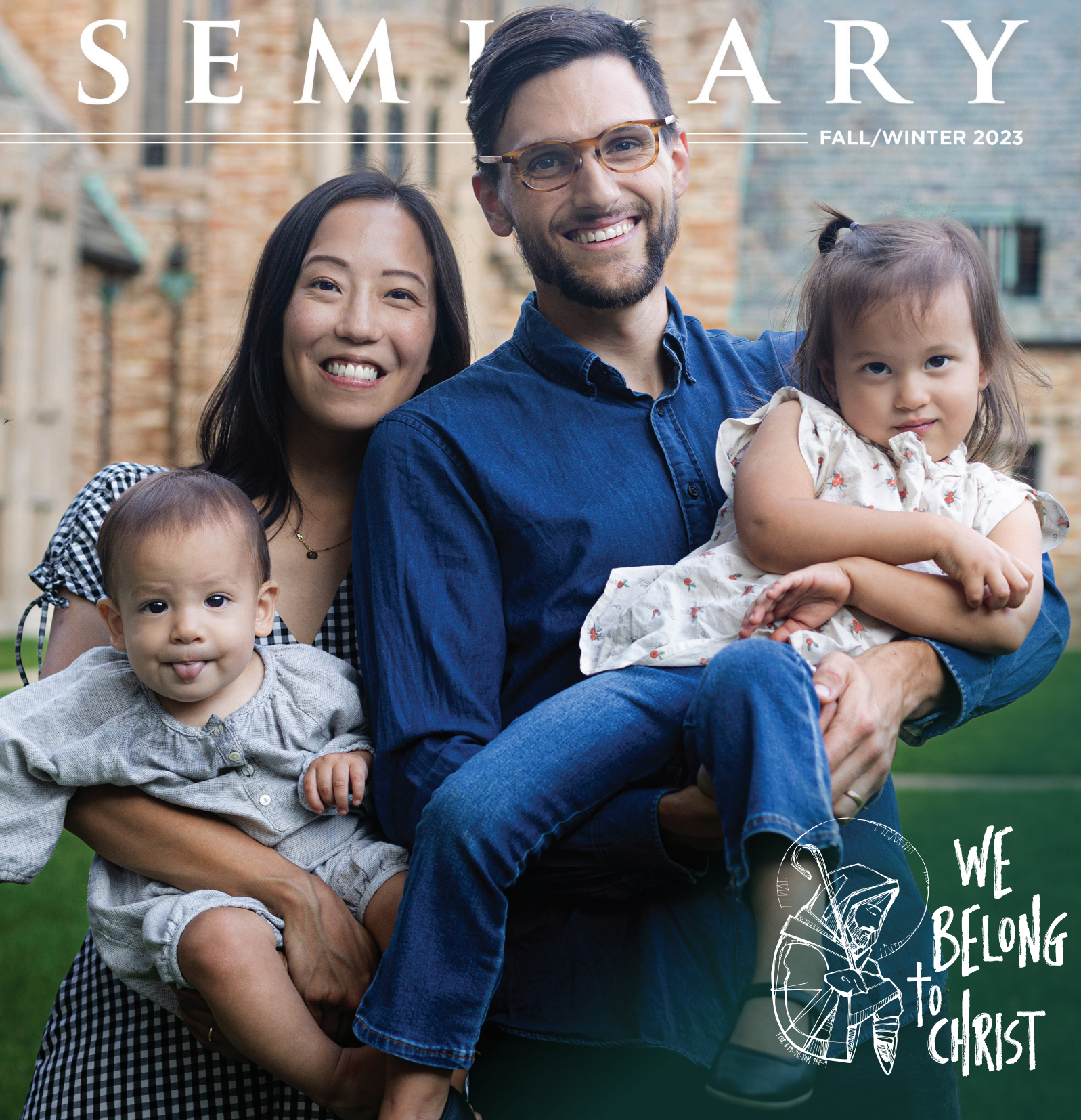


CONCORDIA SEMINARY

FALL/WINTER 2023



WE
BELONG
to
CHRIST

WE BELONG TO CHRIST:
FREEDOM AT ITS BEST

WHAT IT MEANS TO BELONG
TO CHRIST: SEMINARIANS
SHARE THEIR STORIES

BEING THE BODY
OF CHRIST

FIRST LOOK

Prost! It's Oktoberfest! Master of Divinity student Dillon Weber and his wife, Reagan, left, and Reagan Pronsati, wife of Master of Divinity student Dante Pronsati, enjoy the annual Student Association-sponsored Oktoberfest Sept. 29 in the Main Quadrangle. Photo: Tyler Simmons







President Dr. Thomas J. Egger delivers the sermon during the Opening Service Aug. 25.
Photo: Michael Thomas



ON THE COVER
First-year Master of Divinity student Justin Hilton and his wife, Grace, and their children enjoy time in the Main Quadrangle on the Concordia Seminary campus.
Photo: Tyler Simmons

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Dear friends,

Greetings in the name of Jesus.

As we prepare pastors, deaconesses and missionaries at Concordia Seminary, it is vital that they know whose they are. This is vital for you as well. And whose are we? We belong to Christ!

In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul exhorts: “You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” And in Romans 14, Paul writes: “For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s.”

We belong to Christ. In a culture that seems to have lost all sense of purpose, in a sea of young people who seem aimless and adrift, this truth is clarifying and invigorating. Our lives have purpose. We have been purchased by the blood of Christ. He is our gracious Lord, and He calls us to walk in paths of service, love and faithfulness. We are not our own. We live for Him.

We belong to Christ. In a world full of challenges, sufferings and sorrows, this truth is the ultimate ground of comfort, hope and encouragement. Whatever this world throws at us, whatever trials we endure. We belong to Christ. In life and in death, we are the Lord’s. He will never forsake us.

The artwork that goes with this year’s theme has the image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, with a lamb carried in His strong arms. I am that lamb. And so are you. He has purchased us with His blood. He has claimed us. And we are His.

Our new students, our returning students, our professors, our staff — we belong to Christ! God help us to give ourselves, fully, to our vocations here. Let us be focused. Fearless. Resolute. Joyful. For we belong to Christ.

The work of Concordia Seminary is going strong. Our graduates are touching lives in countless communities and all around the world. Please remember us and especially our students in your prayers. We pray and we labor so that many others might believe and be baptized, so that many others might find their place in Christ’s hands and in Christ’s arms forever.

We belong to Christ. Thanks be to God!

Dr. Thomas J. Egger, President



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OUR MISSION

Concordia Seminary serves church and world by providing theological education and leadership centered in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ for the formation of pastors, missionaries, deaconesses, scholars and leaders in the name of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

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“If we belong to Christ, we also belong to each other because we are members of His one body, the church.”



We belong to Christ

Freedom at its best

BY DR. JOEL ELOWSKY

Everyone belongs to someone, whether we like it or not. Sometimes we really like it — as in, I belong to my wife and my wife belongs to me. I do not own her. And, she does not own me. But we do belong to each other and are incomplete without each other.

Other times, the thought of anyone owning us is downright repugnant, as in when somebody tells us, “I own you.” Jesus got this reaction from the Pharisees in John 8 when He told the Jews who had believed Him that they would know the truth and that truth would set them free (John 8:31-32). Their indignant reply was, “We have never been slaves to anyone” (John 8:33). How dare Jesus imply they were slaves of anyone! They bristled at the idea of “belonging” to anyone.

Belonging to someone implies ownership. The ugly history of slavery in our country and in others left a legacy of treating people like property. God’s own people, the children of Israel, were someone else’s property for 400 years in Egypt — despite the

Pharisees’ protestation. God wanted His people never to belong to anyone else again. This is why He delivered His people through His jihad of the 10 plagues. This is why He led them through the Red Sea. He freed them to be His people. They now belonged to Him.

As the new Israel, so do we. Jesus said you cannot serve two masters (Matt. 6:24) — which implies that we are serving at least one. He also said in one of the theme verses for Concordia Seminary’s 2023-24 academic year that we are not our own. We were bought with a price. Therefore we are to glorify God with our bodies (1 Cor. 6:19:20). The implication in Paul’s words is that what we do with our bodies says a lot about who we ultimately belong to and even what it means to be human.

There is a recent book by Alan Noble titled *You Are Not Your Own: Belonging to God in an Inhuman World* (InterVarsity Press, 2021). He explores what it means

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8 >

to be human in our modern world, in North America in particular, and has this to say:

[There is] a particular understanding of what it means to be human: we are each our own, we belong to ourselves. From the early political liberalism of the seventeenth century, with its language of individual liberties and rights, over time westerners began to think of themselves as naturally sovereign: 'The modern political idea, that we are owners of ourselves ... has widened to encompass all ... aspects of existence. The sovereign man who is only like himself, who Nietzsche had imagined, has now become the norm.' From this flows the belief in the virtue of freedom as limitlessness. To be your own and belong to yourself means that the most fundamental truth about existence is that you are responsible for your existence and everything it entails. I am responsible for living a life of purpose, of defining my identity, of interpreting meaningful events, of choosing my values, and electing where I belong. If I belong to myself, then I am the only one who can set limits on who I am or what I can do. No one else has the right to define me, to choose my journey in life, or to assure me that I am okay. I belong to myself.

While this may first appear to be quite liberating, we soon find out that belonging to ourselves is an incredible burden. A fundamental lie of our modern age is that we belong to ourselves, not to God. This lie forces upon us a different reality than the one we were created for: We become the ones to determine whether our life has meaning or not, as we sideline God. With God on the sidelines, we become the arbiter not only of what is right and wrong, but also over what has value — or not, and over our very identity as human beings. Everybody is busy today crafting his or her own identity, whether it is around gender issues, political ideology, health, wealth, status. We are in fierce competition with one another to be the truest form of whatever identity we have created for ourselves on Instagram or Facebook or TikTok. But

we inevitably fall short. There is always someone out there exceeding our expectations. That someone is rarely us, however.

By choosing "We Belong to Christ" as this year's academic theme, we are recognizing the tyranny of choosing to belong to anyone else — especially ourselves. We are conceding that we did not choose Him. He chose us (John 15:16). We belong to Him, much more than He belongs to us. And that's OK. It is not only OK. It is the only way, the only truth, the only life worth living (cf. John 14:6). There are implications in all of this for our life together on the Concordia Seminary campus as well as through our extended presence around the globe and in our sometimes virtual life together accomplished through Zoom and other software.



If we belong to Christ, we also belong to each other because we are all members of His one body, the church. This means we are accountable to one another, and we also strengthen one another and build one another up (1 Thess. 5:11). We worship together, we study together, we pray together, we support one another, we pray for one another — all because we belong to Christ. This is true for us as a campus community and as members of the larger body of His church. Membership in His body has its privileges — and its responsibilities. Martin Luther speaks about this in his explanation to the Apostles' Creed in the Small Catechism.

Luther's explanation of each of the three articles of the Apostles' Creed situates us in a dependent relationship to our Triune God. For the sake of brevity, we confine ourselves to his explanation to the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed, where he addresses this issue of ownership most directly as he broaches the subject of our redemption:

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with

His innocent suffering and death, *that I may be His own* and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true. [emphasis is mine]

Our redemption, our salvation was accomplished and won through an expensive transaction. Jesus Christ paid a price for each one of us to rescue us from death and from the power of the devil. But this was not something money could buy. Only a life for a life; only the Author of Life for the life of the world. Jesus paid the ultimate price at Calvary to buy us back after we had sold ourselves into the slavery of sin, death and the devil. The One who brought us into being and gave us the breath of life gave up His last breath for us and for our salvation. But that's not all. Luther then details what this means for us.

The first thing it means is that I am His own. I can no longer serve that other master, the old nature in me that needs to be drowned and die with all its sins and evil lusts. I have the opportunity now to live a new life under Jesus Christ in His kingdom. Living under a sovereign can be oppressive — unless that sovereign loves his people and sees his reign as an opportunity to serve his people and make sure they are safe and taken care of. We in the West are so used to our political system of democracy that most of us would have no idea what a benevolent monarchy even looks like. But we have to look no further than our Lord and His kingdom. When we seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, everything else will be added and given to us as well, Jesus says (Matt. 6:33).

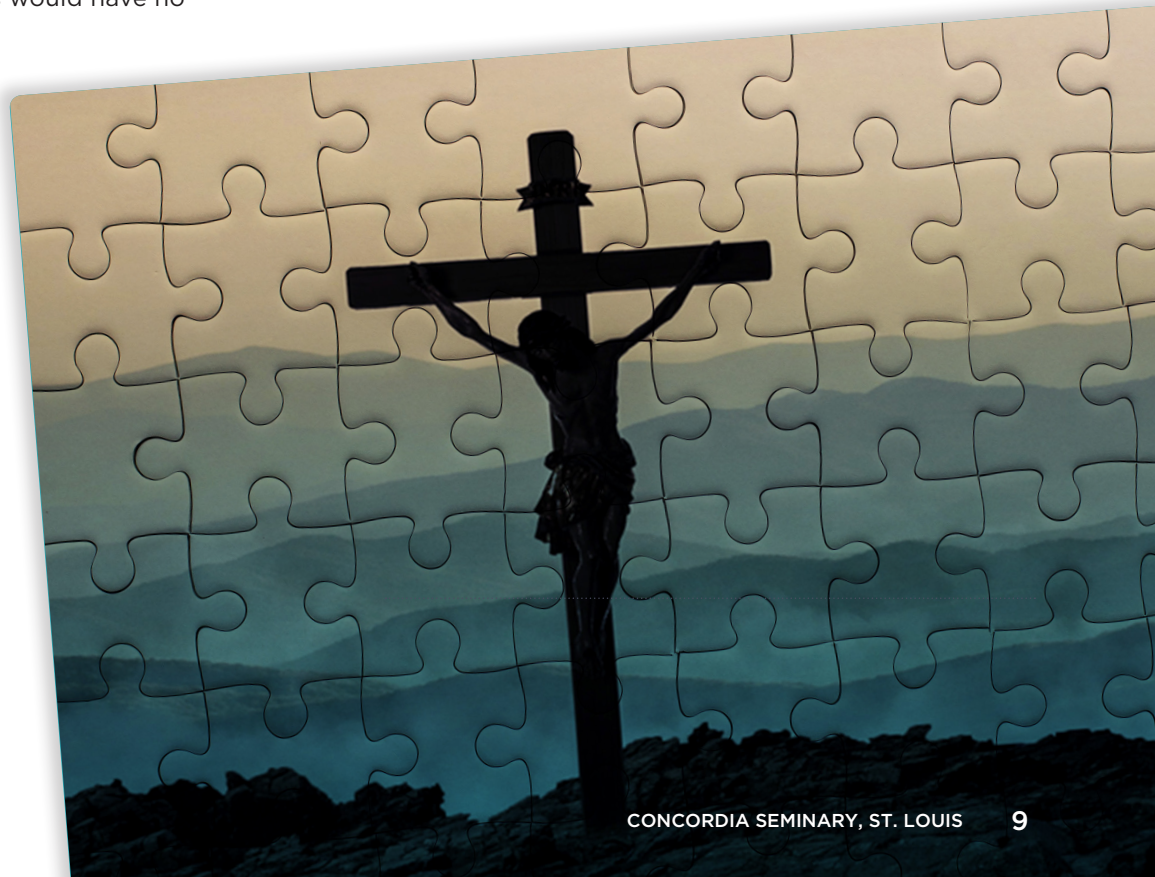
We see a picture of this in the 14th chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans. He writes, "If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died

and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living" (Rom. 14:8-10 ESV). These words from Paul remind us that our lives really are in the hands of our Lord. The reason that Christ died and rose again is so that He would claim what is ultimately only His — you and me. This is a sovereign ruler willing to die for His people. How many human rulers do you know willing to do that? It's rare.

This is the One we belong to! Our Sovereign calls us to live that same sacrificial love for one another. We belong to Him. We belong to one another on campus and in His body, the church here in North America and throughout the world.

I would like to conclude with this thought. When I was at Concordia College, Ann Arbor, Mich. (1981-85) — what some refer to as ancient history (my field) — I lived in Timothy dorm all four years. I still remember our motto during one of those years, which has stuck with me ever since. It encapsulates for me Concordia Seminary's motto for this year, "We Belong to Christ": "Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as in fact you are doing" (1 Thess. 5:11, NIV). This is what freedom looks like.

Dr. Joel Elowsky is the Frank and Valerie Fuerst Professor of Historical Theology, dean of Advanced Studies, director of the Center for the Study of Early Christian Texts and coordinator of International Seminary Exchange Programs at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.



What it means to belong to Christ

Seminarians share their stories

BY MELANIE AVE

“For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living” (Rom. 14:7-9 ESV).

Indeed, we belong to Christ! He lives and reigns and redeems us. And He calls us to live in this broken and sinful world in service to Him, as His chosen and beloved possessions.

Each year, our students come to campus from all walks of life to be formed and prepared in service to the Lord, to be His hands and feet around the world. We asked a few of them to tell us what it means to belong to Christ.



Peter Frank

‘He created me’

Peter Frank is a fourth-year Master of Divinity student from Chicago and a married father of three. He is a second-career student who worked for 15 years primarily in marketing before embracing life as a future pastor in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS).

“I was raised in a Christian household and have been a member of LCMS congregations my entire life. It was in high school, when I started going on mission trips, that I really understood what it meant to be part of the body of Christ. The mission trip experiences were great, but it was the relationships I developed that connected me to the church. I saw men from my congregation who were very successful in their careers use their vacation time to teach VBS and work at medical clinics in Mexico. They mentored me in various ways, showing me how they could use the gifts God had given them in service to others, both in their professional careers and through their service in the church.

“I live for Christ because I can do nothing else. He created me and gave me this life, and His sacrifice on the cross and His resurrection from the grave have given me the promise of life forever. He has made me His own dear child through Baptism, and all that He has given me is to be used to serve others for His glory. As I prepare to enter the Office of the Holy Ministry, I know that He has equipped me for all that He is sending me to do. I know He will use me to teach and show others how to live faithfully and assure them of His grace and mercy because they belong to Christ.”



Matt Gerzevske

‘Jesus is truly at work’

Matt Gerzevske, who grew up in the Chicago suburbs the fifth son of a Vietnamese immigrant mother and an American father, is a married Master of Sacred Theology student.

“My parents, especially my sainted father, were intentional in forming me with a life centered on Jesus Christ. Throughout high school and college, and through difficult times and times of bounty, the identity that He gives me through the waters of Baptism has been integral to who I am as a person.

“Vicarage was a time when I particularly felt reliant upon Christ. In many ways, the vicarage year is filled with both joys and challenges. Your first taste of the day-to-day workings of parish ministry forces you to grow in areas that you did not know you needed. It continues to be a supreme comfort to know that Jesus is truly at work through His gifts.

“The church has always been home. It has been the place where I have experienced the tangible love of God in His Word and Sacraments and through His people. It is my hope that I can serve the church by helping it to be that home for others who need to experience the love and welcome of Jesus. My life in Jesus is centered on His life-giving Word. Through His Word, Jesus puts to death the old man in me and raises me up anew. Living with His Word means living with the community of His people who read His Word together. I pray that my studies at Concordia Seminary strengthen me as one who studies His Word so that I may serve the church in its life with God’s Word.”



Sam Aizenberg

‘Living for Christ’

Sam Aizenberg is a newly married fourth-year Master of Divinity student from Las Vegas. Raised in a conservative Jewish background, he converted to Lutheranism in college.

“Becoming a Christian was where faith began to play a role in every aspect of my life — and I excitedly pursued sharing the Gospel of the Lord with so many others around me. I felt like I belonged to Christ the most through interactions in college with my fellow classmates and professors who took time during class to oppose my faith in Christ. While many of these interactions were intense and frightful, I always knew the Holy Spirit gave me the words to say, and I was there to bear witness to Jesus Christ. I never felt like Jesus left me in those moments ... because I belong to Him. Some of the most rewarding times were when other Christians in the room who I did not know would seek me out after class. It was a comfort knowing Jesus also had provided me with fellow Christians to be with when I felt like there were not any.

“When I learned Luther’s concept of ‘vocation,’ it changed how I see living for Christ every day. I get to live how those that belong to Christ do wherever I am — whether at work, in school, running errands, spending time with others or at church. I’ve also learned to embrace the abilities, personality and demeanor God has given me and use it to the fullest in a faithful witness to Jesus every day, which I will continue to do as a parish pastor who also encourages others to do the same.”



Daniel Kofi Akoh



Julie Baumann

‘Because of who He is’

Daniel Kofi Akoh, a Master of Sacred Theology student and married father of seven, was born and raised in Ghana. He is a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana, a partner church body of the LCMS.

“[For years] I lived with my family as ‘ordinary’ churchgoers of evangelical Presbyterian and Methodist churches. I really felt like I belonged to Christ after a few visits to the Lutheran church at Bawjiase in Ghana. It was when I was sitting in their catechism classes that I first heard that Christ loves me not because of who I am, but because of who He is. I felt so much belonging from Him because there was nothing I could do to attract His love.

“Living for Christ I seek to participate and serve in Lutheran churches, doing what little I can, enabled by the Lord to support the proclamation of the Gospel.”

‘Who I am and whose I am’

Julie Baumann is a second-year residential Deaconess Studies (Master of Arts with Deaconess Certification) student. She grew up in Sioux Falls, S.D.

“My parents did a wonderful job of making sure my siblings and I knew the importance of our faith and life both in and outside of the church. It was incredibly formative for me that they modeled their faith both at home, at church and in their interactions in public. Growing up, they often ‘voluntold’ me for different activities in church, but as I got older, I began to participate willingly. Serving others became second nature because they modeled it for me first! My parents always made sure to remind me that no matter what I did or failed to do, they loved me. Even better, they always reminded me that ‘Jesus loves you most of all.’

“One of the more recent times where I felt I belonged to Christ was this past spring. Life hit me like a truck in many not-so-good ways. I had never

“My life in Jesus is centered on His life-giving Word.” -Matt Gerzevske

gone through so much inner turmoil. Many of these things followed me throughout the summer and lingered even into the fall. Yet through it all, Christ found countless ways to remind me of who I am and whose I am. He rallied my closest friends and family together — and even at times, complete strangers — and guided them to uplift me when I felt that I couldn't stand. Christ continually reminded me that He made me into a daughter, a sister and a friend. He reminded me that I have a lot of growing to do. That I have my own strengths to work on and weaknesses to tackle. But most importantly, He reminded me again and again that I am not my own. I am His.

“Whether I realize it or not, I live for Christ every day. In my interactions with my friends and family, or with

strangers I see on the street, His light and life are in me. Because of this, it can be really daunting to think that I have to act or speak a certain way at all times, and thankfully He forgives me when I forget whose I am. Through it all, I can trust that He already has forgiven me! He even, somehow, miraculously works through my mistakes. I want to continue to live for Christ and serve Him in all that I do, not just in my future vocation as a called deaconess, but also in my daily life with those around me. I want to continue to grow in my faith and love of Him, to be able to better meet others during their times of trial and temptation. He's given me many opportunities to put this into practice with strangers and friends, and I know He will have no shortage of ways for me to continue to serve others throughout my life!”



Tim Thompson. Photos: Tyler Simmons

'He patiently woos us'

Tim Thompson is a Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) student from Greensboro, N.C. Currently working as a librarian while he takes SMP courses, he and his wife have two children.

“I was raised Presbyterian. My family was very active in the life of the church when I was growing up: My father sang in the choir and was one of the deacons. I remember helping him by making sure the pencils in the pews were sharpened and helping serve food at the monthly men's breakfasts. Attendance and participation in Sunday school and Sunday worship was expected and normal.

“My home congregation has been without a pastor for four and a half years. We have a few retired pastors who have been graciously filling the pulpit for us for all of this time, but they let the congregation know that health issues were beginning to become problems and that they would not be able to continue serving us indefinitely. Another solution to our vacant pulpit would be needed. The congregation decided they wanted me to look into the SMP Program (a distance education pastoral program) with the goal of me becoming the pastor of the congregation.

“I think most of us have this head knowledge that we belong to Christ, but in the normal circumstances of life, He doesn't exactly push Himself upon us or intrude into our lives. As the Bridegroom of the church, He patiently woos us. I have been content and satisfied with my secular life. But through the church's vote, God put me on the track to the Office of Holy Ministry. Christ Jesus claimed His right to me ('I belong to Christ') when He placed upon my heart the charge to care for my brothers and sisters in Him — to care for my spiritual family.

“The trust and hope my congregation have in me is humbling. Harkening back to family, the congregation is my spiritual family. Family takes care of family — I don't want to let them down. God willing, I won't. The congregation needs a pastor to preach the Word, to distribute the Sacrament of the Altar, to pronounce Absolution. The church needs to hear God loves her, God will care for her and God forgives her. That God would use me in this capacity is a wonder.”

Melanie Ave is director of communications for Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.



BEING THE BODY OF *Christ*

Seminarian shares life with others

BY LUCAS MOODY

Serving Christ and neighbor has been a part of Justin Hilton's life for as long as he can remember. When he was 10 years old and living in New Hampshire, his father left for a four-month mission trip to Ethiopia. The elder Hilton returned one year later to help build a hospital in the Ethiopian mountains — this time, with his wife and kids in tow.

The family's missionary life continued when they began traveling to African countries aboard Mercy Ships, a nondenominational organization operating hospital ships and providing free surgical care to children with limited medical access.

"The community on the ship was tightly knit. There were many incredible, loving Christians," he says. "We belonged to all backgrounds but shared our lives, which is a basic Christian practice."

Life on the ship helped prepare Hilton's heart for service. It's also where he met his future wife, Grace, while they were children on the ship. Her father is a pastor, and her family was, like Hilton's, helping carry out Christ's Word of hope and healing. Together, before they were married, Justin and Grace were baptized as teenagers on a beach in Liberia.

Looking back, Hilton was surprised at how Baptism was treated on the ship. "It was a total afterthought. No adults talked to us about getting baptized, and if one of the other teenagers hadn't had the idea herself, I don't think it would have happened there," he said. Because

of the varied Christian beliefs and practices of the people onboard, there was no common confession of faith, and much of the community viewed the Sacraments as symbolic. After his family left the ship and he finished high school in Texas, Hilton began to contemplate questions of Christian practice, including that of Baptism and what it means.

When he was 18, he began studying history at Brooklyn College in Brooklyn, N.Y. He also started studying theology and found a congregation near campus that had been planted by Redeemer Church, part of the late Rev. Tim Keller's church planting initiative, "Redeemer City to City."

"Though the church was Presbyterian in name, its pastor 'leaned heavily Anglican' according to him and followed the Common Book of Prayer. It was my first exposure to liturgical worship, and

Grace and Justin
Hilton and their
children. Photos:
Tyler Simmons



I appreciated the structured approach,” Hilton says. “It inspired me to learn more about how Protestant practices compared to those of the early church, and as I did, I found that much of the church has not followed the example or understanding of the first Christians.”

Shortly after this time, Hilton and Grace married, and he joined her in Korea, where she had been living after spending time in Germany and Texas following her family’s time with Mercy Ships. There, the Hiltons attended a nondenominational church where Grace had established many strong relationships, but they remained open to opportunities to worship in a more liturgical setting. Their introduction to Lutheranism came not through a congregation but rather through an online theological discussion.

“While we were in Korea, I had been speaking with the followers of one of my favorite theologians through their [social platform] Discord server

for patrons. There happened to be Missouri Synod Lutherans in the group, and I was impressed by their theology,” Hilton says. “I did some more research and found the *Book of Concord*, and as I read through it, I thought, ‘This is awesome.’”

His interest in Lutheranism was piqued. Hilton knew about a Lutheran church in the area known as International Lutheran Church (ILC) in Seoul. He had passed it many times while walking around the city and recalled its distinct red front door. He contacted the pastor, Rev. Carl Hanson, and upon attending, “instantly loved it,” he recalls. The Hiltons began attending the Lutheran church as a family, and their children, Epiphany and Ira, were baptized there.

Hanson, a Doctor of Philosophy student at the Seminary, played a significant part in redefining how Hilton thought about a pastor’s role. In the nondenominational setting, and especially in the context of mission work, pastors often seemed to be

“somewhat vague figures,” Hilton says. “On the ship, there were community meetings, but there wasn’t a head pastor responsible for the care of his people like in more traditional congregational settings,” Hilton recounts. In contrast, Hilton says Hanson’s leadership style “was highly involved. He and his wife, Chenhsi, took a deeply personal interest in the people the church served.”

“I felt called to take the time to get to know them and to do small things like invite them to breakfast or over to play board games,” Hilton says. “It struck me that a pastor is supposed to look for opportunities to take care of people and speak about Christ with them all the time.”

“A pastor is supposed to look for opportunities to take care of people and speak about Christ with them all the time.”

— Justin Hilton

With much prayer and encouragement from his Lutheran church leaders in Seoul, Hilton applied to the Master of Divinity Program at Concordia Seminary. He is now in his first year of the four-year residential pastoral formation program. Hilton and his wife look forward to sharing their lives and serving others in Christ’s name.

“Grace and I want to serve those who feel alone by offering them a place to eat, feel at home and talk about life and God,” Hilton says. “No matter where He takes us, we are committed to His plans.”

Lucas Moody is a first-year Master of Divinity student at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

TEACHING THE *Next* GENERATION

BY SARAH MANEY

Peer into the Concordia Seminary class where Dr. Pete Jurchen is teaching and you will see groups of seminarians gathered in small groups with their desks pushed together, brainstorming how they can intentionally weave ongoing teaching of the Small Catechism into the daily life of their congregations.

The class is “Teaching the Faith,” and Jurchen’s approach is a practical one. Real-world scenarios provide opportunities for students to try things out and share their experiences together — equipping the future pastors for vicarage and beyond.

“I found in my experience, our default as pastors is to teach primarily to inform,” Jurchen said. “And there’s nothing wrong with teaching to inform, but I would say that pastors should also teach to equip. We should teach to equip our people to be lifelong learners of God’s Word and to rightly understand their place in God’s story of salvation.”

Jurchen, who serves as an editor of Bible resources at Concordia Publishing House (CPH) in St. Louis and as a guest instructor at the Seminary, is passionate about teaching and equipping pastors and other Christian educators.

He believes Christian educators help people to understand how their own life narrative fits into God’s epic narrative of

salvation. “This is a central characteristic of ongoing catechesis,” Jurchen said. “This is an art, and one never really stops learning the nuances of understanding the interplay of these two narratives.”

Teaching the faith

Jurchen grew up in British Columbia, Canada, and in Nebraska, where his father served small congregations or dual parishes as a sole pastor. Following in his father’s footsteps, Jurchen also planned on becoming a sole pastor one day.

In 2009, he earned a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) at the Seminary. He felt a bit out of his depth when he received his first call, as associate pastor at Hope Lutheran Church in Des Moines, Iowa, where he served in team ministry. Team ministry wasn’t something he thought he would ever do when he entered the Seminary, but he learned to love it and appreciate the opportunity to grow in an urban environment.

He served there for four and a half years before receiving his second call to another team ministry setting at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Columbus, Neb.

“God had team ministry in the plan for me,” Jurchen said. He served for three years before being called to CPH after the publisher at the time, the late Rev. Paul McCain, reached out to Jurchen directly. CPH had a wonderful curriculum team,

Jurchen remembers McCain telling him. And they were looking for a pastor who was passionate about education to join their curriculum team. It was team ministry, again, but in a different context.

While the opportunity seemed like a perfect fit, Jurchen struggled with the thought of leaving parish ministry. After much prayer, he decided he could serve the church in a different kind of way through the publishing house. The new opportunity was unexpected for Jurchen, but part of God’s perfect narrative.

Jurchen hit the ground running with the 2017 explanation to Luther’s Small Catechism. It was one of his first jobs where he was the lead editor, which “really only meant that I worked with wonderful people who knew what they were doing to help shepherd the product through,” he said. Together with the curriculum team, Jurchen helped produce new catechism material that included videos and online resources. He also worked with the team to develop new curriculum material for Sunday school and day school, helped develop and write a variety of other Bible resources for congregations, and edited books written by excellent authors.

He also had the privilege of writing the book *Timeless Truth: An Essential Guide for Teaching the Faith*, a companion piece that focuses on lifelong catechesis. The book is a basic primer for pastors, and Jurchen hopes the philosophy in *Timeless Truth* will help equip the next generation of pastors to more confidently, effectively and faithfully teach the faith.

The book is used at the Seminary for the course, “Teaching the Faith,” just one of many places where it is being used.

“[PASTORS] SHOULD TEACH TO EQUIP OUR PEOPLE TO BE LIFELONG LEARNERS OF GOD’S WORD” *-Dr. Pete Jurchen*

“Dr. Jurchen not only teaches us how to plan biblical instruction, but he also employs different teaching techniques in our class periods so we can see the benefits (and limitations) in practice,” said second-year M.Div. student Tyler Simmons. “My understanding of how to teach the Word of God to a variety of age groups has grown exponentially through his expertly crafted instruction.”

Lifelong learners

In 2020, Jurchen earned his doctorate in education, focusing on andragogy, which is the art and science of teaching adults.

“It can be easy for us [as pastors] to default and think, ‘I’m an adult. I know how all adults learn,’” Jurchen said. “But that can be a trap. Motivation for adult learning differs from how children and youth learn.

“Understanding our adults, who are most of the people we teach, most of the people in our parishes, most of the people we interact with as pastors, deaconesses and directors of Christian education, we have a great opportunity to learn how they learn, what motivates them, what makes them tick,” Jurchen said.

Jurchen says that rather than only giving information, pastors and church leaders must equip God’s people. They can help their parishioners to understand the Bible by giving them the tools to read Scripture, to ask the right questions and to live in community and in relationship with each other, gathered around God’s Word.

“I honestly believe there is such a great opportunity that we have in our church body, the LCMS,” he said, “to equip pastors so that they might, in turn, equip their people to be lifelong learners of God’s Word and to abide in God’s truth for life.”

Sarah Maney is a communications specialist at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.



*Dr. Pete Jurchen.
Photo: Tyler Simmons*



“The heart of hospitality is about making time in your day and giving up your conveniences and preferences for other people. People need community.”

— Katie Nafzger

Katie Nafzger. Photo: Tyler Simmons

Getting to know **KATIE NAFZGER**

Women’s ministry for every season

BY SARAH MANEY

The decision to enroll at a seminary is an exciting one for married couples, but there also can be a lot of questions and unknowns. While the next four years are mapped out for husbands as they pursue a Master of Divinity (M.Div.), the experience isn’t so clear for their wives. How can they grow and develop alongside their spouses once the decision has been made to come to Concordia Seminary?

That’s a need that Katie Nafzger seeks to address in her role as the Seminary’s women’s coordinator for residential and Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) programs.

“It’s really important that these women know who they are and have people to go to for help and guidance,” said Nafzger, who was once a Sem wife herself.

“The Seminary Women’s Association (SWA) planning team — all student wives — do the planning and work for our social gatherings. I strive to be more of a resource and support person,” she said.

Seminary women’s ministry has two goals: One is to provide fellowship and social connections, and the other is to offer curriculum, or the women’s official programming. In the fall, the women on campus focus on transitions and connections.

“We know that a lot of the women are going to have many transitions in life,”

Nafzger said. “For some, transitions aren’t difficult right now. It’s a fun adventure, coming to the Seminary. It might be 12 years from now that a transition is really hard. We hope that thinking through transitions now will help them later in life.”

Nafzger tries to help the wives of seminarians connect with other women on campus so they have a community.

Women’s classes help on this front. As an example, this fall, the first-year wives went through a class called “After the Boxes are Unpacked” with several faculty wives. The second-year wives completed the DiSC assessment, a tool that measures personality traits, with Associate Professor of Practical Theology Dr. Mark Rockenbach, and read *Faith to Follow: The Journey to Becoming*

a Pastor's Wife (WestBow Press) by Kate Meadows, whose husband is a Concordia Seminary graduate. Third-year wives were on vicarage with their husbands, and fourth-year women worked through *Waiting: A Bible Study on Patience, Hope and Trust* (Concordia Publishing House) by Sharla Fritz.

Nafzger, with the help of SWA, works to create other opportunities for community, such as the annual retreat weekends. She's also excited when the team plans community around creativity. A couple of examples include a Saturday morning craft session, occasional painting events and an idea she has for a writing project. She encourages connections for women beyond classes and scheduled programs.

Many of the wives wonder about the expectations that their future congregation may have for them. The women's classes and Seminary community help them navigate that concern and help them understand that they don't have to be a certain type of person to be a pastor's wife.

When it's time for the couple to serve in ministry, Nafzger hopes each wife can say, "I'm a pastor's wife. And so now I bring to that role the best me I can be, which means sometimes making mistakes, but leading with my strengths."

"I really want to encourage them to be involved just like any other church member," she said.

A recent addition to Nafzger's role includes reaching out to the wives of men enrolled in the SMP Program. Since the SMP Program is a distance program, the wives are already serving alongside their husbands and already have their own social circles, including their congregation's programs for women. Reaching out to them looks

very different than working with residential students, Nafzger said.

She hopes to add a monthly event and is looking for ways to encourage the SMP wives to connect with each other. "I'm trying to help them create that community so they can be there for each other," she said.

In 2020, right in the middle of the COVID pandemic, Nafzger earned her master's degree in curriculum and instruction with a focus on STEAM (science, technology, engineering and math) education. "It's STEM with an added focus on art," she explained.

"It's really important that these women know who they are and have people to go to for help and guidance."

— Katie Nafzger

Her degree has helped her focus on her other job — supporting teachers.

"One of the things I have learned is that you don't ever just — and I would say this for pastors or pastors' wives — you don't ever just get a diploma and you're there," she said. "You should have two to five years of learning and growing with intentional onboarding and time for feedback about how you are doing. I ask myself: How can I incorporate that here, as the women's coordinator?"

In addition to her Seminary job, Nafzger works remotely for a company

called Soaring Education Services. "We're under the umbrella of Open Sky Education, which has schools in Milwaukee and Phoenix," she said. "Soaring started in January 2021 with an emphasis on creating seats in Christian schools through this micro-school movement."

Balancing both jobs can be challenging, she said, but both are rewarding.

The Nafzger family enjoys living on the Seminary's campus, in one of the 12 recently updated faculty houses, and cultivating community. "It's the way we 'do life,' to be right there in the community and to be part of it," she said. It's important for students to have the opportunity to connect with professors and pastors in everyday life, she said. Her husband, Professor of Associate Professor of Practical Theology Dr. Peter Nafzger, a 2004 Seminary graduate, often says that students catch being a pastor as much as they learn it.

The Nafzgers often open their home to students to demonstrate authentic hospitality. "The imperfect, real kind of hospitality — not 'Pottery Barn hospitality,'" she said.

"The heart of hospitality is about making time in your day and giving up your conveniences and preferences for other people. People need community. Sometimes it happens well, and other times it doesn't," she said. "In my experience, many women leave here and later report that they miss this community, even though there may have been struggles when they were here. It's not perfect. But when they take their first call, many of them say 'I'd like to bring Sem community to my new home or to my new neighborhood.'"

Sarah Maney is a communications specialist at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.



Generously ✓ **SEEING** ✓ **SUPPORTING** ✓ **SENDING** *Servants*

BY CHRISTIE HAMPTON

The year was 1968 and Dan Mattson was fresh out of Concordia Seminary. He was ready for his first pastoral call to St. Thomas Lutheran Church in Freedom Township, Ann Arbor, Mich. He and his wife, Ruth, were excited to serve God's people. His new rural congregation of 120 was equally excited, especially the young people of the church.

"On the day that I was installed, the high schoolers of the congregation wanted to do something special for us so they had us over at the home of one of our members on Pleasant Lake," Mattson recalled.

The day seemed perfect. The Mattsons chatted with a dozen or so high school-age kids and some of their parents. A congregation member said a prayer and everyone gathered for a typical Midwestern picnic, complete with hot dogs, hamburgers, potato chips and soft drinks.

But suddenly, a young man, a recent confirmand, leaped from the dock into the lake, which was about 10 feet deep. He did not know how to swim.

Mattson and several others ran to help. Without hesitation, they jumped into the lake. Under the water, he could see a blurry image of the motionless young man. The young man's older brother saw him too, and grabbed him and heaved him onto the dock. They stretched the young man out and performed resuscitation. Miraculously, the young man began to breathe again and was even sitting up when the ambulance arrived. The new pastor's first youth meeting ended with a

ride in an ambulance to the hospital in Ann Arbor. “He’s alive! Thank God!” Mattson remembers thinking.

To say the least, Mattson’s first day as a pastor was quite memorable. In the ensuing years as he led St. Thomas as pastor, he continued his education, earning a Master of Arts in 1970 and a Doctor of Philosophy in 1983 from the University of Michigan. In 1974 God led the family into missionary work. For 17 years, Mattson prepared local men for ministry in Ethiopia, Nigeria and South Africa.

In 1992, while he was serving in the administration of LCMS World Mission, St. Thomas Lutheran Church invited Mattson back to preach at its 150th anniversary celebration. After the celebration, a quiet young man with a shy smile introduced his wife, his young children and himself. He was the young man who almost drowned during Mattson’s first day as a pastor. Together, the two men talked about their present blessings and how God saves His people, despite their mistakes, and gives them eternal life.

Fast forward to 2011, after his retirement from LCMS World Mission, Mattson

joined the staff at Concordia Seminary, where he became the interim library director, a position he held for 16 months. He then transitioned to a new role: academic assistant in the Ministerial Formation department. In this position, he supports the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT) Program, a distance education certificate program that prepares men who want to serve as pastors and women who want to serve as deaconesses in immigrant and ethnic minority communities in the United States. He sees the program as key to spreading the Gospel as the country becomes more diverse. “If we’re interested in really bearing witness to the world, let’s think about how we can do this in new and better ways,” he said. “Through our service to immigrants, we learn about what works and what doesn’t work, and what we can and cannot do.”

Not only does Mattson give of his time serving on the staff at the Seminary, but he and his wife support the Seminary’s mission with multiple financial gifts in support of general operations and certain programs each year. Being on campus and worshipping at a local church in the city gives the Mattsons the privilege and unique opportunity to see specific blessings and guidance of the

Holy Spirit that have come from having a generous heart.

“In our congregation, all of our pastors have come from Concordia Seminary, and they are the first in line to acknowledge the formative influence that the Seminary has had on their ability to work with people of the congregation,” Mattson said. “The work of the Seminary is essential and must be done well. Ruth and I are glad to make our small contribution to getting this work done.”

“What can we do to further what He’s already begun?” – *Dr. Dan Mattson*

Mattson recently celebrated his 12th anniversary at the Seminary and 55 years of ministry service. He appreciates the opportunity to serve with his time, talents and treasure. He knows God is faithful and continues to bless the investment of those who financially support the Seminary. “Our challenge is to recognize the saving work that God is already doing. Ruth and I are asking ourselves, ‘What can we do to further what He’s already begun?’”

Christie Hampton is a communications specialist at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

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WHAT'S HAPPENING



New Seminary Regents

Matthew Kenitzer and Dr. Adam Koontz (M.Div. '14 CTSFW) have been added to the Seminary's Board of Regents after having been elected during the 68th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) this summer in Milwaukee, Wis. One existing member, Dr. Paul Edmon, also was re-elected during the convention. President Dr. Thomas J. Egger welcomed these new and returning members and thanked two outgoing Regents, Dr. Tyler Arnold and Paul Hegland, for their service to the Seminary. "We are grateful for the service of Mr. Hegland and Dr. Arnold. We hate to see them go, but we are also excited to welcome new Regents with a new mix of backgrounds and gifts," he said.

Board of Regents members gather for lunch Aug. 20 in Koburg Hall after a day of business. Photo: Christie Hampton

Annual Concert Series begins

The annual Concordia Seminary Concert Series began its new season this fall with three After Chapel Concerts and two special services of sacred music. An After Chapel Concert was held Sept. 12 with Dallas-based organist Benjamin Kolodziej, followed by the second concert Oct. 10 with seminarian and trombonist Owen Duncan. Director Matthew Janssen led the Lutheran High School South Wind Symphony in a Nov. 14 performance. The Seminary celebrated the Reformation Oct. 29 with "Each Life a High Doxology! A Service of Sacred Music for Reformation" and welcomed the Advent and Christmas seasons with an evening service, "Stay Awake! A Service of Sacred Music for the End of the Church Year" Nov. 28. Learn more about upcoming concerts at csl.edu/concert-series.

The congregation lifts their voices in song during a Reformation service Oct. 29. Photo: Jill Gray



Former Regent enters rest

Former Seminary Board of Regents member Dr. Walter C. Dissen died Aug. 2, 2023. He was 91. Hailing from a devout Lutheran family and after service in the U.S. Army during the Korean War, Dissen spent nearly four decades as an attorney for railroad companies. As an involved and dedicated LCMS layman, he served on the Boards of Regents of both Concordia Seminary, St. Louis and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., for decades as well. A memorial service was held Aug. 26 at Kramer Chapel on the campus of Concordia Theological Seminary.

Dr. Walter C. Dissen



185th academic year begins

Concordia Seminary began its 185th academic year Aug. 25 with the Opening Service in the Chapel of St. Timothy and St. Titus. Seminary President Dr. Thomas J. Egger preached on the 2023-24 academic theme, “We Belong to Christ,” based on 1 Cor. 6:19-20 and Rom. 14:8-9. During the service, Associate Professor of Practical Theology Dr. Stephen Pietsch; Associate Professor of Exegetical Theology Dr. Adam Hensley; Assistant Professor of Exegetical Theology Rev. Joel Fritsche, who also serves as director of Vicarage and Deaconess Internships; and Rev. Paul Flo, assistant to the director of the Center for Hispanic Studies, were installed. In all, three new faculty and 13 new staff were recognized, and five faculty and staff were recognized for new positions. Also, 39 distance students who received their vicarage and internship assignments were recognized. The Seminary has an enrollment of 130 new students across its Ministerial Formation and Advanced Studies programs for a total enrollment of 618 students.

Faculty Marshal Dr. Joel Biermann holds the mace before the Opening Service Aug. 25. Photo: Michael Thomas



‘Tangible’ podcast debuts

A new podcast, “Tangible: Theology Learned and Lived” debuted this fall and aims to encourage and challenge listeners to deepen their theology and live out their faith in Christ. New 20-minute episodes are released on the 15th and 30th of each month and feature a conversation with various Seminary faculty exploring the ways in which theology permeates all aspects of life. “The faculty at Concordia Seminary are renowned for their contributions to religious studies and to the church at large. ‘Tangible: Theology Learned and Lived’ puts that knowledge in the hands of listeners,” said Jessica Bordeleau, host of the podcast and coordinator of digital publishing at the Seminary. “This podcast is for anyone who wants to explore theology and the ways it applies to everyday life.” Listen on most podcast platforms including Spotify, Apple Podcasts and Google Podcasts. It also can be found on the Concordia Theology website at concordiatheology.org/podcasts.

Coordinator of Digital Publishing Jessica Bordeleau serves as host of each “Tangible” episode and facilitates topical discussions with faculty members. Photo: Tyler Simmons

‘The Acts of the Apostles’ workshop

Professor Emeritus of Practical Theology Dr. Douglas L. Rutt led some 30 participants through the Lay Bible Institute held Oct. 7, “The Acts of the Apostles: The Early Disciples and How They Changed the World.” He examined how the missionary experiences of the early disciples caused the church to grow both geographically and theologically, and how those experiences relate to our world today. The next Lay Bible Institute, “The Bible We Read in Church,” is set for Feb. 10, 2024. Learn more at csl.edu/lbi.



Theological Symposium celebrates Christian hope

The 33rd Annual Theological Symposium, “Church and Society: Living by Hope in a Secular Age,” held Sept. 19-20, offered plenaries and sectionals exploring how our hope — our Christian hope in a healed and new creation — can better shape our engagement and witness with culture and society. The first day began with worship and was followed by a warm welcome from President Dr. Thomas J. Egger. The symposium brought 400 attendees to campus from all over the country for two days of enriching presentations, discussions and fellowship. Save the date! The 2024 Theological Symposium is set for Sept. 17-18.

*Concordia Seminary Professor of Systematic Theology Dr. Joel Okamoto leads one of the plenaries during the Theological Symposium, “Creation and Hope: How the First Article Teaches Us How to Live by Hope.”
Photo: Michael Thomas*

Alumni Reunion

The annual Alumni Reunion for graduates of Concordia Seminary was held Oct. 12-13 on campus. This year’s reunion specially welcomed members of the jubilarian class of 1973, the silver anniversary class of 1998, and graduates, spouses and widows of class years ending in “3” or “8.” The reunion included an address from Seminary President Dr. Thomas J. Egger, a student panel presentation, a stained glass presentation by Dean of Chapel Dr. Jon Vieker, a carillon concert performed by Chief Information Officer John Klinger and a closing banquet featuring Barbara Kay portraying Katie Luther.

*During a luncheon held during the Alumni Reunion, alumni honored Dr. Howard Kramer, right, who graduated from the Seminary in 1948 — 75 years ago!
Photo: Christie Hampton*



Annual giving days support Sem mission

Friends, alumni, faculty and staff raised a record \$106,468 for Concordia Seminary's annual Give Green and Gold Day Sept. 25, surpassing the \$100,000 giving goal and exceeding the total amount raised in the Seminary's five-year history of annual Give Green and Gold Day campaigns. Additionally, on Nov. 28, the annual Giving Tuesday campaign raised a record \$137,707 from 357 donors that will be used where needed most as the Seminary carries out its mission to prepare the church's future leaders. Gifts were matched up to the first \$50,000 raised. Give Green and Gold Day and Giving Tuesday are two of three annual giving days at the Seminary. Learn more at csl.edu/giving-days.

Monarch butterflies paused on campus during their southerly migration while faculty, staff, students and their families celebrated Green and Gold Day on campus by wearing green and gold and enjoying cake pops from a local bakery food truck Sept. 25. Photo: Sarah Maney

Lutheran Prayer Breakfast

The 2023 Lutheran Prayer Breakfast was an exciting and joyous gathering, held Nov. 8 at the Sunset Event Space in Sunset Hills, Mo. About 325 people attended the sold-out event in which Rev. Tim Carter served as speaker. He is associate pastor at St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Columbus, Ind. He shared an impactful message titled "Sent out as Sheep in the Midst of Wolves." Before attending Concordia Seminary, Carter retired from a 21-year career with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice as a death row prison captain. He is the author of *The Executioner's Redemption*, which details his journey from executioner to pastor and which has led Carter to serve as a consultant to many prison ministries.

Rev. Tim Carter serves as the speaker during the Lutheran Prayer Breakfast Nov. 8. Photo: Christie Hampton




CONTINUING EDUCATION

UPCOMING EVENTS



Lay Bible Institute




The Bible We Read in Church

 Dr. Vilson Scholz
 Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
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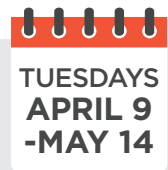
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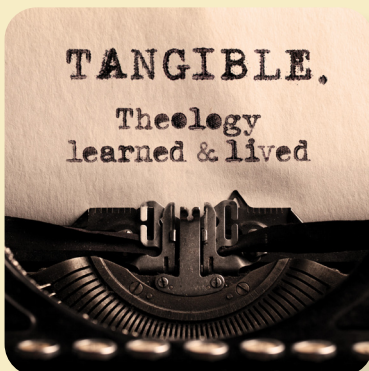
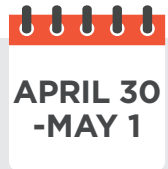
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 Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
 csl.edu/multiethnic-symposium

Register by: April 14, 2024 • Fee: \$80



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NEW: "Tangible: Theology Learned and Lived" podcast and more episodes of the podcast, "Lectionary Kick-start," the Fall 2023 *Concordia Journal*, a Preacher's Studio video interview with Dr. Joel Biermann and an article about the importance of the Seminary faculty to students' formation experience.



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