



# PASTORAL Education

June 2014 • A newsletter for those interested in the Pastoral Ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

## Doctor of Ministry programs

For the benefit of pastors, ministry, local congregations

There are many reasons why pastors seek continuing education. Some have a significant question they need to answer through the rigorous study of a doctoral program. Others may have a desire to teach at a college or seminary in the future, and so pursue a degree toward that end.

But the Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) program offered at each of the two LCMS seminaries is different. It's a program for pastors. For ministry. For the benefit of the local congregation.

"The D.Min. program is a unique theological degree because it is an occupational doctorate," said the Rev. Dr. Gifford Grobien, associate professor of Systematic Theology and Doctor of Ministry supervisor at Concordia Theological Seminary (CTS), Fort Wayne, Ind. "Other fields have this, too — like the medical field has an M.D. It takes a high level of training for pastors to continue practicing the work they've been doing; so the D.Min. is an opportunity for them to deepen their practice of pastoral theology by engaging a particular pastoral experiment or project. The goal is for them to provide pastoral care more specifically and deeply."

"The Doctor of Ministry degree is the highest professional degree in the practice of pastoral ministry that Concordia Seminary grants," added the Rev. Dr. Wally Becker, director of the D.Min. program at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. "It is for pastors who want to grow in their knowledge and skills and become better pastors within their context of ministry."

### STRUCTURED STUDY

While a self-study program offers flexibility, Becker believes that the structure of the seminaries' D.Min. programs is an important benefit that enhances the student's ability to engage in a topic.

"I believe that most of our students desire to be better pastors and are looking for a good continuing-education program with some substance and some structure," said Becker. "And if they are going to put in the work and energy to learn and to grow, why not get a degree for those efforts? Some are looking for growth in specific areas of ministry. They want to be better military chaplains, better preachers or better leaders, and we have specific concentrations in each of these areas. Others are seeking to grow in another specific area of ministry, and our General Pastor Concentration provides the opportunity to develop a program of study that will help pastors to grow in the specific areas that they have selected for themselves."

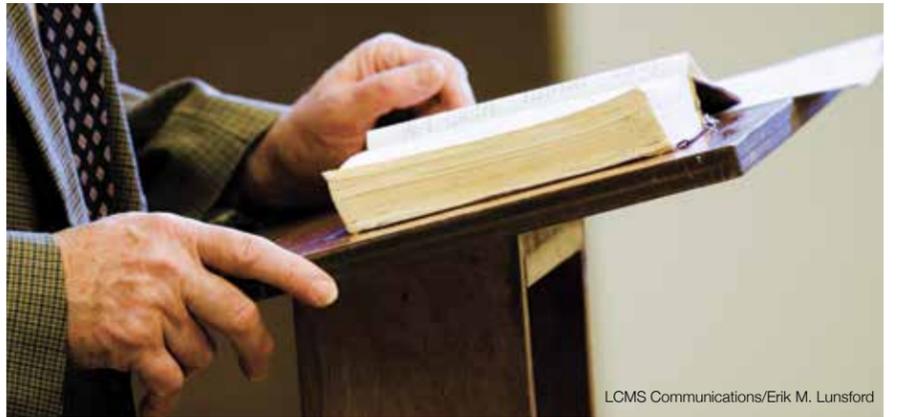
### FOR THE SHEEP

While many congregations may immediately offer their blessing when a pastor requests their support in his continuing-education endeavors, other churches may feel worried that they're at risk of "losing" their pastor to the academic world.

The D.Min. program actually gives congregations a reason to feel more secure.

"Some congregations may wonder if their pastor will leave if he earns a doctorate," said Grobien. "On the contrary, this is a ministry degree. It orients them

(See D.Min. programs, Page 2)

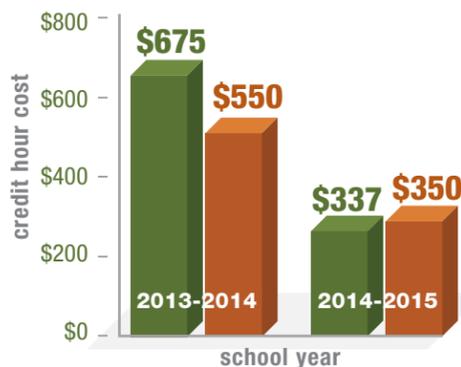


LCMS Communications/Erik M. Lunsford

**“It is for pastors who want to grow in their knowledge and skills and become better pastors within their context of ministry.”**

*The Rev. Dr. Wally Becker, director of the D.Min. program at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis*

### LOWER TUITION COST per credit hour



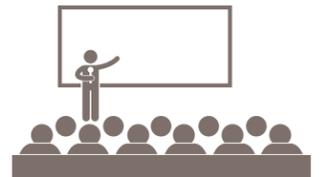
Concordia Seminary  
Concordia Theological Seminary

### TIME on campus

- More online options



- Less time spent on campus



- Fewer trips to the seminary

## A pastor-parish-seminary partnership

Newly instituted changes in the Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) programs at both Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) seminaries make this a wonderful time for parish pastors to investigate the possibility of pursuing a D.Min. degree. Both seminaries have made their programs more accessible for parish pastors and have reduced the cost of completing the degree. This issue of *Pastoral Education* highlights those changes, in an effort to inform and encourage pastors who might be contemplating advanced theological study.

Designed primarily for parish pastors, the D.Min. program provides academic course work with assignments and projects for the pastor to complete within the context of his parish. Through this pastor-parish-seminary partnership, the pastor grows in his knowledge, understanding and skill in specific areas of pastoral

ministry. He increases his ability to undertake advanced research, to integrate theology and practice, and to reflect on the theological implications of individual ministry practices. The congregation and church at-large benefit as the pastor serves God and His people for years to come, following the growth he has experienced through his D.Min. program.

To be sure, a D.Min. is far from the only form of continuing education that can benefit a pastor, his congregation and the broader church. Yet, the D.Min. programs at our LCMS seminaries offer certain distinct advantages:

- instruction that is faithful to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.
- course work and projects that are informed by and formed to enhance pastoral ministry in a congregation of the LCMS.
- the opportunity to proceed through the program as a member of a cohort com-

prised primarily of other LCMS pastors.

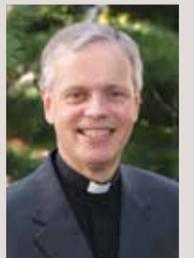
- a cohesive, coordinated program that maximizes learning and integration of knowledge, versus a collection of independent, unrelated learning experiences.
- accountability and discipline produced by the demands of a formal degree program, versus the all-too-easily deferred and delayed independent learning experiences.

From a purely personal standpoint, many pastors who engage in D.Min. study report a renewed sense of vigor and enthusiasm for the work of pastoral ministry. They are stimulated by the study and discussion that is led by some of the best theologians in the world, realizing how much they have missed this level of study and discussion since their seminary days. They reflect on their pastoral practices in new and beneficial ways, informed by study and discussions with professors and colleagues.

The *LCMS Themes for Pastoral Education*, endorsed by the delegates of the 2010 LCMS Convention, include this guidance: "The church must put in place a disciplined pattern for life-long learning among its pastors (to reflect upon pastoral practice, develop pastoral skills, learn pastoral responses to contemporary issues and problems, and to transition to different ministry contexts)."

The D.Min. programs at our seminaries, now more accessible than ever, offer a beneficial component part of a lifelong learning process for parish pastors.

*Rev. Dr. Glen Thomas  
Executive Director  
Pastoral Education*



Thomas

## D.Min. programs *(Continued from Page 1)*



The Rev. Dr. Wally Becker, director of the D.Min. program at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, speaks with the Rev. Eric Ekong following the Theological Diploma Service there in 2013.

back to ministry and is not something that necessarily prepares them to teach in an academic setting. Really, they are earning this degree to stay in the parish, not get called away. It actually helps them to be better equipped to serve people. The pastor will come out of the study having a deeper understanding and ability to handle future pastoral-care issues.”

### ALL-ACCESS PASS

In the past few years, both seminaries have made changes to their D.Min. programs to make them more accessible and achievable for busy parish pastors.

They’ve reduced the number of credit hours required down to 36 (CTS) and 45 (CSL), without sacrificing the quality or accreditation status of the programs.

“Under the old program, we were requiring many more courses than called for by accreditation standards,” said Grobrien. “We reduced the number of courses, but also more intentionally oriented them toward thesis writing and the project. It is really more substantive and rewarding — not to mention easier from a time perspective to get through the program while the pastor focuses on a concentration of his choice.”

Speaking of concentration, each seminary’s D.Min. program provides several options for the student’s main area of study.

“The [D.Min.] program has had a solid foundation for many years with concentrations in Military Chaplaincy, Homiletics, Missional Leadership and General Pastoral Ministry,” said Becker. “Within each concentration, certain specific courses are required, but then the student also chooses from concentration electives and general electives to complete his program.”

Similarly, the main areas of focus offered at CTS are Pastoral Care and Leadership, Teaching and Preaching, and Mission and Culture.

More specifically, according to Grobrien,

“Right now a number of projects are focusing on marriage relations, teaching children and families, and keeping children in the faith. Others are studying evangelism and how to evangelize in a particular context, as well as new-member assimilation.”

In an effort to increase the accessibility and affordability of the program, CTS has reduced the price of the D.Min. program from \$550 per credit hour down to \$350 per credit hour — so the tuition cost for the program is closer to \$13,000, rather than \$28,000.

Instead of reducing the cost for the program, CSL offers a grant for students to make it more affordable.

“The cost of tuition for the 2014-15 school year will be \$675 per credit hour,” explained Becker. “All Doctor of Ministry students receive a 50 percent tuition grant, which reduces the cost of tuition to \$337.50 per credit hour.”

Finally, the programs also have increased the availability of online instruction, so students can complete their D.Min. in less time with fewer trips to the seminary.

“At CTS, 14 of the 30 contact hours of a course are online,” noted Grobrien. “With 16 hours spent in the classroom for one course, a person can come in for a residential week and can take two courses during that one week. Someone working quickly can be done in three or fewer years with only five trips to the seminary. If he wants to work at a slower pace, he is able to do that and still finish twice as fast as [in] the old program.”

CSL also is beginning to provide some courses online.

“Although a student can choose to do the majority of course work on campus, no more than one-third of their credits (15) need to be done on campus,” said Becker. “Another change planned for the 2014–2015 school year will shorten the time that students spend in residence on the seminary’s campus from



Students in the D.Min. program at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., come together for a week of on-campus classes. They are, from left — front row: the Rev. Paul Weisenborn of Bunceton, Mo.; the Rev. Eric Linthicum, Hyattsville, Md.; back row: the Rev. Robb Roloff, Tipton, Ind.; Dr. Gifford Grobrien, the D.Min. supervisor for the seminary; the Rev. Adam Sorenson, Milwaukee; and the Rev. Peter Speckhard, Munster, Ind.

two weeks to one week,” said Becker. “The degree may be completed in as few as three years, or as many as six — again, the student is free to choose what works best for him.

Both seminaries also offer the option of “wraparound” courses. In other words, a student may attend a continuing-education workshop, seminar or symposium — such as Doxology, Family Friendly Partners Network, Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support courses or Pastoral Leadership Institute (PLI) — and with prior approval and consultation with a member of the seminary faculty, additional readings and written assignments are “wrapped around” those experiences, bringing it to the appropriate level for D.Min. credit. Other wraparound possibilities may include military-chaplaincy workshops, continuing-education workshops or seminary book clubs.

### WHAT IT TAKES

Both D.Min. programs have a basic requirement that a pastor serve at least three years in the ministry before applying for the D.Min. Pastors applying for the D.Min. also need to have a Master of Divinity (M.Div.)

degree or equivalent. In addition, there are a number of other admission procedures at each seminary, listed on their respective websites.

To help cover the cost of the tuition and fees, room and board, books and transportation costs associated with completing the D.Min. degree, pastors are encouraged to partner with their congregations, who highly benefit from having their pastor participate in this program.

“Many congregations provide continuing education funds for their pastors, or are willing to budget for this when made aware of the investment value of their pastor’s continuing education,” added Becker. “Scholarships may also be available through outside agencies. Military chaplains, for example, may apply for support through the GI Bill.”

To learn more about the D.Min. program at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, visit [ctsfw.edu/DMin](http://ctsfw.edu/DMin) and [facebook.com/DoctorOfMinistryConcordia](http://facebook.com/DoctorOfMinistryConcordia) or call 260-452-2143.

For more information about the D.Min. program at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, visit [csl.edu/admissions/academics/graduateschool/dmin/](http://csl.edu/admissions/academics/graduateschool/dmin/) or call 314-505-7100.

**“It actually helps them to be better equipped to serve people — the pastor will come out of the study having a deeper understanding and ability to handle future pastoral-care issues.”**

*The Rev. Dr. Gifford Grobrien, associate professor of Systematic Theology and Doctor of Ministry supervisor at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne*



LCMS Communications/Erik M. Lunsford

## PALS and sems reach new D.Min. agreement

Effective June 1, pastors participating in the Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS) initiative will be able to receive consideration by both LCMS seminaries for credit in their D.Min. programs, based on PALS courses the pastors have completed. To be eligible for consideration, the PALS course(s) must have been taken during the second or third year of the three-year PALS cycle.

“We are delighted that our seminaries have agreed to offer this very tangible benefit to our PALS pastors,” commented the Rev. Dr. Glen Thomas, executive director of Pastoral Education for the LCMS. “It affirms the quality of the continuing education that is offered to our new pastors through PALS.”

According to the memo of understanding signed by Thomas and represen-

tatives from both seminaries, “Each seminary will have sole authority to determine whether it will grant wraparound credit in its D.Min. program in response to each request that is made. Each seminary will have the right to determine, assign and evaluate any additional work on the part of the pastor it deems appropriate, in order to grant the pastor credit in its D.Min. program.”

“We encourage any pastors who believe that PALS courses they have completed are good candidates for possible D.Min. credit to contact one or both of our seminaries in order to pursue the matter,” commented Carrie O’Donnell of the PALS staff. “Our PALS office is not involved in the communication, except to verify that the pastors have completed the PALS courses being considered.”

This agreement follows on the heels of 2013 LCMS Convention resolutions that encouraged continuing education for pastors. Resolutions passed at the convention commended the work of PALS, stipulated that the Synod’s executive director of Pastoral Education continue to incorporate continuing education into PALS and called on the seminaries to assist each graduating student in the design of a portfolio of his past course work and experiences. This portfolio will be supplemented by the continuing education he receives as a pastor and is reviewed periodically with his circuit visitor and others.

“PALS serves as a very effective continuing-education resource for pastors during the first three years of parish ministry,” Thomas said. “The D.Min.

programs at our seminaries offer a wonderful next step in continuing pastoral education after pastors conclude their PALS experience. This new agreement is a great way to encourage our pastors to maintain a lifelong pursuit of additional education.”

Since its inception in 1998, PALS has assisted hundreds of new pastors and their wives during their first three years of parish life through participation in collegial, supportive groups that are geographically organized and each led by an experienced facilitating pastor and his wife. PALS gatherings include worship, study, discussion of ministry experiences and issues, and fellowship.

More information on PALS is available at [lcms.org/PALS](http://lcms.org/PALS), via email at [pals@lcms.org](mailto:pals@lcms.org) or by calling 314-996-1254.

# 2014 seminary off-campus continuing-education opportunities

## CONCORDIA SEMINARY, ST. LOUIS, MO.

### TAMPA, FLA.

**June 9–13, 2014**

Rev. Dr. Leopoldo Sánchez  
*¿Enseñan los luteranos la santificación?: Modelos de santificación para el diario vivir*

### HILLSBORO, ORE.

**June 16–18, 2014**

Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Kloha  
*Philippians: Life Together in the Gospel*

### WEST FARGO, N.D.

**June 23–25, 2014**

Rev. Dr. Rick Marrs  
*Making Christian Counseling More Christ-Centered*

### ADRIAN, MICH.

**June 23–25, 2014**

Rev. Dr. Joel Biermann  
*Lutheranism and Character*

### ALEXANDRIA, MINN.

**June 23–25, 2014**

Rev. Dr. Tim Saleska  
*Influenced by a Cloud of Witnesses: Reading the Psalms for Spiritual Strength*

### PHOENIX, ARIZ.

**July 7–9, 2014**

Rev. Anthony Cook  
*Kingdom Consistency*

### OAKLEY, KAN.

**July 8–10, 2014**

Rev. Dr. Kent Burreson  
*Follow Me: Making Disciples Ritually in a Post-Modern World*

### ORANGE, CALIF.

**July 13–16, 2014**

Rev. Dr. David Schmitt  
*Narrative Preaching*

### MELROSE PARK, ILL.

**July 24–26, 2014**

Mark Kempff  
*Ministering to the Hispanic/Latino Family*

### WEST BEND, WIS.

**July 28–30, 2014**

Rev. Dr. David Schmitt  
*Narrative Preaching*

### WEST DES MOINES, IOWA

**July 31–August 3, 2014**

Mark Kempff  
*Ministering to the Hispanic/Latino Family*

### SEYMOUR, IND.

**August 4–6, 2014**

Rev. Dr. David Schmitt  
*Narrative Preaching*

### PINE BLUFF, ARK.

**August 4–6, 2014**

Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Kloha  
*Philippians: Life Together in the Gospel*

### EDEN, IDAHO

**August 6–10, 2014**

Mark Kempff  
*Ministering to the Hispanic/Latino Family*

### CLEVELAND, OHIO

**August 11–13, 2014**

Rev. Dr. Paul Raabe  
*Isaiah and the Nations*

### OVERLAND PARK, KAN.

**August 11–13, 2014**

Rev. Dr. Timothy Dost  
*Why Are We So Divided? A Historical/Social Study of the Roots of Recent Tensions in Our Church Body (LCMS)*

### FREMONT, NEB.

**August 18–20, 2014**

Rev. Dr. David Peter  
*Help for Mid-Sized Congregations*

### CARY, N.C.

**August 18–20, 2014**

Rev. Dr. Leopoldo Sánchez  
*Do Lutherans Take Sanctification Seriously? Models of Sanctification for Everyday Living*

### SANTA FE, N.M.

**August 25–27, 2014**

Rev. Dr. Andrew Bartelt  
*Isaiah 1-12, The Holy One of Israel in Our Midst*

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

### Concordia Theological Seminary

[www.ctsfw.edu/CE](http://www.ctsfw.edu/CE)  
Kara J. Mertz, [CE@ctsfw.edu](mailto:CE@ctsfw.edu) or  
Rev. Jeffrey Pulse, [Jeffrey.Pulse@ctsfw.edu](mailto:Jeffrey.Pulse@ctsfw.edu)  
(260) 452-2103

### Concordia Seminary

[www.csl.edu/resources/continuinged](http://www.csl.edu/resources/continuinged)  
Erika Bennett, [bennette@csl.edu](mailto:bennette@csl.edu)  
(314) 505-7286



Concordia Seminary/Nikolai Gibbons



LCMS Communications/Erik M. Lunsford

## CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, FORT WAYNE, IND.

### BASEHOR, KAN.

**June 9–11, 2014**

Rev. Dr. Carl Fickenscher  
*Looking Again at (and Listening Again to) Our Preaching*

### GALLATIN, TENN.

**June 9–11, 2014**

Rev. Dr. Cameron MacKenzie  
*C.F.W. Walther Today*

### GRAND RAPIDS, MICH.

**June 9–13, 2014**

Rev. Dr. Peter Scaer  
*The Gospel of Mark: The Mystery of Jesus*

### AUSTIN, TEXAS

**June 10–12, 2014**

Rev. Dr. James Bushur  
*Topic TBA*

### ST. CLOUD, MINN.

**June 16–18, 2014**

Rev. Dr. Naomichi Masaki  
*Luther on the Lord's Supper*

### SEATTLE, WASH.

**June 16–20, 2014**

Dr. Adam Francisco  
*Apologetics for the 21st Century*

### PLANO, TEXAS

**June 16–20, 2014**

Rev. John Pless  
*Hermann Sasse as Pastoral Theologian*

### CASTLE ROCK, COLO.

**June 17–19, 2014**

Rev. Dr. James Bushur  
*Let Us Die that We May Live: Confessing Christ with the Noble Army of Martyrs*

### CHEYENNE, WYO.

**June 30–July 3, 2014**

Rev. John Pless  
*Confessing Christ in Crisis: Lessons from Hermann Sasse*

### SIoux FALLS, S.D.

**July 7–9, 2014**

Rev. John Pless  
*Hermann Sasse as Pastoral Theologian*

### FORT WAYNE, IND.

**July 9–11, 2014**

Dr. Adam S. Francisco  
*Christian Apologetics*

### ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.

**July 28–August 1, 2014**

Dr. Adam Francisco  
*A Tour of Worldviews in America: Making Sense of a Pluralistic World*

### MECHANICSBURG, PA.

**August 4–6, 2014**

Rev. Dr. Naomichi Masaki  
*Luther's Catechetical Instruction According to Genesis Lectures*

### ROGUE RIVER, ORE.

**August 4–6, 2014**

Rev. John Pless  
*Toward a Pastoral Theology of Suffering: Responding to the Why Questions*

### FLATHEAD LAKE, MONT.

**August 4–8, 2014**

Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Gibbs  
*Jesus in Jerusalem and Beyond: Studies in Matthew 21-28*

### COUNCIL BLUFFS, IOWA

**August 11–15, 2014**

Rev. Dr. Charles Gieschen  
*Confronting Confusion About the End-Times*

### CEDAR FALLS, IOWA

**August 18–22, 2014**

Rev. Dr. John Kleinig  
*Participation in God's Holiness in the Divine Service According to Leviticus*

### These sites are pending final details:

Concordia, Mo.  
Jackson Hole, Wyo.  
West Bend, Wis.

# An exclusive peek into new D.Min. programs

**P**astors in the D.Min. programs at the two LCMS seminaries may have many reasons for continuing their education and honing their skills in pastoral ministry. But what are some of those reasons? Below are two interviews with pastors who are currently seeking D.Min. degrees, broadening their skill sets and rejoicing as their congregations reap the benefits of their continued learning.

## NEVER TOO EQUIPPED

As he enters his 10th year of pastoral ministry, the Rev. Kristopher Morris feels that time moves along quite quickly for those engaged in the day-to-day activities of a busy pastor.

Morris graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in May 2005 and was ordained and installed as associate pastor of Faith Lutheran Church in Collierville, Tenn., a few weeks later. In November 2010, he accepted a call to serve as associate pastor at Christ the King Lutheran Church in Lake Ozark, Mo., where he currently serves.

“The first five years in the ministry can teach a man many things,” said Morris. “One of the lessons I learned is that a pastor can never be too equipped for the demands of Word-and-Sacrament ministry. Many times in Bible study, sermon preparation and counseling sessions, I found myself coming right up to the boundaries of my knowledge, skills and expertise — and that is not a comfortable place to be.”

While Morris knew that continuing to study would certainly be a fulfilling pursuit in itself, it was really for the benefit of his congregation that he considered making time to expand and polish his skills by engaging in a rigorous program of study.

“As a pastor in the church, I realized I needed to take advantage of some of the opportunities for continued education,” explained Morris. “Not for the sake of intellectualism or to impress people with an advanced degree hanging on the wall, but to be a better servant, a better preacher, a better teacher, a better pastor, for the sake of the people of God.”

After looking into several different programs at different seminaries, Morris decided to pursue a D.Min. at Concordia Seminary in January 2011 because he knew that he would receive a thoroughly Lutheran education that was theologically sound yet still offered a challenge.

“While there are many excellent degree programs at seminaries outside the LCMS, at the end of the day, I know I can trust the fac-

ulty and staff of both of our LCMS seminaries,” stated Morris. “I knew that if I enrolled at St. Louis or Fort Wayne, I could learn from some of the best theologians in our Synod and trust that the content of the classroom conversations would be true to Holy Scripture and to our Lutheran Confessions.”

As expected, Morris is certainly not the only recipient of the learning and growth that takes place through his independent and classroom study — since he continues to serve his parish while concurrently working on his D.Min. degree, his congregation gets to enjoy a front-row seat to all that Morris gains through the program.

“When the pastor is being challenged and growing, then the congregation receives the benefits of that process,” noted Morris. “The content I receive from the readings, the faculty and my fellow students, I get to pass on to the people I serve. They get to hear this ‘new’ stuff and they are challenged and grow also. One of the most immediately realized benefits from this program is in the task of preaching and teaching. For the last several years, the exegetical classes have been scheduled to coincide with the lectionary series at hand. Due to this, I get loaded up with a ton of material from which to teach and preach for the several months that follow. It is also

“**The curriculum is academic, yet also very practical and applicable to real-world issues.**”

*Rev. Christian Tiews, associate pastor at Grace Lutheran Church, Tulsa, Okla., and D.Min. student at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.*

helpful that many of these classes required final projects that were sermons and Bible studies for use in the parish.”

When asked about how he makes time for this extra study, Morris admits that it isn’t always easy — and he understands first-hand that making the decision to move forward in continuing education can be a challenge, at least initially.

“Like so many things in pastoral ministry, it boils down to time allocation and priority setting,” said Morris. “Before enrolling in this program I was already ‘too busy,’ but nowhere in that busy-ness was I making the time for continued personal and professional growth. Now, I am still very busy, but I am not neglecting that critical part of being the best pastor I can be. I had a fair amount of doubt and second-guessing as I considered the Doctor of Ministry



The Rev. Kristopher Morris, associate pastor at Christ the King Lutheran Church in Lake Ozark, Mo., and D.Min. student at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, consecrates the Lord’s Supper during a service at the church.

program. But once I started, there was no doubt that this was the right decision.”

## A WIN-WIN FOR CONGREGATION, PASTOR

Grace Lutheran Church in Tulsa, Okla., is the only church that the Rev. Christian Tiews, its associate pastor, has ever served. Having been at the church for nearly six years, including one year as a vicar, it was no surprise when he decided to follow in the footsteps of previous pastors at Grace and pursue a doctoral degree. He chose to

“We are considering adapting our new-member instruction to better accommodate the increasing number of people who come to us without any Christian background — characteristic of western civilization in the 21st century,” explained Tiews.

This kind of continuing education works for Tiews because of the applied nature — and practical setup — of the D.Min. program itself. As other D.Min. students have found, making the time for study and class is much more doable now than ever before because of the structural changes that have been made over the last couple of years.

“The program is tailored to the work schedule of the busy pastor, with nine weeks of the 10-week quarter spent in the parish — reading the required texts, writing papers and interacting online with the other doctoral students on the topic at hand,” said Tiews. “The curriculum is academic, yet also very practical and applicable to real-world issues. About halfway into the quarter, the students spend one week of residential time on the beautiful campus of Concordia Theological Seminary. This ‘intensive’ provides face time with the instructor and fellow students, as we discuss the various topics at length.”

Since many pastors have wives and families to serve in addition to their congregations, Tiews feels that it’s important to strike a good balance and work toward time-management skills in order to ensure the best possible experience during the course of study.

“My wife and I have four children living at home, plus two in college,” said Tiews. “I try to guard my family life carefully and have one-on-one time with my wife and each child every week, in addition to joint family time. To date, almost two years into the program, the Lord has enabled me to successfully balance family, parish duties and my D.Min. work.”

In addition to balancing work and family life, the D.Min. program — like any degree program — has its challenges. Not surprisingly, however, its benefits and joys outnumber the challenges and are for both pastor and congregation to enjoy, for years to come.

“The last few weeks of the quarter can be somewhat stressful, since final papers are due,” noted Tiews. “The blessings? My pastoral skills have improved and the parishioners greatly support and encourage me in my efforts. The D.Min. program is a ‘win-win’ for both the congregation and the doctoral student — it helps good pastors become even better. Also, being able to work on casuistry and real-life issues with brother pastors in an environment far removed from the stress of daily ministry is very enjoyable and rewarding.”



The Rev. Christian Tiews, associate pastor at Grace Lutheran Church, Tulsa, Okla., and D.Min. student at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., preaching.