



# PASTORAL Education

November 2012 • A newsletter for those interested in the Pastoral Ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

## Diversity and unity

When reading both the Old and New Testaments, one cannot help but be impressed by the great variety of men God chose to serve Him. Abraham was a man of great wealth and somewhat advanced in years when selected by God. In contrast, Jeremiah complained that he was too young to serve as God intended and likely had very little in terms of worldly goods, being young and the son of a priest.

Moses appears to have had a speech impediment, leading him to suggest that God should choose someone else to lead His people. In contrast, Paul repeatedly demonstrated great rhetorical prowess in proclaiming Jesus Christ to be the long-awaited Messiah.

Consider the variety of backgrounds that existed within the disciples Jesus selected. Peter, James and John were fishermen, as was Phillip. Matthew was a tax collector. Throughout Scripture, God called a great variety of men to serve Him in special ways.

In a similar fashion, today the Lord of the harvest is creating in men of very diverse backgrounds the desire to serve Him in the pastoral ministry. This issue of "Pastoral Education" highlights the great variety of backgrounds and experiences that this year's incoming class of students brings to our seminary campuses. Age, colleges attended and previous vocations are just a few of the areas in which significant diversity

exists within this year's new seminary students.

When one includes the contextual education programs such as the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology, the Center for Hispanic Studies and the Specific Ministry Pastor program, the diversity of characteristics represented in this year's incoming class of seminary students expands even further to include a richer diversity of ethnicities and countries of origin.

Yet, in the midst of this diversity, there is also a wonderful God-given unity that has already bonded these new students together with one another and with us. As Paul writes, "There is one body and one Spirit — just as you were called to the one hope that

belongs to your call — one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:4–6). This being the case, we can thank the Lord of the Church for both the diversity and the unity that exists in this year's incoming class of seminary students!



Thomas

Dr. Glen Thomas  
Executive Director  
Pastoral Education

## Many backgrounds, one faith

Attorneys. Chefs. Entrepreneurs. Married men and single men. Twenty-somethings and fifty-somethings. Life-long Lutherans and LCMS converts. LCMS seminarians come from every background imaginable, each one with skills and situations vastly different from the student sitting next to him in Greek class. This is a phenomenon that is unique to the seminary experience.

"In one of my first or second groups of advisees, I had one guy that was previously a lawyer and another one that was a medical doctor," recalled the Rev. Dr. Carl Fickenscher, dean of Certification and Pastoral Education at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTS). "They became close friends with a few other guys who were in the same Greek study group with them, including one guy right out of college and two others who'd had interesting business careers. In

*"God has a way of using the different skill sets He gives and the experiences of our past to form us into the servant leaders He desires us to be."*

— The Rev. Dr. Wally Becker, admissions officer, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

any other situation, they probably would never have met nor had the opportunity to engage in such interesting discussions. Now they all have the same career, and for these guys to become best friends, it's a remarkable thing. The only other place that happens is likely in our congregations, where people who have such different backgrounds come together and bring their unique perspectives."

So what does this great variety of backgrounds look like at the Synod's two seminaries among residential Master of Divinity (M.Div.) and Alternate Route (A.R.) students in the 2012-13 incoming class?

### Average age

In general, the average age of incoming residential seminary students is quite young, at just 29.5 years old. Perhaps more so than at other schools, LCMS seminary students have a wide range of ages, from 21 to 69 years old. Many men pursued alternate careers prior to attending seminary, while others came straight out of college.

### College background

In fact, 47 percent of incoming seminary students attended college at one of the schools in the Concordia University System. This makes for a good mix of men in the classroom who have studied within the Concordia system and those who have attended non-LCMS schools.

Regardless of college background, all incoming students are expected to have a working knowledge of the Scriptures and Lutheran theology when planning to attend seminary.

"There are some obvious skills and attitudes that we desire our students to have already when they arrive at the seminary," said the Rev. Dr. Wally Becker, admissions officer at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (CSL). "Not only should they have a good knowledge of God's Word and the teachings of Scripture (we have entrance exams to make sure that they are at an entrance level of competence in these areas), but they should have a deep love for God's Word and a desire to grow in their knowledge and understanding of God and His Word."

### Marital status

At 60 percent, more than half of the men in the incoming seminary class are married. Many second-career seminarians have been married for years, and



Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne

The Rev. Dr. Lawrence Rast, Jr., lower left, president of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, stands with the 2012 incoming class of students in the M.Div. and Alternate Route programs.

so their wives and families are also impacted by the transition and move to seminary life. At both seminaries, married students and single students mix and mingle in classes, as well as at chapel services and campus events.

### 'Fascinating diversity'

The Synod's seminaries showcase fascinating diversity among incoming pastoral students, including exchange students from other countries, children of LCMS pastors and those studying for specific kinds of ministry. For example, CSL welcomed seven new students into their Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT) and CTS has three new students who are sons of LCMS pastors. The seminaries also are receiving 26 new Specific Ministry Pastors (SMP) for this academic year.

"Men preparing for the ministry bring so many different talents and abilities to the table," said the Rev. Andrew Yeager, admissions counselor at CTS. "Some men take to the languages with ease and bring their linguistic abilities to bear through sound and solid preaching. Some are extroverts and excel at relating, some are introverts whose counsel is sought for their ability to listen. Former business professionals bring commanding administrative ability to their congregations, while former musicians begin and lead choral groups and

(See *Many backgrounds*, Page 2)

# PALS adds new courses to curriculum

Since 1998, the Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS) initiative has assisted hundreds of new pastors and their spouses with the transition from seminary to congregation.

Throughout the Synod, facilitating pastors gather groups of approximately 6-12 pastors who are in the first three years of parish ministry for a series of meetings that include worship, study, discussion and fellowship. Wives meet together with their husbands for most of each PALS gathering, but they also meet separately to study and discuss topics that are most helpful to them. These gatherings provide a positive and supportive environment for new pastors and their wives as they continue to learn and grow.

With generous support provided by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, PALS was able to develop and add new courses to its curriculum in September. The new courses are:

- *Communication and Conflict: Opportunities for Connecting in Grace*, by the Rev. James Otte, Messiah Lutheran Church, Plano, Texas;



- *Preaching as Pilgrimage*, by Dr. David Schmitt, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis;
- *Preaching: The Heart and the Art*, by Dr. David Schmitt, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis; and
- *Making Pastoral Referrals with Confidence* (two-part), by Dr. Beverly Yahnke, Doxology and Concordia University Wisconsin, Mequon, Wis.

“Our goal is to add to the curriculum each year with new courses that cover subject areas suggested by our new pastors and their wives,” commented the Rev. Dr. Glen Thomas, executive director of Pastoral Educa-

tion for the Synod. “In this way, we know that we are addressing areas of significant need.”

Consistent with this goal, at least three new courses also are being developed for use by PALS groups in 2013. They are:

- *Exegeting Your Community* — practical ways that pastors and congregations in rural, suburban and urban contexts can engage their communities;
- *Premarital Pastoral Care* — including the issue of cohabitation prior to marriage; and
- *Stewardship in the Local Congregation* — helping pastors who desire to emphasize biblical stewardship in their preaching and teaching.

“We are excited about the new courses we have this year and the ones we are developing for next year,” stated Carrie O’Donnell, PALS coordinator. “Each course contains a combination of short video segments featuring the course author and printed materials that are designed to trigger further thought, discussion and study.”

Additional information is available at [lcms.org/pals](http://lcms.org/pals).

## Many backgrounds

(Continued from, Page 1)

instrumental ensembles at their congregations. The ministry is not linked to any one personality type.”

### Why diversity?

This kind of variety among students is no doubt preparatory for work in the parish, as members of LCMS congregations also come from all walks of life.

“When new pastors are called to congregations, they’re blessed to have had exposure to the professional lives of other seminarians, so they are prepared to shepherd the people in their parishes,” said Fickenscher. “If a pastor has a doctor in his congregation, it’s helpful that he may have gotten to know how doctors think when he met one in a study group, or gotten to know how lawyers think because a guy in his Epistles class was a lawyer. Maybe a guy who is 45 years old and is second career will have an easier time acclimating to the young adults in his parish because at seminary, he got to know how younger Lutherans think.”

Becker echoes a similar sentiment regarding the diversity of students at CSL: “The varied backgrounds of our students bring a cross section of the real world that our students will be going back to serve. As they work together, learn together, live together in com-



Students with a variety of backgrounds become better acquainted during new student orientation at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

munity and love each other as brothers in Christ, they learn to care about and serve the people who will be part of their congregations some day.”

In addition to the preparation for the parish that this diversity brings, a varied seminary class bestows additional benefits on the church at-large. Since each and every pastor is different with regard to skills, interests and strengths, it makes for a better pastor-congregation fit.

“For one thing, I think it really is in God’s design that pastors should have different strengths, so they fit in different congregational settings,” explained Fickenscher. “The work I did in placement made that obvious — the fact that we have guys who bring unique skills to seminary and take new skills out allows us to do some matchmaking and find a good fit. If congregations were all identical in makeup, we would need identical

pastors. But congregations are diverse, so pastors are diverse as well.”

### One faith

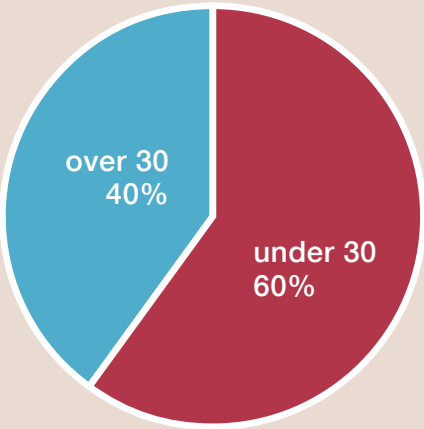
With all this diversity, there still remains one thing that unifies all the students, regardless of background. Their Lutheran faith and commitment to sharing the Gospel is at the core, making them a close-knit community because their confession is the same.

“The office has been filled by former tax collectors, fishermen, doctors, even former persecutors of Christ and His [Church],” said Yeager. “In the end, it is what the Lord does with these diverse instruments that matters. Above all our graduates recognize that the ministry is not centered on them or anything they bring, but it is centered on the One who has called them to this task and ordained them for this service. That’s what makes them faithful.”

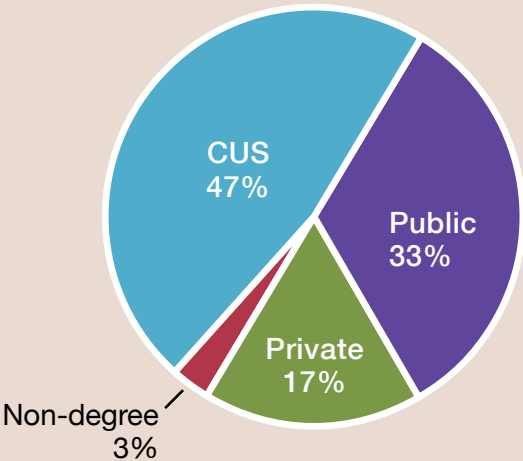
Who attends LCMS seminaries? Men who are forgiven sinners and blessed saints, set apart for service and preparing for a call to shepherd the redeemed and reach the lost, using those specific gifts that were given by God Himself.

## NEW RESIDENTIAL SEMINARY STUDENT DATA (COMBINED SEMINARIES)

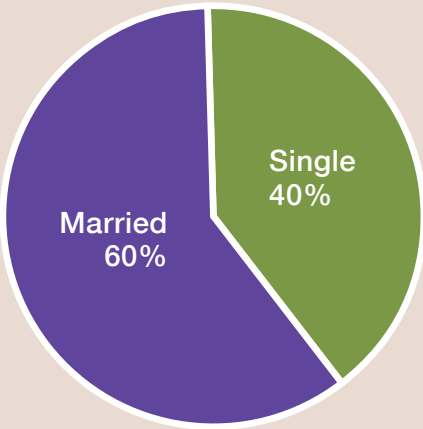
Age



College Background



Marital Status



# New seminarians display diversity



Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne

Seminarian Noah Rogness parses Greek verbs with his classmates at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne.

Just as the Lord chose men from diverse backgrounds to serve His people in days of old, the same is true today among the men in LCMS seminaries who are preparing for pastoral ministry. Regardless of their differences, today's seminarians are united with each other and with those prophets and apostles who studied God's Word and served His flock, united in the one faith and one confession.

The five new students highlighted below — three at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, and two at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, are now fully into their classes. Like their classmates, they represent a rich diversity in past experiences and paths traveled prior to seminary enrollment.

### Military meets seminary



When Noah Rogness joined the Army Reserve as a chaplain assistant in September 1999 during his senior year of high school, he had no idea that his path would eventually lead him to Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTS).

"After returning from Basic Training, I began studies at the University of Minnesota Duluth (UMD)," said Rogness. "Shortly after 9/11 I was transferred from one unit to a smaller chaplain detachment unit comprised of one to two chaplains and one to three chaplain assistants. By January 2002, a chaplain and I were

mobilized and we departed our homes within 72 hours to deploy into Afghanistan for six months."

After returning from Afghanistan, Rogness returned to UMD and picked up where he had left off in his studies. Then in 2005, he was deployed to Sato Cano air base in Honduras, serving as the base chapel noncommissioned officer in charge. He was to ensure that all individuals of all faith backgrounds had a place for worship throughout their tours.

"Once again, I returned home, but only for a short stay, as the Army mobilized me in 2006 to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C.," recalled Rogness. "This tour was one year and provided opportunities for spiritual growth in so many ways, especially in forming me to be a servant. It is amazing to see how Christ uses His children to serve and care for America's wounded military."

In May 2007, Rogness returned home to Minnesota and his studies at UMD. After completing his bachelor's degree in community health education in May 2008, he was asked to serve in the Office of the Chief of Chaplains at the Pentagon. He accepted, and then after one year, the Army placed him on active duty until he left the Pentagon to attend the seminary.

His decision to attend seminary was influenced by his wife, Becky, who worked on Capitol Hill as press secretary for congresswoman Michele Bachmann, as well as by his home pastor in the D.C. area.

"When I spoke to Becky about attending seminary while we were dating, she was supportive," explained Rogness. "We began discussing the seminary with our pastor, the Rev. Christopher Esget at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Alexandria, Va., and seeking his guidance and prayer. We visited the seminary to see what classes, the community and life as a seminarian would be like."

Rogness felt that that the rapid pace of life and great diversity in the D.C. area, coupled with his experience in the military, helped to prepare him for the pastoral ministry.

"In all of the chaos, people need Christ," noted Rogness. "They need to hear His Word and receive His gifts. In many ways, I believe I needed to be in that chaos of the big city to be directed to the seminary. It was there in the chaos of the big city and in our fast-paced lives that we came to a decision through prayer to apply to the seminary and leave the lives we had for my new vocation in the Office of Holy Ministry."

For Rogness, the Army, his college studies and his home congregation provided wonderful opportunities to grow and develop skills to serve God's people.

"I have had the privilege to serve our nation in the Army and travel the world," said Rogness. "In my journeys, I have met so many wonderful people and encountered some people in really trying times in their lives. As a student who went back and forth from college and the Army, I had to learn to be flexible and adaptable. In my home congregation in Alexandria, I was able to serve the church as the vice president of the congregation. What a joy to be involved in the work of the church! This proved to be an amazing opportunity to serve fellow members of the congregation and the Lord. It was here that I was able to see the inner working of the parish and how everyone is connected to one another in what we do as a community of believers."

### Lawyer turned seminarian



Long Island native

Chris Chandler graduated from The State University of New York (SUNY) at Binghamton with a double major in history and political science/law. After college, he attended graduate school and law school, earning both a law degree and an accounting/business degree and was admitted to practice law in New York. From there, Chandler worked for eight years in the area of taxation in both

the corporate and nonprofit sectors in Boston.

Then one day he walked into a bookstore.

"As a child, my family would on occasion attend a local, non-LCMS Lutheran church," explained Chandler. "During my teenage years, I began to attend a Baptist church with one of my older brothers. It was just four years ago, however, when looking for a catechism to enrich our family devotions that I happened upon a reader's version of the *Book of Concord* in a Borders bookstore. After significant reading of this powerful text, I sought out a Lutheran pastor, the Rev. Ingo Dutzmann of First Lutheran Church of Boston (FLCB), to discuss the deep impressions the Confessions were making on me. He and I met over several months, and we walked together through both Scripture and the Confessions. The Holy Spirit used this time to illuminate several teachings in Scripture, namely a biblical view of the Lord's Supper and Holy Baptism."


Chandler and his wife, Shelly, a nurse practitioner, and their four children began to attend FLCB and ultimately became members of the LCMS in 2010. Not long thereafter, seminary was on the horizon, and Chandler realized that his training as a lawyer could prove useful to him as he prepared for the pastoral ministry.

"In agreement with the Lutheran theological emphasis that God comes to us through His Word, I believe that my training as a lawyer, specifically the discipline of studying a text both analytically and historically to ascertain its meaning for the benefit of others, is parallel to biblical interpretation for fellow believers," said Chandler. "The abstract must be made practical in communicating one's findings to a client or colleague in plain, accessible language. Also, people come with all the issues of the day, and it's the human element that adds that dimension of messiness that must be prudently navigated. In this regard, I have learned from both my successes and failures, and more from my failures."

He and his family then moved to St. Louis for Chandler to attend Concordia Seminary. Having only recently become part of the LCMS family, Chandler is able to see objectively some of the blessings and challenges that the Synod must face.

"I believe that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the only true hope for humankind," noted Chandler. "The LCMS can be a powerful voice for God during these

(See New seminarians, Page 4)



## PREPARING PASTORS PROCLAIMING CHRIST

Holy Scripture speaks of the message of eternal life, freely given by God's grace through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Messengers, prepared at our seminaries, preach and teach that through this Gospel "in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation."

### The LCMS Joint Seminary Fund

Out of gratitude to our Lord for the love and mercy He has shown, please prayerfully consider your opportunity to help prepare pastors. Contact us today and find out how you can support this special bond with our seminaries.



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For information on how you can include The LCMS Joint Seminary Fund in your estate plan please call Rev. Paul D. Kienker at 800-248-1930 ext. 1675.

Concordia  
Theological Seminary  
Fort Wayne



Concordia  
Seminary  
Saint Louis

# New seminarians

(Continued from Page 3)

turbulent times, due to our emphasis on the redeeming power of the Gospel and unequivocal conviction and commitment to the truth of Scripture. Finally, as an African-American Christian, my heart is burdened (along with many other Christians of both European and non-European descent) with the racial division within the Church Universal and within the LCMS, and in the years to come I believe that our Synod will play a powerful role in healing the Body of Christ from this scourge. May the Lord continue to grant us all His grace and mercy.”

## The CUS path to seminary



John Koopman grew up in a small town in South Dakota, working on his family’s fruit and vegetable farm. A lifelong member of the LCMS, it was no surprise that he chose to attend college at Concordia University, Nebraska, Seward, Neb., earning a bachelor’s degree in psychology while also completing the pre-seminary program.

The only problem was, he had no interest in becoming a pastor prior to one critical event.

“Toward the end of high school, I attended an Exploring Church Careers Event (ECCE) at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, which is what gave me the incentive to become a pastor,” said Koopman. “My pastor at that time had nominated me to attend this event, and originally I had no intentions of going, as I didn’t want to be a pastor. But my parents enticed me to go by saying, ‘It’s only a little bit of money, and it could be a fun and enriching experience to see the seminary, learn a little more about how pastors are trained and see some of St. Louis while you’re there.’ What with their tempting arguments, I decided I may as well go. ‘Who cares about being a pastor,’ I thought, ‘I would get to go see St. Louis!’ ”

By the end of ECCE, Koopman began to think carefully about his future and what he truly wanted to do, as he had originally planned to look into law

As a lifelong Lutheran, Koopman had many opportunities and experiences in serving the church, so his preparation for seminary was quite extensive.

“Throughout my confirmation years and even into high school I served as acolyte and crucifer at church, and at Concordia, Seward, I quickly became involved with the chapel and evening prayer services,” explained Koopman. “This made me very close to the prayer offices in the *Lutheran Service Book*, learning them front and back and growing a strong affinity for the Scripture and music in them. I was also the head usher on campus my junior and senior years, with responsibilities to find groups to usher and acolyte each week and for special services. During my senior year, I was the president of the Pre-Seminary Club. All of these responsibilities and interactions forced me to step out of my shell a little earlier and take on leadership roles that enabled me to learn not only about leading people, but serving them.”

In addition, since Koopman learned Greek, Hebrew and a great deal of theology as part of his studies at Concordia, Seward, he was able to enter seminary with a good understanding of some of the larger topics in theology, which proved useful to him as a first-year seminarian.

## Following in father’s footsteps



As the son of a church planter, Daniel Vang witnessed how his father served the church by planting new Hmong congregations in Wisconsin.

“I grew up in the LCMS, and my father obtained his M.Div. at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis back in the early ’90s,” recalled Vang. “About every five to six years my family would move to an entirely new city to start a brand new ministry. [My father] is currently working with Saint Stephanus in Saint Paul, Minn., to help start a Hmong congregation there.”

Vang studied at the University of Wisconsin — Milwaukee, graduating in

So how did he come to be interested in attending Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to become a pastor?

“Part of it came from spending time with my church youth group and attending conferences, which really helped me to see the need for pastors for the up and coming generations,” said Vang. “The other part came from really good friends and mentors that have helped shape who



Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

First-year seminarian Daniel Vang, left, talks with the Rev. Dr. James Voelz at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

I am today. Ultimately, I chose to attend seminary because I want to be able to make known the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Not just as a layman, but as a pastor who is able to bring Christ to people through Word and Sacrament ministry.”

Vang believes that his prior experiences contributed to his ability and interest in serving God’s people as a pastor. Studying the English language helped him with his grammar and understanding hermeneutics, both of which are useful in his theological studies now and in the future.

It probably didn’t hurt that he was also deeply involved in the churches that his father planted throughout his life.

“My time with my church has taught me to develop good relationships and that relationships help move a congregation forward,” explained Vang. “This was especially true with my church’s youth group. I am still learning to establish well-intended relationships with people in general, and that patience is of great value and sometimes ‘no’ is the appropriate answer.”

Vang and his wife of nearly three years, Alexandra, have one daughter and are expecting their second child in February.

## From LaSalle Street to Fort Wayne



“I had leather suspenders, starched white shirts and an apartment I couldn’t afford. I really thought I had made it!” Joel Oswald was living

the American dream. Born and raised in Springfield, Ill., and a lifelong Lutheran, he first considered seminary in the eighth grade when his pastor suggested he think about going into the ministry.

“I already knew I would probably do it, but it did not interest me and I convinced myself I wanted to do something where I’d make lots of money,” recalled Oswald. “I attended the University of Illinois and received a bachelor’s degree in finance before taking a job as a commercial banker at the American National Bank on LaSalle Street in Chicago.”

Oswald then married Jeni, his high school sweetheart, and after five

years he took a transfer and they moved back home to Springfield. While living and working in commercial banking in Springfield, he commuted as often as three nights a week to St. Louis to complete his MBA at Washington University.

“This commute was perhaps the most formative aspect of my decision to attend seminary,” said Oswald. “I was, and still am, a talk radio junkie. One

evening I stumbled onto “Issues Etc.” on the radio, and soon realized that I never had appreciated what it meant to be Lutheran. I remember driving to Clayton one night thinking, ‘How silly, I’m driving 100 miles to Clayton, Mo., three nights a week to go to graduate school, and I’m going to the wrong one!’ Concordia Seminary was walking distance from Washington University!”

Upon finishing his MBA, Oswald took a transfer to St. Louis with the bank, and there he found himself in the midst of a challenging situation on the church council in his congregation.

“Through this experience I was even more certain that I wanted to pursue church work,” said Oswald. “But my wife and I decided we would delay until our daughters were finished with high school. I took a banking position back in Champaign, Ill., and continued to stay involved in my church. I continued to feel the tug, and in 2009 we decided to move up our seminary plan by several years, with a target date of 2012.”

Then one year later, in September 2010, Oswald lost his banking job.

“We decided to accelerate our plan by another year, even though we didn’t feel we had our ducks in a row, and out of nowhere a commercial banking job found me. It was the perfect opportunity to transition our lives and get ready for the seminary, even though it required one more move to Pekin, Ill., before moving to Fort Wayne.”

Oswald’s numerous church and secular experiences helped prepare him for the blessings and challenges of the ministry.

“I also believe my banking background has helped me become a good listener and more comfortable in working with a variety of people,” noted Oswald. “That said, I consider myself retired from banking, and have no interest in sitting on any church budget or finance committees — I grew weary of selling financial services when what I really wanted to do was spend my time telling people really Good News!”



Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne

Prof. John Pless, left, visits with new students Jacob Hercamp, Joel Oswald and John Zimmerman at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne.

enforcement. After much prayer and contemplation, and considering that a pastor from his confirmation years had encouraged him to be a pastor, Koopman began classes at Concordia, Seward, with the goal of studying on the pre-seminary track in order to attend Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, and become a pastor.

December 2010 with a bachelor’s degree in English and linguistics. While there, he also pursued a career in music as a singer/songwriter, even producing a six-song extended-play album and a debut album. He then worked for a short time after college at Sigma Aldrich as a package operator and then at Calibre, Inc., as an assembly worker.