



PASTORAL Education

November 2011 • A newsletter for those interested in the ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

A sacred trust

It is difficult to overstate the importance of our seminaries when discussing the future of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and even the future of confessional Lutheranism around the world.

What more important function could there be in any church body than the formation of the next generation of pastors who will preach and teach the Word of God and administer His sacraments for decades to come? Add to this foundational function the formation of deaconesses; the advanced theological study provided for Missouri Synod pastors and pastors and leaders from distant continents; as well as the writing, speaking, and serving on important boards and committees by seminary faculty members. The critical importance of our seminaries to the future of the church is readily apparent.

Overseeing all of this activity on a daily basis are the two presidents of our seminaries. The *2010 Handbook of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* describes the seminary president as “the spiritual, academic and

administrative head of the seminary” (p. 153). While the presidents have faculty and staff members who serve in spiritual, academic and administrative capacities and while the presidents report to their respective boards of regents who have higher-level oversight of the seminaries, finally it is the presidents on a day-to-day basis who are called upon to make the difficult, but necessary decisions. It is the presidents who are ultimately held accountable for everything from the spiritual nurture of students to the paving of parking lots.

On Sept. 11, 2011, the Rev. Dr. Lawrence “Larry” Rast was installed as the 16th president of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. On Sept. 4, 2005, the Rev. Dr. Dale Meyer was installed as the 10th president of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. On both of those September afternoons, the people of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod extended a sacred trust to these men, entrusting to their daily oversight the well-being of their beloved seminaries.

I hope you enjoy reading the interview conducted with Presidents Rast and Meyer in this issue of *Pastoral*

Education. In reading it, you gain a sense of the complex context in which they are serving. A post-Christian culture, a severe economic downturn, and increasing opportunities and invitations to be of service around the world are but a few of the complexities facing our seminaries and their presidents these days.

Let me encourage your prayers, both as individuals and as congregations, for our seminaries and especially for our seminary presidents. The words of Paul to the Christians in Thessalonica seem particularly appropriate: “We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess 1:2-3).

■ Dr. Glen Thomas



Thomas

Q What are some of the characteristics you most like to see in new seminary students as they arrive on your campus?

MEYER: Outgoing personalities and curious about God.

RAST: Openness to be co-workers with the fellow students, faculty and our staff. Christ forms them into servants who teach the faithful, reach the lost, and care for all.

Q What are some of the characteristics you most like to see in seminary graduates as they leave your campus?

RAST: Life-long learners, growing in servant leadership, cooperative with lay-people, not lording it over them—these are some of the characteristics that come to mind.

MEYER: I agree. Also, increasing in a Christ-centered spiritual maturity, continuing their theological growth and doing it all with a practice of accountability.

Q If you could change any item related to seminary education and have it automatically changed when you wake up tomorrow morning, what comes to mind and why?

RAST: That our contextual learning experiences, namely fieldwork and vicarage, might be more fully and intentionally integrated into our curriculum so that our student-learning outcomes might be met.

MEYER: More cross-cultural experiences built into the residential curriculum. Seminarians, all of us, need to experience the different cultures of contemporary America and the world, so that we will be sensitive to finding relevant and faithful ways to share the Good News.

Q How important in your estimation is residential (on-campus) formation of pastors and deaconesses, both now and in the future?

MEYER: I'll ask you some questions. Does the LCMS value theology both for the formation of pastors and deaconesses and for the ongoing life of the church? Do you seriously imagine that theologians gathered in a faculty and interacting daily with future church workers aren't vital to the life of the church? Distance programs have a vital role in this day and age and are part of the mix. That's a fact, but do you want the spiritual needs of your children and grandchild totally serviced out of a tech center?

RAST: Residential theological education brings together a diverse student

(Continued on Page 3)

An interview with seminary Presidents Meyer and Rast

The installation of the Rev. Dr. Lawrence Rast as the 16th President of Concordia Theological Seminary provides an appropriate opportunity to hear from both seminary presidents concerning a variety of seminary-education issues. The following interview allows them to address important issues and provide their perspectives on these issues to the church.

Q Dr. Rast, you were installed on Sept. 11 as the 16th president of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. How is life different for you now as the president of the seminary? Has anything surprised you?

RAST: My life is different in that the need for a strong team has been impressed upon me even more so than when I served as academic dean. God has blessed Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, with an amazingly gifted Board of Regents, faculty, staff and students. Together they make my new area of service an absolute joy.

Q As you travel throughout the church, what do you find are some common misconceptions people



From left: the Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, president, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod; the Rev. Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr., president, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.; and the Rev. Dr. Dale A. Meyer, president, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, just before the Sept. 11 worship service during which Rast was installed as president.

have about our seminaries?

RAST: People still seem to think that the Synod sends the seminary a big check for operations each year.

MEYER: That the corporate Synod takes care of us financially, that distance learning is cheaper, and that our faculty is isolated from the mission of the church.

Life, in all its contexts, has special meaning for Weise

A life-and-death situation while only a toddler led the Rev. Dr. Robert Weise, professor of Pastoral Ministry and Life Sciences at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to enter the ministry after a career as a professor of clinical pathology.

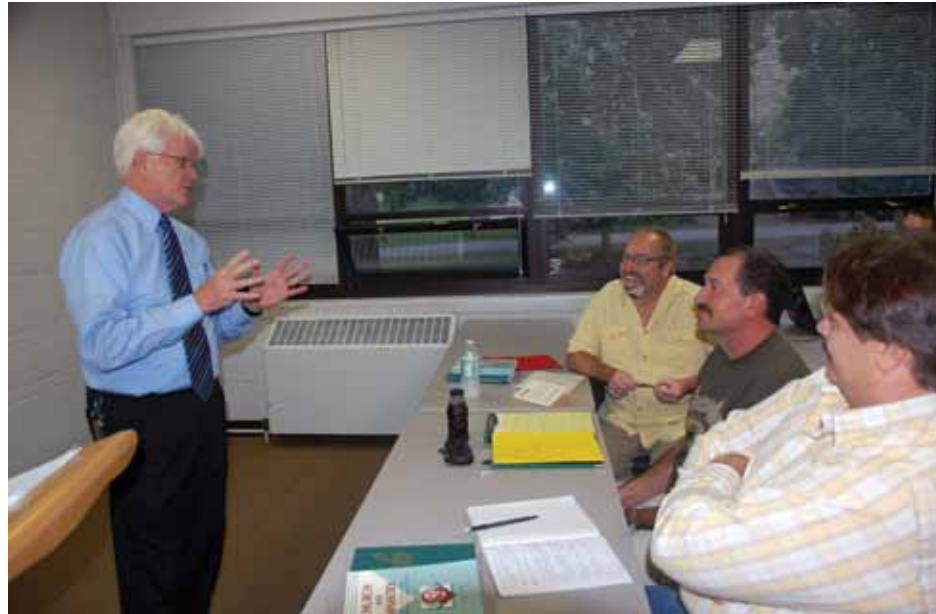
He had fallen ill with a disease labeled “infantile diarrhea” and spent three months in the former Lutheran Hospital in St. Louis, where his parents were regularly visited and comforted by the Rev. Paul Koenig, their pastor at Holy Cross Lutheran Church.

“At some point, the doctors told my mother and father that I had reached a critical stage in my illness,” Weise recalled, “and said that if I made it through the night, I should recover. Having made it through the night, Pastor Koenig told my parents, ‘God has something special planned for Robert.’ Throughout my life in Christ, single, married, scientist, I wondered what this statement was all about.”

But it wasn’t until after he earned his M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in zoology and was a professor at Wayne State University School of Medicine in Detroit, when he “couldn’t shake off the notion of entering the seminary and studying for the Office of the Holy Ministry.

“I tried every thing to say: ‘Bob Weise, a pastor? I don’t think so!’ But God had other special plans for me and my family. Looking back, I believe that this is what Pastor Koenig was talking about,” he said, “and I have never regretted the gift of being able to serve God’s people and now, teach and help form our future pastors and deaconesses.”

Following his ordination in 1982, Weise served as a parish pastor at two congregations in Illinois before joining the seminary faculty. He currently holds the Lutheran Foundation of St. Louis Chair of Pastoral Ministry and Life Sciences,



Dr. Robert Weise interacts with students while teaching a Pastoral Theology class at the St. Louis seminary. He holds the seminary’s chair of Pastoral Ministry and Life Sciences, the only one of its kind among Lutheran seminaries in North America.

the only one of its kind among Lutheran seminaries in North America that has its focus on the relationship between the Scriptures, theology and the life sciences, and how they converge in the training and ministering of pastors. And in an interesting twist of history, the endowed chair is funded by the Lutheran Foundation from the proceeds of the sale of the hospital in which he was cared for as a toddler struggling with a life-threatening illness.

Most of the classes he teaches — bioethics; studies in creation; science, ecology and the doctrine of man; pastoral theology; genetic science in Christian perspective; and contemporary issues in ethics — have a focus on bioethics and the life sciences. In addition, Weise has written extensively and presented lectures on bioethical issues, including artificial reproductive technology, embry-

“the use of biotechnologies should be approached in service to the glory of God, rather than ‘self-glorification’”

onic stem cell research, end-of-life issues and more.

He feels that future pastors as well as current ones should be knowledgeable about these issues because “these biotech concerns go to the heart of what it means to be human in Christ as Christians live the life of Jesus in this world. As this world’s culture continues to turn in on itself promoting ‘radical individualism’ of ‘self’ over and against the Savior from sin, death and the power of the devil,

more and more people are viewing biotechnologies as acceptable as long as ‘I or we get what we desire or want.’

“However,” he continued, “the use of biotechnologies should be approached in service to the glory of God, rather than ‘self-glorification’ so that what you do, in thought word or deed in using or supporting biotechnology, all should be done so that when others see how you use biotechnology, they see the Christ in you.

“Hence, to use a biotechnology that either destroys a human life — such as the weakest amongst us, the embryonic human being or intentionally ending the life of a person because he is suffering from an incurable disease or genetic disorder — denies the God-Man Jesus Christ who suffers with us and who freely gives us His hope, the hope, as St. Paul writes in Romans 5, that doesn’t disappoint us.”

The advances in biotechnology issues, he said, are more and more prominent in society today — in magazines, newspapers, on television and the Internet — and “we are called on to be informed and to search the Scriptures that testify to Jesus Christ who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.”

When not in class or writing his new book titled *The Reconstruction of Mankind, Where Science and Theology Meet*, Weise enjoys spending time with his wife, Jan, and five daughters and their families, along with their combined total of 10 dogs, including Weise’s own Jake, an abandoned Siberian Husky he and his wife adopted.

The couple also enjoys bicycling together, and Weise frequently joins the cycling club at the seminary on 20- to 50-mile rides with students. He hopes that these same students receive from his classes faithfulness to the Scriptures and Confessions.

“I strive in my teaching and relationships with the students,” he said, “to emphasize that they serve God’s people with a humble heart — taking them where they are, as they and the pastor live the life of Christ in this world.”



What a Way exists to rebuild active recruitment and retention of church workers as an integrated part of the LCMS culture and lifestyle at the local congregation level.

www.WhataWay.org

Congregation supports JSF with mission offering

Founded in 1911, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Alliance, Neb., is served by Pastors Martin T. Schnare and Richard C. Mueller. On Dec. 5, 2010, the congregation launched its 100th anniversary celebration which concluded with a 100th Anniversary Divine Service on July 10, 2011.

Pastor Schnare explained that during the past year, Immanuel met its expenses and wanted to show appreciation for the LCMS by supporting its seminaries through The LCMS Joint Seminary Fund (JSF). The final gift received by JSF was very significant.

According to Pastor Schnare, "The 100th anniversary committee made the recommendation to the church council that we adopt the JSF as our project. I suggested that it would be good for us to look outside our congregation for something to support, rather than doing something internally. In addition, we have a good understanding of the need to support men who are entering into full-time ministry. There have been times in the recent history of Immanuel (the past 25

years) when they have had trouble filling the [pastoral] vacancy, and understand that our church body needs more well-trained

men available to serve the church. The JSF was a focus of part of our mission dollars in the previous year, so it was rather natural to expand on that. Upon the recommendation of the committee, the council unanimously supported this decision."

An increasing number of LCMS congregations have generously supported JSF over the years through direct support and by adopting one or both of our seminaries, and/or The LCMS Joint Seminary as a line item in their annual budgets.



Immanuel Lutheran Church, Alliance, Neb.

A recent JSF communication encouraged JSF partners in the Gospel to continue and expand upon this trend. Quoting the communication, "As your congregation begins to establish its 2012 budget, we are bold to ask that our Synod's seminaries receive special consideration. While there are many worthy options for your congregation's support, we trust you join us in the conviction that the formation of tomorrow's pastors, missionaries, chaplains, deaconesses and church leaders is essential. We humbly ask that your congregation include as a line item in its 2012 budget

a gift to either or both of our seminaries and/or to the Synod's Joint Seminary Fund. Since our seminaries depend upon gifts from congregations, groups and individuals for more than half of their annual income, your congregation's gift will have a significant impact."

Questions and comments may be

addressed to Rev. Paul D. Kienker by email at paul.kienker@lcms.org or by telephone at 800-248-1930, ext. 1675.

The JSF provides options for those wishing to support the formation of the next generation of pastors. Gifts may be offered online at <http://lcms.org/jointseminaryfund>. Gifts may also be mailed to:

The LCMS Joint Seminary Fund
Attention: Rev. Paul D. Kienker
1333 S. Kirkwood Road
St. Louis, MO 63122-7295

Write on the check memo line:
A20740-23201-03.

"As your congregation begins to establish its 2012 budget, we are bold to ask that our Synod's seminaries receive special consideration."



Picture, from left, are the Rev. Martin T. Schnare (senior pastor); Harvey Miskimen (son of congregation); Robert Miskimen (son of congregation); and the Rev. Richard C. Mueller (associate pastor); of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Alliance, Neb.

PRESIDENTS MEYER AND RAST INTERVIEWED

(Continued from Page 1.)



Rev. Daniel P. May, Indiana District president, installs the Rev. Dr. Lawrence R. Rast, Jr., as the 16th president of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne.

body and allows it to interact with God's Word in a variety of settings, including the traditional classroom, but reaching beyond that to the chapel, the commons, the library, the local congregation, and the mission field. In my opinion, no other educational option surpasses the residential formation experience.

Q How important in your estimation is distance (online, primarily off-campus) formation of pastors and deaconesses, both now and in the future?

RAST: Throughout its history CTS has been very agile in adapting classic Lutheran theological education to changing educational circumstances. We will continue to do that as we seek to form students in the Scriptures and Confessions, delivering learning opportunities through a variety of modalities. Technology is a wonderful tool for equipping theological students for their future service in the church.

MEYER: Since their beginnings, our seminaries have tried to do whatever it takes to meet the needs of the field. Distance/contextual programs are helping meet the need today. And — don't edit this out! — distance-contextual programs are not hurting the residential programs. At St. Louis, programs like the Specific Ministry Pastor program, the Center for Hispanic Studies and the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology are actually enriching our residential programs.

Q How will we see seminary education change in the next decade, if at all, in your estimation?

MEYER: Hybrid curricula that will serve all students with both residential and distance classes, more connectedness to the Concordia University System,

more international students, more women students in deaconess and graduate studies, significant growth in the graduate school and Doctor of Ministry programs, more cross-cultural experiences and some basic instruction for future pastors in business and non-profit leadership.

RAST: Dale covered the waterfront here. Really can't add anything and I concur in them all!

Q How are our seminaries doing in light of the severe economic downturn in recent years?

RAST: Our board, faculty, staff and students have all felt the impact of the economic downturn. The manner in which they have worked together to provide stability for the institution is a testament to their dedication to Christ's mission carried out in this place.

MEYER: It hurt but St. Louis bit the bullet and thank the Lord we did. Today we have no debt and have good prospects for securing our financial viability for many years to come.

Q How would you respond to some who say, "We do not need two seminaries in our Synod"?

MEYER: That's true, if we are resigned to be a denomination that will continue to decline. If we turn the decline around, we'll need two flourishing seminaries ... maybe a third.

RAST: We have two outstanding seminaries that are making an enormous impact both in the United States and throughout the world. They serve the Synod well and faithfully. Our seminaries are gifts of God to the Synod in carrying out its mission. In an age of incredible opportunity, I hope the Synod as a whole will dream larger dreams and seek ways for the seminaries to bring these dreams to reality.

Pitsch is ‘blown away’ by St. Louis sem experience

When Sam Pitsch, a first-year student at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, made the decision to enter the ministry following college, the first person he told was his grandmother. “I knew that she would be gentle and supportive, because no one loves me quite as much as my grandma,” he said, somewhat jokingly. “My immediate family was a little surprised initially, but that surprise quickly gave way to excitement and encouragement. I couldn’t ask for more support than I am getting from my family.” Pitsch, who calls Fort Smith, Ark., home, said he didn’t know what to pursue in college, but chose engineering

“because it is kind of my family’s vocation.” (His father and brother are engineers and both sisters are studying to be engineers.) He graduated from Missouri University of Science in Rolla, Mo., with a degree in engineering management, but it “soon became apparent in college, through numerous influences, that ministerial formation was the path on which I should be.” Pitsch said he has been “blessed to be born into a family that had me baptized and took me to church every Sunday to hear the Word of God proclaimed and receive the Lord’s Supper faithfully. The Holy Spirit has worked

faith in my heart through those means of grace. Throughout my entire life, at every turn, God has blessed me with family, friends, pastors and teachers who have encouraged and motivated me to pursue this calling. “Coming from a family of engineers, I am entering uncharted territory, but they are certainly behind me 100 percent,” he added. Pitsch chose the St. Louis seminary because “the pastors in my life who have had the greatest impact on me both attended and recommended St. Louis. After five months on campus, I am more confident than ever that St. Louis was right for me. I have a great rapport with many of my classmates, and every day I am blown away by the expertise, energy and Christian hearts of the faculty and staff. I couldn’t be happier with St. Louis.” He came to the campus in June to take “Summer Greek,” a 10-week intensive language course, and is now taking another 10-week intensive in Hebrew. “So far, for me, the seminary is pretty tough,” he said. “I have to spend a lot of time every day to attempt to make some sense out of these biblical languages. However, the professors that I have had are wonderful, and the resources, such as free tutoring, that the seminary provides are impressive.” Pitsch is staying in one of the single student dorms on campus, which is an adjustment for him.

“In my undergrad studies, I almost always lived in a house or duplex, cooking my own meals, mowing the lawn, pretending to be an adult. So dorm life can at times seem like a step backward. That said,” he added, “it is so much fun to live in this particular dorm, because of who my neighbors are. Eating meals in the cafeteria and being literally surrounded on all sides by your friends and peers in the dorm is a fantastic opportunity for fellowship and the building up of our faith. Everyone here has a common goal and a common passion for God’s Word, and that makes the dialogue truly unique and enjoyable.” One aspect of seminary life that Pitsch especially enjoys is the opportunity for daily worship. “We have eight regularly scheduled chapel services per week, with various Bible studies and special events always available. It’s a joy every day to take part in worship,” he said. Following seminary, Pitsch says he has “faith that I will end up exactly where God wants me. I know they take placement very seriously here at the sem, and I trust that they will put me in a situation where I can be impactful in spreading the Gospel.” As he begins his four years of preparation for the ministry, he wishes to thank everyone for their prayers and support. “The seminary is an amazing place, filled with exceptionally talented, yet humble servants of Christ, but without the support of churches and individuals all over America and the world, it wouldn’t matter or exist. I implore you to keep praying for and supporting the seminaries of the LCMS.”



First-year seminarian Sam Pitsch studies for his 10-week intensive language course in Hebrew in the library at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. He appreciates the many resources offered by the seminary, such as free tutoring, to help him master the subject.

Second-career student appreciates curriculum at Fort Wayne seminary

Although Daniel Burfiend didn’t grow up as a member of an LCMS congregation, he credits “faithful pastors, Lutheran friends, the study of God’s Word and other theological writings” for his decision to enter the ministry. Now a first-year seminarian at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, he had planned to enter seminary immediately after his graduation with a degree in history from Hillsdale College in Hillsdale, Mich. But “I was offered a position as a development officer for my alma mater,” he said. “I worked at Hillsdale for three years, traveling the country to raise money for the college.” While there,


he and his wife, Roseli, attended Zion Lutheran Church in Marshall, Mich. Now, at age 26, Burfiend is joining other first-year students on campus, about two-thirds of whom are second-career. He chose the Fort Wayne campus because of its proximity to Hillsdale College, about 85 miles away. While in college, he “had the opportunity to attend various events at the Fort Wayne seminary. I appreciated the worship life there and the recent changes to the curriculum,” he commented. He and his family, including their young son, Theodore (born in March of 2011), live northeast of the seminary on



First-year seminarian Daniel Burfiend, left, talks with Gary Nahrwold, assistant vice president for Institutional Advancement at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne.


the outskirts of Fort Wayne. “My wife and I had become accustomed to life in rural, small-town Michigan. It has then been a bit of an adjustment to move to a much larger city,” Burfiend said. “We have enjoyed the opportunity to meet other seminary families and students. The seminary community has been very supportive, and we look forward to meeting many other students in the coming years.” With several months of seminary studies completed, he finds that the “classes are grounded in the study of Scripture and form a cohesive whole as all the departments of the seminary work together to prepare pastors. I especially enjoy the lectures and the discussions that occur with students and professors. The seminary will give me the opportunity to receive a thorough theological education.”

Burfiend, who is taking Dogmatics I, Gospels I, Liturgics I, Greek Readings, Field Education and Church History, says he usually attends morning classes from 8 to 10, followed by chapel at 10, and then to the commons for coffee with faculty and students and to study. After lunch, he attends classes from 1 to 3 and “then I either drive home or pick up our son from the babysitter.” Burfiend, who hopes to serve in parish ministry following seminary, expressed his appreciation for the support he has received to attend seminary. “I am so grateful for the congregations and individuals who have supported the seminary and my education, he said. “Because of their support, the seminary can provide many faithful instructors who will prepare us to preach and teach.”



Helping pastors and their wives in the transition from seminary to congregation.

PALS is an acronym for Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support, a collaborative effort of our Synod and districts that brings together groups of recent seminary graduates and wives during the first three years of congregational life. Meetings include worship, study and discussion of new ministry experiences.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Office of Pastoral Education • The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
1333 S. Kirkwood Road • St. Louis, MO 63122-7295 • (314) 996-1254
Fax: (314) 996-1120 • Web site: <http://www.lcms.org/PALS>
Email: pals@lcms.org