



PASTORAL Education

January 2013 • A newsletter for those interested in the Pastoral Ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

No nobler thing on earth

In 1530, Martin Luther wrote “A Sermon on Keeping Children in School,” in which he sought to provide pastors with persuasive points they could use in convincing parents that their children should be enrolled in school. One of his strongest arguments was that these schools nurture young boys who could later serve as pastors. In addressing parents, Luther wrote eloquently about the high calling of the pastoral ministry:

“There is no dearer treasure, no nobler thing on earth or in this life than a good and faithful pastor and preacher. Just think, whatever good is accomplished by the preaching office and the care of souls is assuredly accomplished by your own son as he

faithfully performs this office. For example, each day through him many souls are taught, converted, baptized, and brought to Christ and saved, and redeemed from sin, death, hell, and the devil. Through him they come to everlasting righteousness, to everlasting life and heaven, so that Daniel [12:3] says well that ‘those who teach others shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness shall be like the stars for ever and ever.’” (*Luther’s Works*, Vol. 46).

In a similar manner, Paul writes that “If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task” (1 Tim. 3:1). It is noble because of what God does through those who occupy this office, and more precisely, through

the Word they proclaim and the Sacraments they administer.

With this issue of *Pastoral Education*, I appeal to you as pastors, teachers and leaders in congregations throughout the Synod to join me in the activity of identifying, informing and encouraging appropriate candidates for service in the pastoral ministry. My invitation to you is not motivated by data tables depicting future shortages of pastors. It is not issued without knowledge of the many ways that Satan seeks to attack and destroy a pastor, his family and his congregation.

My invitation is based simply upon God’s desire that none should perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved

(1 Tim. 2:4). To quote Luther again, it might well be that God will work through the man you identify, inform and encourage so that in the decades to come, “many souls are taught, converted, baptized, and brought to Christ and saved, and redeemed from sin, death, hell, and the devil.” Indeed, no nobler thing on earth!

*Dr. Glen Thomas
Executive Director
Pastoral Education*



Thomas

Many are involved in raising up a pastor

It all begins at the font. A man is forgiven, redeemed, made one with Christ through His death and resurrection. This is where that man is brought into the Church. And for some, this is the beginning of their road to the seminary, where they’ll be trained for service to the Church through the Office of the Holy Ministry.

“The process of being formed into a servant of Christ does not begin at the seminary level but begins at Baptism, where the Lord claims this person as His own,” said the Rev. Andrew Yeager, admission counselor for Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Ind. “It continues through regular catechesis and confirmation. It endures when the world seeks to throw the young person off course by presenting an alternative worldview to that of Christianity. Being formed into a servant of Christ takes the ongoing, steadfast care of the parish pastor as he ministers to his youth and eventually recommends him to the seminary.”

In fact, more than 75 percent of LCMS seminary students consider their parish pastor to be the primary source of encouragement as they considered serving in the Office of the Holy Ministry. “This is no surprise, since the first step toward service in the Church takes place under the steady and faithful mentorship of the parish pastor, within one’s own congregation,” said Yeager.

The pattern followed by most mentors and trusted advisors — which includes parish pastors, teachers, principals, parents and wives — is ‘identify, inform and encourage.’

IDENTIFY

Many mentors and trusted advisors look for certain qualities in potential candidates for the pastoral ministry. These characteristics are in line with those St. Paul lists in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, including showing humility and patience, being separated from the love of money and free from the sins of addiction, and displaying mercy, kindness and generosity. Pastoral candidates also should be apt to teach the Church’s doctrine and display the capacity to refute false doctrine as needed.

“Most of us have a hard time identifying the gifts, talents and abilities that God has given us,” said the Rev. Wally Becker, admissions counselor for Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. “Other people can see them more easily. As we affirm those potentials in others, especially when we see the possibilities for future ministry, God is

with investigating God’s calling to a church vocation.”

INFORM

When the appropriate qualities are apparent in potential seminarians, pastors and others have an opportunity to point the candidate in the right direction, usually through communication with admission counselors at the seminaries.

Becker noted, “When setting up my visits, I encourage the pastor and principal to identify students and members who should be invited and encouraged to visit with me. I stress this as more important than having a comfortable place to meet with visitors. While visiting a congregation, I will leave materials and other information with the pastor to pass along to high-school youth, college students, even grade-school students to encourage them to consider that God may be leading them toward ministry.”

In addition to the regular visits of seminary admissions counselors to meet with potential candidates in their own churches, circuits and districts, there also are multiple on-campus opportunities for candidates to learn more about the seminaries and aid them as they consider the pastoral ministry. (See the on-campus seminary event opportunities listed on Page 4.)

“When pastors have prospective seminary students, we encourage them to send them to an on-campus event so that the prospective student can be immersed in our classes, our worship and our life together,” explained Yeager.

Providing information and explaining seminary visitation opportunities to potential candidates is a critical part of gently guiding and ultimately encouraging them to think about serving God’s church in this way.

The Rev. W. Max Mons, pastor at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church and University Center in Iowa City, Iowa, has encouraged his fair share of students toward the pastoral ministry, focusing on informing them about their visitation options.

“If there is a man who has an interest in studying
(See *Many are involved*, Page 2)



Cindy Benzinger

The Rev. Brian Davies (right) is pictured with seminarian Merritt Demski. Having been encouraged toward the ministry by Davies, Demski is a first-year student at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis.

able to speak through us to give encouragement to those He is leading toward ministry.”

The Rev. Bill Wrede, director of admissions at Concordia Seminary, also echoed this sentiment. “For a possible candidate to know he may be called to ministry, he also needs others to verify, identify and encourage characteristics that people see as attributes of a good pastor. On his own, in isolation, there is far too much room for self-doubt, misreading his intentions and the like. Testing his intentions, having the backing of the Church, etc., all play into how a man can move forward

Support for new pastors and wives

The transition from seminary to congregation can be challenging for a new pastor and his wife. Recognizing these challenges and the importance of the first three years in the relationship between a pastor and his congregation, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and its districts launched an initiative called Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS) in 1998.

Since its humble beginnings, PALS has assisted hundreds of new pastors and their wives during the first three years of parish life through participation in collegial, supportive groups that are geographically organized and led by an experienced facilitating pastor and his wife.

“I am in my eighth year of being the PALS facilitating pastor in the Southern Illinois District,” commented the Rev. Mark Nebel, pastor of St. Johns Lutheran Church, Red Bud, Ill. “I enjoy working with those who are new to the ministry. They have a drive and enthusiasm that is exciting and invigorating. They probably re-energize me as much as I help them.”

Gatherings include worship, study and discussion of ministry experiences. While wives are together with their husbands for the majority of each PALS gathering, they



also have time away from their husbands for study and discussion that is usually led by the facilitating pastor’s wife. To accommodate families with young children, child care is provided.

New pastors and their wives often comment that the time spent in conversation with other new pastors and wives is extremely valuable to them. “The PALS format encourages open sharing and builds friendships, which are so important to both pastors and wives,” commented the Rev. William Hessler, a PALS facilitating pastor who serves as pastor of Faith Lutheran Church, Bridgeport, Mich. “It’s a safe place to share questions, frustrations and joys. It helps them to know they are not the only ones facing these

issues, and they can help each other with their own experiences, sharing of resources and prayer.” The Rev. Mark Barz, a PALS facilitating pastor who serves as pastor of Crown of Life Lutheran Church, San Antonio, Texas, articulated his desire for new pastors to be involved in PALS and described what he hopes they gain through their participation. “My hope is that by being involved in PALS, first-call pastors make the transition into their congregations more carefully, slowly, deliberately and positively. I also hope that they are able to process in a healthy way both the joys and the difficulties of serving our Lord by serving His people.”

PALS groups meet an average of six days each year and participating pastors receive continuing education units in recognition of their participation. For more information on PALS, contact:

Office of Pastoral Education
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
1333 South Kirkwood Road
St. Louis, MO 63122-7295
800-248-1930 Ext. 1254; 314-996-1254
pals@lcms.org
lcms.org/pals

Many are involved

(Continued from Page 1)

for the ministry, or who I think would make a good pastor, I encourage him to ‘just do it,’ ” said Mons. “If he goes to seminary and it works out, God be praised. If he goes to seminary and discovers the ministry is not for him, God be praised. Either way, the Lord leads this man in the direction he should go. I typically encourage men to speak with seminary admissions officers and take advantage of visitation weekends. Many of the men have told me that visiting the campus was a big part of their decision. It helped them get a feel for what they would be doing and the challenges they would face. They come back from the visit saying, ‘I can do this!’ ”

ENCOURAGE

After identifying and informing potential candidates, most pastors and other mentors recognize that a good deal of encouragement is necessary to guide the decision-making process and help the candidate discern his calling.

“It is not common for people to say, ‘I want to go to seminary,’ ” said the Rev. Brian Davies, pastor at Lord of Glory Lutheran Church in Grayslake, Ill. “It takes someone to encourage them to consider it. They feel they’re inadequate. I have to tell them, ‘You have gifts. I can tell you’re not settled, you should try this now because I don’t want you to end up

here in my office in three years saying ‘I wish I’d gone!’ ” Davies currently has one parishioner studying at the seminary with two more on the way next year.

While many seminarians are encouraged toward the ministry when they are young, or at least prior to entering the workforce, other pastors are formed through their previous careers or later in life.

“I talk to many second-career students who say their pastor encouraged them to consider the ministry when they were in confirmation class or high school, but they pushed that aside,” explained Becker. “Now God is still using that encouragement to bring them to the seminary. God also uses those years of life experiences to form and shape those He brings to seminary into the servants He wants them to be.”

Of course, encouraging students to prepare for the pastoral ministry can be a very rewarding experience, especially for pastors who eventually will gain a brother in the ministry.

“One young man whom I encouraged to study for the ministry came back and did a summer vicarage at our chapel,” said Mons. “It was marvelous to watch him grow and develop and reap the benefits of his seminary education. What is really wonderful is when a man

you encouraged to study for the ministry completes his studies, gets ordained and then contacts you as a fellow pastor and says, ‘Let me pick your brain for minute or two.’ Or better, when you call him and say, ‘Hey, let me ask you a question.’ ”

The Rev. Scott Sailer, senior pastor at Faith Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls, S.D., also finds great value in identifying, informing and encouraging men to consider the seminary.



The Rev. Scott Sailer, left, senior pastor at Faith Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls, S.D., stands with Clint and Amber Thorson. Clint Thorson served as vicar at Faith in 2011-12.



Jayne Sheaffer, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne

Pictured during the 2012 Christ Academy at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, are, from left, seminarian Christopher Harrison; high-school student Andrew Casey; the Rev. Andrew Yeager, admission counselor for the seminary; and high-school student Jeremy Schopp.

“It was interesting how God helped one young man toward the ministry (according to the young man himself) through a round of golf and a couple of us pastors being a part of his foursome!” explained Sailer. “We shared a lot about the pastoral ministry that day. And we encouraged him to go for it. He is a faithful, beloved pastor in metro Kansas City, Mo., today.”

RAISING UP FUTURE PASTORS

So, how can pastors and other mentors continue to assist in raising up future generations of pastors?

“Identify those who love God and His Word, those who want to learn more from God’s Word and who seem to have an understanding of it,” explained Becker. “Along with that, those who want to help people, especially help them grow in faith and in their understanding of God and His Word, are the ones that should be encouraged toward ministry. Pastors and teachers can sometimes recognize this in confirmation classes, but sometimes as early as first grade.”

Parish pastors in particular have a unique role to play in the formation of future candidates for the pastoral ministry. Not only do they serve to encourage men to consider becoming

pastors, but they offer opportunities to witness firsthand what the daily life of a pastor entails.

“In the parish ministry, I have been bold to tell some young men, ‘You should consider the ministry; you have the faith and God has given you gifts for such a vocation,’ ” said Sailer. “Then, I have given them opportunities to serve, doing some things pastors do, like read lessons, teach, go on hospital calls with me, etc.”

Pastors and congregations alike can do the joyous work of pointing worthy candidates toward the pastoral ministry. Through prayer, conversation and even financial support, men will be encouraged and prepared to enter the seminary according to God’s good plan.

Of course, the best way for a pastor to encourage a man to consider pastoral ministry is through his own service in the office.

“There is no better advertisement for the Holy Ministry than a pastor who embodies his office and adorns it with sound teaching and a holy life,” said Yeager. “When pastors preach, teach and care, they are, with or without their knowledge, encouraging others to take up the mantle they themselves have been vested with, mentoring men for the work they themselves are doing.”

Affirmation along the road to seminary

A little encouragement goes a long way. For the four men featured here, a little encouragement helped take them all the way to seminary.

Through word and deed, their pastors, parents, wives and teachers continually supported and affirmed them during their discernment process. Whether it was an idea planted or a complete mentorship, the fact remains that future seminarians need the backing of those they trust as they consider and prepare for the Office of the Holy Ministry.



A different vocation

For seminarian Aaron Yaeger, becoming an engineer was the logical choice.

“As I sought out what career path to take, much of the input I received was that I ought to study engineering,” explained Yaeger. “Since I also enjoy working with my hands and solving problems, this made a lot of sense. I was also interested in theology, but at the time I never thought I could make that my vocation.”

Although he was raised in the LCMS, Yaeger attended Grace Anglican Church in Slippery Rock, Pa., during college. “It was there, through Father Ethan’s sermons, that the reality of the Gospel became clear to me,” said Yaeger. “Though Grace is a small, young congregation, they were sending a number of young men into the priesthood. It was then that I began to seriously consider the ministry.”

For nearly three years, Yaeger pursued a career in engineering, applying and interviewing for several positions within his field. Through it all, it seemed that there was always something holding him back. Following graduation, he returned home to Michigan and began working part time for the area newspaper, listening to “Issues Etc.” on the radio during long night shifts.

When the newspaper company reorganized, Yaeger found himself questioning his vocation and future.

“I began to evaluate why I had pursued engineering in the first place,” recalled Yaeger. “I very quickly came to the realization that I didn’t really have a solid reason for being an engineer, and I think I sold myself short when it came to some of my other interests, particularly theology.”

Having returned to his home church, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Saginaw, Mich., Yaeger began seeking advice from those he trusted.

“There were a number of discussions that I found most beneficial,” he said. “The Rev. Anthony Voltattorni, who had been a vicar at Good Shepherd, also had an engineering background, and he understood my struggle and confusion. When I met with him, he was the first one to ask me if I had ever considered pastoral ministry. He strongly recommended I visit both seminaries. I also discussed my interest with my

pastor, and he put me in touch with the Rev. Andrew Yeager at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne. It was this encouragement, coupled with my visits to the seminaries, that gave me the assurance that pastoral ministry was something I could realistically pursue. While I had considered this opportunity myself, it didn’t really begin to become real to me until I consulted those I respect.”

Voltattorni, who now serves as pastor at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Standish, Mich., felt it was important to identify, inform and encourage new potential pastors.

“My encouragement to Aaron to attend seminary revolved around the great joy of the pastoral office, one in which pastors have the privilege of delivering Christ and the goods of the cross to sinners in need of a Savior,” explained Voltattorni. “Aaron showed a love for the cross-focused Gospel of Christ crucified for sinners, and so I was happy to encourage him to attend seminary. I spoke of the great task that lies before the pastor, that he must be willing to stand firm on the solid ground of Scripture, not just when it’s convenient but when it means confronting the ugliness of sin. The pastor must be able to not only feed the sheep, but chase off the wolves.”

Regarding the task of current pastors and church workers to identify appropriate candidates for the pastoral ministry, Voltattorni believes that encouraging men toward seminary is necessary in order that the gifts of Christ continue to be delivered to the body of Christ.



Jayne Sheaffer, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne

Seminarian Aaron Yaeger, right, visits with the Rev. Dr. Charles Gieschen, academic dean and professor of Exegetical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne.

“Let there be no mistaking the fact that being a faithful pastor is not an easy vocation, but it is one which the Church needs. For the pastor is there to stand in the place of Christ, delivering forgiveness, life and salvation to dead-in-trespases-and-sins sinners. This is why it’s important that the Church raise up men able to the task of serving as pastors, and that is why the Church must continue to support their preparation for the ministry.”

Yaeger is currently a first-year seminarian at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne.



DCE turned seminarian

First-year seminarian Dave McGinley was encouraged to become a director of Christian education (DCE) before he pursued the pastoral ministry.

“For me it was kind of backwards,” explained McGinley. “I hadn’t intended to be a DCE in the first place. But then I looked into being a DCE and thought it would be a good chance to experience ministry. Seminary was an end goal for me, though.”

McGinley’s parents, pastors and mentors were very influential in his decision to go into church work. Whether teaching Bible studies or serving the church in other ways, many people encouraged him to become a pastor. For him, it was validating to have the support of multiple people, and especially of the pastor with whom he worked as a DCE.

“A big influence for me as a DCE was seeing the role of the pastor firsthand,” said McGinley. “The pastor where I served in Knoxville was a very honest guy, and very helpful. One of the turning points for me was when I let him know we’d be leaving the church so that I could go to seminary. I wasn’t sure how he would react, but he was very encouraging. It was very validating.”

In addition to the encouragement received through those close to him, McGinley also had an opportunity for a personal visit to Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, since his wife’s family lived in that area. Even though he arrived at seminary by way of service as a DCE, McGinley feels he was able to get a sense of the pastoral ministry by the example of other pastors and life in the church in general.

(See *Affirmation along the road*, Page 4)

Seminary support is strong

Throughout the LCMS, individuals, groups and congregations are responding generously to support the Synod’s seminaries and future pastors. The Synod’s Joint Seminary Fund is witnessing this generosity in several significant ways:

- With more than 1,200 members, the Joint Seminary Fund’s Messengers Giving Club has more than doubled its number of participants since 2006.
- Last fiscal year, ending June 30, 2012, direct, indirect and matured gifts that flowed through the Joint Seminary Fund to the seminaries totaled \$2,175,631.
- An increasing number of LCMS schools, women’s and men’s groups, congregations and districts are including the LCMS Joint Seminary Fund in their annual budgets. Last fiscal year, this support totaled \$345,882.

“It is both humbling and encouraging to witness how passionate the people of our Synod are in supporting the formation of our future pastors,”

commented the Rev. Paul Kienker, vice-president for the LCMS Joint Seminary Fund. “In my visits with Joint Seminary Fund donors, it is very evident that one of their highest giving priorities is the

“[Joint Seminary Fund donors] realize how important well-prepared, faithful pastors are for the church and its mission.”

support of our seminaries and those who are preparing to serve as pastors. They realize how important well-prepared, faithful pastors are for the church and its mission.”

The Joint Seminary Fund allows donors the opportunity to designate one or both of the Synod’s seminaries to receive their gifts.

“Many donors like the convenience of writing one check to the Joint

Seminary Fund, knowing that it will benefit both seminaries,” commented Kienker. “Others, especially seminary alumni or those who have a personal connection with one of the seminaries, prefer to designate that seminary to receive their support. We are pleased to be able to offer each donor three giving options — supporting the Fort Wayne seminary, supporting the St. Louis seminary or supporting both.”

Kienker also reports an increase in the number of people including the Joint Seminary Fund in their estate planning. “Many donors include the Joint Seminary Fund in their estate plan as a way of expressing thanks for the significant role that pastors played in their lives,” commented Kienker. “Others are concerned that their children and grandchildren will be blessed, as they were, with faithful pastors.”

Additional information on the Synod’s Joint Seminary Fund may be obtained online at lcms.org/jointseminaryfund, by calling 1-800-325-7912, Ext. 1675 or by emailing paul.kienker@lcms.org.

Seminaries offer visitation opportunities

Both LCMS seminaries offer structured on-campus visitation opportunities for prospective students of all ages and their guests. The following visitation opportunities are offered during the next seven months:

Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

- **January 22-25: Symposia** — an opportunity for prospective students to meet with pastors and laymen from around the world as they discuss exegetical and confessional theology.
 - **March 21-29: Prayerfully Consider** — for men and women who want to learn more about the possibility of serving as a pastor or deaconess. There is time to worship with the seminary community, experience classes and meet with faculty and students.
 - **June 16-39: Christ Academy–High School** — This two-week residential activity for high-school-age men offers an in-depth and hands-on seminary experience as they worship in Kramer Chapel, study with seminary professors and other remarkable teachers and pastors, as well as enjoy time for recreation and fellowship.
- For more information, see ctsfiw.edu, email admission@ctsfiw.edu or call 800-481-2155.

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo.

- **January 10: Shepherds of God’s Flock** — Designed for those in college or older, the retreat will focus on the spiritual and personal aspects of the decision-making process. Wives, fiancées and girlfriends also are encouraged to attend. Participants are invited to stay for the Jan. 11 “Green & Gold Days” event.
- **January 11: Green & Gold Days** — for college students considering pastoral or deaconess service. Experience the campus and community, attend classes, worship in the chapel and speak with faculty. Pastors and pre-seminary advisers are encouraged to attend with their students.
- **January 19-21: Taste of the Sem** — an opportunity for high-school men to spend a weekend at the seminary to study theology, pray, worship, meet and talk with seminary students and professors. Attending Sunday morning worship, Monday morning classes and chapel with a seminary student help provide a sense of seminary life for those who think God might be directing them toward the pastoral ministry.
- **March 7-9: Contemplate** — a structured event to learn about pastoral and deaconess formation. Open to men and women who are college age and

- older, it offers time to meet faculty, worship with the seminary community and attend information sessions on ministry, spirituality, student services and relocation.
- **March 15: Green & Gold Days** (see the January 11 event)
 - **June 22-27: Vocatio** — for students (male and female) who will be in high school this coming school year. It focuses on Christian vocation, including full-time service in the church as ordained or commissioned servants. Bible studies focus on vocation as a Christian, both in our daily walk and as a full-time church worker. Participants learn about study opportunities at LCMS colleges and seminaries and participate in service projects.
 - **July 12-13: Next Steps** — Designed for adult prospective students and their families, this event is designed to address practical questions of relocation to the St. Louis community, including housing, moving companies, employment, health care, child care, schools and more.
- For more information, see csl.edu, e-mail admissions@csl.edu or call 800-822-9545.

Affirmation along the road

(Continued from Page 3)

“While being a DCE I got to experience what ministry was like in the parish,” noted McGinley. “It was a great experience and has really helped me in my time at the seminary.”



Pastoral influence
Right from the start, seminarian Daniel Speckhard had the support and encouragement of both his family and his home pastor as he contemplated the possibility of one day going to seminary. Two of his uncles who serve as pastors initially sparked his interest in the Office of the Holy Ministry, but it was ultimately the care and guidance of his pastor that kept him heading in that direction.

“I began to consider the pastoral ministry in my first year of high school, which was also the first year that my home congregation, Immanuel Lutheran Church in Valparaiso, Ind., called a new associate pastor, the Rev. Daniel Eggold,” recalled Speckhard. “When Pastor Eggold found out that I was interested in the ministry, he offered to help in any way he could.”

Over the next several years, that offer came to fruition as Speckhard went along with Eggold on trips to St. Louis, met with him on a weekly basis to study Greek and even assisted him with various pastoral tasks. During high school, Speckhard visited Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, as part of a recruitment event, followed by a trip to Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, in his senior year of college.

“Pastor Eggold’s encouragement, if nothing else, kept me focused on the goal ahead,” said Speckhard. “His interest in me helped to keep me interested in the ministry even when other opportunities arose. He was a vital part of making my early considerations a reality. I am now a second-year seminarian at Concordia Theological Seminary and I’ve loved every minute of it so far. I owe a great deal to Pastor Eggold for the guidance and aid he gave me in the years before I entered



Top photo: seminarian Mark Harriss, left, is pictured with Emeritus Pastor David Fletcher, center, and Pastor Arthur Eichhorn, right, at Saint Salvator Lutheran Church in Venedy, Ill. (Photo courtesy of Jeanette Segelhorst) **Bottom photo:** seminarian Daniel Speckhard (front, left) is pictured with seminarians Richard Thompson, center, Paul Rockrohr, right, and Zachary Marklevitz, back row, during a lecture at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. (Photo courtesy of Jayne Sheaffer, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne)

the seminary. I cannot emphasize enough how much a caring pastor can influence a young man and potentially guide him towards the pastoral ministry.”



Led by example
“I always had the thought in my head of maybe someday going to the seminary to become a pastor,” said seminarian

Mark Harriss.
Like many men, Harriss was working in another career before making the decision to pursue the pastoral ministry. “Following college, I went into the construction business and was a project manager and estimator,” said Harriss. “My former pastor, the Rev. David Fletcher, influenced me by the way he preached about Christ. Because of him, I knew I wanted to proclaim the Gospel

with such great passion as well!”
Harriss talked to his pastor, Rev. Dr. Arthur Eichhorn, about the possibility of attending seminary. Due to their close proximity to St. Louis, his pastor gave him a self-guided tour of Concordia Seminary.
“Mark was a very gifted lay leader,” recalled Eichhorn, who serves as pastor at Saint Salvator Lutheran Church in Venedy, Ill. and Saint Peter Lutheran Church in New Memphis, Ill. “His level of service to the congregation was exemplary and he had a pastoral heart. He was able to work with people, even difficult people, with a sense of servanthood. Mark and I talked about the seminary and I was able to get him more involved in the congregation’s Wednesday night Bible class. I was able to stay in conversation with him through his qualifying tests and his language classes.”
In addition to Eichhorn’s support and assistance, Harriss’ wife also played a part in his decision to pursue the pastoral ministry.
“When I met my wife, Rebecca, I let her know that I was thinking of attending the seminary,” recalled Harriss. “She has been a great blessing to me and always helped encourage me when I would doubt my capabilities.”
According to Eichhorn, pastors have a critical role to play in the raising up of future generations of pastors.

“It is important that we identify young people with the personality and aptitude to be church workers — pastors as well as other professional church workers,” Eichhorn said. As my generation gets closer to retirement, there will be classrooms to staff and pulpits to fill. I believe it is important for the pastor of a congregation to get to know the young people of the parish, share information about professional church work, and stay in conversation with those who are interested and, as much as we can tell, appear that they would be successful in the career.”
Harriss currently attends Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.