltke, administrator of public services, in October 2016. The 1902 Bible, written in German, belonged to their grandparents, who lived on a farm in Cologne, Minn. Photos: Jackie Parker

would be speechless (to have the Bible on display),” Hoekstra said.

“This Bible is part of the history of our family,” Glenn Hasse said. “Just to know that it’s here is special.”

The Seminary’s two-story, 46,000-square foot library was constructed in 1962 and very little has changed, including the now-retro Danish modern furniture. The library’s collections include treasured original volumes from the Seminary’s founding fathers such as Dr. C.F.W. Walther, first editions of the *Book of Concord* and Lutheran composer J.S. Bach’s personal Bible.

Renovation plans call for more open space on the main floor, conducive to collaborative study, and specially designed areas geared toward Master of Divinity and deaconess students. The books on that floor will be those often found in a pastor’s study: commentaries, *Luther’s Works* and the latest theological periodicals.

“We want the main floor to feel as comforting and welcoming as walking into your pastor’s office,” Haupt said. “We want students to be able to talk about things that matter most to a person’s faith.” The area will include a coffee bar and conversation will be encouraged.

“There may be a little bit of noise, little interruptions, but that is what pastors’ offices are like,” Haupt said.

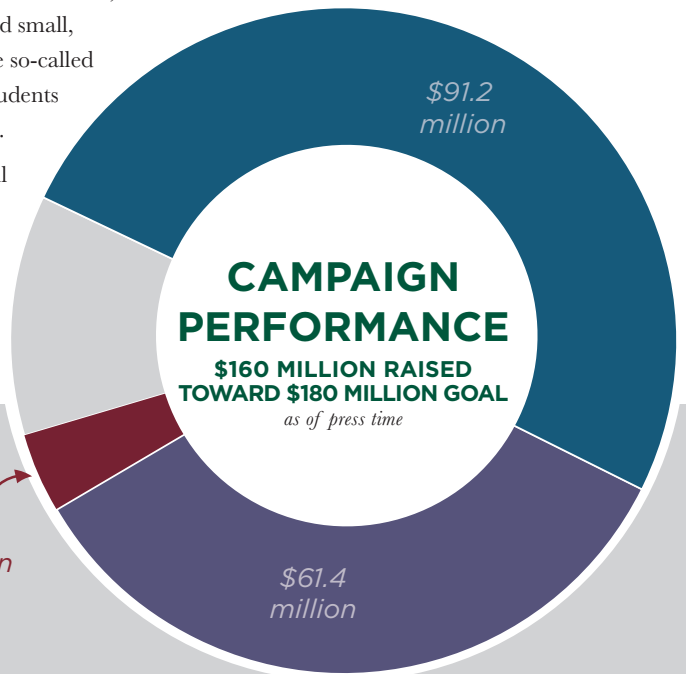
The second floor is being renovated primarily with graduate students in mind, including three classrooms and small, professional study spaces. The so-called “cages” now used by Ph.D. students in the library will be removed.

As for the basement, quiet will rule. About 90 percent of the library’s books will be housed there on movable shelves. A number of study areas also will be designed.

“The primary reason for this renovation is to create a compelling place for students to do theology,” Haupt said. “During the formation process, besides the classroom, the library’s the place.”

To learn more about the library transformation, visit www.csl.edu/library.

Jackie Parker is a communications specialist at Concordia Seminary.



Library and Learning Technology

\$10 million

- Digital accessibility
- Facility enhancements

Amount to reach goal | Endowment Funds and Estate Gifts | Annual Support and Scholarships | Library and Learning Technology



Members of the Seminary Guild make time for fellowship during their December 2016 luncheon. Photo: Kendra Whittle

Sem Guild sets new goals for 2016-17

The Concordia Seminary Guild — known as the Sem Guild — is setting its sights on new goals for the 2016-17 academic year. The women of the Sem Guild set a project goal of \$21,700 and adopted nine campus projects. Those projects include providing a required textbook for all incoming students, campus landscaping, funds for the Food Bank and the Re-Sell It Shop, assistance with the fall and spring choir tours, as well as direct student aid.

The Sem Guild is an organization of women dedicated to providing support to the Seminary community, its students and their families, and staff. Projects are completed with the generous donations of members and friends from across the United States.

Members who live in the St. Louis area meet approximately six times a year for a luncheon and fellowship. Luncheons generally include

presentations by students and other members of the Seminary community.

“It’s a joy to serve the Lord by providing monetary support to the students and the campus at large,” said Sem Guild President Joan Schlichter. “We invite our sisters in Christ to join us in this endeavor through membership or by contributing to the project fund. We are always happy to welcome new members.”

**Find upcoming luncheons,
membership information
and information on how to support
Sem Guild projects, visit
www.csl.edu/friends/semguild.**



Mom always said, “Where there’s a will, there’s a way.” Mom was right.

Mom also made sure you went to church and learned about God’s love.
She was right about that, too.

Now it’s your turn. You want the church to be there for your children and their children. You’ve set the example, but there’s another step you can take.

If you have a will, there’s a simple way to make sure that future generations will have Gospel-proclaiming, people-loving pastors to serve them: Include Concordia Seminary in your estate plan. You’ll make a lasting difference as future pastors serve families like yours.

To learn more with no obligation,
call 800-822-5287 or visit www.csl.edu/give.

Fall Lay Bible Institute addresses Scriptural authority

The Fall Lay Bible Institute discussed the authority and purpose of the Scriptures throughout four weeks of lectures and discussion in October and November. With the title “From Jesus to the Bible (and Back): Meeting the Crisis of Scripture as People of the Word,” the Fall Lay Bible Institute was hosted by Dr. Peter Nafzger, assistant professor of practical theology.

“There’s been a crisis going on for the past few 100 years about what this book (the Bible) is,” Nafzger said. “Rather than viewing the present situation as cause for despair, we meet it confidently as ‘people of the Word.’ As such, we approach the Scriptures with faith in Jesus, the crucified and risen Word made flesh; with vigor to proclaim God’s living and active Word to all; and with humble gratitude for the written Word of the prophets and apostles.”

Nafzger led participants through an in-depth look at the arguments of biblical critics and the doctrine of inspiration. The lectures also included a look at God’s use of human “mouthpieces” to speak to His people, such as Moses, the prophets and the apostles. Nafzger encouraged participants to view the Scriptures as the written form of the Word of God, inseparable from the Word made flesh and the Word proclaimed in the church. This foundation in the Word guards against the errors of historical criticism and legalistic fundamentalism. It leads toward faithful, Christ-centered interpretation and proclamation.



Dr. Peter Nafzger introduces the topic of the Fall Lay Bible Institute during the first session in October 2016. Photo: Kendra Whittle

Giving Tuesday focuses on student financial aid



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT
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\$8,033 RAISED *IN 24 HOURS*

#PREPAREAPASTOR

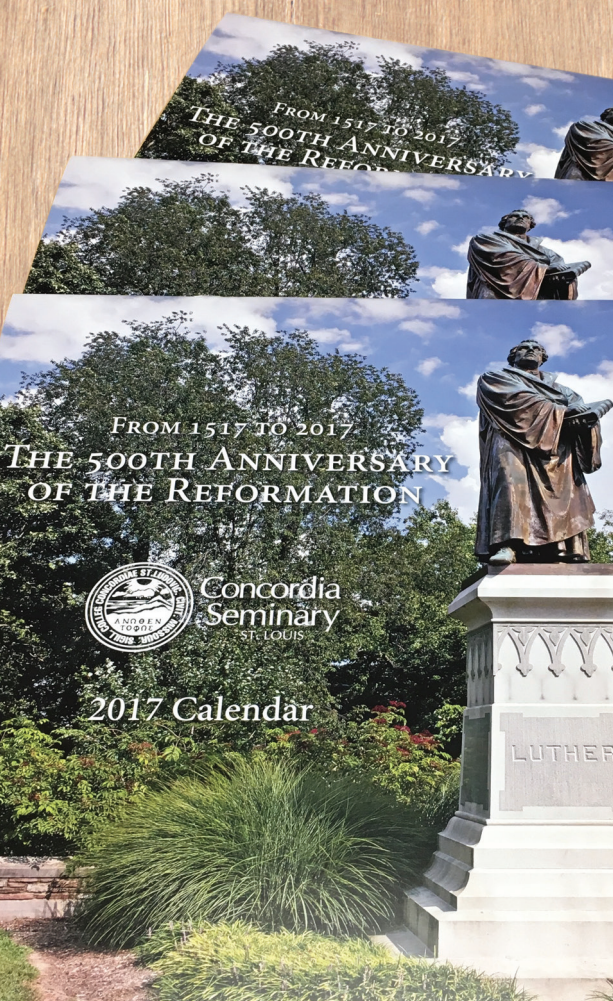
We praise God for the generous donors who contributed to the international day of philanthropy known as Giving Tuesday Nov. 29, 2016. Thanks to their support, we raised \$8,033 during the one-day giving event. Every dollar raised benefits student financial aid and scholarships as Concordia Seminary prepares seminarians to serve as pastors of LCMS congregations all over the world.

“The joy of giving is magnified when the mission is so vital,” said Vicki Biggs, senior vice president for Seminary advancement. “Giving Tuesday gifts to Concordia Seminary mean so much for current and future students as they help eliminate financial barriers that might prevent prospective students from acting on their calling. I thank all those who joined in this global initiative to make a difference.”

NOW AVAILABLE
**CONCORDIA
SEMINARY'S**
2017 CALENDAR

We celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in our 2017 Concordia Seminary wall calendar. The campus abounds with Lutheran artifacts and symbols that pay homage to our faith and to the work of Martin Luther. Call 800-822-5287 or email advancement@csl.edu to request a copy.

Note: Supplies are limited. Requests will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis.



Special tuition award given for M.Div. students



In celebration and commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, the Concordia Seminary, St. Louis Board of Regents approved a special one-time financial aid award for its residential pastoral ministry students that will completely fund tuition for most Master of Divinity (M.Div.) students next year.

The “Reformation Jubilee” award will provide all M.Div. students in residence during the 2017-18 academic year with additional aid amounting to about 5 percent of the published average full-time tuition charge. Average full-time tuition is expected to be \$25,920 next year.

The award, combined with other forms of financial aid, will enable most M.Div. students to meet 100 percent of their tuition costs. Some students may end up with a net credit on their tuition accounts, allowing them to use their award for housing, insurance or living expenses.

Concordia Seminary is blessed by many faithful donors who support the Seminary’s mission to prepare men to serve as pastors in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). Over the past several years, donor generosity through *Generations: The Campaign for Concordia Seminary* has enabled the average student out-of-pocket cost for tuition to be lowered to about \$1,240 each year over four years of study. As donors continue this strong support, the Seminary can continue to keep student tuition costs to a minimum.

“With the approaching 500th anniversary of the Reformation, we celebrate again the work of Christ, the Gospel and justification by faith,” said Provost Dr. Jeff Kloha. “Through this award, Concordia Seminary is pleased to make it possible for even more men to enter into the ministry of Word and Sacrament. Through them, the Gospel will move forward the mission of the church in the next generation.”

Donor support is essential to reducing the students’ tuition load. Each M.Div. student receives a “Residential Grant” which amounts to 25 percent of the tuition charge. The funds for this are drawn from the Seminary’s endowment earnings and other donor giving. The “Reformation Jubilee” award will be added next year, bringing that discount to 30 percent of the students’ tuition charge.

In addition, M.Div. students also receive the following support from donors:

- Adopt-A-Student awards, through which donors provide direct aid to students
- Earnings from priority endowments, which provide financial aid for students who meet certain criteria
- LCMS district and congregation support, given by the student’s home district and home congregation, which provides direct support to the student and his family
- Outside aid

All of these sources of donor giving have resulted in the lowering of tuition costs for students. By maintaining this strong support, donors will continue to ensure that men are able to be formed as pastors and enter the ministry with as little financial burden as possible. To learn more about Concordia Seminary’s financial aid, visit www.csl.edu/admissions/financial.

Bach at the Sem opens season

The beautiful compositions of J.S. Bach resonated throughout the Chapel of St. Timothy and St. Titus Dec. 11, 2016, for the inaugural *Bach at the Sem* concert of its 24th season. The concert featured two complete cantatas — BWV 121 “Christum wir sollen loben schon” and BWV 147 “Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben,” containing the beloved “Jesus, Joy of man’s desiring”; the soprano title aria, “Süsser rost, mein Jesus kömmt,” from BWV 151; and the Sinfonia from BWV 182 “Himmelskönig, sei willkommen,” performed by the American Kantorei under Music Director Dr. Maurice Boyer.

“Our 2016-17 season presents five masterful cantatas delving into and sonically embodying, with startling human and theological insight, the themes of the Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ,” Boyer said. “It is our hope that these great works, in their varied utterance, quicken the heart and stir all in attendance to deepened reflectiveness, abiding comfort and unquenchable joy.”

The second and final concert of the season is set for May 7, 2017, and will celebrate the Feast of Easter.



Bach at the Sem opened its 2016-17 season Dec. 11, 2016, with an Advent-themed concert in the Chapel of St. Timothy and St. Titus. Photo: Jill Gray



Contemplate event

The Seminary hosted the Contemplate visitation event for college students and second-career men Oct. 13-15, 2016. Participants took a tour of campus and visited a Seminary class during the event. They also spent about an hour by themselves in prayer, Bible study and reflection, contemplating whether God is calling them into ministry.

To learn about future admissions events, visit www.csl.edu/admissions/visit-us.

Photo: Kendra Whittle

Thompson joins faculty



Dr. W. Mart Thompson

Dr. W. Mart Thompson joined the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis as associate professor of practical theology and director of the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program beginning in the winter quarter of the 2016-17 academic year. He was installed during a special chapel service Nov. 30, 2016, in the Chapel of St. Timothy and St. Titus.

Thompson brings almost 30 years of experience as a parish, campus and rural pastor to the Seminary. For the past 15 years, Thompson has served as pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in Pevely, Mo.

“Congregations are the centers of Gospel ministry, and so our theological work at Concordia Seminary is focused on sending forth pastors and deaconesses who will be servant leaders for Jesus in their churches and communities,” said Seminary President Dr. Dale A. Meyer. “The entire church is blessed as Dr. Thompson joins our faculty as a professor and mentor in the formation of seminarians for ministry. We invite you to rejoice with us!”

In addition to his professorial duties, Thompson is assuming the role of SMP director, a position now held by Dr. Andrew Bartelt, the Seminary’s Gustav and Sophie Butterbach Professor of Exegetical Theology.

Thompson is a familiar name for many

Seminary students. Since 2012, he has served as a guest professor at Concordia Seminary and at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Ind., where he has taught courses for the SMP and Doctor of Ministry programs.

Thompson holds a Master of Divinity (’88) and Doctor of Ministry (’08) from Concordia Seminary. He has yearned to teach practical theology since his days as a Seminary student.

“I desired to apply the Law-Gospel theology I was learning in very practical ways in my own life and ministry; and what I learned I was passionate about sharing with others,” he said. “That interest led to developing practical applications of Lutheran theology in a multitude of parish ministry areas. For example, my final project for the Doctor of Ministry degree was on introducing Gospel-care small groups into a traditional Lutheran congregation.”



CALL DAY IS COMING!

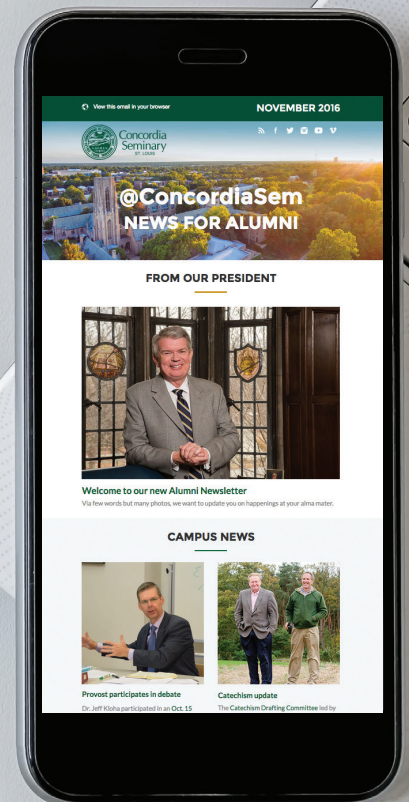
#CALLDAY2017 APRIL 26, 2017

Watch free live streaming of
Call Day services at callday.csl.edu.

New @ConcordiaSem alumni e-newsletter debuts

The Seminary’s new monthly alumni e-newsletter, @ConcordiaSem, debuted in November with a goal of updating alumni on Seminary news and events. “Via few words but many photos, we want to update you on happenings at your alma mater,” wrote Seminary President Dr. Dale A. Meyer in the first issue. “Concordia Seminary is all about the Gospel of Jesus Christ and there’s an energy to get that Good News out into our communities and world. We want you to know ... and we hope you’ll participate.”

Alumni are invited to participate by sending short updates, including calls, births, deaths and the like to Melodie Bostic, senior coordinator of alumni and congregation relations, at alumni@csl.edu.



Students receive fall calls and vicarage assignments

Twenty-three students celebrated calls and vicarage assignments this past fall and will serve congregations and ministries of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). The students were recognized during chapel services Oct. 7, 21 and 28, 2016.

Master of Divinity students called include: James Prothro, Trinity Lutheran Church, Park Hills, Mo.; Peter Heckert, St. James Lutheran Church, Lafayette, Ind.; and Nicholas Price, Trinity Lutheran Church, Lisle, Ill.

One student from the Seminary's Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS) received his first call to pastoral ministry: Ramón Cabrales, Apostles Lutheran Church, Peoria, Ariz.

Students in the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program receiving calls include: Anthony Celia, Water's Edge, Frisco, Texas; Nicholas Cordt, Risen Savior Lutheran Church, Wichita, Kan.; Charles Fenton, Eastern Heights Lutheran Church, St. Paul, Minn.; Matthew Hauser, Peace Lutheran Church, Saginaw, Mich.; Jarrett Jones, St. John Lutheran Church, Mansfield, Texas; Curtiss Lanham, CrossPoint Community Church, Katy, Texas; and Michael Phillips, Grace Lutheran Fellowship, Romeo, Mich.

Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT) students called include: Dawit Bokre, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Hayward, Calif.; Berhanu Didanu, pending; Vue Lee, pending; and Eduardo Torea, Peace Lutheran Church, Garland, Texas.

Two Residential Alternate Route (RAR) students received vicarage assignments:

Michael Apfel, Trinity Lutheran Church, Fort Scott, Kan.; and Joshua Wiley, Redeemer Lutheran Church, Kimberly, Idaho.

Five EIIT students received vicarage assignments: Albino Kong, Anchorage Lutheran Church, Anchorage, Alaska; Richard McCafferty, Anchorage Lutheran Church, Anchorage, Alaska; Robert Sawah, Peace Lutheran Church, Washington, D.C.; Marlon Yearwood, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Springfield, Va.; and Gem Gabriel, Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, New London, Conn.

Also announced was Cross-Cultural Ministry (CMC) student Daniel Morin's Sept. 2 vicarage assignment to Our Savior Lutheran Church, Palm Springs, Calif.

"We join our candidates, their families and friends, supporting and calling congregations in praising God and celebrating His gifts to His church," said Dr. Wallace Becker, director of placement. "The church continues to need people to serve as pastors, missionaries, deaconesses, teachers and Directors of Christian Education. The harvest continues to be great and the workers are needed. Thank our Lord for these men who are ready to serve our Lord and His church as pastors. Pray for them, and that the Lord continue to raise up workers for the harvest."

The Seminary celebrates assignment services throughout the year, but its primary Call Day is held in April when students receive their first calls to ministry as well as vicarage or deaconess internship assignments. Call Day is set for April 26, 2017.



Top photo: Joshua Wiley, left center, and Michael Apfel, right center, receive their vicarage assignments. Also pictured, from left, Dr. Dale A. Meyer, Dr. Glenn Nielsen, Dr. Wallace Becker and Dr. Rick Marrs. Second photo: Peter Heckert, center, receives his call to St. James Lutheran Church in Lafayette, Ind. Also pictured, from left, Dr. Wallace Becker, Dr. Dale A. Meyer, Dr. Glenn Nielsen and Dr. Rick Marrs. Third photo: Berhanu Didanu, center, after a special chapel service in October 2016. Also pictured, from left: Dr. Wallace Becker, Dr. John Loum, Dr. Jeff Kloha, Rev. Russell Hess, Dr. Dale A. Meyer and Rev. Kou Seying. Bottom photo: James Prothro, right center, receives his call to Trinity Lutheran Church in Park Hills, Mo. Also pictured, from left, Dr. Rick Marrs, Dr. Dale A. Meyer and Dr. Wallace Becker. Photos: Jackie Parker and Kendra Whittle

Host congregations serve vital role on campus

BLESSINGS GO BOTH WAYS

BY MELANIE AVE



Rev. Brad Birtell leads a children's message at St. John Lutheran Church in Columbus, Neb., in December 2016. Photo: Red Willow Photography

Rev. Brad Birtell of St. John Lutheran Church in Columbus, Neb., stood before the Concordia Seminary community in chapel in October. For three days he preached as part of his church's role as a host congregation of the Seminary for the 2016-17 academic year.

He spoke with particular passion during one sermon about the parable of the persistent widow in Luke 18. Birtell shared the story of how he and his wife "decided after a lot of prayer that this was not the place for us" a month and a half after they first came to the Seminary.

Despite their doubts then about whether Birtell should continue his Seminary studies, the couple chose to attend Zion Lutheran Church in Mascoutah, Ill., where Birtell had been placed for his Resident Field Education.

"It was through the love and the encouragement of Zion's Pastor Glen Thomas, his faithful

wife, Ann, and those amazing people and that incredible congregation that totally changed our course in life," Birtell told the students in chapel. "I have to tell you very honestly that Christie and I totally believe if it wouldn't have been for them and God's grace at that moment in our life that I wouldn't be a pastor in the Lord's Church and I certainly wouldn't be standing before you here today.

"We are so very blessed to serve in your midst."

Birtell's presence at the Seminary in October was a blessing to him, but it also was a blessing to the Seminary. Each year, Seminary President Dr. Dale A. Meyer asks one church to take on the year-long role of serving as a host congregation. Since the Seminary's Chapel of St. Timothy and St. Titus is not a congregation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), it needs a sponsoring congregation for all

sacramental celebrations including weekly Divine Services.

"Only congregations can celebrate the Lord's Supper and baptize," explained Dean of Chapel Dr. Kent Burreson.

In addition to sponsoring the Lord's Supper, pastors from host congregations typically come to campus at least three times a year for a week. They preach in chapel, meet with faculty and share wisdom with students.

The students enjoy hearing from the pastors who come from all over the country, Burreson said, because "it brings about an awareness about what a pastor's life and vocation is like throughout the Synod. It allows students to see how pastoral ministry is carried out. It allows them to see different preaching styles."

Birtell said he and St. John's were honored to be asked to serve his alma mater. The

1992 Seminary graduate views his visits to the Seminary as a way of giving back. It is also a way for him to encourage future pastors while he learns a few things along the way.

“I was really excited about the opportunity to not only connect with students but also the faculty and staff, and to test my own skills,” he said. “Part of it for me is continuing that formation as a pastor, sitting in classes, sitting in chapel, going to the dining hall.”

During his October chapel sermon, he told the students that he imagines they have some frustrations, failures or fears weighing them down. “But God’s message is simple,” he said. “He is saying wherever we may be in our station of life, that we should hang in there and trust Him.” Just like the persistent widow.

Before beginning his Seminary studies, Birtell attended Concordia University Nebraska, Seward, as a pre-seminary student. But it was not until he began his field education work at Zion in Mascoutah that everything started to click. “It really taught us how to live and love among God’s people,” he recalled. “The congregation was just so supportive and caring. That’s what cemented it for me and my wife, what God was calling us to do.”

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— REV. BRAD BIRTELL

Recalling his time at the Seminary, Birtell said he most fondly remembers the incredible relationships that God cultivated between him and his classmates. “It’s a bond we still have today, not only as brothers in Christs, but as pastors,” he said. “Having that support system all these years has been amazing.”

Birtell said he wants to encourage seminarians to be lifelong learners even as they leave the Seminary and accept pastoral calls all over the country. “Learning to be a pastor is a lifetime journey,” he said. “It never ends.”

During Birtell’s October visit to the Seminary, he spoke to one of Burreson’s systematics classes. The students peppered him with questions: What was going on in his church? Why does he place a priority on encouraging young people to pursue church work careers? His church is in a remote location yet it is a thriving, young congregation? How is that possible?

“The questions were pretty amazing,” Birtell said. “They wanted to know what it’s like in the parish. They wanted real answers. For me, I was able to share with them the struggles and the joy as we work with God’s people.”

Meyer pointed to Birtell’s devotion to calling on his members as a model for seminarians — “he is constantly with his people” — adding that host congregation pastors like Birtell are a great blessing to the Seminary’s mission of forming students.



Pastor Brad Birtell preaches during a chapel service on campus in January 2017. Photo: Melanie Ave

“In my last congregation I made more than 700 personal calls upon people every year but, from what I hear, some pastors in the Synod have forgotten the old saying that ‘a home-going pastor makes a church-going people.’ I can’t thank our Lord enough for the impact our host pastors have on pastoral formation. We have special appreciation for the congregations like St. John in Columbus for sharing their pastor with us!”

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